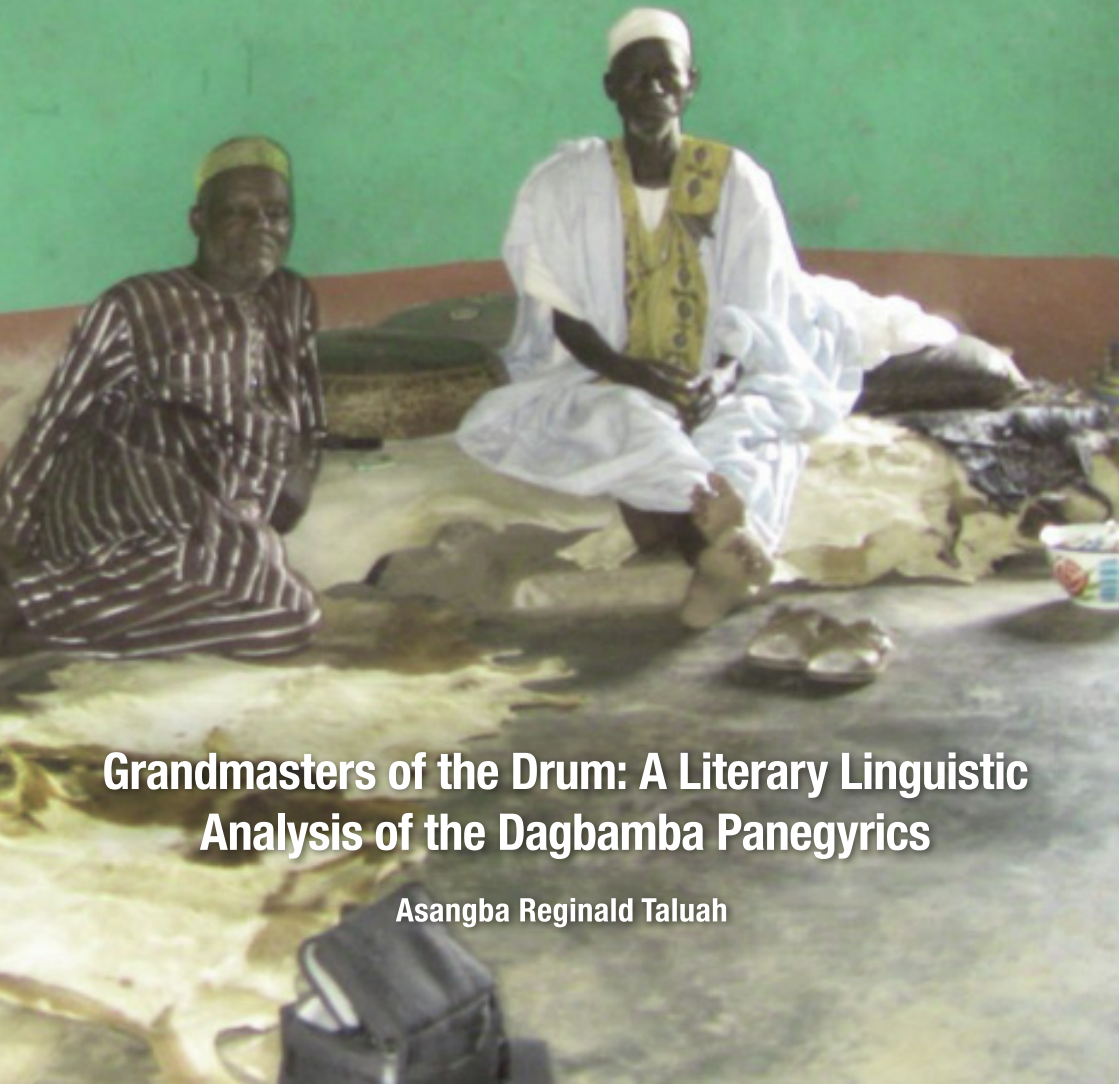


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**Grandmasters of the Drum: A Literary Linguistic
Analysis of the Dagbamba Panegyrics**

Asangba Reginald Taluah

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Dedication

For Gloria Nibunu and Awedana Taluah, my wife and son, who were denied the presence of a husband and father for most of the time I spent in the cold warmth of Cologne, Germany.

For Mr. Charles Patrice Taluah and Mrs. Victoria Navro Taluah, my parents, who guided my steps from the cradle and through many stages of the academic frontiers, but had to answer so quickly to their call to Glory and for Roger Wepia Amipare, a cousin and confidant, whose dedication to this research endeavour was phenomenal but was soon to join the ancestral roll-call.

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CHAPTER 1

Background of the Dagbamba and their Art of Poetry

1.1 Introduction

Language is novel, and more novel are the products of language, and even most novel is the employment of language in artistic enterprises. Human creativity abounds in diverse fields, and language is no exception. It could be said, and true to it, that the artistic use of language is as old as language itself. It is well acknowledged linguistically that even usual conversations in some languages in particular often employ unique creative innovations to express concepts and ideas. No doubt Otto Jefferson in his profound quote maintains that “the genesis of language is not to be sought in the prosaic, but the poetic side of life [...]” (Yule 1996: 1).

Since time immemorial, virtually all known cultures found it worthwhile or perhaps gratifying to express their beliefs and thoughts in diverse artistic forms. Most artistic creations were mostly meant to commemorate some socio-cultural and religious

functions. Artistic creations in languages were intended purposely to teach, delight or move people into action and in some cases, a combination of the three as maintained by Horace as per the classical Roman view of the verbal arts in particular.

Prior to the invention of writing, the artistic products of language were generally passed down from one generation to the other by word of mouth: usually memorised and performed repeatedly on many occasions and gradually gets ingrained in the minds of the participants or the budding generations. In traditional African communities, one fertile ground for the propagation of oral traditions was by storytelling sessions usually referred to as “by the fireside.” Apart from this popular performance situation, other oral traditions, as is the case of Dagbamba panegyrics, were formally taught by renowned experts in the art of praise poetry and performance as a whole. Some apprentices could stay with their masters and or serve their masters for quite a considerable number of years. In some cases, apprentices remained with their masters throughout their lives. Quite apart from these settings, there are other known oral traditions that were deemed secret or taboo and needed to be taught in unique settings or situations. Typical cases in point are dirges and war songs amongst some particular cultures.

In the wake of globalisation, factors such as formal education, rural-urban migration, information communication technology, and their associate currents as manifested in trends in the modernisation process, the crave for oral traditions especially in developing communities of which Dagbon is no exception leaves much to be desired. While older generations die with their songs, the younger generations are being drawn to other cultural artistic forms through the mediums of radio, television and the cinema: wherein they are influenced by foreign musical forms such as hip-hop and their consequent adaptation into a synthesis of diverse musical forms such as hip-life in Ghana, to the disregard of their oral traditions. Significantly however, the oral traditions as the verbal arts that are not

given the necessary attention by the youth possess far better novel-
ties than the coming generations can envisage.

It should be noted that though the acolytes of the praise poetry tradition in Dagbon may be declining, the tradition is nonetheless vibrant as it occupies a central stage in Dagbamba culture. Ojaide's observations of the Udje poetic performance may be likened to the case of Dagbamba praise poetry principally. Writing on the oral poetic performance of Udje in recent times, Ojaide (2015: 237) points out that: "One may feel that the condition of traditional African literature in contemporary times has been exacerbated by the forces of globalization which threaten its very existence." He however contends that: "The new literature that arose from literacy did not stop the composition and performance of traditional literature."

By far, the greatest creative achievement of the Dagbamba to say the least, is their praise poetry. Praise poetry is synonymous with the Dagbamba because they have a long history of conquests and kings passed on from one generation to the other; spanning centuries of their establishment of the Dagbon state in the 15th century. The Dagbamba praise poetry or panegyrics to be specific are orally composed texts that were constructed purposely to glorify Dagbamba kings or chiefs and also uphold historical accounts of the royals and the happenings in the annals of Dagbon in general.

This research is therefore focused on the panegyrics amongst the Dagbamba of Northern Ghana. It explores the beliefs, values and ideas that surround the texts and examines the diverse distinctions and adaptations that pertain in the renditions of the panegyrics and the general contexts as a whole. There are some linguistic or literary elements that are limited to the written word. However, the spoken word entails quite overwhelming diverse and unique paralinguistic figurative elements as well as linguistic elements as the texts are conceived and performed orally.

For a better appreciation of the creative inventiveness of the Dagbamba praise poets as manifested in their panegyrics, this

study adopts an interdisciplinary approach in its examinations. A deeper understanding of oral forms as Dagbamba panegyrics require an in-depth understanding of the world-view that shapes such a tradition. An examination of the general and situational contexts of the Dagbamba as a people and of the panegyrics in particular offer deeper insights into the world-view and circumstances that shape the texts. In his essay titled "The discipline of literary studies", Olsen (2016: 50) is quite emphatic that "[...] while some kind of information about the attitudes, beliefs, and generally the personal situation of the author will be irrelevant, some such information will be illuminating."

This study therefore begins with the premise that a study of oral traditions as Dagbamba panegyrics requires a deeper understanding of the world-view and situational contexts in which the texts are performed. For the purposes of our discussions consequently, it will be significant to trace if only briefly some historical events that relate to Dagbamba kings or chiefs and *lunsi* as maintained in Dagbamba historical accounts and some other documented accounts as well. Originally, praise songs or panegyrics for that matter were meant to accompany chiefs in public hearings. In recent times, however, praise poetry has scaled over the walls of royal courts and lurks in public squares in solicitation of reward or money, and quite recently, to praise some other public or political figures.

Dagbamba praise songs are embroidered in figurative language and are especially laden with epithets, metaphors and allusions. They are also proverbial with idioms and sayings rooted in Dagbamba world-view and cultural environment. The novelty of technique in this cannot be overemphasised. To ascertain the literary merits of the Dagbamba panegyrics, it becomes crucial for a study as this to examine both linguistic and literary features of the Dagbamba panegyrics as unique poetic renditions. Literary analysis or poetic analyses for that matter normally hinge on the figurative use of language, which is generally linguistic or expressed in words for that matter.

1.2 The Dagbamba

Dagbon was originally occupied by the *Tinbihi*, indigenes, before the arrival of the *Nabihi*, royals; the Dagbamba proper. In Dagbon today, both the *Tinbihi* and *Nabihi* have become one and the same people known as the Dagbamba. *Dagbamba* (*Dagbana* SG.) are often referred to by many writers or people in general as *Dagomba(s)*. However, no *Dagbana* in the strictest sense ever refers to himself or herself as a *Dagomba* or his or her people as *Dagombas*. These are anglicised forms of *Dagbana* and *Dagbamba* respectively.

The Dagbamba consist of diverse clans, who assume some respective socio-cultural, economic, and political roles in Dagbon. Essentially, these respective clans trace their origins from one or more ancestors related by blood, the clans are based on some respective expertise and there is mutual respect within the diverse clans and for all clans. Amongst these main clans, there are further classifications which are based on ranks, roles, sex, or age amongst some other factors. Hence, quite apart from the main chief who hails from the royal clan, all other clans have a chief, elders and representatives in matters of the Dagbon state as a whole.

The royal clan is known amongst the Dagbamba as *Naanima*, the drummer clan is known as *Lunsi*, the warrior clan is known as the *Sapashinima*, the butchers are known as *Nakohanima*, the blacksmiths are known as *Machelenima*, the hunters are known as *Tohanima*, the undertakers are known as *Kasikribanima*, the Moslem clerics are known as *Afanima*, and the barbers are known as *Wanzamnima* amongst other clans. In fact, most, if not every socio-cultural role vital to the day to day activities and well-being of the Dagbamba belongs to such categories as mentioned above. In some instances, some roles or duties that do not necessarily belong to some specific categories are entailed in some of the stated clans. Apart from farming that cuts across all the clans in Dagbon virtually all known occupations are the prerogative of some respective clans. Perhaps,

one known occupation that is common with many societies but is non-existent amongst the Dagbamba known clans is fishing. Reasons for the non-inclusion of the fishing occupation amongst the Dagbamba could be attributed to their geographical setting. The Dagbamba communities are generally not located around water bodies to have made fishing a viable occupation.

In the cultural Dagbamba settings, these clan systems are strictly adhered to by the people (Oppong 1973). In fact, there is no horizontal mobility from one clan to the other. Once one is born into a clan, he or she remains in the clan for his or her entire life. Vertical mobility within the clan is, however, the norm. For instance, based on the clan and the community one finds himself or herself in, one can rise in diverse ranks within the set roles identified by the clan in question.

It is significant to note that in the wake of globalisation, however, some Dagbamba from the diverse castes as stated above have rolled into modern positions as managers, directors, lawyers, doctors, nurses amongst the host of other fields available for those who have had formal education. Formal education has therefore eased the movement of some Dagbamba from one field or occupation to the other. However, in most instances, when you meet a Dagbana in any part of the country with the profession of a butcher, then he is indeed from the butcher clan just as when a Dagbana drummer is found in any part of the country, the probability of him being from the drummer clan is nearly a hundred percent. That is to say, Dagbamba are somewhat stark to their clans unless where or what they are switching to is not constituted by the Dagbamba ancestors.

With respect to the origin of the Dagbamba, they trace their ancestry from Tohajie, which translates as 'red hunter'. It is from Tohajie that the Mole-Dagbani as a people spring. The story is told that Tohajie migrated from the East of Chad and moved through to Zamfara in Northern Nigeria, after which he further migrated to Mali through to Burkina Faso, where he settled. Tohajie begot

Kpogonumbo who ruled in Biun, Burkina Faso. Kpogonumbo begot Gbewaa from one of his wives, the princess of Grumah. It is from Gbewaa that the ruling class of the Dagbamba trace their latter descent. It is therefore of little doubt or no doubt at all that the palace of the Yaa Naa, the overlord of Dagbon, is referred to as the *Gbewaa Palace*.

As a result of disputes after the death of Kpogonumbo, history maintains that Gbewaa migrated to Ghana, where he set up the foundation of Dagbon Kingdom in Pusiga, in the northeastern part of Ghana. Zirili, Tohagu and Sitobo, the first, third and youngest sons of Gbewaa all respectively succeeded their father in succession after his demise. It was during the reign of Tohagu that the capital of the then Dagbon was moved from Pusiga to Gambaga. History also has it that the grandson from the only daughter (Yaniega) of Tohagu established the Mossi state in Burkina Faso. Specifically, however, Tohagu, Mantambo and Sitobo, all sons of Naa Gbewaa founded the Mamprusi, Nanumba and Dagbamba States respectively.

It was Sitobo who established the new Dagbon state. Sitobo is therefore credited not only as the founder of Dagbon state, but also as the originator of the title *Yaa Naa*, which loosely translates as 'king of power' or 'king of all', and the functions ascribed to the skin. While some kings or chiefs are either enthroned or enstooled, Dagbamba kings or chiefs and that of their northern neighbours are enskinned (Macgaffey 2013).

Subsequently, Yaa Naa Nyagse, son of Sitobo, later built the new capital of Dagbon at Diari. Yaa Naa Nyagse reined between 1416 and 1432. After Yaa Naa Nyagse came an array of other kings. There are notably about thirty-nine (39) kings to have ascended the Yendi Skin, Yaa Naa Sitobo being the first. For the purposes of our study, some of these kings, as with respects to their contributions to Dagbon in one way or the other, as far as Dagbamba cultural heritage or Dagbon principally is concerned, crave for attention.

Yaa Naa Zangina, who reigned between 1648 and 1677, is credited as the initiator of diverse cultural practices of the Dagbamba (Mahama 2004). The way and manner in which Dagbamba festivals and funerals are celebrated are from his initiatives. Several other socio-cultural celebrations are said to have been initiated by Yaa Naa Zangina. Perhaps, the most significant and palpable initiation by Yaa Naa Zangina that has woven into the cultural and religious fabrics of the Dagbamba was Islam.

Islam was introduced to the Dagbamba in the 17th century under the reign and conversion of the then Dagbon Yaa Naa Zangina. Since the 17th century, Islam has been well entrenched amongst the Dagbamba and it has gained a strong influence from their traditional belief systems. This is evident in their festivals; especially the *Damba* festival and other day to day activities. Islam is so entrenched in Dagbon to the extent that *Afanima*, the Moslem clerics, play significant roles in Dagbon courts and Dagbon as a whole. The *Afar* is revered to the extent that he sits in state with the Yana and other chiefs. Prayers and intercessions as far as the skin and people are concerned are the prerogative of the *Afanima*. In fact, Islam and traditional Dagbamba religious practices have become closely knit in most respects that it becomes difficult to tell where one begins and ends.

It should be noted that chieftaincy remains one of the most revered institutions in Dagbon amidst infiltrations of modern democracy and its currents. Perhaps if any institution should be noted as standing its grounds amidst globalisation and its attendant currents in Dagbon, then it is the chieftaincy institution. Dagbon chieftaincy still maintains an influential role in the lives of the Dagbamba, partly on grounds that the chieftaincy institution is well revered by all and sundry. There are diverse other reasons that may account for the high degree reverence of the chieftaincy institution amongst the Dagbamba. Salifu (2010: 39) for example maintains that:

The chief is an incarnation of the gods and ancestral spirits, and as such is accorded the utmost reverence. The ruler is both *andunia naawuni* 'earth's god' and *buya siyilana* "reincarnate of the ancestral shrines". This reflects in all spheres of the people's lives, so that whoever wishes to prosper would do well not to incur the wrath of these deities or their representative.

One other significant thing worthy of mention is that quite apart from a well-set lineage or clan, for that matter, to occupy Dagbamba skins, chieftaincy skins are generally rotational. It implies that one who occupies a skin may rise to another skin or chieftaincy position of more prominence. More so, there are some skins meant for those known traditionally to be fathers of the Yaa Naa. As an example, the chieftaincy of Kuga, *Kuga Nam*, is reserved particularly for *Naa Yabsi*, fathers of the Yaa Naa. Other skins are also meant for the sons of the Yaa Naa, known as *Naa Piriba*. It should be noted that these father and son relationships between the Yaa Naas are based on Dagbamba cultural prescriptions and dictates as with descent, rather than mere age differences. More so, about five skins can only be occupied by daughters of the Yaa Naa and one other skin or chieftaincy position occupied by both male and female chiefs in succession. Staniland's (1975: 17, original emphasis) assertions of Dagbamba chieftaincy are worth quoting at length:

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Dagbamba chieftaincy was its system of promotion. Young men of the blood royal usually started on the ladder of promotion by appointment to small villages, moving upwards until they reached divisional capitals and ultimately, if they were qualified and fortunate, the paramount chieftaincy itself. Promotion and competition for office were limited above all by one rule: that no man could rise higher than his own father. The most important implication of this rule was that only the sons of a Yaa Naa could become Yaa Naa. But, of course, this provision did not eliminate

competition: it merely structured the field. There were always several qualified candidates, even for Yendi. For all chieftaincies under Yendi the choice ultimately lay in the discretion of the paramount: even the highest degree of eligibility did not confer the *right* to a skin.

The Yaa Naa, chief of Yendi is the overlord of Dagbon, the king or paramount chief of the Dagbamba. Other notable chiefs include the Mion/Sambu Lana, Savulugu/Yoo Naa, Karaga Naa, Kumbungu Naa, Tolon Naa, Gushegu Naa and Gukpegu Naa. Other custodian chiefs are Tugere Naa, Gomli Naa, Kpatihi Naa, Ballo Naa, Boga Naa, Kumlana, Kuga Naa and Zohi Naa. The skins that are occupied by women precisely, the daughters of the Yaa Naa are Gundo Naa, Kpatui Naa, Kogulugo Naa, Shailim Naa and Tuya Naa in a descending order of ranks or seniority.

There are some particular chieftains that cannot rise from the chieftaincy they occupy. However, for one to ascend to the paramount skin in Yendi, one necessarily must have been the *Gbon lana*, that is the direct son of the chief who normally acts as the regent. The other three royals who can compete with the *Gbon lana* must be chiefs of Savulugu, Karaga or Mion/Sambu. These are the only four persons or positions that can ascend Yani (the Yendi/paramount skin).

Generations on, the royal class has grown in number. The contestations for chieftaincy titles grow fierce with the coming generations. Chieftaincy disputes become the order of the day with the most contested being the position of the Yaa Naa (Staniland 1975, Ladouceur 1972). Ladouceur (1972: 98) is quite certain that “[t]he Dagbamba are strongly attached to the institution of chieftaincy, which partly accounts for the intensity with which conflicts over chieftaincy are carried out. It is considered particularly disgraceful, for example to allow a chieftaincy to pass away from one’s family or to be lost to one’s “gate”.”

Two step brothers of the late Yaa Naa Yakubu, popularly known by the appellation “Yakubu Nantoo”, who reigned between 1824 and

1849, annexed the paramount skin in Dagbon. They are Yaa Naa Abdulai and Yaa Naa Andani, hence the known gates of the Andani and Abudu. Abdulai (Abudu) was the elder and reigned between 1847 and 1876. After the demise of Abdulai, Andani reigned between 1876 and 1899. With respect to chieftaincy disputes in Dagbon, the most recent one is a case in point. It is worth noting that chieftaincy disputes also rare their ugly heads amongst other people in Ghana as a whole and amongst some of the immediate neighbours of the Dagbamba in particular (Awedoba 2012, Mahama 2003).

Dagbon was divided for so long a time after the decapitation of the Yaa Naa, Yakubu Andani and the murder of some notable elders on the 27th March 2002. The dispute, as to who murdered the Yaa Naa and some of his elders and who should be enskinned as the next Yaa Naa after the late Yaa Naa, Yakubu Andani was between the Andani and Abudu gates – the sole lineages that can ascend the paramount skin. Upon several disputes and the consequent failures of governments to resolve the chieftaincy dispute, the late king's son, Kampakuya Naa Abdulai Yakubu Andani was made the regent in the year 2006 (Mahama 2009b).

On Friday, the 18th of January 2019, Ghana witnessed a historic coronation of the king of Dagbon, Yaa Naa Abubakari Mahama II. This coronation or enskinment for that matter in the traditional parlance is historic for some notable reasons. The last of such a coronation in Dagbon dates back to 31st May 1974, which marked the coronation of the former king, Yaa Naa Yakubu Andani. Hence, very few Dagbamba were present at the last grand coronation of the king of Dagbon. The mere sight of the multitudes of people flooding in from all walks of life and parading the streets of Dagbon, most especially the crowds that joined the chief of Kumbungu on horseback and his entourage of elders on their journey to Yendi was an amazing spectacle. This act is very symbolic and mandated by the customs of Dagbamba in as far as the coronation of a new king is involved. Considering the diverse cultural practices that were

enacted during the coronation of the king of Dagbon, there is no slightest doubt that indeed the Dagbamba had invented a magnificent tradition that baffles human imagination. Power therefore as vested in the Dagbamba chiefs and elders is manifested diversely. For instance, the regalia and general adornments of chiefs and that of horses in most respects exude power and authority. Here, even hats as with respect to their type, colour, posture and general amulets speak volumes. Hobsbawm (1983: 1) opines that:

Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.

Cannadine (1983) offers insightful descriptions and explanations of the changes in the nature and context of English royal ceremonies, which general pageantry and monarchy may be likened to the case of Dagbamba ceremonies.

1.3 Demography

Dagbon, the land of the Dagbamba as it is affectionately called by the natives is found in the northern part of Ghana; located particularly in the northern region of Ghana. The people are known as the *Dagbamba*, the anglicised form of Dagbamba as the natives refer to themselves. They speak Dagbani or Dagbanli, depending on the speaker.

Yendi is the paramount town and capital of the Dagbamba and importantly, the spiritual and cultural heart of the Dagbamba. The once ten regions of Ghana were further divided in 2018 by the National Patriotic Party government to constitute sixteen (16)

regions. A referendum on the creation of the six additional regions was held on the 27th of December 2018. In this referendum, votes were in favour of the creation of the six new regions. Dagbon still remains under the erstwhile northern region, with its regional capital being Tamale as before.

The Dagbamba are said to number about one million, one hundred and sixty thousand (1,160,000) (UNSD 2013). Dagbon covers about 20,000 square kilometres and consists of ten administrative districts, namely: Tamale Metropolitan, Yendi municipal, Savulugu municipal, Sagnerigu municipal, the Karaga district, the Nanton district, Gushegu district, the Tolon-Kumbungu district and the Zabzugu district respectively.

The region which the Dagbamba inhabit is savannah grassland with scattered trees. There are mainly two seasons, namely: the dry and rainy seasons, respectively. The period that is stated as the rainy season alters with time as a result of global warming and other such related factors and may span between the periods of April

Figure 1.1: Map of the Dagbamba of Ghana (by Monika Feinen, 2019)



and September. The remaining months are generally dry, with the raging harmattan weather, thus classified as the dry season.

Traditional Dagbamba houses are usually constructed with mud and roofed with thatch. In recent times, however, thatched roofs have been substituted mostly with metallic sheets as zinc and alumina. There has also been a surge of structures constructed with blocks in most suburbs of Dagbon. The Dagbamba are a patrilineal society with traditional polygamous households. As such, some men may be found with more than a single wife. External family ties are cherished by the Dagbamba as compared to nuclear family ties. A typical Dagbamba compound may comprise of the husband, wife, children, parents (mostly that of the husband) and some dependents (see also Stoffelbeam 2014: 46–55 for further elaborations).

As a patriarchal society, Dagbamba compounds are organised mainly on patriarchal basis. Each married man is recognised as the head of his respective family. More so, related families may live together in one compound. Amongst related married siblings either domiciled in one compound or not, the eldest amongst them serves as the lineage head. Yet, amongst lineage heads who trace their ancestry to one particular individual, the eldest amongst them serves as the clan head. In the respective Dagbamba communities, therefore, the clan heads serve as elders of the community which normally has a chief as the main authority.

The Dagbamba are generally engaged in agriculture. Whereas many raise animals and grow crops in subsistence, a few others raise animals and grow crops on commercial basis. Amongst a host of farm produce, the Dagbamba are well noted for the cultivation of diverse varieties of yam. They also grow cereals such as maize, millet, rice, sorghum, peanuts, beans and several other vegetables, most important amongst which is okra. Fowls, guinea fowls, goats, sheep and cattle are the common animals raised either in subsistence or on commercial basis by the Dagbamba. Quite apart from mango and pawpaw in particular, most fruits known to the Dagbamba are mostly gotten from the wild.

1.4 Praise Poetry in Dagbon

Dagbamba have a rich and diverse culture and amongst other oral traditions, perhaps their praise poetry, *salima*, stands out as their origin is inextricably woven on chieftaincy, which finds its grandeur in the clan of praise poets known as the *lunsi*. Poetry, in its diverse manifestations or the panegyric in Dagbamba contexts in particular is shrouded in secrecy. How poetry or the word and its associated actions translate into power is quite revealing. Power is significantly defined by words; the more their potency to qualify in exultation the better. There is no doubt therefore that the performances of the Dagbamba panegyrics serve as catalysts to project power, its relevance and continuity. There is no chief in Dagbon without praise poets. In fact, the presence of the former implies the later. The two titles are central to Dagbon and go in tandem. Hence, every paramount, divisional, sub-divisional chiefs and chiefs who head communities will normally move with their personal orchestra of drummers. More often than not, the more the number of the praise singers, the greater the respect. However, true substance lies in parading the best praise poets: those well versed in stringing grand appellations of kings or chiefs in royal courts. Writing on the role of the African musician, Kinney (1972: 258) maintains thus:

The role that the African musician plays in relation to his chief is essentially one of mutual dependence. The musician depends upon the ceremonies and other obligations of the chief in order to fulfil his function as an artist and to gain recognition for himself. The chief, in turn, depends upon the reliability of the musician to maintain the dignity both of himself and his subjects and the relevance of the traditions.

The art of performance, of which praise poetry performance is no exception is generally the prerogative of the *lunsi* clan. As a position dictated by custom, one must have necessarily descended from

a family of *lunsi* to be regarded as one. The *lunsi*, to say the least, are the heartbeat of the Dagbamba. They are generally indispensable in all life endeavours in Dagbon. They are present either in times of sorrow or joy. They are involved in all cultural celebrations. These celebrations may range from rites of passage, festival, durbars and work amongst a host of other diverse celebrations. Writing on the *Damba* festival for instance, Kinney observes that “the role of the drummer in the *Damba* festival is certainly one most important for he must be active in every major event that takes place. He must be prepared to play and sing the prescribed music which dramatizes the history of his people” (1972: 264).

The craft of the *lunsi* is referred to in Dagbani as *luntali*. The *lunqa* is an hour-glass shaped drum played by the *lunsi* and serves as a conceptual metaphor of the *lunsi*. No doubt both drum and drummer are known by the same term *lunqa*; the two are one and the same. Quite apart from the term *lunsi*, which designates a respective Dagbamba clan of praise poets, the term *Daanga* (*Bansi* PL) generally connotes a singer or performer.

“In Dagbon, the drummers (*lunsi*) are court historians, musicians, geographers, consultants, advisers, judges, and chroniclers of the past and recorders of the present. They are also teachers, researchers, and carvers” (Abdallah 2010: 1). The *lunsi* are versatile artists with complex functions. Traditionally, the *lunsi* are regarded as praise singers for the royal courts. They can best be described as historians par excellence of the royal courts, communities and the Dagbon kingdom as a whole. They are social as well as cultural commentators (see also Oppong 1968, 1969).

It is expected of the *lunsi* to have knowledge of the chiefs and their ancestors. The appellations of chiefs or perhaps their subjects of praise are particularly of great significance. The deeds, mostly noble, of the chiefs and their places and circumstances of birth are also of significant importance. In addition, the names and deeds of elders and other distinctive loyal subjects need also to be known by

the praise poets. As a whole, “[t]he unbroken historical narrative and royal genealogy which they remember and recite is the charter of the political structure of the kingdom, and the story of the origins of the people, and as such is vital to the continuity of the traditional system” (Abdallah 2010: 8).

Dagbamba maintain that the praise poets have such unique memory capabilities because the art of poetry runs in their veins. Some other persons also maintain that the memory techniques of the Dagbamba praise poets are further enhanced by the employment of charms. It is not that easy to ascertain the potency of charms in the praise poetry performances as Dagbamba panegyrics, though its impacts cannot be in doubt. The drum as well as the drummer are accorded significant respects. They may be fortified with charms to enhance better delivery and reception. This belief to say the least, is mainly due to the ability of drummers to hold patrons and audience alike spellbound in their art of performances.

Perhaps a brief rendition of the history of the drummers or praise poets’ clan may point to how a people appropriated the rubrics of memory, delivery and performance as a whole. The plight of a young prince was bound to establish a distinctive vibrant clan in the cultural fibre of the Dagbamba for centuries and would last in the annals of Dagbamba existence. Dagbamba oral traditions have it that the father and ancestor of the *lunsi*, the drummer clan, is Bizung. It is from Bizung that all drummers in Dagbon trace their ancestry. Bizung was a prince born to Naa Nyagse, the then Yaa Naa and overlord of Dagbon who reigned between 1416–1432. The mother of Bizung is said to be Napaga Faniriba, who later died leaving Bizung and his elder brother Zima.

Living in a polygamous household that consists of many wives and mothers for that matter, the brothers did not receive the necessary attention after the demise of their mother. Feeding was in fact a problem as their mother was not around to prepare their meals. The story maintains that Bizung and his elder brother Zima espoused

a strategy of playing calabashes to entertain their step siblings in return for food at meal times. Other accounts maintain that Naa Nyagse asked the orphaned brothers to play the calabashes at meal time to remind him of their presence as he was busy with matters of his state that could lead him to forgetfulness to which Bizung and Zima obliged. And so was the beginning of the art of drumming.

In Yaa Naa Nyagse's conquests of the *Tindannima*, the indigent populace of Dagbon, he reached a town known as Diari and to his utter dismay, instead of the inhabitants of Diara fleeing as was usually the case or welcoming him with fright, they welcomed him with pleasant rhythms played with the shells of snails. In their performances, they eulogised Naa Nyagse with fond memories of his ancestry and conquests. Delighted by their performances, he spared them and told them of his two sons, Bizung and Zima, and how they were also engaged in such a music enterprise. He requested to bring his two sons under their tutelage, which he did. Oral tradition has it that in Diara the orphaned princes were under the tutelage of Tisuu. Unfortunately, prince Zima died in the subsequent years. Bizung consequently remained in Diara, got married and begot the praise poets of Dagbon known as the *lunsi*.

Significantly, however, praise poetry proper and its functions were not set at the time of Bizung. It was during the reign of Yaa Naa Luro (1554–1570) that the art of the *lunsi* came into the limelight in Dagbon. It was during the reign of Naa Luro that the descendants of Bizung found their way back to the royal courts to perform both royal and social functions (Abdallah 2010). Hence, luŋa Zhega, a son of Bizung was the first to start the art of praise singing in Dagbamba courts. In the subsequent decades, Naa Zangina, who reigned between 1648 and 1677, was bound to expand the culture and artistic trends in Dagbon.

Namoo Naa is the title for the chief of all drummers in Dagbon. The current *Namoo Naa*, as it is common with main chief drummers, is resident at Yendi. He is one of the elders of the Yaa Naa and sits in

state with him. His particular drum is called *Gbungburilunja* and this drum is only played during the enskinment of a Yaa Naa or on his demise. Quite apart from the *Namoo Naa*, there are also chief drummers at all known chieftains and they are generally known as *Lun Naa*, chief drummer. The second in command after the *Lun Naa* is the *Sampahi Naa* and *Taha Naa* happens to be the third title in the ranks of the *lunsi* at the various palaces (see Abdallah 2010: 30–36 for a detailed list).

1.5 Socio-Cultural Activities

Most of the socio-cultural accomplishments of the Dagbamba are attributed to Yaa Naa Mohammed Zangina. Numerous other Dagbamba socio-cultural ceremonies and practices as reiterated earlier were initiated by Naa Zangina (Mahama 2004). Naa Zangina also introduced Islam in Dagbon by inviting Muslim scholars to instruct Dagbamba. This venture has since left a lasting mark on the Dagbamba as a people. The evidence of Islam in Dagbon is overwhelming as it encompasses most of Dagbamba cultural activities.

Dagbon was also a trade route and centre for the Hausa and Wangara, also known as the Soninke traders. These contacts were so strong to the extent that most of these traders were co-opted into the Dagbamba. For instance, most of the titled Muslim clerics in Dagbon are of Hausa origin. Nonetheless, as Dagbamba borrowed extensively from Islam, they were certain to retain the ways of their traditional Dagbamba ancestors, emerging with a unique cultural tolerance of a blend of Islam and Dagbamba traditions. Quite apart from the fact that most Dagbamba are Muslims, their traditional rites of passage and festivals in particular have strong Islamic influences.

As it is common with other societies, rites of passage such as naming or birth rites, puberty rites (which are rarely realised in recent times), marriage rites and death rites are accorded great

importance. Dagbamba also have diverse other cultural celebrations; of prime importance amongst which include their festivals. Most prominent festivals amongst the Dagbamba include the *Bugum Chugu* (Fire festival) and the *Damba Chugu* (Damba festival). The following discussion outlines the four main festivals amongst the Dagbamba and their respective functions. Based on the descriptions, one is bound to identify that Islamic festivals are given a traditional Dagbamba twist.

The *Kunyuri Chugu* (Water drinking festival) is celebrated to mark the end of Ramadan. *Damba Chugu* (Damba festival) which prominently features a durbar of chiefs and elders is celebrated to mark the birth of the prophet Mohammed. *Kpini Chugu* (Guinea fowl festival) is a festival that witnesses the whipping of guinea fowls. Here, unfettered guinea fowls are whipped with the accusation of their refusal to give water to God's child, prophet Mohammed after which they are slaughtered. It should be noted that this festival is not adhered to by some Muslim converts. The *Chimsi chugu* (Prayer festival) is celebrated to mark the prayers during the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The *Bugum* festival is celebrated at the beginning of every lunar year in Dagbon Calendar. This usually falls in the month of October. *Bugum Chugu* is celebrated on *Bugum Goli*, the month of fire. The *Damba* festival is a thanksgiving festival celebrated on the third month of the Lunar Calendar. It has two manifestations: *Somo Damba* and *Naa Damba*. *Somo Damba* is celebrated on the tenth day of the third month of the Dagbamba lunar calendar and the *Naa Damba* commences on the 17th of the same month. The *Damba* festival happens to coincide Rabi-ul-awwal, a commemoration of the birth of the prophet Mohammed. For the Dagbamba, the tenth day is the birth and the 17th day is the naming, even though Prophet Mohammed is said to be born on the twelfth day (Locke 1990).

It is worth noting that there is usually a prayer ceremony organised in the courts of the Yaa Naa on every Friday to pray for the whole of Dagbon and Dagbamba as a whole. This normally includes

both Islamic and traditional prayers concurrently. It is, however, not on all Friday occasions that the Yaa Naa is seen in state. For instance, when a Friday falls on the first, fifth, 15th and 25th of the Dagbamba Lunar Calendar, the Yaa Naa does not appear in state although the prayers still pertain. The Yaa Naa does not also appear in state on Yendi market days (a three-day rotational market) that fall on Fridays. Similar prayers and practices are also observed by the diverse Dagbamba chiefs in their respective communities.

1.6 Beliefs and Practices

The Dagbamba believe in the supreme being, known as *Naa Wuni* which literally translates as God King. Gods and shrines are collectively known as *Buya* (*Bugli* SG); while personal gods and charms are collectively known as *Bagyuuya* (*Bagyuli* SG). Dagbamba also believe in the ancestors, known as *Yabnima* (*Yab* SG). They believe in *Wunbie* (*Wunbia* SG) which translates as god's child(ren) and refer to main household gods usually found outside the house. There are also the *Wagla* and *Sabli*, medicines eaten or worn as amulets. *Tilo* and *Jebuni* represent the traditional calabash and pot normally found within the house.

The Dagbamba believe in witchcraft, *Sonya*, and diverse other supernatural forces. They refer to the seers as *Jinwarba* and the soothsayers are known as *Bagsi* (*baga* SG). Ultimately, they believe in the hereafter; with the knowledge that human beings on earth are on a transition to the ancestral world.

As reiterated earlier, Islam is the dominant religion amongst the Dagbamba. However, some of the practitioners of the Islamic faith have not neglected the ways of their ancestors. Prior to the coming of Islam in Dagbon, the Dagbamba predominantly practised ancestral worship, which nonetheless was the belief and worship of the supreme God. There are also a considerable number

of Christians amongst the Dagbamba while a few others belong to some religious sects.

1.7 Dagbamba Musical Traditions

In as much as music is concerned, the Dagbamba have a wide range of musical instruments used for quite diverse occasions and performances. Instruments are often used as complements of others in most music and dance renditions. Of the four major classes of musical instruments namely: ideophones, membranous, aerophones and hydrophones, Dagbamba musical instruments mainly consist of the last three and may be further classified as percussions, drums, string instruments, *gonje* and wind instruments, flutes. Amongst the host of musical instruments, one instrument of the Dagbamba that features predominantly in most musical performances and used concurrently with other instruments is the drum (Chernoff 1979).

A wide range of music and dance performances can be found in Dagbon. More often than not, some music performances correspond with the various dances. The most notable dances in Dagbon include the *Takai*, *Bamaya* and *Jara*. Other dance performances include: *Billa*, performed only at funerals of chiefs. *Tohi waa*, hunters' dance is usually performed during the funerals of *Tindanima*, the earth priests and hunters for that matter. *Machele waa* – blacksmiths' dance, is usually performed during the enskinment of blacksmiths. Other musical and dance performances include *Dikala* – blacksmiths' music, *Dakohi waa* – butchers' dance, *Kambunsi/Sapashinima waa* – warriors'/musketeers' dance, *Nabeyu*, and *Simpa* dance amongst a host of others (see Chernoff 1985, 1990 for recorded Dagbamba musical types).

Amongst the *lunsi* drum assemble are particularly the *lunja* and the *gunjon*. The *gunjon* is said to have been borrowed from the

Kotokoli people and it is the usual complementary drum of the *luŋa*. The *luŋa* is an hour-glass shaped drum made of wood from some special trees. The ends of the *luŋa* are covered with goat skins which are held and regulated by strings of ropes, mainly of antelope skin and sometimes nylon; strung across the edges of the *luŋa*. The *gungon* is of a similar make, however, with a metallic cylindrical body.

Other drums employed in the music traditions of the Dagbamba include the *tempana* and the *daligu* drums. The *tempana* are the talking drums usually used to welcome chiefs and other dignitaries at royal courts, whereas the *daligu* drums are also larger talking drums used in every chief warrior's court. Unlike the *luŋa* and the *gungon*, the *tempana* and *daligu* drums are played by the warrior caste known as the *Sapashinima*. Another instrument employed by the *Sapashinima* in their musical performances is the flute.

The *Gonjenima* are the recognised clan of fiddlers introduced to Dagbon by Yaa Naa Zangina in the 17th century. They are known for the *gonje*, a fiddle like instrument and its complement the *zaabia* (rattle gourds). The *gonje* is principally made of a composite string of hairs of a life horse's tail. Normally, the box is made out of a gourd and covered with the skin of a monitor lizard; the Nile monitor (*varanus niloticus*) or the Bosc's or Savannah monitor (*varanus exanthematicus*), with a stick from a unique tree passing through it to hold the *gonje* in a violin form. The *gonje* is played with a similar string instrument in a bow-like form.

There is also the use of two joint cylindrical drums played mostly on social dance performances as the *simpa* dance. It is, however, not uncommon to find the use of the *simpa* drums in most charismatic churches especially in the northern part of Ghana. These drums are popularly referred to as *simpa* drums and they are usually joined together at the sides. It must be stated, however, that the *simpa* drums are said to be borrowed from the Chokosi, a neighbouring people of the Dagbamba. Hence, unlike the other drums

mentioned above, the drumming of the *simpa* drums is not the prerogative of the Dagbamba drummer clan per se.

Amongst a host of metal claps employed by the Dagbamba in some of their musical performances, they have particularly a metallic bell struck with a horn or metal known as *dawuli*. Other metallic claps are normally in pairs and are fastened to the thumb and the index finger and clanked together to produce rhythmic beats. A variety of metallic objects is also used in musical and dance performances especially amongst the black smith clan on important occasions as the enskinment of a chief or the death of a blacksmith. The music of the blacksmiths is known as *dikala* by the Dagbamba.

In some music and dance performances, especially amongst the *Sapashinima*, the whistle plays a central role in dictating the movements of the performers. Last but not least, amongst Dagbamba musical instruments are the *gingeli* and *moglo*. These are stringed instruments similar to the lute. In recent time, however, these instruments are not common as compared to the aforementioned instruments.

1.8 Structure of the Study

The research is principally divided into six chapters. The first chapter focuses on the background and a general context of the Dagbamba and some of their institutions that are imperative as far praise poetry in Dagbon is concerned. Amongst other contextual information, it traces their origin, religion, customs, some socio-political activities, chieftaincy institutions, the drummer caste, praise poetry performances in their world-view in general. Since Dagbamba praise poetry is an oral performance, a deeper understanding of these contexts best serves the objectives of the research.

Chapter two sets out to outline the research design and methodological procedures undertaken to meet the objectives set for the

research. As such, elaborations on the significance of the research, statement of the problem, objectives of the study and a survey of the scope and methodology of the research are undertaken. Other examinations that serve as key sections to this chapter include detailed information on the data collection procedures, the Dagbani language, issues on translation, limitations and delimitations of the research and definitions of some key concepts.

A literature review of verbal arts and Dagbamba art forms is embarked in chapter three. Chapter three also attempts a proposition and justification of contextual relativism approach as the theoretical framework of the research. Other theories that underpin the approaches to the research as a whole are explored in detail. The oral-formulaic theory as propounded by Parry and Lord, the theory of oral composition as developed by Foley, ethnopoetics by Hymes, Tedlock and Rothenberg and the performance approaches by Okpewho and Bauman are some of the literary theories that underpin the contextual relativist approach. Linguistic models explored include: descriptive linguistic insights from corpus linguistics, cognitive linguistics and formalist approaches.

Chapter four presents the performance context of Dagbamba panegyrics. As the texts are orally composed and performed, a deeper understanding of their artistry entails a better understanding of the situation of performance. This chapter therefore focuses mostly on the non-verbal and paralinguistic cues employed by Dagbamba praise poets in their poetic renditions. Dagbamba praise poets do not write praise poetry, neither do they recite it, they perform it. Hence, the performance context of the texts cannot be overemphasised.

Chapter five is dedicated to a literary linguistic analysis of Dagbamba panegyrics. Literary linguistics seeks not only to understand the meaning of texts by the figurative use of language but also how meaning is derived as evidenced in the composition of the texts and the contexts within which the texts are realised in general.

Dagbamba panegyrics are embroidered in figurative language and are especially laden with epithets, metaphors and allusions. They are also proverbial with idioms and sayings rooted in Dagbamba world-view and environment. A literary linguistic analysis seeks to ascertain the creative inventiveness of the texts. Amongst other endeavours, this chapter also embarks on tracing the formulaic techniques employed by Dagbamba praise poets in their performances. By so doing, a comparative analysis of proto-praise poems such as in praise of God and other panegyric compositions of some respective Dagbamba kings by some notable praise poets is done. Some key issues examined include tradition versus the individual talent, the mechanics of oral composition and the formulaic repertoire of Dagbamba praise poets in particular.

Chapter six, being the last chapter draws conclusions from the research findings and formulates recommendations for further research. Appendices of selected Dagbamba panegyrics and Dagbamba kings are also categorised.

CHAPTER 2

Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Introduction

Diverse methodological approaches are adopted in the research as per the objectives set out to examine the literary linguistic endowments of the Dagbamba panegyrics. This chapter therefore expounds the general procedures adopted in the research endeavour from its initial stages to its conclusion. Some issues that deserve attention and are expounded herein include the scope of the research, research objectives, significance of the study, statement of the problem, limitations and delimitations of the study, definition of key concepts and the general methods such as the choice of language, transliteration and translation procedures and general analytic procedures.

It is envisioned that an examination of the research design and the methodological procedures that shape the processes of description and analysis will shed more light on the objectives sought to be achieved in general.

2.2 Significance of the Study

Considering the overwhelming need to document the dying traditions of the world, this study aims to refine, revise and extend the existing knowledge of orature and to acquaint students and researchers of orature and other related fields with Dagbamba praise poetry overall and the Dagbamba panegyric in particular. This study also seeks to preserve and transmit Dagbamba panegyrics in their proto-forms vis-à-vis recent improvisations to the academic world and generations to come.

Like many other cultures, diverse research has been conducted on the Dagbamba. Although most of this research relates to their social lives, where their artistry is mentioned, it is simply glossed over. It is therefore anticipated that this research will unearth the underlying figurativeness and linguistic inventiveness of Dagbamba praise poets and their panegyrics. This study seeks to establish Dagbamba panegyrics as unique creative enterprises in the literary canon and academia as a whole.

It is hoped that by the completion of this research, an in-depth understanding of the Dagbamba and the nature of Dagbamba panegyrics and the performance contexts of praise poetry in general will be ascertained. The theories and approaches advanced to establish the linguistic and literary inventiveness of Dagbamba panegyrics will go a long way to influence other scholars of oral traditions in their respective fields and contribute to current theoretical discussions in linguistics and literary foundations.

Quite apart from establishing the figurativeness of oral traditions as Dagbamba panegyrics, the research will also reiterate the need to document oral traditions by archiving and showcase novelties of other technical media in the establishment of the inextricable link between orature and the performance situation. Further research into Dagbamba praise poetry and their oral traditions generally is also anticipated as this work will ignite the

attention of other scholars in Dagbamba panegyrics and other oral traditions amongst other cultures in general.

As it is also a belief held by the Dagbamba that the praise poet's genius rests on his innate creative ability as a member of a respective clan and its associated charms, this research seeks to establish to what extent both creative innateness and creative acquisitions exist or contribute to the artistic process.

2.3 Problem Statement

Praise poetry amongst the Dagbamba may be fraught with many threats; however, the least amongst them is the threat of extinction. In the abstract to *Names that prick: Royal praise names in Dagbon, Northern Ghana*, Salifu (2010: 10) contends that "I do not start this enquiry as a collector of material that is on the verge of dying, getting corrupted, and thus needing to be captured on paper before it is lost to eternity. I see the art as an everyday phenomenon which is alive, beautiful and worthy of attention from us in academia".

This is mainly on grounds that the institution of praise poets and chieftaincy are inextricably intertwined. Chieftaincy as an institution in Dagbon is accorded great reverence. Foreign democracy may have a negative toll on it as a whole. However, chieftaincy remains an institution to reckon with in Dagbon. And as long as there is chieftaincy, so will the panegyric thrive as it serves as a compliment of the chieftaincy institution. In as much as the chieftaincy institution is sustained, praise singers will remain to perform their customary roles.

Nevertheless, there are some challenges faced by praise poetry performances in Dagbon. Significant amongst others is the lack of interest on the part of coming generations to stick to the functions of their respective clans. This is mainly a result of urbanisation and formal education amongst other currents in this modern time.

Many an artist also maintain that for one to indulge himself fully in the praise performance enterprise as dictated by custom will be very detrimental in recent times. As their populations continue to increase, with the royal courts remaining almost the same over the centuries, not all praise poets are seriously engaged to the royal courts. As a whole the lucrativeness of the profession continues to diminish as time goes on.

Another problem worth noting is that though there are quite a number of writings on the Dagbamba as a people and their oral traditions, of which praise poetry is no exception, there is yet to be an in-depth examination of the literariness of the Dagbamba praise poetry as a whole and the panegyrics in particular and the linguistic inventiveness of the composers as realised in the texts and the performance contexts.

In his concluding remarks, Abdallah (2010: 64) also posits some of the challenges of the Dagbamba praise poets as follows: “Finally, *lunsi* need education and enlightenment with regard to their values and things they can do as an institution to broaden their outlook. They need material and financial support to keep things moving. Most of their works need to be documented and to be preserved for generations to come.”

2.4 Research Objectives

The main objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To establish the figurativeness of the Dagbamba panegyrics and bring to the fore their linguistic and literary ingenuity.
2. To establish the inextricable link between the performer, performance and audience (patrons) as central to orature vis-à-vis the contexts of the texts.

3. To examine the non-verbal and paralinguistic elements that enhance the creativeness of the oral texts.
4. To undertake an in-depth analysis of the methodological and theoretical implications in the study of orature such as praise poetry and to offer new directions for further research.
5. To examine individual artistic prowess of respective praise poets against the backdrop of the communal craft.
6. To digitise both performances and texts for further research and posterity. It is anticipated that both the data presented herein and a selection of the data obtained from the field work would be archived online and made accessible by the general public.

2.5 Scope of the Research

The sample population may generally be considered to be the Dagbamba, whereas the sample size is restricted specifically to the clans of praise poets and royals. Both structured and unstructured interviews were conducted as and when the situation under consideration demanded. As a whole, a purposive sampling technique was generally employed in the selection of Dagbamba communities to visit and the persons interviewed.

The researcher had to identify his objectives from the onset in order to determine what to observe so that nothing obstructs his purpose. Research questions had to be set; however, exercising some amount of flexibility for changes such as additions and subtractions of the present questions. In the process of the general observations, interviews, social interactions, audio/video recordings, critical thoughts were noted. As a general note, the researcher

had to critically manage and interpret behaviours and inferences. Since the presence of the researcher may affect the behaviour of the participants or phenomena under investigation in general, it became necessary that the presence of the researcher was made known only at necessary times. In fact, there were instances in which he had to either emerge himself fully or partially from the phenomena under investigation. The researcher was either a complete observer or a complete participant; and in some other situations an observer as participant or a participant as observer.

Considering the concerns of the research, he had to gain the trust of the Dagbamba before pondering over the right enquiries to make and the appropriate questions to ask. This is important as to ensure that the interviewees are comfortable with the questions being posed and are not sceptical about the general enquiries of the researcher. Prior to this, thorough research had to be done on the ways of life and general world-view of the people. More so, knowledge of the current circumstances that pertain in Dagbon was ascertained.

