

Haffali Mulla: The Ethnopoetics of Traditional Marriage and Marriage Songs among the Pasaalas in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Haffali Mulla are traditional marriage songs among the Pasaalas of the Sisali speaking ethnic group in Ghana. Like many oral compositions, *haffali mulla* are literary in nature and can be analysed from that perspective. The institution of marriage, in the rural set up, is not only strong and old, but it is replete with tradition and processes leading up to the union. This paper traces the mores and the processes of traditional marriage among the Pasaalas and critically examines the verbal aesthetics as well as the utilitarian aspects of *haffali mulla*. Analysis from this paper, using the theory of ethnopoetics, reveals that *haffali mulla* are compositions which embed verbal art and useful messages that can be used to improve social cohesion and to strengthen the institution of marriage. The traditional processes of marriage are also sound sources of lessons that the present generation can draw on.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage in Ghana and all over the world is regarded as an important institution (Sarpong 1974:77, Mbiti 1976:133, Moeti et al. 2017:247). Indeed Mbiti observes that "For African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence... Therefore marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate." (1976:133) This situation is not different from what is obtained in the Paasaali culture. Among the Paasaalas, marriage is not only a sacred duty, but it is a process that is full of tradition right from the beginning to the end. *Haffali Mulla* which are performed on the evening of the marriage marks the climax of the joy that is associated with this rite. It is the occasion on which every individual in the community is called upon to participate in the joy of the union, to welcome the bride into the community, to advise another, to dance, to support the newly married financially and to trace their genealogies for the bride.

Despite the social, economic, aesthetic and traditional dimensions of *haffali mulla*, the failure to understand the rel-

evance of the afore-mentioned perspectives as well as acculturation has led the younger generation to a blind copying of other cultures while neglecting, completely, their own culture. They do not even try to blend the foreign with the native and this is a worrying trend among the elderly ones.

This paper uses insights from culture and literature to examine the processes of marriage in the traditional Paasaala set-up and to critically examine the songs and constructed dialogues that are used for the performance of *haffali mulla*. The objective is to bring out the social, cultural, economic and literary implications of traditional marriage and marriage songs among the Paasaalas using the theory of ethnopoetics as the fulcrum of analysis.

ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Paasaali is a dialect under the Sissali language. The dialect is Paasaali but the native speakers are referred to as Paasaala. Communities such as Kunyabeng, Kundungu, Buffiama, Funsu Jumo, Yaala Number One and Two are all Paasaala

communities found in the Wa East District of the Upper West region. The district is also a constituency on its own and the main economic activities of the people in these communities are farming and trading. Western education is not new to these communities but very few people have accessed it.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS, METHODOLOGY AND THEORY

Mul in the Paasaali dialect means a tale. *Mulla* is the plural form of *mul* and *haffali mulla* literally means “tales of the new wife.” Indeed, when one is performing tales in the traditional communities referred to in this paper, it is often said that “baa mul mulla” (they are executing tales). On the other hand, when they are to perform *haffali mulla*, it is often said that “baa guwa haffali mulla” (they are dancing the tales of a new wife). The relationship between tales and *haffali mulla* stems from the fact that some songs from folk tales can be culled out and performed on the night of executing *hafalli mulla*. The song must also be the type that can be danced to since *haffali mulla* are normally executed alongside drumming and clapping of hands. *Haffali mulla* are usually performed on the first evening of the marriage. If a force majeure occurs in the community, then they can be postponed to an appropriate date.

Haffali mulla are also executed on the day of the marriage in the community of the husband. It is the husband and his community who welcome the new wife to her new home in the form of *haffali mulla*. These songs are not executed by the family, parents or the community of the woman as it is obtained among the Lebu in Senegal (Ch. Ah. Tidiane and R. H. Mitch 1993:90) or among Senegalese women in general (Maramé Gueye 2010:67-86). The songs are not directed at the new wife per se but they are performed to celebrate the joy associated with marriage, to advise one another and to provide social commentary on the happenings in the community. The researchers used both primary and secondary data. The primary data is obtained from the research grounds which constitute the communities where *hafaali mulla* are still alive in the Wa East District. The primary data consists the songs performed on the day of *haffali mulla*, the constructed dialogues used, and the insider interpretation of the songs and dialogues. The secondary data is from the documented sources on marriage and marriage songs. In addition to these two sources of data, the observer-participant method has also been used by the researchers. On the two occasions that the researchers have come across live performances, they observed, participated and later asked questions on certain aspects of the performance.

