

Elements of Drama in Ghanaian Traditional Festivals: A Case Study of the Feok Festival among the Builsa People of the Upper East Region of Ghana

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Abstract

A good number of literary artists including Ruth Finnegan, have argued that drama is not a genre that is well developed in Africa. As a result, the origins of that entrance were marked in the main by condemnation, inferiorization, and general disregard. It was asserted or implied that blacks either had no traditions of drama indigenous to them, or had traditions that, in comparison with Europe and Asia, were merely “proto or “quasi-dramatic.” Wherever true dramatic traditions were found, they were considered to be products of the African’s encounter with Europe and therefore, were nothing more than derivatives of western forms and traditions (Jeyifo 1990) This idea was part and parcel of the implacable inferiorisation of Africa and its cultural forms that matured in Europe in the eighteenth century and remains a major constituent of Eurocentrism. This paper seeks to refute the idea that Africa had no drama or had a less developed drama. The study of the Feok Festival has basically established that some African performances during festivals have all the qualities of drama as spelt out in Aristotle’s “The Poetics” where he spelt out dramatic principles. The study, therefore, effectively sets aside the notion by some literary scholars that Africa has no well developed drama.

Keywords: Festival, drama, elements of drama,

1.0 Introduction

Ruth Finnegan, for instance, maintains, “It would perhaps be truer to say that in Africa, in contrast to Western Europe and Asia, drama is not typically a wide-spread or a developed form,” (p.500). This assertion of Finnegan should have been narrowed to literary drama at the time of her assertion, for a number of literary critics, both within and without Ghana, have disproved her assertion. Africa can be said to have a well developed form of drama when one takes a critical look at some of the performances that Africans undertake. Mvula E. S. Timpunza, writing about the Gule Wamkulu among the Chewa of Malawi for example, gives us a vivid picture of an actual performance with a variety of dramatic elements. In The Oral Performance in Africa, Rangeley had earlier written on the same Gule performance and emphasized that “The Gule Wamkulu as performed should be seen as a mystery play as well as a ritual drama In other words, it is a form of traditional (ritual) drama.

J. H. Nketia in his Funeral Dirges of the Akan People succeeded in identifying and isolating dramatic elements in the traditional Akan dirge. His literary analysis of the dirge focuses on the theme, performance, language, structure, style and scope of creativeness, Nketia’s analysis of the Akan dirge makes it clear that the performance is a classical example of ritual drama. His analysis was echoed by D.K Ghartey-Tagoe (1997) when he took the argument a step further by proving that not only dirges but also the entire celebration of a funeral, can be a piece of drama. Having researched into the “Edibo” a funeral performance of the Effutu of Winneba, Ghartey-Tagoe is able to declare convincingly, that the Edibo is a piece of ritual drama. A piece of research work which is more closely related to this study is that of Joseph Obi. He researched into the Elluo festival among the Sehwis of southern Ghana as drama. This paper is therefore, in furtherance to the discovery of Obi that there are indeed dramatic elements in the festivals that are celebrated in some African countries with specific reference to an important festival with great historical significance in Ghana.

Festivals in Ghana are celebrated among ethnic or religious groups. They are occasions that are used to remember special events in the life of an ethnic or religious group. Festivals are often characterized by merry making. Generally, festivals in Ghana are celebrated to honour the ancestors for their past good works or pay tribute to the great men who have helped to shape the destiny of the existing generation.

Yet, there are festivals used to celebrate a harvest or mark a trying moment in the life of a group of people or clan. Examples of harvest festivals in Ghana are the Homowo of the Gas, the Ohum of the Akyems, the Elluo of the Sehwis and the Feok of the Builsa in the Upper East Region. Notwithstanding the assertions of some renowned literary critics that Africa has no drama, it is interesting to realize how fallacious this assertion is, when one realizes the extent to which some of the festivals in Ghana possess dramatic elements that qualify them to be termed classical drama.

