

AN ETHNOPOETIC ANALYSIS OF ANUFŌ DIRGES

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Abstract

This paper offers an ethno poetic analysis of AnufŌ dirges, which have received little scholarly attention despite the plethora of studies on the AnufŌ language. The overarching objective is to examine the ethno poetic features of the AnufŌ dirge genre, which is anchored on the premise that the AnufŌ dirge is an aesthetic verbal art, and thus, reflects the AnufŌ's ethnography of speaking at funeral events. Data were sourced through fieldwork and the author's native speaker intuitions. Applying the performance theory and using descriptive content analysis of the dirge texts, the paper shows that the AnufŌ dirge is a literary product. Analysis of the basic structure of the physical texts, as well as the performance structure, reveals an antiphonal formula which reflects distinct internal features such as question-statement or statement-question structural patterns ornamented by the use of accompaniments. The poetic content, which encompasses the structure, exhibits artistic, aesthetic, and thematic manifestations that generally reveal the cruelty of death. Lastly, the paper shows that the poetic language of the AnufŌ dirge exists in the forms of idioms and metaphors which demonstrate idiosyncratic features reflecting the AnufŌ worldview. The paper concludes that the AnufŌ dirge is a verbal art with idiosyncratic literary elements which can be interpreted and understood within the cultural context of the AnufŌ. This paper is germane to the scholarship on the verbal arts of lesser-known indigenous languages in Africa in general, and the verbal arts of the AnufŌ in particular.

Keywords: *AnufŌ dirge, ethno poetics, oral poetry, performance, verbal art*

Tanya boowa

Ahin kadasi n kere fa kŌ kabo AnufŌm di konijuem wara bu bo tatariri sɛɛ nu barasu n wŌ. Ama, siifŌm beberebe nya fa mǎ bu sunsuni se mǎ i su. Haari ni bo siifŌm dŏnggu akere AnufŌ anie n nu fa kŌ tatariri juem ni bu ŋusu woowa wŌ. Dama, AnufŌ tatariri jue ti sunsuni kere nŏanie jŏjŏowa wŌ, na i kere kabo AnufŌm sun koko bu sɛem nu barasu. KerefŌ n natiiri awŏre awŏre nu deeri nŏaniem labari fiteeri minem dŏ ni i tienggu deɛ sii bo i la fa kŌ kabo AnufŌm bo tatariri barasu n ye i fa kereeri ahin kadasi n a. Dama ka yiri mmŏ ni i tii, ti AnufŌnie wŌ. I faari kabo bu yo dekem deɛ sunsuni fa saŋga ni tatariri juem deɛ kunnu jŏrem n atin su fifitiiri nŏanie n nu a. Nyini fifiti nu n nu, kadasi n su kere ka AnufŌ tatariri jue n ti kara kereewa bo bu akere i wŌ. Jue n kunnu fifiti nu, ni i agŏre gŏowa deɛ fifiti nu n kere kere ka tatariri ti jue di ni soro su deke wŌ. Juem la bu kunnu awoorim bo bu nbem nati fa kŌ jŏre bisaawam ni bu bŏnum wara jŏre bŏnu ni i bisaawam deɛ atinm. Na bu kaaki nati ni agŏre gŏ nengem bo bere ma tatariri n yo fiefie a. Jue n kereewa kunnu jŏre bo yiri ti tatariri n ni tii titiki n la kabo bu gŏ agŏre n ni sunsuni kereewa, ni sawŏre kpakpam bo bu koko i fa kŌ yiwee ŋusu jŏrem. I awieeri su, kadasi n kere ya AnufŌ tatariri juem ŋusu jŏrem wŌ, bere la anyundŏrem barasu bo bu kun n kun kere tienggu awoorim kere kabo AnufŌm woowa ni bu sunsuni ti barasu. Kadasi n awieeri la ka, AnufŌ tatariri jue n ti nŏanie jŏjŏowa deke bo i la i tienggu kereewa awoorim bo minem koro sŏnsŏn i na bu si, na bu ti i nyunyumi, nzen bu la AnufŌm nasiriya yoowam si. Ahin kadasi n kun kperɛ, dama, i buka nŏanie jŏjŏowam deɛ kara sŏnsŏn fifiitinum su fa kŌ nananu aniem kere bo bu wŌ Afirika asien n su, na minem dŏnggu si mǎ bu sa ni, fa saŋga ni AnufŌ anie n tienggu deɛ nŏanie jŏjŏowam kere.

Nŏanie mbaa titiim: AnufŌ tatariri jue, anie kunnu juem, mba ferewa juem, deke yo, nŏanie jŏjŏowa

1. Introduction

Dirges (also known as funeral poetry) are a vital part of African traditional culture and serve as a means of expressing grief and mourning for the deceased (see Nketia 1955; Ogede 1995). In Ghana and most parts of Africa, dirges are commonly performed by women, who sing in a call-and-response style accompanied by percussion instruments (Nketia 1955; Alembe 2002; Finnegan 2012). The case may not be different among the AnufŌ of Ghana. This indigenous ethnic group, based in the northeast part of Ghana and in other parts of West Africa, can be said generally to possess a rich cultural heritage that includes a distinctive style of dirge performance. Thus, the AnufŌ dirges are a unique verbal expressive form of the African oral poetry genre. The AnufŌ dirges, therefore, entail a culturally-specific form of performance manifested in the dance, music, and language, used in conveying the complex emotions associated with death and loss. The literature indicates that dirges are characterised by their culturally-specific use of repetitions, images, metaphors, and symbols for the purposes of grieving (Nketia 1955; Ogede 1995; Alembe 2002; Luri 2020). They are performed as part of a larger funeral ritual that involves the entire community and serves to express and affirm social and spiritual bonds, and to honour the deceased.

The present paper is an ethnopoetic analysis of Anufɔ dirges, which will examine their structure and content, and their literariness as tied to their socio-cultural implications.

The African dirge has been the subject of extensive academic research during the last few decades. The literature shows that African folklorists and researchers (e.g., Nketia 1955; Ogede 1995; Alembi 2002) have shared very significant insights into the nature of African dirges and further demonstrated how these dirges reflect the values and philosophy of the African peoples. Ogede (1995) and Alembi (2002), for instance, have sifted through the poetic structure, content, and social context of the dirges of the Ogede and Abanyole peoples of Nigeria and Kenya, respectively, and shed light on their literary merits. These studies and several others show a progressive pathway for folklorists and researchers who are interested in African oral literature to carry out a literary appreciation of African dirges as a genre of oral literature, thus demonstrating that the African dirge is both a literary product and a culture-specific way of expressing grief (Sanka 2010; Taluah 2013; Luri 2020; Sanka et al. 2020). Despite these scholarly insights, the research on the nature of the Anufɔ dirge remains underexplored. The present paper takes the step of building on existing dirge studies in Africa by examining the dirge phenomenon of the Anufɔ people, a lesser-known indigenous African ethnic group found in the northeast region of Ghana, to provide further illuminating insights into the nature of the dirges of lesser-known indigenous languages in Africa. The specific objective of the paper is to explore the structure and poetic language of the Anufɔ dirge as a genre of oral literature and how they contribute to the aesthetic values of dirge performance. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the Anufɔ people to help navigate readers into the geolinguistic background of the ethnic group. Section 3 presents a survey of the literature on dirge studies. Section 4 discusses the performance theory proposed by Richard Bauman as the theoretical framework that undergirds the analysis of the data. Section 5 provides the methodology. Section 6 presents the results and discussions of findings. Section 7 is the conclusion, which sums up the paper.

2. The Anufɔ people

The Anufɔ (also called Chakosi) people speak a language called Anufɔ¹, which is a genetic member of the Niger-Congo family of languages, which belongs to the Central Tano Kwa group of languages (Dakubu & Ford 1988; Bendor-Samuel 1989; Olson 1996; Snye 2004). With an estimated population of about 87,176² native speakers in Chereponi, Anufɔ is spoken in three West African nations, namely: Ghana, Benin, and Togo (Olson, 1996).

The Anufɔ are one of the ethnic groups in northeast Ghana who trace their origin to the Ivory Coast. In Ghana, they are mostly concentrated in the district capital, Chereponi, but traces of them can be found in almost all the sixteen regions. The map of Ghana showing the Anufɔ ethnic group in Ghana, Togo and Benin is presented in Figure 1 below.

¹ Anufɔ is the official name and not Anufo.