More to having to stay in Dagbon for about three to four months each in 2018 and 2019, the researcher had to interact with the Dagbamba in their day-to-day activities and was present at diverse social and cultural gatherings. The more he was seen in diverse Dagbamba gatherings interacting with some notable chiefs and elders, the better his recognition. The motives of the researcher and the purpose or objectives so to say of the research was clearly outlined at the first instance of community entry. It was essential for him to ensure that there was mutual respect for all parties involved and cultural practices in particular; a sense of relishing the internal logic of the diverse cultures and world-view. The way and manner the researcher managed cultural shocks, though minimal, were well calculated. At most, a cultural relativist approach was adopted in the research enterprise. These salient principles were established in order that he obtains appropriate and best results.

Decisions on the elders interviewed and most importantly the praise poets recorded were based on some pertinent principles. The objectives of the research require that the elders and some notable indigenes consulted had to have first-hand information on the art of praise poetry in Dagbon and the Dagbamba as a whole. As the study is focused on the enterprise of praise poetry performances, focus had to be placed on the drummer clan, known as the *lunsi*, as they are mandated by custom to perform such functions. In fact, there was the need also to find the best amongst praise poets to have a better grasp of the routines in the performances and the literary linguistic inventiveness of the rendered panegyrics in particular.

The Dagbamba towns and palaces and events visited were also chosen on purpose. The Dagbamba panegyrics are mostly occasioned in the courts of the king or chiefs and on occasions of durbars, festivals and funerals in particular where the presence of the chiefs or king is inevitable. Several visits were therefore made to Yendi, Gbewaa palace in particular. Permission had to be sought from the overlord of Dagbon, who was then the regent of Dagbon Kampakuya Naa Abdulai Yakuba Andana. He was later enskinned as the chief of Savulugu where he currently serves in his capacity as Yoo Naa. Meeting him was the best decision that was ever made in the researcher's field research endeavours. Permission to conduct the field research was sought from the highest authority in Dagbon. Quite apart from this feat, the then overlord of Dagbon further appointed some elders from his court to lead him to the court of the Namoo Naa, the overall chief of the drummer clan, who is also elder in the Dagbon paramount court.

Meeting these two highest authorities in Dagbon was enough confirmation that all was indeed on the right track. Quite apart from interviewing these personalities on matters relating to the success of the fieldwork and the objectives sought by the research in particular, they also appointed some of their representatives to lead him to other notable courts and events. Quite apart from

being in attendance at the Friday intercessory prayers in Yendi in particular, these events also afforded him the opportunity to meet most respected praise poets knowledgeable in the art of praise poetry in particular in Dagbon. It was through the efforts of the Namoo Naa, Abdulai, that the researcher was able to meet the overlord of all female chiefs in Dagbon, Gundo Naa Salamatu, and have a panegyric performed in her honour. One other notable event that afforded him the opportunity to witness the grandeur of Dagbamba culture and praise performances amongst other performances was at the event of the enskinment of the regent of Karaga in March 2018. Several other visits were made to some notable praise poets who reside in Tamale and its environs. Praise poets from Savulugu, Mion, Sang, Nantong and Kumbungu in particular were also interviewed and some solicited panegyrics performances recorded. The reception at all the places visited, to say the least, was excellent.

More often than not, the presence of an outsider is likely to influence and change the behaviour of a people such as the poet cantors of the Dagbamba panegyrics. Some praise poets at the initial encounters in particular were not so convinced as to whether they should be part of the research or not. This was anticipated as the Yendi chieftaincy conflict was unresolved and most praise poets, if not all Dagbamba, tended to side with one of the two factions. Some interviewees and praise poets in particular were a bit reluctant to be captured on any form of recording or state their opinions regarding certain matters. The presence of recorders as the video and tape recorders and microphones also tended to have some effects on solicited performances in particular whereas some praise poets lost their confidence during performances, others tried to over impress in their acts. However, great care was ensured to ascertain the most appropriate output.

Quite apart from the visits and consultations to the traditional courts and festive occasions in Dagbon, the researcher also visited

some notable institutions to acquire some knowledge on the state of the Dagbamba panegyric, Dagbamba lore and research as a whole. The institutions visited included the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) located in Tamale. Since its establishment in 1962, GILLBT has become a force to reckon with, with respect to Ghanaian languages, literacy and bible translations in particular. Visits were also made to the College of Languages Education, University of Education, Winneba. For the past few years, the college has been engaged in the organisation of an annual cultural week celebration to mark the International Mother Language Day Celebration amongst other activities as a durbar to showcase the diverse creative cultural achievements of the thirteen (13) Ghanaian languages studied in the faculty, of which Dagbani is one. Visits to these institutions in particular enabled the researcher to interact with both students and faculty on research in Dagbani and the Dagbamba creative arts predominantly. Some insights on performances are attained during the diverse cultural performances.

Quite apart from discussions above outlining the scope and procedures undertaken in the research, some resource persons and field assistants in particular served as significant assets for the accomplishments of the research. Sources consulted include official statistics, historical documents, books, articles and general information on the Dagbamba and their art of poetry on the internet and social media in largely offered relevant information.

2.5.1 Data Collection and Research Procedures

The best way to gain an insider's view is to be a participant-observer in the research. Participant observation offered the researcher the opportunity to have deeper insights into the world-view of the

people, the art of praise poetry in practical terms and the situational contexts of performance in particular.

A holistic approach to verbal arts documentation and description is resorted to in the field in order to meet the set objectives of the research. The researcher undertook a three-month participant field observation between March and May 2018 and a four-month follow up field trip between February and May 2019. The researcher had prior knowledge of some aspects of the praise or panegyric performances of the Dagbamba to some extent owing to the fact that the researcher was born and raised in Dagbon for a considerable time.

Most of the texts under investigation were recorded during the time spent on the first field trip. Both audio and video recordings of texts were done for further transliteration and translation. Group performances and relevant socio-cultural events were captured on video to complement the texts and the situation of performance in particular. Prearranged performances were also resorted to as most texts that were recorded in the actual situations of performance tended to be unclear in most instances. Some pictures were also captured to showcase the performative nature of the Dagbamba panegyrics.

The texts alone cannot meet the objectives of the study. As such, interviews were also conducted to ascertain some historical information about the Dagbamba as a people and their oral traditions in particular. Dagbamba panegyrics in particular have diverse cultural undertones and require deeper contextual information for a better understanding of the texts. As such, some personalities, knowledgeable in Dagbamba lore were interviewed to ascertain some pertinent information relevant for a better understanding of the Dagbamba panegyric and Dagbamba praise poetry in general.

The follow-up field trip was purposely meant to acquaint the researcher with the nuances of the performance situation. The trip also served as an excellent opportunity for the researcher to make

some verifications on some transliterations and translations of texts and some allusions and epithetical statements that make reference to kings, historical events and places. The situation of performances encapsulates many novel artistic and literary nuggets that warrant critical attention. The use of both verbal and non-verbal cues, such as gestures, silence, ululations and interpolations amongst a host of other cues at the situation of performance are examined to find their literary linguistic relevance.

Recorded texts are transcribed and translated for further analysis. Interlinear translations are employed to reflect the poetic lines of the texts in order to enhance a better appreciation of the linguistic insights of the Dagbamba praise poets. Descriptive survey and analytic interpretations based on the theories explored are examined in relation to the texts under study. This is so as to ascertain the poetic inventiveness of Dagbamba panegyrics and underscore the inextricable link between oral traditions and their consequent contextual underpinnings.

It was pertinent to explore the linguistic prowess or perhaps strategies of the Dagbamba praise poets in particular. For instance, how are the panegyrics rendered by different poets similar or different, and how are the panegyrics of one particular praise poet similar or different with respect to the same panegyric rendered at different occasions and different panegyrics rendered by the same praise poet generally. As such, there was the need to study some notable praise poets in question, track their renditions of panegyrics to the same chief at different occasions, and their renditions of panegyrics of different chiefs or Dagbamba kings as a whole.

As a whole, the research is primarily qualitative by nature and employs both synchronic and diachronic approaches. Quite apart from general discussions and reviews of research relevant to this study in the preceding chapters, interpretative descriptive analysis of recorded texts and the general linguistic phenomena is undertaken.

2.5.2 Choice of Texts in Appendices

The appendices to this study are divided into three main sections. The first section consists of Dagbamba panegyrics recorded during field research conducted by the researcher in Dagbon and its environs. The second section consists of excerpts of Dagbamba panegyrics sourced from other researchers. A list of the kings of Dagbon, dating back to Naa Gbewaa are stated in the third section of the appendices.

The panegyrics included in the appendices for the main purpose of analysis are contained in appendices A. *Dakoli nye Bia* text was included in the appendices on the basis that it serves as a mother text to all Dagbamba praise poetry, of which the panegyric is no exception. It is the praise text that is taught every budding praise poet in the early years of his training. These texts were chosen to reflect the objectives set out in the research. For instance, two panegyrics performed by two praise poets in honour of Yaa Naa Yakubu Nantoo serve to demonstrate how a panegyric in praise of one particular monarch differ significantly in length and detail depending on the performing praise poet in particular. Since kings and most chiefs in Dagbon are usually male, it was significant to include a panegyric in praise of a female chief, Gundo Naa Salamatu, to reflect the reality in Dagbon. This text may be compared to the other texts in praise of male chiefs or kings to ascertain their differences and similarities in content in particular.

In an attempt to understand the nature of the Dagbamba panegyric and the linguistic repertoire of Dagbamba praise poets, and to what extent the texts are recycled from memory, two praise poets from Nantong, related by blood and training were made to perform the appellations of one particular king, Naa Yakubu Nantoo in alternating turns. In their rendition, the brothers knew exactly where to break for the other to take over the narration. In fact, it was clearly evident that the text they performed was well ingrained

in their linguistic repertoire as they knew exactly which text item preceded the other and how to intermittently introduce drum beats. The success of their performance hinged principally on the fact that they had their training from the same master praise poets and would have performed together or witnessed each other perform on several occasions over the years. From all indications, it is also possible to have two praise poets, unrelated by blood or training to achieve such feats. The repertoire of the panegyric is laid out by a tradition that transcends the praise poet or performer.

To have a better grasp of the community craft as against the individual talent, a critical examination of some other praise poems that tend to borrow the poetic idioms and style of the Dagbamba panegyric is worthwhile. A typical example that illustrates these distinctions is best captured by the praise poet Olivier Zakaria's praise performance on the day of Corpus Christi at the Yendi Catholic church in honour of Jesus Christ, the king of kings. In his rendition, one knowledgeable in the Dagbamba panegyric is bound to find echoes of the traditional Dagbamba panegyric. In this text, the individual prowess as emanating from the communal art of praise poetry is clearly evident.

How the traditional idiomatic style of the Dagbamba panegyric is transposed into a quite unique occasion and subject of praise is very revealing. Indeed, Jesus Christ, also known as the king of kings, is by all indications a royal of distinction by Christian dictates; hence standing in as a subject of praise in the Dagbamba panegyric is not overstretched. What is even more innovative is the skilful manipulation of the content of the panegyric; however, maintaining the structure and musical quality of the original or traditional panegyric.

A critical examination of the performance by Olivier also reveals not only the same rhythmical style of the typical Dagbamba panegyric but significantly, a tactical subtraction and addition

procedure in place. Quite apart from the subject, the themes and their manner of arrangement are similar with that of the Dagbamba panegyric. Considering Jesus Christ as God and king for example, the unavoidable introductory phrase *A balima* [...], which means “your mercies [...]”, fits very well to his role and status as one who is divine and to whom solicitations of all kinds are directed to in prayers. The poem tends to allude to the connections to Jesus Christ as the father God, Holy Spirit, virgin Mary as well as his status, role, deeds, accomplishments and other social associations.

2.6 The Language: Dagbani

Dagbani, otherwise known as Dagbanli or Dagbane has three dialects: Timosili, spoken in and around tamale; Nayahili, spoken in and around Yendi and Nanundi, the language or dialect of the Nanumba; spoken in and around Bimbila. The dialect for Dagbamba orthography and education is Timosili. Some other languages that are intelligible with Dagbani include: Mossi, spoken in Burkina Faso and Talensi, Mampruli, Gurune, and Kusaal; all spoken in the northern parts of Ghana.

Dagbani is a Gur language and belongs to the South East category of languages of the Niger-Congo language phylum, traced down to the Central Gur language family and further to the Oti Volta language family (Naden 1998, 1989). Typologically, Dagbani is basically an SVO language and it is tonal by nature (Olawsky 1999). Dagbani is written in the Latin script. Notably, Dagbani has an inventory of nine phonemic vowels, represented by the symbols available in the Latin alphabet, as well as by the relevant IPA symbols. From the foregoing discussion on Dagbani, the following tables illustrate the consonants and vowels employed in Dagbani orthography.

	Bilabial		Labio-dental		Alveolar		Post-alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Labio-velar		Glottal	
	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+
Plosive	p	b			t	d			tʃ		k	g	kp	gb		
Nasal		m				n			ɲ		ŋ		ɲm			
Trill						r										
Fricative			f	v	s	z	ʃ	ʒ			x	ɣ				h
Lateral						l										
Approximant				v						j						

Table 2.1: Dagbani consonants

	Front	Central	Back
High	ɪ	ɨ*	u
Mid High	e	ɘ*	o
Mid Low	ɛ		ɔ
Low		a	

Table 2.2: Dagbani vowels

The following three complex consonants occur in Dagbani: kp – voiceless labio-velar plosive; gb – voiced labio-velar plosive and ɲm – voiced labiovelar nasal. The digraph ch represents the voiceless post alveolar affricate (tʃ)*. Structurally, it fills the slot of c, the voiceless palatal plosive. The digraph sh represents the voiceless post alveolar fricative (ʃ)*. The digraph ny represents the voiced palatal nasal (ɲ)*. There are

seven short vowels as shown in table 2, and all seven vowels can also be long: i; u; e; o; ε; ɔ; a. The vowels i* and ə* may be described as epenthetic vowels in Dagbani. See Hudu's (2010: 15-18) discussion on Dagbani vowel inventory and vowel epenthesis for detailed elaborations of the usage of these vowels.

Vowel elision is common in Dagbani, hence an apostrophe (') is used in place of the elided vowel. This is often the case with a final vowel; a vowel that comes before another vowel and before a word that begins with a consonant. Transcriptions and Dagbani fonts employed herein are particularly from the IPA extensions of symbols from Microsoft Word.

Alhassan (2012: xi) notes that writers usually differ in their use of characters to depict different sounds. More often than not, the same sounds are also depicted by writers differently. Alhassan (2012: xi) states that: "The digraphs **gb**, **kp**, **w**, **ny**, are used without variation, but **dʒ** (as in **just**) and **tʃ** (as in **chin**) have been replaced by **j** and **ch** respectively by some writers." It should be noted, however, that some of these variations as found amongst writers are partly based on the dialectical differences. For instance, while some Dagbamba indigenes refer to their land as Dagbon, others refer to it as Dagban. Generally, the following are the short vowels that occur in Dagbani: **a**, **e**, **ε**, **i**, **o**, **ɔ**, **u**. The long vowels are notably: **aa**, **ee**, **ii**, **oo**, and **uu** (Naden 1998, Blench et al. 2004: 5, Olawsky 1999 and Alhassan 2012).

The official writing of Dagbani dates back to 1968. Dagbani is amongst the first nine languages to have been taught in schools since the inception of Ghanaian language education in Ghanaian schools. It is studied in the nursery, lower primary and secondary schools in the northern region of Ghana. Dagbani is also studied in the tertiary levels of education as in the colleges of education and the university as well.

A comparison of Dagbani with the other languages in Northern Ghana with respect to literacy reveals that Dagbani has relatively

more literature for educational, religious, and socio-cultural purposes, thanks mostly to the location of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) in Dagbon. For instance, the complete Dagbani Bible was translated in 2007. The first Dagbani dictionary was prepared in 1941 by Blair and Tamakloe, though with no established and consistent orthography at the time. A revised version of the Dagbani dictionary was prepared later on 25th December 2004 by Roger Blench.

2.7 Notes on Translation

Dimmendaal (2015: 15) defines translation as “[...] an interpretive task, whereby one tries to present the categories of one conceptual system in terms of another, functioning as the metalanguage, in order to make shared understandings possible.” In a cross-linguistic examination of semantic categorisation and cognition, he (*ibid.*) notes some challenges that the art of translation is often fraught with. Considering the fact that language in itself is embedded in culture, it is not easy to separate what actually belongs to language proper from the culture. The distinctions to say the least are blurred in most respects. That notwithstanding, attempts are made to render faithful translation worthy to capture the closest resemblance of the target language to the source language. One can, however, not deny the frustrations of coming to terms with the reality that no matter the efforts made to render faithful translations of poetic texts as the Dagbamba panegyric, the Dagbani language has some peculiarities that are very difficult or almost impossible to translate into English. Quite apart from finding exact words or substitutes to capture the exact ideas sought to be conveyed in the source language into the target language, the rhythmic or musical quality as the Dagbamba panegyrics are concerned become stale in their English translations.

Verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics tend to lose some aspects of their structure or form in their written word. Transferring a live performance into a lifeless monograph is enough a disservice to verbal arts in general. Attempts such as translations have shown that most languages cannot echo the thoughts and sentiments sought to be conveyed by other languages. Hence, quite apart from the efforts made at apt transcriptions and further translations of Dagbamba panegyrics, good audio-video recordings as well as pictures enhance one's appreciation of the contexts of performance as they tend to showcase the diverse non-verbal cues employed in the performance of the texts. More significantly, the choice of not placing the texts into recognised stanzas is also mainly based on the fact that a single text does not remain the same over time, place or occasion. That notwithstanding, the texts are organised in lines as it is the case with most poetry. Rizk (2007: 71) quotes Kabira (1987: 7) as stating thus:

The written word cannot convey the vivid and varied scenes and atmosphere which are often evoked by the spoken word and enactments, especially when the performing artist is a skilled one. Writing eliminates a great deal from an oral performance, and when the material is translated, it is removed from the original performance even further. It is also difficult to transfer meaning from one language to another.

The fluidity of the oral word usually enables the respective praise poets to alter the texts in some respects to fit the situation of performance. Hence, where a word may be employed to denote an idea in some instances, entire clauses may also be employed to denote a similar idea. In fact, the general content, structure and techniques employed in the rendering of the Dagbamba panegyrics may not only change per the praise poet in question but the occasion and other circumstances in particular.

In order to have accurate results and information especially with regards to the texts therefore, Dagbamba language and culture experts were consulted to assist in the transcriptions and translations of the texts. Further clarifications were also ascertained from knowledgeable Dagbamba in Dagbamba lore and panegyrics in particular.

2.8 Limitations and Delimitations

Upon critical reflection, words as encapsulated in a work as this cannot explain the experience of the performance in totality. No matter the efforts made to portray the diverse contexts as with respect to the non-verbal cues, the paralinguistic features and the diverse evaluations by patrons and audience alike, the aura of the performance lies in one actually witnessing the performance.

Chiefs in Dagbon are as many as the Dagbamba communities and they vary in ranks and territory. More so, there number of praise poets, known by the Dagbamba as *lunsi* far outnumber the royals, with particular regard to chiefs. Every chief in Dagbon has an entourage of praise poets. Per the objectives of this study and the time for such a research enterprise in particular, soliciting panegyrics from the host of praise poets in Dagbon is a daunting task. It is virtually impossible to have recorded texts from all the royal courts in Dagbon just as it was not possible to have either met or recorded all the renowned praise poets.

Great strives were made to meet the most notable praise poets and also visit the most notable courts to record actual occasioned panegyric performances and also record solicited performances. The zeal and enthusiasm of the researcher to be present at virtually all known Dagbamba festivities that occasioned the performances of panegyrics was high; however, time and resources did not afford the researcher the opportunity to be present at all times. More often

than not, festivities that occasioned the performances of panegyrics were simultaneously ongoing at the same time but at different Dagbamba localities; thereby making it impossible for the researcher to be present at all festive occasions. However, the issue of being present at most festive occasions was resolved to some extent by the involvement of some field assistants who are often deployed to some of the praise poetry festivities.

Significant data was obtained from the field research. In the long run, it became quite a complexity for the researcher to decide on the data, especially recorded panegyrics to include as data for analysis in the research. This issue was, however, resolved by a critical selection of some of the most relevant Dagbamba panegyrics.

As a whole, though significant financial support and research material was obtained from notable agencies as the DFG (Prof. Dr. Anne Storch, Leibniz), Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), University of Cologne and the Institute of African Studies and some other personalities in diverse respects, the researcher nonetheless faced some financial constraints. That notwithstanding, the researcher would not have met the set objectives of the researcher without the support of the aforementioned agencies and personalities.

2.9 Definition of Concepts

Orature: Orature refers to orally conceived, composed and performed creative or non-creative arts. Throughout the discussions, the concept orature is employed to mean what most scholars would generally refer to as oral literature. It said to be coined by Pio Zirimu, a Ugandan linguist and literary theorist.

Praise poetry: Praise poetry refers to creative expressions that serve to extol either animate or inanimate things and both abstract and

concrete entities as a whole. There are generally no limits to what is being extolled. It is, however, not uncommon to find some elements of critique or condemnation in some praise poetry. In Dagbani, the word or concept *Salima* is a noun that may either denote a story or a praise rendition and *Salim* is the verb that connotes 'to praise'. The concept in literary theory that denotes *salima* is 'praise poetry' of which the concept panegyric serves as a kind. It is also worthy of note that the Dagbamba *salima* – as in praise poetry – is more of a complex art form.

Praise poet: The praise poet may simply be referred to as one who is engaged in the art of praise poetry. Amongst the Dagbamba, the praise poet principally plays the role of a court historian. He is also a counsellor, a musician, an entertainer, a town crier, a commentator by all standards and the custodian of the culture and history of the Dagbamba people as a whole. His roles and status in the Dagbon are dictated by custom are inherited by virtue of his lineage or descent. The Dagbamba praise poets form a respective clan in Dagbon and they are generally known as the *lunsi*.

Panegyric: A panegyric is a kind of poem that may be referred to as court poetry or a heroic poem in most respects. It may be defined as a eulogistic oration that relates to the discourse on the glory of kings. The term panegyric is etymologically from Greek. It is derived from the compound noun panegyris, denoting a general assembly, traced from the early 17th century from French *panégyrique*, via Latin from Greek. Most notable ancient panegyrics include the works of the Greek isocrates namely: the Panegyricus (c. 380 BC) and Panathenaicus (c. 340 BC). Affinities of the panegyric include the ode, epic, eulogy and the dirge or lament. The Dagbamba panegyric in particular is an ovation in praise of kings, royals or other notable persons. It is an epideictic, eulogistic, ceremonial oration or discourse that may serve as an acclamation, accolade or tribute depending on the context of its performance.

Context: Context refers to the general factors or circumstances that surround or influence some phenomena. Some of the general contexts that have a significant toll on literary works in particular include the social, cultural, religious, economic and the general world-view of a people.

Performance: Performance, as in the situation or the context of performance serves as the most immediate and fundamental contexts of the verbal or performing arts. Orature or the verbal arts for that matter are generally realised in performance; as such, the creative ingenuity of the arts are best evaluated at the situation of performance.

Clan system: The stratified Dagbamba clan system is principally hereditary by nature. It is a stratification of the people by socio-cultural categories or roles and functions as in barbers, royals, warriors amongst a host of other occupations. All known clans are respected or deemed important in as much as they contribute to the well-being of the Dagbon community as a whole. The drummer clan, otherwise known as the Dagbamba praise poets are known in Dagbon as the *lunsi*.

The royal clan: The panegyric revolves mainly on the royal clan, known in Dagbani as *naanima*. The paramount chief, under whose chieftom all other chiefs answer to is known as the *Yaa Naa*, here referred to as the king of Dagbon or King of the Dagbamba, other divisional and sub-chiefs are generally referred to as chief(s) *naanima* (PL.) *naa* (SG.). Dagbamba enskin female chief(s), *pag'naanima* (PL.) *pag'naa* (sing) who are also generally referred to as chiefs. The title "queen mother" has no parallel in amongst the Dagbamba. The wife of the King or chief is known as *napaga*, whereas leaders of female groups are generally referred to as *magazia*.

CHAPTER 3

Literature Review and Theoretical Approaches

3.1 Introduction

The *lunsi*, the drummer clan, is a pervasive force in Dagbon to escape the attention of any one who finds himself or herself amongst the Dagbamba. As reiterated earlier, the *lunsi* are the heart-beat of the Dagbamba. If the clan system of the Dagbamba is cited, the *lunsi* stand paramount. If chieftaincy or the system of rule in Dagbon is mentioned, the *lunsi* are not left out of the discussion. If festivals or any other socio-cultural activities are mentioned, the *lunsi* cannot be left out. More so, if the history of the Dagbamba is in question, the *lunsi* are invariably evoked. The *lunsi* as a clan is the epitome of Dagbon history. The history of the Dagbamba rests on their shoulders. They are the wheels around whom the Dagbamba society revolves. In fact, from the cradle to the grave of the Dagbamba, be it social, cultural, religious, political or any other aspect of Dagbamba life endeavours, the *lunsi* occupy a centre

stage. Hence, the ethnologist, linguist, sociologist, musicologist and several other scholars of diverse disciplines who find themselves in the endeavours of Dagbon are bound to trip on the *lunsi* clan in one way or the other in their scholarly investigations.

Amongst other roles, the Dagbamba praise poet is the town crier and social critic; as such, his role cannot be overemphasised. The relevance of the drummer clan speaks throughout the ages. According to Lorentzon (2007: 9):

African orature has a long tradition, and one germane reason for attaining its quotability is that it is also informational: in its logic and thematic finalization it asserts facts about myth and history, about the environment in aetiological tales and riddles. It may also be directive, as in proverbs and riddles, but particularly in fables told by the elders to children.

This chapter seeks to undertake a literature review of the Dagbamba in question, with particular reference to their art of praise poetry and other related factors as the Dagbani language, Dagbamba oral traditions and other socio-cultural activities that have attracted scholarly attention. In a follow up, the theoretical frameworks that underpin the objectives of the study are outlined. Some theories noted as good foundations for an apt presentation and a consequent understanding of this study are examined in detail. The methodological approaches that inform the theoretical frameworks examined herein are also elaborated in detail.

3.2 The Praise Poem and the Panegyric

The praise poem in Africa in particular notably embraces several subjects and functions. It may appear as a heroic poem or a war song. It also manifests itself as a dirge or elegy, eulogy and most

particularly an ode. In some instances, the praise poem is typically referred to as the panegyric; which shares close affinity with the epic. The praise poem, as its name suggest, is generally a poetic art form meant to extol. The subject of praise is quite diverse and may take different forms and styles. For instance, there are praise poetic renditions for both the sacred and mundane, God and man, gods and ancestors, the living and the dead, male and female, animate and inanimate, man and beast, animal and crop amongst a host of other binary pairs. In fact, nothing is too small or too big a concept not to warrant praise.

Praise is the act of proclaiming or expressing one's admiration, gratitude and homage to the tangible and intangible alike. There may be some form of condemnation in some praise renditions, though the concept of praise deviates from such ideas. Some examples of entities that attract praises may include: God, gods, elders, lovers, nations, idols amongst a host of others. Poems in praise of God abound in most cultures. Quite apart from praise poems meant to extol persons in high authority, there are also praise poems to extol oneself and other inanimate concepts as mountains, and crops like millet and maize. Some notable examples of praise poems include the "Ode to the West Wind" by Percy Bysshe Shelley and "Ode to the Nightingale" by John Keats. It is, however, worthy of note that unlike the works of the aforementioned poets belonging to the romantic era, their forebears believed that their art did not mimic reality as to depict or describe it, but makes reality. Their poems were considered to do what magic can do. Dagbamba praise poetry or the panegyric in particular is quite a complex signifier of power, sacredness, history, sovereignty and the Dagbamba state as a whole.

The art of praise may take different forms or functions to the extent that what to term the praise rendition becomes blurred. Hence, a clear distinction between some of these related genres as per their function becomes problematic. In Dagbamba contexts for instance, the praise poem may as well serve as an elegy or a dirge to

moan the demise of a chief or king figure and to usher the deceased king or chief to the hereafter or the land of their ancestors with dignity. The praise poem is also primarily directed to God, or in most respects makes implicit references to God. With respect to the praise poet or poets, the praise poem may also be manifested as an extolment of oneself.

Dagbamba *salima* praise poems are generally eulogies and may be employed in diverse situations where praise is needed. Praise poems are not restricted to chiefs or royals alone, but are also set in praise of diverse other people in the Dagbon communities or elsewhere. What matters is that the praise poets need to change the themes and ideas to suit the person being praised. However, the art of praise is more pronounced with chiefs or kings in royal courts and very rare with other individuals. Dagbon customs actually bind the praise poets with chiefs or kings. Any other subject other than these royal figures are secondary.

Considering the fact that “praise poem” as a concept embraces a whole range of poetic forms as outlined above, the need to remain more specific to the focus of the study arises. Hence, oblivious of the fact that praise poets, as the *lunsi* amongst the Dagbamba, sing varied praises to diverse subjects, the focus of this study is particularly on the praise poems performed for chiefs or kings of Dagbon and praise poems performed at royal courts in Dagbon. This study therefore adopts the concept “panegyric” to refer to the Dagbamba praise art form known as *Naa Salima*; being poetic renditions in praise of chiefs or kings. At least, based on the nature and form of the Dagbamba *salima* – praise poems, the concept panegyric best qualifies it as compared to the other array of literary terms. For instance, dirge or elegy invariably evokes death and the ode or eulogy appear more or less as literary synonyms for the general term praise. The terms heroic and war song may also serve as themes covered in the panegyric as a whole. According to Finnegan (2018: 53), the “[p]anegyric (praise poetry) is the most prized and elaborate poetic

genre of Africa. It often goes with a particular ethos: a stress on royal or aristocratic power, and an admiration for military achievement”.

Research on the panegyric and the verbal arts principally is not new to academia (Havelock 1986, Mulokozi 2002, Kaschula 1997, 1999, 2002, 2004, Kaschula & Mostert 2009). The panegyric proper is, however, more pronounced in some cultures as compared to others or virtually none existent with respect to acephalous societies in particular. The earliest records of the panegyric can be traced to the *Panegeris* by Isocrates in 350 BC. Other notable research on African panegyrics include those of the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, the Zulu and Xhosa of South Africa, the Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa of Nigeria, the Sotho of Lesotho and the Tswana of Botswana.

The panegyric as elaborated above is known by the Akan as *Apae* (Yankah 1983). The panegyric is also known as *Lothoko* by the Sotho, *Izibongo* by the Zulu. *Oriki* by the Yoruba, *Maroka* by the Hausa and *Mbongi wa ku Pfusha* by the Thongo of Mozambique (Kaschula 1999, Finnegan 2007, 2012). These are but a few mentions of some of the panegyrics by some cultures that have gained scholarly attention. Quite apart from these, there are undoubtedly some panegyrics or praise poems as a whole yet to attract scholarly investigations.

In southern Africa for example, the praise poem has attained a significant national political hype in the recent democracies. Note for example the role of the Imbongi Zolani Mkiva's, also known as Mandela's praise poet, the Xhosa Imbongi and Yomthonyama singer, Jongela Nojosi and the female Imbongi Jessica Mpangeni. Unlike the inherited role of the Dagbamba praise poets, the *lunsi*, Kaschula (1999) notes that anyone can become an *imbongi*. The position of a *Bekiwe's* status within the community is reserved for the most eloquent, respected and recognised poet.

Women mostly sing songs other than the kind of poetic chants performed by the drummer clan of the Dagbamba and may generally be referred to as musicians other than (praise) poets in the true sense of Dagbon culture. Women also engage in several kinds

of dances; they also clap and ululate to enhance performances in many instances. Ululations in particular happen to be the vocation of women. The quite recent works by Stuffelbeam (2012, 2014) shed more light on the role of women in Dagbamba communities and their involvement in the music enterprise in particular. Unlike the case of the Dagbamba, in some parts of Africa, women have been involved in compositions and performances of poetry and songs in general (see Gunner 1979, 1995, Hale 1994 and Rizk 2007).

The spoken word and the drum are vital in the art of the *lunsi*. In Mali, the specialists of the talking drum and the spoken word, just as the *lunsi* of Dagbon, are known as Tagadinmanu. The griots also make use of musical instruments such as the Kora, Balafon and Ngoni, a traditional lute. It is also reported of the guslers and bards that they more often than not use musical accompaniments as the gusle and the lyre respectively. Note also the East African stringed instruments used to accompany the performances of poets as described by Mulokozi (1983: 283): “Enanga (or nanga) is a seven-stringed trough zither that the Bahaya and other interlacustrine peoples of East Africa play as they re-cite, sing, or chant songs, ballads, panegyrics, and epics. The poems so delivered are also collectively called enanga.”

3.3 Literature Review

Research on the Dagbamba as a people is scant when considered globally; however, with respect to Ghanaian national indices and the northern part of Ghana in particular, the Dagbamba have received quite significant scholarly attention. As reiterated in the previous chapter, Dagbani, the language of the Dagbamba, is among the nine government sponsored languages in Ghana studied from the lower primary to the tertiary levels of education. The location of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy

and Bible Translation (GILLBT) in Tamale, the heart of Dagbon, has equally served to bring Dagbamba and Dagbon as a whole to the lime light. Research in Dagbani, the social institutions of the Dagbamba and diverse aspects of their lives are undergoing some scholarly investigations. Significant amongst others, there are the Dagbani dictionary (Blench et al. 2004) and a Bible in Dagbani (2006). Notable research on Dagbani phonology and morphology includes Olawsky (1999).

Perhaps, one of the earliest accounts where the Dagbamba are mentioned is in Rattray's (1931) work on the tribes of the Ashanti hinterlands. Though a two-year anthropological survey may not be sufficient to capture the intricacies of such a relatively large number of diverse yet similar people, especially with respect to their socio-cultural and political institutions, Rattray undoubtedly offers an insightful glimpse of the social institutions of the people in particular. In a quite recent development, Awedoba (2006) offers a detailed account of the socio-demographic patterns of the people of northern Ghana – focusing primarily on their languages and their socio-cultural practices while Macgaffey (2013) writes on the political history of land ownership in northern Ghana. Oppong (1973), Kropp Dakubu (2000), Kropp Dakubu & Read (1985) and Mahama (2004) have explored diverse aspects of the Dagbamba – ranging from history, culture and the developmental trends of their social institutions as well.

Nketia (1954, 1963), Chernoff (1979), Agawu (2003) and Locke (2005) have shed light on the music traditions of Africa, of which Dagbamba music and dance forms are no exception. Of particular significance worth mentioning are the records and analyses of the Dagbamba drum music and dance (Chernoff 1985, 1990, Locke 1996, 2008). These are quite revealing as they do not simply describe or explain how or what Dagbamba drum music is, but audio performances are recorded to capture the essence of the music to foreign ears.

Haas (2016) examines masculinity and issues of patriarchy with respect to the warrior clan of the Dagbamba, known simultaneously by the two terms *Sapashinima* or *Kambonsi*, paying particular attention to their songs and performances known as *Kambunwaa*. He notes the decline of cultural systems in the wake of the 21st century. Haas' interests on the music and dance of the Sapashinima clan to say the least is unflinching. Haas (2008, 2007) further examines particularly the aspects of the music and dance of the warrior clan, otherwise known as *Kambon-waa*. Other explorations of the dynamics of Dagbamba music from an ethnomusicological perspective include the works of Phyfferoen (2017, 2016). As a general observation, the extent of scholarly investigations of the art of music making amongst the Dagbamba, emerging from scholars from diverse academic backgrounds and areas of speciality is indicative of the artistic ingenuity of the Dagbamba as a people. Of significant mention as far as the artistic renditions in Dagbon courts are concerned are the works of the Dagbamba fiddlers, known as *gonjenima*. Oppong (1970) undertakes a general overview of Dagbamba fiddlers and DjeDje (2008, 1982, 1978) has been engaged in comparative studies of fiddlers amongst the Dagbamba, Hausa and the Fulbe in particular.

The art of the drummer clan in particular amongst the Dagbamba has caught the attention of ethnomusicologists in the past two generations. The contexts of the situation of performance have also received quite significant elaboration with the emergence of modern technology as the internet medium and other academic and social media (Locke 2009). Kinney (1972) and Locke (1990) examine the role of the drummer clan in one of the most celebrated festivals, known as *Damba* amongst the Dagbamba. The fire festival known as *Bugum* is also examined by Neeley (1994). As a whole, these socio-cultural functions are not complete without the mention of music and dance, which automatically brings the Dagbamba drummers in particular into question. The role of the *Bansi*, the general term for musicians in Dagbon, in preserving the culture of the Dagbamba also receives an elaboration by Plockey and Asuro (2018).

One institution amongst the Dagbamba that has attracted scholarly attention and that of Ghanaian governments and non-governmental institutions as a whole, to say the least is the chieftaincy institution. Chieftaincy conflicts now and in some generations past have been one of the problems confronted by the Dagbamba. Though positions of the sub- and divisional chieftains happen to be relatively peaceful, the paramount, established in Yendi, the spiritual capital of the Dagbamba, is fraught with conflicts of grave consequences. Staniland (1975) and Ladouceur (1973) undertake a study of the early developments of chieftaincy conflicts in Dagbon with special focus on the paramount skin in Yendi and the interventions and resolutions that followed suite. Most recent examinations of chieftaincy conflicts amongst indigenes of Dagbon include Mahama (2009a, 2009b, 2003) and Yakubu (2005).

Research on the Dagbamba panegyric is scant. Nevertheless, the enterprise of praise singing or the praise poem have attracted the attention of both literary scholars and linguists in particular. Socio-linguistic studies amongst such related fields on the art of the drummer clan amongst the Dagbamba have been undertaken by Salifu (2000, 2010) and Salifu & Gurindow M-minibo (2014). Neeley & Abdullai (1995) examine the performances of the drummers in the market squares in Dagbon. Salifu (2000) sets out to examine the communicative practices in Dagbamba royal courts and Salifu (2010: viii) examines the implications of Dagbamba royal praise epithets as he interrogates: "How are the titles and accolades each chief goes by chosen? Why are they so proverbial in nature, and why do they taunt others?" Abdallah (2010) traces the origin of the Dagbamba drummer clan and their functions in Dagbamba royal courts and Dagbon as a whole. Abdallah (ibid.) further describes the process of apprenticeship amongst the drummer clan with special reference to himself, as one born into the Dagbamba drummer clan, whereas Abdulai (2015) in a master thesis attempts an examination of the aesthetics of Dagbamba panegyrics.

Works on the praise poem, with particular interest to royal courts renditions are most popular amongst the Akan of Ghana in particular. By far, the Akan royal court praise song stands out in research in praise songs in Ghana. The praise song in Akan is known as *Apaɛ* and it has been examined from linguistic perspectives by Akosua Anyidoho (1991) and Yankah (1991, 1995).

3.4 Theoretical Justifications and Methodologies

The Dagbamba panegyric simultaneously infers from other texts that are not hitherto contained in the text proper and therefore needs to be understood from diverse contexts. The meaning derived from a text by a listener can only be substantiated by the listener's prior knowledge of other inferences ignited by the text under consideration. Therefore, a true appreciation of the Dagbamba panegyric can best be ascertained by one identifying the diverse themes or ideas, mostly in allusive statements that leap for attention. Names and appellations of some Dagbamba kings often come in the form of usual Dagbamba expressions and can be difficult to grasp by the unsuspecting listener.

More so, the issue of fieldwork as mostly realised in participant field observations needs to be handled with the strictest care in order that appropriate and reliable data is solicited. That notwithstanding, there remain some complications with respect to recordings and transcriptions. In this regard, the appropriate methodologies or theoretical perspectives need to be employed for faithful transcriptions and further analysis of the verbal texts. Considering the intricacies entailed in oral traditions and the verbal arts in particular, it becomes apparent therefore that oral traditions or verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics for that matter require interdisciplinary approaches and diverse perspectives for one

to have a true and better appreciation of the texts. Writing on the Dagbamba praise performances, Abdallah (2010: 56) observes that:

We need to pay attention to culturally established modes of interpretation. Clues as to how texts should be interpreted are usually encoded in the body of the text. Where clues are not encoded, we need to have knowledge of antecedent texts which speak to issues raised within the present text, that is, look for inter-textual relations with other texts.

It is worth noting that both the oral and the written word have unique attributes and that to be fair to both forms, they need to be approached with the appropriate lenses. This is particularly true with verbal arts like the Dagbamba panegyrics presented herein which are transposed from the oral performance stage to a written form. The intricacies of such oral texts are far more complex than one can imagine. This study therefore adopts diverse theoretical and methodological approaches, mainly from linguistics and literary studies to bring to the fore the diverse elements that make the panegyric and verbal arts for that matter achieve their unique poetic, linguistic and paralinguistic inventiveness. By adopting both synchronic and diachronic approaches, this study probes, expounds, tests and contrasts Dagbamba panegyrics in order to come to a full realisation of the literariness of the texts. Hence, critical, comparative and interpretative-descriptive analyses in qualitative research are employed to accomplish the objectives of the study.

Why a literary linguistic analysis? Examining a literary work without paying due cognisance to the medium (language) in which it is written is not comprehensive enough. In as much as linguistics is the study of language, poetics cannot be divorced of such a discourse science. Literature and linguistics coexist and complement each other. To a great extent, linguistics complements and reinforces literature in diverse respects. When we consider the literary

arts, such as verbal expressions as basically literary communication, then it becomes imperative that linguistics occupies a central place in the literary arts. A literary linguistic analysis of Dagbamba panegyrics offers penetrating approaches to the poetics of the texts. Both are interested in determining the messages in expressions. Linguistics examines the verbal structures of a text to ascertain the meanings embedded, whereas literary studies examines the literary elements that makes the texts a work of art.

König and Pfister (2017: 12) maintain that “[...] literary studies can and will profit from linguistics and vice versa, particularly if one focuses on the area where they intersect most directly and closely, i.e. on the literary work of art as a verbal structure and the aesthetic use of language it employs”. According to Culler (1975: 4) “the notion that Linguistics might be useful in studying other cultural phenomena is based on two fundamental insights: first, that social and cultural phenomena are not simply material objects or events but objects or events with meaning, [...] and second, that they do not have essences but are defined by a network of relations, both internal and external.”

Literary linguistics is also referred to as stylistics or poetics and basically has to do with the multidisciplinary approach to literary works by examining both figurative elements and the language structure of texts. In some instances, some writers prefer the concepts stylistics or poetics as these are synonymous to literary linguistics. Literary linguistics is, however, opted for in lieu of the two other related concepts as it clearly depicts what it seeks. More so, the concept ‘literary linguistics’ stands out in recent studies.

It should be noted that though theories tend to lay emphasis on certain phenomena that serve as the focus of a respective research endeavour, some theoretical approaches more often than not overlap with respect to their focuses or procedures. In this regard, better insights can be obtained in comprehensive examinations if more than a single theoretical approach is imperative to serve the

objectives of the research. For instance, in the analysis of the figurative use of proverbs in verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics, the diction of the texts, their syntac-semantic structures and their general form are crucial to a literary linguistic enterprise. However, more important to the establishment of the character of the proverbs are insights of the general contexts, world-view and the circumstances that shape the creation of the proverbs. Therefore, quite apart from unearthing the literary linguistic novelties, such as the figurative use of language, style and the general linguistic features of the Dagbamba panegyrics – the functions, nature of the situation of performance and the general contexts that shape the texts need in-depth elaboration.

This study sets off on the premise that the linguistic and literary competences of Dagbamba praise poets hinge more on recurrent patterns in poetic renditions as compared to the creative innateness or charms as believed to be possessed by the drummer clan. Nonetheless, all aforementioned factors play some roles in the performance process as a whole. The theories that reinforce this study are quite diverse, yet related in one way or the other. All the theories under discussion are generally subsumed under the umbrella of literary theory or, in some other instances, critical theory. It should be noted, however, that some particular theories though significant in the analysis of poetry do not serve the purpose and literary essence of the Dagbamba panegyrics in particular.

The choice of a theory to a great extent depends on the objectives sought by the researcher in question. If the preceding assertions stand true, the conceptual, pragmatic and hypothetical principles that permeate the study and theorising of literary works from a literary linguistic perspective include, but are not limited to the following approaches and associated notable scholars: oral formulaic theory as propounded by Milman Parry and Albert Lord; performance approaches by Isidor Okpewho, Ruth Finnegan, Richard Bauman, Dan Ben-Amos and Karin Barber; insights of ethnopoetics

approaches by Dell Hymes, John Miles Foley, Dennis Tedlock and Jerome Rothenberg and cognitive poetics theory by George Lakoff, Ronald Langacker and Mark Johnson. With respect to text linguistics and discourse analysis approaches, one cannot also lose sight of the contributions by scholars such as Max Müller, Vladimir Propp, Claude Levi-Strauss, Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson.

From the foregoing discussion, it becomes imperative that a research of this magnitude requires a multidimensional approach for a better appreciation of the Dagbamba panegyric. After a perusal of quite a number of works in literary theory and criticism, linguistics, classics and other literary genres and traditions, there arises the need to situate the nature and complexities of the Dagbamba panegyrics in a most conducive approach for a better appreciation of the texts. As such, a proposition and employment for that matter of contextual relativism as a theoretical approach of verbal arts is undertaken.

Considering the significant insights to the study and theorising of literary works, the contextual relativist approach is fundamentally informed by one's knowledge of existing theoretical approaches in the respective field. It is a comprehensive theoretical framework that embraces other theories and methodologies for systematic enquiries. Contextual relativism hinges on the principle that the understanding of a phenomenon or event is based on the phenomenon in question's relationship with other phenomena. For instance, for a deeper understanding or perhaps appreciation of the Dagbamba panegyric, one needs to pay particular attention to any details that shape the performance or the texts as a whole. Such details may include the relationships between the performance and the text, performer, audience with relation to the general socio-cultural and historical connections involved. As a whole, contextual relativism therefore seeks to foreground factors that contribute in no mean measures to the conception, perception, performance and

diverse other processes and native understanding that are often relegated to the background.

Putting the Dagbamba panegyrics into perspective, it would be realised, for instance, that the division of roles as realised in the clan system of the Dagbamba has an overwhelming impact on the mastery of the performances of panegyrics and praise poetry in particular. As a legacy passed down from the drummer clan, generations across centuries, the texts have gained quite uniform adaptations by dint of the fact that they are censored and moderated by a well-organised known clan. The mere belief that the art of praise poetry performances is partly intrinsic is based on one's blood ties to the clan and on the training and general practices that the praise poets go through, serves as a significance boost to the performances of the texts. These notwithstanding, the efficacy of charms, amulets and other medicinal or magical potions as enhancers of memory, oratory and the general performances of Dagbamba panegyrics and praise renditions in particular cannot be underestimated. The aforementioned factors may seem very trivial in literary linguistic analysis; nonetheless, they contribute in no mean measure to the meaning and artistic novelty of the Dagbamba panegyrics in particular and therefore deserve critical attention.

The contexts that shape the texts are very vital for apt appreciations of verbal arts in particular. It should be noted, however, that the degree of significance of a contextual factor is dependent on the situation mostly peculiar to each particular genre or text. Context has been referred to in diverse discourse analyses than has been theorised. While the concept or notion is not often stated explicitly, it is implied in virtually most known theoretical and methodological approaches to oral traditions and the verbal arts in particular (Finnegan 2012, 2007, 1977, Okpewho 1992, 1990). Ben-Amos (1993: 211) notes that: "Theoretically, contextual description increases the specificity of each folklore performance. As no two poems are alike,

so no two telling, singing, or reciting of texts duplicate each other.” Ben-Amos (ibid.) further maintains that context is the interpretant of oral traditions from a pragmatic point of view. According to Ben-Amos (1993: 213):

Even those texts that have an apparently lower contexts dependency draw their specific meanings from the broad context of their specific society, the language in which they are performed, and the cultural symbolic system that interprets them. They are equally bound by the ideology, historical knowledge, modes of thought, value system, aesthetic principles, and principles of behaviour that comprise the context of culture. These relations between texts and contexts have become evident in numerous studies on specific genres and their performance in different societies.

Context may be broadly categorised into two: the cultural and performance contexts respectively. It should be noted, however, that whereas the cultural contexts normally remain stable, the performance context is ever changing. Detailed explications of the changing nature of performance are elucidated in the following section. The cultural context includes the historical, political, religious, economic and the socio-cultural backgrounds of a people whereas the performance context includes the occasion, setting, audience, performer, performance and the entire circumstances, such as verbal and non-verbal cues that pertain in the performance event. Writing on the essential components of African performance traditions, Anyidoho (1991: 42) notes thus:

The concept and practice of performance are central to artistic expression and experience in African tradition. As a rule; however, the validity of this rule may not be obvious partly because we often encounter difficulty in finding precise non-African equivalents for the various terms that an African people uses in defining its art forms [...].

In the actual public performance of his role [the role of the poet cantor], the picture becomes even more complex, for the poet-singer performs as part of an ensemble of drummers, dancers and singers.

Texts or literary works for that matter, notwithstanding the similarity of genre or kind, differ fundamentally from one another as a result of the environmental and general cultural circumstances that lead to their creation and continue to influence their performance and existence. Therefore, texts should be evaluated based on their internal logic and structures and the general contexts that influence both the creation and occasion of the texts rather than be judged by the standards of other texts or genres. What constitutes an original, true text or what makes an artistic piece novel, exists in relation to the diverse contexts that pertain in the respective society and what the people perceive or consider to be so.

With respect to the verbal arts in particular; of which the Dagbamba panegyric is no exception – the conception, throughout to the realisation of texts in performance, hinges on diverse contexts, mostly unique to each text or genre based on where, when, how and to whom the text is performed. More so, quite apart from efforts made to render faithful translations of linguistic corpus, the use of audio-video recordings on tapes, compact disks and digital archives to complement linguistic data or the performative nature of the poetics of verbal arts in particular offer insightful perspectives on the nature or character of the texts.

Oral traditions are fundamentally imbued with a folk spirit. The reality that society makes the artist is unquestionably clear. Also, the fact that the artist invariably imparts a culture or society is undeniable. Hence, a deeper understanding of oral traditions such as Dagbamba panegyrics requires a better understanding of the diverse contexts that shape the texts, as they reveal significant insights into their linguistic and literary inventiveness. Na'Allah (1997: 133) is very clear in his affirmation that: "In order

to understand and interpret an African oral performance, one must first recognize it as a heritage. One must be prepared to enter into it and become part of its existence.”

The complexity of the verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics inextricably binds it to diverse phenomena and factors that are essential to the character of the texts as a whole. Depending on the objectives sought by the researcher, focus may be placed on some contextual aspects as compared to others. Okpewho (1992) notes that the “social and cultural environment”, the “artist’s personality” and the “scene of performance”, are the three important factors in the study of oral literature.

Per the objectives outlined in the preceding chapter, it becomes imperative for this study to examine diverse contexts and pay equal attention to them for a better appreciation of the Dagbamba panegyrics. Central to verbal arts are the performer, the performance, the audience (patrons), the setting or situational context and the general contexts of the texts, such as the socio-cultural and historical. It is significant to note that the social and physical factors that influence the artistic performance such as the scene of the event or the artistic performance may constitute the context; however, a change of the performer(s), the audience, the text or even the scene may automatically alter the performance event. Writing on the context and poetics of Kasena Dirges and War Songs, Taluah (2013) offers a vivid illustration that elaborates the centrality of the diverse contexts and their inextricable relationships with the text, performer and the audience as a whole. The diagram below is therefore modelled after the “Matrix of Orature” (ibid 2013: 45) and serves to highlight the factors that influence the performance of oral texts as the Dagbamba panegyrics.

