

## **The Structure and Literary Analysis of Fareferi Libation Text**

**Barnabas A-inkonge**

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines libation text; a type of oral literature text in Fareferi (Mabia language). The phenomenon existed in many African cultures but has received descriptive cultural analysis. The main purpose of the paper is to examine the structure of the libation text and to provide literary analysis to it. The study design for this study is qualitative. Data for this study was collected through recording of ten native speakers from five Ninkare speaking communities of Fareferi in the Upper East Region of Ghana. It is evident that the form/structure and style of Fareferi libation text is a three-structured text; beginning, middle and finally conclusion. The language used is poetic and full of literary devices. It is therefore can be confirmed that Fareferi libation text has a structure different from other languages in Africa. We also found that the libation text is full of literary devices

*Keywords:* **Fareferi, libation text, structure, literary analysis, oral literature**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Libation among the Fareferi is a cultural act of praying through the ancestors and the principal deities to the Supreme Being (God). One of sociolinguistic significance of libation text is the continuous communication between the visible (living) and the invisible (our departed ancestors), principal deities and the Supreme Being. Libation ritual has been an important component of African oral literature and African culture. This means that libation is not only a cultural activity but an oral literature. Finnegan (2015) describes oral literature as being dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on specific occasions, verbal artistry playing an important part and that there is no other way in which it can be realized as a literary product without oral performance.

A number of studies have been conducted on some sections of libation in various languages across the world. These include; Adam (2010), who devoted his discussing on the aesthetics of the language of the Nae Wulomo's performance. Much of his work is on content, explicatory, supplication and invocation

which is more sociocultural analysis of the language of the text. Aku-shika (2016) discusses more about occasions in which libation prayer is said e.g. naming, marriage, funerals etc. Agbedor (1996) defines prayer as a means by which a supplicant petitions a higher being for benefits or protection against evil, or a means by which he offers praise and thanks for benefits received.

Mensah & Ekawan (2016) discussed the language of libation rituals in the context of Efik traditional marriage. Their emphasis was on the form and style of language used as well as the structure (morphology and syntax) of libation prayer, which are coded in specific cultural message. They stated that the ritualised and symbolic language of Efik libation performances is generally solemn, poetic, less manipulative and not structurally open-ended. Though they employ commonplace in every day narrative, they have pragmatic connotations that can broadly be contextual and understood in terms of the values and belief system of the Efik, given their culturally shape meaning and metaphysical presupposition. The purpose of this study is therefore to discuss the structure and the literary use of language in Farefari libation text.

I employed descriptive analysis to demonstrate that Farefari libation is a three-structured in form and uses many literary devices.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE LANGUAGE**

According to Dakubu (2003), the name most widely known in the rest of Ghana is undoubtedly Faráfará, it was a nickname given by Nigerian soldiers to their Gurensi comrades-in-arms during 1914 -1918. The name Farafara was taken from the greeting fará fará or fara which expresses gratitude, or a general statement of 'well done'. Farefari is used to refer to the language and speakers. The term Farefari often anglicised as Frafra is often used to refer to the cluster of dialects of which Taln, Nabt, Booni, Gurenε and Nankani are members. Geographically, the speakers of Farefari are located in Upper East Region of Ghana. The language is spoken in seven districts out of fifteen districts in the region. These include Bolgatanga District, Bolgatanga East district, Bongo District, Talensi District, Nabdám District, Kasena-Nankana East and Kasena-Nankana West Districts. (.Naden & Schaefer, 1973; Nsoh 1997: 2011: Dakubu 1996 & Atintono, 2011).

## THEORETICAL FRAME WORK AND ASSUMPTION:

The theoretical framework on which this paper is based on, is **the issue of context and text** by Agyekum (2013, p.44). He refers text to language as, the structure, phraseology and the cohesive links between the mass of words used in communicating the message and producing the literary work. He argues that language in communication is where language is used in real life and particular contexts. To him language of literature when carefully analysed under context, can tie up with pragmatics and discourse analysis.