² This was the provisional statistics of the 2021 Population and Housing Census

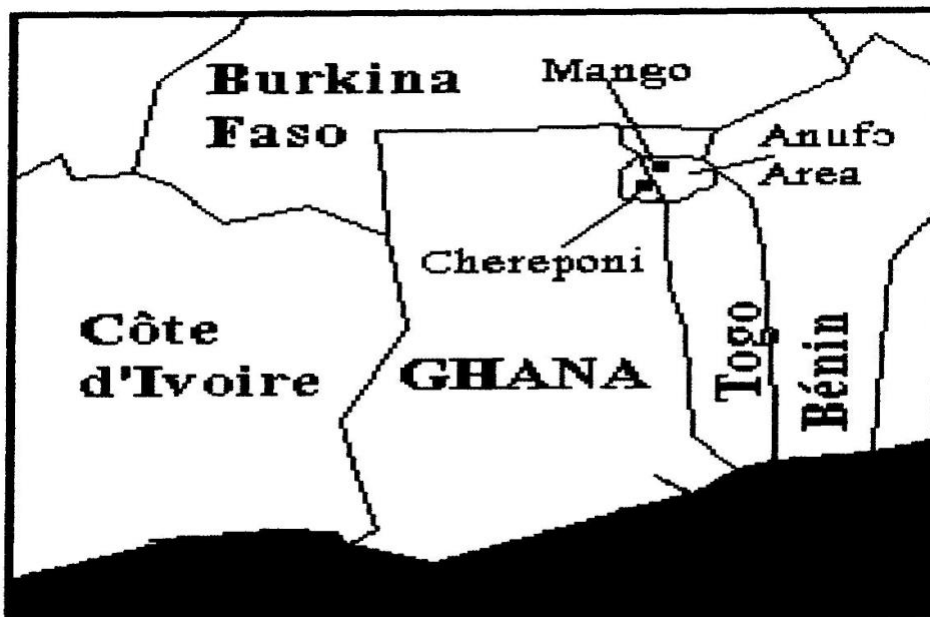


Figure 1: The Map of Ghana showing Chereponi, Benin, Togo (the locations of the Anufo ethnic peoples). Source: Adapted from (Smye 2004: 1).

3. Literature review

This section explores studies on the dirge in Ghana. It does not attempt to cover all the aspects of these studies, but to sieve through some common features that make them distinct, including their structure and poetic elements. The section covers studies on the Akan, Sisaala, Kasena, Gonja, and Dagaaba dirges in these regards, respectively.

Nketia's (1955: 8-9) seminal publication of *The Funeral Dirges of the Akan People* serves as an important landmark for scholarly discussions of the dirge in Ghana and Africa as a whole. Nketia identifies that the organisation of the Akan dirge "revolves around individual dirge singers". Thus, dirge singing is an individual practice, where singers choose their dirges based on their own resourcefulness and knowledge of the dirge material, rather than considering others' performances. It is worthy of note that the organisation of the Akan dirge is quite distinct from other cultures like the Kasena, Sisaala, Dagaaba, and the Anufo. Nketia's (1955) study also emphasises the societal significance of funeral dirges as a component of farewell rites and as a vehicle for self-expression and individual responses to the funeral circumstance. According to Nketia, the Akan dirges evoke sorrow and sympathy during funerals, and contain stock phrases and musical qualities, with meaning, rhythm, and form. Nketia also categorises Akan dirges based on their internal structures and identifies four recurring themes, such as those that include a reflection or message about ancestors, the deceased, domicile, or the ancestor to the deceased, thus comparing them to poems in literary form (cf. Nketia 1955: 17-73).

Sanka (2010) critically examines the performance of the Sisaala dirge from its literary and cultural contexts. The study reveals that in spite of the obstacles posed by faiths, Western lifestyles, and a lack of unity, the Sisaala dirge still functions in mourning the deceased and reinforcing cultural, moral, social, aesthetic, and historical values. The organisation of the Sisaala dirge is unlike the Akan. Sanka (2010: 70) points out that the Sisaala dirge is "a community performance, rather than an individual performance, at the death of a person." Thus, the community grieves for an adult's death, for instance, attending it with the funeral dirge. This includes distant relatives and sympathisers gathering at the homestead of the deceased to prepare the body for burial. The study points out that the Sisaala dirge is performed based on factors such as age, availability of food, and circumstances of death. Sanka (2010) also identifies structural and social considerations in

classifying the Sisaala dirge, which involves chanting, appellations, and laments. Mainly revolving a community participation, the study reveals that the dirge is both artistic and aesthetic as it is imbued with ideophones, images, metaphors, rhythm, body language, repetitions, and also entertains but mournfully.

Again, Sanka et al. (2020: 23) examine the Paasaala dirge and reveal that “aesthetically, this dirge is often couched in highly metaphorical terms. Thus, in its complex form, the Paasaala dirge is a combination of different verbal arts such as appellations, tales and songs.” According to Sanka et al. (2020), the Paasaala dirge demonstrates that repetition is the key structure, as whole lines are repeated to create a refrain, allowing easy participation and memorisation. This technique, often used in metaphorical and proverbial terms, emphasises meaning, rhythm, and allows poets to think of future songs. Sanka et al. (2020) also argue that the artist employs literary devices to enhance the narrative, incorporating ideophones, similes, and puns to depict the old man's sexual virility and physical strength. The narrative also explores the question of whether the old man should prioritise his sight over his sexual potency, thus adding a dramatic element to the story. Further, Sanka et al. (2020: 23) observe that the Paasaala dirge plays key social functions. That is, the dirge is a sarcastic and didactic funeral story meant to honour an elderly person who has led a life that is deserving of admiration. In addition to discussing societal and personal difficulties, it imparts cultural and communal values. Africans view storytelling as an “enter-educational art,” and poets and cantors masterfully integrate the two on funeral grounds.

Despite the worry expressed by Taluah (2013: ii) that “Kasena dirges and war songs have received scant attention in scholarly studies”, a substantial amount of research has been done in the area recently. By analysing the dirge as a literary work, his study, *The Context and Poetics of Kasena Dirges and War Songs*, explores the microcosm of Kasena culture in great detail. Taluah (2013) points out that in its antiphonal form, the Kasena dirge is participatory. The study further reveals that Kasena dirges and war songs contain recurring themes and motifs such as death and the celebration of life, bravado, childbirth, or womanhood; and portray literary elements such as apostrophe, simile, repetitions, symbolism, and metaphors; and construct gender identity, cultural milieu, as well as lived experiences and sensibilities. The study concludes that these “dirges and war songs reflect as well as shape the worldview of the Kasena and are sung mainly to win the sympathy of mourners. The funeral event where such dirges and war songs are performed is an occasion that involves mourners, particularly kin and kith, who in one way or the other are affected by the loss of the deceased” (Taluah 2013: 138).

Additionally, in examining the context and structure of Kasena dirges, Taluah (2020) acknowledges that the context of performance is key in the analysis of these forms of verbal art. He argues that the context of performance provides for both the performer and the audience significant knowledge and insight into the performance. The study also concurs with Finnegan’s (2007: 147) assertion that text, in its centrality, creates the performance. However, it is intricately linked to the performance and the audience, both referred to as the “co-creators of performance” because of their great deal of interplay. Taluah highlights, as significant features of Kasena dirges, the “edifying and aesthetic” roles they must play (Taluah 2020: 269). He notes that Kasena dirges: must be didactic in order that the audience can benefit from the moral or the information that the texts seek to convey, as the educative elements of the texts unassisted, cannot draw the attention of the audience and hence, may not carry the texts through time...the texts must necessarily have aesthetic charm to make them more appealing to listeners (Taluah 2020: 269).

Stating clearly that Kasena dirges are performed during funerals and targeted at the deceased as the subjects, the study concludes that Kasena dirges have literary qualities such as “symbols, euphemisms, allusions, and personifications” as well as rhyme, rhythm, and repetitions (Taluah 2020: 282), which help to bring ‘poetic sensibilities’ to the dirges. Among the Dagomba people of Ghana, Agordoh (2002: 35) highlights another importance of the Ghanaian dirge, and that is, “its musicality and theatrical nature.” Agordoh observes that the Dagomba funeral dirge involves a lot of music and theatre, which helps to bring the community together. Mentioning the role of accompaniments in the Ghanaian dirge, Agordoh (ibid) further notes that the **goje**, which is a common accompaniment at the Chief’s palace, is also used as an accompaniment of dirges and laments conducted in remembrance of the deceased.