The theory used for the analysis of arguments in this paper is ethnopoetics. Ethnopoetics, according to Catherine S. Quick, aims at “deriving an interpretive frame from discourse in its own cultural context.” (199:95) The interpretation of the processes, songs and dialogues in the cultural context in which they are performed is what brings out not just their meaning and relevance but it also affords the researchers the opportunity to appreciate the poetics of these performances. Thus in this paper, equal attention is given

to both performance and the written word. Also, traditional marriage, as used in this paper, means a union between a man and woman according to the Paasaali tradition in a consensual manner.

TYPES OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGES AMONG THE PAASAALAS

Customarily, the Paasaala people have different types of traditional marriages. The type of marriage arrangements made, which lead to the marriage, is what is used to describe the wife. Therefore, the Paasaala people have “kyangkyan haang” (marriage based on friendship between the husband and his father-in-law); “dingdo haang” (marriage based on the concept of “dindobi”); “loh haang” (marriage based on widow-inheritance) and “sonu haang” (marriage based on courtship between the husband and the new wife).

“Kyangkyang haang” comes about as a result of true friendship between two men and one of them, based on this friendship, decides to give the daughter’s hand in marriage to the other. The daughter could be young or she could be old enough to marry. If she is too young to move to the husband’s home, she will remain in the father’s home and the prospective husband will continue to take care of her until she is of age. The prospective husband, who may live in a different community, can continue to take care of the would-be wife by helping the would-be father-in-law with his farm work, with the maintenance of his buildings during the dry season and by supporting him any time tragedy befalls the lady’s family. There are instances where a man may take care of a girl who would grow up into a woman and refuses to marry the man himself but may prefer his son or his bother to the man himself. In such a situation, since the woman will still marry a member of the family, it is not regarded as a loss. The important thing is to get the woman to choose the man she likes from the father’s friend’s family and marry such a person. The girl must not be compelled to marry someone she does not love, else the whole marriage is likely to fail and it would be an embarrassment to the two friends. Besides, as the name implies, everything is based on friendship, love and understanding. Once the lady gets mature and can decide for herself, she will accept the father’s friend as the husband or choose someone else from the father’s friend’s family and the necessary rites will be performed before she is brought home.

In the case of “dingdo haang”, what it implies is that the man marries a woman traditionally and takes good care of her. And when the woman realises she is advancing in age but the husband is still strong and is capable of marrying additional wives, the woman may discuss it with the husband and go for a “dindobi”. It means she goes for a little girl from any of her brothers and brings her into the husband’s family. The wife and the husband will raise her and when she is mature, she will then be given to the man to marry and the aunt will stop giving birth. The belief and wisdom in this process is that it is the aunt who raised the young woman and the young woman will have complete respect for the aunt. Again, with the niece, the woman is sure that even if there are misunderstandings, the niece will not give

her many problems as compared to a stranger who could be brought in by the husband. Also, the children of the niece are the aunt's children and the children of the aunt will also treat the niece as their "small mother". This way, there is a stronger bond between the aunt and the niece and among their children. In this instance, the young woman could again, after attaining the age of maturity, decide to marry a different member of the family and not necessarily the aunt's husband.

The third type of traditional marriage among the Paasaala people is the widow-inheritance type of marriage. This is not a true levirate as explained by Sarpong (1974:78). A younger brother can inherit the wife of a deceased elder brother. But in this case, the wife belongs to the younger brother and the children born from such marriage belong to the younger brother. Even in this instance, the widow has the right to choose who she loves among all the younger brothers in the extended family. No husband is forced down the throat of the widow and the wisdom in this process is to ensure who the children given birth to through the first husband are not deprived of their mother and that the woman continues to bear children who all belong to the same family. In instances where the widow feels she has given birth to enough children and is disinterested in giving birth, she can customarily marry any male child of two or three years old in the family. In such a situation, the family cannot neglect the widow and her children because the "second husband" is still a member of the family and the widow will also have her peace of mind since no adult will come pestering her about the issues of sex.