Citing Syal (1994, p.5) who posits that “literary texts like other discourse, are not just collection of sentences but are composed of utterances functioning within a textual context in certain specifiable and analysable ways”. Agyekum (ibid) added that “if one looks at only the language of a literary piece without considering the context, then the function and socio-cultural knowledge of the text is missing. This study chooses to use issue of context and text because the Farefari libation language uses pragmatics and literary devices. The pragmatics and literary devices make Farefari libation text contextual and needed to be analysed before arriving at a certain meaning.

## METHODOLOGY

Data for the study was collected from both primary and secondary source. For the primary data, I consulted and recorded utterances of the ten native speakers who have lived most of their lives in the language **area**. They comprised of ten men with their age ranging between fifty and seventy five years. This because it is only the elderly men in the community or the household are qualified to make libation. However, all the speakers were Ninkarɛ lectors in their respective towns and levels of libation. The five towns includes Nabaagɔ, Nantugɔ, Siiregɔ, Lankɔ and Manyɔɔ. The types of libation include; community based libation, clan based libation and ancestral based libation. The selection was to enable us ascertain whether the structure and the use of literary devices occurred in the three types of libation. The people were selected partly because of ability to speak the language and partly because of their experience in making libation. The recorded data was translated into English. The secondary data was the collection of family libation prayers by Ayelapokiya, (2005).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

### THE STRUCTURE OF FAREFARI LIBATION TEXT

Agyekum (2013) says that every literary work has a style and structure. The syntax deals with the structure of the phrases, clauses and sentences. The structure refers to the parts of the piece and normally each piece has three major parts, the initial, middle and final parts. Adam (2010) identified five structures of the Ga libation text which he cited from Engmann (1961) as: Introduction, invocations, narration of purpose, supplications, and conclusion.

Farefari libation text is broadly considered into three major stages. With a critical observation of the text under study, Farefari libation has three main segments just like Agyekum (ibid) discussed. In the sample libation text for instance portrays that; Lines 1-2 is the invocation stage. Calling or inviting the ancestors or deities and welcoming them. Lines 3-7 is the stage of the reason or the purpose of calling ancestors or deities. Lines 8-15 is the final and supplication stage; in the supplication stage, pledges, vows, curses, blessings etc. are made here. The sample text under study is a libation text that was performed by a father to save his child who was very sick.

#### Invocation (Beginning/Starting)

Farefari libation text begins with invocation, the call of the ancestral spirits and gods. The performer begins the invocation by invoking the ancestral spirits first in their hierarchy of authority from the least powerful to the most powerful. After that, the principal deities who are believed to be higher in authority than the ancestral spirits are invoked. The Supreme Being, Almighty God is the last and final in the invocation. Making libation in Farefari simply means, "call and send". The younger ancestral spirits are invoked first and sent to the eldest ancestral spirits who are invoked and sent to the principal spirits so that together with the ancestral spirits, they send the message of the living to the Supreme Being (Almighty God) for address. They are always welcomed with water which is a traditional practice among the Farefari people. The message of invocation is more poetic and full of personal names of the ancestral spirits, principal spirits and the Supreme Being. Sometimes, praises and appellations are added to the invocation.

This is an invocation of the sample libation text below, very poetic.

*N so Aduŋɔ, isege saazuo to'e ko'om wa tari paε yaaba Agambarε*

1SG father, *Aduŋɔ* get up take water DEM take reach grandfather, *Agambarɛ*

*Ti ya pɛ yaaba Amilema ti ya sige tinganen*  
 that 2SG reach grandfather Amilema that 2PL go down river god

*ti ya lagum taaba zom pɛ Winɛ.*  
 that 2PL together EMPH climb reach God.

‘My father *Aduŋɔ*, wake up, take this water and go to my ancestor *Agambarɛ*’

So that you get to ancestor *Amilema* and you together go down to the river god so that you together climb up to the supreme God. His father (the less powerful ancestor), was given the libation to be taken to *Agambarɛ* (the senior to the first ancestor) so that they will reach *Amilema* (the senior to the first two ancestors) before they reach the river god (principal deity) and they together go up to the Supreme Being, God with the request of the living.