Luri (2020) points out that there are underlying socio-cultural effects of the use of repetitions, parallelisms, and metaphors in Dagaare and Sisaali dirges. From this cross-cultural analysis, which adopted the Oral-Formulaic theoretical approach, Luri (ibid) argues that the Dagaare and Sisaali dirges not only follow a formula in their compositions but also portray these literary elements embedded in the culture of these indigenous ethnic groups. Luri (2020: 366) argues further that the Dagaare and Sisaali dirges take on “the structure and novelties of the oral-formulaic theory, and function as a social critic, and a panegyric (praising particularly the dead). They also educate and serve as mournful entertainments. Though the typology of Dagaare and Sisaali dirges is not explicitly stated in Luri (ibid), the literature shows that the Bayira dance and the Paasaala dirges (both of which are Sisaali dirges) have structural types which share ethnocultural features (cf. Sanka 2010: 77-87). The study concludes that it is only appropriate to study the African dirge in its cultural context since there are culturally unique differences exhibited in their form, rather than for anyone to overgeneralise their nature and context like the written texts in the West or Europe. In the analysis of the Gonja dirge, Seidu (2020) outlines two forms: the **Kenanawɔba** ‘performed by grandchildren’, and the **Ngbanyachewɔba** ‘performed by Gonja women’. Stating further that these dirges entail both aesthetic and artistic features in their performances. Structurally, Seidu (2020) notes that the Gonja dirges are often brief but reflect various motifs related to counsel, consolation, rage, regret, and mourning as well as personification, simile, ideophone, assonance, alliteration, rhetorical questions, repetition, metaphor, and symbolism.

Beyond Ghana, Finnegan (2012: 145-146) discusses that songs similar to elegiac poetry are performed at funerals or memorial rites. She further references the fact that these songs are mostly sung by women, such as Akan women soloists. Alembi (2002: 53) agrees with Finnegan on the occasion of the performance and adds that such songs are usually “fleeting, full of adoration for the deceased and sometimes register the acceptance of death.” Alembi also notes that the Abanyole men (warriors by nature) also perform this poetry.

According to Finnegan (2012), women are the chief singers and performers of funeral poetry in Africa. Linking the elegy to laments, she concurs with other scholars that among the Akan, Limba, and the Yoruba, the women are “the most frequent singers” of funeral poetry (Finnegan 2012: 146). Also commenting on the occasion and context of the lament, Finnegan notes that:

The occasions for these laments differ from people to people. Often dirges are sung round the corpse (or round the house in which the corpse lies) while it is being prepared for burial. Sometimes, as among the Akan, this is followed by a period of public mourning, during which the corpse lies in state and dirges are sung. The actual burial may or may not be accompanied by elegies: among the Akan, it is not (Finnegan 2012: 146).

Contrary to Finnegan’s over-generalisation of the performers of elegies that “in Africa as elsewhere such activities are considered typically female” (Finnegan 2012: 146), it is contended in this paper that among the Anufɔ of Ghana and the Abanyole of Kenya (Alembi 1992; 2002), the performers of elegies are not the exclusive reserve of women but both sexes (genders) or mixed sex. Among the Anufɔ, the men play the drum; they horn, and they join in the singing and dancing as and when necessary. Ohwovoriolè (2009: 142) discusses the social roles of Urhobo funeral poetry. She observes that “other than lamenting the dead, mourners (dirge performers) engage in moral education, social criticism, and philosophical reflection on life”. For society to survive, funeral poetry spreads social norms and beliefs, and also influences the community to adopt a particular perspective on reality. These explanations account for why Urhobo proverbial dirges are noted to be agents of social change. In her study, *A Reflection of Urhobo Funeral Poetry as Socio-Cultural History*, Ohwovoriolè (2013) reflects on the socio-cultural significance of funeral poetry. She aptly captures this significance in her conclusion, thus:

Urhobo funeral poetry is not only about death but also serves as an important facility through which the different forces, contradictions, and fears in Urhobo society are evoked. The songs are also used to record history and depict the people’s total way of life. Performance of the songs socialises the communal members as well as helps maintain a cultural identity (Ohwovoriolè 2013: 79).

Ohwovoriolè (2021) describes funeral poetry as elegiac in nature. However, in Africa, it is more frequently known as dirges or requiem texts. Such dirges, according to her, are poetry, songs,

lamentations that express sadness, chants, and recitations which are typically performed during funerals or memorial rites. They are a component of the rites of passage and grieving rituals in Africa. Ohwovoriole (2021: xi) emphasises in her chapter on the nature and peculiarities of funeral poetry in Africa that funeral poetry acts as a “sieve for some comprehension of traditional beliefs regarding deaths, mourning customs, and funeral dirges performed throughout burial rituals.” This is important to note in relation to the social significance of funeral poetry among the Anufɔ.

The foregoing review identifies a notable dearth of research on the dirge traditions of the Anufɔ ethnic group in Ghana. This highlights the need for the current investigation as it attempts to fill a lacuna in the oral literature of the Anufɔ. The findings from the available literature will directly contribute to the overall analysis and understanding of the lesser-known African dirge, as they focus on the performance, structure, and cultural significance of the dirge genre.

4. Theoretical lens

The study conducted in this paper adopts the performance theory (PT) proposed by Bauman (1975) for the analysis of the data. In the 1970s, ethnographers like Dennis Tedlock and Richard Bauman thought of a better way of appreciating folklore. In the spirit of this inspiration, they developed the performance theory (henceforth, PT), an analytical approach to verbal art that has since gained recognition in academia. Scholars such as Ruth Finnegan and Isidore Okpewho have not fallen short of its application. The notion that verbal art is performance-centred was articulated in particular by Bauman (1975) on the basis that performance is its method of speaking. Therefore, the PT in its basic sense is “a performance-centered approach to verbal art” (Bauman 1975: 290). The Anufɔ dirge is basically rendered verbally through performance. Based on this understanding, it is worth exploring what goes into its performance for a holistic appreciation of this verbal phenomenon.

The performance approach conveys a dual sense of its application. In one sense, it focuses on the artistic mode of transmission, and in another, the artistic situation as well as the context of transmission. Bauman (1975: 290) posits this lucidly that within the context of verbal art, “the term 'performance' was employed to convey a dual sense of artistic *action*-the doing of folklore-and artistic *event*-the performance situation, involving performer, art form, audience, and setting: both of which are central to the developing performance approach to folklore”. Within the Anufɔ cultural setting, the dirge performance involves both the action and the event. This is because the entire Anufɔ dirge performance occurs at a formal funeral occasion, and involves dancing, singing, and lamenting with percussion instruments. In this sense, there are performers and audiences who are actively engaged in this performance in its original setting.

The focus on the action and event of the performance is seen as a paradigm shift in this endeavour. Bauman (1975: 291) simply advocates for “a move from artistic texts, identified in formal or other terms, to performance, by simply looking at how such texts are rendered, in action terms... because...the artful, esthetic quality of an utterance resides in the way in which language is used in the construction of the textual item”. In this paper, we deem the Performance Theory appropriate and suitable for the discussion of the Anufɔ dirge for the following reasons. First, a performance-centred view of verbal art emphasises performance itself over linguistic features, recognising performance as a distinct mode of communication. It suggests that in artistic performances, the audience is encouraged to interpret the messages in a special sense, establishing an “interpretative frame” for understanding beyond literal meanings (Bauman 1975: 292). Additionally, performance is recognised as a unique ‘communicative resource’ within specific communities, requiring speakers to demonstrate communicative competence and assume accountability to their audience. This accountability goes beyond mere content, focusing on the skill and effectiveness of expression, which invites audience evaluation. Performance emphasises the act of expression, increasing both performer awareness and audience engagement. It positions ‘language use as a significant mode of verbal art’, prioritising communicative contexts over formal characteristics of texts (Bauman 1975: 293). Further, framing and performance are achieved through culturally conventionalised metacommunication, where speech communities utilise distinctive communicative means to establish performance frames. This ensures that

communication within these frames is understood as performance specific to that community. Performance keys including special codes, formulae signaling performance, figurative language, formal stylistic devices, prosodic patterns, paralinguistic patterns, appeals to tradition, and performance disclaimers form the basis of the text performance (Bauman 1975: 295). Last but not least, the performance is shaped by various conventionalised methods that differ across communities, with potential for universal patterns. It occurs within specific contexts, influenced by cultural settings and institutions such as religion and education, which provide frameworks for performance. The structure of performance events arises from a combination of factors, including the setting, sequence of actions, and performance rules, all governed by cultural themes and social interactions, alongside the roles of participants, performers, and the audience (Bauman 1975: 298-299). Taluah (2013: 34) observes that this theory, which underscores a “multidimensional approach”, is suitable for the study of verbal arts because of its proposition for performance. The PT is suitable for the present paper because it caters to the composition of the performance of the Anufɔ dirge. The performance-centred approach basically thrives on the performance of the verbal art as a culture-specific way of speaking. The Anufɔ dirge in this regard is a performance-centred verbal art. As a specific culture, it should be intriguing to examine how the Anufɔ speak during funeral events.