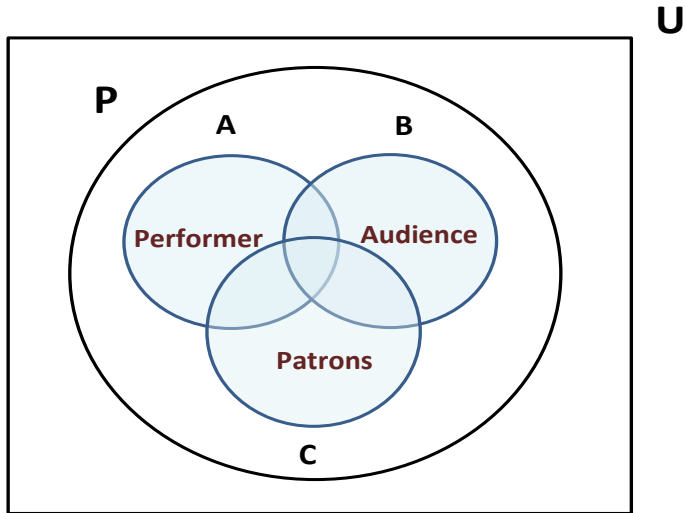


Figure 3.1: A Matrix of Orature

Considering the discussion above, we may illustrate the encompassing nature of context with regard to the central factors of orature as follows: performer(s), patron(s) and audience – together, they embody the performance situation. From the Venn diagram above, U represents the universal set and comprises the totality of the Dagbamba as a people. Within the universal set around P, the context of performance, are the diverse contexts such as historical, cultural, social, political, religious, economic and the entire worldview of the people. At the precincts of P, the context of performance are the performer(s), the patron(s) and audience; who together initiate the performance. Hence, A represents the performer(s), B represents the audience and C represents the patron(s) (which in the setting of the Dagbamba panegyrics are kings or chiefs). These three inseparable entities together constitute the performance, and together, orature or the verbal arts are borne within the performance situation with the diverse other contexts shedding their influences on the texts as a whole.

It may seem that the performance is what matters; however, with verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics, A, B and C in accord give essence to the situation of performance. The success or novelty of the texts or the performance per se revolve around the inextricable link or consequent mutual dependence of the performer(s), patron(s) and audience. At the intersections of the performer(s), patron(s) and audience is the text matter. The texts serve as the binding force that brings these three agents together. Below is a summary of the discussions of the factors that constitute the contexts of oral performances as the Dagbamba panegyrics.

- U = The universal set
- P = The context of performance
- A = The performer(s)
- B = The audience
- C = The patron(s) or subject of praise
- A n B n C = Orature or the oral performance
- AnB, AnC, BnC = The inextricable link of the factors in performance (the text)

The role of the performer and patrons in oral performances as a whole have been explored in most studies of the verbal arts. However, what has often received less attention amongst the factors noted above is the audience. The importance of the audience in the oral performance cannot be overemphasised. Anyidoho (1991: 43) notes the relevance of the audience in performances as follows: "The members of a typical audience in Africa will probably not applaud a bad performance out of politeness and then walk away mumbling their disgust to themselves. They expect a high display of competence, and they will insist on it." The audience serve as the immediate evaluators of the performance event and thus, every performer is critical of their presence.

It is evident therefore that a close attention to context improves our appreciation of the artfulness, meaning, subtleties and implications of verbal arts and oral traditions in general. It is the context that shapes and establishes the meaning embedded in the texts. As reiterated, the existence of the texts is based primarily on the long-held evaluations that the texts are subjected to in relation to what the people affirm is true art. Bauman (1986: 2) concurs that:

we must recognize that the symbolic forms we call folklore have their primary existence in the action of people and their roots in social and cultural life. The texts we are accustomed to viewing as the raw materials of oral literature are merely the thin and partial record of deeply situated human behaviour. My concern has been to go beyond a conception of oral literature as disembodied superorganic stuff and to view it contextually and ethnographically, in order to discover the individual, social, and cultural factors that give it shape and meaning in the conduct of social life.

Möhlig (1995) had earlier advocated an “interdisciplinary model of the analysis of African verbal arts” where he notes three principal dimensions of African verbal arts as follows: dramaturgic, text linguistic and text pragmatic dimensions. These dimensions offer deeper insights into the nature of African verbal arts in particular. The complexities of the verbal arts and the need for multidimensional approaches have not evaded the attention of researchers of the literary arts. In the introduction to *Pragmatic Literary Stylistics*, Chapman and Clark (2014: 7) advocate a possible engagement of diverse interpretations that is worth quoting at length:

Another key assumption concerns theoretical and methodological eclecticism. There is a growing commitment in various branches of linguistic analysis to the idea that theorists and analysts should be open to a wide range of possible approaches, adopting frameworks which

seem to help with addressing specific questions rather than sticking closely to one approach. (See, for instance, Jeffries 2000). Like many stylisticians, we endorse this view and believe that different approaches should not necessarily be seen as 'competing' approaches from which a 'winner' needs to be chosen. Rather, we would suggest that specific approaches adopted should be those which seem to provide insights into the specific phenomena being considered.

Cameron (1990: 214) noted once and truly so that: "Language is too complex and too deeply implicated in a wide variety of human activities and concerns for any one discipline or approach to capture it *in toto* or to address every question of interest concerning it." Considering the preceding discussions on the contextual relativist approach as the appropriate approach to verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics, the following theoretical approaches serve as the conceptual frameworks that shed light on the contextual relativist approach.

3.4.1 Performance Theory

Perhaps, what is central to the verbal art as the Dagbamba panegyric is the context of performance. It could be stated without hesitation therefore that the performance theory is only second to the contextual framework, in which the performance context is a part. It stands to mean that when the cultural context, which may entail the social, historical, political, religious, economic and the entire world-view of a people, in relation to their oral traditions is known, the other pertinent factor that jolts for attention is the performance context. Writing on the oral text and performance in Africa, Barber (2005: 264) notes that "[...] the performance is the unique, never-to-be repeated realization or concretization of the text, a realization that "brings the text to life" but which is itself doomed to die on the

breath in which it is uttered. Text fixes, performance animates." It is therefore on these crucial grounds that the performance theory serves as framework for the study of the Dagbamba panegyric.

According to Bauman (1984: 27), "[w]e view the act of performance as situated behaviour, situated within and rendered meaningful with reference to relevant contexts. Such contexts may be identified at a variety of levels – in terms of setting, for example, the cultural defined places where performance occurs." Bauman (ibid.: 8) further reiterates that "by identifying the nature of performance and distinguishing it from other ways of speaking, we will have among other things a measure of the authenticity of collected oral texts".

All things being equal, the performance theory occupies a centre stage in most research in the verbal arts. It is almost impossible to examine verbal arts without exploring their performance contexts as they are always realised in performance. Amongst other scholars, its adherents include Ruth Finnegan, Isidore Okpewho, Richard Bauman, Ulli Beier, Dennis Tedlock, Dan Ben-Amos and Karin Barber. It should be stated, however, that performance theory is approached quite differently by its adherents based on their subjects and objectives. Hence, this study adopts the performance approaches by Bauman and Okpewho, borrowing liberally from other insights from other adherents of the performance theory (Okpewho 1990, 1992, Bauman 1984).

Performance theory maintains that the oral text is central to the performance event. The oral text comes to life only when it is performed. The store house of the text is also in the mind of the performer, without whom the text ceases to exist. The audience also serve as the fuel of the performance. Without the presence of the audience to pay a listening ear to the performer and evaluate the performance in process, there may not be a performance at all. Hence, as reiterated in the matrix of orature above, the text, performer, audience and patrons as a whole are essential to the performance event. Finnegan (2007: 192) maintains that:

Oral texts exist in the unique situated moment. It is realised in active and embodied participation, in public theatrical display [...] so rather than its existence residing in enduring 'texts', each performance is actualized – and to be analyzed – in its own mix of communicative channels: its particular place and timing; its participants and their potentially perspectives and struggles among themselves; its activated arrangement of music, words, singing, colour, somatic involvements, dance, material display or whatever – all the elements realised in one immediate event. Performance is evanescent, experiential, actualized, emergent in the participant's creation of the moment [...].

One may see the audience as mere spectators of a performance or perhaps as being controlled by the performer. Although such happenings cannot be discounted entirely, the audience are very influential to the success or failure of a performer or performance as a whole. In the performance of the Dagbamba panegyric in particular, the attention given by the audience to the performer can boost his taunts. Other people in the audience with special talents as ululating, which is often the prerogative of women, can move the performer to greater heights. Motivations, in the form of monetary give-outs by the audience can also enhance the performance as a whole. Hence, the audience or participants are also co-creators of the text and the performance as a whole. Anyidoho (1991: 44) is quite succinct when he maintains that:

The audience is not necessarily a threat to the performer. On the contrary, the audience is more likely to be an ally, a prompter, and an inspirer to excellence, than an obstacle to a satisfying experience. After all, the audience is anxious to be offered the pleasures of performance, just as the performer experiences a sense of personal satisfaction over a successful performance.

The performance contexts of oral texts as the Dagbamba panegyric cannot be overemphasised. In fact, just as the written text does not exist until it is written, the oral text does not exist until it is performed. The written text is also more stable whereas the oral text fluctuates at the instance of performance. Not even in a two-time performance of a particular text by a particular performer will the text be the same. The difference in one particular text in two situational performances lies in the fact that the performance contexts, which as reiterated in the preceding section as ever changing, vary with respect to the audience, setting, the mood of the performer and other such dynamics that are brought about at the instance of performance. It is only evident that these factors are bound to differ in different situational contexts. These factors serve as the sharp dichotomies that lie between orate and literate texts. Writing on the glory of performance, Finnegan (2018: 17, original emphasis) notes thus:

In western contexts literature is pictured as, essentially, written: one-line, fixed, cold on the printed page. But the glory of African literature, sometimes written but often not, lies in its *performed* quality – in the miraculous properties of the human voice and of the astounding multi-sensory qualities of African performance from which we can learn so much. Here it is that we can best notice the choreographic, kinesics (conveyed by visible gesture or movement), sonic and musical dimensions of performance and the co-constructing role of the audience.

Owing to the fact that written poetry often goes through a series of corrections and censorship by the writer and other agencies involved before it is opened to the public, published works or works that reach the audience or readers for that matter are often polished to some degree. However, oral composers do not have the luxury of this privilege. Composition, editing, censorship and performances delivered to an audience to a great extent, are simultaneously

done at the situation of performance. "It is therefore in the study of performance that we are able to see the essential character of oral literature as distinct from written literature that is, as an art form created in the warm presence of an audience as against the cold privacy of the written work" (Okpewho 1992: 42).

Anyidoho (1986, 1991), the Ghanaian performance poet and scholar, has been preoccupied with establishing the reality that the written word solely cannot carry the essence of African verbal arts as a result of their dynamism with respect to the performance situation. Not only has Anyidoho demonstrated his stance in his academic works, but he has also on different occasions published his poetic works with voice recorded performances as complements (Anyidoho 2011, 2002). Other notable poets to have led and demonstrated the superiority of the poetic performance over the print medium include Atu Kwei Okai and Edward Kamau Brathwaite, the Ghanaian and Afro-Caribbean, respectively.

Quite apart from the oral text, the performer, audience and the entire performance as central to the performance theory, the theory further underscores the importance of other factors such as the success of the performance as realised by the competence of the performer, the employment of verbal and non-verbal cues and other paralinguistic features that are not part of the text proper. Suffice it to say that the oral text achieves its best potential when it is examined together with the verbal and non-verbal occurrences in the process of performance. Ben-Amos (1993: 213) notes that: "The context of situation is an interactive arena in which the speakers' age, status, and gender gain symbolic significance in their communication. Similarly, code, style, and measure, intonation and dramatization, genre and its conventions, and time and place of performance convey meanings."

The situational context of performance is laden with significant meanings. Words, such as the texts in its entirety, tone as in attitude, actions and sounds convey unique meanings in the situational

contexts of performance as compared to the same performance rendered out of the respective performance context. The reality is that the same texts performed in the appropriate situational contexts and out of contexts are bound to differ.

An understanding of Dagbani, the language in which the texts are rendered, does not automatically guarantee a better appreciation of the texts. Storch hints that: "Being a fluent, complete speaker very often means being a competent speaker of various registers and speech styles. A language as a sum of its varieties, sociolects, registers, and styles, is of course something different from language as a simplistic standard" (Lüpke & Storch 2013: 121). Poet cantors usually employ special codes of language as in idioms, proverbs and other sayings of linguistic archaisms. The spoken word is central to verbal arts and it is given its essence or power by the voice of the performer poet. The way and manner in which the word is carried or conveyed by the performer poet can enhance the competence or success of the performer and performance as a whole. It therefore becomes apparent in the conclusion that "[...] learning and knowing the contexts of the different ways of speaking can be an ability as critical as the ability to speak a certain language or register" (Lüpke & Storch 2013: 77).

An attempt to understand thoroughly the poetics of verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics further assumes the concept of semiotics, which underscores the theory of signs. Hence, not only is poetics an integral part of linguistics, which is the study of verbal structures, but also the study of signs. Approaches to symbolic interactionism are said to be pioneered by George Herbert Mead. However, it is through Herbert Blumer, a student of Mead, that the concept "symbolic interactionism" caught the attention of academia (Blumer 1969). According to Blumer (1969), the very tenets of symbolic interactionism are that human interactions by nature are based on the meanings they assign to them; the meanings that are assigned to things are based on humans' interactions with their

environment and these meanings in entirety are interpreted with relation to specific circumstances.

The performance event as realised with the Dagbamba panegyrics is laden with linguistic signs. These linguistic signs, though, may be maligned by unsuspecting critics, communicate significant meanings which in all contribute to the novelty of the texts and the performance as a whole. Linguistic signs as realised in the performance event initiate diverse interpretations. When critical attention is paid to the diverse aspects at the situation of performance, better insights into the linguistic inventiveness of the Dagbamba and their panegyrics in particular are certain.

Symbolic interactionist approaches are crucial to the study of the poetics of Dagbamba panegyrics and verbal arts predominantly on grounds that they entail very significant details, employing both linguistics and paralinguistic elements. Signs employed by the performer, audience and patron contribute to meaning just as symbols such as the drum and other musical instruments and general dress codes contribute in no mean measure to determining meaning at the event of performance. For instance, surrogates of the Dagbamba panegyrics such as the drum in particular are used to confound meanings. The rhythms played usually differ from place to place and the status of the royal involved. Finnegan (2018: 81, original emphasis) observes that:

A remarkable phenomenon in parts of Africa is communication, both every day and poetic, transmitted through drums and, up to point, through other musical instruments. That this is a *form of language and literature* rather than music is clear when the principles of drum language are understood. Although its significance is often overlooked, expression through drums forms a not inconsiderable branch of the literature and communication resources in a number of African societies.

Writing on Ewe poetry, Awoonor (1974: 17) notes that “poetry amongst the Ewe comes to life around the drums. In the mood and the cadences of the drums, and in the structure of the songs, we come face to face with the form and content of original poetry.” The drum in itself has an overwhelming presence before words are uttered. The rhythm to which the drums are played vary from time and place. More so, the rhythm of the drum tells the occasion and state of the performance in general. In fact, the metonymic relationships between the sign and the signified in the tones of the drums and other aspects at the event of performance are worth noting. Understanding these signals is crucial for a better interpretation and understanding of the Dagbamba panegyrics.

3.4.2 Ethnopoetics Theory

Following the critical perspectives of the performance theory, insights of the ethnopoetics theory stand out as crucial to the study of verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics under study. Notable proponents of the ethnopoetics theory include amongst others Dell Hymes, John Miles Foley, Dennis Tedlock and Jerome Rothenberg. In succinct terms, ethnopoetics advocates that verbal arts performances should be rendered appropriately, paying significant regard to details such as interpolations, silences, sounds, pitches and other factors that are occasioned by the situation of performance. These details enhance the artistry of the texts.

It stands to mean that transliterations and translations of the verbal arts should be faithful to the rendered performances of the texts. Transcriptions should convey the paralinguistic and dramatic features as realised in performance. Most transcriptions often neglect these salient contributors to artistry. The enterprise of transcribing and translating the oral word is not just to salvage the oral form from extinction, but to outdoor the uniqueness of

the creative inventiveness of the performance (Hymes 1981, 1996, Foley 1991, 1998, 2000).

Fine (1998: 68) outlines four characteristics noted by the translation theorist Eugene Nida. These are the translated text's ability to "make sense", "convey the spirit and manner of the original message", to be "natural and easy to read" and its ability to produce "a similar response".

The dramatic and paralinguistic features as noted above are often difficult to capture in the texts as in the transcriptions. Hence, for the concerns of the ethno-poetics theory to be realised at least, if not fully, the research dedicates particular attention to details of the performance event. Quite apart from including details such as pitches, silences, interpolations and other such related paralinguistic features in the transcriptions of the texts proper, it would be worthwhile to undertake a descriptive analysis of these paralinguistic features as realised in the performance event. Rizk (2007: 71) quotes Kabira (1987: 7) as stating thus:

The written word cannot convey the vivid and varied scenes and atmosphere which are often evoked by the spoken word and enactments, especially when the performing artist is a skilled one. Writing eliminates a great deal from an oral performance, and when the material is translated, it is removed from the original performance even further. It is also difficult to transfer meaning from one language to another.

Quite apart from a dedication to the descriptive analysis of the paralinguistic realisations in the event of performance or the verbal and non-verbal cues predominantly, photographs and both audio and video presentations and documentations of verbal arts can also offer significant insights of the performance event. Publications and further archiving of oral traditions as verbal arts best portray the novelty of the texts. In the last two to three decades, the internet

and social media have witnessed the dissemination of the verbal arts tremendously. Photographs and both audio and video recordings as a whole have therefore served as significant representations of the performance context in particular and the diverse cultural contexts in general.

'Technauriture', a concept propounded by Russell Kaschula to designate the accessibility of performances of oral traditions through modern technologies as the internet and social media is well acknowledged by scholars of the verbal arts. As reiterated, multimedia documentation and transmission of oral traditions as Dagbamba panegyrics will serve to bridge the gaps between the texts proper and the verbal and non-verbal cues realised in the performance event (Merolla 2014, Kaschula 2012, Dorvlo 2012, Merolla & Ameka 2012, Kaschula & Mostert 2009). Kaschula (2012: 10) maintains thus:

The interaction between orality and literacy is now more complex than one would expect, as it now also involves technology. It would seem to be dependent on the individual performer and where they find themselves on the oral-literacy-techno continuum, as well as the extent to which they choose to allow orality and literacy to interact with modern technology.

3.4.3 Oral Formulaic Theory

Considering the subject of the panegyric or the praise poem principally as being a close relative of the epic, the insights of Albert Lord and his student, Milman Parry, in the former's classic work *The singer of tales*, is a force to reckon with. The study of the Slavic epic bards known as guslers has been a breakthrough in the study of oral performances as far as the epic is concerned. Lord and Parry demonstrated that the Slavic bards employed formulaic measures,

such as repeated phrases, plot outlines and themes, in what they refer to as “composition-in-performance”, of the Slavic epic. Lord and Parry further demonstrated how the well acclaimed Homer, known for the classics: *The Odyssey* and *Iliad*, was himself an oral bard and how he employs similar repeated patterns as the Slavic guslars (Lord 1960, Parry 1971).

This study is therefore informed by the oral-formulaic theory as propounded by Milman Parry and Albert Lord. Oral-formulaic theory maintains that the craft of “composition-in-performance” mostly employed by performers of verbal arts such as the epic achieves poetic excellence, especially with regard to the memorisation and delivery, mainly as a result of the formulaic techniques mastered by the performers through observation and practice.

Oral-formulaic theory addresses the building blocks for performance and “composition-in-performance”. The style of performance and the memory retention devices and techniques employed by the performer with the background information of the contexts in question are central to the oral-formulaic theory. Insights of the oral-formulaic theory are very important in the sense that this study being multidimensional per its objectives does not only seek to examine the product of composition or performance but it also seeks to examine the processes of composition and “composition-in-performance” for that matter. Hence, a close examination of the text will be done and objective analyses made, to unearth the formulaic patterns employed by the Dagbamba praise poets.

To bring the case of the Dagbamba panegyrics into perspective, the art of praise singing as reiterated earlier is passed down from one generation to the other by word of mouth. The *lunsi* or praise singers are a clan mandated by custom to sing the praises of chiefs. As a clan, it is believed that the power of memorisation is aided most importantly by one’s consanguine relationship to the drummer clan as passed down through the ages. On the contrary,

research has revealed that the epic performances by praise poets as griots, who can be likened to the *lunsi*, are able to memorise and perform their poems by formulaic techniques. An examination of the memory techniques employed by the Dagbamba praise poets is therefore central to this study.

Writing in his paper "The Making of an Anglo-Saxon Poem", Robert Creed (1959: 446) notes that: "[...] the making of any Anglo-Saxon poem was a process of choosing rapidly and largely on the basis of alliterative needs not between individual words but between formulas". More so, there are some assumptions that the way and manner in which the Holy Quran is learnt has a great impact or is clearly reflected in Dagbamba praise poetry as about eighty percent (80%) of Dagbamba are Muslim (Na'Allah 2010). In his contribution "The Singers and Their Epic Songs", Matija Murko (1990: 13) rightly observes: "It is among the Muslims that the oral tradition is best preserved, because they are more traditional in spirit and think better of illiterates. The singer who learns a song that is read to him must have it repeated more times in order to know it".

It is therefore not surprising when Rizk (2007: 46) observes that "[t]he recitation of the Quran has influenced the recitation of Swahili poetry as well as the composition of taarab music". He further confirms that:

Most *taarab* singers in Zanzibar emerged out of Quran schools where they went during childhood to learn Quranic recitation and the ABC of the Arabic language. Reciting the Quran develops their natural love for music and singing and makes it easier for them to learn the complicated way of singing ideal *taarab*, as the *maqamat* (rhythmic tone scales) which are used in both are the same. (Rizk 2007: 73)

3.4.4 Cognitive Poetics Theory

Cognitive poetics lends itself to cognitive linguistics, the study of the relationship between language and the mind: language as entailed in the cognitive capacities of speakers. Hence, cognitive poetics approaches language by a critical examination of the relationship between the literary use of language and the mind, otherwise known as literary cognition (Langacker 2008, 1987, 1991a, 1991b, Lakoff 1987, Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 1999). Cognitive poetics therefore pays particular attention to memory, perceptions and intentions as competence and other cognitive processes and tasks involved in the composition, performance and the general world-view from and in which literary texts such as the Dagbamba panegyrics evolve. Writing on cognitive linguistics in the preface to his book, Lakoff (1987: xi) states thus:

Cognitive science is a new field that brings together what is known about the mind from many academic disciplines: psychology, linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, and computer science. It seeks detailed answers to such questions as: What is reason? How do we make sense of our experience? What is a conceptual system and how is it organized? Do all people use the same conceptual system? If so, what is that system? If not, exactly what is there that is common to the way all human beings think? The questions aren't new, but some recent answers are.

Cognitive linguists maintain that language is best studied or described when cognitive experiences and the social contexts are taken into consideration. The idea of “conceptual metaphors”, pioneered by George Lakoff and conceptual blending and integration as part of language communication are well acknowledged in cognitive poetics approaches to the literary arts. According to Lakoff & Johnson (2003: 21), “the most fundamental values in a

culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture”.

Freeman (2007: 1176) makes it clear that “in its focus on the process of literary creation, interpretation, and evaluation, Cognitive Linguistics contributes scientific explanations for the findings of literary critics and thus provides a means whereby their knowledge and insights might be seen in the context of a unified theory of human cognition and language.” Freeman (ibid.: 1192) further notes that “Cognitive Poetics attempts to describe how poetic language and form is constrained and shaped by human cognitive processes.”

The cognitive principles and mechanisms adopted by verbal arts performers as the Dagbamba praise poets are worth critical examination. These principles and mechanisms are more abstract than they can be realised physically; they nonetheless shape the creative novelties of verbal texts or the performance as a whole. Quite apart from the interpretations of language structures, internal structures are equally crucial keys to ascertaining meaning in language.

One of the things worth noting about Dagbamba panegyrics is the conception of the performance. For instance, some of the questions that leap for attention include amongst others: what are the preparations necessary for a successful performance? How do the performers and audience alike process the language, ideas and styles as rendered in the texts? Do the poet cantors encounter problems in their performances and most especially how do they manage or correct errors in the art of composition-in-performance? Or perhaps, do they make mistakes at all?

3.4.5 Text Linguistics and Discourse Analysis Theories

Considering the fact that the theories outlined above delve into areas that are deemed crucial to meaning making in the event of

performance, the last but not least theoretical approaches that examine the text proper are text linguistic and discourse analysis processes. The matrix of orature as elaborated above demonstrates in clear terms the centrality of the text. It lies at the intersections of the performers, patrons and audience as a whole. The performance is occasioned on the existence of the text. Without it, there is no performance. It is therefore crucial to examine the text in detail as it is carved in language. Insights from scholars such as Max Müller, Vladimir Propp, Claude Levi-Strauss, Ferdinand de Saussure, Roman Jakobson, Julia Kristeva as far as the aesthetics of language are concerned are therefore adopted liberally.

“If I had to single out a primary function of human language, it would be not one, but the following two: to scaffold the performance of social activities (whether play or work or both) and to scaffold human affiliation within cultures and social groups and institutions” (Gee 1999: 1). The art of speaking, termed by de Saussure as “parole”, is worth critical attention as the language, “langue” itself. One needs to understand the rules of the language: its nature and conventions as employed in the Dagbamba panegyric.

Text linguistics is deemed as an application of discourse analysis. It is an approach to textual analysis that focuses principally on the form or structure of the texts; however, taking into consideration the settings of the text and other discourse features in context. In discourse analysis, all communicative factors as realised in the discourse in question are taken into consideration. Hence, while text linguistics highlights grammatical features of texts from the sentence and word or morpheme levels, discourse analysis pays particular attention to any written, oral or semiotic communicative discourses as realised in communication. Other areas of interests of both theories include speech acts, gestures, style, signs and verbal and non-verbal cues amongst other communicative codes.

With respect to the Dagbamba panegyric and verbal arts for that matter, there are usually some conscious attempts made by

the performers to subvert the structure, meaning and other communicative codes in order to give the texts a poetic edge. The performers exploit the semantics of language: through polysemy and polyphony of words, phrases, entire idioms and semiotic and grammatical innuendos. The schema theory as grounded in cognitive poetics (Lakoff 1987, Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 1999, Langacker 2008), the oral-formulaic theory (Lord 1960, Parry 1971, 1930, Finkelberg 2012) and structuralist approaches (Tsur 2008, Herman & Vervaeck 2005: 42–109, Culler 1975) in particular seek to account for the creative use of language and its nuances in poetic expressions as the Dagbamba panegyrics.

Following an adaptation of Jakobson’s communication model, this study therefore attempts to examine the poetic discourse of the panegyric from the addresser (encoder), message, addressee (decoder), context, contact and code factors in the communicative enterprise in relation to their constitutive functions as emotive, poetic, conative, referential, phatic and metalingual, respectively.

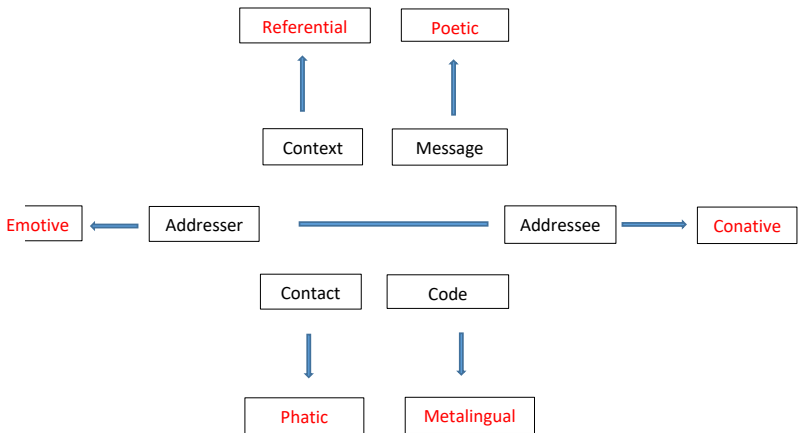


Figure 3.2: Jakobson’s Communication Model (adapted from Jakobson 1960)

The performer sends out a message as in the form of a poetic act, the audience receive and interpret the messages and react in diverse ways: as paying close attention, ululating, clapping and/or cheering. The appreciation of the act of performance by the audience, here the addressees, is based on their contextual knowledge and appreciation of the culture and performance, in which the art (message) is rendered. The style (code) and means in which the performer, here the addresser, employs in the performance is also based on the shared culture within which the performer and the audience reside.

It must be stated in unambiguous terms that the emotive function of language may be fraught with issues of interpretation and so are the physical as well as the psychological functions that refer to the phatic function of language. However, the multidisciplinary approach adopted in this research serves to bring to light elements that are often backgrounded by their very nature.

3.5 Conclusion

If we consider literary or critical theory as the ideas and methods for a practical reading or examination of literary texts, it seems natural, then, to assume that the preceding outline of critical theories as crucial approaches for a better understanding of the Dagbamba panegyrics speak for themselves.

These approaches may not offer the ultimate conclusions or suggestions about the verbal arts, but they offer diverse perspectives for a better appreciation of verbal arts as a whole. Though these approaches are viewed by scholars of oral traditions or the verbal arts in particular as crucial to the analysis of texts, they are nevertheless fraught with limitations. Hence, the contextual relativist theory as employed herein, which adopts the approaches and methodologies of other theories; however, related in one way or the other, relevant to the objectives of the research, offers the

best paradigm for which verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics can be appreciated.

From all indications, these theoretical paradigms and methodologies offer the best results in descriptive analytic qualitative researches as this study if only they guide the researcher to attain the ultimate meanings from the analysis of the texts and the diverse contexts in which they are realised. It is also worth noting that quite apart from the theories outlined herein, there are also a number of theories that may lead one to similar meanings arrived at in this research. One thing that stands most important is that there is a true meaning of the texts; however, there are diverse approaches to this meaning. Nonetheless, some approaches are best suited and well illuminating as compared to others.

CHAPTER 4

The Performance Context of Dagbamba Panegyrics

4.1 Introduction

It is a bright Friday morning; the sun had set out on its journey to the west. The hissing winds hover with the tantalising oily aroma of *kose* and *maasa*, the bean and millet cakes that are served with the usual traditional millet porridge known as *kooko*. At the precincts of the *Gbewaa* palace in Yendi, the spiritual town and paramount of the Dagbamba of Dagbon, multitudes of people have gathered to celebrate the usual Friday prayers ceremony for the thanksgiving and intercession for the King, Dagbon and the Dagbamba as a whole. The occasion is one amongst several celebrations that affords one the opportunity to witness the rich customs and pageantry of the Dagbamba in full display. More grand ceremonies as festivals, durbars, coronations and royal funerals in particular witness larger crowds of people and activities that may obstruct the attention of participants and onlookers alike.

From a distance, two groups of women situated along the main street are surrounded by people who desperately wait for their turns to purchase their breakfast before the activities of the day begin. Their presence is an unavoidable sight. The general setting is however characterised by movements from all angles, while others are patiently seated in groups in anticipation of the day's activities. Quite apart from shouts, commands and other indistinct utterances from the active crowds, the drum beats of the *lunsi* and the *akaranima* fill the air. The two sets of *Tempana*, the talking drums of the Dagbamba employed at the royal courts, are placed at both the left and right sides of the entrance to the royal forecourt. Both drummers of the *Tempana* and the *luŋa* enthusiastically welcome dignitaries to the grounds by the beats of their drums. No one utters a word; however, the dignitaries themselves appear to understand that the drummers bid them welcome and as a token of appreciation, they dole out money as they move on.

Amidst the crowds, one can distinguish between the clan groups present by virtue of their associations, dress codes and general appearances and positions amongst their peers. The *naanima*, the royals; the *lunsi*, praise poets; *gonjenima*, fiddlers; *sapashinima*, the warriors; *afanima*, the Moslem clerics and members of the traditional religious sects are some of the clans present with their peculiar dress codes and roles.

Once some notable chiefs had taken their seats at the forecourt of the *Gbewaa* palace, the movements and sounds recede and silence reigns. Automatically, the silence signals that the day's activities were on the verge of starting. The tunes and song of the fiddlers can be heard from the inner courts of the king. They rise with time and become even vibrant as the sub-chiefs and elders of the king lead the procession to usher the king to his forecourts where other chiefs, elders and the entire audience await. An elderly woman moves along with the procession and chants praises to the king in the Hausa language, often genuflecting and raising her two hands

to the sky, as if in a form of surrender. Before the king comes out from the gate, the praise poets spring up in their numbers to their feet and together with the fiddlers on the other side of queue; they intensify their performances.

So gracefully the lead praise poet moves close the king. He beats his drum with dexterity and cups his right palm around his ear, as though to receive the next lines or ideas from an invincible muse whispering in his ear. Gently his voice rises and falls as he devotionally closes and opens his eyes. *Balim, balim, balim.* /*Nom balim, balim ka tiŋ maai*, which translates as “Gently, gently, gently. /Walk gently, gently and calm the earth”, are his first two lines as a call to the king. There and then, he strolls backward and forward in his unending praise, transformed into higher realms of possession and leaves the audience spellbound. The king reaches and takes his seat, but the praise poets remain standing as they complement the panegyric of their lead poet with intermittent drum beats. Meanwhile the lead praise poet has his right knee on the ground as he faces the king and chants appellations that trace the genealogy of the king and their achievements to the amazement of the general audience. Money is coming from all sides amongst the audience to the praise poets as a commendation of their efforts. The king and elders do not also relent in dishing out money to the praise poets. The practice is common with the Dagbamba and several other people. Writing in the *Economy of the Unlost*, Carson (1999) compares and contrasts the works of the ancient Greek lyric poet Simonides of Keos and the Romanian poet, a Jew and survivor of the Holocaust Paul Celan. She notes that the former was the first of the western poets to solicit money for his poetic works. The nods of affirmation, attentiveness and excitement from the audience are clear indications that the performance is up to standard. As the lead praise poet concludes his panegyric after about thirty (30) minutes of showers of praise, the fiddlers in turn take charge.

The preceding description of an event of performance is but a mere glimpse of what actually entails at the situation of performance.

Therefore, following the discussion on the relevance of the contexts of orature in the introductory sections, this chapter seeks to highlight the dynamics of the performance situation as far as Dagbamba panegyrics are concerned. The functions of the performers, audience, the patrons and the texts proper are explored for a better appreciation of the novelty of the oral texts as prodigious literary works. The texts may be the focus of interest; however, they can only be fully appreciated with due attention paid to the entire performance situation. Other contextual issues that contribute to a better understanding as the socio-cultural, economic, political and religious aspects of the Dagbamba as a people and with relation to the Dagbamba panegyrics are hereby carried up in the event of performance.

The performance event also embodies several other acts and factors that contribute significantly to the artistry of the texts. With respect to the Dagbamba panegyrics in particular, the drum complements the oral texts and serves to embody the spirit of the texts and the drummers as a whole. Its omission in the discussion of the Dagbamba panegyric therefore is suspect. The verbal and non-verbal cues and other prosodic and paralinguistic features as realised in the event of performance require detailed elaboration.

This section further seeks to examine some fundamental questions that concern what is considered as a good performance by the dictates of the praise poets or performers in question, the audience and the general Dagbamba public. Other questions that leap for attention are: What are the rules to be obeyed in the renditions or performance of the Dagbamba panegyrics and when are these rules adhered to or broken?

Figures 4 and 5 showcase performance events at *Karaga*, a Dagbamba town. Figure 4.1 shows a chief being ushered into the *Karaga* palace while figure 4.2 shows an entourage of chiefs and elders in the company of praise poets from *Kumbungu* arriving at the enskinment of the regent, *Gbonlana* of *Karaga*. These pictures demonstrate the large crowds that often attend ceremonies in the Dagbamba communities. Most Dagbamba events involve entire communities and visitors from far and wide.



Figure 4.1



Figure 4.2

4.2 The Performance Contexts of the Dagbamba Panegyrics

It is significant to state that Dagbamba panegyrics as oral texts cannot be studied in isolation. Poetics or meaning in general is entailed in both texts and the event of performance, which encompasses diverse contexts as the cultural, social, historical, political and economic amongst a host of diverse other contexts. Therefore, an attempt to appraise the literariness of the texts with no due attention to the contexts in which they are realised will be a great disservice to the Dagbamba panegyrics and oral texts as a whole. To Finnegan (2018: 18), simply “the performance is the literature”. The significance of performance as the best approach and appreciation to and of orature has been advanced by several scholars researching diversely in the field of literary studies and other related fields; of significant note include: Okpewho (1992, 1990), Bauman (1984, 1986), Bauman & Braid (1998), Finnegan (2018, 2012, 2007), Barber (1996, 2005), Ben-Amos (1993), Foley (1995, 1991), Hymes (2003, 1981), and Tedlock (1999).

The importance of the performance event as far as the oral text is concerned cannot be underestimated. It is the conduit through which oral texts achieve their true glamour. The context of performance is perhaps the most crucial of all, within which other contexts come to life. At the event of performance, some critical agents that call for attention are the performer, audience, patron, the text and other general contexts as a whole. It is therefore important to highlight the contributions of each agent to the performance event. Bauman’s (1984: 11) observations of the event of performance and the co-actors in such an artistic enterprise is worth quoting at length:

Fundamentally, performance as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a

display of communicative competence. This competence rests on the knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways. [...] From the point of view of the audience, the act of expression on the part of the performer is thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill is marked as available for the enhancement of experience, through the present enjoyment of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression itself. Performance thus calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of expression and gives license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity.

Finnegan (2012: 5) reiterates that “the significance of performance in oral literature goes beyond a mere matter of definition: for the nature of the performance itself can make an important contribution to the impact of the particular literary form being exhibited.” For a better appreciation of the Dagbamba panegyrics, the presence of one at the event of performance is imperative. Unlike written poetry, the oral text spirals to life at the situation of performance. However, as being present at the event cannot be achieved by all and sundry, audio or video recordings may serve as better supplements, while pictures, good and detailed descriptive analysis could also highlight the performance in perspective. With the advancements in digital technologies, the internet and the diverse communication media are avenues that do not only preserve but serve to disseminate information in both audio and video forms. Hence, discussion on ‘technauriture’, the fuse of technology and literature as the use of the above media to showcase literature has been led by the South African scholar, Russell Kaschula.

The performance contexts of the Dagbamba panegyrics involve a performer or performers – who constitute the Dagbamba praise poets; the patrons – chiefs and royals; an audience that may include both Dagbamba and other neighbours and friends; a setting, time and place within which the text is brought to life with the aid of

the voice and the interplay of gestures, costumes and both linguistic and paralinguistic features. Though the performer serves as the lead actor in the situation of performance, the subtle interaction between him and the audience at the moment of performance enhances the entire performance as whole. The mood and general atmosphere are set by the coordination between the performer and audience as well as the patrons at the event performance.

It is at the place, time and situation of performance that the actual composition of the Dagbamba panegyrics take form. At the event of performance, composition by the praise poet and the evaluations by the patrons and general audience go on simultaneously. Also, the art of recalling what one has in memory and the actual composition-in-performance take place concurrently. No matter the art and efforts spent on rehearsal or memorisation, the text proper only emerges during performance. That is to say, Dagbamba panegyrics, like most oral texts are conditioned by the setting, time, the audience present and the general situation of the performance. Hence, rehearsals are only worthwhile when the performing praise poet selects what to say, omit or add as per the dictates of the performance situation.

Writing on the ethnography of performance, Coulthard (1977: 42) notes the following in relation to setting, otherwise known as the place of performance: "All speech events occur of necessity in time and space – sometimes it is one of the defining criteria of an event that occurs at a specific time or in a specific place." He (ibid.) further observes that "[a]ll speech communities have unique rules for interpreting the messages conveyed both verbally and non-verbally, and thus the same formal realisations may have different values in different communities."

It is at the situation of performance that the genius of the performer comes to bare. As reiterated earlier, unlike the writer poet who puts into writing his text and goes through editing and proof-reading processes until he or she is satisfied with the work before it reaches

the audience, here readers, the oral poet does not have such luxuries. Composition, to some extent, editing, amongst other proofs, are done simultaneously during performance. Therefore, great strides are made to avoid errors as the audience and patrons of the oral word are an immanent presence in virtually all the processes of the composition and performance of the Dagbamba panegyrics.

It is a reality that errors are bound to arise in the process of performance; however, the good performers evade at least some errors so well that it will take good listeners and persons well versed in the art of praise poetry and Dagbamba lore as a whole to realise that a mistake has indeed been committed. The praise poet is less persuasive but delivers informational and entertaining speeches aimed at teaching and delighting the audience. Therefore, a mistake may be recaptured to appear as though it was deliberately brought up to enhance the performance.

Based on the foregoing, it could be deduced that the event of performance is a cloak that the oral expression puts on to gain true glamour. It is at the situation of performance that the essential aspects of the oral form stand out. In her introductory remarks to *Text and performance in Africa*, Barber (2005: 264) is quite critical with her distinctions between the text and performance as she maintains thus:

In written literary traditions the distinction between text and performance seems self-evident. The text is the permanent artefact, handwritten or printed, while the performance is the unique, never-to-be repeated realization or concretization of the text, a realization that "brings the text to life" but which is itself doomed to die on the breath in which it is uttered. Text fixes, performance animates.

It is at the situation of performance that truths and values are reconfirmed. As a whole, performances tend to advocate unity as it brings people together. The audience are gratified not just by the

artistic prowess of the performers, but also by the achievements of their ancestors and kings in particular. As a general note, the history of the Dagbamba and the genealogies of their kings are alluded to in the rendition of the panegyrics. The roles, deeds, visions and aspirations of the kings and the people as a whole are also reiterated during performances. The performance as a whole is therefore a display of the rich artistry of the Dagbamba as a people. Herein, their artistic sensibilities are showcased. As a result, Dagbamba feel some dignity for their culture and ancestry. To a larger extent, performances also tend to unite as well serve as reconciliatory fronts and highlight the promises of the future.

4.3 The Performer

The praise poets of Dagbon, known as *lunsi* (PL.) *luŋa* (SG.), are called the grandmasters of the drum not only for the fact that the drum accompanies their performances but more so, for their age-long adaptation of the drum and their mastery of diverse beats coupled with their versatile roles in the Dagbamba kingdom. As reiterated earlier, the art of drumming is an inherited art passed down from several generations by virtue of one's consanguine relation to the drummer clan. No one decides to become a drummer or praise poet simply because he or she wishes to play the drum or to learn the art of praise poetry. Clearly, no one can get into the Dagbamba clan later in life or get out of it. One may only decide to either be active or passive in his or her cultural designated role as a whole.

The performer, herein the praise poet, occupies a central place in the event of performance. The entire performance revolves around the performer or the praise poet as it is with Dagbamba panegyric performances. He is the orchestrator of the performance, hence the name performer. It is the praise poet who initiates the performance and continues to steer the event throughout its creative process to

a logical conclusion. Hence, a performance can either be enhanced or denigrated by the role played by the performer at the situation of performance.

The personality of the performer is also vital to the performance situation. In the Dagbamba communities, though the art of praise poetry may be the prerogative of the drummer clan, some praise poets stand out. As is the case with many other arts and professions in general, some praise poets have distinguished themselves in the art of performance; and for that matter, they are well revered in their respective communities and Dagbon as a whole. Even esteemed praise poets, regardless of the respect bestowed on them, equally have other praise poets they admire in one respect or the other. More so, in the presence of renowned praise poets, neophyte praise poets may lose their confidence while others may stand up to the task and excel for that matter.

It stands to reason that at events where renowned praise poets are present or are supposed to lead a performance, many people in the locality and its surrounding communities would be obliged to be present. This could be attributed to the artistic prowess of the praise poet in question and the style with which he carries out his performances. The praise poet needs to ensure that the patrons and audience in particular do not lose interest in the performance. Their interests must be sustained throughout the process of performance; it is a skill only master praise poets can uphold. The style the performer adopts in his performances is therefore an important factor to consider.

The mood of the praise poet at a particular time or place of performance can be a contributing factor to the success of a performance. There are instances, where some audience at the event of performance may deter the praise poet from uttering some statements that are in the stock of phrases of the usual poetic rendition. For example, the presence of chiefs or kings who occupy a higher status than the royal to be extolled may require that the

praise poet recreates the texts in performance by some necessary additions and omissions or generally evade statements that may appear demeaning or ambiguous to others present at the event of performance. In the presence of some members of a royal clan or community, circumventions of some statements in the process of performance become inevitable.

More significantly, it is at the situation of performance that the ability of the praise poet at memorising is put to test. There are times, where some lines of even master performers escape from their memory. The issues that warrant evasions can be of both internal and external factors, albeit the latter is more often the result of forgetfulness on the part of performers in oral performances.

There is often the tendency to think of the human mind as being incapable of holding information as oral lore passed on from several generations' past. This tendency may then hold orature suspect of precision as it may be fraught with issues of originality and excesses. The fact should be told and well that some of the praise poets or master drummers of Dagbon for that matter have in memory tons of information to the minutest details that great libraries and encyclopaedias and books generally would envy. In fact, the knowledge of the praise poets is most significant as they have answers to all baffling questions and issues, which even the greatest books remain quiet to, as a result of their static nature. Hence, it could be argued that all stored information is only second to these walking libraries as archives of information. The fertility of the poets' minds is therefore very crucial as far as the Dagbamba panegyric is concerned.

That notwithstanding, praise poets and audience alike maintain that the voice quality, also known as timbre of the performer is a plus in the rendering of the panegyrics. However, it is only second to the stock of knowledge that a performer has regarding the panegyrics as a whole. Therefore, a praise poet is of the best ranking if he commands both qualities of a beautiful voice and a

rich knowledge of the genealogies, history and general intricacies of the panegyric tradition.

With respect to the functional role of the voice at the event of performance, the praise poet needs to project his voice to the hearing of the audience as well as be audible enough in order that sounds of the drums and other instruments and surrounding noises do not drown his voice in the process of rendition. He needs to also regulate rhythmically according to the text in question and the entire rhythms initiated by the drum in particular at the situation of performance. Most importantly, the praise poet must guard against interruptions as well as strictly regulate his pauses in accordance to the general patterns of the text. He must also take the necessary care not to omit vital stock phrases or either interchange or introduce irrelevant information that does not well develop the plot and mood of the panegyric by traditional dictates.

Indeed, no matter the attempts made to give a description of the voice quality of the performer, it can barely be truly appreciated. No adjective, regardless of the images it attempts to capture, can match the actual realisation of the voice in the event of performance. Audio or video recordings may address this lapse to some extent; however, the best approach to an apt comprehension of the voice quality and other such paralinguistic features is for one to be a witness or participant at the event of performance. Some other paralinguistic features as realised at the situation of performance are given more detailed elaboration in the sections that follow. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show *Namoo Naa* Abdulai, chief of all drummers in Dagbon in his court at his residence and under his hat with other drummers at the *Gbewaa* palace in Yendi.



Figure 4.3



Figure 4.4

4.3.1 The Process of Apprenticeship

The Dagbamba praise poet, albeit his role in the community as a praise poet, is destined by birth – a point well made in the preceding discussions. More so, the art of praise poetry tends to sway more to extrinsic acquisitions rather than what is intrinsic, as virtue of one born into the lineage of praise poets. Therefore, the budding praise poet must necessarily undergo some training in order to distinguish himself in the art of praise singing. It is for this reason that one may find some Dagbamba who are deemed praise poets by virtue of the fact that they hail from the lineage of praise poets, but are not versed with the nitty-gritties of praise poetry, let alone attempt a performance of such an act. This is even more of the case in recent times as globalisation and its attendants tend to affect some cultural prescriptions.

Under the tutelage of a master praise poet who can either be a father or relative, the budding praise poet is first taught the history of his immediate lineage, the entire community or Dagbon at large, the history of other notable neighbouring communities and their relationships and the historical encounters between one's community and Dagbon as a whole are about the stages of knowledge acquisition in the art of praise poetry amongst the Dagbamba. Also, of great significance are the socio-political, cultural and religious happenings in the past as well as the present. All these together are very crucial in the fertilisation of the mind of the budding praise poet. It should be noted, however, that this general knowledge may only be enough but not deemed complete as there is always a variety of other notable issues and events that are worth knowing. Therefore, the enterprise of apprenticeship is a lifelong process, and will last as long as the praise poet lives. After the budding praise poet extricates himself from the tutelage of his master, he then begins to be a master of himself and of many other praise poets as time goes on.



Figure 4.5



Figure 4.6

Praise poets range from all ages. It is not uncommon to find children about the ages of seven or even younger struggling with drums almost their sizes during performances. In fact, that is how they start to learn and appreciate their roles as drummers or praise poets. While some children may actually play their drums to complement those of the general assemble of drummers, others serve as helpers in carrying the drums of their fathers or masters. Figures 4.5 and 4.6 show pictures of young apprentice praise poets supporting a drum assemble as active players of the drum in *Karaga* and a budding praise poet assisting in carrying a drum at the *Gbewaa* palace in Yendi respectively.

With respect to praise poetry in general, the first and foremost praise poem that is supposed to be known by any budding praise poet is *Dakoli nyɛ bia*, which translates as 'the bachelor is a child'. This praise poem is basically an ode to the almighty God from its onset and concludes with evocative praises of the genealogy of the respective praise poets. The second praise poem to be grasped by the neophyte praise singer is the panegyric in honour of the king or chief of his immediate community. When one has mastered the panegyric of the royal of his immediate community, the panegyrics of the reigning *Yaa Naa*, the paramount chief of Yendi and king of Dagbon and other late kings of Dagbon, are further learnt. The next point of call in the learning process of the praise poet is then to acquire the panegyrics of prominent chieftains as *Karaga*, *Savulugu*, *Mion/Sambu* and *Bimbila* amongst a host of other panegyrics of prominent chiefs and sub-chiefs of Dagbon. In fact, this process may not be complete as the Dagbamba share close affinity to the *Mamprusi* and *Nanumba* for that matter in Ghana and the *Mossi* in Burkina Faso. Therefore, as the Dagbamba panegyric is governed by occasion, place and other factors as the presence of some particular dignitaries other than Dagbamba royals, it becomes imperative for the praise poet to have a cross-fertilised knowledge of some other communities and people as the aforementioned.

The venture at grasping the genealogies and histories of the Dagbamba as a whole should not be seen as too complicated, though it is to some extent. This is because, as stated earlier, the Dagbamba belong to diverse clans of which the royal clan is one. Hence, most of the chiefs and kings, as a general rule, are related. For example, virtually all Dagbamba kings or chiefs proper have one ancestral king called *Naa Gbewaa*, and therefore any praise directed to the son of *Naa Gbewaa* works for all royals who hold *Naa Gbewaa* as their ancestor. And of course, any praise directed to the son of *Naa Gbewaa* may automatically be a praise to any *Dagbana* (SG. form for Dagbamba).

The art of the poet as a divine call to task is well known in most traditions. As reiterated earlier, though the art of praise singing is a mandate by tradition by virtue of the poet's lineage, the gift of memory and performance are not equally distributed. To borrow the biblical clause from Matthew 24: 14 (KJV): "For many are called, but a few are chosen." Quite apart from the individual prowess, it is believed at least by some Dagbamba praise poets that there are spiritual dimensions to their art. The first is one's consanguine association with the lineage of praise singers. This may serve as the first divine call. Others are further chosen with time, and as such distinguish themselves from other praise poets by dint of their phenomenal creative dexterity in the art of poetry and performance as a whole.