**Statement of Purpose (Middle)**

At this stage, the performer gives the reasons for the libation. It is often the message or the purpose of the calling of the ancestors, narrative e. g.

*La de la guum n ka giser-i goone wa puan bala ti mam*

it is FOC sleep PRT NEG sleep-PROG wall DET POSTPOS why that 1SG

*bɔ’ɔr-a fu ko’om wa*  
 give HAB 2SG water DEM

‘It is the sleep that does not sleep in this house that is why I am giving you this water (libation)’. Meaning, someone is sick in the house and the performer is seeking for healing/intervention from the ancestors.

*Tumam buvɔa ka mi sɛla, la de la yamam n mi Wuntɛɛŋa la yu’uŋɔ ɛreba*

1PL living NEG know anything it is FOC 2PL PRT know afternoon and night roamers  
*peŋe A- aniteem base fɔw.*

do away pain leave far.

“We the living know nothing, it is you who know both day and night searchers, do away of pains!”

This means that human beings have limited knowledge but they, the ancestors have unlimited knowledge. If somebody cause this sickness in day or by the nighttime, you know. So let this

sickness/suffering go away and replaced with good health. The main message is narrative; more proverbs are used and metaphorical language etc.

### **Conclusion stage** (Curse/Vows/ blessing)

The libation text is always concluded with curses to those who don't want the wellbeing of the performer, blessings to those who want their wellbeing and finally make a vow to the ancestors to be met on fulfilling their request passionate e.g.

*Basε ti beere ta yileger-a la ti balum-miηa lebege yoore Ko-ma'asega*  
 Leave that tomorrow PRT break-HAB FOC that sperm -EMPH change pot Water-ADJ

*ti fu beene zε' mε.*

that 2SG animal stand-HAB COMPL.

“Let tomorrow, by the breaking of day, this child will change to be like a cold water pot and your animal will be ready for you”. The performer is daring his ancestors to immediately intervene and heal the sickness of the ailing child so that he gives him his pledge of an animal.

*Fu san sirum dεna la bumbeo kε muen kan leme zaηa la, basε ti guum gise*

2SG if actually, are FOC wicked enter forest NEG return empty FOC let that sleep sl eeps

*goone wa puan dee `to'e fu logero.*

wall DET inside and take 2SG things.

If you are really such a powerful man who goes for hunting and does not return empty handed, let sleep sleeps in this house so that I give you your things (thanks giving)”.

This means that the performer continues to dare his ancestors. He said “if you are really such a powerful man who does not go for hunting and come home empty handed, let us see good health in this house or let this child become healthy and take the pledged items.

### **LITERARY ANALYSIS OF FAREFARI LIBATION TEXT:**

The language of libation text in Farefari is poetic and this section examines all the literary devices/ figures of language (elements) such as metaphors, proverbs, idiomatic expressions, euphemisms, personification, parallelisms etc. and how the author uses those elements to create certain effects in the libation language.

Morphologically, the structure of words in the libation text ranges from lexical items to complex inflectional words. At the level of the lexicon, some of the words are primarily common nouns or proper names and simple sentences. E.g.

*N so, Aduṛṛ isege saazu to'e ko'om wa*  
 1SG father name get up collect water DEM  
 "My father, Aduṛṛ wake up! Take this water".

The living doesn't actually see the spirit beings but they see the living. So it is an honour to say that if you are sleeping wake and take this water. To wake up also implies the emergent need of attention.

**Anaphora/ Repetition**

Repetition is a device that is not only gives a touch of beauty or attractiveness to a piece of expression (whether song or narrative or other kind of statement) but also serves certain practical purposes in the overall organization of the oral performance (Okpewho 1992).

In literature anaphora refers to a repetition of a word or words at the beginning of two or more successive clauses or verses especially for theoretic or poetic effect. In Farefari libation text, anaphora is seen in the beginning of the libation with the phrase "ti ya" being repeated in several lines e.g.

