

Thematic Analysis of the Dagaaba Women's Plays Songs: Within the Ullo Traditional Area in the Jirapa Municipality of Northern Ghana

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Abstract

This study analyzed the themes of Dagaaba women's plays songs. Dagaare is a Language spoken in the Upper West Region of Ghana and also Burkina Faso and Cote d'ivoire. Songs are mostly sung during occasions such as birth of a child, marriage and funeral ceremonies. Songs are therefore inevitable because they play a very vital role in human life. The study was conducted in Ullo Traditional area in Jirapa Municipality of Upper West Region of Ghana. The objective was to document Dagaaba women play songs and analyze the various themes that these songs contain. To achieve this objective, Purposive sampling method was employed to obtain 40 native Dagaaba women consisting of 4 lead singers and 36 chorus singers. The Dagaaba women play songs were audio recorded as the women sang the play songs while photos were taken as the women performed the songs. The audio recorded songs were Transcribed and then translated into English Language using idiomatic translation. The Dagaaba women use play songs to help address some social problems in homes and the society as a whole and also for recreational purposes. The Dagaaba women compose their play songs in lines and stanzas which are determined by the pauses made by the lead singer. The number of lines in a stanza varies from song to song. The songs also vary in rhythm depending on the type of performance. Dagaaba women play songs are composed based on themes. Some of the main themes around which the songs are composed are love, praise, caution, hardwork, jealousy, lamentation among others.

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1. Introduction

One cannot talk about Dagaaba women's play songs without knowing the people and their language. Dagaare is a language spoken in Northern Ghana, specifically in the Upper West Region. The language is Dagaare and the people are called Dagaaba (plural), and Dagao (singular). Some of the major towns in Upper West where Dagaare is spoken are; Wa, Jirapa, Nadowli, Ullo, Lawra, Nandom, Kaleo, Busie and Daffiama among others. Tuna and its surrounding areas in the Northern Region of Ghana also speak Dagaare (Bodomo, 1997). Even though there are many dialects in the Upper West Region, four main regional dialects of Dagaare are identified, namely Northern Dagaare, Central Dagaare, Southern Dagaare and Western Dagaare (Bodomo 1997).

Northern Dagaare is spoken in the Nandom and Lawra traditional areas, and neighbouring Burkina Faso. The Central Dagaare covers Jirapa, Ullo, Daffiama, Nadowli and areas under their jurisdiction. Southern Dagaare is the dialect spoken in Kaleo, Wa (the regional capital), and their surrounding villages. Western Dagaare (Birifor) is spoken in areas lying on the western side of the Black Volta River in Burkina Faso and La Côte d'Ivoire. These dialects however are variants of the same language and should not be viewed as separate languages because they are mutually intelligible. The data for this study is analyzed using the Central Dagaare.

Genetically, Dagaare has been classified as a member of the Oti-Volta group of the Gur branch of the Niger-Congo language family (Bendor- Samuel, 1989; Naden, 1989; and Bodomo 1997, 2000). Languages that are related to this family include Dagbani, Mampruli, Kusaal, and Buli, in the (Northern Region), Farefari, and Moore in the (Upper East Region). These languages are referred as 'Mabia' (Bodomo, 1997). (Literally means 'my mother's child', referring to, a brother or a sister). The 'Mabia' group is believed to have descended from the same ancestral root.

Predominantly, Dagaaba are into agriculture; farming of crops and rearing of livestock. Owing a big farm or a big kraal is a mark of a wealthy man. However, sometimes drought causes wide spread crop failure and bushfires burn food and property there by causing famine. On the contrary, heavy rains may flood all the rivers and streams and wash away all the farm products which also results to famine. Also, an outbreak of some animal diseases like anthrax, fowl pox, Newcastle disease and others may cause the death of a man's livestock leaving him in poverty. The main crops include millet, maize rice, groundnuts, cowpeas, corn, beans, guinea corn, yam etc. Farming activities are dependent upon the rainy and dry seasons. The rainy season lasts from roughly May to October and that is the time to plow, sow, and tend to new crops. Thus this is the normal time for long working hours for the

people (Bodomo & Mora, 2002: 2). The dry season lasts from roughly November to April and is the time to harvest and prepare for the next season. Rearing of animals includes cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and birds like fowls and guinea fowls. Besides farming and rearing, there are other works that Dagaaba are into. Some of them are fishing, hunting, carving, pottery, basketry, pito brewing, cake making (Puotege 2009, Ali 2017).