More so, there are notably some charms and potions that praise poets resort to in order to be successful in memory retention, delivery and general performance. The most notable charms are *Tele* (memory) and his purported wife *Yelkuntum* (perfection). As to whether charms and potions enhance the performances of the praise poets is mostly for the praise poets themselves to decipher. However, in a candid opinion, the charms and potions are most effective even though it will be very complicated or nearly impossible to measure the degree of their efficacy. It should, however, be noted that if indeed the charms and potions are not effective, the praise poets

will not say they are or let alone trust their uses over the centuries. Like some other people, praise poets may acquire some personal charms for protection and also to enhance their performances. The point should, however, be made that Dagbamba praise poets generally maintain that the drum in itself is a very effective charm in the possession of the drummer or praise poet.

The case of one of South Africa's youngest *Sangoma's* call to the art of praise singing and divination is a typical case in point as far as the spiritual element in the arts is concerned. In an interview, *Monde*, as he was called from birth, notes that upon sleepless nights, he awoke one night and walked behind the house only to be confronted by an animal which said to him that he was no longer to be called *Monde*, but *Gobela*. Hence, from the tender age of six, Monde heeded to his call to duty as a *Sangoma* and became *Gobela Mazibuko Radebe Bhungane Mashiamahle Nje Nge Nyamaane* (full name). Gogo Mwawa, a female *Sangoma* and *Sangoma Mthelo Mangena*, co-tutors of *Gobela*, under whose tutelage *Gobela* underwent his training both attest to the prowess of the divine call of *Gobela*.¹ Diverse other spiritual dimensions as this pertains to the art of praise poetry amongst the Dagbamba.

4.3.2 Gender Roles versus the Art of Praise Poetry in Dagbon

The Dagbamba, like most of their neighbours, practice a patrilineal system of inheritance. Therefore, patriarchy plays a significant role in the determination of many customs and general activities in Dagbon. With regard to the role of women in the respective clans that are identified in Dagbon, roles per se are mostly male

¹ In an interview, Daily Sun TV captures the scenario as: "Is he Mzansi's youngest *Sangoma*?" (21st January 2014). The following YouTube links show two interviews in this regard: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAxb-fJoXWU>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnYdjaX457k>

dominated if not entirely male played. As an example, women who are born into the drummer clan are not involved in the roles played by the said drummers proper. Focus is placed on male children born into the lineage of drummers; little attention or no attention is placed on female children as far as the art of praise poetry is concerned.

That should not be mistaken to mean that females are not recorded respect. What is meant is that women are bestowed other roles that are mainly dictated by tradition. For example, many a praise poet have affirmed that the nature of their work is not suitable for females as they tend to travel a lot and to distant places where they often stay overnights. That notwithstanding, women support the enterprise of the praise poets in several ways. For instance, they tend to ululate at some particular times and more so commend the praise poets at events of performance. Quite apart from these, they may also render some general services such as serving food and drinks to the praise poets.

Though women are not a part of the drum assemblies proper, their knowledge of the art of praise poetry is not in doubt. A praise poet from *Mion/Sambu* confirmed that he had witnessed a woman perform praise renditions to the astonishment of many. He, however, confirmed that it was quite a unique scenario as the lady seemed to have been in a trance, a sort of spiritual possession of a sort. At the event of some performances, some women present would nod in affirmation to the panegyrics rendered by some praise poets. One woman from the drummer clan was also able to point out a chronological misplacement in the rendition of a panegyric by a praise poet. This indicates that women do understand the nature of the performance and as well understand what is being rendered.

This stands to buttress the fact that women are knowledgeable in the art of praise poetry; the only problem being that tradition does not allow them to showcase it as their male counterparts do.

Some female children from the drummer clan have been known to have imbibed the lore of the Dagbamba and the art of praise poetry in particular to the astonishment of many. For instance, a praise poet narrates an instance where their female sibling who happens to usually be washing bowls or arranging stuff in their compound amidst their drum lessons grasps the knowledge of the art of praise poetry, with particular respect to the histories and panegyrics taught, even though she was not formally part of their classes. This is not a rare situation; instances such as this, as far as the art of praise poetry and gender are concerned, abound.

In another instance, some praise poets consciously teach female children the art of praise poetry as a last resort. Take a renowned praise poet from *Nanton*, a Dagbamba community, who happens to be married to a daughter of another late renowned praise poet (a female praise poet in all respects) with a single child who happens to be a female. Apparently, their female child has been taught the art of praise poetry by both parents and she is well abreast with the lore of Dagbamba as a whole. Indeed, the knowledge of both parents needs to be passed on and since there is no male heir, the female child automatically takes up the role, albeit the fact that she cannot act out the role of a praise poet in the Dagbamba community. Significantly, however, she may pass on her knowledge to a male child or relative in the near future. This venture should be recommended by tradition. Generally, women who are gifted in the art of singing may simply become general singers or performers known as *bansi* (PL.), *baŋa* (SG.).

4.4 The Patron(s)

Dagbamba panegyrics focus on extolling the glories of kings and chiefs. Attention therefore is directed more on the genealogies of rulers and their accompanying appellations. The

panegyrics feature prominently at durbars and festivals as kings and chiefs play very vital roles during such occasions as compared to weddings and naming ceremonies. For example, the *Naa Damba* festival is purposely meant to celebrate kings and chiefs of Dagbon.

Though the praise poem in general may be employed to praise any person worthy of attention, the patrons and subjects of Dagbamba panegyrics, as the name suggests, are kings, chiefs and some other notable royals. In some other instances, virtually all people are worthy of the praise of the Dagbamba praise poets. This is even more so with political figures and other influential people in the community. However, though the renditions of praises to the people other than royals may have striking similarities especially in style, there are some unique epithets and acclamations that are strictly the preserve of royals and some particular royals for that matter.

The distinction between the king and chief in this discussion is as follows: The king in Dagbon is the paramount chief of the Dagbamba. His skin name is *Yaa Naa* and he serves as the chief of Yendi, the spiritual town of the Dagbamba. He answers to no other chief in Dagbon. He; however, has a council of some divisional chiefs, sub-chiefs and elders who advise him and serve as a decision-making body. There are also divisional chiefs and sub-chiefs who exercise dominion over some other Dagbamba communities. It is significant to state here that with respect to chieftaincy in Dagbon, some chieftains are specifically designated for female chiefs only; and females who occupy these skins are notably the daughters of *Yaa Naas*. All chiefs, irrespective of their gender are, however, answerable to the paramount chief of the Dagbamba, the *Yaa Naa*. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 show pictures of the king of Dagbon, *Yaa Naa* Abubakari Mahama II and the chief of Gundo, *Naa* Salamatu Abudu – paramount chief of all the female chieftains in Dagbon.



Figure 4.7



Figure 4.8

4.5 The Audience

Without an active presence of an audience, the event of performance is bound to be stale. The audience at a performance as that of the Dagbamba panegyrics play a vital role in the entire process. They may erroneously be viewed as mere spectators, however, at the situation of performance, they are active participants other than mere passive onlookers. They play a functional role in the determination of the success of an event. The performance of panegyrics can either be successful or unsuccessful as per the nature and degree of involvement of the audience.

As a matter of fact, the presence of a lively audience alone can be a significant boost to the performer. At least, it shows that the audience appreciate the performance. The diverse responses by the audience as the performance unfolds have great bearing on the success of the entire event. Quite apart from the intermittent utterances in the form of recommendation, as in interpolations, exclamations and interjections, the audience often dish out money to the performers at heightened points in the rendition of the texts.

The people as the audience and their general numbers as a whole can ignite the artistic prowess of the performer. More so, the presence of the audience ultimately breeds both verbal and non-verbal communicative cues. Facial expressions like smiles and eye contacts are some of the non-verbal cues that are exchanged by performers, audience and patrons alike. Hand gestures and general body expressions keep the praise poet poised for perfection. These factors go a long way to propel performances in general.

The general audience at an event of performance consist of diverse people in the Dagbamba community. In most instances, it is also not uncommon to find members belonging to other neighbouring communities, friends and relations. Some notable personalities from the community and from elsewhere may also be present. Visitors present to see the chief, in most respects, go in

turns. For example, during Friday prayers, the *Afanima*, Moslem clerics, say their prayers after which they leave the forecourt for the traditionalists to also say their prayers. When these are over, other visitors present follow in succession. Figure 4.9 shows a group of chiefs, elders and some visitors at the forecourt of the *Gbewaa* palace whereas figure 4.10 shows the *Afanima* and their families at the forecourt of the *Gbewaa* palace.



Figure 4.9 and 4.10

The audience, as noted, in oral literary research usually occupy a marginal role in performance discussions. However, without them, the text cannot be fully realised or may not exist at all. Why? The participation of the audience and their consequent evaluations of the texts contribute significantly to meaning making. Considering the functional role of the panegyrics, a most important one being to maintain allegiance of the subject to the monarch in the Dagbamba society, the presence of the audience at the event of performance cannot be overemphasised. For example, when diverse affirmations are being directed to the monarch, it is only prudent that there be an audience to digest the information by reaffirming their allegiance. In fact, their mere presence alone speaks volumes and their active involvement in the performance event is even more graceful.

4.6 The Texts

The communal nature of most verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics cannot be contested. The society in which the poets reside, and the culture of the respective people invariably has a great toll on the poet. The texts as a whole and the repertoire of the praise poet are a creation of Dagbamba culture. The texts may have been the creation of some individual praise poets; however, they have come to be communally owned, particularly by the drummer clan. Though the praise poet adds to the creativity and artistry of the performances and the texts, he owes his style and product to his ancestors, who have with time set the boundaries for the performance and text in particular.

The texts have stood the time, in content and form, through the censorship of the community since their inception and transition through the ages. Censorship of texts throughout the centuries and the individual artistic talents as captured in the performances of texts demonstrate how praise poets personalise them with their

peculiar artistic idiosyncrasies. That apart, the texts also undergo some modifications; however slightly, with time and are performed to suite situations and patrons by the unique creative prowess of respective praise poets. Swann and Deumert (2018) conclude thus: "In a break from ideas of the lone, creative genius, contemporary studies see creativity as a more widespread phenomenon, socio-historically located, and co-produced – i.e. a collaborative rather than individual achievement."

The fact that the composer owes much of his knowledge to the lore of the Dagbamba as history, proverbs, riddles, wise sayings and other content information is undeniable as this is apparent in the texts. For many who have come to know the Dagbamba panegyrics and the art of praise poetry in particular, their enthralment is a long lasting one. Many have wondered how praise poets trace the roots of persons, spanning several generations with such accuracy. In response, the praise poets have explained their knowledge of versatility of the genealogies diversely; and issues that hold sway are summarised in an analogy of persons as similar to trees as an example. One can tell the type and kind of tree by its physical appearance, its environment and its general interactions within and with its sphere or habitat. More so, one can tell the kind of a tree by its leaves. Knowledge of the leaves further reveals the nature of its branches and stems which consequently lead one to the affirmation of its roots. It is the same with humans. One needs to simply find a peculiar trait or characteristic of a person or thing and all other associations fall in place.

The question of originality as far as the Dagbamba panegyric is concerned is somewhat a complex issue to address. One may ask: Original in what respects? It should be stated that originality proper could best be measured by a comparative historical examination of the panegyrics from their inception in the past centuries to the recent times. However, there are barely substantial data to make such a study plausible. As the originality of the panegyrics

cannot be ascertained by a systematic comparative study of the aesthetics and general artistic prowess of the texts of the past and present, originality is herein measured by the artistic creativity of the praise poet in question as against the other praise poets and the panegyrics available. The originality of the Dagbamba panegyrics is also weighed against the adherence of the texts or entire performance to the standards of the time as prescribed by the praise poets themselves and the Dagbamba as a whole. Nagy (1996: 9) is therefore quick to remind us: "I believe that once we know the facts of oral composition, we must cease trying to find an *original* of any traditional song. From one point of view each performance is an *original*."

Dagbamba panegyrics are orally composed; they are learnt orally and are also performed or transmitted orally. Issues of variations of texts therefore become evident. Though the aesthetics of the Dagbamba panegyrics may be presumed to have changed with time; however minimally, the content or plot of the texts, would have been consistent, changing only liberally per the circumstances that pertain at the situation of performance. Noteworthy are also the facts that the phraseology of the panegyrics is also bound to vary with the changing trends in the *Dagbani* language with time and the case of dialectal differences and individual preferences of diction and style of speech and performance as a whole. Per these assumptions, Finnegan (2018: 23–24) observes truly that "[...] a strict characteristic of oral as distinct from written literature is its verbal variability."

No single text, irrespective of the creative prowess of the praise poet is likely to remain the same no matter the efforts made by even a particular poet to achieve such a feat. In fact, no praise poet actually aspires to this feat, as the genius lies in adapting the texts to suit the respective time and place than repeating the same texts or stunts. Each performer at a given time, place and situation, to say the least, performs an original text by all standards. Hence, what is original is not necessarily the performances of texts that pre-date others as it is the case with some other genres.

When the question concerning the nature of the verbal text is raised, it could simply be said that it is imprinted in the minds of the oral poets. However, it should be stated emphatically that the praise poets of the Dagbamba do not memorise their texts by rote. As far as the time, place, the audience and patrons and other factors during performance actually inform the performance, rote memorisation and, or rehearsed performance is most likely to result in a disaster. In fact, such acts would be detrimental to the art of praise singing per its nature. Therefore, a praise poet has to have a general knowledge of diverse histories and genealogies of relevance; for the panegyric proper is woven with the stock information within the reach of the praise poet in question. The order and arrangement of themes are calculated and so are the contents of the panegyrics. Hence, the real rehearsals are realised in one act of a performance.

Dagbamba panegyrics reflects some expeditions, socio-political and cultural circumstances of the Dagbamba as a whole. With regard to the content of the Dagbamba panegyrics, they are most importantly characterised by epithets, origins and genealogies of kings and chiefs. Other mentions may include historical conquests, migration history, territorial control, statesmanship and the aspirations and vicissitudes of the past and reigning chiefs. Character traits, physical features as well as dispositional traits may gain mention if they indeed stand out. More often than not, the appellations that are bestowed on royals define their roles and duties in the Dagbon Kingdom. The *Kuga Naa* is notably one of the most influential chiefs amongst the council of elders in Dagbon. Quite apart from the diverse roles he plays in the day to day administration of Dagbon as a whole, he is said to be a *Naa yeɓa*, grandfather chief, and he is therefore accorded great respect. More detailed elaborations of the text of the Dagbamba panegyric and its nature are explored in the following chapter.

The panegyrics normally revolve around the reigning royal, his or her descent – often tracing the origin and feats of both parents

and siblings as well. Unquestionably, parentage and other relations are crucial. That is the most reason why Dagbamba panegyrics are allusive by nature. Moral and emotional attributes and general deeds or actions of the king or chief may also gain the attention of the praise poets in panegyric performances. The accomplishments of the reigning royal, his visions, roles and general attributes may also be carried up in the panegyrics. These have to be relevant to the development of the plot and themes. Finnegan (2012: 111) says of the panegyric thus: "In its specialized form panegyric is the type of court poetry and one of the most developed and elaborate poetic genres of Africa. It seems to go with a particular ethos, a stress on royal or aristocratic power, and an admiration for military achievement." Further elaborations of the panegyric as a form of praise poetry that functions in royal courts to extol the genealogies and deeds of royals are found in Finnegan (2018: 49–74, 2012: 111–143).

Generally, allusions to chiefs and other historical events are normally done in sequential order. Usually, stanzas or sub-plots are chronologically introduced in a performance, from the last to the recent. After each rendition of a stanza or a sub-plot comes the beating of the drum with its accompanying responses. When the drum falls, it signals the progression or introduction of the next sub-plot. Some praise poets may choose to end the renditions of their sub-plots with some particular phrases as in "sit (gently) and calm the earth" and several other notable phrases.

It is significant to note that human errors are possible even as the eloquence of the Dagbamba praise poets is not in doubt. Whenever errors occur in performances, the lead performer may be signalled by another accompanying performer, normally by the drum, or take up the performance as a whole. A chief who reigned before another, for example, is not mentioned after one who reigned after him or her. In fact, a skip of a notable chief or a historical event in a rendition is easily noted by the praise poets or any knowledgeable audience and an entire skip of a sub-plot is even more palpable.

Hence, such a skip or elimination is considered a blunder in the rendition of the panegyric. This is, however, a very rare scenario. Significantly, errors may simply be glided over by a master praise poet well versed in the art of performance as not many an audience will actually notice any mistakes.

Irrespective of the role of the panegyrics at striving to maintain truths and values, the tendency for bias and untruth in the texts and performance as a whole cannot be denied. The panegyric by nature is laden with exaggerations often made to glorify rulers as kings and chiefs. Hence, exaggerations may tend to run over values and truths. That apart, salient issues may tend to also be evaded for minor ones in as much as they do not serve the purpose of the praise poet and the Dagbamba as a whole. For instance, the Dagbamba have lost as many wars against their neighbours as much as they have won. However, the losses cannot be glorified and so the least said about them, the better. There may also be elements of criticism, contrary to the concept of praise, fused in a praise poem or the panegyric in particular. These criticisms are often meant to rectify certain anomalies of the time and place. The praise poets censor leadership roles without recourse to fear, albeit that is usually done with polite and covert messages. The voice of the poet is indeed the voice of the people. The descriptive analysis of the prowess of the Dagbamba praise poets lends credence to Storch's (2017: 2) assertion:

Creativity is thus a process that emerges out of the interpersonal, out of shared language, and out of its mimetic nature. Creative performance requires both a look in the mirror and a turn to the other, in order to achieve its various aims: the creation of imagined realities, transmission of ideas about the self, and obtaining the other's evaluation of the same.

4.6.1 Orality versus Literacy: The Praise Poet in Recent Times

The emergence of Arabic for writing and learning purposes in Dagbon dates back to the coming of the Islamic clerics, popularly known as *Afanima*, in Dagbon about the 17th century. However, the preservation of the Dagbamba panegyrics in writing was not deemed necessary. In recent times when scholarship and writing in diverse languages of which Dagbani, the language of the Dagbamba, have been standardised, archiving Dagbamba panegyrics is not a concern that craves for attention at all. Many factors account for this lack of interest in the documentation of an art form that occupies a centre stage in the lives and culture of the Dagbamba.

Considering the dramaturgical stunts employed in the performances of the Dagbamba panegyric, the written word will do a great disservice to them. Dagbamba panegyrics and oral texts for that matter shed significant properties in writing. The written word basically compresses the oral texts in a fixity to the extent that they can barely manifest their very true nature, thereby staling their artistry or literariness. It is at the situation of performance that the Dagbamba panegyrics are brought to life. Hence, they can only perform their true functions and manifest their true nature in spoken words and at the situation of performance. Indeed, in the royal courts, the patrons or royals do not read the panegyrics in their honour and neither do the praise poets read written texts to their patrons. The artistry of the texts relies on the event of performance which includes an organised patron(s) and audiences.

Therefore, albeit the proliferation and veneration of the written word over the oral word, the Dagbamba panegyrics may continue to strive in their oral forms. Texts may be put into writing or recorded in diverse other means in audio and video as it is becoming the

trend in recent times. However, the oral form and the art performance will remain the preserve of oral traditions as the Dagbamba panegyric.

Nonetheless, written records as well as audio and video recordings, the social media and internet in general are significant platforms to reckon with for the transmission and archiving of oral texts, of which the Dagbamba panegyrics are no exceptions. These modes of transmission and archiving will serve to preserve the texts, mostly in their proto-forms for the coming generations. Scholarship will also stand to benefit as scholarly investigations from diverse academic disciplines on the panegyrics become necessary.

4.7 Setting and the Pragmatics of Costumes

The event of performance is a cocktail of acts, people and diverse other situations. All these acts, people and situations contribute to the realisation of the texts. It therefore stands to reason that audio and visual representations of the event of performance may not capture the substance of the performance in its entirety. Audio recording may capture sounds devoid of their contexts just as video recordings may capture only some aspects or some particular areas of the performance that are at reach of the video recorder and the recording equipment for that matter. Pictures, audio and video recordings only tend to capture some perspectives of the performance. It is important to dedicate some time on some of the scenes, sounds and silences that may escape the attention of the audio and visual gadgets.

First and foremost, one's attendance of Dagbamba occasions is very crucial and cannot be underestimated. The presence or absence of a person of a high standing particularly at an event is communicative enough of respect or disrespect and agreement or disagreement. Every Dagbana has to show interest in the activities and festivities



Figure 4.11 (Source: radiantghanaguide.wordpress.com)



Figure 4.12

organised in one's community and in Dagbon as a whole. However, one's presence at an occasion may speak volumes as far as one's appearance or dressing is concerned. Figure 4.11 shows a Dagbamba chief on horseback with a praise poet rallying behind him while figure 4.12 shows a group of elders in a procession at *Karaga*. Those with cloths wrapped around them are particularly the *kambunsi* or *sapashinima*, the warrior clan.

4.7.1 The Events of Performance of Dagbamba Panegyrics

A praise poem may be performed at virtually all gatherings; however, as the term 'panegyric' denotes, Dagbamba panegyrics are occasioned at events such as the *Sambanluŋa*, which literally means compound drumming but translates as a composite drumming event. Quite apart from the composite drumming, events such as durbars and festivals that have the presence of the king of Dagbon or other chiefs necessarily warrant the performances of panegyrics. As maintained in earlier discussions, the Dagbamba are predominantly Moslem and Fridays are well revered days in the Dagbamba calendar. Hence, prayer ceremonies are usually organised at the royal courts to solicit peace and unity, health and progress amongst other concerns for the Dagbamba and Dagbon as a whole.

Other events that occasion the performance of panegyrics include coronation and funeral ceremonies of kings and chiefs to be specific. As a whole, at events where kings or chiefs happen to find themselves, be it at weddings or naming ceremonies and other such general events, the panegyric is bound to emerge. Figures 4.13 and 4.14 show pictures of the then regent of Dagbon, *Kampakuya Naa* Abdulai Andani and his sub-chiefs and elders



Figure 4.13



Figure 4.14

at the forecourts of the *Gbewaa* palace and an assemble of praise poets performing a panegyric in his honour respectively. It should be stated that the positions of the regent, sub-chiefs and elders as seen in figure 4.13 are not random, but well calculated by Dagbamba tradition.

Abdallah (2010) notes two main kinds of praise poetry performances based on contexts, namely the *Daa Luŋa* and the *Kali luŋa*. The *Daa luŋa* are praise poetry performances directed at chiefs or other personalities at the market squares or on festive seasons while *Kali Luŋa* are directed at kings or chiefs in their palaces or anywhere they find themselves. Other historical praise performances at festivals or durbars also fall under this category. Quite notable also in Dagbon are the appellations performed at dawn to sort of call the king or chief for the first Islamic prayers. This call to prayer is generally referred to as *Beiyu Naayo*. There is also what is referred to as *Ɔieri Tɔbu*, which literally translates as 'sorting out the recipe'. This relates to the usual preludes to the Dagbamba panegyrics or praise poetry performances in general. The permission sought for the act of panegyric performances may be termed as *Nam balimbu* whereas the plot(s) or allusions of the panegyrics are termed as *Mɔni* (Salifu 2010).

4.7.2 The Drum and other Accompaniments

There are diverse instruments that feature at the event of performance. One may find different Dagbamba clans depending on the occasion. Most of the clans have some instruments that are peculiar to their respective groups; elaborations of which can be found in the first chapter. However, for the purposes of this discussion, attention is herein given to the instruments employed by the praise poets in the performances of the panegyrics.

Amongst diverse musical instruments possessed by the *lunsi*, the drummer clan of the Dagbamba, drums occupy a centre stage.

Yet, the most prominent amongst the drums is the *luṇa*, the hour-glass-shaped drum. It comes in different kinds and sizes such as the *luṇ bila*, *luṇ daa* and *luṇ doyu*. The *luṇa* is notably employed in virtually all occasions that require the presence of the praise poets and it may be complemented with other drums, particularly the *gungon*.

Drums are cultural universals especially in most parts of Africa. They are used for diverse functions; ranging from music and dance performances, ritual incantations and the dissemination of information amongst a host of such related purposes. The drum serves as the trademark of the Dagbamba praise poets and it is used to complement the verbal word in rhythmic beats. More often than not, the drum begins as well as ends the performances. The drum is often used to signal performances, as the beats of the drum serve as a sort of refrain to the texts. The beats played by the drum at certain intervals of the performances of the panegyrics also serve to set the texts into their respective stanzas. In fact, there are some specific times in the performances of the panegyrics that occasion the beats of the drum just as there is time for the praise poet to also set his words in motion.

Like the bards of old and in diverse traditions, performances are generally graced with musical accompaniments. The griots in the West African sub-region specifically are well known for their use of acoustics as the *Kora* and other such related lutes. As the Slavic poets are known by the instrument that accompanies their performances – *gusle*, instrument and *gusler(s)*, performer(s) of the *gusle* respectively, so is the case amongst the Dagbamba. The Dagbamba bards are known as *luṇa* (SG.) *lunsi* (PL.), named after the drum instrument, *luṇa* that dominates their art of praise poetry.

The *luṇa* is an hourglass-shaped drum principally carved out of wood from some particular trees. The Dagbamba refer to this carved out wood as *luṇ kobli*. There are usually two openings from both ends which are covered with leather, *luṇ gban* mostly tanned from goat skins. The covered leather from both ends of the drum

are further connected simultaneously with leather tension cords, *lun je* or nylon strings, the former being the most preferred and used as compared to the latter in Dagbon. The leather strings are mostly of the skin of bush animals like the antelope. Both ends of the drum can be played and it is usually played with a skilfully crafted, bent on one end stick known in Dagbani as *lun duali*, meaning 'drum stick'.

It is played by placing the drum under one's forearm, directly under the armpit. Rhythms are generated by skillfully beating one end of the drum with the drum stick and correspondingly, tactically squeezing the tension cords under one's armpit. In some other instances, rhythms are played by touching the leather covering with one's fingers in the course of beating the drum with the drum stick.

The hourglass-shaped drum, depending on the particular drum or player, can be heard from long distances. One other fact about the drum worth noting is that it can be played to mimic the tones of Dagbani other languages as far as the master drummer is well versed in the said language and its intricacies. It can also mimic the syllables in usual expressions. Therefore, the drummer must master the pauses between syllables and entire expressions as it is key to apt comprehension. Technically therefore, the drum may be referred to as a speech surrogate.

Writing on the creative aspects of African drums, Finnegan (2018: 75) observes that "[e]xpressions in drum language, once thought so mysterious by visitors who failed to grasp its principles, turns out to be based directly on actual words and their tones." More often than not, it takes critical attention for one who understands Dagbani to discern what the tones of the drum try to depict of the tones of the language. However, well versed drummers and some other natives understand the unique expressions that are made by the drum.

It should be stated that quite apart from the verbal panegyrics composed to extol the kings and chiefs of Dagbon, praise poets have peculiar drum tunes solely created to extol some particular

chiefs. In fact, entire drum beats exist for some particular kings and these are mostly employed in music and dance performances in general. Beats like *gingaani* are played for only chiefs who are enskinned by the *Yaa Naa*. *Bimbiɛyu* and *pampamli* are played for the *Yaa Naa* and other specific chiefs. In these renditions, the drum typically imitates the tones of the Dagbani language and no verbal utterances are involved. Ethnomusicological investigations of the Dagbamba drums and their diverse functions have been explored in Locke (1990, 2005) and Chernoff (1979, 1985, 1990). Figure 4.15 shows the praise poet Abubakari Lunzoo and his sons: Mohammed and brother, from *Sanj* while figure 4.16 shows the praise poets Yakubu Alhassan (right) with his elder brother Issah Alhassan from *Nantonj* performing solicited panegyrics in *Sanj* and *Tamale* respectively.

As reiterated earlier, the drum may solely be used in the art of praise singing without the accompaniment of the verbal text. This is done by skilfully beating the drum in a rhythmic fashion to imitate the tones of the Dagbani language. The lead praise poet for that matter beats his drum and his entourage respond accordingly as in a call-and-response pattern before the oral text proper is intoned. This pattern is repeated sequentially throughout the performance of the texts. These tones are mostly usually discernible by praise poets, chiefs, elders and some members of the community as a whole. Nketia (1974: 115) is quite elaborate on the aesthetics of African music as he maintains:

It would seem, therefore, that an examination of the aesthetics of African music reveals a distinct bias toward percussion and the use of percussion techniques, not only because of the structural functions of such instruments, but also because of a preference for musical textures that embody percussive sounds or sounds that increase the ratio of noise to pitch.



Figure 4.15



Figure 4.16

It could be said that the drum beats serve to introduce the sub-themes of the Dagbamba panegyric or to set the texts into their respective stanzas or controlling ideas and subsequent supporting details. The tones and intervals in the performance of the panegyric vary with the occasion, time of performance and the praise poets in question. The tones chosen may largely be based on the discretion of the performing praise poets whereas the differences in drum tone intervals are largely a result of the fact that the details of the texts may differ according to the occasion or either the competences or the choices of the praise poets.

4.7.3 Dress Codes in Silent Communication

One significant thing worthy of mention amongst the Dagbamba is their dress patterns. The way and manner in which one dresses has diverse connotations. Dressing communicates many things in many cultures of which the Dagbamba is no exception. Dress codes may refer to the clothes, costumes, regalia and such associated outfits and complements that are worn by individuals. They are generally uniquely distinct in diverse cultures. However, dress codes amongst the Dagbamba are more spectacular for their distinctively diverse details and connotations. In the Dagbamba community, it is possible to tell the lineage that one belongs to by the way one dresses or carries himself or herself. Outfits may also indicate status, role and diverse other affiliations and implications. Culler (1975: 32) notes thus: "If clothing had no social significance people might wear whatever seemed most comfortable [...]". A such, the kinds and manner of dressing in Dagbon have many implications. The dress codes or general appearances of people mostly on occasions and at the event of performance in particular can be very revealing. In an introduction to *Dress and Ethnicity*, Eicher (1995: 1) observes that:

Dress is a coded sensory system of non-verbal communication that aids human interaction in space and time. The codes of dress include visual as well as other sensory modifications (taste, smell, sound and feel) and supplements (garment, jewellery, and accessories) to the body which set off either or both cognitive and affective processes that result in recognition or lack of recognition by the viewer. As a system, dressing the body by modifications and supplements often does facilitate or hinder consequent verbal or other communication. The body modifications and supplements that mark the ethnic identity of an individual are ethnic dress.

Dagbamba dress codes are best observed on socio-cultural gatherings of which the presence of chiefs, elders and persons of high repute condition an adherence to traditional held notions of dress codes and their implications. For instance, in the presence of other chiefs or elders, some stand out as compared to others as roles and statuses differ significantly. Hence, the dress codes of the chiefs should reflect the occasion at stake and so should the dress codes of other members of high repute in the community. As a general practice, the Dagbamba tend to dress like Arabs or the Hausa in particular; perhaps, due to their early embracement of Islam and contact with the Hausa respectively.

The way and manner in which one appears in an outfit communicates significant captivating latent meanings. Dress codes in Dagbon may convey status, sex, age, socio-cultural roles, politico-economic ranks and diverse other roles and functions. They communicate intricate meanings based on self-perception and self-presentation and convey values, ideas and other spiritual implications passed on from one generation to the other. By linguistic conventions, dress codes as non-verbal forms of communication speak louder than words as they tend to engage in communications that were hitherto inadvertent. As reiterated earlier, Dagbamba dress codes are more pronounced on ceremonial days and serve to

maintain social order. Nonetheless, role conflicts emerge. The way and manner in which people dress is typically ingrained in their culture. However, what is inherently indigenous may have some aspects of foreign complements; a fact to reckon with in this age of globalisation. For example, though the *biɲmaa*, *batakari* or smock cloth, is mainly the traditional cloth worn by both sexes of the Dagbamba and their neighbours, it is not uncommon to find some people in suits, jeans and diverse other foreign outfits. Women specifically have developed a taste for the various African prints as well. Some general outfits for men, however, include *biɲmaa*, *yebli*, *kaftan*, *zalabia*, *kurugu*, *zuprigu* and *mugri*, whereas the women wear *slit* and *kaba*, *ayaba* and *zuprisi* like the *hijab* and *mayafi*.

The nature of clothes, as with respect to the fabric, number, colour, size and embroidery or design communicate significant details. The kind of hats worn and their positioning on one's head, either tilted to the left, right, back, front and centre have significant spiritual and political connotations. Though in recent times some people have lost sight of the implications of the dress codes, the interpretations derived are well enshrined in Dagbamba culture and world-view. Therefore, on normal occasions, one who does not adhere to the dictates of the custom as far as dress codes are concerned may simply be ignored. However, this will not go unnoticed or incur the displeasure of others at specific occasions in particular; as dress codes may also appear to assume or protest against certain roles.

The clothes one puts on may generally be based on one's economic standing rather than socio-cultural role; though these factors often seem to go in tandem. That notwithstanding, the elderly, chiefs, as most influential people in the Dagbamba community, tend to wear clothes made of traditional fabric like the *batakari* as compared to the youth. Hence, it is common to see the elderly in diverse forms of the *batakari* than in t-shirts or jeans trousers. The traditional wears seem to command respect as compared to the foreign

ones. Writing on the sociology of fashion and clothing, Crane and Bovone (2006: 321) note the relationships between personal values and material goods as follows:

Clothing as a form of material culture is especially suitable for studying the relationship between personal values and values attributed to material goods because of its close association with perceptions of the self. Clothes both affect and express our perceptions of ourselves.

The *batakari* or smock material, *biɲmaa*, may be used for the following male outfits: *yansichi*, sleeveless smock; *biɲmaa bare*, sleeved smock; *kpaakuto*, wide sleeved smock; *yebli* or *kparigu*, wide or big overcoat; *kurugu* or *ginganlane*, large trousers and *zugprigu*, head gear/hat. *Mugli*, boots, are usually made of leather. African prints and *biɲmaa*, the smock material, may also be used for the female *slit* and *kaba*, *ayaba*, both *slit* and blouse, and head gears, *zuprisi*, as well. Other *zuprisi* for women include the *hijab* and *mayafi*, both may be categorised as Islamic head gears. These are the outfits generally worn by both male and female elderly persons, respectively. The *kpaakuto* and *yebli* or *kparugu* are the usual outfits Dagbamba chiefs patronise, whereas the *gbɛɲno biɲmaa*, a spiritually fortified smock with amulets, is worn by people with a high spiritual aptitude. There is also the *baramansu*, a relatively big *biɲmaa*, which is mainly worn as a regalia for horse riding on festive days. It is, however, much appreciated or graceful on the dance floor. These are generally the most notably outfits found amongst the Dagbamba on special occasions.

Amongst the costumes of the Dagbamba, the traditional hat is perhaps the most enigmatic as it encodes far more information than the small piece of cloth that simply rests on the head. The traditional hat of the Dagbamba, which is normally made of the *batakari* fabric, has diverse connotations. It communicates significant information on the role and status of the wearer and his relationship amongst

others and the entire community and Dagbon as a whole. When the hat is bent towards the left, right, back, front or made to stand upright, the positions convey meanings and have diverse implications per Dagbamba world-view and they are well adhered to by all and sundry and the elderly primarily.

Generally speaking, the traditional hat is normally worn by the elderly as compared to the youth. However, one who wears a hat usually has to doff it when greeting persons who are older than the wearer. In the presence of the elderly principally, the youth usually take off their hats. When greeting or paying respects to a chief, even an elderly person needs to remove his hat in the process. A hat that is tilted to the right connotes *nlalaa* or *n'javere* which translates as "I don't want problem"; a hat tilted to the left connotes *mam belam wumli sheli*, which translates as "I no longer hear anything", implying the person is head strong. The hat that is tilted to the front connotes *kpe kani*, which translates as "I have no (co)-equal". A hat that is tilted to the back connotes *m' mali nyandoliba*, which translates as "I have followers". Hats worn by the king and chiefs are usually stiff and point to the sky which connotes *dunia zerigu* "one who carries the earth". *M'mali nyandoliba*, the implication of hats pointing backwards is the general position worn by many elders of whom chiefs are not excluded. This is basically so per its claim to a general truth that applies to virtually any grown up individual.

Quite apart from the directions that the traditional hats point to, red and white colours of hats particularly worn by chiefs also reveal their roles and socio-cultural standing in Dagbon. Generally, *naa prinima* (PL.), *naa pra* (SG.), which implies chiefs who refer to the king as father, normally wear white hats. *Naa yabsi* (PL.), *naa yaba* (SG.), which denote chiefs who refer to the king as their son, either wear white or red hats. A red hat implies that the chief has reached the highest of his ranks, whereas a white hat implies that the respective chief can move to another chieftain designated a higher rank than the one he occupies at present.

The use of the towel as head gear in Dagbon is also a common sight, especially on occasions that involve chiefs, elders and the king predominantly. When one wears the towel, it is implied that the king or chief who swore him into office or his rank or title is deceased; and until another person occupies that said position the wearing of the towel by such a mourner is mandated by Dagbon custom. Towels hanging on the shoulders of the elderly mainly serve to mean they are representatives of either an authority or their communities as a whole. The hanging of a towel on one's shoulder, however, has become more of a fashion in recent times than the general norm. The following images 4.17, 4.18, 4.19, 4.20, 4.21 and 4.22 illustrate the colour, positioning and implications of the traditional hat and the use of the towel as head gear in Dagbon.

Bangles, rings, walking sticks, horses and other body adornments as tails of diverse kinds are also a common sight in Dagbon, especially on the occasion of grand events. Bangles and rings, depending on the kinds and where they are worn, have diverse purposes and interpretations for that matter. More often than not, these together with other amulets and charms serve as protective mechanisms and general spiritual strength of the possessors. It should be stated, however, that the number of objects worn by a person does not necessarily correlate with his spiritual aptitude; it is the quality of the objects that matter.

Horses, so to say, are mostly part and parcel of Dagbamba kings and chiefs. Horses are revered in no mean degree amongst royals predominantly. Some of the horses that belong to particular chiefs do not escape the attention of praise poets in the rendition of Dagbamba panegyrics. In fact, most of these horses undergo spiritual fortification and are equally worn charms and amulets as persons do. Walking sticks and tails, mostly the colours white and black from the cow and horse in particular, are generally the preserve of kings, chiefs, the elderly and those with a degree of spiritual aptitude. Figure 4.23 shows a Dagbamba elder in *gbanɔoo biɲmaa*, a walking



Figure 4.17



Figure 4.18



Figure 4.19



Figure 4.20



Figure 4.21



Figure 4.22

stick and some assorted tails while figure 4.24 shows one of the horses on a normal day at the *Gbewaa* palace in Yendi. One would observe that there is an amulet made of cowries around the neck of the horse. On special occasions, horses are worn special adornments to reflect the stature or pomp of the kings or chiefs who ride them. Most horses are also bestowed names to reflect the positions and roles of the owners or riders. Typical examples, often alluded to, include the horses of Yaa Naa Nyagse (1415–1432) found in text IV as in *Malimali*, *Sochariga*, *Naa Mam*, *Binzayu*, *Kpimba Pielli* and *Warizeyu di kopina* in lines 224, 226, 228, 230, 232 and 234 accordingly.

There are other charms and amulets, mostly in the form of potions, that may be smeared on diverse parts of the body or garments depending on their functions. *Chilo*, a kind of traditional mascara often applied on the eye lashes and slightly on the lower eye lid, is common amongst the Dagbamba. The use of these charms and amulets are general to all Dagbamba rather specific to one particular clan. It should be known, however, that not all Dagbamba necessarily bear these charms or amulets and other such spiritual potions. The drummer clan generally maintain that they do not have a charm that is more potent than their drums. Their dress codes are by large modest and one may notice that drummers are mostly in possession of their drums and scarcely are they found with other charms, bangles and amulets. Figure 4.25 shows a picture of the *Vo Naa* of *Nanun* in a typical Dagbamba outfit



Figure 4.23



Figure 4.24

befitting a royal of his stature. His hat is the traditional make worn pointing to the back as signifying he has followers, *n mali nyandoliba*. The charms and amulets are of different kinds and sizes and are hanging at different places on his body. He is also wearing the *Kpaakuto binmaa* with what could be presumed as a *kurugu* or *ginganlani* as trousers and the traditional *mugli* boots to fit. Figure 4.26 shows friends dressed diversely engaged in a communication at *Karaga*.



Figure 4.25



Figure 4.26

4.8 Emerging Verbal and Non-verbal Cues at the Event of Performance

An attempt to showcase the poetics of verbal arts as Dagbamba panegyrics requires an analysis of the situation of performance to elicit the prosodic features and other verbal and non-verbal cues that pertain in the rendition of the texts. These cues come together to make communication a complete whole. It is, however, worthy of note that as languages differ from one culture to the other, both verbal and non-verbal expressions do not also mean the same thing in different cultures. In fact, some cues may simply be alien to some

cultures. That notwithstanding, both verbal and non-verbal cues are intrinsically intertwined in the situation of performance and critical observations of the cues employed and their functions are worthwhile.

Both verbal and non-verbal cues, to a great extent serve to complement the oral texts. As verbal arts, Dagbamba panegyrics have cues for expressions by the performers and also for reception by the audience. These cues together seek to heighten the messages and artistry of the texts as a whole. Paralinguistic communication devices such as vocalics, proxemics, haptics and kinesics cannot be relegated to the background as a result of their overwhelming impacts in the communication process.

A better understanding of the event of performance and the verbal and non-verbal cues involved in the process of communication should necessarily be hinged on one's appreciation of the time and setting of the performance. The time is as crucial as the physical environment or setting and the people present and contributes significantly to the performance event. These are worth noting as both verbal and non-verbal cues may, and so to it, are usually occasioned by the time and setting of the event of performance.

4.8.1 Verbal Cues

The mastery of the Dagbani language and its nuances is not just a prerequisite for the performer but the audience as well. They are very crucial as far as composition and reception are concerned. The praise poet must necessarily master the Dagbani language that serves as a conduit for the expression of his thoughts. A better understanding and an appreciation of the Dagbamba panegyrics as well requires that the audience have a mastery of not just the language but also the skilful use of it by praise poets in expressing their ideas. This mastery of language is mostly quite relative as praise poets employ diverse styles in their skilful use of the

Dagbani language. A more detailed examination of the Dagbani languages as employed in the Dagbamba panegyrics is explored in the following chapter.

Quite apart from the mastery of the Dagbani language as prerequisite for the Dagbamba praise poets, tone and voice as reiterated earlier are also crucial at the event of performance. They are very central to meaning making and the grace bestowed on verbal texts in particular. However, the voice quality, also known as timbre of the performer cannot be showcased meticulously in transcriptions. The best that can be done to highlight the role of the voice in performance is to recreate it in some other respects. Hence, audio or video recordings may be used as supplements to complement the transcriptions of the texts; or at least, vivid descriptions of the voice quality of the performer and how it is modulated in performance stated.

4.8.2 The Semantics of Sound and Silence

Sound, as in noise and silence, has rhetorical functions at the event of performance of the Dagbamba panegyrics. Nonetheless, silence is a multifaceted concept. Describing the act is as complicated as enacting it. Silence is fraught with ambiguities and even in the contexts of its enactment, it may be problematic to arrive at the right implications. Silence may generally mean concern on the part of an audience. It may also mean attentiveness and admiration for the performance. Silence as realised in pauses on the part of the performer serves to draw more attention to the act of performance. Silence may also be employed as a device to introduce a performance.

As a rhetorical technique, silence may come at the closure or in the middle of a performance to highlight what follows or what is preceded. It serves as a time marker or filler which affords performers a chance to recall what they have in store in their artistic

repertoire. In normal discourse, silence may mean concern, but it can also connote disrespect to the opposite interlocutor. In like manner, silence on the part of the one enacting it may simply connote an 'I don't care' or an approach to say the opposite interlocutor is verbose or simply wasting one's time. Strict care, therefore, needs to be observed in order that one who maintains silence is not misjudged by any means.

A jumble of words or expressions and several other sounds from far and near at the event of performance may be described generally as noises. Noise may signal contentment or dissatisfaction on the part of the audience. For instance, a performer who utters untruth or does not have control of the panegyric in question may incur the dissatisfaction of the audience who may tend to make some unappealing comments or sounds. On the contrary, noises may also emerge as a result of appreciation by the audience who individually may not be able to resist the temptation to shower praises to the praise poet in question. At a time when most people are expressing their appreciation in diverse forms, the result is likely to be a cacophony. Regardless of the double faces of positive and negative implications that sound as noise may connote, Swann and Deumert (2018: 6) maintain that "Storch's theorization of 'noise' not simply as sonic distortion but as the interpersonal construction of obscurity and deliberate unintelligibility, suggests that it is necessary for us to pay attention to that which was conventionally seen as being outside of language: cries and screams, gibberish and all forms of unintelligible speech." Commenting on the semantics of sounds as noise, Hollington et al. (forthcoming) opine that "sounds (or noises) are not disturbances, of course, nor are they codes of their own, but aural accompaniments of speech, in the sense of theatrical scenery. And while speech is something 'real' that comes right out of a person's mouth, mimetic sounds have an artificial quality." At the event of performance, the reality of the above assertions tends to dawn on the critical observer or participant.

Storch (2019: 15) notes that “[t]he mere presence of the voice, in hiccuping, coughing and screaming, therefore is not primordial, but always already entrenched in meaning-making reflexivity. Regardless of its semantic opacity and solipsist performance, the voice always already bears in it the potential to reach out to the other.” Hence, the importance of the voice quality of the praise poet as in his employment of pitch and intonation, stresses and other such musical features at the situation of performance cannot be overemphasised. These features often go in tandem with silence, loudness, whispers and changes in pitch and tones and other special formulae to give a twist to the performance and the texts rendered specifically. These cues are also mostly subtle and elliptic and to a great extent, they are used for emphasis.

The problem, however, arises as descriptive analysis may fail to capture a near exact nature of the voice at the event of performance or to highlight the semantics of a cough or scream. For instance, “a high-pitched sound” as it stands is very relative and may be assumed quite differently by different people. The complexity of the voice in linguistic discussions has been observed by Storch (2019: 13) as such: “Thinking about voice is complicated in this meta-discursive context – where, after all, can it be placed in a linguistic discussion, and how can meaning expressed by the mere quality of the voice be included in an analysis of communicative practices?”

As a whole, the praise poets understand so well the significant functions of sound and silence in the rendition of the panegyrics. The poetic breaks as in pauses at diverse levels of the performance are very crucial to the praise poets. Pauses, as brief silences as well as quite long silences and loudness may serve as memory markers in the performance. These prosodic features may also show up before or after the praise poet appeals to tradition and a disclaimer of performance. To capture the attention of his audience, the praise poet mostly intones his first lines in high-pitched tones.

Some sounds that are mostly idiosyncratic of praise poets include the expletives *yeee*, *yooo* and their diverse manifestations amongst a host of other sounds often employed to introduce stanzas or (sub)plots. These expletives are generally intoned in high-pitched tones. Though these sounds have no semantic meaning in Dagbani and may seem as mere noises, they nevertheless feature predominantly in praise poetry renditions. According to Storch (2019: 22) “[...] performances of what might be deemed ‘noise’ otherwise can unfold their transformative capacities as discourse and topics of the narratives themselves”. More so, albeit these expressive sounds, to say the least, are devoid of any real meanings, their relevance in capturing the attention of the audience as far as the Dagbamba panygyrics are concerned cannot be overemphasised. The use of these expletives by the praise poets is mainly to arrest the attention of the audience or emphasis a point and are, therefore, idiomatic. They are very central to the situation of performance and are never left out in the renditions of the oral texts.

Hollington et al.’s (forthcoming) observations of the stylised sounds that may serve as “sonic signatures” of Jamaican reggae and dancehall artists hold true to the Dagbamba praise poets. In fact, they have unique stylised sounds that are peculiar to some particular praise poets, though some other sounds may be more general to many praise poets. They (ibid.) attest that “[i]n their songs, artists may laugh, grunt, cough or use other stylised noises. For example, such practices can be used to mark the identity of the respective artist, as a kind of individual ‘sonic signature’. Certain artists have a specific sonic signal, sequence or ‘noise’ which they use in all of their songs and which emblematically stands for them and their identity as artists.”

Interpolations, some of which often come as interjections: *kinkagli* ‘amazing’ *n’yeba yelema* ‘grandfather speak’ and *yel di zaa* ‘say it all’ are but a few of the statements that can be heard from the audience. It should be stated here that ululations are barely heard at

the event of performance. However, some women ululate at smaller community gatherings where the praise poet performs his texts. Ululations are also generally done by women. Men are not engaged in this act.

4.8.3 Non-verbal Cues

How are signals of attitudes of power carried up by monarchs primarily and how are attitudes of submission or interest carried up by the praise poets and the audience predominantly? Though meanings can be inferred from both verbal and non-verbal cues, it is nonetheless a fact that the truth is best inferred from non-verbal cues, when critical observations are made. Considering the abilities of man and his manipulative tendencies, deliberate efforts can be made verbally to falsify an assertion; however, non-verbal cues can be most revealing. The old adage that maintains that “actions speak louder than words” is, therefore, worth consideration. Some notable non-verbal expressions that are inextricably intertwined with the compositions of Dagbamba praise poets at the events of performances include facial expressions, body movements and postures also technically known as kinesics. Kinesics include glances as eye contact, winking and smiles. Other non-verbal cues include bowing, kneeling, genuflecting, prostrating, nodding, a pat on the shoulder, hand gestures as waving, shaking hands, embracing, contact, distance and other such related actions. As characteristic of performance, praise poets employ diverse non-verbal cues simultaneously to achieve their aims.

Positions and distances maintained at the event of performance are worth elaborating as these can be crucial to meaning making. For instance, amongst a group of people, particularly elders or chiefs in Dagbon, the most influential is normally found at the centre and on a higher elevation as compared to the others

when they are seated. In a procession, the highest ranked person is normally the last to be ushered in and the last to be ushered out. Positions may not always be so organised; however, when they are, these descriptions best suit the situation on the ground as this is mostly the case on special occasions in which the panegyrics are performed.

The beauty of the panegyrics and the performance for that matter is significantly elevated with dramaturgical stunts. They serve to bring some sort of pleasurable aura to the performance situation and also fuel the participatory nature of the performance. When the performance is heightened, the audience and patrons alike are well engulfed in the act and all together, they form one performance.

If the patron to be extolled is seated, then in most instances, he or she is surrounded by an entourage of other sub-chiefs and elders and the entire audience at large. As the extolment of Dagbamba chiefs or kings is almost culturally mandated, the lead praise poet and his assemblage of drummers are given a centre stage, close to the royal in question in the midst of all present. More often than not, the lead praise poet kneels on either one knee or both while he performs the panegyric. In some instances, while some praise poets may be on their knees and may also occasionally stand up, others may remain standing throughout the performance. He may engage in a few movements within the limited space at his disposal, he may, from time to time, bow or genuflect to his patron or patrons. These cues often show up when he seeks to highlight some images or metaphors conveyed in the panegyric. Quite apart from these cues, the nodding of the head, some frequent turns here and there and the use of the hand in buttressing some particular statements are also common non-verbal cues that are simultaneously employed in the process of performance.

If indeed, the patron is being led to or from an occasion or a courtyard, the praise poets are bound to follow him in performances. In

such instances, they walk with the royal in procession. At some intervals of the performance, some lead praise poets in the process of performing the panegyric may move forth and back, to and from the royal in question. They may also bow down or genuflect at some intervals during performance. Others may nod, place their drumming sticks on the shoulders of some particular people present or simply place their drums on the floor while their assemblies pick up the performance. It should be stated that most of these gestures are meant to pay reverence to the royals in question. In some instances, these gestures may as well be occasioned by the heightened delivery of performance or appreciation during the performance event. These notwithstanding, some of the gestures may also be occasioned by the praise poets' desire to solicit rewards in the form of money or acclamation.

A profound gesture that is often employed by the praise poets is their use of the palms in cupped forms slightly around their ears in the process of performing the panegyrics. Upon investigations as to why praise poets employ such a gesture in performances, some praise poets maintain that it is simply a copied style that has come to stay. It could, however, be presumed that the gesture sort of tries to invoke the muse or sensibilities of the praise poet in the process of performance. Figures 4.27 and 4.28 show two praise poets from *Nanton* and *Savulugu* exhibiting the employment of cupped hands in the process of performance. Figure 4.27 further shows the praise poet from *Nanton* in a gesture with his right hand indicating his claim that a particular king bore two sons.