5. Data and Method

The data in this paper are the “danceable” Anufɔ dirges which were sourced through fieldwork in six Anufɔ-speaking communities namely: Chereponi, Mayamam, Ando, Adibo, Kwabena-kan Bɔsu, and Kpamamba, where traditional funerals featuring these dirges were performed between 2022 and 2023, as well as the native speaker intuitions of the author. The data were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated using Newmark’s (1991) approaches to translating oral texts, which combine semantic, idiomatic, and figurative strategies. In order to ensure accuracy, the transcriptions were cross-checked by four Anufɔ literacy consultants³: two Translators and Reviewers from the Anufɔ Bible Translation Project with the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), and two trained reviewers for purposes of Anufɔ literacy translation review. The data comprise two parallel texts: the Anufɔ source text and the gloss⁴. The analysis of the data was thematically carried out using Bauman’s (1975) performance theory, aided by the descriptive qualitative content analytical approach (Elo & Kyngäs 2008).

6. Results and Discussions

This section presents the Anufɔ dirge data for analysis and discussions. The analysis and discussions are framed within the performance theoretical lens proposed by Bauman (1975).

6.1 The Anufɔ Dirge

Based on the data, the Anufɔ dirge is a versed expression⁵ of sorrow on the occasion of a specific person’s death. Further, it is a form of customary utterance that is extemporaneously composed or has been primarily memorised and replicated during Anufɔ funerals. These compositions, in essence, are structured in the call-and-response pattern where a lead cantor offers the opening lines for the community chorus to respond. This renders the Anufɔ dirge a primary form of communal mourning and lamentation within the funeral discourse context of Anufɔ. The foregoing conceptualisation of the dirge among the Anufɔ exhibits a verisimilitude ontological perspective shared by earlier African folklorists and scholars such as Nketia (1955: 3), Ogede (1995: 80), and

³ Rev. James Kofi Azumah and Pastor Rockson Mcdorbi are both certified Anufɔ language experts who are currently collaborating on the translation of the Old Testament Bible into Anufɔ. The two reviewers, Solomon Yaw-ba and Kujo Nachim, are both professional teachers, the researcher inclusive, who have received training on translation review by the GILLBT.

⁴ The source text (Anufɔ) in all places exists in italics, whereas the English glosses remain in their normal font.

⁵ These are memorised or extemporaneous versed expressions structured in a call-and-response format.

Abrams (2005: 77) about the African dirge in general. The examples in (1) illustrate the versified nature of the Anufɔ dirge as follows:

- | | | | |
|---|----|---|--|
| 1 | a. | Bu su dɔ ɔɔ
Ya kɛrɛ dɔ ee
Nja n di má m dɛɛ i! | They are farming ⁶
We must all farm
Unknown to me, I will not enjoy mine! |
| | b. | Bu su dɔ ɔɔ
Ya kɛrɛ dɔ ɔɔ
Nja n di má m dɛɛ i! | They are farming
We must all farm
Unknown to me, I will not enjoy mine! |

The above dirge texts embody the Anufɔ dirge. These texts were appropriately couched and performed in their formal settings (funerals) to mourn the dead. They basically symbolise the Anufɔ's way of speaking at such events. The language of the genre is interspersed with idioms, symbols, and figurative expressions. Bauman (1975: 295) describes such figurative expressions in the verbal art performance as "performance key". Constitutive of a text body, the genre is woven artistically and aesthetically by the Anufɔ dirge singers using culturally appropriate language performance codes situated within socio-cultural contexts.

As the above texts show, the Anufɔ dirge singers compose the genre in verses. The examples in (1a-b) above instantiate the versified nature of the Anufɔ dirge genre. The first verse is the section for the lead cantor. The second verse is the section for the response. Note that (1a) and (1b) involve turn-taking patterns (basically using the call-and-response format). The call-and-response formula is the most commonly observed structure of the Anufɔ, as this pattern pertains to other African dirges cross-linguistically. In (1a), the lead cantor opens the dirge with the issue of farming. The rest of the lines in this verse are also centred on this issue. In a similar style, the same issue of farming is observed in (1b) as shown above. This is taken to be the turn of the response. Within the concept of farming, it is important to note that the main idea or sense being conveyed by the dirge singers in the above excerpts is the denial of enjoying the fruit of one's labour, as shown in (1a) in the line: **Nja n di má m dɛɛ i!** 'Unknown to me, I will not enjoy mine!' The examples in (2) below further illuminate the versified nature of the dirge.

- | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|
| 2 | a. | Am ma ya dɔ ee
Am ma ya dɔ oo
Yiwee asere m kpaweni
Am ma ya dɔ oo | Let us work
Let us work
Death has invited me to a communal labour.
Let us work |
| | b. | Am ma ya dɔ ee
Am ma ya dɔ oo
Yiwee asere m kpaweni
Am ma ya dɔ oo | Let us work
Let us work
Death has invited me to a communal labour.
Let us work |

Similar to (1a-b), the examples in (2a-b) are also presented in verses. They also exploit a turn-taking approach, as observed above. (2a) involves the lead cantor taking the first verse, followed by the response in (2b), the second verse. Also, observe in both verses that the idea expressed is farm work which is similar to the examples in (1); however, it is noteworthy that whereas the examples in (1) communicate denial, the examples in (2) communicate a communal call to grief and mourn since death has wreaked havoc in the society. This is illustrated in line 3 of (2b), thus: **Yiwee asere m kpaweni** 'Death has invited me to a communal labour.' It can, therefore, be argued that although the dirges in both (2) and (1) are centred on everyday Anufɔ activities such as farm

⁶ The author may use a particular dirge several times, but in different contexts to support arguments in the data analysis. Where a dirge excerpt recurs, it will assume a different example.

work, they are composed in verses. Again, they entail the use of culturally appropriate expressions that can be understood within the context of the funeral tradition from which they emerged. The utilisation of these culturally appropriate expressions (in the form of idioms and metaphors) constitutes the Anufɔ funeral bards' linguistic strategies at funerals. By extension, these expressions constitute the performance key of the Anufɔ dirge.

Based on the native speaker intuitions of the author as well as his personal observations of the contexts of the Anufɔ dirge performances, the confirmation of a person's death presages wailing and crying. It is worth stating that within the Anufɔ traditional society, the confirmation of death is followed by the commencement of pre-burial rites, which involve bathing and cleansing the deceased, digging the grave, and preparing food to escort the corpse. This is the time women with red ropes around their heads file to the stream for water, carrying locally-made clay waterpots, and sing mournfully to and fro. The songs (mostly intoned) sung during this time are also dirges (but not danced). Singing these songs only informally commences the performance of the notable funeral poetry⁷ of the Anufɔ. There is a designated number of times the water is fetched, which largely depends on the sex or gender of the deceased: four times for a female and three times for a male. It is some of this water that will be warmed for the bathing and cleaning of the corpse, and also for cooking food for the corpse. The Anufɔ refer to the act of bathing and cleansing the corpse as **joko yi** 'dirt cleansing'. For an elderly deceased, the "danceable" dirge can officially commence right after the end of the cleansing.

6.2 The composition and structure of the Anufɔ Dirge

As a typical performance-centred verbal art, the 'danceable'⁸ Anufɔ dirge is mostly composed in two ways by the Anufɔ dirge singers (mostly women with this form but men may be involved). First, the dirges are mostly composed on the occasion of funerals without any prior rehearsal before their performance. But it must be noted that these are already known songs, somewhat learnt from time to time at such funeral occasions. Consequent to this, when a funeral occurs, the dirge singers are mobilised to perform at the funeral grounds. The second method of composition is extemporisation during the performance. This is mostly regarded as a spontaneous composition (Alhassan & Nsoh 2020: 306). This strategy is where the dirge singers compose the dirge during the performance extemporaneously. It is an impromptu composition that may be stimulated by impulses such as the circumstance of the death, the presence of the offspring of the deceased, if any, rivalry, challenge, and several others. In these instances, the dirge may be sympathising, praising, or making a jest. The discussions in the paragraphs below shed light on the structure of the genre.