<b>Ti ya</b> pæ yaaba Amilema	<b>so that</b> you go to Amilema
<b>Ti ya</b> sigē tinganen	<b>so that</b> you go to the river god,
<b>Ti ya</b> lagum taaba zom pæ Wine	<b>so that</b> you together get to the Almighty God

This means that, consultation is a continuous process from the immediate ancestor to the highest ranking ancestors or deities until they reach the Almighty God with the message to solicit success from Him (the superior deity). Anaphora is used to create stress on their demand

**Euphemistic Names:**

The study has also discovered an instances of Euphemistic names in the language of libation text among the Farefari people. Agyekum (2013) defines euphemism as verbal art forms which the speaker uses to embellish his/her speech in an attempt to show his communicative competence and linguistic politeness with the sociocultural norms of communication. e.g.

Farefari ordinary names	Euphemistic names	Gloss.
Yire "house"	goone " wall"	house

Bia “chld”	balum “sperm”	child
Duŋa “animal”	beene “animal”	animal
Guum “sleep”	guum “health”	health

### Parallelism:

The study has also discovered some **parallelism** (semantic parallelism) expressed in Farefari libation text. Parallelism, according to Finnegan (1979, p.98) consist basically of a type of repetition (usually a binary pattern) in which one element is changed, the other-usually the syntactic frame itself remaining constant. Shipley (1960, p.297) cited in Saanchi, (2002) refers to parallelism as balanced return of structures. Semantic parallelism, according to Agyekum (2013, p.91) is the case where two sections of a text have parallel meaning. Most semantic parallelism must be based on structural parallel. In semantic parallelism, two sections of a text can be interpreted implying opposition. e.g.

Tuma bunvoo-si ka mi sela. La de la yamam n mi yu'unjo la wuntɛɛŋa yele 1PL  
 living-PL NEG know anything. it is FOC 2PL PRT know night CONJ day problem.

‘we the living don’t know anything. It is you who know both day and night problem’

Parallelism: ‘We the living don’t know....., you know .....’.

### Appellation

This is an appellation for a powerful person. Abadzivor (2007:117) cited in Amekpordi (2012) states some functions of appellation as “showing pride in personal achievements, praise, positive living, describing experience of people, counseling or warning people about dangers, expressing opinion on issues and the casting of insinuation.

In the line below, the performer used a language that would challenge the ancestors to work on his favour. He started with the ancestor’s appellation, which is “the powerful man who does not go for hunting and return home empty” and further asked him to act according to his appellation and restore the child’s health.

*Fu san sirum dena la bumbe’o ke’ muen kan leme zaŋa, base ti guum gise goone wa*  
 2SG if EMPH is FOC wicked enter forest NEG return empty, let PART sleep sleeps wall DEM  
 puan dee to’e fu loger-o.

inside CONJ take you thing-PL.

'If you are really such a powerful man who does not go on hunting and do not return empty, let this child recover from her/his sickness and take your things (thanks giving)'.

**Personification:**

The use of personification is also part of the libation language. Agyekum (2013) defines personification as a figure of speech in which a thing, an animal, or an abstract term is made human being. For example;

*Guum gise goone wa puan.*

Sleep sleeps wall DEM POSTPO

Sleep sleeps in this house.

This means that 'Sleep' here has been personified to have eyes and can sleep.

**Idiomatic expressions:**

Idiomatic expressions were also used in the Farefari libation text. Idioms are expressions in a language with a meaning that cannot be derived from the bare words involved; it is an expression that cannot be translated literally into a second language Agyekum (2013). These are;

- a) Peɲe a ani teem base fow.  
let 3SG is pain leave away.  
Do away with pain (sickness).
- b) Ti balum miɲa lebege yore ko-ma'asega.  
That sperm itself become pot water-cold.  
So that the child her/himself become completely healthy.
- c) Ze'ele ba du-ma wuntɛɲa puan.  
stand 3PL owner-PL sun POSPO  
'Let them stand in the su