The last type of traditional marriage is the "sonu haang" among the Paasaala people. The previous three are all sort of arranged marriages. With the fourth type, the young men simply approach a female or women and tell them "sonu musung." It is a formula for inviting a female to choose from a group of young men the one she would want to marry. It is usually done in a very casual manner so as not to intimidate the opposite sex and it is often done during the day time. This will allow the female to see clearly who she is choosing. While saying "sonu musung", the young men would proffer their open palm for a handshake with the opposite sex and the one whose hand the female shakes would be the one who the woman is interested in marrying. This is just the begin-ning of the courtship process since the young man will later meet with the woman and find out from her if she is not in a formal relationship with another man and whether she meant the gesture that she made towards him. If the woman is even in a formal relationship with another man but that man does not belong to the community or the clan of the young man, he can also go ahead and court the female and whoever wins the woman's heart will finally take her away. The rest of the discussions in this paper will centre on this type of marriage among the Paasaala people.

PROCESSES LEADING TO THE MARRIAGE

After "sonu musung", the young man will meet with the lady to find out if she is earnest in wanting to marry him by choosing to shake his hand. If the response is positive, the prospective suitor would have to propose to her formally by giving

her a token of money. There is no fixed amount on this but the amount given is normally regarded as a symbol of love; the young man himself normally decides how much he can part with. If the woman accepts this token of love, then she is ready to go with the young man all the way to marriage. This token of money given by the young man is normally referred to as "sonu molibi."

Once the process of giving and accepting the "sonu molibi" is over, the two love birds can inform their parents. This is when the parents will do underground investigations to find out more about the character of the prospective daughter-in-law and son-in-law. The parents are interested in assuring themselves whether the young man or woman is hard working, humble, open minded and friendly and whether he or she is free from any diseases that can bring disgrace to the family. They want to avoid diseases such as epilepsy, madness or someone suffering from enuresis. For social "diseases", they want to avoid a daughter-in-law or a son-in-law who is a thief, a gossip or a prospective wife who cannot be faithful to the husband. While these investigations are ongoing, the young man can mobilise his friends once in a while to go and help the prospective father-in-law on the farm and to mend his accommodation for him. Visits to the lady at this stage are strictly regulated and parents will always ensure that the two love birds do not meet alone; they always meet in the presence of a third person or in the presence of the lady's friends or the friends of the young man.

When investigations are completed by the man's parents, they will find two or three elderly men to go and sleep in the woman's community and announce their intention of seeking the lady's hand in marriage for their son. This is usually done by presenting a hundred or two hundred kola nuts, some amount of money and some ground tobacco to the family head of the girl. The family head will call for a meeting of all the men in the family and announce to them the mission of the visitors. The men in the family will in turn call for the girl's mother and announce to her the news brought by the elders. She will also be asked to bring the girl before the meeting so they enquire from her whether they should go ahead and eat the kola presented to them. Eating the kola nuts signifies the young woman loves the prospective husband and is ready to marry him. If the response from the young woman is yes, they will still ask her about three times before accepting the items. They ask three times because they want the young woman's response to be emphatic and unequivocal. Therefore if the answer is yes, it will be yes three times and if it is no, it will be no three times. And when the items are finally accepted, a portion is given to all the women in the family and a portion is also given to all the elders of the clan who may not necessarily be members of the lady's family. Marriage is not a secret process; it is contracted in an open manner.

The items presented in the form of kola nuts, ground tobacco and some money carry some symbolic meaning. In the Paasaali culture, kola nuts are the items that are used to broker peace, for pacification and to ask for forgiveness among the living. For every traditional gathering, before the deliberations start, kola nuts must be eaten as a symbol of

unity and good intentions. The kola nuts therefore signify that the young man and his people have come to visit their prospective in-laws with good intentions, not bad intentions. Again, the kola nuts symbolise the fact that what they have come to do is to beg for the hand of their daughter in marriage; it is never an issue of force or pawning the lady. Kola nuts in this context perform a function that is similar to the one embedded in the Yoruba proverbs which says that "Good talk brings out kola nut from the pouch; provocative talk draws the arrow out of the quiver." (Bernth Lindfors 2011:115) The ground tobacco is also regarded as a symbol of peace and unity since people who are on a war path do not share tobacco with one another. It is meant to be snuffed so as to calm down nerves and clear the head for good deliberations. The young man alone, early on, gave out an amount of money to the young woman as a token of his love and his commitment to the relationship. The money that is included in the items presented to the family is meant to indicate the love and commitment of the young man's family to the relationship. The relationship is no longer between the two love birds alone but the two families are now united in their decision to help the young man and woman to build a family together. The money does not symbolise buying the young woman; this is why it is not the lady's family who decides on how much money should be added to the items.