A close examination of the overall physical text structure of the Anufɔ dirges reveals that the Anufɔ dirges are organised in an antiphonal formula with the aid of musical accompaniments. Thus, these dirges are basically structured along a "call-and-response" pattern where there are lead singers (lead cantors) and those who respond to them (the community chorus as audience). The lead cantor usually sings the opening lines as a soloist. And this section constitutes the call aspect. When she lands, those who respond pick up the lines. They also constitute the response aspect. Note that the response section comprises the community chorus, who are also the audience. The call-and-response formula is the most commonly observed structure of the African dirge cross-culturally. Consider the examples in (3) below for the call-and-response structure of the Anufɔ dirge:

⁷ The notable Anufɔ funeral poetry includes: (i) the 'danceable dirge' **tataciri jue**, (ii) the 'hunt dirge' **koni jue**, and (iii) the 'corpse water-fetching' dirge' **fuin nzue jue**

⁸ 'Danceable' dirge because the hunt songs performed by recitation by men are also dirges but do not involve any dance steps. They are hymned, recited and intoned. Also, the songs the women sing whilst going for the "deceased's water" are also dirges but not danced. But these categories of dirges have not been primarily considered in this study because of time and the study objectives.

- 3 a. **Konkonsanfɔ, masacifɔ ee** You, the hypocrite and troublemaker!
Yiwee ayo m sa be Death, you caused me a great thing.
M wara koro fi má durunya nu I cannot forget this on earth.
- Response:
- b. **Konkonsanfɔ, masacifɔ ee** You, the hypocrite and troublemaker!
Yiwee ayo m sa be Death, you caused me a great thing.
M wara koro fi má durunya nu I cannot forget this on earth.
- Call:
- c. **Wɔ afa Taabe akɔ ɔɔ** He has taken Taabe away!
Kpanje yiwee afa Taabe akɔ ɔɔ Guinea Fowl Death has taken
Taabe away!
M wara koro fi má durunya nu I cannot forget this on earth
- Response:
- d. **Wɔ afa Taabe akɔ ɔɔ** He has taken Taabe away!
Kpanje yiwee afa Taabe akɔ ɔɔ Guinea Fowl Death has taken
Taabe away!
M wara koro fi má durunya nu I cannot forget this on earth

The texts above embody the call-and-response formula as shown in (3a-d). (3a) and (3c) represent the call sections whereas (3b) and (3d) are the response sections. It can be observed that each part of the text is composed of a three-line stanza (tercet). This could be longer or even shorter. In (3a), the lead cantor sings the verse as a soloist. The lines are then picked up by the response as demonstrated in (3b). It is the same pattern in (3c) and (3d). In the first line of the call section, the lead cantor introduces the subject matter of the text by describing death as a ‘hypocrite and troublemaker’ thus: **Konkonsanfɔ, masacifɔ ee** ‘You, the hypocrite and troublemaker!’. The second stanza reiterates the subject matter by shedding more light on what death has done to be addressed as a hypocrite and troublemaker, thus: **Wɔ afa Taabe akɔ ɔɔ** ‘He has taken **Taabe** away!’. Note that the entire text involves repetitions. That is to say that the response basically repeats what the lead cantor presents. It is the commonest style that the lead cantor and the response employ throughout the Anufɔ dirge composition. The repetition is both an emphasis-making and attention-drawing strategy.

Also, the dirge is accompanied by percussion instruments, ululations, and handclapping among other accompaniments, which heightened the totality of the performance. This poetic pattern of call-and-response is what characterises the physical text structure of the Anufɔ dirges in general. Scholars such as Alembe (2002) and Taluah (2013) have shown that the African dirge as a verbal art generally follows the call-and-response pattern as its physical structural organisation. About the Abanyole funeral poetry of Kenya, Alembe (2002) clearly states that the poems are “structured along the call-and-response lines where the soloist sings a line, which is picked up by the chorus” (Alembe 2002: 169). Again, in making references to the ‘monochoral’ and ‘antiphonal’ groups of performances outlined by Isidore Okpewho, Taluah (2013: 124-125) also points out that Kasena dirges “follow the call-and-response patterns.”

The Anufɔ dirge is also structured along a statement-question or question-statement parallel structure within the call-and-response format. This is a structure in which the lead cantor makes a statement, followed by a question or asks a question, followed by a statement. In this structure, there is no direct answer provided by the response. The lack of a response intention in this situation renders the whole dirge a rhetorical composition. It is worthy of note that the response repeats the same statement-question or question-statement parallel structures. This stylistic feature

employed helps to draw attention and also conveys the effect of the subject matter of the dirge in its rhetorical form. Consider the use of the question-statement parallel structures in (4) below:

- | | | |
|---|----|--|
| 4 | a. | K1 ⁹ . Ayikanbaam da ni ee? Where will the orphans sleep?
K2. Da ni ee? Sleep where?
K3. Nzue n amuna The clouds have formed |
| | b. | K1. Yiwee akun m niwa Death murdered my sibling
K2. M ni ŋma a ka a? Who shall keep me company? |

The lines: **Ayikanbaam da ni ee?** ‘Where will the orphans sleep?’ / **Da ni ee?** ‘Sleep where?’ / **Nzue n amuna** ‘The clouds have formed’ in (4a) above exemplify the question-statement parallel structure whereas the statement-question parallel structure is illustrated in the first two lines of (4b): **Yiwee akun m niwa** ‘Death murdered my sibling’ / **M ni ŋma a ka a?** ‘Who shall keep me company?’. In (4a), for instance, the lead cantor asks emphatically, ‘Where will the orphans sleep?’ This question is reiterated in the second line, and then the statement is followed in the third line, as demonstrated in the excerpt. In the same vein, the lead cantor in (4b) demonstrated the statement as the opening line, and this was followed by the question. In both instances, the lead cantors and the audiences strategically drew the attention of the audience to the homelessness of the orphan and the lack of a companion, both of which are conditions caused by death in the respective excerpts. It is interesting to stress that the lead cantors in both dirge excerpts did not expect any instantaneous response from the chorus or support singers, but rather employed this style to throw a challenge of sombre reflection to the community to feel the pain of death. This last point is also observed about the role of the rhetorical resource in Kasena dirges. Taluah (2013: 78) observes that in the Kasena dirges, it is deployed to make the audience “feel the effect of the loss to the community as a whole”.

Related to the rhetorical structure, the Anufɔ dirge singers also pattern the dirge following a question-and-answer formula that is presented by only the lead cantor as a soloist. The response only repeats what the lead cantor presents, as is typical of the call-and-response format. It must be noted that this soloist question-and-answer format is also a pervasive style in the performance of the Anufɔ dirge. Observe how the soloist demonstrates the question-and-answer structure in example (5) below:

- | | | | |
|---|----|---|--|
| 5 | a. | K1. M la m janjatiɛ
K2. Tara anɔ ŋgbɛɛn bo i da nzu oo?
K3. M la m janjatiɛ tara
K4. Tara anɔ ŋgbɛɛn bo i da tengelen | I possess a spoilt straw mat
Better than a gateless door which lays what?
I possess a spoilt straw mat
Better than a gateless door which lays open. |
| | b. | K1. M la m janjatiɛ
K2. Tara anɔ ŋgbɛɛn bo i da nzu oo?
K3. M la m janjatiɛ tara
K4. Tara anɔ ŋgbɛɛn bo i da tengelen. | I possess a spoilt straw mat
Better than a gateless door which lays what?
I possess a spoilt straw mat
Better than a gateless door which lays open. |

⁹ For our discussions, the excerpts are arranged using K1 following to represent the order of the lines. Where K1 means line 1, K2 means line 2 in that particular order.