Gestural and verbal expressions are complementary and central to the performance event. Gestures may tend to foreground the verbal expression. It is for this reason that modern dramatists tend to include these directions in their plays. Moods and attitudes are conveyed through gestural expressions; hence, calculated efforts should be made to communicate the appropriate and well-intended



Figure 4.27



Figure 4.28

messages. In its exaggerated forms, however, what may be inferred by the audience or patrons mainly will be deceit or disrespect.

Facial expressions also play a vital role during performances. The mood of the performer is clearly expressed by his facial expressions. A praise poet has to often express a degree of excitement during performances. More often than not, the praise poet brims with excitement and pride during performances to have occupied such a centre stage in the recapitulation of Dagbamba customs, genealogies and glories as passed down from several generations before him. The excitement demonstrated in the process of performance ultimately heightens the general ambiance of the performance. König and Pfister (2017: 200) posit:

Facial gestures are primarily used for expressing emotions and attitudes. Psychological experiments on the comparative study of emotions are largely based on this expressive potential of facial gestures. Our eyes can be contracted (winks), rolled and widened for different expressive purposes and, as already mentioned, various positions of our torso or whole body may signal attitudes of power, submission interest, etc.

Eye contact between the praise poet and his patron or patrons and the audience at large also tends to enforce the poetic sensibilities of the performance of the panegyric. In fact, a good performer must necessarily master the way and manner in which to maintain eye contact. This is because eye contact must be well calculated in order not to breed discontent. Too much or less of eye contact may hamper the success of the event of performance as a whole. And as no praise poet in normal circumstances would not like to have his eye contact during performances to be read as that of annoyance or general discontent of the patron in question, critical care is taken not to attract a misreading by the patrons or audience as a whole.

Nodding the head to show agreement and shaking the head to show disagreement or displeasure are some common gestures

that the audience mostly may resort to. Praise poets may also employ head nods and shakes to emphasis claims they have made in their renditions accordingly. A shrug of the shoulder to reposition the drum or relax the muscles of the hand that bares the drum stick is also a common phenomenon of praise poets at the event of performance.

It is worth noting that at the royal courts of Dagbon, the clapping of the hands as a sign of appreciation is not entertained. The sign that is normally made to show appreciation is the snapping of both thumbs to produce a milder and most soothing sound as compared to the loud clapping of hands. Hence, performers at the royal courts are also shown appreciation by the snapping of the two thumbs, an act that requires skill to replicate, let alone master.

In fact, diverse other gestures that may be idiosyncratic to some performers or audience alike at the event of performance abound. For instance, the use of the hand alone can convey quite a lot of information when employed in communication. The raising of one's hands, the folding of the arms, the pointing of a finger or fingers and several other gesticulations are necessary acts either consciously or unconsciously employed by actors at the event of performance. As a whole, these gestures tend to communicate significant meanings at the event of performance.

4.9 Conclusion

It is evident from the preceding discussion that quite apart from the figurativeness of the Dagbamba panegyric, both the verbal and non-verbal cues that emanate in the process of performance contribute significantly to the novelty of the texts and the performance as a whole. Facial expressions for example have multiple functions. The mood or feelings of all the actors of the performance of the Dagbamba panegyrics by and large communicate

significant meanings. Gestures also tend to communicate interpersonal relationships such as friendship or disagreement on the part of the parties involved. Hostility, fear, anger or joy can easily be ascertained from the gestures of individuals. Clothing or physical appearances for that matter by the Dagbamba have unique interpretations. They are very symbolic and also serve as silent communicators that are accorded customary significance in Dagbamba settings. General posture, personal space, distance and physical contact amongst other such related features are not treated lightly at all.

This chapter is a modest attempt to recapitulate in writing the events of the situation of performance and its diverse interrelated contexts as far as Dagbamba panegyrics are concerned. Irrespective of the strides made to capture in vivid details the scenes and general aura at the performance events of the Dagbamba panegyrics, it only becomes clearer to one who has actually witnessed the event that words alone cannot bring to life the sights, sounds, smells, feelings and the general appreciation of performances. Being a witness or a participant at the event of performance affords one the best opportunity to appreciate such a performance. Better still, audio and video recordings may showcase most aspects of the event. Na'Allah (1997: 139) contends that "[...] photographs taken at the moment of performance are not enough to let us into the world of the drama; even a video-recording cannot provide us with a necessary sense of the background or mood of the performance." He (ibid.) makes it clear: "It is performance that gives the oral form the air upon which it lives and breaths. It is only through our participatory performance that we can experience it, understand it and correctly interpret it." It is therefore of little doubt or no doubt at all that Anyidoho (1992) observes that "[w]e need to revise our understanding of the concept of 'publication' to include the act of performing poetry in public."

CHAPTER 5

The Poetics of the Dagbamba Panegyrics

5.1 Introduction

To ascertain the poetics of creative expressions as Dagbamba panegyrics requires an in-depth examination of both the literary and linguistic features that are appropriated by Dagbamba praise poets in novel enterprises as captured in Dagbamba royal courts and festive occasions. A poetic analysis usually evokes an examination of the figurative use of language in literary works. However, as the verbal arts largely cannot be devoid of language, the novel employment of language with respect to its style and structure specifically shed tremendous insights into the creative inventiveness of verbal arts. König and Pfister (2017: 12) maintain that “[...] literary studies can and will profit from linguistics and vice versa, particularly if one focuses on the area where they intersect most directly and closely, i.e. on the literary work of art as a verbal structure and the aesthetic use of language it employs”. Whereas Culler (1975: 4) is quite emphatic:

The notion that Linguistics might be useful in studying other cultural phenomena is based on two fundamental insights: first, that social and cultural phenomena are not simply material objects or events but objects or events with meaning, and hence signs; and second, that they do not have essences but are defined by a network of relations, both internal and external.

Diverse are the approaches adopted by literary scholars in the examination of literary texts as poetry. They are generally dependent on the objectives of the researcher in question and more so, the genre or kind of literary work under consideration. Grounded on the conception, composition, performance and the general characteristics of the Dagbamba panegyrics therefore, this chapter is informed by structuralism (Tsur 2008, Herman & Vervaeck 2005: 42–109, Anozie 1981, Barthes 1988, Culler 1975, McGrath 1985), cognitive poetics (Lakoff 1987, Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 1999, Langacker 1987, 1991a, 1991b, 2008), the oral-formulaic theory (Finkelberg 2012, Lord 1960, Parry 1971, 1930, Foley 1991) and the reception theory (Jauss 1982, Papadima 2015, Thompson 1993) amongst such other related theories in literary theory or criticism.

Structuralism is an approach to literary texts that seeks to analyse texts and their relations to other structures, models and their inter-textual connections and recurrent systems as themes and motifs. Structuralism in some respects, employs linguistic analysis and relies on the Saussurian binary linguistic concepts of the signifier and the signified. “In general, structuralism proposed to study the structural codes that enable certain social products to achieve their designated ends. This study of structural codes or conventions was intended as descriptive, not interpretive” (McGrath 1985: 809). Finkelberg (2012: 75) is quite elaborate with her definition of the oral-formulaic theory as she writes: “A formulaic system, or a system of formulas, is a group of expressions of varying metrical shape, specialized for rendering a given idea under various metrical

conditions. As Parry had demonstrated, the systems into which Homeric formulas are organized are characterized by extension and economy.” Reception theory as subsumed in reader-response criticism highlights the significant insights that the general public as listeners or readers of texts offer in meaning determination. It upholds that meaning is not only inherent within the texts but co-created by the interpretative evaluations by the general public that inform the texts over time. Jauss (1982: 26) makes it explicit, thus: “The relationship between literature and audience includes more than the facts that every work has its own specific, historically and sociologically determinable audience, that every writer is dependent on the milieu, views, and ideology of his audience [...]”.

Based on the main approaches stated above, some analytic ones that fall within the frameworks of structuralism, cognitive poetics and the receptionist theories suffice. Text linguistic analysis, schema theory and the oral-formulaic theory are the main analytic approaches applied in the examination of both the linguistic and literary creativity of the Dagbamba panegyrics. Basically, text linguistic analysis is a branch of linguistics that seeks to describe texts grammars. Schema theory seeks to ascertain how knowledge in organised in the mind as in schemas and frames. It stems from cognitive linguistics or poetics for that matter. In the following analyses of the Dagbamba panegyrics, schema theory is carried on three main levels: the linguistic, content and formal schema (Carrell 1984, Carrell & Eisterhold 1983). The linguistic schema refers to the prior linguistic knowledge, herein of the Dagbamba praise poets principally, such as the grammar and phonetics of Dagbani. Content schema refers to the general background knowledge, such as the knowledge of the culture, familiarity of conventions, beliefs, practices and the general contexts relevant at a specific given time and place. The last but not the least is the formal schema which relates to the background knowledge of the formal and rhetorical structures of the texts.

The analyses are principally grounded on stylistic approaches that endeavour to identify the textual structures of poetry and their consequent effects on the entire meaning and aesthetic novelty of the texts. Here, the principles and methods that guide the composition and performance of the Dagbamba panegyrics are of utmost interest. For an in-depth understanding of the nature, form and the general stylistic features of the texts, systematic attempts are made to examine the notable aspects of most poetic analyses. As such, attention is directed at aspects such as the content, form, structure, themes, motifs, point of view, mood, tone amongst other figurative devices as metaphor, imagery, symbolism, irony and elements of style as diction, rhythm, repetition, alliteration and assonance.

The chapter therefore sets out with an examination of the subjects of praise in Dagbamba panegyrics, tracing both the recurrent motifs and themes embedded in the texts as a whole. Examinations of the general composition, style and form, syntax and morphology of the texts are also explored. Quite apart from the verbal formulas such as repetitions, additions and substitutions of phrases and entire lines and the diverse aphorisms embedded in the Dagbamba panegyrics, attempts are made to showcase the figurative elements that are employed by Dagbamba praise poets to achieve poetic excellence.

Some of the questions that guide the following analysis are thus: What are the formulas employed by Dagbamba praise poets in their poetic renditions? What do the praise poets say or think are the strategies for upholding memory in praise poetry renditions and what is actually happening by analysis? What is deemed perfect poetry or art in Dagbamba contexts as against what is deemed imperfect? And what are the general novel aesthetics of the Dagbamba panegyrics? These questions are relevant in order that the traditional notions of panegyrics as carried on over time in Dagbamba contexts will be ascertained with reference to standard held notions.

It should be noted, however, that though several theoretical approaches are sourced with reference to oral compositions and praise poetry in particular, what the Dagbamba panegyrics manifest is regarded as the ultimate. This study suggests and points out the novelties of the texts as based principally on the traditional notions of creativity in language and art. As more of the notions on what makes a literary work novel are general than specific, some references on verbal arts and the art of praise poetry predominantly are duly acknowledged whenever necessary. It is hoped that by the examination of the Dagbamba panegyrics at both linguistic and literary levels in their diversity, an in-depth appreciation of the texts will be ascertained.

5.2 Typology and Classification

It is evident that the days of heroic exploits in a globalised time of the twenty first century are stories of bygone times. However, the memories of people as realised in their histories and stories as a whole are nevertheless intact. Praise poets, royals and the entire Dagbon population pride themselves in the exploits of their forebearers. They claim the praises of their ancestors as theirs; by dint of their genetic affiliations to ancestors of great historical exploits. They also embrace the achievements of their leaders or immediate chiefs or kings as general accomplishments of the Dagbamba community as a whole.

The classifications of the praise texts as panegyrics herein are based on some fundamental claims. The texts are termed panegyrics on the grounds that they function to extol the deeds and genealogies of kings or monarchs. They belong to the main category of praise poetry that may include the general poetic renditions in praise of any individuals or entities. Salifu (2010) tends to refer to the same constructions presented herein as epics. This classification

may, however, not be far-fetched as the dichotomies between the epic and the panegyric may only differ in details. That being said, the length of the Dagbamba panegyric tends to vary and may also pay particular details to events or circumstances as deemed fit by the praise poet in question or the occasion.

Quite apart from the classification of the texts as panegyrics, they may generally also be referred to as court poetry. As reiterated above, they aspire to the epic with respects to subject, theme or style. The texts also aspire to the eulogy, dirge, elegy or ode with respects to purpose and function in most respects. Further explanations of these typologies are examined in the following sections. Mysticism, a trademark of the epic, features though marginally in the Dagbamba panegyric. As a whole, the texts may also generally be classified as narrative poems composed in free verse. There are no rules as with respect to meter; rhythm is key.

5.3 Purpose and Function

An examination of the content of Dagbamba panegyrics invariably calls for an examination of the purpose or functions of the texts amongst the Dagbamba. These clearly set out the way and manner in which they are presented. The introductory remarks to *The world in Literature* offers insightful definition of literature or literary works and highlights their functions thus: "Literature is in part an abiding source of beauty and entertainment for all civilized men, and in part a record of the ideas and customs, the special visions and feelings, of the people who have created it" (Warnock & Anderson 1959: 1).

In his introduction to *Indigeneity, Globalization, and African Literature*, Ojaide (2015: ix) reiterates the reality that "African oral literature is generally seen as functional and the early generations of African writers seem to have carried the functionality on." He (ibid.) emphasises: "The positions of many African writers have affirmed the importance of literature beyond its entertainment value."

As the name panegyric suggests, its principal function is to serve as court discourse in praise of kings or chiefs. Related purposes as a court discourse are to inspire both the reigning monarchs and their subjects towards the roads of patriotism, peace and development for the entire well-being of the people. Dagbamba panegyrics also serve as perfect conduits for education and enlightenments in culture, history and diverse facets of life.

Na'Allah's (2018: 66) conviction that "praise poetry is perhaps the most important poetry in African oral literature, as it contains strict admonitions, sharp rebuke, and at the same is showering praises of one's attributes and commendation for one's actions" underscores some functions of the Dagbamba panegyrics. Another pertinent aspect of the Dagbamba panegyrics is the allusive extolment of royal lineages. Opland's (1983: 134) suspicion of the role of Imbongi in expatiating praise falls in line with the role of the Dagbamba praise poet. He notes:

I suspect that the Imbongi belongs in a position of mediation. On the social level he enjoys the social freedom to criticize those in authority: in his poetry he upholds the values of society in praise and condemns individualism that acts contrary to the common good, but as the same time his poetry, like Maninka epic, praises the individual and his achievements.

As noted in the preceding elaborations, Dagbamba panegyrics serve quite a myriad of purposes and functions. Though the texts are mainly set in royal courts, thus the designation court poetry, Dagbamba panegyrics may scale the walls of courts and their environments to festive occasions that involves Dagbamba monarchs especially. These festive occasions include amongst others: festivals, durbars, funerals, marriages and naming ceremonies. Last but not the least, Dagbamba panegyrics may also serve as dirges or elegies at the undesirable event of the demise of monarchs and at other ritualistic functions. The basic purpose of the texts is to extol

monarchs. However, they could be appropriated in diverse creative ways to extol other personalities or entities in general. In this regard, the texts cease to carry the tag panegyrics but praise poems in most respects.

5.4 Subjects of Praise

The Dagbamba panegyrics are originally performed in honour of royals or the aristocrats. The texts presented herein are, however, centred on Dagbamba monarchs – *naanima*, and focus mainly on texts performed in the courts of Dagbamba royals. The royals include principally kings, “queens”, and princes and princesses of Dagbon either with or without designations. The usual practice, which has somewhat become a cultural norm, is that panegyrics proper are performed in honour of monarchs who have reigned either as regents or chiefs. Panegyrics or praise poems may also be directed to chiefs and elders belonging to the diverse Dagbamba clans. As reiterated in earlier discussions, the diverse other clans amongst the Dagbamba, other than the royal clan, have their respective chiefs and elders.

It is therefore not uncommon to find some contents and styles of the original panegyrics in praise poems directed to some members of the political class and other influential people in the Dagbamba communities and other communities as a whole. In fact, as a general rule, every Dagbamba is deemed a royal in as much as he or she regards the ancestral monarch Naa Gbewaa as a father or ancestor. Therefore, some notable praises or allusions of the original panegyrics may also be directed at any person worthy of praise at a performance situation as far as the praise poet in question is knowledgeable in the history and general socio-political system of the family one belongs. At social gatherings involving a host of people, there is usually the tendency for the praise poet to sprinkle a bit

of praise on some other royals or dignitaries present and echo the feelings of the people as a whole. This must be done in a way not to arouse the displeasure of any parties.

As it is with the case of genres as odes, elegies, dirges and general tributes and praises, any concept or idea, animate or inanimate thing may be worthy of praise depending on the circumstances or need. God, gods, totems and general flora and fauna especially common to Dagbamba environment or world-view may serve as subjects of praise. In Dagbamba panegyrics, these concepts or ideas may be embedded and referred to in metaphorical terms. Perhaps, the mother of all panegyrics or praise poetry in Dagbamba contexts is the poem *Dakoli Nyɛ Bia*, 'the bachelor is a child' text IV. It is from this praise poem that all other praise poems in Dagbon spring. *Dakoli Nyɛ Bia* is generally composed of two parts: the first part serves as an ode to the Supreme Being of a sort, while the second part serves as an evocation or allusive praise to Dagbamba monarchs and the ancestors of the praise poets principally.

Its substance rest particularly on the ideals it sets for royalty, aristocracy, the common people and the general circumstances in the life of man in relation to the universe and all that it entails. It asserts the supremacy of God over everything that is ever created and affirms the tendency of God in changing the destinies of men. Hence, its admonishment for humility, respect and dignity for all serve as motifs that pervade Dagbamba panegyrics in particular.

A critical examination of the Dagbamba panegyrics also reveals echoes of the Magnificat (Luke 1: 46-56) in the *Dakoli Nyɛ Bia* text, with respect to its first part. Care is, however, taken not to refer to the similarities as a biblical allusion but rather an echo per se, as one is not certain if the similarities are due to the fact that the earlier composers of the panegyrics in general had any knowledge of the Bible and its contents. The Magnificat, which may be summarised as Mary's song of praise to the Almighty dwells on humility as an essential virtue and how the Almighty chooses only those he deems

deserving, irrespective of their statuses. Excerpts of some of the similarities in ideas are presented below: “And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away” (Luke 1: 50-53).

Nun n-nyε ηun ku bundana bia,
The one who kills the wealthy man’s son,
Ka deei buni.
And takes away his treasures.
Ka zan tinshee dabili,
And takes a slave from another land,
Chilim leei tinshee nabia.
And makes a royal a salve in another land.
Ka pa Biligu Naa ka na’ ηuni?
If not God who else?
(Text IV: lines 36-40)

Based on the preceding examination of the subjects of praise in Dagbamba panegyrics, a brief insight of the way and manner in which the titles of the texts are crafted is worthwhile. Titles offer insights into an entire work. Fowler (1967: 80) maintains that “[r]eading poetry involves the discovery of contextual meaning; we cannot feel secure in our response until we think we know what the poem is about”. Most literary works are generally identified by some specific titles that serve to define as well as distinguish them from other works. One usual way in which titles are assigned to literary works is by explicitly stating formal titles as in *The Odyssey* by Homer (Fitzgerald 1998) or *The Cathedral* by Kofi Awoonor (1964).

Unlike the above mode of designations as titles of some recognised works of art, however, titles of Dagbamba panegyrics are

more often than not descriptive and serve to state the purpose for which a work was created or for whom a panegyric is directed or attributed to particularly. Hence, titles normally come in the following forms: *Naa Yakubu Nantoo Salima* meaning 'the praises of King Yakubu Nantoo', *Naa Abukari Salima* which means 'Praises of King Abukari' (Abubakari Gariba II), the reigning King of Dagbon. Kofi Anyidoho (2002) best exemplifies the above stated titles in his poem and anthology *Praise Song for the Land*. Titles may also be couched out from the initial lines of texts as it is with the case of the poem *Dakoli Nye Bia*, 'the bachelor is a child'.

5.5 Recurrent Motifs and Themes

Motifs and themes have some similarities: whereas motifs are more of the concrete ideas sought to be conveyed in texts, themes are the recurrent abstract ideas implied by texts. A motif is referred to herein as a recurring idea with a symbolic significance. Motifs may refer to the recurring ideas, implicit and of symbolic value that forestalls the themes of a work. A theme is the central idea or message that is being echoed in work of art. Imagery, symbolism and some linguistic factors serve to enforce motifs overall.

The motif of the ancestor or genealogy and the importance of offspring, especially male children serve as domineering ideas in the Dagbamba panegyrics. Most other ideas tend to lean on these motifs. There are generally shifts in themes that may range from a few to quite a significant number depending on the poetic acumen of the praise poets or the occasion in general. The themes as sought to be showcased in Dagbamba panegyrics include amongst others: marriage, ancestry, bravery, virtue, physical beauty, affluence and conquests. The recurrent motifs and central themes in the Dagbamba panegyrics are expounded in the following discussions.

5.5.1 The “Ancestor” *Yaba* Motif and its translation to the First Son, *Zuu*

The eminent presence of the spiritual in the lives of the living cannot be underestimated. The Dagbamba panegyric are primarily composed of lineages of the Dagbamba monarchs who serve as subjects of praise. In fact, there are no instances where a said panegyric is performed without drawing connections with ancestors that one belongs to. Ancestors are linked to the past and the spiritual world in most respects; however, their presence and influence in mundane are certain. The king or chief for that matter owes much to his or her ancestors. The lineage, especially with respect to the paternal side alluded to in the panegyric directed at Gundo Naa Salamatu, text III in the introductory section as follows: *A yab Daa nyela Naa Ablai*, ‘your grandfather was king Ablai (Abdulai)’, line 7. Earlier in lines 2 and 3 her ancestors and those of her grandfather Naa Abudu (Gbewaa and 3irili) are alluded to as follows:

Gbewaa kachayu, a balima yeee!

Gbewaa woman regent, your mercies!

3irili kachayu, a balima yeee!

3irili woman regent, your mercies!

The people and chiefs principally pride themselves in their ancestors; they bask in their glories or achievements. Of course, the chief or king occupies a skin as a result of the fact that his or her ancestors served in a similar capacity by dint of their consanguine relations or by their efforts to create and maintain such a status or role. To take pride in what has been passed down by one’s ancestors, especially the deeds worthy of emulation is noble. It is by dint of the achievements of the ancestors that the establishment with its associated roles has been enshrined. The reigning king or chief is therefore building upon the accomplishments of his predecessors.

The overwhelming presence of the ancestor *yaba* motif in Dagbamba panegyrics thus cannot be overemphasised. This motif is also generally corroborated by the motif of the first son, *zuu*. It is therefore of little doubt or no doubt at all that Dagbamba panegyrics are characterised by copious historical allusions to the past kings and chiefs, who are mostly “first son descendants”. Though some allusions tend to refer to several actors as persons, villages, clans and even animals amongst other referents, no allusion occupies a more central stage in the Dagbamba panegyrics than allusions to the ancestor, *yaba* which is consequently reflected in the first son, *zuu*. For instance, amongst the host of appellations of the Yaa Naa as realized in excerpt III are: *Gbewaa zuu*, ‘first son of Gbewaa’, lines 31 and 51. *Gbuyinli zuu*, ‘the first son of the lion’, line 34 and *Shitobu zuu*, ‘first son of Shitobu’, line 62. The consistency of the idea of the first son is even more pronounced in the concluding lines of the panegyric directed at Naa Yakubu Nantoo.

Dunialana zuu.

First son of intercessor of the earth.

Wulimpuhili namlana.

King of the east’s first son.

Andunia Naawunilan zuu.

God of the earth’s first son.

Wulinluhili namlana zuu.

King of the west’s first son.

Nusaa ni nudirigulana zuu.

Owner of both left and right’s first son.

Nom balim ka tinj’ maai.

Walk softly and calm the earth.

Napaxa tooni Gubili Zuu.

Son of the family of the first royal wife’s first son.

Naa Yakubu Zuu bilimma bilimm.

First son of Naa Yakubu walk majestically.

Though the establishment of one's ancestral heritage may be important in Dagbamba panegyrics, this theme only achieves its relevance when it is buttressed by the individual prowess of the reigning monarch. The ancestors serve as models of behavioural codes. Reigning kings or chiefs need to build upon the achievements they succeeded and desist from failures.

It should be noted that though the ancestral motif is almost a norm ruled by Dagbamba customs and therefore holds true in all instances, the motif of the first son is not the standard in some instances. It is a known fact that sons other than first sons have occupied centre stages in Dagbamba panegyrics and tradition as a whole. Females also occupy some chieftaincy skins in Dagbon. The point is that tradition pays more attention to the first son, hence its mention and emphasis in Dagbamba panegyrics, as compared to subsequent sons or children as a whole. The importance of bearing offspring and the consequent role of the Almighty to answer the prayers of monarchs is repetitively employed in Dagbamba panegyrics. Text III: lines 18–22 demonstrate this claim:

Naa Luro n-daa suyi Naawuni;
King Luro prayed to God;
N ti yen dɔyi,
And when he was to give birth,
N dɔyi paɣa ηuni mi bia?
And gave birth to which woman's son?
Do ηuni mi bia?
Which man's son?
Naa Luro n Daa dɔyi Nyɔηlan Danoo.
King Luro gave birth to Nyɔηlan Danoo.

The Yendi skin, the paramount of Dagbon for example, is a typical case of a son other than the first son becoming king. Naa Zangina was the youngest of eight paternal siblings amongst nine

contenders for the Yendi skin; see Staniland (1975: 18–27) for details of the story. As reiterated earlier, apart from men, women may also occupy chieftaincy positions in Dagbon. There are some chieftaincy positions reversed for women, particularly the daughters of the Yaa Naa. A case in point is Gundo Naa Salamatu, chief of Gundo and the paramount chief of all women chieftains.

In the traditional parlance predominantly, the antidote of death has always been procreation. Therefore, the theme of marriage and its consequent result of having offspring serves as a vital theme in Dagbamba panegyrics. This theme is implied throughout the texts and attains much repeated intensity and confirmation in the poem *Dakoli Nye Bia*, 'the bachelor is a child'. It should be pointed out that children are generally important in one's life with most regard to chieftaincy and most aspects of Dagbamba social life. Nonetheless, with the pervasive patriarchal system of inheritance, male children and first sons specifically occupy a centre stage. It is for such reasons that the first son, *zuu*, is foregrounded throughout the texts. Subsequent sons are not given equal attention by their exact positions, though they also tend to occupy chieftaincy positions of which the Yendi skin is no exception. With instances even where the monarch is indeed a female, quite apart from her usual epithets, achievements and roles, the allusions are generally tied to male forbearers as it is the case with the panegyric for Gundo naa Salamatu, text III. This is so because the lady monarch occupies her skin by virtue of the fact that she is a daughter of the king.

From the foregoing discussion, it should be borne in mind that the past and its connectedness to the spiritual world is persistent in Dagbamba panegyrics. As such, allusions to the ancestors, gods and past events are given no mean prominence in the poetic repertoire of the Dagbamba praise poets. The spiritual world includes both the ancestral worlds and the realms of the gods and the divine creator. These spiritual elements are recreated into the mundane in what may be termed as a creative melting pot of a sort.

No text is performed without the prior invocation or invitation for that matter of the Almighty God, the gods, the ancestors or some other spiritual forces. Praise poets usually invoke these spiritual forces to guide them in their performances. This invocation often commences and concludes the performance either as part of the text proper or recited in the conscience of the performer. An in-text invocation of the muse of oratory in the forms of memory and perfection, *teli* and *yelkuntum* by the praise poet Abdulai Abukari of San buttresses these claims. Text I, a panegyric directed to Naa Yakubu Nantoo, lines 1–5 maintain thus:

Yeligu yelima ka n-deei yeli kali.
 I am here to speak the words of my forefathers.
Yelikutum,
 Perfection,
O yelimi ka n-deei n-yeli yeli kali.
 She speaks of my forefathers through me.
Naa Yaba Yakubu yeee!
 Grandfather Naa Yakubu!
Yeligu!
 Word!

This invocation by the Dagbamba praise poet rightly reflects the invocation employed by Homer in the *Odyssey*, lines 1–4: “Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story/ of that man skilled in all ways of contending/ the wanderer, hurried for years on end/ after he plundered the stronghold on the proud height of Troy” (Fitzgerald 1998: 1). Quite apart from the muse proper, God and his actions or interventions are also generally inferred in Dagbamba panegyrics. Though God may not be the one to whom attention is drawn to, he is almost always invoked or implied in the actions or circumstances of monarchs or the people as a whole. However, it is in the primary praise poem *Dakoli Nyɛ Bia* that God becomes the central focus of praise.

5.5.2 Themes

One basic characteristic of the Dagbamba panegyrics is praise. As a dominant idea that runs throughout the texts, other themes that are raised serve to foreground the idea of praise. Opland (1983: 146) contends that “[...] praises commemorate physical and moral qualities of the subject and events in which he participated, and they locate the subject in a genealogical context.” Text II, lines 248–255 conclude with the reaffirmations of the appellations of the monarch in the following extolments:

Dunialana zuu.

First son of intercessor of the earth.

Wulimpuhili namlana.

King of the east’s first son.

Andunia Naawunilan zuu.

God of the earth’s first son.

Wulinluhili namlana zuu.

King of the west’s first son.

Nusaa ni nudirigulana zuu.

Owner of both left and right’s first son.

Nom balim ka tinj’ maai.

Walk softly to calm the earth.

Napaya tooni Gubili Zuu.

Son of the family of the first royal wife’s first son.

Naa Yakubu Zuu bilimma bilimm.

First son of Naa Yakubu walk majestically.

The concepts of extolment notwithstanding, ideas of admonishment may show up in some instances where the praise poet seeks to comment on pending issues that go contrary to the expectations of the people in general. Extolment, however, is mostly the order of the Dagbamba panegyrics and admonishment, though not uncommon,

is rather rare. A typical example that serves to buttress the idea of admonishment in Dagbamba panegyrics is the concluding statement of a praise poet to the paramount chief of all women chiefs in Dagbon, Gundo Naa Salamatu. He states:

Yinima n-su Dagbaŋ tabili ŋmampirigu Kacheɣu.

You own Dagbon and women regents of premature gourds.

Niŋmi ka ti Kani.

Reign well.

Ka a yuli kun bɔrigi Salaam.

So that your name will not be erased in this world.

(Text III: lines 153–155)

From the preceding illustrations, it becomes evident that Dagbamba praise poets censor leadership roles in quite appealing manner. The voice of the poet is indeed the voice of the people. Though the texts may rightly be deemed as praise poems, they are not devoid of reproach. Praise as against vilification, reproach or reproof are deployed in case of necessity. Further explications on the ideas of admonishment as evident in the texts will be carried up in the following section on the use of hyperbole.

Perhaps, one theme that runs through Dagbamba panegyrics is the monarch as representative of the Almighty Creator and an intercessor of the people. The supremacy of God over all created things and happenings such as fortune and perils of man and the circumstances of the environment in which he resides is well acknowledged. These ideas abound in Dagbamba panegyrics and are evidenced by the respective formulaic epithets, hyperbolic constructs and conceptual metaphors in panegyrics dedicated to Dagbon kings in general. In the following excerpt, these attributions suffice: *Tihi ni mɔri lana*, 'owner of trees and grasses'; *Kunkuna ni naɣilima lana*, 'owner of mountains and lowlands'; *Andunia Wumbila*, 'god of the earth'; *Dunia balinda*, 'intercessor of the world'; *Salaa*

Naa, 'king of the world'; *Salaa nachima*, 'son of the world'; *Dunia wuni*, 'god of the earth'; in lines 1, 2, 4 and 47, 24, 29, 36, 49 and 54 of excerpt III, accordingly.

Heroism as a theme is also quite pronounced in Dagbamba panegyrics. It is held in high esteem in Dagbon and it translates into other socio-cultural relations and negotiations. The heroic deeds or actions of monarchs are also of utmost concern to praise poets. It is these elements that set one; especially royals from other royals and members of the community as a whole. The distinctive heroic deeds or acts of monarchs consequently serve to uplift their status. There is no doubt therefore when reigning monarchs and the general audience alike nod in pride and admiration at the mention of heroic feats and rulership prowess of kings or chiefs. It would be recalled from the earlier discussion on the origin of the *lunsi*, the drummer clan, that it was actually by dint of heroic achievement at a battle that warranted a praise poet to usher Naa Luro (1554–1570), the then king of Dagbon, into his kingdom by exalting his victory and glories.

The valour of the individual amongst the Dagbamba is for one to live a good life worthy of emulation. This is expected more of leaders amongst whom the Dagbamba kings or chiefs occupy a centre stage. Personal accomplishments that relate to a monarch's service to the community in which one reigns as king or chief is crucial to the development and peaceful coexistence of the people as a whole. The deeds of one, especially of monarchs, whether in action or in word, remain binding even after one's demise. What one does, says or attributes to himself or herself are, therefore, not taken lightly. As a result, the accomplishments of the king or chief are not left out in Dagbamba panegyrics. The higher the achievements of a monarch, the higher his or her reputation.

The visions and aspirations of a monarchs for his community or people may also be made known through the panegyrics. As accomplishments are well lauded, the persistent mention of the

visions and aspirations of the monarch in question may serve as a motivational reminder to forge on with his or her ambitions.

Both physical attributes and mental capabilities of monarchs and their overall appearances also attract the attention of praise poets. In most instances, positive attributes receive their attention and the negative attributes simply elude them. A king's stature, kindness, modesty, wisdom and temperaments amongst other qualities may find place in Dagbamba panegyrics.

In conclusion, the idea of interconnectedness either in the spiritual or mundane realms is central to Dagbamba. The panegyrics revolve on this particular theme in diverse respects. The ancestral allusions that seek to trace the lineage of the ruling monarch through his father and sometimes mother and siblings attest to this fact. The reigning monarch is what he or she is because the ancestors had set the stage for him; and so are families, lineages, clans and some other marital and friendship relations deemed important to the Dagbamba as a whole. Quite apart from the genealogies of kings or chiefs and heroic exploits and personal characteristics may also serve as controlling ideas in the Dagbamba panegyrics. The general controlling ideas that are being alluded to in the panegyrics tend to entreat the reigning monarch to be on the quest of emulation of deeds or acts worthy of support. It is in this light that the praise poet in the panegyric for Naa Yakubu Nantoo, text I, line 89, states quite unequivocally thus: *Naa kuliya ka o yuli kun bɔrigu*, 'the king departs, but his name is not forgotten'.

5.6 Content and Style of Composition

Content, as far as language or the creative arts are concerned, may generally refer to the ideas or thoughts expressed in any given discourse situation. Therefore, the ideas or thoughts conveyed constitute a part or a selection of or from a larger stock of

information. The contents of the Dagbamba panegyrics, therefore, refer to the creative selection and arrangement of information for the purpose of meeting a specific aim. Style relates to the general techniques employed in composition; herein the Dagbamba panegyrics. Salman (2010: 115) notes that "for an idea to be labeled style, there must be a degree of predictability, habit, level of frequency and pattern. What makes a style is the frequency of occurrence and of course the lexical predilection." In an elaboration about the affinity of stylistics, "an artful science" with rhetoric, Mason (2019: 62) quotes Carter and Stockwell as stating thus:

Stylistics overlaps considerably with 'elocutio', the selection of style for an appropriate effect. (The other four divisions of rhetorical skill were: invention, the organisation of ideas, memory and delivery.) It is important to note the dual aspect in the discipline: rhetoric was concerned not only with linguistics form but also inextricably with the notion of the appropriacy of the form in context. (Carter & Stockwell 2008: 292)

With respect to the principles of variability, the contents of the Dagbamba panegyrics are woven around old structural patterns that consist of stock information passed down from one generation to the other, with just a few individual additions and subtractions over time and place. However, having knowledge of the stock of praise repertoire is one thing while mastering the skill of presenting such knowledge is quite another. A praise poet, worthy of acclaim must therefore possess knowledge of the stock praise repertoire as well as the skill of presentation.

What is also of foremost importance with respect to Dagbamba panegyrics is that the truths or facts for that matter should be the core of the contents sought to be carried up. The realities in historical or general accounts passed down from one generation to the other should not be distorted in any way. That notwithstanding,

some information or revelations tend to be contested by some praise poets and the general public alike.

The plot of the narrative is built on some specific themes. Quite apart from the introductory and concluding sections of the texts that focus on the character, accomplishments and roles of the monarch as well reaffirmations of his or her dominion, most of the content of the Dagbamba panegyrics is carved around allusions of past kings or chiefs and their families as links to the reigning monarch in question. With about 40 passed monarchs to have ascended the Dagbon paramount skin for instance, it is not common to have praise poets recount all the reigns, associations and accomplishments of all past chiefs. The most notable or perhaps those who share close affinity with the monarch as subject of praise are the ones who are often mentioned. See Appendix C for a list of Dagbamba kings.

That said, it should be pointed out that the plots or sub-themes raised in the Dagbamba panegyrics are so cryptic that the listeners or audience are bound to make inferences. This is mainly a result of the fact that themes and characters and some general circumstances in the texts are not fully developed. Therefore, one's knowledge of Dagbamba history or folklore serves to complement one's understanding of the texts. One's knowledge of the diverse Dagbamba clans and their functions, the lineages, villages and associated names or totems are vital as far as Dagbamba panegyrics are concerned. Barber (2007: 74) contends that:

Praise poetry is notable for its fluid, disjunctive form, its vocative, second-person address and its simultaneous evocation of the past and the present, bringing the powers and potentials of dead predecessors into the centre of the living community. It is assembled out of discrete, name-like formulations which are brought together in fluid and variable combinations.

The Dagbamba panegyrics may be sectioned as follows: There is the expository stage where the poet introduces the chief or royal being praised by ushering him with simple exultations in vivid imagery. The plot then rises with personal praises of the monarch's physical or personal attributes. The climax is realised with the praise of exploits and achievements that may be personal to the chief or his ancestry. The plot falls often with the poet praising himself or his creative prowess which may allude to his ancestry or admonishments to the chief or audience in subtle ways. The denouement is the concluding part where the poet reaffirms the position of the monarch as subject of praise. Each thematic shift may either be introduced by or concluded with the verbal phrase *Nom balim ka tirja maai* as in 'thread gently and calm the earth'. Upon critical observations, it is ascertained that in most respects the arrangement of sub-themes in such a manner as described above tends to aid memorisation and delivery.

A critical observation of Dagbamba panegyrics also reveals that some particular statements are generally identified with some particular characters or monarchs for that matter. Hence, one finds striking similarities in texts performed by different poets at different Dagbamba towns or settings. The moment a particular monarch is invoked, there are some pertinent complimentary statements that follow up. In countless renditions, the keen observer is bound to realise for example that at the mention of the monarch Naa Ablai Bila (king Abdulai II), for example, the following statements do not elude the praise poets in performance. *Ninsalnim ni zay'si shel*, 'what men reject', / *Din ka wuni pili maana*; 'is what God adorns'; text II, lines 215 and 216.

What is the style of composition by the praise poets who are credited with the compositions and performances of the Dagbamba panegyrics? There are significant factors that come to play as far as the mechanics of composition are concerned. Dagbamba praise poets tend to be consistent with the information and rules

set by their fore-bearers. They basically conjure the themes and some other stylistic elements from traditional verses with a blend of their personal creative acts. The main differences that distinguish one text from the other are a matter of style, mostly unique to some particular praise poets, other than content. There must be clarity of expressions of ideas and thoughts. Coherence with respect to the display of the contents of the panegyrics is also not undermined in the narrative process.

The poet's genius lies in his ability to replicate traditional schemes and to rise out of them with his unique personal creativity without distorting essential elements of the texts and the performance in general. One important feature of composition in performance is that the poem or performance per se can either be shortened or lengthened with respect to the circumstances at play. The source of composition is credited to tradition; however, there exist some taunts that are uniquely the creation or artistic prowess of the praise poet in person – hence, the need to ascertain where tradition ends and where individual talent or genius of the praise poet sets in.

Dagbamba panegyrics are basically composed of complex and diverse plots. The length of the texts may vary from a couple of hundred lines to a thousand depending on discretion of the praise poet in question and the occasion in particular. In most instances, however, where time is critically apportioned, panegyrics tend to be shorter as they are mostly composed in excerpts to suite the situation. On the occasion of composite drumming (praise performances usually enacted at royal courts, rightly referred to by Dagbamba as *sambaŋ luŋa*), performances last for hours, throughout the night till dawn.

There are no categorically set stanzas as realised in the performance of the Dagbamba panegyrics. However, one may tend to place the text in stanzas based on two major principles: the long pauses that seek to break or introduce the themes highlighted in the

texts or the drum beats that serve to introduce the particular themes of the text, may serve as good indicators for stanza breaks. That notwithstanding, presenting the texts without any stanza breaks may also be a better option; owing to the fact that such stanzas cannot be maintained in the same text performed even by the same poet at a different place or time.

The lines in the Dagbamba panegyrics are, however, clearly identified by short pauses or statements *per se*, introduced by the praise poets in the course of performance. As poetic renditions, it is not plausible for one to render the texts in a prosaic form. The inter-linear arrangements of the thoughts expressed by the praise poets tend to give the texts the poetic form that they most deserve. Other punctuation marks as the full stop, comma, question mark, exclamation mark, semi colon and colon are also noted. It should be stated, yet emphatically, that the lines and punctuations marks that are represented in the texts herein are based on the discretions of the researcher as realised in the performance of the texts.

The Dagbamba praise poets as reiterated earlier are masters of improvisation to say the least. Not only are they well versed with the lineages of royal clan proper; they seem to always have something to say of just anything or person they seek to praise within their poetic repertoire, imaginations and the environment as a whole. The moment names and concepts are evoked, they trigger further information to serve as supporting details to the theme raised. They employ diverse strategies in improvisations and performances as a whole. In her discussion on intertextuality, Mason (2019: 21–24) notes how connections are made between different pieces of information within and across texts and stores of knowledge. She distinguishes a mental process, “narrative interrelation”, and the articulated product, “inter-textual reference”, as vital in the production and articulation processes respectively.

The method of repeated reproduction as noted by Bartlett (1932: 63-94) rightly situates the style of memory and reproduction of

the Dagbamba panegyrics by the praise poets. See Bartlett's (1932) application of schema theory on literary cognition with respect to the mechanisms of remembering and memory. Mason (2019: 66) reiterates that:

In a sense, then, every mental process relating to memory and knowledge that humans ever engage in, both consciously and unconsciously, is a form of interrelation because thought is in essence a constant process of situating and understanding new information in relation to the information we already have; of working out how things are related to one another.

Irrespective of the knowledge of the content and form of Dagbamba panegyrics by the praise poets, human errors are bound to occur even as poets have put into memory a wealth of ideas and strategies to deliver apt performances. Whenever such errors happen in performances, the lead performer may be signalled by another accompanying performer, normally by word of mouth or drum language. Other errors could just be glided over as not many audiences will actually notice if anything is wrong. When the praise poet inadvertently makes a pause, the last stated line is more often than not repeated before the continuing lines follow.

The arrangements of the plot and sub-themes or ideas in the Dagbamba panegyrics need to be systematic to ensure a logical coherence of the development of the plot. Kings and chiefs for that matter reign from different epochs as well as occupy different jurisdictions at a point in time. Hence, once the main subject of praise is identified, accolades are first directed to him or her and then the allusions ranging from past kings or chiefs are called up in a descending order. Generally, allusions to chiefs and other historical events are normally done in sequential order. A king or chief who reigned before another for example, is not mentioned after one who reigned after him or her. In fact, a misplacement of the king or chief

with respect to the time, order of reign or a pertinent historical event in a rendition is easily noted by most praise poets or any knowledgeable Dagbana well versed in the lore and history of the Dagbamba.

Dagbamba praise poets have the poetic license to either omit or include varying details that may range from personalities, associations, locations and some other idiomatic forms as proverbs, riddles and wise sayings that may be attributed to a monarch in question. Irrespective of these omissions and inclusions, a sequential arrangement of the sub-themes in descending order of time is not compromised. In fact, in some instances, when the need arises, some past kings or chiefs may be omitted in the cause of narration. However, the sequential order of arrangement is strictly adhered to.

The implications, therefore, are that a panegyric in praise of a reigning Dagbamba king or chief will automatically commence with the accolades of the monarch in question. The next point of call for the praise poet will usually be to allude foremost to king Gbewaa, the notable ancestor and first king of the Dagbamba. After king Gbewaa, allusions are made to the following kings and/or chiefs in a descending order (for instance, Naas Gbewaa, Zirili, Shitobu, Nyagse, Luro in that sort of order). In a panegyric dedicated to King Yakubu Nantoo for example, praise poets will usually begin with the accolades of Yakubu Nantoo. In the course of narration, the praise poets take a trip down memory lane to allude to the ancestral kings and chiefs who are usually closely related to the reigning monarch as subject of praise. King Gbewaa is notably accorded the position of ancestor and king around whom all Dagbamba kings and chiefs trace their descent. King Gbewaa's sons, Zirili and Shitobu, come in line; and after, king Nyagse follows through to about 40 kings to have ascended the Yendi skin, the paramount skin amongst the Dagbamba. When the narration builds up to the reign of King Yakubu Nantoo, he is once again invoked and further appellations and elaborations are raised. Further, the descendants of King Yakubu Nantoo are invoked in like manner.

It should be borne in mind that in the course of narration as per the occasion or dictates of the praise poets in question, royal wives, children (mostly first-born sons), siblings (mostly males who have ascended some skins), general achievements, circumstances of one's life and reign and general Dagbamba idiomatic expressions serve to complement the Dagbamba panegyric in no mean distinction. For instance, the cause for the variation in the lengths of text I and text II, even though they are both solicited panegyrics in praise of Naa Yakubu Nantoo rest mostly in the fact that the latter poet chooses to elaborate on the family ties of the kings mentioned whereas the former does not.

Quite apart from time and occasion as being significant factors that determine the content of the panegyrics, sometimes it may simply be a matter of knowledge of the stock information of Dagbamba praise poetry by the praise poets. Their repertoire as far as the art of praise poetry is concerned vary significantly. Hence, while one may have knowledge of relationships and roles of diverse kings and chiefs spanning generations praise poets may have limited knowledge.

Critique may as well feature in Dagbamba panegyrics when the need arises. The critique may either be directed to the king or chief in question or the audience as a whole. It is also not uncommon for a praise poet to critique general issues that are of relevance to the community or more so critique a fellow praise poet just as to reaffirm his position or status in the art of praise poetry or his mood or role at a particular time or place.

Significantly also, panegyrics performed in the presence of a monarch differ in some respects from panegyrics performed in the absence of the monarch in question. As a typical example, the introductory part of the panegyric may begin with the common introductory phrase *A balima* ... as in 'your mercies ...'. However, this is mostly when the king or chief in question is seated or at least is stationed at a particular location. In an instance where he is either being ushered in or out of a place or occasion, the repeated phrase

balim, balim... as in 'gently, gently ...' tends to introduce the procession in the rendition of the panegyric. Most of these expressions usually come in the form of exclamations. Note the instance in the introductory statements of the panegyric performed in the presence of Gundo Naa Salamatu.

A balima yooo, a balima yeee!

Your mercies, your mercies!

Gbewaa kachayu, a balima yeee!

Gbewaa woman regent, your mercies!

Ɔirili kachayu, a balima yeee!

Ɔirili woman regent, your mercies!

Ɔmantuna yεrigu, a balima yeee!

The wearer of premature gourd, your mercies!

Buntaam barigu, a balima yeee!

The rider of donkey, your mercies!

(Text III: lines 1–5)

Quite apart from two introductory statements of the Dagbamba panegyric, a third one may suffice. In some instances, however rarely, the praise poet may tend to introduce his panegyric with a brief introduction of himself. As acknowledged by the praise poets, the real introduction to any panegyric performance is an invocation to "memory" and "perfection" as principal spiritual guiding forces of the oral word and sometimes further invocation of gods and ancestors of the praise poet in particular. Dagbamba praise poets maintain that though an invocation may not be uttered as part of the panegyric proper, in most occasions it is indeed performed or rather chanted either in the sole presence of the praise poet or in the mist of others as a prayer for guidance in the art of praise performances. A typical instance with regard to the employment of invocations in the Dagbamba panegyrics is found in the introductory statements of text I.

5.7 Point of View

The narrative of Dagbamba panegyrics normally varies from the second-person singular perspective 'you', *a*, and the third-person singular perspective 'he or she', *o*, with the former being the most prominent. These two main narrative perspectives may be employed simultaneously in a single narrative at varying times of necessity. In most instances, the second-person singular perspective 'you', *a*, is often employed when the subject of praise, the monarch is present, whereas the third person-singular perspective 'he or she', *o*, is employed in the absence of the subject of praise. Both situations stated above are common amongst the Dagbamba as it is not in all times of an occasion that the monarchs are or must be present before a panegyric is performed. For instance, before or after the arrival or departure of a monarch to or from a ceremony, praise poets are often engaged in panegyric performances.

Considering the ubiquity of allusions as pertain in the Dagbamba panegyrics, the second and third-persons singular possessive pronouns, as in 'your', *a*, and 'his or her', *o*, also well abound in the texts and serve to complement the second- and third-person nominal pronouns 'you', *a*, and 'he or she', *o*.

It should be noted that the above stated perspectives are not the only points of view expressed in Dagbamba panegyrics; they are mostly the dominant ones. Indeed, the first-person singular perspective 'I', *m*, *n*, or *η*, is called for in times when the praise poet in question decides to introduce himself, with particular focus on his ancestry and accomplishments in the art of praise poetry. As noted earlier, the employment of the first-person nominal pronoun 'I', *m*, *n*, or *η*, invariably calls for the first-person possessive pronoun 'my', *m*, *n*, or *η*, as it is common with the introduction of allusions. Copious instances of these assertions are found in texts I, II, III, IV.

As a general note, the panegyric is mostly presented from the second-person point of view. Only on a few instances would the

first-person point of view occur. More often than not, when 'I' occurs, it is often for emphasis. For instance, in affirming his role or status in the community and beyond, the praise poet may tend to introduce himself from the onset of his performance. In a measure to affirm his status or role, the poet in question may, as it is often the case, invoke ancestors.

Barber's (2007: 75) observation in the following quotation runs true for the Dagbamba panegyric: "Praises are often produced by a linguistic process of nominalisation, in which a phrase, sentence or even an extended passage is turned into a name-like form by the addition of a prefix meaning 'One who -'."

5.8 Tone and Mood

Tone, also referred to as attitude, may be considered as the feeling expressed by the poet in the actual realisation of the texts towards the audience. Mood on the other hand may be termed as the emotions evoked by the audience. The praise poets control the actions of the chief and the audience as a whole. For instance, he delights the chief and audience as a whole as well as instructs and moves them into action. That notwithstanding, the influences of the monarchs in question and the audience on the praise poet and his performative acts cannot also be contested.

There is generally a playful or dramatic twist to the ceremonial ambiance of the texts and the performance event by and large. The tone of the praise poets as far as Dagbamba panegyrics are concerned are conversational in nature. The conversational tone is further characterised by commentary, which may be evaluative in most respects. The tones of praise, persuasion and admonition can be discerned from the panegyric performances. Nevertheless, the tone expressed by the Dagbamba praise poets in their panegyric performances is formal. The diction of the praise poet is usually

respectful. Even when he intends to say something unpleasant, he makes it euphemistic.

Considering the target of Dagbamba panegyrics at exulting the monarch in most respects, in the mist of his or her subjects, friends and neighbours, care must be taken by the praise poet in question to make his performance as a whole devoid of the slightest ambiguities of any kind; as this can arouse the displeasure of the monarch, his subjects or other sympathisers. Ironical expressions or sarcasm for that matter must be well calculated if indeed their inclusion in the texts will help drive home the message, ideas or issues sought to be conveyed by the praise poet. As the texts are realised in performance, it is almost impossible for the praise poets in question to resort to correcting errors, hence the need for praise poets to carefully monitor the time, place and the audience present as a whole in the cause of performance.