The presentation of kola nuts has to be repeated three times on different occasions. The third presentation marks the end of this process and the courtship by now would have travelled into a year and beyond. By now, the prospective son-in-law would have been a familiar face in the family of the lady due to his frequent visits to help work on the farm and other gifts in the form of food produce that he would have sent to the woman and the mother. Other members of the community would have also been aware by now that the young man is courting a particular lady from their village. The young man and his friends will then discuss with the lady the day and time they will come and take her away (elope with her) as a new wife. Indeed, the young woman's consent is no longer regarded as a necessity at this stage; she has already given her word in the presence of all the men in her family. On such an occasion, it is usually the friends of the young man who go to bring the lady to her new abode; nobody accompanies her from her family since she is literally "stolen" and run away with.

When she is brought to the husband's community, an elderly woman is asked to ululate or "ngmaa kpulenge" about four times to announce the news to the community. The young woman is not also put under the roof of the husband. Rather, she is kept in the room of the husband's trusted friend until the *haffali mulla* are executed and until she has rested for at least three to seven days. During the period that she is under the care of the husband's trusted friend, she is not supposed to cook or work.

And because she is literally stolen from her home, the parents of the husband will normally send a young man back to the lady's community a day after her disappearance with a fowl that is referred as a "ba ta ki kye gyimii". It is meant to announce to the community that it is the family of the

prospective husband that has come for their daughter and that she is safe and sound with them. This calms their nerves down.

If the lady has never been married, after the *haffali mulla*, the husband and the family will still go back to the lady's parents for the rites of "nyu funnu" (the shaving of the young lady's head). This marks the end of the processes of courtship and the shaving of the head is symbolic since it is meant to cleanse the lady spiritually and to usher her into the new world of womanhood. She is no longer a girl and in fact, in the olden days, the head of the lady was really shaved and the accompanying rites performed. But in modern times, the head is no longer shaved but the accompanying rites are actually performed.

HAFFALI MULLA IN CONTEXT

"Sermons preach a little but songs preach a lot." (Peter Wood and Emma Wild-Wood 2004:145) *Haffali mulla* are essentially musical performances that are executed in the evenings. The venue for *haffali mulla* is usually the extended family compound where there is enough space for such gatherings. Wooden benches and plastic chairs are arranged in the form of a circle. The drummers will usually occupy some of these seats and the new wife and some friends of the husband will also occupy some. A bowl with a lid is normally placed in front of the new wife for collecting donations from well-wishers.

Before *haffali mulla* are performed, the husband of the new wife would have distributed kola nuts or toffees to the entire community early in the morning to announce his intention of organising musical performance in the evening of that day. The husband and friends would have also made arrangements for drummers to be present and to provide the drumming that would accompany the execution of the songs. The husband and the friends as well as members of the husband's direct family would also make arrangements to buy more toffees, kola nuts or fried groundnut paste balls (kpulikpuli) that they would use during the evening to reward those who would take centre stage to sing and dance.

The arrangement of the seats is organised in such a way as to create ample space in the middle for the purposes of vigorous and swift dancing. Men and women as well as children are qualified to take centre stage and dance. The dancing arena is also controlled in such a way as to have at most two people dancing to a song at a time. No special attire is required of the women when performing *haffali mulla*. The men, on the other hand, often wear casternets around their ankles and on their fingers when they want to dance in the centre. These are worn and shaken during the dancing process in order to provide rhythm in terms of sound.

A special announcer or a master of ceremonies is also consulted to be at post in the evening. Such a person has to make announcements when it comes to people making donations or when someone wants to resort to the use of constructed dialogue before he or she composes a song. The announcer repeats the dialogue loud enough for everyone to hear. All the members of the audience would clap their hands and sing the song in accompaniment to the drumming. The

songs are short pieces that consist very few lines which are repeated several times before they are discarded and new ones brought up. Sometimes the performance can travel very late into the dawn of the following day. Every pause in the performance of the songs is marked by the announcement of fresh monetary donations to the newly married. The entire amount is counted and the total figure is announced to the general public before they disperse.