In most Dagaaba communities the young men after farming usually travel down South especially to farming areas like the Bono and Ashanti Regions to work as farm labourers to earn some income to enable them return home and solve some pertinent problems. They usually return when another farming season is due. Today however, the young men no longer wait until dry season before traveling; they leave anytime to the mining areas called 'galamsee' in search of money and leave their farms for the elderly to struggle with. The young ladies equally migrate to the cities to work as porters, popularly known as 'kaayaayee' while others join the men at the 'galamsee' areas. Some of them are also seriously engaged in other business ventures like construction, operating stores and all kinds of trading in and outside the region.

The staple food of the Dagaaba is 'saabo' (TZ) and the common wear is the 'Dagakparoo' (smock) for men and 'Dagawagys' (woven cloth) for women. The inheritance system of the Dagaaba is patrilineal. Among the Dagaaba, during marriage contraction they use cowries, ceddis or cattle as the bride wealth to the woman's family depending on which part of Dagao the lady is coming from. Ownership of children depends upon the payment of the bride wealth. The Dagaaba have so many activities that portray their culture and many of such activities are accompanied by songs. Apart from that, at their leisure time especially during the dry season where they have less work, the women usually gather at the forecourt especially when there is moonlight to sing various play songs and perform different dances for relaxation and for entertainment.

Ullo community which is the study area is located in the Jirapa Municipality of the Upper West region of Ghana. The Municipality is located in the north western corner of the Upper West Region of Ghana and one of the eleven districts in the region. It lies approximately between latitudes 10.25° and 11.00° North and longitudes 20.25° and 20.40° West with a territorial size of 1,188.6 square kilometers representing 6.4 percent of the regional landmass (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Jirapa Municipality is bordered to the south by the Nadowli-Kaleo District, to the north by the Lambussie-Karni district, to the West by Lawra Municipality and to the east by the Sissala West District. The Jirapa Municipality is 62 km away from Wa, the Regional capital (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Its location presents a special development advantage for the Municipality.

The Municipality is not well drained as no major rivers are found except the intermittent tributaries of the Black Volta River (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). These are Kaabaa around Ullo, Bakpong near Baazu, Dazugri in Jirapa and Telenbe at Tizza. In the long dry season, these tributaries dry up leaving the district with no surface water catchment for domestic and agricultural purposes. The valleys of these tributaries are suitable for the development of small-scale irrigation dams and dugouts for dry season gardening, fishing and watering of animals, especially cattle (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). There are however, small-scale dams and dug-outs scattered throughout the Municipality. Konzokala, Tizza, Jirapa and Ullo are some of the places where one can find dams and dug-outs. Topographically, the landscape of the Municipality is generally flat and low-lying with average height of 300 meters above sea level (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). There are few plateau surfaces ranging between 1,000-1,150 feet. These are found in Yagha and Jirapa (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

The soil of the Municipality is mainly sandy loam with underlying hard iron pans (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). There are however narrow strips of alluvial soils along the numerous dry valleys of the tributaries of the Black Volta River suitable for rice farming. It is important to remark that the sandy loam is susceptible to severe sheet and gully erosion caused by surface run-off during the peak of the wet season. The widespread erosion adversely affects not only the fertility of the soil but also contributes in silting the few dams in the district (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Generally, however, the sandy loam is very fertile and enhances large scale cultivation of groundnuts. There are large tracks of fertile soils in Somboro, Tuggo, Han and Mwankuri areas that can support large-scale agricultural production. Also, there are gravel pits scattered all over the Municipality for road construction. The extensive Birrimian formation and granite rocks largely found around Yagha and Jirapa store considerable quantities of ground water which serves as the main source of water for sinking boreholes and hand dug wells. Geological survey carried out by a mining company in 1998 holds that the rocks contain gold deposits. Azumah Resources Ltd, an Australian based mining company is currently conducting exploration with the hope of developing a mine at Yaga.