**Proverbs:**

Ababila (2006) posits that Gurenɛ proverbs are not merely artistic saying; they symbolize real life situations in just a few words that consummate great meaning. Thus proverbs provide an array of values and knowledge. These are;

Zalɛ a daana bugum. Dee fum nɛre-mina n zal-i mia bugum nyoger-a yo-im  
Hold 3SG owner fire. For 2SG person-who PRT hold-PROG grass fire catch-PRO ants  
'Put fire into her/his hands'. For anyone who is using grass fire to catch ants,

a san pæ dɔgi'a bugum fu kan base.  
FOC if gets wood fire you NEG leave

if she/he gets wood fire she/he would not leave.

These proverbs in the above “to put fire in some one’s hands” means to punish someone severely while “For anyone who uses grass fire to catch ants, if he gets wood fire he will not leave” is giving warning, not to underrate your enemy. In the libation text, the performer’s child was sick and he said to the gods that, if the enemy who is harming his child, gets him (the parent), he will not leave him. This is why he asked the gods to punish the enemy.

## CONCLUSION

Generally, the structure of the Farefari libation text is in three forms; invocation, statement of the problem and conclusion which was discussed into detail in the STUDY. Some of literary devices identified from the analysed data are anaphora/repetition, euphemistic names, parallelism, appellation, personification, idiomatic expressions, proverbs and others. With the above analysis, it is clear that libation is not only a cultural activity but libation text is more of a literature than just a cultural activity.

## REFERENCE:

- Ababila, A. J. (2006). *Sociolinguistic Analysis of Gurenɛ Proverbs*. Unpublished M.Phil Thesis. University of Education, Winneba.
- Adams, G. (2010). *Libation Text in Ga: Aesthetics of the Language of the Wulomo*. In Journal of African Cultures and Languages, (ed) Department of Ghanaian Languages Education, University of Education, Winneba: volume 1. Pg 45 -55: ATGL, UEW.
- Agyekum, K. (2007). *Introduction to Literature* 2nd Edition Accra, Legon: Media Design.
- Agyekum, K. (2010). *Akan Verbal Taboos*. In the context of the Ethnography of Communication. Legon-Accra: Ghana University press.
- Agyekum, K. (2013). *Introduction to Literature* 3rd Edition Legon –Accra: Adwinsa publications (Gh) Ltd.
- Amekpordi, C. K (2012). *The Sociolinguistics of the Appellations in the Asogli State in the Volta Region Of Ghana*: Unpublished M.Phil Thesis. University of Ghana Legon.
- Atintono, A. S. (2011). *Verb morphology: Phrase structure in a Gur language (Gurenɛ)*. Saarbrücken: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.

- Ayelapokia, J. (2005). *So koka'are kã'ã yela Mirigu-Nabaanjo so'olum*. B.ed Long Essay. University of Education, Winneba.
- Bendor-Samuel, John (1971). "Niger-Congo, Gur". In Current Trends in Linguistics Vol. 7(p. 141-178). In T. Sebeok (ed.) The Hague: Mouton
- Dakubu, M. E. K. (2003). *Gurene phonology and Grammar* (Revised Edition). Legon: University of Ghana.
- Finnegan, R. (1979). *Oral Poetry: its nature, significance and social context* Cambridge: University Press.
- Okpewho, I. (1992). *Africa Oral literature: backgrounds, character, and community*. Blooming: Indiana University Press.
- Finnegan, R. (2012). *Oral Literature in Africa*. United Kingdom: Open Book Publishers CIC Ltd.
- Finnegan, R. (2005). *The How of Literature*. Oral tradition, 20(2), 164-187.
- Nsoh, E. A. (1997). Some aspects of Gurune (Frafra) nominal structure (MA thesis). University of Ghana.
- Nsoh, E. A. (2011). A lexical-functional syntax of the adjective in the Farefari Language PhD thesis). University of Ghana, Legon.
- Okpewho, Isidore. (1992). *African Oral literature*. Bollomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Saanchi, A. J. (2002). *Linguistic Parallelism and Dagaaba dirge*. Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana. In New Directions in Ghanaian Linguistics Essays in honour of 3Ds. Ed. Felix, K. Ameka. Leiden University and E. Kweku, Osam. University of Ghana Legon. Pg. 309-423
- The language of libation rituals among the Efik .Eyo Mensah and Ekawan Silva university of Calabar: Retrieved from ([www.drustvoanthropologov.si](http://www.drustvoanthropologov.si)). 01/12/2018
- Umar, A. (2014). The Aesthetics of Kukula prayers, chants and song texts. Unpublished M.Phil Thesis. University of Education, Winneba.