The songs used can be taken from a repertoire of songs for *haffali mulla*. However, sometimes, some of them are composed extempore by the dancers and other songs are repeated with some little variations from community to community. Some of the songs are also culled from folk tales but a lot of them are purposely composed for the occasion of *haffali mulla*.

THEMES IN HAFFALI MULLA

There are certain recurring ideas that often underlie the meaning of songs performed during *haffali mulla*. These recurring ideas can be grouped into the themes of marriage, motherhood, didacticism, social commentary and general reflections about life.

As indicated early on in this paper, marriage is often regarded as an important social duty in the Paasaali culture. The natives are predominantly farmers and a wife in such a context is a necessity since there is always some sort of division of labour with regard to farm work. Women, preferably wives, are needed for sowing, for harvesting, for pro-cessing of farm produce through winnowing and for carting farm produce on their heads home. It is the wife or wives who will supervise other women who may come to help the husband with the farm work. The wife ensures that the work is thoroughly and diligently done by other women. But in addition to this important role played by women is the sacred duty of procreation. Procreation, we all agree, cannot be done by the man alone. The chores at home such as cooking, washing, receiving and taking care of visitors as well as the natural need to love and be loved are all additional reasons why wives are an important part of the social, cultural, political and economic lives of the people. A bachelor in these circumstances suffers the same consequences as a spinster or a barren woman. For these and many other reasons, marriage is normally celebrated through the performance of *haffali mulla*. The song below celebrates marriage indirectly.

<i>Bongyong bongyong sii paa i kiina</i>	Bachelor, bachelor remove your mat
<i>Bongyong bongyong sii paa i kiina</i>	Bachelor, bachelor remove your mat
<i>Bongyong bongyong sii paa i kiina</i>	Bachelor, bachelor remove your mat
<i>Ka i naa waaru aa fiyalu re</i>	Have you noticed the weather is getting cold
<i>Ka i naa waaru aa fiyalu reeeeee</i>	Have you noticed the weather is getting cold

The bachelor is asked to remove his mat from outside and to go inside because the weather is getting cold. This is a message that celebrates marriage in the sense that the bachelor is indirectly told to get married in order to enjoy the cool breeze outside during the night. If the bachelor tries to sleep outside alone, he would catch cold but if he has a wife, they can enjoy each other's warmth. In addition, if the bachelor catches cold, he would not receive the tender care of a wife. The song taunts the bachelor to hasten and get married so as to enjoy the cool breeze outside during the warm season or the feminine care of a wife if he happens to fall sick.

In another context, the song below also celebrates marriage indirectly. It poses a rhetorical question that calls for a deeper reflection on the part of the community. Does the fact that a person remains a bachelor make him a despicable person? At the same time, the song also serves as a serious reminder to the bachelor to get married so as to avoid such a demeaning treatment from the community. Traditionally, people are accorded social respect when they are alive if they are married. On the occasion of their death, if they married and produced children they would again be given a befitting farewell. If it is not the case, they are treated differently in their life on this earth and on the occasion of their death. This goes to confirm the opinion that marriage and children are valued and cherished in the Paasaali culture. Though reference is often made to the bachelor, the spinster also suffers the same fate in the community. Marriage is therefore a social duty for both males and females in this context.

<i>Bongyong yee bongyong</i>	Bachelor yee bachelor
<i>Bongyong ka tii yaa ni kuwasi ri du?</i>	Is the bachelor a despicable being?
<i>Bongyong yee bongyong</i>	Bachelor yee bachelor
<i>Bongyong ka tii yaa ni kuwasi ri du?</i>	Is the bachelor a despicable being?
<i>Bongyong yee bongyong</i>	Bachelor yee bachelor
<i>Bongyong ka tii yaa ni kuwasi ri du?</i>	Is the bachelor a despicable being?