The district is located in the tropical continental climate regime with mean annual temperature ranging between 28° C to 31° C which offers the opportunity for the development of solar energy (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). During the months of April/May-October the district experience a single rainy season induced by the moist monsoon winds with an intensity of 1,000-1,100mm per annum and humidity ranging between 70-90 percent but falling to 20 percent in the dry season (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). The rain fall pattern within the season is irregular which makes it difficult to predict for any cropping year as long period of no rain often punctuate the wet season, leading to partial or total crop failures. The prevailing winds, the tropical continental air mass blowing from the North-East (Sahara), are cold, dry and dusty (Harmattan) usually between November to March. During

this period of harsh weather, deaths caused by outbreaks of Cerebro-spinal Meningitis (CSM) and other diseases are common in the Municipality (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

The vegetation of the Municipality is generally the Guinea Savannah woodland with light undergrowth and scattered medium sized trees. The major trees which are also the economic ones are shea, dawadawa, baoba and neem. Human activities such as bush burning, tree felling for fuel wood and charcoal burning, improper farming practices and the excavation of vast areas for sand and gravel all contribute immensely to destruction of the natural vegetation and therefore the environment. The Municipality has no major forest reserves except some isolated pockets at Somboro, Tuolong and Yagbetuolong along the Black Volta that are undeveloped (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

The Municipality is made up of one main indigenous ethnic group namely the Dagaaba with two (2) Paramoucies namely the Jirapa Paramoucy and Ullo Paramoucy. There are however pockets of other ethnic groups such as Sissalas, Moshi, Wangara, Fulani and other ethnic groups from the southern part of Ghana. There has been a long-standing peaceful ethnic and religious co-existence in the district, which serves as a potential for development investment in the Municipality. The main festivals of the Jirapa Traditional area are: the Bonjo and Bogre festivals. The Bonjo festival is developmental oriented which brings the youth of the traditional area together each year to deliberate on the development of the area. The Bogre festival on the other hand, is a religious festival, which is shrouded in secrecy. It is an annual festival, which falls immediately after the harvest of crops. Available statistics from the 2010 Population and Housing Census Report identify three main religious groups in the Municipality including Christianity (65.9%), Islam (10.4%) and Traditional (18.8%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

It is believed that the legendary Bayong of Dantie left his footprint on a Baobab tree at a place now called Bayongyir during the Samori- Babatu slave wars in 1902-1932 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). It is also a historical fact that the donkey of another great leader, Dootoraa of Gbare left its footprints on a rock surface in the village not far from Jirapa.

Agriculture remains the main economic activity in the Municipality with 67.1 percent of the people in the Municipality engaged in agriculture, which is largely subsistence in nature (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Very few farmers are engaged in large-scale production of cereals and legumes in Han and Mwankuri areas. Cash crops cultivated in the Municipality are shea nuts, cotton, groundnuts and cashew. The rearing of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and poultry are mainly produced as a supplement to crop farming (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). A few farmers however engage in large-scale livestock production in the Han and Ping areas (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