Feok is a festival celebrated by the Builsa people of the Upper East Region of Ghana. This study is intended to reinforce Ghartey -Tagoe’s conclusion that African performances have dramatic elements that qualify them to be seen as drama. Tagoe’s finding was limited to a southern traditional celebration, hence the

need for one to examine the situation in the northern part of Ghana as well. This paper, is therefore, an attempt, to establish, that there are elements of drama in the Feok festival, and to affirm that the festival is indeed a piece of classical drama. Festivals fall under what is termed traditional drama, besides the popular and literary drama that we have.

1.1 Methodology

The research was accomplished through interviews, and a combination of observations. The historical facts that surround the festival were obtained through interviews with elders of the people of the area, including some of the sub chiefs. Data on the preparations and performance of the actual celebration of the festival were obtained through a combination of covert, overt and participant observations. A research assistant who understood the Buili language was engaged for the purpose of translation.

1.2 Historical Background of Builsa Land and the Feok Festival

Builsa land in Ghana is divided into two main administrative zones (North and South). It has an estimated population of nine hundred thousand (900,000) people who are predominantly peasant farmers. The Feok festival evolved from two main dimensions. It started as a simple house hold sacrifice for good harvest and later, in the early nineteenth century, assumed the form of a more communal war dance festival. History has it that Babatu was a notorious slave raider in most parts of Northern Ghana, including the Builsa land. When the Builsa people could no longer withstand the activities of the slave raiders, they decided to take the bull by the horn. Dressed in war attire, they laid ambush at a place called 'Akumcham', where they succeeded in killing Babatu the slave raider. This event coincided with the harvest period and the time of family sacrifice. In his excitement, the chief of Sandema at that time a forebear of Nab Ayieta Azantinlow IV, elevated the celebration of the festival to include the conquest of the slave raiders. That was to commemorate the sagacity of the warriors who fought selflessly to save the people from slavery. Since then, after the usual family celebrations, a special day is set aside for the climax at Sandema, the district capital. It is at the climax that the war against the slave raiders is simulated; thus bringing back, the historical event into focus.

1.3 Preparations

The festival normally comes off around the second week of December each year. Preparation for the celebration is at two levels. First, the spiritual; this begins at the family and clan level. The various family heads appease their ancestors through libation. This takes the form of supplications of the gods and ancestors with drink. The clan heads then turn to the purification and revival of their charms, and weapons.

Meanwhile, children and women all have important preparatory roles to play. Women have to collect firewood to make sorghum malt for the local drink called *Pito*, which normally takes three days to brew. The children look for materials for the war dancers' costume in exchange for coins or food. As soon as the day for the climax of the Feok is announced, women rehearse old songs and learn new ones. A popular song that is rehearsed each year in preparation for the festival is as follows: (translated from the Buili language).

<i>Ta le pogba ta te daa</i>	We women have our day,
<i>Ni doma me tab a daa</i>	The men too have their day
<i>Kpalin dan bodu</i>	But not when it comes to war
<i>Kpari ka ta ni doma nisua</i>	At farming it is the men's pride
<i>Tani pogba na piisi</i>	And at harvest, it is our pride
<i>Kuda jam kpalin daa</i>	But when the day of war comes
<i>Ka te me na daa</i>	It is the day for all
<i>Ai ti komma</i>	Including the ancestors
<i>Ni doma a kpang a ko</i>	The men attack to kill
<i>Bako ba gala</i>	Others attack to be killed
<i>Ta le pogba te ba nyiem</i>	We refresh them with water and food
<i>Ti mare maba ta siak yila</i>	We encourage them by our songs
<i>Ti koma a maba</i>	The ancestors protect them
<i>Ti koma tuesi ba chiika</i>	And welcome their souls
<i>Babatu chnina</i>	Babatu is coming
<i>Wien ni doma</i>	Tell the men
<i>Wien ni domate ba paa ba</i>	Let the men meet them
<i>Anka dadi ba ni pa a te</i>	Than they meet us
<i>Anka dadi ba ni ko te bisinga</i>	Lest they kill our children
<i>Dani china</i>	The day is coming
<i>Dani jang</i>	The day has come
<i>Babatu jang</i>	Babatu has come

This song does not only serve to tell the people, especially the youth, of what happened many years ago but also to spell out the roles the various people in the society are expected to play in ordinary times and in times of crisis. Others compose special songs for their heroes that laid down their lives for the good of the society, while others perform dirges in remembrance of their fallen heroes during the war against the slave raiders. Meanwhile, groups of young men are seen rehearsing the war dance. The Paramount chief or King and his sub chiefs on their part prepare feverishly in secret. A few days to the climax of the festival, the king invites the clan's fetish priest to spiritually fortify the land against any evil spirit that may attempt to mar the celebration. Invitations are then sent to chiefs of surrounding villages and government officials.