Of course, motherhood is also closely tied to marriage. It is marriage that could make a woman a mother and motherhood is always celebrated in most cultures. The mother is the source of life; she is a mother not only to her children but to other children in the extended family. Her death or absence in the life of a child at a tender age is always a tragic loss. This is why the orphan in the song below makes an interesting observation about life without a mother at a tender age. Due to the fact that the child is orphaned, he is always served "tuozafi" without soup. And it is not a pleasant business for one to eat "tuozafi" without soup. Literally, the child is left to go hungry without food and this, the orphan attributes to the absence of a mother in his life. A mother, who is a good one, would not let the child go hungry; she could even sacrifice her food for the child. The song therefore celebrates the theme of motherhood in the traditional context.

*Ng ka a bi niina kana wiya re ng nyang ki nyang kuu
nyan ni*

It is because I do not have a mother that I am normally served tuozafi without soup

Ng nyang ki nyang kuu nyang ni, ng nyang ki nyang kuu nyang ni

I am normally served tuozi with no soup, I am normally served tuozafi without soup

Ng ka a bi niina kana wiya re ng nyang ki nyang kuu nyan ni

It is because I do not have a mother that I am normally served tuozafi without soup

Ng nyang ki nyang kuu nyang ni, ng nyang ki nyang kuu nyang ni

I am normally served tuozi with no soup, I am normally served tuozafi without soup

Ng ka a bi niina kana wiya re ng nyang ki nyang kuu nyan ni

It is because I do not have a mother that I am normally served tuozafi without soup

Ng nyang ki nyang kuu nyang ni, ng nyang ki nyang kuu nyang ni

I am normally served tuozi with no soup, I am normally served tuozafi with no soup

Didacticism is one of the essential features of most African oral performances (Mary E. M. Kolawole 2007:94, Liz Gunner 2007:67, Cheikh Tidiane Lo 2016: 40). Oral performances in Africa seek to regulate attitudes and conduct in the community by proffering explicit didactic poems, songs or tales or by presenting exemplary life styles in these compositions for the moral edification of members in the community. In the Paasaali context, *haffali mulla* is one of the platforms on which clear moral lessons are offered to members of the community through the songs. The songs are thus one of the means of handing down moral values from generation to generation and for regulating conduct in the society by constantly reminding the Paasaalas of what is good and what is bad; what is acceptable and what is abominable. In the song that follows, the small he-goat is metaphorically used to give advice to all the young men and women in the community. He who refuses wise counsel will always find himself or herself in trouble. This is a simple maxim about life but the symbolic aspect of the he-goat is what actually adds imagination, tradition and drama to the song. For in the Paasaali cul-ture, the he-goat is well known for its truancy, disrespect and foolhardiness. Comparing someone to the he-goat already connotes these qualities and if the individual refuses to listen to wise counsel in addition to this attitude, the person is bound to encounter a lot of difficulties.

Gbungbogo biye vielle vielle The small he-goat

Viya kyagili naa ba kyie kperi Who refuses counsel will find himself in trouble tomorrow

Gbungbogo biye vielle vielle The small he-goat

Viya kyagili naa ba kyie kperi Who refuses counsel will find himself in trouble tomorrow

Gbungbogo biye vielle vielle The small he-goat

Viya kyagili naa ba kyie kperi Who refuses counsel will find himself in trouble tomorrow

Social commentary is also one of the themes that underlie the performance of *haffali mulla*. It is this theme that provides performers the opportunity to compose new songs aimed at satirising certain new attitudes, questioning the society on new developments or even quizzing the relevance of established traditions. In the traditional Paasaala community, picking of shea nuts is the preserve of women. The shea tree is not cultivated but it grows in the wild. Women pick the nuts during shea nut picking season and process them for sale in order to supplement their earnings. When a man is seen with a pouch slung over the shoulder picking the shea nuts, he becomes the butt of criticism in the song below. For the women, it is a question of fighting for the right to pick the shea nuts. It is a traditional role reserved for women and it comes with some earnings. If the men are allowed to perform that role, they may even want to take it away from the women. Besides, the season normally coincides with the farming season and if men are allowed to join the women in picking the shea nuts, then who does the work on the farm?

Salia laali logo paa kyuuna Salia wore a pouch and went picking shea nuts

Salia laali logo paa kyuuna Salia wore a pouch and went picking shea nuts

Ma ta leng di haani nii yee Do not let the women hear about it

Ma ta leng di baala ni yee Do not let the men hear of it

Salia laali logo paa kyuuna Salia wore a pouch and went picking shea nuts

Finally, the theme of reflections seeks to remind man of his place in the universe and the need for him to relate well to others and to his Creator. Life on this earth is ephemeral. This theme ponders the mysteries of life. In the sample song that follows, death, despite its omnipresence, is presented as a mysterious phenomenon whose origins are unknown to humanity. Man's inability to master death is as a result of its unknown origins and nature. This also means that death will continue to be inevitable to man due to the paucity of information that humanity has on it. Since death cannot be avoided, it might be better for man to live and relate well to others on this earth instead of just passing through life.