2. Statement of the Problem

Many writers and researchers have worked on some aspects of the Dagaaba oral literature such as; Saanchi (1992 & 2002) worked on the Dagaaba dirge: A study of its structure and style and the Linguistic Parallelism and the Dagaaba dirge respectively. Saanchi (2002) citing Levin (1962) discusses the unity in poetry. Yemeh (2002) discusses the Dagaaba Dirge. Bodomo and Mora (2007) documented Spoken and Sung Text of the Dagaaba of West Africa. Kyiileyang (2009) discusses the Figurative Representation in Dagaaba Oral Literature. Sanortey (2012) discusses the Aesthetics of Kɔntɔmbɔɔre Songs. Tengepare (2013 & 2015) worked on the Literary Appreciation of Dagaare Work Songs and the Aesthetics of Dagaaba Women Play songs respectively. Kogri (2014) discusses the Thematic and the Aesthetic Analysis of Dagaaba proverbs. Okpewho (1992) observes that there is no occasion or activity in traditional African life that is not accompanied by songs and chants and these songs and chants evolve around themes. Based on Okpewho's observation, it has come to knowledge that even though various analyses have been done on the Dagaaba oral literature, much attention is not given to Dagaaba women play songs and their themes. There is therefore the need to study the Dagaaba women play songs and their themes in order to fill in this gap.

2.1 Research Question

The study was guided by the following research question.

What are the main themes around which the Dagaaba women compose their play songs?

3. Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research design. Qualitative research is a method developed in social science to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena (Myers, 2009). A research is qualitative when it tries to uncover complexity and understand meaning (Kankam & Weiler, 2010: 65). Qualitative research involves deriving information from observation, interviews or verbal interaction and focuses on the meaning and interpretation of the participants (Owu-Ewie, 2012). thematic analysis is seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis. It is the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn, as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006).Vanderstoep and Johnston

(2009) suggest that qualitative research produces narrative or textual descriptions of the phenomena under study. This is suitable for this study as the study seeks to identify the main themes in Dagaaba women's plays songs.

The population for this study was native Dagaare speaking women in the Upper West Region of Ghana. It was from this population that a sample of forty (40) native Dagaare speaking women from Ullo Traditional area in the Jirapa Municipality was obtained for the study.

Purposive sampling method was employed. This is a sampling method in which elements are chosen based on the purpose of the study (Owu-Ewie, 2017:31). Dagaare has four major dialects in the Upper West Region: thus, Northern Dagaare, Southern Dagaare, Western Dagaare and Central Dagaare. The data for this study was analyzed based on the central Dagaare which is studied in our schools. These native Dagaare speaking women from Ullo Traditional area in the Jirapa Municipality were chosen because they speak the central Dagaare and have knowledge in the Dagaaba women play songs.

Equipment used in data collection included tablets; android phones, notepad and pens were used to do audio-visual recording, taking of pictures and also writing down some observations that were made during the data collection. The data collected was analyzed based on the various themes around which the songs were composed. The recorded songs were played several times and transcribed into standard Dagaare. The transcribed songs were then translated using idiomatic translation. Songs that have the same theme were identified and grouped under that particular theme.

3.0 Results

3.1 Main Themes in Dagaaba Women's Plays Songs

Theme is the major, dominant or central idea of a work of literature including stories, novels, plays and poems (Agyekum, 2013). The theme may be referred to as the main idea or the subject matter of literary work. Okpewho (1992) observes that there is no occasion or activity in traditional African life that is not accompanied by songs and chants and these songs and chants evolve around themes. Okpewho identified some themes in songs and chants as love, praise, criticism, war and death. The Dagaaba women play songs are also composed based on some of these themes. Some of the major themes that are found in the Dagaaba women play songs are enumerated below.

3.2. The Theme of Praise/love in Dagaaba Women's Plays Songs

Love, the feeling of affection or tenderness toward a person or a thing, is expressed in traditional African songs in several ways (Okpewho, 1992). He expresses that the theme of praise is to some extent similar to that of love because both sentiments are fundamentally based in a feeling of admiration for a person or an object. The language of praise and love are often lofty and exaggerated as the singers usually try to impress their audience. In the Dagaaba women's play songs the singer uses some adjectives to praise the boyfriend.