A wrong assertion or an ambiguous one is most likely to instigate conflicts. Issues of the validity and truth of performances are therefore carefully monitored by performers and audience alike. The praise poet, therefore, needs to be very circumspect with the information he selects from his stock repertoire, what he deems fit for the occasion to present in his panegyric performances.

The Dagbamba panegyrics or praise poets for that matter evoke myriads of moods. There is a feeling of satisfaction derived from the texts or performance when the achievements of the fore-bearers of the Dagbamba and the kings and chiefs in particular are alluded to. There is also the feeling of gratification and honour at the mention of the deeds and qualities of the monarch in question. The overall contentment of the audience stems from the educative and yet entertaining nature of the performance and the allusions to the achievements and events of the Dagbamba past.

5.9 Linguistic Conventions

That poetry essentially lends itself to linguistic scrutiny cannot be contested. Quite apart from the content or the information sought to be conveyed by the texts, the creative use of language contributes significantly to the artistic prowess of the Dagbamba praise poets. A literary linguistic analysis therefore pays special attention to language details. According to Fowler (1967: 80),

[f]ormal patterns are found on three levels: grammar, phonology and lexis. Lexis may be understood as vocabulary, if it is a matter of the inventory of available dictionary items in a language; as diction, if it is a selection from that inventory for a particular purpose (e.g., 'poetic diction'); as collocation, if it is the relations between lexical items in a text which are under discussion.

As reiterated earlier, Dagbamba panegyrics are products of language; and to understand the genius of the Dagbamba praise poets, an in-depth exploration of the way and manner in which language is employed in the texts is crucial. The message that is usually encoded in praise renditions by the praise poet are decoded by the listeners from different angles. Hence, one needs to understand the language, being Dagbani, in which the texts are rendered to fully appreciate the texts or performances as a whole. Nonetheless, one's knowledge of Dagbani is not an end in itself. Knowledge of the creative inventions as realised in both linguistic and paralinguistic forms is even more crucial. The relations of component parts in a given literary work as poetry as conveyed by structuralism is expressed by McGrath (1985: 810) as such: "A poem is seen as part of a system of structures established by the existence of other poems. Further, the author is now not the poem's creator in any *ex nihilo* sense. The poem may well have created itself within the context of the codes of poetry."

The following section, therefore, seeks to examine the general use of language in the Dagbamba panegyrics, paying particular attention to the types and kinds of sentences, diction and the general syntactic and morphological processes of the texts.

5.9.1 Syntax: Structure of the Dagbamba Panegyric

Owing to the narrative style and the dramatic nature of the Dagbamba panegyrics, diverse types and kinds of sentences are employed in the texts. Kinds of sentences relate to their functions, whereas types of sentences refer to their structural composition. A critical observation of the Dagbamba panegyrics reveals that the declarative sentence is the most pervasive kind employed by the Dagbamba praise poets, perhaps owing to the fact that the texts dwell much on allusions. Both interrogative and exclamatory kinds of sentences are also interspersed in the texts. They tend to forestall the interactive ambience that pervades the performance of the Dagbamba panegyrics. The least frequent kind, however not absent, realised in the Dagbamba panegyric is the imperative sentence.

As a poetic form, the Dagbamba panegyric is characterised by relatively short expressions. Hence, the type of sentences that are common with the Dagbamba panegyrics are simple constructions. In some rather few instances, the complex sentence comes in handy and is often realised in enjambments. The enjambments are often realised in conjunctive clauses; introduced mostly by 'and' and 'but', with the former being the most prevalent. The frequency of the conjunctive clauses in the Dagbamba panegyrics may be attributed to the narrative style of the texts. Deviations from common collocation are rare.

The rule of poetic economy makes poets opt for more lexical than grammatical items. Subjects, pronouns, tense markers, relative

morphemes and general conjunctions appear to be common with most Dagbamba praise poets and the Dagbamba panegyric in particular. Syntactic variations, such as syntactic inversions are, however, not common. Hence, the usual clause structure in Dagbani as in SVO is common with varied sentence types and kinds. However, when syntactic variations such as syntactic inversions are employed, they are mostly for poetic effects. In some instances, cases of ellipsis, contractions and hedging may show up. What is; however, mostly employed stylistically in Dagbamba panegyrics to attain poetic effects is the use of synonymic expressions and euphemisms grounded in Dagbamba idiomatic repertoire. A typical example is the expression employed to refer to the demise of the respective kings or chiefs mentioned in the panegyrics. Text II, lines 53, 154, 220 and 230 present the idea of death as follows: *Nantoo ni zan nuu ηmeri buya tiηa*, ‘the day Nantoo passed on’; *Tipariga ni ka yin dahi n’ she*, ‘the day Tiparaga passed on’; *O ni zan o nuu dihi buya tiηa*, ‘when he passed on’; *O zo che namsama dahinsheli*, ‘the day he passed on’.

With respect to tense and aspect, the perfective aspect is most prevalent in Dagbamba panegyrics. The past and the present also happen to be the predominant tenses employed in the Dagbamba panegyrics. As a narrative poem that seeks to allude to events and characters alike, it is of little doubt or no doubt at all that the past tense pervades the texts. The present tense automatically shows up when praises are directed to the reigning monarch.

5.9.2 Diction: The Morphology of the Dagbamba Panegyric

It should be made emphatic that language (the spoken language and its nuances) contributes in no mean measure to literary expressions as verbal arts. The language in which the texts are rendered carries

with it some peculiarities that allow for some particular stylistic expressions. It is for this reason that no language can presume to express another language in the true and strictest sense. As reiterated earlier, one knowledgeable in the Dagbani language for instance is bound to see disparities between the source language, being Dagbani, and the target language, being English.

The language employed in Dagbamba panegyrics is predominantly Dagbani. However, one noticeable feature of the texts is that they have some dialectical differences. As noted earlier, Dagbani has three dialects; and the texts the praise poets perform, albeit the similarities in subject matter and the development of themes, the respective dialects of Dagbani show up. Though the texts are predominantly rendered in Dagbani, it is not uncommon to find instances wherein bilingual praise poets employ code-mixing and code-switching of Dagbani and other neighbouring languages like Mampruli, Mossi, Konkomba, Gonja, Hausa or even English.

It should be known that code-switching and code-mixing strategies are mostly employed on purpose to achieve certain aims. With respect to the Dagbamba panegyric proper, where the occasion involves mostly Dagbamba, code-switching or code-mixing is not common with the Dagbamba praise poets as the purpose of their inclusion would be stylistically stale. Code-switching and code-mixing attain significant stylistic reverence when they are employed in an occasion that involves other speakers than the Dagbamba. As such, these stylistic devices are mostly realised in praise poems targeted at politicians or some other aristocrats in society as a whole. Herein, the slightest code-switching or code-mixing of English and Dagbani in an occasion set in Dagbon foregrounds the presence of the notable persons present as speakers or users of the English language. It is in a similar vein that the code-mixing or code-switching in Mossi and Dagbani in an occasion set in Dagbon would tend to highlight the presence of the notable Mossi person or persons present.

Quite apart from the dialectical differences, which do not in any way alter the aesthetics or meanings sought to be carried up in Dagbamba panegyrics, there are also quite noticeable idiolectal differences as found with the large array of praise poets in Dagbon. Most of these idiolectal differences relate mostly to some stylistic stunts such as exclamations and some sententious aphorisms. In some instances, most of these stunts, especially the manner of their realisations, can be directly attributed to some particular praise poets.

The language employed in the texts includes archaisms, religious or sacred words or expressions. For instance, *A balima*, which translates as 'your mercies', is solely reserved for the praise of kings or chiefs. The word *balima*, as in 'mercies', carries with it some religious and spiritual undertones. The king or chief is perceived as not just a mediator between God, gods, ancestors and the people but an embodiment of the spiritual entities. It is within him that these spiritual entities reside and carry out their functions in the human realm. Hence, alluding to the king or chief as 'your mercies' rests partly on the divine nature of king or chief. It is therefore not surprising that this accolade is accorded specifically to kings or chiefs.

As reiterated earlier, there is generally the employment of more lexical items as compared to grammatical items. This is true especially with poetry in particular. As the praise poets strive to condense their thoughts in quite sententious aphorisms, lexical items tend to convey information in brevity. More so, the texts are imbued with conversational discourse markers. These discourse markers tend to forestall the interactive, and yet eminent force of the texts. The use of pronouns and vocatives such as personal names, titles and terms of endearment in the Dagbamba panegyrics are a case in point. When vocatives appear in discourses as the Dagbamba panegyrics, they are usually accented.

But for kings or chiefs who had reigned in earlier times of the formation of the Dagbon state, most bear a minimum of two names.

However, they are mostly known in the local parlance by one name. The title 'chief' and its associates as reiterated earlier usually precede the name. More so, there are usually corresponding epithets or appellations that may follow a name. In most instances, these epithets or appellations are inextricable intertwined with the personalities sought to be identified by the respective names. Once the name of a monarch is mentioned, its corresponding epithet or appellation automatically follows. The personality of Naa Yakubu Nantoo as in 'King Yakubu, the anthrax' and Naa Satan̄kuyili, 'King Abudu, the thunder stone' are cases in point.

Dagbamba bear names that are mostly etymologically indigenous or of Islamic origin. Some, if not most of the Islamic names, undergo some forms of indigenisation in several respects. For instance, the name Abdulai is indigenised as Abudu, Aburu or Ablai. More often than not, the array of indigenised forms may serve to depict different personalities. There are some instances where kings or chiefs, who have reigned at different times and places, may bear a similar name. To clarify such ambiguity, therefore, the noted categories: first, second, third in that order, as popular with successive reigns identified by a common name, are often realised in Dagbamba panegyrics as *kpema*, 'senior', or *bila*, 'junior'. The kings Ablai Kpema and Ablai bila occupy central thematic roles in Dagbamba panegyrics, and are often identified in such a manner.

Naa is a pre-nominal title or honorific for a king or chief in Dagbani. Some particular chieftains bear the post-nominal *lana* to refer also to a king or chief. *Naa* literally translates as 'king or chief' whereas *lana* translates as 'owner'. Both nominals connote rulership or control over a designated territory. Other notable prefix honorifics include *nyaba* and *mba* which translate as 'grandfather' and 'father' respectively. These titles may also be attributed to some particular chieftains to depict particularly the role of an occupant in Dagbon as a whole. These titles are therefore prominent in Dagbamba panegyrics and Dagbamba royal discourses in general.

With respect to the grammatical categories, nouns and verbs are the dominant categories employed in Dagbamba panegyrics. This is not surprising as this phenomenon is common with general expressions. The mention of verbs and nouns as central to expressions as Dagbamba panegyrics inevitably warrants the inclusion of pronouns, demonstratives and determiners to feature in the said expressions and consequent elaborations of such expressions. Adjectives and adverbs are rarely employed but are nevertheless absent. When adjectives or adverbs show up in Dagbamba panegyrics, they assume significant functions. The significance of the ubiquitous adverb of manner: *balim*, which may be translated as 'gently' or 'slowly', in Dagbamba royal discourse cannot be over-emphasised. In the presence of a monarch notably, this adverb is unavoidable in the Dagbamba panegyric. Not only does it serve to introduce the panegyric, but it is also repeated consistently in the texts as a form of adoration. Coordinating as well as subordinating conjunctions feature quite prominently as per the narrative style of the Dagbamba panegyrics.

As a general note, nouns are mostly proper, collective and compound kinds in the forms of personal names, names of villages, clans and lineages. These concepts are made referenced to diversely in the Dagbamba panegyrics. Verb forms are also typically in the perfective other than the imperfective. The verb form *nyε*, 'to be', is the most common verb employed in the panegyrics. This is mainly because the panegyric often makes reference to one being something else in metaphorical terms (personal appellations and allusions to ancestors, descendants and general associations in particular are realised with the verb *nyε*, 'to be'). Perhaps, the second most common after the verb forms 'to be' are forms of the verb *dɔyi* 'to give birth' and their associated synonyms. As the panegyric attempts to trace the ancestry of the substantive royal, allusion to his or her ancestry is made by tracing the generations or descendants from which the royal in question belongs.

An examination of the normal day-to-day register of Dagbamba and the register of the panegyrics reveal that the Dagbani employed in both situations are similar with respect to their syntactic structures in particular. For instance, the reduplication of verbs is as common in Dagbamba panegyrics as it is in Dagbani discourse. The following expressions in text II, lines 3 and 72 and text IV, line 171 contain verb reduplications: *O puuni ηmen ηmen surim*, 'Birigu Yomda is silent', .../*Bili Bili ni nan polo*, '... space can be found when shaken'; and *N-zabi zabi ti ηma Kasalli Shebili*, 'and he fought and beheaded Kasalli Shebili', respectively. The verb duplications are represented in bolds: ηmen ηmen may be translated as 'squeeze squeeze', *Bili Bili* may be translated as 'shake shake' whereas *zabi zabi* may be translated as 'fight fight'. It should be stated, however, that the translations rendered herein are far from literal; the translations are done to serve the context and poetics of the Dagbamba panegyrics. What is very common with the Dagbamba panegyrics is a high frequency of proverbial statements and such other coded constructs that may be very difficult or nearly impossible for listeners to decode. The morphology of the Dagbamba panegyrics is, however, quite different from the Dagbani spoken in daily life endeavours. That is to say, there are usually archaic words that may be employed in the Dagbamba panegyrics proper that may evade the knowledge of some Dagbamba or Dagbani speakers predominantly.

5.10 Prosodic Features

Prosodic features may refer to the phonotactic elements of discourse in general. They include among others rhythm, rhyme, meter, repetition, ideophones, alliteration and assonance. Other notable prosodic features such as variations in pitch, syllable length, loudness, tone, pause, stress and the general voice quality and its cadences as a whole have been examined in the previous chapter.

This section therefore attempts to throw more light on some of the notable prosodic features otherwise known as literary devices that distinguish the Dagbamba panegyrics from other texts. It should be reiterated that a significant feature that distinguishes poetry from other genres is its phonotactic layout, which is often harnessed by poets of no mean distinction to foreground certain ideas or concepts in some specific poetic segments or entire texts.

Phonotactic elements serve to buttress the general musical quality of the Dagbamba panegyrics. Some of these features are more pronounced in some particular texts as compared to others. The prosodic elements that abound in the Dagbamba panegyric are features that are common to most poetic verbal arts in general. These prosodic elements contribute in no mean measure to the aesthetic beauty of the texts and the poetic genius of the Dagbamba praise poets as a whole. With regard to the Dagbamba panegyric in particular, rhyme and metre are less of a concern to the Dagbamba praise poets. It should be noted, however, that though an element such as rhyme is not common with the Dagbamba panegyric, they are not absent.

5.10.1 Rhythm

Perhaps if there is any prosodic element that stands out without the slightest contestation in Dagbamba panegyrics, then it should be no other than rhythm. Rhythm is one particular prosodic feature that is not compromised by the Dagbamba praise poets. The texts per se, are realised in song, and for that matter the musical quality of the texts play a central role in composition or consequent performance. In most African contexts, poetry is song and as such most poetic forms are realised in song. The spontaneity of the performance of the texts is carried up in the rise and fall of pitch and the diverse calculated intermittent pauses. The stresses or loudness, silences

and general modulations of the voice contribute significantly to the euphony of Dagbamba panegyrics. These qualities are mostly evident and tend to stand out as per the praise poets in question.

Amongst other features, one that graces or enhances the rhythmical texture of the texts is the tonal nature of the Dagbani language itself. Normal conversations in Dagbani are often rhythmical, hence deliberate attempts at enhancing the musical quality of the Dagbamba panegyric as a poetic song-kind realises even more rhythmical textures. Rhythm is also realised in the metrical concordances of the syllabic structure of the lines and the texts as a whole. The rhythm and sense of sound in a text is guarded by the formulaic systems that recur and do help the singer in memorising the texts. Writing on Lesotho migrant songs, Coplan (1997: 32) notes that “[...] rhythmic performance creates a conceptual unity of sounding and hearing, sensation and understanding that conflates individual and collective experience.”

Rhythm is key in Dagbamba verbal arts, and musical aspects such as tones and repetitions serve great needs. Rhythm is not compromised in the texts at all. It is cherished by the praise poets as they must rise and fall with the rhythm of the drum and the musical texts. Praise poets therefore cease this avenue or capitalise on this for musical effects. It should be pointed out here that the metrical patterns of Dagbamba panegyrics are not strictly enshrined in the texts as they tend to vary with respect to the performer or time and place of performance of the texts. As a whole, be it rhythm and rhyme, both are similar means to the same end.

Generally, calculated or patterned rhyme is not the goal of the Dagbamba praise poets even though some rhyme patterns pertain and may be consciously incorporated by some praise poets. As a matter of fact, rhyme is not a hyped feat in the Dagbamba panegyric as rhythm holds sway in the texts. As such, an effort to trace rhymes in the texts or perhaps consider them as central to the Dagbamba panegyrics would be futile and unfit for traditional considerations.

Quite apart from the aesthetic beauty of rhyme, what is often aimed at by most a poet with rhyme is rhythm and the Dagbamba panegyric exudes with such rhythmic potency. Detailed elaboration on the function of rhythm is found in the following section dedicated to rhythm and its artistic deployment in Dagbamba panegyrics.

5.10.2 Ideophones and Interpolations

There are some notable repeated sounds, words, expressions and ideophones that pervade the Dagbamba panegyrics. These may serve as interpolations, ideophones or general comments; some of which may not be part of the texts proper. Ideophones and interpolations are often realised as exclamations. These exclamatory remarks may stand alone in a line or may appear within an expression in a given line. Ideophones and interpolations as a whole are often uttered by the praise poets or general audience in the cause of the performance. These ideophonic words are usually intoned rhythmical and in varying pitches when uttered by the praise poets particularly. They are also usually preceded by the drum beat.

The most notable exclamations found in Dagbamba panegyrics are the ideophonic words *yeee* and *yooo*. These, in their varying repeated lengths and forms per the discretion of the performing praise poet, are notably the most frequently employed ideophones in the Dagbamba panegyrics. In most instances, when they are employed, they come at the end of words, phrases or clauses that mostly serve as independent lines of the texts. As such, these ideophones tend to forestall the rhythmic quality of the Dagbamba panegyrics. For instance, the ubiquitous introductory phrase *A balima*, implying 'your mercies', is more often than not followed by either *yeee* or *yooo*. In all recorded instances and as witnessed in actual performances, no instance was this introductory phrase employed without these complimentary ideophones.

Other words that form a basic part of the Dagbamba praise poets' poetic repertoires are the ideophones *wooi*, *wei* and *oi*. Though *wooi*, *wei* and *oi* may not always form part of the Dagbamba panegyric text proper, they are nevertheless uttered to express surprise or general excitement. It should be pointed out that some of these ideophones are peculiar to some particular praise poets. For instance, one elderly praise poet from Nanton will usually institute the ideophones as follows: *A mama yeei*. The introductory lines of text III, lines 1–6, exemplify the employment of the ideophone *yee* in exclamations for stylistic and aesthetic effects:

A balima yooo, a balima yeee!
 Your mercies, your mercies!
Gbewaa kachayu, a balima yeee!
 Gbewaa woman regent, your mercies!
Ɔirili kachayu, a balima yeee!
 Ɔirili woman regent, your mercies!
Ɔmantuna yerigu, a balima yeee!
 The wearer of premature gourd, your mercies!
Buntaam barigu, a balima yeee!
 The rider of donkey, your mercies!
Wei!
 Wei!

As a general note, these ideophones tend to contribute to the rhythm of the texts and the syllabic unity of the lines accordingly. Most of the ideophones noted herein tend to be associated with some particular phrases as intimated above, or may be employed as precursors or sub-themes in a text. Others may simply be interspersed in texts mostly as a technique to draw the attention of listeners. Considering their general functions, ideophones may serve as memory enhancers in the situation of performance. They are also used to emphasise ideas and themes and to engage the auditory senses of the listeners.

5.10.3 Formula, Repetition and Parallelism

There are verbal cues, formulas or mnemonic techniques such as words, phrases and refrains that guide the oral poet in his spontaneous rendition or composition-in-performance. Perhaps, amongst a host of other verbal cues employed in Dagbamba panegyrics, repetitions, parallelisms and general formulaic expressions abound. Repetition may well be classified as both a figure of speech and a rhetorical device in some respects. As a rhetorical device basically, it entails formulaic diction, parallelism and other kinds of repetitions. An examination of the respective texts performed on diverse occasions reveal a high dose of repetitions. In some instances, these within and across texts may be partial, with a relatively few verbatim ones.

Repetitions manifested in Dagbamba panegyrics come in different forms and kinds. The kinds of repetitions in the Dagbamba panegyric are verbatim, including variable terms or simple inflection, the repletion of words, sounds, phrases and expressions, sequences of lines as in parallelism, omissions and additions of words, lines and general substitutions of synonyms. Repetitions of words and general expressions in Dagbamba panegyrics normally serve as some formulas for apt performance.

Lord (1960: 4) defines the formula as a "line or half-line constructed on the pattern of the formulas." Parry (1930: 80) defines the formula as "employed under the same metrical condition". As far as the Dagbamba panegyrics are concerned, these definitions appear to be limiting the scope and nature of what a formulaic expression or word may be. Therefore, the idea of the 'same metrical condition' especially is altered with a similar rhythmic filler, however, semantically appropriate to the context, that enhances the texture of the text. Here, the formulaic word or expression relates to time, space and person. That is to say, some specific times of the performance of the Dagbamba panegyrics or place in the text call for some particular words or expressions.

Parry's (1930) definition of formula revolves around three main ideas: that the formula entails an essential idea, that it is regularly employed and employed with the same metrical condition. Though these assumptions may well fit the epics that Parry encountered, a strict adherence to his prescription of formula does not fit the case of the Dagbamba panegyrics. Finkelberg (2012: 82) concedes that "[...] no system, oral formulaic or another, can be treated as identical to the individual text that derives from it: the distinction between 'langue' and 'parole' would certainly be in place here. In other words, the applicability of the oral formulaic hypothesis to Homeric diction cannot be regarded as absolute." Finkelberg (2012: 82) concludes, however, that "[...] to sustain the Parry-Lord theory as a valid scientific hypothesis, we have to recognize its limitations and to work out a more comprehensive theory that would include the original hypothesis as its central core."

Critical observations reveal that the formulas characterised by the Dagbamba panegyric are mostly shared inheritances of the praise poetry tradition. That notwithstanding, one may observe some peculiar idiosyncratic devices that are unique to some particular performers. Following Parry and Lord's theorising of formulaic discourse as characteristic of the Slavic epics and the epics of Homer, it could be deduced that similar formulaic expressions are employed in the Dagbamba panegyrics.

If the above clarifications on repetition and formulaic expressions specifically are issues to go by, there are some words or a group of words that crave for attention in the Dagbamba panegyrics. One notable formulaic expression that often serves as an introductory statement of the Dagbamba panegyric is the phrase: *A balima ...*, which translates as 'your mercies ...'. On several occasions, it may be employed in the same texts quite a number of times to either introduce a sub-plot or theme or foreground an idea or message in the text. A word that functions in a similar vein as the introductory statement above is the adjective *balim*, which translates as 'slowly' or 'gently'. It

is often employed in the introductory stages of the Dagbamba panegyric and repeated in succession at least twice in a given line of the text. As reiterated in earlier discussions, this expression is often ubiquitous in a panegyric performance when the monarch in question is either being ushered in or out of his courtyard or a gathering. As a whole, these expressions are generally known as anaphora, as they tend to be repeated before successive words, phrases or clauses in Dagbamba panegyrics. The following excerpts show how the expressions *a balima* [...], 'your mercies' and *balim* 'slowly or gently', are employed in the Dagbamba panegyrics.

Quite apart from the aesthetic adornment to Dagbamba panegyrics and verbal texts in general, repetition and parallelism in most respects serve as memory aids to guide the poet in his poetic renditions, composition-in-performance. The strategies for ease of remembrance or recollection are very common with Dagbamba praise poets but also appear to be even a more common feature with praise poetry in general. See for example the striking similarities with the repetition of the preceding lexical words 'owner ...' in a Dagbamba panegyric and 'great ...' in the panegyric of the powerful nineteenth-century King Mutesa quoted by Finnegan (2012: 114):

Panegyric for King Mutesa

Thy feet are hammers,
Son of the forest [a comparison with a lion]
Great is the fear of thee;
Great is thy wrath;
Great is thy peace;
Great is thy power

Introduction of a Panegyric for Kings of Dagbon

Tihi ni mɔri lana.
Owner of trees and grasses.
Kunkuna ni nayilima lana.

Owner of mountains and lowlands.
Sayim lana.
 Owner of food.
Andunia Wumbila.
 god of the earth.
Nom balim, balim ka tiŋa maai.
 Walk gently, gently to calm the earth.
 (Excerpt III: lines 1–5)

Repeated words or expressions may also come in the form of rhetorical questions. Rhetorical questions serve to highlight the themes explored by the poet in the preceding statements or lines. They also heighten the delivery of the poems as they seek to draw the attention of the audience by means of foregrounding some respective concepts or ideas. One particular expression that may be considered as a repetitive clause or a formulaic expression is the rhetorical statement *Bɔ n-che ka n-yeli?* as in ‘Why do I say so?’. It is often complimented by the expression *Din che ka n yeli ni*, as in ‘That is why I said’. This rhetorical expression may not be considered as typical or central to the panegyric per se; but rather a repetitive style that is employed by many a praise poet, at least in some panegyric performances as a measure to offer further details to an aforementioned claim. The repetition of the rhetorical question to emphasis a point in the Dagbamba panegyric is best classified in literature as epimone. As such, once it is introduced, it is often followed by the allusive statements that characterise the Dagbamba panegyrics. The first two lines of text II foreground the importance of the rhetorical question stated above as follows:

Yakubu Daa nyela Birigu Yomda payasara bia.
 Yakubu’s mother was from Birigu Yomda lineage.
Bɔ kan yeli ni birigu yomda payasara bia?
 Why do I say his mother was from Birigu Yomda lineage?

Instances of lexical and syntactic parallelism are interspersed throughout the texts. A typical instance of lexical parallelism in Dagbamba panegyrics is the use of the conjunction *ka*, ‘and’ as typically a coordinating conjunction linking diverse ideas and concepts. The repetition of the conjunction ‘and’ is known as polysyndeton. *Balim*, meaning ‘slowly’ or ‘gently’ is also perhaps the commonest example of syntactic parallelism, following its ubiquitous presence in diverse sections of the texts. More so, phrases like *A yab Daa nyela ...* as in ‘your grandfather was ...’ as an example are subject to internal substitutions that permit flexibility in adaptations to other phrases that are metrically equivalent to the rhythm of the above expression.

Other kinds of repetitions in Dagbamba panegyrics worth noting include epitrophes, otherwise known as epiphora or antistrophe. It refers to the repetition of a word or phrase after successive words, phrases or clauses. The poem *Dakoli nye bia*, text IV employs this repetitive feature in great detail. For instance, the word *namlana* which may be translated as ‘creator’ is repeated after every statement or line from the first sections to the middle section of the text. Another typical example of epitrophe repetition worth noting is found in text I, lines 70–72. Line 69 is repeated in line 73 in the following excerpt as praise of Naa Gbewaa’s offspring for emphasis:

Naa Gbewaa bia yela ka teebu.

Son of Gbewaa is great and mighty.

Ban mali laamba, Naa Gbewaa.

Those with parents are under his care.

Ban ka laamba, Naa Gbewaa.

Those without parents are under his care.

Kɔnsi da zoomba, Naa Gbewaa.

The lepers and the blind, are all under his care.

Naa Gbewaabia yela ka teebu.

Son of Gbewaa is great and mighty.

Based on the preceding discussions, the effects of repetitions, parallelisms and general formulaic expressions are worth noting. Repetition serves to endow the texts with a sort of sonic beauty and serves as well a rhetorical conjunctive device that links the sub-plots of the texts. It also serves as a memory enhancer to the performing poets in the situation of performance by and large. The ubiquity of repetitions in orally composed texts are better appreciated in performances. Repetition and its varied kinds foster cadence in rhythm especially with verbal texts as the Dagbamba panegyric. It also tends to foreground ideas or concepts. It should be pointed out that written texts are relatively more consistent with verbatim repetition as compared to oral texts. Caink (2014: 29) notes the nature of memory in the art of repetition to be influenced by context, frequency and recency when he states:

Human memory is not organised like a computer with a specific address for each item. On a computer, once a file is loaded onto the memory, a perfect copy of it may be accessed at any time. For reasons of evolution, human memory is based around context (we are often able to recall things by association with other things), by frequency (the greater number of times we have accessed the memory, the easier it is to recall; hence rote learning) and 'recency' (more recent occurrences may be more salient).

5.10.4 Call-and-Response Patterns

One general feature that pertains to oral performances or songs in particular is call-and-response patterns. In the Dagbamba panegyric, they are not common with the text proper; however, they are generally realised with the drum interpolations. Usually, a lead drummer beats his drum in unique rhythms that automatically call for certain corresponding unique rhythms by the accompanying

drummers as a response. These call-and-response patterns are carried up intermittently in the course of the performance.

A case in words as with respect to call-and-response patterns is found in the first section of *Dakoli Nye Bia*, 'the bachelor is a child', text IV. As realised in the following excerpt, the calls in the text vary; whereas the response *Namlana*, 'creator', remains the same throughout lines 1–24. In some other few instances, call-and-response patterns may feature in the panegyrics proper as with the syntactic stylistic discretion of the praise poet in question. For example, in the process of performance, a praise poet may stylistically mention the sons of a particular monarch in a descending order by simply attaching the name of the monarch to the sons. Text I, lines 70–72, quoted in the preceding discussion testify to employment of call-and-response patterns in the Dagbamba panegyrics.

5.10.5 Consonance, Alliteration and Assonance

Prosodic devices like consonance, alliteration and assonance do feature in Dagbamba panegyrics. They are employed in the texts for a range of purposes amongst which are to reinforce the meaning of ideas and images and also to heighten the rhythmic texture of the respective lines and the texts in general. The repetition of consonant sounds is generally termed as consonance. The repetition of consonant sounds at initial word positions and vowel sounds in close proximity is referred to as alliteration and assonance respectively. Tsur (1997: 283) notes that:

A speech sound may be described on an acoustic, a phonetic and a phonemic level; normally, its acoustic description is irrelevant to its linguistic or poetic significance. However, in certain circumstances,

the acoustic description may account for the emotional quality of the speech sound, may yield insight into the rhythmic structure of a poem (or just of a performance thereof), etc.

The alliterative presence of the /i/sound and the assonance as realised in the /l/ in the expression *Buyili liyiri layi bieri be soli ni*, which translates as ‘money belonging to the fetish is on the way’ in text II, line 76, is worth noting. Note also the assonance of the /y/ sound in text I, lines 1–3, as in:

Yeligu yelima ka n-deei yeli kali.
I am here to speak the words of my forefathers.
Yeli ku tum,
Perfection,
O yelimi ka n-deei n-yeli yeli kali.
She speaks of my forefathers through me.

Some other instances of alliteration can be found with the /i/ sound in text I, lines 45–53.

Bibirili dimdi kun dim payisara bia.
Insects bite, but do not bite the king.
Tihi ni mɔri lana Daa ηmani zuuzuli m bindi kɔbiri.
The owner of trees and grass was like the hairy caterpillar.
N ηmani wanzam pindi o taba bihi.
And was like barber barbering his colleagues’ children.
Naa Adani ni kani dabisili sheli.
The day Naa Adani passed on.
Ka be yeli ni zo n gwaai pay’ ηuni bia do ηuni bia.
And they began to search for his successor.

In fact, these are but a few instances of the employment of prosodic features as alliteration and assonance in particular. Several other

instances of these prosodic elements run through all Dagbamba panegyrics. Though some Dagbamba praise poets may make conscious efforts to achieve these prosodic effects, the point must be made that the tonal nature of the Dagbani language itself makes some of these prosodic elements a natural occurrence in expressions.

5.11 Figurative Conventions

Poetry to a great extent thrives well with the employment of figurative elements to boost the aesthetic beauty and general meaning of literary works. Amongst the host of figurative elements that foster the charm of poetry, the significant roles of metaphor and imagery in any poetic expressions as the Dagbamba panegyrics cannot be overemphasised. Without these two main ingredients of literary works in general, a work of art may not stand the test of time or let alone attract the attention of literary admirers. More so, a skilful interspersing of other figurative elements as symbolism, metonymy, personification, allusions, similes, oxymoron and a host of other literary elements give the poetic genre notably a great appeal. Metonymy, a figurative element which lends itself to metaphor and symbolism; the catalyst of imagery also serves great purposes in literary works as poetry.

This section is, therefore, dedicated to the pursuance of the figurative elements that are contained in the Dagbamba panegyrics. This examination will serve to buttress the poetic inventiveness of the Dagbamba praise poets as a whole. Efforts are also made to establish the effects that the identified figurative elements have on the texts in general.

5.11.1 Imagery and Symbolism

In most respects, there are no clear divisions between some figurative elements as some of the definitions and functions tend to overlap. Therefore, this section basically seeks to discuss figurative elements that come together to enforce one's diverse senses and one's sense of symbols and comparisons in diverse respects. As such, some figurative elements under discussion in this section include the epithet, metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche and personification.

Imagery and symbolism serve as greases that oil the wheels of great poetry; and the Dagbamba panegyrics abound with them. Once imagery is mentioned, symbolism shows up. Most images employed by the Dagbamba praise poets are the concrete than the abstract. The mental or virtual images invoked in the preceding discussion are generally symbols of no mean significance. Once the lion is mentioned in Dagbon, what readily comes to mind is the king of Dagbon, who occupies the Yendi skin. In Dagbamba panegyrics, therefore, the mere mentioning of lion or the son of the lion is not confused with any other person than the king of Dagbon. The title *Yaa Naa* itself as a designation for the king of Dagbon as reiterated earlier means 'king of strength'. Hence, the symbol of the lion serves to compliment the might of the king and the skin that he indeed occupies. The metaphor of the king as being a lion receives apt collaboration in the statement in text II, line 39 thus: *Gbuminli bia na pɔra ku ŋubi mɔri*, 'a lion's son will never eat grass'.

Unlike the evocation of such animal figures in some praise poems as depicting totems of the respective subjects of praise, the lion and such other animals are more of figures adopted by the Dagbamba mostly on the basis of their characteristics and roles in real life endeavours. Hence, as the lion is mostly depicted as the strongest animal and the king of the jungle, it well fits the nature of the Yendi skin. In instances where other animals are mentioned in

Dagbamba panegyrics directed to the overlord of Dagbon, they are either used in juxtaposition with the lion in question or are simply embedded in Dagbamba idioms or praise names of some particular royals. It is also not uncommon to find other monarchs' bear animal epithets or animal associations in Dagbon. Some monarchs may tend to have praise names or epithets that allude to animals for specific purposes and effects. Further elaborations have been made in preceding discussions.

With respect to animal symbolism in Dagbamba panegyrics, they are generally occasioned by diverse reasons. Quite apart from the fact that some animals may simply be adopted for some specific purposes and reason, others may serve as totems or deities of a sort to the people or communities at large. That notwithstanding, animal symbolisms may also feature on grounds of their association to some particular persons, communities or titles as a whole. The chief of Kumbungu for example, a warrior chief, is the custodian of the sacred bees of the Dagbamba. Hence, the mention of bees or their consequent functions in his praise is no surprise at all. The paramount chief of all women chiefs in Dagbon normally has the appellation 'rider of donkey', as the donkey, other than the horse, serves as her customary means of transport.

Diverse other symbols that relate to other physical entities abound in Dagbamba panegyrics. In the above excerpt in praise of the woman monarch, Naa Salamatu, the chief of Gundo and paramount chief of all women chiefs in Dagbon, it would be realised that she is further addressed as the wearer of the premature gourd. The premature gourd serves as symbol that distinguishes her from all other chiefs. It should be made emphatic that these symbols carry very significant traditional and sacred undertones that require further elaborations and research when questions pertaining to the reasons why such symbols are employed come to mind.

Images in Dagbamba panegyrics, to say the least, are quite diverse. They mostly deal with the five senses and evoke mental

images such as the visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, kinesthetic and gustatory. Images in Dagbamba panegyrics may also range from the fauna to flora and they mostly reflect the immediate environment of the Dagbamba. Rivers, trees, plants, paths and most especially animals abound in the mental archive of the praise poets. Images that relate to animals are mostly employed based on their characteristics and functions. For instance, if the image of the lion is evoked, what is consequently implied is its might amongst other animals in the jungle. The physical as well as the mental capabilities of the lion are implied in such instances.

Other images that serve to heighten the meaning and charm of Dagbamba panegyrics are varied. Some elaborations are worth the effort. The adverb of manner, 'gently' or 'slowly' both in repeated succession and isolation evokes the sense or image of movement. It serves as the expository element to usher listeners to more serious themes and tropes to come.

Perhaps what is most pronounced in oral literary expressions such as praise poetry is the employment of epithets. Dagbamba praise poets grace their texts with a range of epithets, which are often employed as forms of honorifics of a kind. They are sprinkled spontaneously in most instances in diverse forms and references. As a royal discourse, epithets are bound to be part and parcel of the Dagbamba panegyrics. Generally, every royal is known by an epithet that relates to his clan, lineage or totem and the cultural and social environment of the Dagbamba as a whole. Epithets that often come in the form of metaphors and extended metaphors tend to depict the personality of the bearer. Most of the epithets employed in Dagbamba panegyrics may be termed as fixed epithets. They are words or phrases employed repeatedly to qualify one particular entity. They communicate circumstances as well as visions and aspirations of the bearer.

Naa Abudu Abdulai for instance refers to himself as *Nabieɣu*, 'the troublesome cow'. Indeed, what is implied is the nature and

character of the stubborn cow amongst the herd of cows. It controls and puts the entire herd under control. Also, the notable Naa Yakubu *Nantoo* (*Nantoo Nimdi*), which translates as 'Naa Yakubu the anthrax', is simply an embodiment of the deadly Anthrax disease that strikes down both man and beast alike. It is often said, however, that Naa Yakubu claims himself as not being an anthrax for cows or other animals; but of royals. Anthrax as an epithet tends to ascribe to the bearer a sense of invincibility. Not only is anthrax deadly to the living, it is also a dreaded disease of no mean distinction. Therefore, any royal stands at his mercy and need to handle him, Naa Yakubu *Nantoo*, with care. Naa Abudu *Satanƙuyili* as in Naa Abudu, 'the thunder stone', and Naa Andani, *Naani Gooi*, meaning 'Naa Andani, the trusted torn', are also typical cases in point.

What is in a name? Most of the epithets, which normally originate from the monarchs in question, are often messages targeted at either a specific person or persons and the Dagbamba as a whole. The appellative epithets may also be answers or comments to certain circumstances at a time or place. Therefore, there is the strictest care taken in order not to invoke some interpretations that may incur the displeasure of some people.

References to Dagbamba monarchs are generally rendered in metaphorical terms. These references span across just simple metaphors to metonymical qualifications. Metaphorical expressions are also very common as compared to expressions in similes. Indeed, to boast of something is best done in metaphorical terms as compared to similes. As reiterated earlier, the metaphor of the king of Dagbon as a lion and its associations is a frequent and almost inevitable concept that is evoked in Dagbamba panegyrics as far as the chief of Yendi, who is also the overlord of Dagbon, is concerned. The praise of the King of Dagbon inevitably evokes the lion; and where the monarch in question does not reign in Yendi, the lion is nevertheless evoked as all monarchs in Dagbon pay allegiance to the chief of Yendi. Most profound comparative expressions employed by

Dagbamba praise poets in their panegyrics include the following: Text 1, lines 42 and 49, *Andani nyɛ kuɣititali kun vuɣu suli*, 'Andani is a big rock which cannot be removed by force', and *Tihi ni mɔri lana Daa ŋmani zuuzuli m bindi kɔbiri*, 'the owner of trees and grass was like the hairy caterpillar', respectively.

With reference to the metaphorical conceits raised in Dagbamba panegyrics, zoomorphism and chremamorphism as opposed to personification become important points of references as far as Dagbamba monarchs are concerned. Assigning animal qualities to persons or events may be referred to as zoomorphism whereas assigning characteristics of objects to humans is referred to as chremamorphism. Instances as these are quite common with the appellations of Dagbamba monarchs. In fact, in an attempt to glorify the monarchs in question, praise poets tend to qualify them with just any perceivable insurmountable object or idea. The following appellations mostly directed at Dagbamba kings are clear cases in point:

Tihi ni mɔri lana.

Owner of trees and grasses.

Kunkuna ni nayilima lana.

Owner of mountains and lowlands.

Sayim lana.

Owner of food.

Andunia Wumbila.

God of the earth.

(Excerpt III: lines 1–4)

5.11.2 Allusions

If allusions may be considered as passing references to another event or circumstance, be it in history, legend or myth amongst a

host of other cosmological factors, then allusions abound in the Dagbamba panegyrics. In fact, to state that the Dagbamba panegyric is an allusive poem clearly speaks to its nature. Most parts of Dagbamba panegyrics centre on allusions rooted in Dagbamba culture and history.

Historical allusions and allusions in general are employed to reaffirm the origin, nature and achievements of the subject of praise. What is; however, particularly inextricably intertwined in Dagbamba panegyrics are allusions to historical events, clans and ancestors and (good) deeds and achievements (battles) of the current person being praised and his lineage. The panegyric also extols the descent and stance of chiefs in society, their achievements and exploits in battles amongst a host of things and issues worthy of acclaim.

The poet seeks to establish the monarch's identity through the reputation and lineage of his forebears. The recollections of the life and actions of the ancestors serve to preserve the legitimacy of coming monarchs. Quite apart from the establishment of the legitimacy of monarchs, the ideals of the past are well embraced and further passed on to the coming generations of monarchs and posterity as a whole. Some allusive statements grounded in Dagbamba history are worth quoting at length.

Feudalism ka be zarɔ balim Naa Yakubu nam.

It was the red Feudalism they gave to Naa Yakubu.

Ka o deei kpehi o duu puuni,

And he received her into his royal home,

N ti yen dɔyi n dɔyi nam lana Andani.

And they gave birth to king Andani.

Andani Jeriloɔ.

Andani Jeriloɔ.

Naa Alaasani.

King Alaasani.

Alaasani Daa nyela pimbee payabia.

Alaasani was son of a woman who hails from Tampion.

Nayidiyi dam saa payabia.

Son of a woman who hails from Nayidiyi.

Loomi Simburi payabia.

Son of a woman who hails from Loomi Simburi.

Bɔ n tahili ka n yeli shem ηɔ?

What prompts me to say this?

O yab' Kamsheyulana Daakuri.

His grandfather Kamsheyulana Bukari.

Di yi polo ban a zo.

Do not come out clearly to know your friend.

Chami nyam nyam ban a zo.

Secretly observe to know your friend.

Bukari n Daa dɔyi Kamsheyulana Ayiba.

It was Bukari who gave birth to Kamsheyulana Ayiba.

(Text II: lines 119–131)

Quite apart from the fact that the main body of the Dagbamba panegyrics are steeped in allusions, the allusions in most respects tend to compliment the epithets sought to be foregrounded in the texts.

5.11.3 Hyperbole, Irony and Rhetorical Questions

A very pertinent figurative element that is common with the panegyric or praise poetry in general is the hyperbole. Hyperbole basically refers to extravagant exaggerations. As notable persons as kings or chiefs and general events are sought to be extolled, exaggerations serve to imbue descriptions and general statements with a better appeal. These hyperbolic expressions are mostly realised in

references made to the monarch in question and his or her ancestry principally. Though these expressions are mostly far-fetched, their consequent effects can never be overemphasised. Perhaps a typical example of statements that archive high hyperbolic significance in Dagbamba panegyrics are the ubiquitous claims often attributed to Naa Abudu (Abdulai). The praise poet in a panegyric directed at Gundo Naa Salamatu, text III, lines 121–126, renders the claims as follow:

A ba n nye Naa Buru.

Your father is king Buru.

A ba daa nyɛla Nanima chichira.

Your father was a wonderful creator among kings.

Bɛ daa yi bolo saa,

When he was called from the heavens,

Ka o sayi tiŋa.

He responded from the earth.

Ka bɛ bolo tiŋa,

And when he was called from the earth,

Ka o sayi saa zuɣu.

He responded from the heavens.

It could be deduced from the above explications of hyperboles and epithets for that matter that boasts in diverse forms are common preoccupations of Dagbamba praise poets. They have the tendency to boast of their prowess or achievements and that of the chief, depending on the time and circumstance.

The tendency of Dagbamba praise poets to sprinkle some ounces of admonishment in the Dagbamba panegyric at the most opportune time calls for other figurative elements like irony or sarcasm in most respects; they are employed diversely in the texts. Note the following critique enshrined in Dagbamba panegyrics:

Dagbamba yuri ziri pam n-gari yelimaŋli.

The people of Dagbon prefer lies to the truth.

Be zaŋla kabɔbili zaŋ da liyiri awei.

They bought a bundle of millet for an amount of nine.

Ka zaŋ nansar' kpuli zaŋ da tuhi kabiga.

And bought a piece of tobacco for a thousand.

Din nahim ba.

It will surely disturb them.

(Text I: lines 32–35)

As truth is one factor cherished by the Dagbamba in their panegyrics, accusatory statements made, need further substantiations. Therefore, praise poets occasionally make claims and tend to reinforce them by providing further details. They substantiate a claim that is often introduced in the preceding line or thought as in: 'Why do I say so?' The rhetorical expression leads them further to elaborate on earlier claims. It should be noted that the contents that praise poets present are taken into serious consideration. The truth or facts are treated with no mean seriousness. Another remarkable conclusion well couched in a rhetorical question is the concluding line of text I, line 130, as in *Amii Naa be yiŋa wumdi o nam tuma?*, which translates as: 'Is the king in the house listening to his royal deeds?' Indeed, the praise poet in question is certain that the king is at home; however, the line is employed as a stylistic approach for emphasis. Quite apart from the prevalence of the aforementioned, other points of views may be introduced to address a respective need.

5.11.4 Aphorisms

Aphorisms may be termed as concise witty sayings that are mostly passed on from one generation to the other. Aphorisms stepped in

Dagbamba world-view and environment in general are well interspersed in Dagbamba panegyrics. Most of them come in the form of idioms, proverbs, riddles, puzzles and wise sayings. Dagbamba aphorisms as realised in their panegyrics are mostly communally owned; they are often attributed to ancestors, elders or more generally the past. Nonetheless, there are some that are attributed to specific individuals. In some instances, they serve as direct quotations or paraphrases of words uttered by monarchs, mostly past, and some notable personalities of Dagbon. In some other instances, they may either be statements uttered by some praise poets which have become part of the stock information of praise poetry with time or direct statements by the performing poet in question to reflect a situation or to emphasize a point.

Proverbs and riddles are pervasive in the day-to-day communication of the Dagbamba. As it is the case with most African people, the mastery of these forms is a distinctive mark of wisdom and knowledge. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe (1958: 2) affirms this claim for the Igbos as he states: "Among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten." One who deems himself or herself knowledgeable in the language must understand the nitty-gritties as art forms as Dagbamba panegyrics are steeped in the culture and entire world-view of the people. Hence, quite significant doses of proverbs and idioms serve to foreground the creativeness of the Dagbani language and the Dagbamba as a whole.

It should be pointed out that the proverb and riddle are more often than not literal and figurative at the same time. From a figurative perspective, the proverb and riddle tend to be encapsulated in metaphor; they establish associations with quite dissimilar things or concepts that, however, bear some sharp similarity of a kind. On the literal note, the proverb and riddle tend to raise issues that are common to Dagbamba environment or world-view in general. Some notable examples of include the following: Text II, line

36, *Balim kɔligu ku chee yom*, 'a bag that is handled with care will not tear'. Text II, lines 85 and 86, *Daa tia ku zo vuri*, 'a tree in the market will not fear noise'/ *Jenkuno ηun simsira ku gwaa duuηa*, 'the sneakiest cat can never catch a mosquito'. More so, Text II, lines 224–229, point out that Yaa Naa Andani had three dogs and their names and implications well elaborated by the praise poet. Dogs have over the centuries attracted the attention of the Dagbamba praise poets because of the proverbial nature of their names. The given names tend to reflect the personal philosophies of Yaa Naa Andani and blends well with the general world-view of the Dagbamba as a whole. For instance, the reality of the name accorded to the first dog cannot be overemphasised. *Gutuli ka simdi*, which translates as 'an ungrateful person has no friend', was the name of the first dog.

Some other wise sayings, quite gnomic statements rooted in Dagbamba world-view and creative sensibilities as employed in the panegyrics, are worth noting: Text II, lines 215 and 216, *Ninsalnim ni zaγ'si shel*, 'what men reject' / *Din ka wuni pili maana*, 'is what God adorns'. Text III, lines 141 and 142, *Kulinoli din vieli yee!*, 'a source of good drinking water! / *Ni layim nyuriba*, 'will attract drinkers'.

As a general note, most of the proverbs, riddles or general idiomatic expressions that qualify particular monarchs tend to compliment the respective characters. They may suggest the circumstances that led to the enskinment of the monarchs, their character and general achievements or visions.

5.12 Conclusion

Attempts have been made to offer in-depth analyses of the literary linguistic creativity of the Dagbamba panegyrics. To make their work resonate deeply as any literary works, Dagbamba praise poets employ quite unique and diverse figurative conventions and prosodic elements. Metaphors, allusions, epithets, symbols

and several other figurative elements are employed to offer apt images and captivating insights into Dagbamba creative prowess and world-view in general. Prosodic elements as rhythm, alliteration, assonance, call-and-response patterns and diverse repetitive features give the texts the required aesthetic charm they are nonetheless compromised by Dagbamba praise poets.

Following a poetic examination of Dagbamba panegyrics, this chapter maintains that Dagbamba praise poets have to their disposal a stock of information for their poetic renditions. The factor of variability is therefore the onus of the praise poet. Omitting or adding some content in the course of performance depends largely on the situation of performance. Factors that can and may determine the flow of information of a panegyric include amongst others the time, place, occasion, addressee or audience as a whole. The linguistic, content and formal schemas and creative formulas exploited by the Dagbamba praise poets are very revealing.

The plot of the narrative is usually based on some specific themes. At the expository stages the poet introduces the monarch in question and ushers him or her with exaltations in vivid imagery. The plot then rises with the personal praises of the chief's physical attributes and most especially allusions to his or her ancestry. The climax is realised with the praise of exploits and achievements that may be personal to the chief or his ancestry. The plot falls with reaffirmations of the position and substance of the chief as realised in the initial stages. The denouement is the concluding part where the poet may affirm his role or creative prowess. The arrangement of these themes in such plots aid the delivery significantly.

Dagbamba panegyrics mostly highlight the monarch as subject of praise and his or her genealogy in general. Praises may range from the skin title of the monarch in question, his or her subsequent appellations, role and function of the monarch in his community and the Dagbon kingdom as a whole. In most instances, the feats of the reigning monarch, if any, or his or her ancestors may be of

crucial importance. As the monarch is extolled, admonishment may fall whenever the praise poet in question may deem necessary. These admonishments, however, come in subtle ways to appear polite or formal in most respects.

Expressions employed in the texts are generally simple with most woven in Dagbamba cultural idioms. Complex sentences rarely show up but when they do, they are often carried up in enjambments. As one would expect, declaratives abound in Dagbamba panegyrics as a result of their vocative character. Imperatives, interrogatives and exclamatory sentence kinds are also employed in varying lines.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This section serves as the concluding chapter of the research. It offers general concluding remarks on the discussions and analysis undertaken in preceding chapters. Based on the research findings, recommendations are made as suggestive remarks for further research in academia and for posterity.