Wiwii bulong ni kang li liili yee Everything has an origin

Suu me kang li liili re Does death also have an origin?

Haana wiwii bulong ni kang li liili Everything about women has an origin

Suu me kang li liili re Does death also have an origin?

<i>Baala wiiwii bulong ni kang li liili</i>	Everything about men has an origin
<i>Suu me kang li liili re</i>	Does death also have an origin?
<i>Wiiwii bulong ni kang li liili yee</i>	Everything has an origin
<i>Suu me kang li liili reeeee</i>	Does death also have an origin?

STYLE IN HAFFALI MULLA

In preliterate Africa and among the Paasaala people, “Every occasion had its genre of chant and/or song.” (Funso Aiyejina et al. 2009:134) The situation is not different in the Paasaali context today. *Haffali mulla* are purposely composed for the occasion of marriage and their performance is a combination of songs, drumming, dancing and the use of constructed dialogue. The short nature of the songs contributes to the pacey rhythm of the performance and the vigorous dancing that goes with it. The occasion is a joyous one and the emotions for the evening are better expressed through the dance. After all, African oral poetry’s “artistic quality resides in its ability to stir emotion and influence behavior.” (Okpewho 1992:8) The brevity of the compositions also gives room for many pieces to be performed within the night and hence many people will have the opportunity to take centre stage to compose their own pieces and dance to them. Again, the absence of verbal ebullience in the compositions enables the audience to easily participate in the execution of the song even if it is new. The songs, by their nature, are the call and response type in which the composer calls the first line and the audience provides the response in the second line. But as soon as the rhythm of the clapping of hands picks up and the drums begin to sound, the composer leaves his role of calling the first line to the master of ceremonies in order to concentrate on the vigorous dance.

The first stylistic feature of the songs is the use of phonoaesthetics to create euphony and harmony between verbal sound, drumming, sound from the casternets and clapping. Three features of sound are used here; the elongation of certain syllabic sounds, the use of ideophones and the repetition of certain sounds to contribute to the general sound pattern in the performance. In the songs provided in the preceding pages, most of them end with the elongation of the last syllable of the last word such as *kyuunaaaa, reeeee, kperiiii, niiii* and so on. It is intentionally done in order to mark a hiatus so that a new song can be provided. The tone of the audience is also lowered at this stage in order to rhyme with the slowing down of the drumming and the clapping of hands that are discontinued to mark the hiatus. The ideophone “vielle vielle” is repeated in the song about the small he-goat for different reasons. In the text of the song, “gbungbogo biye” actually means a small he-goat. However, the description ‘vielle vielle’ is provided in order to create rhythm, euphony, drama and emphasise meaning. The ideophone emphasises the contrast in the fact that despite the dwarfish size of the goat, it is recalcitrant and would not listen to good

counsel. Both internal rhyme and euphony is also provided in the repetition of the ideophone. In all the sample songs provided so far, lexical and syntactic isomorphisms have been used. This results in the repetition of certain sound patterns in the songs which allows for harmonisation in terms of word sound, drumming and clapping of hands.

Repetition with a focus on meaning and mood also remains one of the key aesthetic elements of *haffali mulla*. In the course of repeating lexical items or parallel structures, it is not only meaning that is reiterated but certain sounds are repeated and this results in enhancing euphony and the rhythm of the performance. The impact of the resulting rhythm, verbal cohesion and emphasis in meaning helps in creating “topoi, generating a particular theme, emotion or mood.” (Fasan 2015:116) But in addition to these effects, repetition as an oral formula is used “to express the fullness of an effect.” (Agyekum 2007:46) The compact nature of the compositions and the fact that repetition is heavily used in them makes it easier for audience to participate in their execution as well as memorise them for future use. In the piece that follows, lexical repetition of “junjulong” has been used to enlist audience participation, to achieve rhythm as well as express the full impact of how lonely it is to dance alone as an individual. Dancing on joyous occasions is better expressed through group performance since the feeling is communal and not individualistic.