Example: 1

LS: Hawoo n meɲ sene la yaa
N meɲ sene la dɔɔbilii pɔɔ kpekyaaandie

Hawoo n meɲ sene la yaa
N meɲ sene la dɔɔbilii pɔɔ kpekyaaandie

CH: Hawoo n meɲ sene la yaa
N meɲ sene la dɔɔbilii pɔɔ 'kpekyaaandie

Hawoo n meɲ sene la yaa
N meɲ sene la dɔɔbilii pɔɔ 'kpekyaaandie'

LS: Hawoo n meɲ sene la yaa
N meɲ sene la 'boreɛ boreɛ' zoyaare wee

Hawoo n meɲ sene la yaa
N meɲ sene la 'boreɛ boreɛ' zoyaare wee

CH: Hawoo n meɲ sene la yaa
N meɲ sene la 'boreɛ boreɛ' zoyaare wee

Hawoo n meɲ sene la yaa
N meɲ sene la 'boreɛ boreɛ' zoyaare wee

LS: Hawoo n meɲ sene la yaa
N meɲ sene la dɔɔbilii pɔɔ dɔɔbil-goɲo na
Hawoo n meɲ sene la yaa

Hawoo my boyfriend is
My boyfriend is the light of
the room among the boys
Hawoo my boyfriend is
My boyfriend is the light of
The room among the boys
Hawoo my boyfriend is
My boyfriend is the light of
the room among the boys
Hawoo my boyfriend is
My boyfriend is the light of
the room among the boys
Hawoo my boyfriend is,
My boyfriend is the rabbit
that runs round the farm
Hawoo my boyfriend is,
My boyfriend is the rabbit
that runs round the farm
Hawoo my boyfriend is
My boyfriend is the rabbit that runs round the farm
Hawoo my boyfriend is
My boyfriend is the rabbit that runs round the farm
Hawoo my boyfriend is
My boyfriend is the rabbit that runs round the farm
Hawoo my boyfriend is
My boyfriend is that kapok tree boy among the boys
Hawoo my boyfriend is

N meŋ sene la dɔɔbilii poc dɔɔbil-goŋo na

CH: Hawoo n meŋ sene la yaa

N meŋ sene la dɔɔbilii poc dɔɔbil-goŋo na

Hawoo n meŋ sene la yaa

N meŋ sene la dɔɔbilii poɔ dɔɔbil-goŋo na

The singer is praising the boyfriend using some adjectives that are exaggerating. For instance, the singer uses adjectives like kpekyaaane die ‘the light of the room’, boreɛ boreɛ zoyaare weɛ ‘fast running rabbit’, dɔɔbil-goŋo na’, dɔɔbil-goŋo na ‘kapok tree’ etc in praising the boyfriend.

My boyfriend is that kapok

tree boy among the boys

Hawoo my boyfriend is,

My boyfriend is that kapok tree boy among the boys

Hawoo my boyfriend is,

My boyfriend is that kapok tree boy among the boys

3.3. The Theme of Lamentation in Dagaaba Women’s Plays Songs

Some of the Dagaaba women play songs are songs of lamentation. They express feelings of disappointment and regret. This is clearly displayed in the song below.

Example: 2

LS: N naŋ da wa paaloŋ, N naŋ da wa paaloŋ yee

CH: Salaa laare leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ leŋ

LS: N naŋ da wa paaloŋ N maŋ gaŋ la die kyɛ kpe

CH: Salaa laare leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ leŋ

LS: N maŋ gaŋ la die kyɛ kpe a te woŋ yeli muno muno

CH: Salaa laare leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ leŋ

LS: N naŋ wa kore belaa yeli muno muno zaa baareɛ

CH: Salaa laare leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ leŋ

LS: N naŋ wa kore belaa, N maŋ gaŋ la kyaaraa poc

CH: Salaa laare leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ leŋ

LS: N naŋ wa kore belaa N ne booreŋ laŋ gaazie

CH: Salaa laare leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ saa leŋ leŋ leŋ

In this song the singer is lamenting over the way she has been handled by her husband. She is comparing the early days of her marriage to the present time. For instance, the singer says; N naŋ da wa paaloŋ N maŋ gaŋ la die kyɛ kpe ‘When I came first I use to sleep in the chamber.’ N naŋ wa kore belaa N maŋ gaŋ la kyaaraa poc ‘When I became a little old I sleep in the hall.’ So, the singer is lamenting over the way husbands normally handle their wives at the beginning of their marriage and when they become old in the marriage how they are treated by the same men.