6.2 Conclusions

Dagbamba panegyrics are orally composed and performed. They are composed in free verse and are characterised by dramatic stunts. These oral compositions are in fact varied on the grounds that diverse praise poets and in instances where an individual poet comes into question, he varies the compositions with respect to the chief or occasion. If indeed, one particular poet is known to sing the

praises of one particular chief, the occasions automatically vary. Hence, the situational contexts of praise poems can have significant effects on the oral compositions.

The praise poet pays homage to the chief through unique epithets and images. He recounts the significant deeds of the chief and his ancestry, praises or addresses the visions of the chief to his subjects. He also recounts the exploits of the chief or his ancestors at battlefields and in recent decades the life endeavours of the chief as in education, good luck amongst such other factors of relevance or what the Dagbamba people deem worthy of praise. The praise poets can be said to be the chapters of the Dagbamba people: their culture and history put together, when these chapters are woven together in comparative care, a unique oral monograph of the Dagbamba as a whole will be the result.

It should be borne in mind that quite apart from the fact that the poetic acumen of the praise poets depends on the knowledge of the poetic repertoire or tradition of the Dagbamba passed down from hundreds of generations, one's ability to also be in and excel in the art of praise poetry also depends on one's consanguine ties to the lineage of praise poets. Hence, poetry does not just flow in the minds of Dagbamba praise poets, but it flows in their veins as well. Of significant mention is also the role of the supernatural as realised in charms and several other incantations or invocations. Though the effects of the supernatural in an academic enterprise as this is nearly impossible to ascertain, let alone analyse, most Dagbamba praise poets undoubtedly believe in its efficacy.

The research sought principally to unearth the literary linguistic inventiveness of the Dagbamba panegyrics. Based on the objectives set out in the research, the contextual factors that influence the creation and subsequent renditions of the texts have been examined from diverse perspectives. The historical, cultural, religious, economic, political and such related contexts in relation to the Dagbamba panegyrics and praise poetry in Dagbon as a whole

have been explored. It is argued that a true and thorough examination of the literary prowess and linguistic ingenuity of oral texts as the Dagbamba panegyrics require contextual explorations of the factors that influence the creation and performance of the texts and the verbal arts as a whole.

A myriad of linguistic and literary models and methodologies have been harnessed to this effect. The research assumes contextual relativism, a holistic approach to the verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics. It adopts the insights of diverse theories that serve to address the objectives of the research. Prominent amongst others, the research hinges on the schema theory, oral-formulaic theory, reception theory and the performance and general contextual approaches that seek to unearth the literary linguistic inventiveness of the Dagbamba panegyrics.

Quite apart from the examinations of the cultural and historical contexts amongst such related matters of the Dagbamba and their art of praise poetry, the context of performance has been given detailed elaboration. The complexity of the situation of performance makes it necessary for an in-depth examination of the diverse factors that come to play in the performance of verbal arts as the Dagbamba panegyrics. The performers (herein the Dagbamba praise poets), the audience and the patrons serve as the central factors in the situation of performance; and at the heart of these factors is the text.

It has been established, as other scholars have maintained, that the context of performance is very crucial to the oral text. The research further maintains that the performer(s), the patron(s), audience and the oral texts for that matter are inextricably intertwined at the situation of performance. With respect to the performances of the oral texts for that matter or the Dagbamba panegyrics specifically, an attempt to isolate one of the above-mentioned factors as most crucial in the performance event will be very detrimental to the oral text especially or the performance as a whole. It should be

stated in unambiguous terms that the aforementioned factors are co-creators of the performance event, the absence of one in the true sense of the Dagbamba panegyric is, therefore, futile.

Quite apart from the analyses of the figurativeness and structure of the Dagbamba panegyrics, the research also examines both the verbal and non-verbal cues that emanate in the process of performance. The research foregrounds the diverse cues employed by all the co-creators of the performance and concludes that the cues in their totality contribute significantly to the novelty of the Dagbamba panegyrics.

For instance, it has been established that facial expressions have multiple functions. The mood and feelings of all the actors at the performance of the Dagbamba panegyrics, as in all other oral performances, communicate significant meanings. Gestures also tend to communicate interpersonal relationships such as friendship or disagreement on the part of the parties involved. It is an undeniable fact that hostility, fear, anger or joy can easily be ascertained from the gestures of individuals.

Clothing or physical appearances are very symbolic. They may be termed as silent communicators. Dress codes in Dagbon as a whole have diverse connotations and any mature Dagbana has knowledge of some of the implications, if not all. More so, general posture, personal space, distance and physical contact at the event of performance all communicate significant meanings. It is therefore expected of all present at Dagbamba performance events to pay particular attention to the non-verbal cues as they complement one's usual expressions. In fact, in most instances, these cues communicate significant messages without the persons in questions actually uttering a word whatsoever.

On the level of the figurativeness of the Dagbamba texts, the subjects of praise as encapsulated in the Dagbamba panegyrics and the general recurrent themes and motifs are examined in detail. The analyses also dwell on the content and style of composition, syntax

and the morphology of the texts. As the texts are generally realised in language, the linguistic nuances are imperative as far as a literary linguistic analysis is concerned. More so, both the literary tropes and the prosodic elements such as metaphor, imagery, allusions, epithets, irony, symbolism amongst a host of other tropes and prosodic elements as employed in the Dagbamba panegyrics are explored.

Writing on language ideologies in Wolof, Gal and Irvine (2019: 29–49) outline the differences between ‘noble speech’ and ‘Griot speech’. They observe:

The most extreme version of “griot talk” was displayed in the griot’s public (outdoor) performances: loud, rapid oratory accompanied by emphatic gestures; pitch mostly high, but including sharp pitch contours; sentence constructions that contained many morphological and syntactic devices for emphasis, intensification, and repetitive parallelisms; and vivid vocabulary, especially regarding details of sound, motion, and feeling.

Though the conclusions for the speech registers of griots in Senegal are similar to that of the *lunsi*, praise poets amongst the Dagbamba, esoteric registers or expressions are relatively few in Dagbamba panegyrics. Most esoteric expressions employed by the Dagbamba praise poets are often coded in highly proverbial constructs.

It could therefore be concluded that Dagbamba praise poetry is appreciated at three different levels: the semantic, pragmatic and meta-pragmatic. The semantic refers to the basic understanding of the meanings of the words being uttered because they are in the language understood by the listener. The pragmatic level refers to both the basic understanding of the words being uttered and an understanding of the cultural tropes or underpinnings as well. At the level of meta-pragmatics, there is the basic understanding of the words being uttered and a deeper understanding of the cultural tropes and the performance contexts as a whole.

6.3 Recommendations

The researcher has made stringent efforts to examine the literary linguistic ingenuity of the Dagbamba panegyrics from diverse levels in great respects. These efforts notwithstanding, there remain some pertinent areas or factors that may require further investigations. The possibility of special attention directed to the examination of some particular aspects of the contexts raised herein may be worthwhile. For instance, historical as well as comparative analysis of proto-panegyrics and recent texts or a comparative study of Dagbamba panegyrics and other panegyrics or genres may be of literary significance.

Considering the overwhelming importance of the situation of performance and the general contexts that influence oral texts as the Dagbamba panegyrics, it is only imperative that some pictures or video recordings be made readily available to complement the discussions on the performative nature of the oral texts. Some selected pictures may be included in the discussions proper whereas the recorded videos and general pictures be archived on reliable platforms. Adesina and Olorunyomi (2020: 66) observe that “with the easy access to recording, editing and reproduction facilities made possible by the near ubiquity of modern ICT, many Yorùbá verbal artists have taken to the use of multimedia facilities to enhance the performance, precision and propagation of their verbal art.” This could be cue embraced by many artists to enhance performance and significantly also to showcase the performative nature of the verbal arts. Deumert and Storch (2019: 107) are very succinct in their assertion that “making data available is an ethical imperative of language documentation.” They (ibid.: 108) further maintain that “[...] the curation of language in a publicly accessible archive is based on ideas of universal ownership and free circulation to an unidentified mass audience.” The ethical issues as made elaborate by Deumert and Storch with particular reference to language run true for the

verbal arts or oral tradition generally. See also Dimmendaal (2010) for insights of language documentation and conservation through cinematography.

Based on the findings of the research, it is evident that the verbal arts or oral traditions in general have great literary and linguistic value that warrant academic attention. Oral traditions and the verbal arts in particular continue to be lost in time; with the existing ones mostly relegated to the background. The fact, however, remains that oral traditions serve as springs that nurture the literary traditions in their diverse genres and compositions. Hence, the need for attention to be dedicated to oral traditions in the forms of recording, translating, analysing and archiving for posterity and further research. The concluding remark by Lisanza and Muaka (2020: 243) in *African languages and literatures in the 21st century* is worth serious consideration:

In an effort to empower African languages and make them relevant in the twenty first century for the current and future generations, the Africa children should learn more African languages and be introduced to varied African literatures; not just their own. This will enable African children to appreciate other African cultures.

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APPENDIX

The texts in appendix A can be found in an online collection of Dagbamba panegyrics:

<https://lac.uni-koeln.de/collection/11341/0000-0000-0000-35B6>

The collection consists of video recordings of the performed texts and some contextual excerpts of the event of performance. Some of the texts have both audio and transcribed attachments.

Appendix A

Dagbamba Panegyrics (Salima)

Text I

The praise singer is known as Abukari Luṅzoo (a.k.a. Landlord). His father was Gingaani Luṅnaa Abdulai. He was under the tutelage of his grandfather Luṅzoonaa Ibrahim of Saṅ, where he was brought up and taught the art of praise singing. He took after the

title of his grandfather, whose title has actually been vacant since his death. This is a panegyric of the late King of Dagbon, Yaa Naa Yakubu Nantoo, father of Yaa Naa Abudu and Yaa Naa Andani (the descendants of these two past Kings of Dagbon constitute the sole gates to the Dagbon paramountcy in Yendi).

Performed by: Abukari Lunzoo

Yeligu yelima ka n-deei yeli kali.

I am here to speak the words of my forefathers.

Yeli ku tum,

Perfection,

O yelimi ka n-deei n-yeli yeli kali.

She speaks of my forefathers through me.

Naa Yaba Yakubu yeee!

Grandfather King Yakubu!

5 *Yeligu!*

Word!

Nyangbani Kpantaligu paya bia, Naa Yaba Yakubu yeee!

Nyangbani Kpantaligu woman's child, grandfather King Yakubu!

Sapon Kpantaligu paya bia, Naa Yaba Yakubu yeee!

Sapon Kpantaligu woman's child, grandfather King Yakubu!

Yulimi ni yeli shem ηɔ yaa, Naa Yaba Yakubu Nantoo.

Listen to what is said, grandfather King Yakubu Nantoo.

Naa Yaba Kunkɔη Dasana.

Grandfather Naa Kunkɔη Dasana.

10 *Jerigu nya bundana buni di n-jerigi zaa,*

No matter how much a fool eats from the wealthy one,

O ku doli kuli bundana yili.

He does not follow him to his home.

Kunkɔη lana Dasana n'-daa suhi Naawuni ni o dɔyi.

Kunkɔη lana Dasana pleaded with God for a child.

- N'-naan dɔyi napaya Litɔyu.*
 And gave birth to a daughter called Litɔyu.
M ma Litɔyu ka be zan balim Jengbaribobigu nam.
 And gave her hand in marriage to Naa Jengbanribobigu.
- 15 *Ka o deegi o kpehi o duu puuni.*
 And she was received into the royal home.
N'-dɔyi Naa Yaba Nam lana Yakubu.
 And gave birth to grandfather Naa Yakubu.
Din suyu ka n'-yeli ni Birigu Yomda pay' kpan bia nye o.
 That is why I said he is the child of the elder woman from
 Birigu Yomda.
Balim balim koligu ku cheei yom.
 A bag which is carefully handled is hard to tear.
Bayilinaa tambieyu kuriti kpana,
 When termites gather weapons for war,
- 20 *Ka Naa noo wum dirila galiga.*
 The followers of the great King jubilate.
Nyevuli din pɔri ku tari pini.
 Life is too small to share as a present.
Ni di nye dini da tari pini,
 If life were to be a form of a gift,
O daa naan tabili Abudu n'tabili Andani.
 He would have shared it with Abudu and Andani.
Mɛon Simaani bia yela ka tambu.
 Mɛon Simaani child cannot be forgotten.
- 25 *Yakubu zuu Naa Abdulai.*
 Yakubu's first son Abdulai.
Nyevuli yi di nyela din dara,
 If life could be bought,
Naa Yakubu naan da n- ti o bihi.
 Naa Yakubu would buy for his children.
Kambaŋ payi bia, Zooshiri payi bia.
 A woman who hails from Kambaŋ and Zooshiri.

- Wummi ni yeli shem ηϯ yaa, Kambaη Laamisi bia.*
 Listen to my words Kambaη Laamisi's son.
 30 *Kambaηnima daa kϯη kom nyura,*
 When people of Kambaη community had no water to
 drink,
M ma Laamihi bia n daa yi ni.
 It was the son of Laamisi who resolved it.
Dagbamba yuri ziri pam n-gari yelimaηli.
 The people of Dagbon prefer lies to the truth.
Be zaηla kabϯbili zaη da liyiri awei.
 They bought a bundle of millet for an amount of nine.
Ka zaη nansar' kpuli zaη da tuhi kϯbiga.
 And took a piece of tobacco for a thousand.
 35 *Din nahim ba,*
 It will surely disturb them,
O paηa bi di, o bia bi nyu.
 His wife did not eat, and his children have not drunk.
Ti baη taba ka zuyu niη dodo.
 We are aware of this ill attitude.
Bilaa ηun kpi yuη sayim kuli.
 A slave dies in the night and ruins a funeral.
N yaba Sumaani Bia kundi.
 My grandfather Sumani's son honors the holy book.
 40 *Nun bϯri ma bini ka m bϯra.*
 I like those who like me.
Nun je ma bini zaη giri lϯη.
 Whoever does not like me, I do not like him.
Andani nye kuyitali kun vuyu suli.
 Andani is a big rock, which cannot be removed by force.
Mϯkari waa di diemdi mϯkpalli.
 The dry grass should not play with wet grass.
O yaa pa ni naagi o n-tabili o balibu.
 He will finish him and his entire family.

- 45 *Meon lana Yaba Sumaani, Naani gooi kuhi biera.*
 Son of Meonlana Sumaani, beware of a trusted torn.
ʒishinaa Nantogma zuu naani gooi kuhi biera.
 First son of ʒishinaa Nantogma, beware of the trusted torn.
Adani n-dyɔi zuu Yiri.
 It was Andani who gave birth to, first son Yiri.
Bibirili dimdi kun dim payisara bia.
 Insects bite, but do not bite the king.
Tihi ni mɔri lana daa ɲmani zuuzuli m bindi kɔbiri.
 The owner of trees and grass was like the hairy caterpillar.
- 50 *N ɲmani wanzam pindi o taba bihi.*
 And was like a barber, barbering his colleagues' children.
Naa Adani ni kani dabisili sheli.
 The day Naa Adani passed on.
Ka be yeli ni zo n gDaai pay' ɲuni bia do ɲuni bia?
 And they began to search for his successor.
Ni be zo n-gDaai namlana Alaasani.
 They settled on Nam lana Alaasani (Naawuni zaligu).
Jeligu yelimi ni di yen niɲmi.
 A fool says it will happen.
- 55 *Di yi di nyela di yen niɲmi,*
 If it were to happen,
Tamale Gubiliyayili dalila ka di daa naan niɲ.
 It would have happened on the day of Tamale Gubiliyayili.
Di daa bi niɲ.
 It did not happen.
Di yi di nyela din daa yen niɲ, Kootu dalila ka di daa naan niɲ.
 If it were to happen, it would have happened on the day
 of Kootu.
Di daa bi niɲ.
 It did not happen.
- 60 *Di yi di nyela din daa yen niɲ,*
 If it were to happen,

Di daa bi niŋ.

It did not happen.

Sataŋ kuyili bayibo m be Anduni chomdiba ni.

The thunder stone cares less about those who are out to cause disunity.

Ni bi zo n-gDaai namlana Mahama kpema.

Mahama Kpema was the next successor.

Dagbamba yoli yeligu ka sheli kani.

Dagbamba are late in giving a word.

65 *Amaa suhuyini bayibo mbe Andani chomdiba ni.*

A person with clear conscience fears no detractors.

Jerigu chaŋ daa zaysi o yanima ka dolibu.

A fool goes to market and refuses to follow his people.

Ka doli bundamba.

And rather follows rich people.

Daa ni yi ka, o kuli o ko.

When the market closes, he will go home alone.

Naa Gbewaa bia yela ka teebu.

Son of Gbewaa is great and mighty.

70 *Ban mali laamba, Naa Gbewaa.*

Those with parents are under his care.

Ban ka laamba, Naa Gbewaa.

Those without parents are under his care.

Kɔnsi ni zoomba, Naa Gbewaa.

The lepers and the blind, are all under his care.

Naa Gbewaa bia yela ka teebu.

Son of Gbewaa is great and mighty.

Mahama Kpema ni kani dabisili sheli

When Naa Mahama passes on

75 *Be zo n-gDaai pay' ŋuni bia, do ŋuni dapala.*

They were to search for the next successor.

Ni be zo gDaai Namlana Mahama bila.

Naa Mahama Bila (junior) was chosen as successor.

- Zambalana dimla kurigu,*
The greedy person bites a metal,
Ka o nyina kpalim be kurigu ni.
And the metal destroys his teeth.
Kom yina n dirila saalana bia.
The rain owner's son is drowned by flood.
- 80 *Ma satim ku nyuhi kurigu.*
They do not use metal to make medicine.
Mahambila ni kani dabisili sheli,
When Naa Mahama bila passed on,
Ka kpamba yeli ni be zo n gDaai pay' ηuni bia,
And the elders were to search for the next successor,
Ni be zo n gDaai Dinηoyu payisara bia.
They settled on Dinηoyu young woman's child (Andani).
M ma ʒenabu bia.
Child of ʒenabu.
- 85 *Ni be zo gDaai namlana yaba Andani.*
The elders settled on grandfather king Andani.
Njuni daa nye gambe yirigu ʒinabu bia daa nye o.
He was ʒenabu, the true faithful royal wife's son.
Alizanda soli bili mɔri,
When the road to heaven was infested with weeds,
Gumbia yirigu payisasara bia n daa pahi.
It was Naa Andani who cleared the road.
Naa kuliya ka o yuli kun bɔrigu.
The king departs, but his name is not forgotten.
- 90 *Yulimi ni yeli shem ηɔ yaa:*
Listen to what I am saying:
N yaba daa niη Naa Ablai bila.
My grandfather Naa Ablai bila (junior).
Saηmar' gɔη m-bɔηɔ ku ʒini tiηa.
The brighter star will always be found above.

- Goli da' pihita dali,*
 On the thirtieth day of the lunar moon,
Nira ηun lihi tooni ku kɔη goli.
 Whoever looks ahead will not miss the moon.
- 95 *Andani ni ka yin̄a dabisili sheli,*
 The day that Naa Andani passed on,
Ka be yeli ni ti zo n-gDaai Gambie'yirigu Fatimata bia.
 The royal faithful wife Fatimata's son was chosen as successor.
Din̄ɔyɔ payisara bia.
 Son of the woman who hails from Din̄ɔyɔ.
Nun pa nira bayibo m be o kpee tɔbu ni.
 One who has no feeling for a neighbor cares not about one's
 war.
- A yaba daa nin̄ Sayinarigu lana Sule,*
 Your grandfather was Sayinarigu chief Sule,
- 100 *Daliri biela bayisi Naa dabuyilana.*
 He was the source of hope for wonderers.
Nun daa suhi Naawuni ni o dɔyi.
 He prayed to God for a child.
N dɔyi a yaba Savelegu Naa Mahama.
 And gave birth to grandfather Savelegu chief Mahama.
Salima dapala, gbieli ku ηme.
 Salima's son stirs at me but cannot beat.
N dɔyi a yaba Savuligu Naa Mahama.
 And gave birth to grandfather Savelegu Naa Mahama.
- 105 *Be gbieli ma yun̄ n-sayim gbieligu.*
 It is a waste signalling me in the night.
Be teri ti mi dimbie,
 They think evil about us,
Naawuni bayibo m-be Fatimata bia ni.
 God watches over Fatima's son.
Nun daa suhi Naawuni,
 He prayed to God,

- N' dɔyi Dirɔɔyɔ pakpaŋ bia yeee!*
 He gave birth to a son of Dirɔɔyɔ's woman!
 110 *Amii Naa gariya bee Fatimbila bia n-kuli?*
 Has the king gone?
Ko' surim bela tiŋa, Naa ni su zuŋɔ.
 There is bath water under the earth for the king.
Ko' nyurim bela tiŋa Naa ni nyu.
 There is drinking water under the earth for the king.
Gbana bela tiŋa Naa ni zini zuŋɔ.
 There are skins under the earth for the king.
Waribar' suŋ bela tiŋa, naa ni ba zuŋɔ.
 There is a good horse under the earth for the king.
 115 *Naawuni yeli niŋda m-bala.*
 These are the works of God.
Njun daa suhi Naawuni,
 He prayed to God,
N dɔyi Buyiyeligu pakpaŋbia.
 And gave birth to Buyiyeligu woman's child.
Ka o zini gbaŋ kpalim nam ni, Dagara.
 He became a regent and still in the regency.
Che yuri bari kɔri.
 He leaves horses and rides zebras.
 120 *Na'yuri na' jerigu.*
 A chief who loves and fools.
Dagara Abudu zini o ba gbaŋ n na zi nam puuni.
 Dagara Abudu became regent and remain in the kingship.
Zuyusaa ni tiŋalana niŋ Naa Gbewaa zuu.
 Both the earth and the sky belong to Naa Gbewaa's first son.
Ban mali laamba, Naa Gbewaa zuu.
 Those with parents belong to Naa Gbewaa's first son.
Ban ka laamba Naa Gbewaa zuu.
 Father of the fatherless belong to Naa Gbewaa's first son.

- 125 *Kɔnsi ni zoomba Naa Gbewaa zuu.*
 The lepers and the blind belong to Naa Gbewaa's first son.
O ba daa yeliya ni be di tɛri o din bie.
 His father once said they should not think evil of him.
Naawuni bayibo m-be Fatimbila bia ni.
 God cares less about those who think evil of junior Fati-
 ma's son.
Dunia balindi zuu.
 Intercessor of the world's first son.
Andunia wumbila.
 Demi god of world.
- 130 *Amii Naa be yiya wumdi o nam tuma?*
 Is the king in the house listening to his royal deeds?

Text II

This is the performance by Luŋ AlaDaani from Saŋ. It is a panegyric for Naa Yakubu Nantoo. According to Luŋ AlaDaani, to praise a king you should begin from the mother's side to the father's side. He believes that it is not only a man who gives birth to a child: it takes both male and female to realise that and as such, the need to acknowledge both parents.

Performed by: Luŋ AlaDaani

Yakubu daa nyela Birigu Yomda payasara bia.
 Yakubu's mother was from Birigu Yomda lineage.
Bɔ kan yeli ni birigu yomda payasara bia?
 Why do I say his mother was from Birigu Yomda lineage?
O puuni ηmen ηmen surim.
 Birigu Yomda is silent.

- Ninvuy' so ηun maana ηun n gari ηun sayida.*
 A peace maker is better than one who divides.
- 5 *Birigu Yomda n dɔyi Kunkun Lana Palidaa.*
 Birigu Yomda gave birth to Kunkun Lana Palidaa.
Ka Palidaa dɔyi Kunkun Lana Dasana.
 And Palidaa gave birth to Kunkun Lana Dasana.
A safi nya bundan bin ku doli o kuli.
 A fool sees a wealthy person but can't follow him home.
Pieri kɔbga siyiri kuliga ka yubili zay' yini ti deei nasara.
 Hundred buckets set out to the river site and one pot takes
 the glory.
Galingoli nya lehu ka o suhu ηma galingoli.
 A tree sees an axe and becomes afraid.
- 10 *Ka tasalli wum lala nti teei doni.*
 And when tasalli (a plant) heard this, he laughed a lot.
Njun daa doyi Nakpali Lana Azima.
 He gave birth to Nakpali Lana Azima.
Be zan Gbambiɛyu zan chan kuligu.
 They have taken bad skin to the river site.
Napaya Bootinɔn, Sayisisayisi je n dɔyi;
 Sayisisayisi je gave birth to Napaya Bootinɔn;
Zan ti naa Andani Jangbani bɔbgu.
 She was given to king Andani in marriage.
- 15 *Ka o deei kpehi o duu puuni,*
 He received her into the royal home,
N dɔyi Naa Yakubu.
 And gave birth to King Yakubu.
Din che ka n yeli ni.
 That is why I said.
Birigu Yomda payabia.
 Son of a woman descended from Birigu Yomda.
Nakpaligu to n kpaai loyu paya bia.
 Son of a woman hails from Nakpaligu.

- 20 *Naa bi dira daa ni,*
 A chief does not eat at market place,
Di zoyu ka Yakubu je maasa ni fula.
 That is why Yabubu ignores the maasa and fula.
Ninyino bayaba m be yoyu namo?
 Why should one person worry about poverty?
Mahalana moona masa.
 The masa seller calls out to buyers.
Ka Yakubu wum nyatishi o je.
 And Yakubu hears and ignores them.
- 25 *Fula lana moona fula.*
 The Fula seller calls out to buyers.
Yakubu wum nyayisi o je.
 Yakubu hears and ignores them.
Gbujminli bia banzana b̄ori nima,
 A lion's son traps a piece of meat to eat,
Ka Yakubu barizana n k̄oŋ ŋun ni kaai li.
 And Yakubu put up his trap and no one visits it.
Jangbuni bia be m̄oyuni b̄ori nimdi,
 Jangbuni's son is looking for meat in the bush,
- 30 *Ka Yakubu bari zana coŋ ŋun kaara.*
 And Yakubu kills and finds no one to eat.
Suli Pielli bia be m̄oyuni b̄ori nimdi,
 Suli Pielli's son is looking for meat in the bush,
Ka Yakubu ku nimdi n-kayili s̄ondi.
 And Yakubu killed meat all over.
Kpunkpaaniba b̄ori daam ni bi nyu,
 Konkombas are in search of pito to drink,
Ka Yakubu duyɪ daam j̄erigi Asantehene.
 And Yakubu gave more than necessary to Asante King.
- 35 *Nanumba b̄ori dam,*
 Nanumbas are in search of pito,
Balim k̄oligu ku chee yom.

A bag that is handled with care will not tear.
Tambieyu kuriti kpana,
 Termites are manufacturing spears,
Ka Naa Noo wum diri galiga.
 And the king's fowls hear and start to take precautions.
Gbuminli bia na pɔra ku ηubi mɔri.
 A lion's son will never eat grass.
 40 *nyevuli pɔri ku tɔri pini.*
 No matter how small life may be, it can't be given as a gift.
Di yi di nye din naan tɔri pini,
 If it could be given as a gift,
O naan tɔri Abudu ntabili Andani.
 He would have shared it between Abudu and Andani.
Ka zaη din guui t Mahami.
 And given what is left of it to Mahami.
Nantoo ku nimdi ka muha gari kɔbga.
 An anthrax kills meat and hundreds of traditional medi-
 cines show up.
 45 *O pala niyi nantoo,*
 He is not anthrax of cows,
O naan dola niyigɔrigu ni ni o ku niy'bihi.
 He would have been found in a cattle crow killing calves.
O pala pieri nantoo.
 He is not an anthrax of sheep.
O yi di nye pieri nantoo,
 If he were an anthrax for sheep,
O naan dola pieri dunolini.
 He would have been found in sheep's pen.
 50 *O pala buhi nantoo.*
 He is not anthrax for goats.
O yi di nye buhi Nantoo,
 If he were anthrax for the goats,
O naan dola buzɔη dunoli ni ni o ku buhi.

He would have been found in the goats' pen killing goats.

Nantoo ni zaŋ nuu ŋmeri buya tiŋa.

The day Nantoo passed on.

N ye ni be zo n gDaai o zuu Abudu.

They settled on his first son Abudu.

55 *N ye ni Mban paɣa bia.*

Son of a woman who hails from Diare.

Kadi cherimɔri paɣabia.

Kadi cherimɔri woman's son.

Safɔm Zalikuli, Danooyili paɣabia (Nyɔŋ).

Son of a woman hails from Danoo's lineage.

Kuchirigu paɣabia (Nyɔŋ).

Son of a woman hails from Kuchirigu.

Bɔ n tahili ka yeli Danooyili, paɣ'bia?

Why do I say a son of a woman from Danoo's lineage?

60 *Kuchirigu paɣa bia (nyɔŋ).*

Son of a woman hails from Kuchirigu.

O ɣab daa nyela nyɔŋlan Danoo.

His grandfather was chief Danoo of Nyɔŋ.

Saatia kun birigu Wuni.

The medicine of the rain will not offend God.

Diɛmba bɔri o bia fɔbi n zoi dɔyisa.

Inlaw wants his daughter back with a lot of complaints.

Nyuya Daan dalɔyila.

Yams with holes in them.

65 *Kpaŋ bekuunsi.*

Guinea fowls with dry legs.

Liɣiri laɣi wabila.

Stiff money.

Za nangɔm gbali.

Rotting millet.

Kalo kaliŋmaansi.

A short door.

- Deembiɛyɛ bi aka Malibu.*
 It is difficult to handle a bad in-law's daughter.
- 70 *Danoo n-daa dɔyi Diyeli lan Bukali.*
 Danoo gave birth to chief Bukali of Diyeli.
Njun ka yin' bim zaŋ gamda.
 He who does not see the reality bluffs.
Bili bili ni nan polo.
 Space can be found when shaken.
Palo ku nam yoli.
 Space can't be found without shaking.
Kuri kpeŋ ni barigi zalli.
 A strong metal will resist.
- 75 *Pɔhim zaŋ neli ka zim daŋ tooni.*
 Wind takes a grinding mill and the floor takes lead.
Kambaŋ Monyoo dali,
 On the day of Kambaŋ Monyoo,
Bukali daa tɔ paɣasarili
 Bukari picked a woman
N tabili o lima awei.
 With her nine beads.
N tɔ kakpara tabili zee.
 And picked a farmer and his products.
- 80 *Suligu yuŋbuni kamda.*
 There was his drummer drumming.
N naan kumdi Danoo to n di balli.
 The beat was that Danoo shot best.
Bukali daa ye ni 'yaayee bi ku wubiga'.
 Bukali says 'go away will never kill a hawk'.
Di daa naan kula Danoo Bukali.
 It would have killed Danoo Bukali.
Bukali n-dɔyi Jinlana Ali.
 Bukali gave birth to Jinlana Ali.
- 85 *Daa tia ku zo vuri.*
 A tree in the market will not fear noise.

- Jenkuno ηun simsira ku gDaa duuηa.*
The sneakiest cat can never catch a mosquito.
Duuηa m -biε.
Mosquito is bad.
Ali ma n daa dɔyi Gbatɔhi naa Nabila.
Ali's mother gave birth to Gbatɔhi chief Nabila.
Sakpalimbila mε yili tabili Sala.
Sakpalibila (bird) built its house close to human.
- 90 *O kpela yilkpam tabili zee.*
He enters yilkpami together with zee.
Gbatɔhi naa Nabila Buyisilana Sibiri.
Gbatɔhi chief Nabila Buyisilana Sibiri.
Ka dɔyi Lahamihi.
And gave birth to Lahamihi.
Ka zaη Lahamihi m-baim Naa Yakubu.
And Lahamihi was given to King Yakubu.
Ka o deei kpehi o duu puuni.
And he received her into the royal home.
- 95 *N dɔyi Naa Ablaaɪ Nay'Biεyu.*
And gave birth to King Ablaaɪ Nay'Biεyu.
Naa Ablaaɪ ni o nyeli Andani.
King Ablaaɪ and his brother Andani.
Kpimbee paγasara bia n daa nye o.
Son of a woman who hails from (Kpimbee) Tampion.
Nayidiyi damsaa paγ'bia.
Son of a woman who hails from Nayidiyi.
Looni Simburi paγ'sara bia.
Son of a woman who hails from Looni Simburi.
- 100 *Naa Gariba yili paγ'bia.*
King Gariba's lineage woman's son.
Bɔ n-tahili ka n-yeɪli she ηɔ?
What prompt me to say this?
A yab Naa Gariba,

Your grandfather Naa Gariba,
Tampionlana Mahami daa ye,
 Tampionlana Mahami said,
 ‘Darikpam Dasandi bochaa’,
 ‘Darikpam Dasandi saltpeter’,
 105 *Ban zi duyibu galimdi ziri.*
 Those who do not know how to cook spoil soup.
Balim balim ku ηmani kpeη.
 Slowly, slowly will not be like power.
Bieyu soyu chani ku libgi noo.
 Daybreak can never surprise the fowl.
Zoη kpibga zaη zoη bini.
 An elder bat took another bat’s thing.
Furim ka yiyima zoη bini.
 Where ever it goes it still belongs to the bat.
 110 *Mahami n-doyi Tampion lana Sule.*
 Mahami gave birth to Tampion lana Sule.
Kpuyα din galim pani ku gali liyiri.
 Hyena that rejects vagina will never reject money.
Kpuyα din gali Sakolo ku din niη Kpuyα bieyu.
 Hyena that rejects fufu becomes a bad hyena.
Di ku galim liyiri.
 It will not reject money.
Sule daa n duyι Kpaligu duli lana Mahami.
 Sule gave birth to kpaligu duli lana Mahami.
 115 *Kundunη gDaai nandani bua.*
 A wolf caught a poor person’s goat.
Ka n duma Naawuni, ni Anabi pun saai layifu layifu.
 And God and his Prophet bargained for it.
Mahami daa n doyι Buda’ Sabiliga.
 It is the Mahami who gave birth to Black Buda.
Ka doyι Buda’zee.
 As well as the red Budaali.

- Budaali ka be zaŋ balim Naa Yakubu nam.*
 It was the red Budaali they gave to Naa Yakubu.
- 120 *Ka o deei kpehi o duu puuni,*
 And he received her into his royal home,
N ti yen dɔyi n-dɔyi nam lana Andani.
 And they gave birth to Naa Andani.
Andani Jerilɔŋ.
 Andani Jerilɔŋ.
Naa Alaasani.
 King Alaasani.
Alaasani daa nyela kpimbee paya bia.
 Alaasani was son of a woman who hails from Tampion.
- 125 *Nayidiyi dam saa paya bia.*
 Son of a woman who hails from Nayidiyi.
Loomi Simburi paya bia.
 Son of a woman who hails from Loomi Simburi.
Bɔ n-tahili ka n yeli shem ɲɔ?
 What prompts me to say this?
O yab' Kamsheɣulana Daakuri.
 His grandfather Kamsheɣulana Bukari.
Di yi polo baŋ a zo.
 Do not come out clearly to know your friend.
- 130 *Chami nyam nyam baŋ a zo.*
 Secretly observe to know your friend.
Bukari n-daa dɔyi Kamsheɣulana Ayiba.
 It was Bukari who gave birth to Kamsheɣulana Ayiba.
Nubiliyini ku pii kuyili.
 One finger does not pick a pebble.
Paya ka kpaligu nyelim gunɗa buli.
 A woman without dawadawa always visits the kapok tree.
Kunchuni na doli buli ku pali chi.
 A linguist's store will never be filled.
- 135 *Salinsaa karimbundana nya liyiri*
 A proud ant gets money

- Zayisi kakpiri dabu ka.*
 And refuses to buy millet.
Dari kpana ni o ti daai zoli, zoli ka daabu.
 And rather wants to push a mountain, mountains can't
 be pushed.
- Ka Ayiba daa dɔyi Zeemoli naa Simaani.*
 And Ayiba gave birth to Zeemoli chief Simaani.
N dɔyi Tampion kulibɔɗɗlana Mushee.
 And gave birth to Tampion kulibɔɗɗlana Mushee.
- 140 *Yumpina saba;*
 Yumpina talisman;
Ban yeri ni dee dansi.
 Those who wear it will be wounded.
Sɔyilo be nyaɗɗa, din vieli be yomayoma.
 Patience is behind, the good thing is close.
N-dɔyi Liman Mushetu.
 And gave birth to Liman Mushetu.
Yeltɔyi kurili zuɣu ka nayipiɛliga doli nahu.
 Because of past issues that nayipiɛliga follows a cow.
- 145 *Pa nahu blaa n-nyɛ nayipiɛliga.*
 Nayipiɛliga is not a slave to a cow.
N-dɔyi Zakali Yaɣu.
 Gave birth to Zakali Yaɣu.
N-dɔyi Gɔri.
 Gave birth to Gɔri.
N-dɔyi Daamunu.
 Gave birth to Daamunu.
Ka dɔyi Naasakai.
 And gave birth to Naasakai.
- 150 *Daamunu ka be zaɗ ti Naa Blaa Nayibiɛɣu.*
 It was Daamunu they gave to Naa Blaa Nayibiɛɣu.
Ka o deei kpehi o duu puuni.
 He received her into the royal home.

- N- dɔyi namlana Alaasane Tipariga.*
 And gave birth to king Alaasane Tipariga.
Din che ka n' yelni kpimbee pay' sara bia n nye o.
 That is why I say he in a son of a woman who hails from
 Tampion.
Tipariga ni ka yin dahi n-' she,
 The day Tiparaga passed on,
 155 *Ni ti zo n-gDaai o zuu Aburi.*
 That we should opt for first son Aburi.
Zangban nayili payibia.
 Son of a woman who hail from Zagban.
Kɔra kushe kahinga payabia
 Son of a woman who hails from Kɔra kushe Kahinga
Maan nin dalili paybia.
 Son of a woman who hails from Maan.
Tibun Sandaani yili pay'bia.
 That a son of a woman who hails from (*Tibun Sandaani*)
 Zagban.
 160 *O yab Zagbanlan Dasaa.*
 His grandfather was Zagbanlan Dassa.
Ku che ye o ku che.
 Will not accept says he will not accept.
Ka Naawuni chebu gari kɔbga.
 And God has the final say.
Dasaa n-dɔyi Zagbanlana Gaani.
 Dasaa gave birth to Zagbanlana Gaani.
Namtariga nyu o bari.
 Nantariga (Mole) soothsaying.
 165 *Bayiliri nyɔ vum.*
 Sooth saying smells money.
Bayi koligu nyomi.
 Sooth saying bag smells.
Nun bi zori nyomi o gari buyi o nyom bayiri.
 He who does not fear bad smell should come and consult.

- Ka o dɔyi Zagbaŋ lana Yakubu.*
 And he gave birth to Zagbaŋ lana Yakubu.
Njmana balim tia ka behim.
 Doves beg trees but will not beg a branch.
- 170 *Yakubu n-dɔyi ŋun be ka Wuni,*
 Yakubu gave birth to one like God,
N-zaŋ ti Moiŋ lana Sumani zuu.
 And gave her to Moiŋ lana Sumani.
Tibuŋlana Dawuni.
 Dawuni of Tibuŋ lana.
Duɣi dam bi kpeera,
 A pot of that does not become hot,
Zaŋbedari n dɔyi Tibuŋ Dawuni bia Kwoona Wuli.
 Zaŋbedari gave birth to Tibuŋ Dawuni's child Kwoona Wuli.
- 175 *Gavuligu tim bi diri kpini - Naa Sandaani bia.*
 Gavuligu medicine does not take guinea fowl - Naa Sandaani's son.
Buɣili liyiri laɣi bieri be soli ni.
 Money belonging to the fetish is on the way.
Njun bahi bi yi.
 Whoever leaves it there is not safe.
Njun puli bi yi.
 Whoever seeks it is not safe.
Bua deei mi a ka noo daŋ tehi.
 A rope is put on a goat and fowl takes lead.
- 180 *Ka o zaŋ ŋun be kawuni n ti o zuu Karimɔyɔ lana Asimani.*
 And he gave the one who is like God to Karimɔyɔ lana Asimani.
Ti duma Naawuni tiri ma yeɔvielli.
 God should bless me with a good thing.
Yeɔvielli gari salma.
 A good thing is better than gold.

- Ka o zaŋ ɲun be ka wuni kpehi o duu puuni.*
 And received the one who is like God into his royal home.
N dɔyi paɣaba Asana.
 And gave birth to Asana.
- 185 *Asana zaa yuli;*
 Asana pronounced her praise name;
Konyuya kɔbga chari kuliga,
 Many pots go to a water source,
Ka konyuli ɲun du abungbalga,
 One pot successfully fetches across abungbaliga,
Ŋun n-dɔyi Namlana Aburu.
 She gave birth to Naa Abudu.
Din che ka n yeli ni,
 That is why I said,
- 190 *Zagbaŋ Nayiŋ paɣabia.*
 Son of a woman who hails from Zagbaŋ Nayiŋ (kɔra).
M ma niŋ Datili paɣabia
 Son of a woman who hails from Datili
Tibuŋ lana Sandaani yili paɣabia.
 Son of a woman who descends from Tibuŋ lana Sandaani.
Karimɔyulana Simani yili paɣabia.
 Son of a woman who descends from Karimɔyu lana Su-
 mana.
Mɔiŋ Kurisabi Asanatu bia n daa nye o.
 He was Mɔiŋ Kurisabi Asanatu's son.
- 195 *Kpimbee paɣabia Mahama daa nyela Laabaŋ Naasakai bia.*
 Son of a woman hails from Tampion, Mahama was a son
 of Nasakai from Laribaŋ.
Napaɣa Buɣalana bia.
 Son of a royal wife Buɣalana.
Ban yoli yeligu;
 They are late to speak;
N dunianima be yolila yeligu yeee, ka silminga nya zaashee.
 My people were late to react and the white man was settled.

- Andunianima be b̄orila ban mali yee.*
 My people only love those who have wealth.
- 200 *Be je nandaamba.*
 They do not love the poor.
N̄un mali dri ku k̄oŋ yura.
 Whoever has wealth will surely have lovers.
Pushuḡyili din ḡmelim ku ḡmani kamb̄oŋ.
 No matter how big a farm hat is, it can never be compared
 to a silo.
Gumachuyu lu biliga ni.
 A chameleon falls into a well.
Naawuni m- mi o yaara.
 It is only God who knows its saviour.
- 205 *Napaya Naasakai lana n daa chani o tanchibga o ti nȳo m̄oyu.*
 A wicked royal wife heard and quickly run to the bush to
 burn the grass.
Be ti yen paai m̄oyu sunsuuni,
 Before she gets to the middle of the bush,
Ka Napaya Nasakai zaŋ suhuyini pili tandi.
 The royal wife Nasakai peacefully started her construc-
 tion.
Namlana Mahakpema kalisi dali,
 The day Naa Mahama, the senior passed on,
Ka o ye ti zon gDaai Mahama bila.
 And they asked that we choose Mahama junior.
- 210 *Zambalana dim kurigu,*
 A wicked person bites a metal,
Ka nyina kabsi niŋ kurigu.
 And all the teeth remain in the metal.
Kom din saa lana bia.
 A son of rain is being drowned by water.
O ni zo n- che namsa dahin sheli.
 The day he passed on,

- Ni be zo gDaai namla Ablabila,*
 That they should appoint Naa Ablai bila (junior).
- 215 *Ninsalnim ni zaɣ'si shel,*
 What men reject,
Din ka wuni pili maana.
 Is what God adorns.
Goli biεyupihita dali,
 On the thirtieth day of the Lunar month,
Niriba ban lihi gbunni koŋ goli,
 People who watch the west will surely find the moon.
Saŋmarigoŋ ku zini tiŋa.
 A moon will never sit on the ground.
- 220 *O ni zaŋ o nuu dihi buya tiŋa,*
 When he passed on,
Ni ti zo n- gDaani Namlana Andani.
 That we should appoint Naa Andani.
Toli ka sakari be.
 There is no difference between toil.
Ziri warita vuɣ'si ka yelimaŋli boŋi bimbira shee.
 A liar is ploughing and the truth is searching for seeds.
Naa Andani n- daa pii o bahi ata;
 Naa Andani had three (3) dogs;
- 225 *M boli yino yuli: 'gutuli ka simdi'*
 And named one 'an ungrateful person has no friend'
M boli yino yuli ni: '-a yi yen niŋ,
 And named the other one: 'when you are to do good,
Nyin niŋmi ŋun mi.
 Do it to the one who knows tomorrow.
Miri kaŋŋ ŋun zi.
 Do not do it to the one who does not know tomorrow.
Ŋun zi min Gutulu ka simali n- daa doli'
 The one who does not know tomorrow and the ungrateful
 one move together.'

- 230 *O zo che namsama dahinsheli,*
 The day he passed on,
Ni ti zo n- gDaani Namlana Yakubu.
 That they should appoint Naa Yakubu.
Andunia balinda.
 Intercessor of the earth.
N- kpee terima dimbe,
 My friend thinks evil of me,
Naawuni ko m- mi.
 It is only God who knows.
- 235 *Njun bi yurima dindiema.*
 My enemies joke.
Dindiem vieliga yidana chan tɔbu ni,
 A beautiful woman's husband goes to war,
Ban suhuri Naawuni gari kɔba di kuna kun aka o paana.
 Those who prayed he should be killed were more, but he
 returned home.
Naa Yakubu n-daa pii o bahi ata.
 Naa Yakubu had his tree dogs.
M boli yino yuli: 'ninsal ku yili kpa.'
 He called one: 'a human being can't be hanged on a nail'.
- 240 *Ka boli yino yuli: 'a naan saɣi bee?'*
 And called one: 'if you were the one would you take it?
Ka boli yi no yuli: 'be niɲla be maɲa'.
 And called the other: 'they have wronged themselves'.
Be naan ku loɲ bee.
 They would have gotten something.
Zoya paɣa bia.
 Son of a woman from Zoya (Sunsɔɲ).
Buɣiyeligu paɣabia.
 Son of a woman who hails from Buɣiyeligu (Sunsɔɲ).
- 245 *Nakpaniboni kaɣili yaɣa paɣabia.*
 Son of a woman who hails from Nakpaniboni kaɣili yaɣa
 (Sunsɔɲ).

Waambung burizambu payabia.

Son of a woman who hails from Waambung burizambu (Sunsɔŋ).

Salimbaŋa piri naa ku piri tarimadabuɣu lana payabia.

A gold bangle worn by the king can't be worn by a woman commoner's son.

Dunialana zuu.

First son of intercessor of the earth.

Wulimpuhili namlana.

King of the east's first son.

250 *Andunia Naawunilan zuu.*

God of the earth's first son.

Wulinluhili namlana zuu.

King of the west's first son.

Nusaa ni nudirigulana zuu.

Owner of both left and right's first son.

Nom balim ka tiŋ' maai.

Walk softly to calm the earth.

Napaya tooni Gubili Zuu.

Son of the family of the first royal wife's first son.

255 *Naa Yakubu Zuu bilimmi bilimm.*

First son of Naa Yakubu walk majestically.

Text III

This is a praise poem performance by the praise poet Mohammed Namoyu in honour of the chief of Gundo, Naa Salamatu. She happens to be the occupant of the paramount skin of all other skins in Dagbon reserved solely for women (daughters of the Yaa Naa).

Performed by: Mohammed Namoyu

A balima yooo, a balima yeee!

Your mercies, your mercies!

Gbewa kachayu, a balima yeee!

Gbewa woman regent, your mercies!

Ɔirili kachayu, a balima yeee!

Ɔirili woman regent, your mercies!

Ɔmantuna yerigu, a balima yeee!

The wearer of premature gourd, your mercies!

5 *Buntaam barigu, a balima yeee!*

The rider of donkey, your mercies!

Wei!

Wei!

A yab daa nyela Naa Ablai;

Your grandfather was King Ablai (Abdulai);

Kambarɛ Lamisi bia.

Son of Kambarɛ Lamisi.

Safam Zarikuli paya bia Naa Ablai,

Safam Zarikuli woman's son King Ablai,

10 *Kadia Cheri Mɔri pakparɛ bia n nyε o.*

He is son to Kadia Cheri Mɔri woman regent.

Yakubu n-dɔyi zuu Aburu,

Yakubu gave birth to first son Aburu,

Kadia cheri mɔri Lamisi bia.

Kadia cheri mɔri Lamisi's son.

- Sana Yen Yayibuya pakpaη bia n nye o.*
 He is son to Sana Yen Yayibuya woman regent.
Nambayila zaligoma pakpaη bia n-nye o.
 He is son to Nambayila zaligoma woman regent.
- 15 *Bɔ n-che ka n-yeli?*
 Why do I say so?
Ni Kadia Cheri Mɔri Yavangulaies bia n-nye o.
 He is son to Ni Kadia Cheri Mɔri Yavangulaies.
O yab n-daa niη Naa Luro.
 His grandfather was King Luro.
Naa Luro n-daa suyi Naawuni;
 King Luro prayed to God;
N- ti yen dɔyi,
 And when he was to give birth,
- 20 *N- dɔyi paγa ηuni mi bia?*
 And gave birth to which woman's son?
Do ηuni mi bia?
 Which man's son?
Naa Luro n-daa dɔyi Nyɔηlan Danoo.
 King Luro gave birth to Nyɔηlan Danoo.
Deemba deembiεyu
 A bad in-law
Bɔri bia deebu zoi dɔyisa
 wants to take his/her daughter as exchange
- 25 *Yen ni liyiri layiri layi wabila.*
 Says that money is rough.
Daridasabila.
 Black wood.
Kacheyu balankona.
 Woman regent balankona.
Nimdi kɔba wab.
 Meat with bones all over.
Kpaη zuyu kɔyu.
 Dry heard Guinea fowl.

- 30 *Nun n-daa suhi Naawuni.*
 He prayed to God.
N- ti yen dɔyi,
 And when he was to give birth,
N- dɔyi Jiɲlana.
 Gave birth to Jiɲlana.
Kun din soli, ko too zagse yuli.
 The corpse that fears, does not resist the grave.
O yi bɔra, o ni doni ni.
 If it wants, it will lay in it.
- 35 *O yi je o ni doni di ni.*
 If it does not want, it will lay in it.
Ali n-daa n-suhi Naawuni,
 Ali prayed to God,
N- dɔyi Nambayila Ablai.
 And gave birth to Nambayila Abdulai.
Kpeenkurijerigu n zabiri nyukuma zuɣu.
 A foolish elder fights for dry yams.
Pinkuma be puuni,
 Dry mounts are in the farm,
- 40 *Bo n-niɲa ka a bi zabi di zuɣu?*
 Why don't you fight for them?
Kpeenjerigu zabiri nyukuma zuɣu.
 A foolish elder fights for dry yam.
Funfɔŋ kuma do puuni,
 Dry land for raising mounts is in the farm,
Bo niɲa ka a bi zabiri di zuɣu?
 Why don't you fight for it?
Nun n-daa suhi Naawuni.
 He prayed to God.
- 45 *N- dɔyi Gbanzalinaa Laamihi.*
 And gave birth to Gbanzalinaa Laamihi.
N- zaŋ o ti yab Yakubu Nantoo.
 And gave him to grandfather Yakubu Nantoo.

- Ka o deegi o kpehi o duu puuni.*
 And he received him into his home.
N- ti yen dɔyi.
 And when he was to give birth.
N- dɔyi Naa Ablaai.
 Gave birth to king Ablaai (Abdulai).
- 50 *Din che ka n-yel ni kambaŋ pakpaŋ bia Nayibiɛyu.*
 That is why I said Kambaŋ womans son Nayibiɛyu.
Nayibiɛyu pakpaŋ ɲmantuma yerigu.
 Nayibiɛyu woman regent.
Ɔinimi ka tiŋ maa mai.
 Sit and the earth will be calm.
A namla biɛyula yaa di neeya.
 The day of your kingship is broken.
Ni yeli shem mo yaa,
 What I said is,
- 55 *A yab n-nyɛ naa Andani.*
 Your grandfather was king Andani.
Blaai ɲɔkpi yuŋ n-sayim kuli.
 The slave died in the night and spoiled the funeral.
M ma Galigbaŋ bia Naani goo:
 My mother Galigbaŋli's son, Trusted torn:
Andani n-dɔyi zuu Yiri.
 Andani gave birth to first son Yiri.
Nyama, ka che n-dɔyi Bukalijia.
 See, and also gave birth to Bukalijia.
- 60 *A yab n-niŋ Namlana Alaasani.*
 Your grandfather is king Alaasani.
Bukalijia kachayɔ, Ɔinimi ka tiŋ maa mai.
 Bukalijia woman regent sit and calm the earth.
A yab n-niŋ Namlana Alaasani.
 Your grandfather is king Alaasani.
Yiŋ memuna bia.
 Yiŋ Memuna's son.