In the above excerpt, (5a) represents the “question” section while (5b) represents the “answer” section. In a complete call-and-response style, the lead cantor begins the dirge with a complete question structure as seen in lines (1-2) of (5a). This strategy is presented as if she expects an answer from the response. This contrasts with the normal order of the question-and-answer formula, where the answer is usually provided by the response. In the Anufɔ dirge context, however, the lead cantor provides the answer as shown in lines (3-4) of (5a) in a soloist style. (5b) is only a repetition of the lead cantor. Indeed, the excerpt presents an idiomatic expression of the fact that the deceased is better alive than dead. Although he (the deceased) is presented to be immaterial to the family, his death is painful because it presents a gap represented here as: **Tara anɔ ŋgbɛɛn bo i da tengelen** ‘Better than a gateless door which lies open’. Of course, a gateless door is always vulnerable to insecurity. In the context of this dirge, therefore, the lead cantor employs the question-and-answer device in a soloist format as a culturally recognised way of presenting a contrasting view of the usefulness of the living rather than being lost to death. It must be stressed that the lead cantor does not ask the question to be answered by the chorus; rather, the answer is presented by the same lead cantor. This contrasts with the typical question-and-answer format among the Kasena dirge, where the question is asked by the lead cantor and the answer is provided by the response (cf. Taluah 2020: 274). This dirge also exemplifies an Anufɔ idiomatic expression: **Fuu tara ŋgbɛn** ‘Half a loaf is better than none’ to mean that the spoilt straw mat (which symbolises the deceased who was extremely old) is worth living than dying because his presence in the home as the Anufɔ popularly say, will not let the ‘processed guinea corn grain for pito under the rain.’ Clearly, this structure is not like the cross-culturally known question-and-answer pattern, as Sanka (2010) and Taluah (2013) observe about the Sisaala and Kasena dirges, respectively.

It is also noteworthy that by their call-and-response nature, the Anufɔ dirges are rendered dramatic and choric. As it has already been shown in the examples in (3) above, the entire composition thrives on the call-and-response formulaic approach. Within the Anufɔ context, as the lead cantor lands with her section of the structure, it initiates a turn to be taken by the response. Thus, this pattern in its continuum not only demonstrates dialogue at play between the lead cantor and the response but also exemplifies a choric approach to the dirge composition. Also, it must be pointed out that the holistic performance of the Anufɔ dirge is a shared community responsibility and is, therefore, organised around the lead singers, chorus, and the Anufɔ community as a whole. As a culturally acceptable medium of expressing sorrow and grief, the organisation and construction of the Anufɔ dirge around this sense of communal participation gives credence to the dramatic and choric nature it is composed, and by extension, enhances the genre’s social meaning and acceptance. This is not different from what Sale (1992) ascribes to the call-and-response structure’s creative function of rendering the verbal art “meaningful or functional to the community” (Sale 1992: 41).

The Anufɔ dirges are also composed with the dynamism of the lead cantors to the effect that the dirges entail various structural manifestations. They can exist as a couplet, tercet, quatrain, or even a hexastich, and can also be short or long. Thus, the number of words and lines in the dirge depends on the creative dynamism of the lead cantor. This, therefore, implies that there is no fixed length of the Anufɔ dirge. It is also crucial to mention that the Anufɔ dirges are not composed to any predetermined or fixed regular metrical pattern; therefore, they exist in free verse. In this regard, there is no such conscious attempt on the part of the lead cantors to pattern the Anufɔ dirge to rhyme. It is also good to point out that all cases of rhyme in the dirges are not predetermined and are also mostly so because of the repetitive style adopted by the dirge singers. See example (6) below for the illustration of the points raised above:

- | | | | |
|---|----|--|---|
| 6 | a. | <p>Sa be yo má ya
 Ka yiwee si má
 M kɔ na m ba
 Oi yiwee, Oi yiwee ee</p> | <p>Nothing pains any less
 Than death who knows not to say
 I shall journey and return.
 Oh, death! Oh death!</p> |
|---|----|--|---|

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| b. | Sa be yo má ya
Ka yiwee si má
M kɔ na m ba
Oi yiwee, Oi yiwee ee | Nothing pains any less
Than death who knows not to say
I shall journey and return .
Oh, death! Oh death! |
| c. | Awurufɔbiɛ n akɔ ni
Ye ya su niɛniɛ koro i a? | Where has the Landlord gone
That we are in search of him? |
| d. | Awurufɔbiɛ n akɔ ni
Ye ya su niɛniɛ koro i a? | Where has the Landlord gone
That we are in search of him? |

The texts above, which present the idea of death, show varied manifestations in terms of the number of words and lines that constitute the genre. In the above example, (6a) and (6b) respectively represent the call-and-response sections, whereas (6c) and (6d) respectively represent the call-and-response sections. It is very revealing to note that whereas the (6a) and (6b) are composed in four lines to a verse, (6c) and (6d) are composed of two lines to a verse. Also, the total number of words in (6a) varies, such that there are 5, 4, 5, 4 (plus the *ee*) words that structure this verse. A similar situation is observed in (6b) since it is a repetition of (6a). However, in (6c), there are 4 and 7 words in each line, respectively. Again, a quatrain constitutes the verses in (6a) and (6b) respectively, whilst a couplet constitutes the verses in (6c) and (6d) respectively. More crucially, it can be seen in both (6a) and (6b) that the dirge is not patterned to any rhyme scheme. This is the situation in (6c) and (6d). It must, however, be noted that, considering the couplet pattern in (6c) and (6d), the verse may rhyme as *abab*. But this occurs coincidentally and perhaps because of the couplet structure. The point to note is that with a couplet, this situation occurs in the Anufɔ dirge. In these regards, scholars such as Finnegan (2018) and Alembi (2002) concur that the African dirge generally has no fixed length. Alembi (2002: 34) makes this observation about the oral funeral poetry of Africa, particularly the Abanyole dirge. He states thus, “this poetry can also be said to be dynamic because it has no fixed length of performance. The length of any verse is determined by several factors about the audience and the physical circumstances surrounding the performance. For example, if the audience is interested and eager to listen and dance to a particular song, the artist will prolong it by frequent repetition” (cf. Finnegan 2018: 14).

In summary, the Anufɔ dirge is antiphonal in structure, involving the call-and-response patterns; it is also structured along rhetorical questions; it is dramatic and choric; it also involves free verses; and has no fixed length. These ethnopoetic elements characterise the structural composition of the Anufɔ dirge, which agrees with similar findings by scholars such as Finnegan (2018), Alembi (2002), Okpewho (1992), and Sale (1992), who underscore that the oral funeral poetry in Africa, generally, has the antiphonal structure involving a call-and-response format.

6.3 Ethnopoetic language of the Anufɔ Dirge

As a performance-centred verbal art, the Anufɔ dirge is composed using poetic language and expressions. Language is particularly crucial to the discussion in this section because “the artful, esthetic quality of an utterance resides in the way in which language is used in the construction of the textual item” (Bauman 1975: 291). The Anufɔ dirge genre uses the language of idioms, proverbs, metaphors, and personifications, among others, in the construction of the textual items. These idioms and figurative expressions are drawn from the rich stock of vocabulary stored up in the culture and traditions of the Anufɔ people. Bauman (1975) underscores in the performance theory the significance of the use of culturally appropriate language or expressions in the performance of verbal arts. One of such significances is for content referentiality. Since performance is generally regarded as the “mode of speaking” of the Anufɔ dirge, it calls forth the dirge singers to employ culturally appropriate language and expressions that will appeal to the tradition and emotions of the Anufɔ community (see Bauman 1975: 293).

In this regard, the Anufɔ dirge genre is a mixed composition of simple and complex forms of the Anufɔ expressive culture and language. These simple and complex expressions have

traditional and emotional appeal, as already indicated. It can be observed in examples (7) and (8) that the Anufò dirges employ metaphors and personifications in complex ways to convey the idea of grief, pain, and sorrow. These complex structures symbolically express and enact the Anufò traditional way of grieving and mourning the dead. See (7) and (8) below for this point:

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 7. | Anuᅅgbele Baka akpekete oo,
Ya nya Lolo ni?
Anuᅅgbele Baka akpekete oo,
Ya nya Lolo ni? | The Compound Tree has fallen,
Where do we get Shade?
The Compound Tree has fallen,
Where do we get Shade? |
| 8. | Kereketε baka awo m ja
Kereketε baka
Kereketε baka awo m ja
Wo akaaki m nanduri oo | Kereketε stick pierced my leg
Kereketε stick
Kereketε stick pierced my leg
It has turned me into a leper |

Examples (7) and (8) are both Anufò dirges which illustrate the use of metaphoric language to present death. Each excerpt is anchored on the concepts of **baka kpekete** ‘tree falling’ and **baka wo** ‘stick piercing’ respectively. But it can be observed that such conceptual metaphors foreground the ideas of death, which are expressed using such complex culturally appropriate language resources. For instance, in (7), the speaker laments the falling of the compound tree in the first and second lines of the verse above, thus: **Anuᅅgbele Baka akpekete oo** ‘The Compound Tree has fallen’/**Ya nya Lolo ni?** ‘Where do we get Shade?’. These expressions symbolise and express the death of the elderly in the home or community of the speaker. This is a man who was the pillar, support, and breadwinner of the family until his demise. Generally speaking, death announcements within the Anufò society are done euphemistically because of the pain associated with the news of death. For the most elderly, such as chiefs, family heads, or landlords, queen mothers, and others within the indigenous Anufò traditional setting, it is a cultural norm to announce their death euphemistically. Such culturally appropriate euphemistic expressions used in the death announcements also reveal the social status of the deceased within the indigenous Anufò society.