Example: 3

LS: Borebo daare k’ N e poŋe,

Selebo daare k’ N e poŋe,

Kye ka zie wayi yee,

Ka dɔɔ poŋe ba la e poŋe.

Sowing season, I am a wife,

transplanting season, I am a wife,

But during dry season,

A man’s wife is no longer a wife.

This is another song that is showing lamentation. The excerpt is taken from song text 8. In this song the singer is agitating that when it is time for sowing she is recognized as a wife, when it is time for transplanting, she is recognized as a wife, but during dry season, a man’s wife is no longer recognized as a wife.

Example: 4

LS: K’ n biiri yeŋj naa,

Maa koŋ zeŋ dɔɔ dieŋ yaa!

K’ n biiri yeŋj naa,

Maa koŋ zeŋ dɔɔ dieŋ yee yee

A e dɔɔ boŋ mɔɔ?

Kannyiri belaaŋ le la

If not because of my children

I won’t sit in man’s house

If not because of my children

I won’t sit in man’s house

And do what with a man?

It is just a little patience

This excerpt is taken from song text 17. In this song, the singer is lamenting. She is sad and telling the audience that if not because of her children, she will not stay in a man’s house, that what is she doing with a man? That one just needs a little patience. The message that the singer is conveying to the audience shows that the singer is regretting for going into marriage.

Example: 5

LS: Dɔɔ yaa

Dɔɔ ba e neɛ

Dɔɔ yaa

Dɔɔ yaa, dɔɔ yaa, dɔɔ yaa

A man,

A man is not human.

A man,

A man, a man, a man,

The excerpt above is taken from song text 34. The singer is lamenting over the death of a friend's child by asking the question that what kind of bad luck is that. In human society and for matter the Dagaaba, it is seen to be odd for a child to die while the parents are still alive. Society normally frowns on that. Therefore, when that happens, it is always considered as a bad luck because it is assumed that children should mourn their parents and not the other way round.

The theme of caution in the Dagaaba women's plays songs

A caution may be sounding formal warning to someone against danger. Caution may be an advice given to a person to avoid danger. The Dagaaba women play songs are composed based on various themes and the theme of caution is one. Below are examples of songs that are sounding caution to the audience.

Example: 11

LS: Yiriŋ lere!	The house is collapsing!
Yiriŋ lere!	The house is collapsing!
Neŋkpoŋ faa zeŋ kyɛ hoono	A bad elder sits While moaning!
Yiriŋ lere!	The house is collapsing!

The excerpt above is taken from song text 13 and it is cautioning the landlord. The singer is saying that the house is collapsing. The first two lines are sounding warning that the house is collapsing and the third line is cautioning that a bad elder that sits while moaning, the house is collapsing.

Example: 12

LS: Ye nyɔge taa taa le!	You should be united
Ye nyɔge taa taa le!	You should be united
Kɛɛ ba nɔnema moɔ yele ye taŋ yoo!	If your enemies are complaining don't mind them
Ye nyɔge taa taa le!	You should be united
Ye nyɔge taa taa le!	You should be united
Kɛɛ ba nɛnema moɔ yele ye taŋ yoo!	If your enemies are complaining don't mind them

This excerpt is taken from song text 14. In lines 1 & 2 the singer is cautioning the audience that they should be united and in line 3 she is saying that they should ignore their enemies when they are complaining. The first three lines are repeated in lines 4, 5 and 6.