## APPENDIX

**INVOCATION (BEGINNING/STARTING) STAGE**

- |    |                                |   |
|----|--------------------------------|---|
| 1) | N so Aduṅo                     | my father, Aduṅo                        |
|    | Isege saazuo                   | get up and                              |
|    | To'e ko'om wa                  | collect this water                      |
| 2) | Tari pae yaaba Agambara        | send it to ground father, Agambara      |
|    | Tie ya pae yaaba Amilema       | so that you go to Amilema               |
|    | Ti ya sigē tinganen            | then to the river god,                  |
|    | Ti ya lagum taaba zom pae Wine | so that you all get to the Almighty God |

### STATEMENT OF THE OCCASION (REASON/PURPOSE)

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 3) | La de la guum n ka giseri <b>goone</b> wa puan | there is no sleep in this wall "house"      |
|    | Bala ti mam bɔ'ora fu ko'om wa                 | that is why I am giving you this water      |
| 4) | Tumam buvɔa ka mi sɛla                         | we, the living know nothing                 |
|    | La de la yamam n mi                            | you are the people who know                 |
|    | Wuntɛɛŋa la yu'uṅo ɛreba                       | about those who roam at night and day.      |
|    | Peŋe a ani teem base fɔw                       | do away with what brings pain               |
| 5) | Bunvɔa san tara gɔ'osi muŋa                    | if any person is bringing a crown of thorns |
|    | Sina ti a vuge nɛra zuo goone wa puan          | to put on someone in this wall,             |
| 6) | Inɛ paŋa la fu dikɛ tu a daana                 | try and put it back on his/her head         |
|    | La san sirum dɛna la bunvɔa nuo n pagi bim     | if it is true that, the living hand is on   |
| 7) | Dee dagaŋa yamam n boti sɛla Zale a            | but not your will, put fire in              |
|    | daana bugum dee fum nɛremina n                 | that person's hands, for he who             |
|    | zali mia bugum nyɔgera yo-im la                | is catching ants with fire from grass when  |
|    | san pae dogi'a bugum fu kan base               | he gets fire from wood, he will not leave   |

### BLESSING AND CURSING STAGE (CONCLUSION)

- |    |                                       |   |
|----|---------------------------------------|---|
| 8) | To'e ko'om mea, to'e                  | collect the water, collect.             |
| 9) | Base ti beere ta yilegera la          | let by tomorrow comes with the sperm    |
|    | Ti balum miŋa lebege yoore koma'asega | (child) becomes cool water from the pot |
|    | Ti fu beene zɛ' me                    | so that you will take an animal.        |

- 10) Fu san sirum dɛna la bumbeo kɛ muen if you are actually, that powerful man who
- 11) kan leme zaŋa la, goes for hunting and will never come back  
empty handed,
- 12) Base ti guum gise goone wa puan let sleep come to this wall(home) and  
dee to'e fu logero take your things
- 13) Base ti nyane la vi di ba duma let shame and disgrace be their portion
- 14) Ze'ele ba duma wuntɛɛŋa puan put them in the sun
- 15) To'e fu ko'omma'asega miŋa n bala collect, this is your cold flour water, collect.  
La fu zɛkɛ na'are pae Tingane la Wine and quicken your steps to tingane (principalities)  
and God
- 16) Ti tu da le wum zuo la pua goone wa puan so that we 'll no longer hear head and fever  
in this house