In the same vein, (8) presents the concept of leprosy, which is contingent on the piercing of the stick. Indeed, the expression: **Kereketε baka awo m ja** ‘**Kereketε** stick pierced my leg’ symbolises the Anufò’s cultural expression for death attacking the deceased. In the last line of the excerpt above, the speaker further presents what the strike by death has suddenly transformed her into: **Wo akaaki m nanduri oo** ‘It has turned me into a leper’. The word **nanduri** ‘leper’ is also used implicitly among the Anufò to associate with helplessness, inactivity, or a defect. From the foregoing, it is clear from both dirge excerpts that the use of culturally appropriate complex expressions such as idioms and metaphors, among the Anufò reflected in their poetic language in such appropriate contexts.

Notwithstanding the above, the Anufò dirges also reflect very simple, direct, and straightforward language use in their composition. The instance of the directness or straightforwardness of the language used in the Anufò dirge is to simplify understanding without giving the listener any difficulty in knowing and understanding the demands being made. Consider the examples in (9) below for the illustration of this point:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9 | a. Ahigere ee
M kan kere ᅅma wo ahigere?
Ya bukafò ni,
Kpanje yiwee aba ade i oo

M kan kere ᅅma wo ahigere? | And now!
Whom shall I tell it too?
Such our Helper
Guinea Fowl Death has taken
him away!
Whom shall I tell it too now? |
| | b. Yiwee akun m aja dumbieni ee
M fa nzu yo dingoo? | Death murdered my last heir
With what then shall I boast in life? |

<p>c. M aka m ayika Ayika fofoe Be i si be Na i di na i ma m</p>	<p>I have remained an orphan A complete orphan Whoever has pity Would eat before serving me</p>
---	--

The excerpts above demonstrate the use of simple, direct, and straightforward language to communicate death. Each excerpt is the first verse of each dirge. Unlike the previous examples, which show how the speakers use metaphors as the common language use, these excerpts employ very simple expressions to convey their various ideas. In (9a) above, it is obvious that the speaker has been left stunned by the harm death has caused her for having **ade** ‘taken away’ the confidante. Through the simple question parallel structure, the speaker brings to fore this idea, thus: **Ahigere ee** ‘And now!’ / **M kan kere ŋma wɔ ahigere?** ‘Whom shall I tell it too?’ The simple conjunction “and” used with the adverb of time “now” in the first line both reflect everyday common expressions which are embedded in the Anufɔ dirge for simplicity of communication and understanding. A considered observation of the various lexical items in the second line also reveals the same common everyday language usage. The point to note is that the speaker, in these instances, is strategically employing these simple, direct, and straightforward everyday expressions to make it simple for the audience to relate to the harm death has caused.

In (9b) above, the speaker’s direct use of the expressions: **Yiwee akun m aja dumbieni ee** ‘Death murdered my last heir’ / **M fa nzu yo dingɔɔ?** ‘With what then shall I boast in life?’ also helps to reveal the death of the speaker’s **aja dumbieni** ‘last heir’. Thus, the last heir of the speaker has been murdered. The mournful but introspective tone of the speaker evokes feelings of emptiness and despair conveyed in the lines **M fa nzu yo dingɔɔ?** ‘With what then shall I boast in life?’. Through this simple expression, the subject matter that revolves around lamentation over the loss of the last heir is highlighted, thus revealing the impact of the loss on the bereaved. This direct expression also helps to delineate the thematic idea of the fragility and the transience of life, as can be seen in the above dirge.

In the same vein, (9c) above further illustrates the use of direct and straightforward language. The speaker’s parallel structures: **M aka m ayika** ‘I have remained an orphan’ / **Ayika fofoe** ‘A complete orphan’ / **Be i si be** ‘Whoever has pity’ / **Na i di na i ma m** ‘Would eat before serving me’, help to reveal the persona’s quest for food in this dirge. Without any ambiguity, these expressions appeal to the pathos of the audience to sympathise with the persona.

The Anufɔ dirge is also quite revealing in terms of its tone and mood. Finnegan (2012: 6) considers the expressiveness of tone and mood as not just mere embellishments of the oral art “but integral as well as flexible part of its full realisation as a work of art.” As integral language resources of the verbal art of the Anufɔ funeral dirge artist, tone and mood are crucial to the full realisation of the Anufɔ dirge in general. The tone of the Anufɔ dirge singer is reflected in terms of her attitude towards the poetic subject matter. The mood, in the other sense, is to enable an appreciation of the pervading atmosphere which surrounds the Anufɔ dirge. How does the audience or the Anufɔ community appreciate the pathos of the Anufɔ dirge? This is possible in many ways, but a point of note is through the tone and mood of the dirge singer.

Examples (10) and (11) demonstrate two forms of mood and tone conveyed through language use, and also how they enable the full realisation of the Anufɔ dirge as a work of art. These dirge excerpts reveal positive and negative forms of tone and mood, which are subsumed under sadness, anxiety, pity, loneliness (negative), recreation, excitement, and light-hearted joy (positive), respectively. See (10) and (11) below for the discussion of the above points:

<p>10 a. Bundani akan m soma, Wɔ ayo m ya Wɔ ayo m ya, Bundani</p>	<p>Scorpion has stung my lover, It has pained me You have caused me pain, You Scorpion!</p>
---	--

<p>Bundani akan m soma, Wɔ ayo m ya Wɔ ayo m ya, Bundani ee.</p> <p>b. Sa be yo má ya Ka yiwee si má M kɔ na m ba Oi yiwee, Oi yiwee ee</p> <p>11 a. Yiwee akpaaki m ni danfo ee</p> <p>M ni ŋma ka aa?</p> <p>b. Ayikanbaam da ni ee? Da ni ee? Nzue n amuna, Sɔkpiri n atɔ Ayikanbaam da ni ee?</p> <p>c. M aka m ayika Ayika fofoe Be i si be Na i di na i ma m</p>	<p>The Scorpion stung my lover, it has pained me You have caused me pain, You Scorpion!</p> <p>Nothing pains any less Than death who knows not to say I shall journey and return. Oh, death! Oh death!</p> <p>Death has separated me from my companion Whom shall I live with? Where will the orphans sleep? Sleep where? The clouds have formed The living room has collapsed Where will the orphans sleep?</p> <p>I have remained an orphan A complete orphan Whoever has pity Would eat before serving me</p>
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The above texts show the two forms of tone and mood reflected in the Anufɔ dirge. In excerpt (10a) presented above, for instance, both tone and mood convey a sense of sadness or unhappiness. In this excerpt, the speaker expresses pain towards the death of her lover through the metaphor of death as a scorpion sting, which is captured in the line: **Bundani akan m soma, wɔ ayo m ya** ‘Scorpion has stung my lover, it has pained me’. The speaker uses the word **akan** ‘pain’ to depict not only her tone but also her mood. Her blatant declaration of this tone and mood is revealed in the phrase **wɔ ayo m ya** ‘it has pained me’. Since sadness is contingent on a painful or hurtful feeling, this implies the portrayal of the tone and mood of sadness. It should be noted that the context of the Anufɔ dirge from which this dirge excerpt was framed enables a better understanding of the tone and mood of the speaker. This role of context in this excerpt is therefore consistent with the Infracultural Model, which underscores an “interpretation of words and actions within specific cultural contexts” (Alembi 2002: 22).

In (10b) above, the tone and mood of sadness are revealed through the speaker’s expressed frustration in the line: **Sa be yo má ya** ‘Nothing pains any less’. This phrase does not simply reveal the tone and mood of frustration, but it also intensifies the speaker’s sadness and sorrow at the event of death. This sorrowful situation is illuminated in the lines: **Ka yiwee si má** ‘Than death who knows not to say’ / **M kɔ na m ba** ‘I shall journey and return’. Indeed, these expressions symbolically represent the idea of death as “a journey of no return”, which implies that the deceased will not return any longer. This thus presents the speaker with a sad but sorrowful demeanour, and therefore, gives credence to the tone and mood of sadness expressed in the excerpt.