<i>Ang na guwa junjolong, junjolong, junjolong</i>	Who is dancing <i>jungjolong?</i> <i>junjolong, junjolong?</i>
<i>Ang na guwa junjolong</i>	Who is dancing <i>jungjolong?</i>
<i>Di u koli di a guwa junjolong</i>	The person should come out so we dance <i>jungjolong</i>

Most of these compositions also embed a lot of imagery that is cleverly employed to paint mental pictures, capture drama and to express the emotions involved. In the preceding composition, a rhetorical question has been used to throw an invitation to members of the audience. Any individual who feels like dancing should join the composer at centre stage so they dance together instead of both of them doing it separately and individually. Similarly, the composition on the small he-goat who refuses to listen to wise counsel uses metaphor to achieve its full impact. Figuratively; the small he-goat is the recalcitrant young man who refuses to settle down and marry. In the composition about Salia, irony and sarcasm are used effectively. Though the composer is advising his audience to keep the act a secret, he has already gone ahead and composed a song to mock his butt of criticism. In effect, the audience must propagate this “abominable act” by Salia in order to dissuade him and his like from picking shea nuts.

In the song below, a constructed dialogue is used before the song. The dialogue enabled the composer to interact with his audience and to invite them to share in his mood and his intended sarcasm for his younger brother who just married a new wife. An ideophone and a metaphor are captured in the form of “kya kya” which means something that is needless. In the business of brewing “pito” traditionally, we have the real “pito” and we have the “si kyakya” which is a by-product of the real “pito”. The actual “pito” has all the qualities

of a true brew while the “si kya kya” is meant for children or people who cannot withstand the alcoholic content of the actual “pito.” It is the unimportant aspect of “si kyakya” that is captured in the metaphor “kya kya lummo” which means a needless peep.

<i>Heeye ma ya fuwah!</i>	Let there be silence please!
<i>Naa sing daha gyinag, ng teng bulong ni fiyala</i>	As I stand here today, I am overjoyed
<i>Bee wiya ng baa ng teng iyala re?</i>	Why do I say I am overjoyed?
<i>Bayoung haa, ng naa biye re.</i>	Bayoung is my brother
<i>Nyina kirigi, niina kirigi.</i>	Same father, same mother
<i>Di uuh nyang kpa a haang di uuh yaa nii kyomoh</i>	If he brings a woman home to fetch us water
<i>Di ng teng bi fiyala ng ba yaa ni bong?</i>	And I am unhappy about it, aren't I a bad person?
<i>Na ng molibii re nya, ma laa tiya hafali.</i>	This is my money for our new wife
<i>Ma yang yii ng yiil tiyang!</i>	Now shall the audience help me execute my song!
<i>Ang na lumming?</i>	Who is peeping at me?
<i>Kya kya lummo lummo kya kya lummo</i>	Needless peeping, peeping, needless peeping
<i>Bagmaana bil tuwo</i>	The blame game is over
<i>Kya kya lummo lummo kya kya lummo</i>	Needless peeping, peeping, needless peeping.

The preceding dialogue and song were constructed and composed by an elder on the occasion of his younger brother getting married at Kundungu. He is happy for the younger brother because the latter now has a wife who can take care of him and also prepare him food. Hitherto, the younger brother had to depend on the elder one and his wife to prepare him food and sometimes, even when they have nothing to eat, the younger brother still suspects them of preparing food but refusing to serve him. During such instances, the peeps are not necessary since there is simply no food at home. At the same time, the song is used to taunt the younger brother about taking care of a family. If it is an easy job, the brother will soon find out. But the elder one is happy because “the blame game is over” and the younger brother will soon find out what it takes to keep a family going.

CONCLUSION

Haffali mulla is not a hallow performance; it is an activity that climaxes all the processes that culminate in marriage. It brings people together in a communal spirit so that they can entertain themselves, offer counsel to one another, reflect on life and trace their genealogies to the stranger that has been brought to be part of their community. But above all these, *haffali mulla* allow members of the community to help out the newly married couple financially and to demonstrate their verbal creativity by recollecting, re-performing a

repertoire of songs and by creating new ones with meanings and style that speak directly to their individual and communal needs.

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