- Naawuni zai o zaligu.*
 God has his plan.
- 65 *Katini bia.*
 Son of Katini.
Tampin dundun di ku zo saa nun bubu.
 The floor will not fear the rain.
Gbuyinli bia na pɔri ku rubi mɔri,
 The young child of a lion will not chew grass,
Faa shee nimdi.
 Unless meat.
Tampima dundun.
 Rocky floor.
- 70 *Zuɣu pkaa tinɣpura saa zuɣu mayi.*
 Head nails all heads to remain calm.
Wei!
 Wei!
Naawuni bi yeli ka ninsala nin bo?
 If God does not say what can man do?
Tiparigu pakpaɲ ɲmantuna yerigu.
 Tipariga woman regent wearer of premature gourd.
ʒinimi ka tin maa mai.
 Sit and the earth will be calm.
- 75 *N doɣi a ba nin Naa Aburu.*
 And gave birth to your father king Aburu.
A ba daa nin korilangbaɲa.
 Your father was korilangbaɲa.
Sheri kahinga Asana bia.
 Sheri kahinga Asana's child.
ʒirilana dari baɲa.
 A liar buys bangles.
Yelimaɲli yori Asana bia Samili.
 The truth pays Asana's child, Samili.
- 80 *Aba daa toɣisi Naawuni,*
 Your father imitated God,

- N tumid kpiηlana tuma.*
 And did the works of God.
Ṣirili Zagbaη saa paḡa bia.
 Ṣirili Zagbaη woman's child.
A ba daa zi sunsuuni,
 Your father was in the middle,
Saa siyilana Asana bia.
 Rain incarnate Asana's child.
- 85 *Daliri ka nuuni kḡsima.*
 Nothing at hand makes one lacks friend (kḡsima).
Kḡsima n dḡyi zuu Aburu.
 Kḡsima gave birth to first son Aburu.
Pieri kḡbga siyiri kuliga,
 Hundred buckets go to fetch water,
Yubila zaḡi yino nti deei nasara.
 A small clay pot claims the glory.
Yḡyu tolana zuu Aburu.
 Yḡyu tolana first's son.
- 90 *O yab niη Mionlana Simani.*
 His grandfather is Mionlana Simani.
Asimani mi n dḡyi paḡa ηuni bia?
 Asumani also gave birth to which woman's son?
Kpatiηlana Dawuni.
 Kpatiηlan Dawuni.
Ayab Dawuni yeee! Kwaanawuli.
 Your grandfather Dawuni! Kwaanawuli.
A yab yeee! Zaηbayili bia
 Your grandfather! Zaηbayili's child
- 95 *Dawuni n daa suhi Naawuni,*
 Dawuni prayed to God,
N dḡyi Kawimḡyulana Yisa.
 And gave birth to Karimḡyulana Yisa.
Yisa n suyi Naawuni,
 Yisa prayed to God,

N- ti yɛn dɔɣi,
 And when he was to give birth,
Dɔɣi paɣa ηuni mi bia?
 Gave birth to a child of which woman?
 100 *N- dɔɣi a yaba.*
 And gave birth to your grandfather.
Dehi kɔbga siyiri kuliga,
 Hundred bush pigs go to fetch water,
Debila zaɣiyino ti deei nasara.
 One bush pig claims the glory.
Yɔɣutolana zuu Aburu.
 Yɔɣutolana's first son Aburu.
Din che ka n-yeli ni,
 That is why I say,
 105 *ʒirili Zagbaη saa paɣa bia.*
 ʒirili Zagbaη saa's woman son.
Shitɔbu dapala ηmantuna yɛrigu.
 Shitɔbu daughter wearer of premature gourd.
ʒinimi ka tiη maa mai.
 Sit and the earth will be calm.
A ba n nyɛ Namlana Mahama kpema.
 Your father is Namlana Mahama Kpema.
Dagbamba yoli yɛligu.
 Dagbamba are late in communicating.
 110 *Bɛ yoli ka shɛli kani.*
 They delay until there is nothing to do.
Banyoli Yɛligu pakpaη ηmantuna yɛrigu.
 Banyoli Yɛligu, premature gourd wearer.
ʒinimi ka tiη maa mai.
 Sit and the earth will be calm.
A ba n nyɛ Namlana Mahamabila.
 Your father is king Mahamabila.
Maasha Kurimari ʒenab bia.
 Maashaa Kurimari ʒenabu's son.

- 115 *Kambaŋ paɣa bia Kurugu.*
 Kambaŋ woman's son Kurugu (metal).
ʒiri noli malisi malimali.
 The mouth of the liar is full of sweetness.
Yeɓimaŋli nyela zaɣyini.
 Truth is one.
Din galisi ʒenab diyela bia Kurigu.
 Son of the great ʒenab Deyeli's Kurigu.
Kurigu dapala ɲmantuma yeɓigu.
 Son of Kurigu, premature gourd wearer.
- 120 *ʒinimi ka tiŋ maa mai.*
 Sit and the earth will be calm.
A ba n nyɛ Naa Buru.
 Your father is king Buru.
A ba daa nyela Nanima chichira.
 Your father was a wonderful creator among kings.
Bɛ daa yi bolo saa,
 When he was called from the heavens,
Ka o sayi tiŋa.
 He responded from the earth.
- 125 *Ka bɛ bolo tiŋa.*
 And when he was called from the earth,
Ka o sayi saa zuɣu.
 He responded from the heavens.
M ma chimisi bia Gingili (Snail).
 Mother chimisi's son Gingili.
Naa Sataŋkuyili pakpaŋ ɲmantuma yeɓigu.
 King Sataŋkuyili woman regent, wearer of premature
 gourd.
ʒinimi ka tiŋ maa mai.
 Sit and the earth will be calm.
- 130 *A ba n-nyɛ Naa Andani.*
 Your father is king Andani.

- Gasi Zenaba bia dimbilinda.*
 Gasi Zenaba's rolling son.
Alikauli soli yen bili m̄ori,
 The path of the covenant is getting weedy,
Wunyuyiri Zenaba bia m-pahi.
 Wunyuyiri Zenaba's son clears the weeds.
Zolikuyili.
 Woman regent.
- 135 *Ɔinimi ka tiŋ maa mai.*
 Sit and the earth will be calm.
A ba n-niŋ Naa Mahama bila.
 Your father is king Mahamabila.
M ma Samata bia.
 Mother Samata's son.
Zuyulana Mahama zuu.
 First son of Zuyulan lana Mahama.
Gushee lana Sheini zuu.
 First son of Gushee lana Sheini.
- 140 *Tampion lana Mahama zuu.*
 First son of Tampion chief Mahama.
Kulinoli din vieli yeee!
 A source of good drinking water!
Ni layim nyuriba.
 Will attract drinkers.
A ba nyɛ Namlana Yakubu.
 Your father is Yakubu the king.
Kaa yen dii kuliga din p̄ora.
 You are close to a blessed water source.
- 145 *Ninsalinim teri o din biɛ.*
 Human beings are nurturing mischief.
Ka Naawuni zaŋ mali fattim bia.
 And God blesses Fatima's son.
A ba mi ka yiŋ din dahinsheli,
 When your father was called to glory,

- 150 *Ka a tuzo zini gban,*
 And your younger brother became regent,
Zan be salaa ni.
 And remained on the Gbewaa throne.
Tolana bia,
 Son of Tolana,
Yinima n-su Dagban tabili nmampirigu Kacheɣu.
 You own Dagbon and women regents of premature
 gourds.
Niɲmi ka ti Kani.
 Reign well.
- 155 *Ka a yuli kun bɔrigi Salaam.*
 So that your name will not be erased in this world.

Text IV

Dakoli nye bia, which translates as ‘the bachelor is a child’, is the first praise song every beginner starts to learn. One is not taught any other praises until this is accomplished. It could be described as an ode to the Almighty God, his creations and control over all as characterized by the introduction and a concluding array of allusions to the genealogy of the drummer clan and that of the praise poet specifically. It is the praise song that sets the performances of the composite drumming and performed especially before the commencements of festivals and some other court ceremonies.

Performed by: Mohammed Abdulai (teenager)

Dakoli nyɛla bia ba yeee! Namlana
 A bachelor is a child! Creator
Payilana n-nyɛ kpɛma ba yeee! Namlana
 The married man is elder! Creator

- Nun mali lana nun dim ba yeee! Namalana*
 It is he who has that eats! Creator
Nun karlana nun zia ba yeee! Namalana
 One who has not should not eat! Creator
 5 *Salinsaa namoyili baligu ba yeee! Namlana*
 The father of the army of ants! Creator
Nmanzeelana bayibuyiri ba yee! Namlana
 The dove father of diviner! Creator
Kulinmalan nye kika ba yeee! Namlana
 The father of the crowned crane! Creator
Nmeliimee koyiwu ba yeee! Namlana
 The father of plougher! Creator
Kusiyiriba chankagi ba yeee! Namlana
 The father of water drawers! Creator.
 10 *Pay' puulana kandaligi ba! Namlana*
 Consoler of the pregnant woman! Creator
Nun yeli ni Wuni pala Naa maa, Namlana
 Whoever says God is not king, Creator
Nun lihim i o tooni,
 The fellow should look ahead,
Nmaligi lihi o nyaan
 Again, turn and look behind
Ka ban ni Wuni sayi Naa! Namlana
 And know that God is actually King! Creator
 15 *Nun yeli ni Wuni pala Naa maa,*
 Whoever says God is not King,
Nun zan shigban lihi ban di puuni yelli.
 The fellow should take bee wax and tell what is within.
Ka ban ni Wuni sayi Naa! Namlana
 And know that God is actually King! Creator
Nun yeli ni Wuni pala Naa maa! Namlana
 Whoever says God is not King! Creator
Nun zan bimmuni lihi ban di puuni yelli
 The fellow should look at close object and tell its contents

- 20 *Ka baŋ ni Wuni sayi Naa! Namlana*
 And know that God is actually King! Creator
Njun baŋ ni Wuni pala Naa maa! Namlana
 Whoever says God is not King! Creator
Njun zaŋ tan' yini lihi baŋ di nimbieri
 The fellow should use a single cloth to tell its front from
 its back
Ka baŋ ni Wuni sayi Naa! Namalana.
 And know that God is actually a King! Creator
Njun yeli ni Wuni pala Naa maa! Namlana
 Whoever says God is not King! Creator
- 25 *Biligu Naa na kuli tumdila o nam tuma;*
 God is still doing his creation;
N- naan kuli nam tia,
 And just created a tree,
N- naan nam o vari n-tabili o wula.
 And again, created its branches as well as leaves.
Biligu naa na kuli tumdila o nam tuma;
 God is still doing his creation;
N- naan kuli nam sala,
 And created human being,
- 30 *N- naan nam o nuhi n-tabili o bayiri.*
 And again, created his hands as well as his legs.
Biligu naa na kuli tumdila o nam tuma;
 God is still doing his creation;
N- naan kuli nam kora mɔyili,
 And again, created a mighty river,
Kɔyisikɔyisi be zimba bieli.
 Difficult to cross.
Mɔyili to koro n-gori yebla.
 The mighty river closes to stop the fish.
- 35 *Ka to koro n-goori yeee.*
 And closes to stop some kind of fish.

- Nun n-nyε ηun ku bundana bia,*
 The one who kills the wealthy man's son,
Ka deei buni.
 And takes away his treasures.
Ka zaη tinshee dabili,
 And takes a slave from another land,
Chilim leei tinshee nabia.
 And makes a royal a slave in another land.
 40 *Ka pa Biligu Naa ka na' ηuni?*
 If not God who else?
Biligu Naa na kuli tumdila o nam tuma;
 God is still doing his creation;
N naan kuli zaη payiba pia lana,
 And makes a husband of ten wives,
Chilim leei dakoli
 To be a bachelor,
Ka zaη dakoli chilim leei payiba pia lana.
 And makes a bachelor a husband of ten wives.
 45 *Ka pa Biligu Naa ka na' ηuni?*
 If not King God who else?
Biligu Naa na kuli tumdila o nam tuma;
 God is still doing his creation;
N-naan kuli zaη yilititali lana,
 And makes a big household,
Chilim leela yili bilalana.
 Turn to a small household.
Ka zaη yilibila lana,
 And makes a small household,
 50 *Chilim leela yilititali lana.*
 Turn to a big household.
Ka pa Biligu Naa ka na' ηuni?
 If not God who else?
Biligu Naa na kuli tumdila o nam tuma;
 God is still doing his creation;

N-naan kuli namla waribarilana bia.
 And created a horse rider's son.
Ka o taba ti bara.
 But when his colleagues mount their horses,
 55 *Ka o doli zorila tiṅa yṅndiyṅndi.*
 He runs on the ground.
O zori ka kumdi Naawuni kpinlana.
 He runs and cries to God Almighty.
Biligu Naa na kuli tumdila o nam tuma;
 God is still doing his creation;
N- naan nam kparikṅbigulana bia.
 And created the wearer of batakarí's son.
Ka o taba ti yera,
 And when his colleagues are putting on their cloths,
 60 *Ka o doli yeri o taba binchera.*
 He wears their torn batakari.
O yeri ka kumdi Naawuni Namlana.
 He wears and cries to God Almighty.
Biligu Naa na kuli tumdila o nam tuma;
 God is still doing his creation;
N- naan nam sayimlana bia.
 He created the food owner's son.
Ka o taba ti dira,
 And when his colleagues are eating,
 65 *Ka o doli viehiri o taba ḡmana.*
 He goes about picking food crumbs.
O viehiri ka kumdi Naawuni.
 He eats and cries to God Almighty.
Biligu naa na kuli tumdila o nam tuma;
 God is still doing his creation;
N-naan kuli nam nimḡubirilana bia.
 And created a wealthy person's son.
Ka o taba ti ḡubiri,
 And when his colleagues are chewing,

70 *Ka o doli ηmari o taba kɔba.*
 He goes about feasting bones from his colleagues.
O ηubiri ka kumdi Naawuni Namlana.
 He eats and cries to God Almighty.
Biligu Naa na kuli tumdila o nam tuma;
 Go is still doing his creation;
N- naan kuli nam piliηlana bia.
 And creates the circumciser's child.
Ka o ti mali gundi o taba.
 And he rather uses it to circumcise his colleagues.

75 *O gundi ka kundi Naawuni Namlana.*
 He circumcises and still praise God Almighty.
Ban duri ka wabgu duri zoli,
 Those who climb mountains like the elephant,
Ban lari ka kom ηmari bula,
 Those whose laughter divides water bodies,
O pun yiyisi daη naa sampaani
 He always dashes to the palace
Ka zaη daangbee tili ka leensi,
 And leans his walking stick on the wall like silos,

80 *Ka zaη duungbana gbani ka bua,*
 And kneels like a goat,
Ka zaη nyamari bolim ka saa,
 And makes his nose run like rain,
Ka zaη luηkpun nyayi ka bia,
 And hangs the drum like a child,
N- naan zaη lundoli pɔri ka tɔbu,
 And bends the drum stick like a bow,
N- yiyisi daη Naa samDaani,
 And dashes to the King's court,

85 *N- ti zaη daangbee tili ka leensi,*
 And lean his walking stick like silos,
Ka zaη duungbana gham ka bua,
 And kneels like a goat before the king,

- Ka zaŋ naɣɛligu ti naai daŋ,*
 And pours down the history of the king.
O ημερι ka kumdi Naawuni, Namlana.
 He drums and gives praises to God Almighty, creator.
Lunɣ bia ni zaŋ lundoli niŋ o nuuni,
 When the drummer's son picks the drum stick,
 90 *O ημερι ka kumdi Naawuni, Namlana.*
 He drums and give praise to God Almighty, Creator.
Afabila ni zaŋ kariŋgbana niŋ o nuuni,
 When the Mallam picks the papers of the Quran,
O karindi ka kumdi Naawuni, Namlana.
 He reads and praises God Almighty, Creator.
Tɔhanaa bia ni zaŋ tɔbilangɔŋ kperila mɔɣu,
 When the chief hunter's son set out for hunting with his tools,
O tɔri ka kumdi Naawuni, Namlana.
 He hunts and praises God Almighty, Creator.
 95 *Gummiri bia ni zaŋ gummuu niŋ o nuuni,*
 When the cotton spinner's child spins the-cotton with his
 hands,
O miri ka kumdi Naawuni Namlana.
 He spins and praises God Almighty Creator.
Waribari bia ni zaŋ galigbaŋ niŋ o nuuni,
 When the horse rider's son mounts the horse,
O bari ka kumdi Naawuni, Namlana.
 He rides and praises God Almighty, Creator.
Mani Daaŋa bia ku che Wuni kum sala.
 The praise singer's son will not abandon the praises of
 God for man.
 100 *Sala pala Naawuni n-nam Daaŋa bia.*
 Man is not God to create a praise singer's child.
Ti zaŋ yeŋ Yɔɣu sama yeŋi ηuni bia?
 Which woman's son shall we give the royal tittle to?
Be yeŋi ti zaŋ Yɔɣu sama yeŋi tigburi bia,
 They say we should give the royal tittle to the son of the stump,

- Bee kulasanzee bia.*
 Or the son of a stone.
Gbarigbari Naa Gbewaa.
 Indescribable King Gbwaa.
- 105 *Yoriyori Naa Gbewaa.*
 Unmeasurable king Gbewaa.
Zuyusaa ni tiŋa lana Naa Gbewaa.
 The owner of heaven and earth, king Gbewaa.
Tihi ni mɔri lana Naa Gbewaa.
 The owner of trees and grasses, King Gbewaa.
Ban ka laamba ba Naa Gbewa.
 The father of the fatherless King Gbewaa.
Ban mali laamba ba Naa Gbewaa.
 Father of all fathers, King Gbewaa.
- 110 *Salaa Nmemana ba yeee! Naa Gbewaa bia.*
 Salaa Nmemana! King Gbewaa's son.
Nmampirigulana yelitabili ba yeee! Naa Gbewaa bia.
 Nmampirigulana yelitabili! King Gbewaa's son.
Salagalana Kayili kuni ba yeee! Naa Gbewaa bia.
 Salagalana Kayili kuna! King Gbewaa's son.
Bimbilalana Nmantambu ba yeee! Naa Gbewaa bia.
 The King of Bimbila, Nmantambu! King Gbewaa's son.
Kuyulana Subekpema ba yeee! Naa Gbewaa bia.
 Kuyulana Subekpema! King Gbewaa's son.
- 115 *Sanlana Subebila ba yeee! Naa Gbewaa bia.*
 Sanlana Subebila! King Gbewaa's son.
Karinaa Beemoni ba yeee! Naa Gbewaa bia.
 Karinaa Beemoni! King Gbewaa's son.
Mani ni che Naa Gbewaa,
 I will leave King Gbewaa,
M balim Gbewaa dapala booni Shitɔbu.
 And appellate the son of Gbewaa called Shitɔbu.
Shitɔbu ni kpalim Bayili dahasheli,
 When Shitɔbu died at Bayili,

- 120 *Ka Yiṅsaa doli kpalim Bayili.*
 And Yiṅsaa died at Bayili.
Shitɔbu ni kpalim Bayili saha sheli,
 When Shitɔbu died at Bayili,
Ka Takpariga Tuyirinam doli kpali Bayili.
 And Takpariga Tuyirinam also died at Bayili.
Ka o ma Sanʒee kpalim Bayili.
 And his mother Sanʒee died at Bayili.
Ka o Yunbuni doli kpalim Bayili.
 And Yunbuni also died at Bayili.
- 125 *Shitɔbu ni kpalim Bayili dahasheli,*
 When Shitɔbu died at Bayili,
Ka n-yaba Bizunɔ ni o lundoli kpalim Bayili.
 And my ancestor, Bizunɔ and his drum stick remain in
 Bayili.
Shitɔbu ni kpalim Bayili dahasheli
 When Shitɔbu died at Bayili
Ka napaya Katini zayisi duu, loori kpaliga.
 And Napaya Katini abandoned the room for trees.
Ka o mi doli kpalim Bayili.
 And she died in Bayili.
- 130 *Ka Siyirinitɔbu nemdi nuu n-dɔyiri o nam nachimba.*
 And Siyirinitɔbu gave birth to his children.
N- dɔyi Bakurigu Simbuyiri ba, Siyirinitɔbu,
 He gave birth to Bakurigu Simbuyiri,
Kpabo Tintani ba, Siyirinitɔbu Kpabo Tintani,
 Kpabo Tintani's son, Siyirinitɔbu Kpabo Tintani,
Zaṅlana Mariba Siyirinitɔbu,
 Zaṅlana Mariba Siyirinitɔbu,
Zinnyee Saa Nmaari Mira,
 Zinnyee Saa Nmaari Mira,
- 135 *Ngboo Lumbila ba Siyirinitɔbu bia.*
 Ngboo Lumbila, Siyirinitɔbu's son.

Nayizera Yiŋa ka Bobigu father Siyirinitɔbu.
 Nayizera Yiŋa and Bobigu father Siyirinitɔbu,
Suyili Yiŋa zaa yiŋa kum pa leenga,
 Suyili Yiŋa zaa yiŋa kum pa leenga,
Gbamburigulana Nambukurugu,
 Gbamburigulana Nambukurugu,
Be zaa daa bela Naa Shitɔbu maa ni,
 They are all descendants of King Shitɔbu,
 140 *Mani ni chela Shitɔbu m-balim Shitɔbu dapala booni Nyayisi.*
 I will leave Shitɔbu and appellate his son called Nyayisi.
Naa Nyayisi paani ni yen mɔni dabisi sheli,
 When King Nyayisi was to perform his wife's marriage
 rites,
Ka o gDaai wabga n-kuhi buli.
 And he killed an elephant.
N- gDaai bankarɪŋa zaŋ mali ban ka laamba kuli.
 He used bush turkey to perform the funeral rites of the
 fatherless.
N- gDaai nayinyili n-zaŋ mali biɛyu ni saa.
 He used buffalo to perform the rites for the coming rains.
 145 *N- gDaai deei n-zaŋ mali o paya noli Wuni.*
 He used a bush pig to perform the rites of his wife's per-
 sonal god.
Ka yeli ni bini ŋɔ zuɣu be gburagbura pam.
 And said that here is tough.
Ni di simsi Nyayisi Wumbee wuni Malibu.
 That it is good for the pacification of Nyayisi Wumbee's
 personal gods.
Nyayisi Gungɔbili monimi gali ku suyi bim.
 Nyayisi-Gungɔbili prepares food without soup.
Naa Nyayisi paani ni yen mɔni dabisi sheli,
 When the first wife of King Nyayisi was to prepare her
 first royal food,

- 150 *Ka Kpaligu kana pali ηman,*
 And the kitchen was full with dawadawa spice,
Ka yelim pali kabiriga,
 And the container was filled with salt,
Ka zaη yelim buri saa,
 And salt became abundant,
Nyayisi Gungɔbili monimi gali ku suyi bim.
 Nyayisi Gungɔbili prepares food without soup.
Naa Nyayisi paani ni yεn mɔni dabisisheli;
 When the first wife of King Nyayisi was to prepare her
 first royal food;
- 155 *Ka nimdi kana pali leensi,*
 And silos were filled with meat,
Ka yelim pali kabiriga,
 And the container was filled with salt,
Ka o za kpam be soli,
 And cooking oil became abundant,
N- zaη yelim buri saa,
 And salt became abundant,
Nyayisi Gungɔbili monimi gali ku suyim bim.
 Nyayisi Gungɔbili prepares food without soup.
- 160 *Naa Nyayisi paani ni ye mɔni dabisi sheli;*
 When the first wife of King Nyayisi was to prepare the
 royal food;
Ka o paya dungbana leei bema,
 And his wife's knee prints became streams,
Ka kolebisi lebi toya,
 And Kolebisi turned to motars,
Ka o dibi ηubirili leei puhiga.
 And his chewing stick became puhiga (King of trees).
Nyayisi Gungɔbili monimi gali ku suyi bim.
 Nyayisi Gungɔbili prepares food without soup.

- 165 *Naa Nyayisi paani ni yen mɔni dabisi sheli;*
 When the first wife of King Nyayisi was the to prepare
 royal food;
Ka o vaai yiyisi zaborila looloo,
 And he set out with his warriors,
N- zabi nti nma Pulunpuma Gbehi zuyu.
 He fought and beheaded Pulunpuma Gbehi.
Ka ti yeli ni nmani nmaye kperila ku kpe.
 And we said things have fallen apart.
Ka ti yeli ni kperi kpeya.
 And we said everything has gone bad.
- 170 *Ka o vaai yiyisi ninɔdila looloo,*
 And he set out with his warriors,
N- zabizabi ti nma Kasalli Shebili.
 And he fought and beheaded Kasalli Shebili.
Ka yeli ni nmani nmaye, Shebirila n ku Shebi.
 And said things have fallen apart, with no one to protect.
Ti ni shebi shebili nun biritila n-ku biri.
 That paths are created but with no body to use them.
Ka o vaai yiyisi zaborila looloo,
 And he set out with his warriors,
- 175 *N- zabi ti che Birikpuna Tuzuyuri.*
 He fought and killed all except Birikpuna Tuzuyuri.
Ka yen ni cheri cheya karila n-ku kari.
 And he (Birikpuna Tuzuyiri) was set free but his will was
 not done.
Cheya karila n-ku kari.
 Let us set him free.
Ka ti yeli ni kari kaya zirila n-ku zi.
 And he was set free but his wish will not be done.
Ka o vaai yiyisi zaborila looloo,
 And he sets out with his warriors,

- 180 *N- zabi ti paai Bayisuyili.*
 And fought until he got to Bayilisuyili.
Ka naan kpalina doni gaa gbunni mi dindali,
 And he laid under an ebony tree,
Ka bia tam gaa zuyu n-ηubirila gawuyila
 And there was a child on the tree eating ebony fruits
N- naan ηubi gawuyila m-bahi naa zuyu na.
 Who spat out ebony fruit on the King.
Ka naa kpuyi o zuyu zuγusaa,
 And the King looked up to the child on the tree,
- 185 *Ka naa yeli Namoyiliyoo Zomzibieri*
 And the King instructed Namoyiliyo Zamzibieri
Ni o siγisim bia na.
 To bring the child fourth.
N- ti zan bia zan shi γori.
 He brought the child before the King.
Ka bəhi bia:
 And he questioned the child:
A yanɔ zaa be ya?
 Where are the people of your community?
- 190 *Nun yeli Gbewaa dapala Naa Nyayisi:*
 He replied the son of Gbewaa, Naa Nyayisi:
Shitəbu dapala,
 Son of Shitəbu,
Bε wumla Naa yela n-zo zaa wuliwuli.
 They heard of you and run for refuge.
Ka o zan nam kparigu zan yeli bia.
 And he wore the child a king's regalia.
N- zan nam namda zan piri bia.
 And wore the child royal foot wear.
- 195 *Ka bia yaai noli η ηme kuη maa banban,*
 And the child rejoiced in his achievements,
Ni o taba zaa duri gaa n ηubirila gawuyila.
 That all other children should eat ebony fruits.

- Ka nuna titi du gaa tu vieliga.*
 And he attains success from ebony tree.
Gaalana Tunvieliga ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi zuu.
 Gaalana Tuuvieliga! King Nyayisi first son.
Funyaalana pɔyisi chirigi ba! Naa Nyayisi.
 Funyaalana, the woman regent! King Nyayisi.
- 200 *Dipalilana Danʒee ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.*
 Dipalilana Danʒee! King Nyayisi's son.
Sunlana Maliyɔyiri ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.
 Sunlana Maliyɔyiri! King Nyayisi's son.
Bagurugulan Siyirinyɔɲ ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.
 Bagurugulana Siyirinyɔɲ! King Nyayisi's son.
Banvumlana Tin' pili ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.
 Banvumlana Tin' pili! King Nyayisi's son.
Gukpenaa Tulebi ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.
 Gukpenaa Tulebi! King Nyayisi's son.
- 205 *Naantonlana Batan ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.*
 Naantonlana Batan! King Nyayisi's son.
Tampionlana Kpimbee ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.
 Tampionlana Kpimbee yeee! King Nyayisi's son.
Galiweilana nin Fɔɲ ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.
 Galiweilana nin Fɔɲ! King Nyayisi's son.
Zɔɣulana nin Zolisaa ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.
 Zɔɣulana nin Zolisaa! King Nyayisi's son.
Sakpelana Faabili ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.
 Sakpelana Faabili! King Nyayisi's son.
- 210 *Zakpalisilana nin Numda ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.*
 Zakpalisilana nin Numda! King Nyayisi's son.
Sanlana Subebila ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.
 Sanlana Subebila! King Nyayisi's son.
Mionlana Kurisabi ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.
 Mionlana Kurisabi! King Nyayisi's son.
Kpuyililana Kungoo ba yeee! Naa Nyayisi bia.
 Kpuyililana Kungoo! King Nyayisi's son.

- Naa Nyayisi daa dɔyi n ti dɔyi n yaba Bizun.*
 Naa Nyayisi gave birth to my ancestor Bizun.
 215 *Ka n-yaba Bizun zan o manɔa lebi nabalima.*
 And my ancestor Bizun turned to praise singing.
Balindi zaa wuni balim tooi biɛyu.
 Performs praises dawn to dusk.
N yab' nabalima ku kɔɲ kɔbili.
 My ancestor praises and never lacks.
Balindi zaawuni balim tooi biɛyu.
 Performs praises from dawn to dusk.
N yab' nabalima ku kɔɲ zishee.
 My ancestor praises and never lacks an abode.
 220 *N yab' Bizun tɔyisi naa n zeri kuliga.*
 My ancestor Bizun imitates the king in fishing.
Naa yi kuli nyɔri mɔɣu ka Bizun nyɔri mɔɣu nyoli.
 When the king burns the bush, Bizun burns the tail end
 of the bush.
Naa yi kuli zɛrila kuliga,
 Whenever the king was fishing,
Ka n yab Bizun zɛrila kuliga nyoli.
 My ancestor Bizun was also fishing at the other end.
Naa yi kuli bari malimali,
 Whenever the king rides Malimali (the king's horse),
 225 *Ka n yab Bizun bari o zuli.*
 And my ancestor Bizun rides at his tail end.
Naa yi kuli bari sochariga,
 Whenever the king rides Sochariga (another horse),
Ka n yab' Bizun bari o zuli.
 My ancestor rides at his tail end.
Naa ni bari Naa Mam,
 When the king rides Naa Mam (king's lover -horse),
Ka n yab Bizun bari o zuli.
 And my ancestor Bizun rides at his tail end.

- 230 *Naa yi kuli bari Binzayū,*
 When the king rides Binzayū (horse),
Ka n yab' Bizun̄ bari o zuli.
 And my ancestor Bizun̄ rides at his tail end.
Naa yi kuli bari Kpimba Pielli,
 When the king rides Kpimba Pielli (horse),
Ka Bizun̄ bari o zuli.
 And Bizun̄ rides at his tail end.
Naa yi kuli bari Warizɛyū di ko pina,
 When the king rides Warizɛyū di kopina (horse),
- 235 *Ka Bizun̄ bari o zuli.*
 And Bizun̄ rides at his tail end.
N yab' Bizun̄ beli naa ti duhi kuliga.
 My ancestor Bizun̄ accompanies the king across the river.
N yab' Bizun̄ beli naa ti duhi mɔyuni.
 My ancestor Bizun̄ accompanies the king across the bush.
Lun̄lana Lun̄zɛyū ba yeee! Bizun̄ bia.
 Lun̄lana Lun̄zɛyū! Bizun̄'s son.
Lun̄lana ηm̄eri munli ku yɛli sheli ba yeee! Bizun̄ bia.
 Lun̄lana ηm̄eri munli ku yɛli sheli! Bizun̄'s son.
- 240 *Lun̄lana ηme n-ηubi yona yeee! Bizun̄ bia.*
 Lun̄lana ηme n-ηubi yona yeee! Bizun̄'s son.
Lun̄lana ti zaa ni ηme ba yeee! Bizun̄ bia.
 Lun̄lana ti zaa ni ηme! Bizun̄'s son.
Lun̄lana zinitabili daantaliga ba yeee! Bizun̄ bia.
 Lun̄lana zinitabili daantaliga! Bizun̄'s son.
Mani ni chela Bizun̄ m balim n yab Yɔyulana.
 I will leave Nyayisi and praise my ancestor Yɔyulana.
N yba' Yɔyulana daa yɛliya ni ninsal ku bili gbem.
 My ancestor Yɔyulana said human beings would not
 grow fur.
- 245 *Zupiela bia yimi ka bi gahima.*
 Zupiela's (white tail) son goes without informing me.

Ka bi gahima sheri nyela Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.
And does not tell me is Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.
Sakɔpiela bia m-bɔŋɔ miritima nina.

A grasshopper's child is here stiring at us.
Miriti ma nina shiri nyela Yɔɔy Naa.

Stiring at me is Yɔɔy Naa.
Kabiri bia tɔm ka bi yeli ma.

250 Kabira's child prepared without my knowledge.
Tɔmi ka bi yelima shiri nyela Yɔɔy Naa.

Preparing without telling me is Yɔɔy Naa.
Sashiriga bia dolila sinkpara bia.

The squirrel follows the groundnut farmer's child.
Sinkpara shiri nyela Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.

The groundnut farmer is quiet and says Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.

Dayuyu bia dolila kpayuriwalli.

The rat's child follows wild fruits.

Kpayuriwalli shiri nyela Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.

Wild fruit is quiet and says Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.

255 *Nɔmaandɔyɔ bia dolila kuliŋma, nyela Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.*

The monkey's child follows the water and says Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.

Ɔisunɔ bia tɛri ma nabili.

Ɔisunɔ's son thinks of my progress.

O tɛri ma nabihɔ shiri nyela Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.

He thinks of my progress and says Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.

Gukpeɔy Tuutinɔli paya yuli Yamaha.

Gukpegu Tuutinɔli woman's son Yamaha (nowhere is cool).

Savelugu Bunlunɔ payayoo yuli Mankukurigi.

Savelugu Bunlin woman's name Mankukurigi (I will never grow old).

260 *Mankukurigi shiri nyela Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.*

I will not get old actually talks of Yɔɔy Naa Ninsala.

N yab Yɔɔɔlana paɣa yuli booni Shebalamani.
 My ancestor Yɔɔɔlana wife's name is Shebalamani (some
 people laugh at me).
Kpa chee biɛla bɔrigiya,
 When any oil gets missing,
Shebalamani n-zan.
 Shebalamani took it.
Naanzuchee biɛla bɔrigiya,
 Any paper that gets missing,
 265 *Shebalamani n-zan.*
 Shebalamani took it.
Shebalamani sheri nyɛla Yɔɔɔ Naa Ninsala.
 Shebalamani is actually Yɔɔɔ Naa Ninsala.

Text V

Performance of a praise singer, Olivier Abdulai Zakaria, before the
 blessed sacrament, on the occasion of the Corpus Christi Celebra-
 tion held at Our Lady of Fatima Cathedral, Tamale. Thursday, May
 31st 2018. This performance was recorded on purpose to ascertain
 the traditional idioms that have been transposed to a rather different
 subject, here Christ as the blessed sacrament in Christianity.

Performed by: Olivier Abdulai Zakaria

A balima yeee!
 Your mercies!
Naawuni nankpana,
 God the sovereign one,
A balima yeee!
 your mercies!
Zuyusaa ni tiŋ'lana,
 Owner of the sky and the earth,

- 5 *A balima, yeee!*
Your mercies!
Naawuni bigarŋa m-bala.
The only son of God.
M ma Mariam payapiel' suŋ bia.
Son of the blessed virgin Mary.
Nom balim ka tiŋa maai.
Thread gently and calm the earth.
Nyin niŋla suzaalana.
You are the owner of everything.
- 10 *Nyevuli zaŋ pa talima lana;*
Sacrificial lamb;
Nyɔɔyɔ din yelima ni deei bɔbirilana.
The broad chest will own a shirt.
Pieri kɔbga siyiri kuliga ka yubili zay' yini ti deei nasara.
Hundred pots go to fetch water and a one pot takes the
acclaim.
ADaa!
ADaa!
A balima yeee, eyeee!
Your mercies!
- 15 *A ba nyela Naawuni nankpanalana.*
Your father is God the Sovereign one.
Ŋun yiko ni ka binsheɣu kam daa nam.
Under whose power everything was created.
Ŋuna m-mi zuŋɔ n lahi mi biɛyɔ ni.
He knows today and also knows tomorrow.
Di yi pala Biligu naa maa ka na'ŋuni?
If not God, who else?
Naawuni nankpana,
God the sovereign one,
- 20 *A balima yeee!*
Your mercies!

Zuyusaa ni tirʼlana zuu.
 First son of the owner of the sky and the earth.
A balima, yeee!
 Your mercies!
M ma Mariam payʼ pielʼ surj bia,
 The son of Holy Mary,
Nom balim ka tirja maai.
 Thread gently and calm the earth.
 25 *Nwoi, nwoi!*
 Nwoi, nwoi!
Napayi bɔbgu bia.
 Son of several royal wives.
A balima, yeee!
 Your mercies!
M ma Maata yelimi ni o bia.
 Martha says that he is her son.
Ka m ma Eliza yeli ni o bia.
 And Elizabeth says he is her son.
 30 *Ka m ma Mariam payʼ pieliga yeli ni o bia.*
 And Holy Mary says he is her son.
Bana n suhi Naawuni.
 They prayed to God.
N-ti yen dɔyi,
 When they were to give birth,
N naan dɔyi Yisa dunia tiligira.
 They gave birth to Jesus, the savior of the world.
Di zuyu ka n yeli ni napayʼ bɔbigu bia Yisa.
 That is why I say several royal wiveʼs son, Jesus.
 35 *O nyela nabiʼ suhudoo lana.*
 He is the prince of peace.
Alahichinima zo.
 Friend of sinners.
Alahaziba tuumbinsila.
 Wonderful miracles performer.

Nuna n-zarɔ kom, lɛbi waim
 He turns water into wine.
Nun che ka zoomba neera.
 He made the blind to see.
 40 *N che ka kpiimba neeri kum ni.*
 He raised the dead.
Di yi pa Yisa ka na ɲuni?
 If not Jesus, who else?
Anabi Ibrahim dabuyilana.
 The incarnate of Prophet Abraham.
Anabi Musah dabuyilana.
 The incarnate of prophet Moses.
Anabi Yakubu dabuyilana.
 The incarnate of Jacob.
 45 *Ɔinimi balim ka tiɲa maai.*
 Sit gently to calm the earth.
Yisa, a nyɛla neesim nti dunia zaa.
 Jesus, you are a light to the entire world.
N naan ne ka biɛ' ɲmariga la.
 You shine like a morning star.
N dana Naawuni biyurigu,
 The lovely child of God,
A balima yeee!
 Your mercies!
 50 *Naawuni nini ni tiyi bi' so,*
 The one God believes in,
A balima yeee!
 Your mercies!
Naa Sulemana dabuyila m bala.
 He is the incarnate of King Solomon.
A yi shiri tumdi alahaziba nima ɲɔ zaa,
 If you actual did all these miracles,
Bɔ zuyu ka ti ku dihi a tabili?
 Why don't we believe in you?

- 55 *Nun zaŋ o maŋa n-kpi n-tiligi andunia zaa.*
 He who sacrificed his life for the entire world.
Di yi pa Yisa ka ηuni?
 If not Jesus, who else?
Yisa daa boli o waani yuli:
 Jesus states his appellations:
Ni ηuna n-nyε Naawuni bimbirili sanzali bi kuri li.
 That he is the plant of God no drought can over power it.
Nyini n-nyε Naawuni tirila kalaamba pini.
 You are the God who blesses the parentless.
- 60 *Naawuni zaligu ku tayi zaa andunia ni.*
 God's plan will never change on this earth.
Anabi Yakubu dabuyilana m-bala.
 He is the incarnate of prophet Jacob.
Ni bε kaanila doo ni tum tuun' shεŋa bε ʒin kali doo yuubu.
 They count the deeds of a man, but they never consider
 how long he lived.
Bε ʒi n zaŋ doo nini n-yuli baŋ doo;
 They never use a man's face to tell who he is;
Nayila doo tuma ni.
 Except in his deeds.
- 65 *Alikauli soli bili mɔri;*
 The promised path germinates grass;
Wuntizɔri m pahi.
 The God fearing one weeds it.
Nankpana naa yiko puuni ka o ma daa niŋ pua dɔyi o.
 It was through the power of the sovereign God his moth-
 er picked his seed.
Dunia tiligira.
 Saviour of the world.
Bin' sun yoli daa ku kɔŋ dara.
 No matter the abundance of a good thing, it will be
 bought.

- 70 *Lahibali suŋ lana.*
 Bearer of Good news.
Alizanda ni pay' naa bia, n'duuma.
 Princess of heaven's son, my lord.
Nyini n daa kpi n tiligi ma.
 You died to save me.
N suhu kuli bela a ni sahakam.
 My heart is in you always.
A ko n nyɛ n tiligira.
 You alone are my saviour.
- 75 *N kuli ni jɛmla a ko ka pa so.*
 I will only worship you alone and no one else.

Appendix B

Excerpts of Dagbamba Panegyrics

Excerpt I

An introductory part of a Panegyric to the late Yaa Naa Yakubu Andani II.

Balim, balim, balim.
 Gently, Gently, Gently.
Nom balim, balim ka tiŋ maai.
 Walk gently, gently and calm the earth.
Di damdi kpeeni, kpeeni.
 Do not shake.
Gbuyinli bia, Gbuyinli.
 Lion's son, lion.

- 5 *Balim, balim, Dunialana.*
 Gently, gently owner of the world.
A balima yeee!
 Your mercies!
Nom balim, balim ka tinja maai.
 Walk gently, gently and calm the earth.

Excerpt II

Appellations of Naa Abudu Satanƙuyili.

- Napaya tooni bia, Bimbieyu.*
 Son of the royal first wife, awesome one.
Ninsali ni zayisi sheli,
 What man rejects,
Din ka Wuni pihi maana.
 Is what God picks up in pieces and rebuilds.
Dunia balinda.
 Intercessor of the earth.
- 5 *Tikuma puhi vari libigi dakabiriba.*
 Dry trees shoot new leaves to the surprise of firewood cutters.
Jerigu ye di yen niɓmi.
 A fool says it will happen.
Di ye niɓmi ka nyini kpe ya?
 If it happens, where will you be?
Wooi! Wooi! Bimbieyu.
 Wooi! Wooi! Awesome one.
Chimsi bia.
 Chimsi's son.
- 10 *N yaba Nabiyɔɗɗana Alaasani.*
 Grandfather prince Alaasani.

Nira n̄un bi nya o yubu, o ku paɣi.

A person who has not met his expectations cannot be grateful.

Yiŋ Memuna bia.

Yiŋ Memuna's son.

Gbuyinli bia, o ku n̄ubi m̄ori.

A son of a lion will not chew grass.

Tipariga n-d̄oyi zuu Abudu.

Tipariga gave birth to his first son, Abudu.

15 *Jerigu daa yelimi di yɛn niŋmi.*

A fool says it will happen.

Di yɛn niŋmi ka nyin kpe ya?

If it happens where will you be?

Excerpt III

General appellations of the Yaa Naas

Tihi ni m̄ori lana.

Owner of trees and grasses.

Kunkuna ni nayilima lana.

Owner of mountains and lowlands.

Sayim lana.

Owner of food.

Andunia Wumbila.

God of the earth.

5 *Nom balim, balim ka tiŋa maai.*

Walk gently, gently to calm the earth.

N̄un kuri sheba ka doli neeri sheba.

Giver and taker of life.

Kɔnsi mini zoomba ba.

Father of the destitute.

- Ban ka laamba ba.*
 Father of the fatherless.
Naawuni dabili gballi ku bili mɔri
 The grave of the righteous person will be free from grass.
- 10 *Yɔyu sɔyiberi lana.*
 The forest is the home of all manner of animals.
Pakoya soona.
 One who takes care of widows.
Kpibisi soona.
 One who takes care of orphans.
Yiyisi jem Naawuni.
 Please intercede.
Tiligi ban ka laamba.
 And save the vulnerable.
- 15 *Wundabili ku baɛ nini,*
 A righteous person cannot be identified by face,
Nayila o tuma ni.
 Except with his works.
Salaa gbubila Naa nuu ni.
 The world is in his hands.
Luyimi tibili wuma.
 Pay attention.
A bayili yɛlli.
 And listen carefully.
- 20 *Wulimpuhili namlana.*
 King of the east.
Wulinluhili namlana.
 And king of the west.
Nɔn n-yi sambani na n-zahim saa.
 He who comes out and gazes at the sky.
N kana kpe duu zahim yɔyura.
 And enters the room gazing at the roof.
Dunia balinda.

- Intercessor of the world.
 25 *Be kaanila doo tuma.*
 A man is defined by his deeds.
Be zin, kali doo yuusim.
 And not by his age.
Nyoyu yelima ni deei bɔbiri.
 A man of abilities will always face realities.
Akɔyu Satankuyili bilim ku ŋma.
 The unbreakable stone will roll forever.
Salaa Naa.
- King of the world.
 30 *Abalima yooo!*
 Your mercies!
Gbewaa zuu.
 First son of Gbewaa.
Gbuyinli!
 Lion!
Zuyusaa ni tiŋlana.
 Owner of the sky and the land.
Gbuyinli zuu.
 The first son of the lion.
- 35 *Nom ka tiŋ' maama.*
 Walk gently and calm the earth.
Salaa nachima.
 Son of the world.
Nom ka tiŋ' maama.
 Walk softly and calm the earth.
Suhuburɔ nya wabilaa zuli
 A person with bad intentions will always
M bilisi bilisi gbe kum.
 Have one's head bowed in shame.
- 40 *A balima yeee.*
 Your mercies.

- Naa Bimbieyu mali kuli ku zaŋ buyili.*
 A bad chief may claim inheritance of a dead person but
 not the god.
A balima yeee.
 Your mercies.
Balim, balim, Dunialana.
 Gently, gently, owner of the earth.
Bi' leri tiyisi doya ku baŋ zoligu.
 One cannot identify a moron among babies.
- 45 *Balim ,balim ka tiŋ maai.*
 Gently, gently and calm the earth.
M mam Daa yuli, ninsal ku yili kpaa.
 My lover's dog's name is human, but cannot be hanged
 on a nail.
Dunia balinda.
 Intercessor of the world.
Luyimi tiba wum a bayili yelli.
 Listen to the words of your father.
Dunia wuni.
 God of the earth.
- 50 *Dunia balinda.*
 Intercessor of the earth.
Gbewaa zuu.
 First son of Gbewaa.
Balim, balim ka tiŋ' maai.
 Gently, gently and calm the earth.
Albarika buni din pɔra ni niŋ pam.
 Blessed small things shall increase.
Dunia wuni.
 god of the earth.
- 55 *Saha gari danyibu.*
 Good luck is better than being early.
Yeligu.

Word.

Shitobu zuu.

First son of Shitobu.

N dan ba nyabu be ku nin sheli.

I saw them earlier; they cannot do anything.

Jirigili, nom ka tin' maai.

Jirigili, walk gently and calm the earth.

These excerpts are sourced from Abdulai, Z. Oliver. 2015. *The Aesthetics of Dagbamba Royal Panegyrics*. University of Education, Winneba: MA thesis. It should be stated, however, that some modifications have been made to the texts especially with respect to the translations.

Appendix C

Kings of Dagbon (Naanima) – From Naa Gbewaa to Yaa Naa Bukari II

The first and ancestor king of the Dagbamba is Naa Gbewaa. However, it was not until the reign of Naa Sitobu, founder of present Dagbon kingdom, that the title Yaa Naa, which translates as 'king of strength', emerged to designate the occupant of the Yendi skin and paramount king of Dagbon.

	TENURE	SKIN NAME	TITLE
1.	c. 1320 – 1365	Gbewaa	Naa
2.	c. 1365 – 1375	Zirili	Naa
3.	c. 1375 – 1384	Tohagu	Naa
4.	1384 – 1414	Sitobu	Yaa Naa
5.	1415 – 1432	Nyagse	Yaa Naa
6.	1432 – 1442	Zulandi	Yaa Naa

7.	1442 – 1454	Bierigudeera	Yaa Naa
8.	1454 – 1469	Darigudeera	Yaa Naa
9.	1469 – 1486	Zolgu	Yaa Naa
10.	1486 – 1506	Zongma	Yaa Naa
11.	1506 – 1514	Ningmitooni	Yaa Naa
12.	1514 – 1527	Dimani	Yaa Naa
13.	1527 – 1543	Yenzoe	Yaa Naa
14.	1543 – 1554	Dariziegu	Yaa Naa
15.	1554 – 1570	Luro	Yaa Naa
16.	1570 – 1589	Titugri	Yaa Naa
17.	1589 – 1608	Zagli	Yaa Naa
18.	1609 – 1627	Zolkugli	Yaa Naa
19.	1627 – 1648	Gungobli	Yaa Naa
20.	1648 – 1677	Zangina.	Yaa Naa
21.	1677 – 1687	Naa Andani I-Sigli	Yaa Naa
22.	1687 – 1700	Binbiegu	Yaa Naa
23.	1700 – 1720	Gariba	Yaa Naa
24.	1720 – 1735	Nasaalan Ziblim	Yaa Naa
25.	1735 – 1740	Ziblim-Bandamda	Yaa Naa
26.	1740 – 1760	Ziblim Kulunku	Yaa Naa
27.	1760 – 1778	Andani II-Jangbariga	Yaa Naa
28.	1778 – 1799	Sumani Zoli	Yaa Naa
29.	1799 – 1839	Yakubu I	Yaa Naa
30.	1839 – 1858	Abdulai I	Yaa Naa
31.	1858 – 1896	Andani II	Yaa Naa
32.	1899 – 1917	Alasani	Yaa Naa
33.	1920 – 1938	Abdulai II	Yaa Naa
34.	1938 – 1948	Mahama II	Yaa Naa
35.	1948 – 1953	Mahama III	Yaa Naa
36.	1954 – 1967	Abdulai III	Yaa Naa
37.	1968 – 1969	Andani III	Yaa Naa
38.	1969 – 1974	Mahama IV	Yaa Naa
39.	1974 – 2002	Yakubu Andani II	Yaa Naa
40.	2019 -	Gariba II - Abukari	Yaa Naa

The list of the rulers of Dagbon is principally adapted from Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_rulers_of_the_Kingdom_of_Dagbon. References have also been made from several other accounts to ascertain the accuracy, at least of the information provided. A critical observation reveals that the differences in accounts are mainly two factors: Some inclusions or exclusions are based on the circumstances of reign, mostly deposition whereas some differences in the time of reign of some particularly kings may be largely due to either the inclusion or exclusion of one's time as a regent before the enskinment. Nonetheless, some vacant years as can be seen from the above list may be due to the aforementioned reasons. For instance, it will be observed that between 2002 and 2019, the position of the Yaa Naa is vacant. This is as a result of Chieftaincy skirmishes after the Yaa Naa Yakubu Andani II was murdered together with 39 elders. Between the following years (April 2006 – January 2019), Kampakuya Naa Abdulai Yakubu Andani served as regent of Dagbon. See Staniland (1975: 18-27) for further elaborations.



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