In (11a) above, the excerpt also portrays the tone and mood of anxiety, pity, and loneliness, which is highlighted in the expressions: **Yiwee akpaaki m ni danfo ee** ‘Death has separated me from my companion’ / **M ni ŋma ka aa?** ‘Whom shall I live with?’. These expressions appeal to the audience’s psyche to sympathise with the speaker. The elements of anxiety, pity, and loneliness are highlighted by carefully examining each lexical item in the lines above. It is lucid to note that each of the lexical components in the phrase **M ni ŋma ka aa?** ‘Whom shall I live with?’ communicates the sense of these dreaded and forlorn feelings. It can be seen that the dirge singer uses a rhetorical device to highlight the mood and tone of desolation, which is exacerbated by the loss of the speaker’s sibling-companion. Situated within the context of performance within the

Anufò culture, the speaker in this dirge calls forth a companion. But as the case may be, there is no hope for another sibling-companion. According to the framers of the theory of verbal art as performance, such an instance where the context of performance helps the audience to decode and comprehend the tone and mood of the genre can emerge through the performer's "own mood" (Bauman 1975: 303). Within this context, therefore, the audience can sympathise with the speaker through her emerging tone and mood during the performance.

In (11b) above, the speaker's use of the interrogative structure: **Ayikanbaam da ni ee?** 'Where will the orphans sleep?' / **Da ni ee?** 'Sleep where?' / **Nzue n amuna** 'The clouds have formed' succinctly captures the emotive feelings of forlornness, pity, and anxiety conveyed by this dirge. It is worthy of note that such expressions not only reveal the forlornness of the speaker but also present a marooner whose situation has been exacerbated by the signs of rainfall in the skies. See this in the line: **Nzue n amuna** 'The clouds have formed'. It is a common natural phenomenon among the Anufò that "formed clouds" presage rainfall. In the spirit of this expression, one could tell that the speaker will be left at the mercy of the weather since it is told that **Sòkpìri n atò** 'the living room has collapsed'. Similar to the situation of the speaker in (11b), the expressions: **Be i si be** 'Whoever has pity' / **Na i di na i ma m** 'Would eat before serving me' also evoke pity, and rightly so, as captured by the word "pity". The speaker, in the previous line of this excerpt, has indicated that she is **Ayika fofoe** 'a complete orphan', which explains why she appeals to anyone who sympathises and empathises with her should be considerate and eat before "serving" her. Among the Anufò, **fofoe** connotes 'completeness'. So, one can imagine where this **Ayika fofoe** will make ends meet if nobody comes to his aid.

Regardless of the negative forms of tone and mood reflected in the Anufò dirge, there are also positive forms of tone and mood, such as optimism, recreation, excitement, and light-hearted joy. The goal of the lead cantor in this endeavour is to express the thought of death in a light-hearted manner, thereby ameliorating the pain of death (see Finnegan 2012:237). Generally, such forms of tone and mood engender hope and belief in the afterlife or ameliorate the pain of death for the living. The following examples in (12) illuminate this point below:

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|----|----|---|--|
| 12 | a. | Wò akò awuru wò
Wò akò awuru wò
Ya Si Kwame baari gò di wò
Wò adi awie
Wò akò awuru wò | He has gone home
He has gone home
Father Kwame attended the market of life
And completed his market of life
He has gone home |
| | b. | Am ma ya dò ee
Am ma ya dò oo
Yiwee asere m kpaweni
Am ma ya dò oo | Let us work
Let us work
Death has invited me to a communal labour
Let us work |
| | c. | Bo n boo oo
Ya da asi oo
Bo n boo oo.
Bo n boo oo
Ya da asi oo
Bo n boo oo. | Very good!
We thank you!
Very good!
Very good!
We thank you!
Very good! |

The above excerpts illustrate the tone and mood of optimism, recreation, excitement, and light-hearted joy in the Anufò dirge. In (12a) above, the lead cantor presents the death of Kwame as a journey back home to rest, having completed spending the market of life on earth. Among the Anufò, **gò di** 'to spend market' or 'market life' is a metaphor (associated with daily life activities, human existence, and life on earth). The market days of the Anufò are fleeting events that do not last, are not static, and are never permanent. In this excerpt, therefore, the lead cantor equates Kwame's daily existence to these metaphors, thereby projecting life to be transient. The idea of

Wɔ akɔ awuru wɔ ‘He has gone home’ as captured in the first two lines of this excerpt illuminates this point further. To portray the death of Kwame as a journey back home intimates an existing life somewhere (the Anufɔ believe in the metaphysical realm of existence, which is the home of their “living dead” or ancestors). The point to note is that if Kwame’s death is treated with such images as **gɔ di** ‘market life’ and **awuru kɔ** ‘going home’, then the lead cantor by this poetic strategy attempts to reassure the living that there is an afterlife or simply to convey the tone and mood of optimism.

Related to (12a), the dirge text in (12b) also conveys the tone and mood of recreation and excitement. Among the Anufɔ, death, funerals, and dirge performance are an important part of the rites of performance that involve the totality of the entire Anufɔ society. Such rites of performance are not individual affairs. It must be stressed that among this ethnic group, the death of an individual in the Anufɔ community calls for communal mourning. The lead cantor’s call, thus **Am ma ya dɔ** ‘Let us work’ or ‘let us farm’, sheds light on the communal call to mourn, grief, and honour the deceased in this dirge. In the third line of this excerpt, **Yiwee** ‘Death’ is the subject of the communal clarion call to work or farm. This sense is conveyed thus **Yiwee asere m kpaweni** ‘Death has invited me to a communal labour’. Farming is the Anufɔ’s predominant occupation. Farm work or farm activities in general are not only exercise but also a major source of recreation, refreshment, and divertissement to the Anufɔ. These senses of excitation and recreation that the Anufɔ derive from farm work drive the context of this dirge.

The example in (12c) also reveals the tone and mood of light-heartedness in this dirge. **Bo n boo** ‘Very good’ or ‘well done’ are light-hearted expressions in Anufɔ denoting gratitude, appreciation, and expression of joy. The entire verse in this excerpt, therefore, denotes appreciation or expression of gratitude for the communal mourning of the deceased as captured in the second line **Ya da asi oo** ‘We thank you!’. In this instance, the atmosphere of the dirge performance is that of a light-hearted mood. Thus, the members of the Anufɔ community feel recognised and appreciated for being a part of the mourning. This is the point to note about the tone and mood of this dirge.

In summary, the mood and tone of the Anufɔ dirges can be positive or negative. In the positive sense, the Anufɔ dirges express the mood and tone of optimism, recreation, excitement, or light-hearted joy. This finding, even though it is from the perspective of a dirge analysis, is similar to what Finnegan (2012: 237) identifies in ‘drinking songs’ as a form of verbal art. In the negative sense, the Anufɔ dirges express the mood and tone of sadness, unhappiness, anxiety, pity, loneliness (forlornness), lamentation, pain, and grief. All this gives credence to the fact that the Anufɔ dirges, for example, constitute a poetic genre that represents a wealth of culture which portrays good and negative feelings (cf. Finnegan 2012: 236).

7. Conclusion

This paper examines the Anufɔ dirge as a verbal art, applying the performance theoretical framework proposed by Bauman (1975), which advocates lucidly for the analysis of an ethnographic phenomenon such as the Anufɔ dirge within its context of performance. Data sourced through fieldwork and the native speaker intuitions of the author were analysed in terms of their structure and poetic language. The analysis of the Anufɔ dirge revealed its antiphonal structure, based on a call-and-response performance involving a lead singer and a community chorus. The Anufɔ society views the dirge as a communal rite, engaging the entire community rather than just the family of the deceased. The paper notes unique internal features, including a question-statement format, differing from the typical question-and-answer format identified in other African dirges by scholars such as Taluah (2013). This distinctive approach highlights the lead singer primarily as a responder rather than an interactive participant. Further, the paper revealed that the Anufɔ dirge genre utilises culturally specific language contained in idioms and metaphors, which embody the unique ethnocultural traits of the genre. It draws from the Anufɔ's death and funeral repertoire, emphasising the socio-cultural significance and meaning of these elements. These findings support previous research by Sanka (2010), Taluah (2013), Seidu (2020), and Luri (2020), highlighting the prevalence of idioms and metaphors in the Sisaali, Kasena, Gonja, and Dagaare dirges, which reflect the unique cultural aspects of these ethnic groups. The paper highlights its

significance for research and pedagogy, notably contributing to studies of oral funeral poetry among lesser-known indigenous groups in Africa. It also has pedagogy relevance as it shows the aesthetic values of the Anufò oral literature, through its exploration of idioms and metaphors.

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