Example 13

LS: Pɔge faa see dalugiri	An ugly woman is better than a log pillar
O moɔ ba see dalugiri	she is better than a log pillar
A borebo saa naŋ maŋ mi,	when it rains,
O maŋ ba gaa te bore?	Doesn't she go to sow?

The above excerpt is taken from song text 26. In this song the singer is drawing the attention of the general public that, no matter how ugly your wife is, but she is better than a log pillar that is standing in the room. She supports her argument by saying that when it rains, the ugly wife goes to sow which in fact the log pillar can not do. She is then cautioning the men in particular that even if one has a wife that is ugly but she is better than the log pillar.

Example 14

LS: Koɔ wa gaaɛ toɔ yele yee!	When you go don't say anything yee!
N kyɛɛ ma woo!	My dear friend woo!
Koɔ wa gaaɛ toɔ yele yee!	When you go, don't say anything yee!
Ziezaa ka yeɛ be	There are problems everywhere

The excerpt above is taken from song text 29. In this song, the singer is advising married women. She is cautioning married women not to share their marital issues with their parents when they visit them. Some women are used to sharing their marital problems with their parents and she is now cautioning a woman who is going to visit her parents that when she goes she should not tell her parents anything concerning her marriage because there are problem everywhere. It is not only one person that has problems or it is not only one marriage that has issues. Every marriage has its own special problems because there is no perfect marriage anywhere.

Example 15

LS: Ye ta maŋ laara nenyeni yee!	You shouldn't laugh at a single person yee
Nenyeni kye laabo	Single person should not be laughed at
CH: Ye ta maŋ laara nenyeni yee!	You shouldn't laugh at a single person yee
Nenyeni kye laabo	Single person should not be laughed at

This excerpt is taken from song text 30. The message the singer is sending across is that no one should laugh at a single person. If you see that somebody is alone in a particular house, you should not think that the person was the only one that was born to that family. There were many people but it is death that has killed all of them leaving that single person. So the singer is therefore cautioning the general public that when they see a single person they should not laugh at that person because it is death that has made that person single.

Example 16

LS: Ta yi yee yaa!	Don't divorce!
Ta yi zagloŋ.	Don't divorce for nothing.
CH: Ta yi yee!	Don't divorce!
LS: Ta yi yee yee yaa n kyene ma	Don't divorce my dear friend,
CH: Ta yi yee	Don't divorce.
LS: Ta yi yee yaa!	Don't divorce!
Ta yi zagloŋ.	Don't divorce for nothing.
CH: Ta yi yee!	Don't divorce!
Koo wa kuli a serɛ k'o ba sãã fo,	If you marry a husband and he has not wronged you,
Ta yi yoo!	Don't divorce!

This excerpt is taken from song text 33. The singer is advising a married woman who is threatening to divorce the husband. The singer is telling this person that she should not divorce the husband because if she divorces the husband what will she do with her children, her father-in-law and mother-in-law. So the singer is cautioning this woman against divorce.

3.4. The Theme of Rivalry in the Dagaaba Women's Plays Songs

From the analysis it is also realized that the Dagaaba women play songs also revolve around the theme of rivalry. Culturally Dagaaba are into polygamy and in a polygamous family it is not always easy to have complete love or peace among the women. The oral artists compose their songs based on some of the issues they see or hear happening between rivals. The excerpt below is a song concerning rivalry.

Example: 17

LS: Dmaaŋa da koŋ zoro baa	Monkey would not have feared dog,
A e wola da koŋ zoro baa?	Why won't it fear dog?
Baa naŋ taa poteere	Dog has a supporter
Dmaaŋa meŋ poteere bæ?	Where is monkey's Supporter?

The excerpt above is taken from song text 4. The singer uses metaphorical language to convey her message to the audience. The singer uses Dmaaŋa 'monkey' and baa 'dog' to represent the rivals. Dmaaŋa represents first wife and baa represents second wife. It is an undeniable fact that a monkey and a dog are rivals and whenever a monkey sees a dog, it hides not because the dog is stronger, but because it has a supporter.

Example: 18

LS: Yontaa nyuuri la yee!	This is rivalry yee!
Yontaa nyuuri la!	This is rivalry!
Kaŋ de ŋmane kaŋ te pege meŋ,	Even I picked a calabash to wash,
Ka yontaa nycge faa.	And my rival seizes it,

This excerpt is taken from song text 23. This is another song that is showing rivalry. The singer is telling the audience that it is rivalry because if she picks up a calabash to go and wash and her rival seizes it from her. So, the singer has composed this song for the audience to know what is happening between her and her rival.

3.5. The Theme of Jealousy in the Dagaaba Women's Plays Songs

Example 19

LS: A yiri ŋa koŋ taa bale,	This house should not have offsprings,
A yiri ŋa deme da koŋ taa bale,	The members of this house should not have offsprings,
Pookpolee da teere ka,	Enemies thought that,
yiri ŋa eŋ deme da koŋ taa bale.	The members of this house should not have offsprings

LS: A yiri ŋa da naa oo moo,	This house should have chewed grass,
A yiri ŋa deme da naa oo moo,	The members of this house should have chewed grass,
Wanɔnema da teere ka,	Enemies thought that,
Yiri ŋa eŋ deme da naa oo moo.	The members of this house should have chewed grass.

Example 20

LS: Bɔmbaala yeŋ koŋ maale yee!	Poor person's problems can never be solved yee!
Dɔndɔmɔ teereɛ,	Enemies thought,
Bɔmbaala yeŋ koŋ maale!	Poor person's problems can never be solved!
Anaŋ maala waana le!	They are becoming solved!

The excerpts above are taken from song text 15 and 35 respectively. In the first stanza of example 19 the singer is saying that the enemies of their family thought that they should not have offsprings. And in the second stanza, the singer said the enemies of their family thought that they should have been eating grass. In example 20, the singer is saying that the enemies of the poor person thought her problems should not have been solved but that

they have been solved. The wishes of the enemy are not the wish of God. All the above excerpts are expressing jealousy in our society.

4. Conclusion

The study made collection of Dagaaba Women's plays songs and analyzed the themes around which the Dagaaba women compose their songs. The analyses have revealed that the Dagaaba women's play's songs are composed based on various themes such as; praise, love, caution, lamentation, rivalry and jealousy. It is observed that the Dagaaba women play songs and the Dagaaba dirge have similar themes. For instance Yemeh (2002) explained that the Dagaaba dirge is a lamentation song sang at the death of someone which is also seen in the Dagaaba women's play's songs.

5. Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Due to lack of time, the study could not cover the entire Dagaaba land. The data was collected in the Ullo Traditional area therefore the results may not be generalized to the entire Dagaaba land. Future researchers may widen their scope to cover the other areas of the Dagaaba land.
2. Some aspects of the Dagaaba oral literature have been worked on. However, much attention is not given to songs. I recommend researchers to extend their attention to the various types of the Dagaaba songs for they are sources through which social and cultural issues can be addressed.
3. Also comparative study should be made by researchers on the themes of Dagaaba women's play's songs and Dagaaba bawaa songs.

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Biodata of First Author

Marcelline Tengepare is from a community called Ullo-Kogri under Jirapa Municipality in the Upper West Region of Northern Ghana. She was born into the Tengepare family on the 28th day of September, 1967. She started education in Ullo Roman Catholic Primary and Middle School from 1976-1984. In 1985 she gained

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Eugene Naah Kogri was born on the 6th of January, 1972 at Ul-kpong in the Jirapa Municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana. He had his first and second degrees in Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Ghanaian Language Studies (Dagaare) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) in Ghanaian Language (Dagaare) in 2014 and 2007 respectively from University of Education, Winneba in the Central Region of Ghana.

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