1.4 The Eve of the Festival

On the eve of the festival people from all parts of the area, throng to the district capital (Sandema) for the celebration. The night before the festival, the war drum is beaten and the accompanying flute is sounded towards midnight. The festival spans through three days:

2.0 The Actual Festival (Day 1)

This is the day that the paramount chief invites all the sub chiefs to his palace. Each chief attends the meeting with his elders. The chiefs attend this meeting in wardress with all the amulets. Each of these chiefs is accompanied by a group of elders and drummers or praise singers. At the end of the meeting, the flute blower blows his flute to signify whether it is safe to celebrate the festival or not. Otherwise, some other sacrifice may be required before the actual celebration takes place.

2.1 Actual Celebration (Day Two)

On the morning of the second day, people of all walks of life make their way to the historical ebony tree under which the warriors used to keep their weapons in readiness for attack of the enemy. Some go out in a procession, amidst singing, drumming and dancing and gather under this tree. A sketch of the durbar ground is illustrated below:

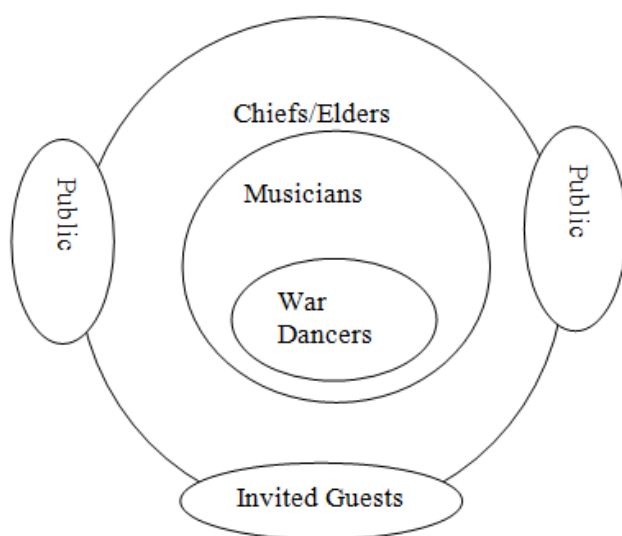


Fig. 1 Seating Arrangement

At the signal of the master of ceremony, the performance opens with drumming and singing amidst clapping of hands. There is also the flute, which sends out special messages to the public about the war against slavery and the festival as a whole. Some of the interpretations of the flute blower's music were explained to the researcher as follows;

*My message to the men.
Time to tighten your bow
Time to set your arrows
My message to the women
To those who are brave.
It's war time again*

The sub-chiefs and their elders and war dancers make a procession to the durbar ground. By this time, all the invited guests are seated whilst the king waits at home. When all is set, the fetish priest of the clan, with

the permission of the chief, makes a libation prayer to invite the spirits and the ancestors. In a spiritually possessed mood, the fetish priest, half dressed, and bare footed, performs the libation with the support of some elders. With a bottle of drink in his hands he utters the following words.

<i>Wenzuk ale tengka nyam</i>	Fathers of the Earth,
<i>Ti teng ka nyam</i>	Fathers of our land
<i>Baai ala te ti ngandiita</i>	Determiners of our harvest
<i>Tama fi biisinga za dela nwana</i>	We your children stand here once more,
<i>Aen ti sak sue nyog ale poi pectik</i>	To express our joy and happiness
<i>Ti ale nya ngandiita nalem nyiini la</i>	For the bumper harvest
<i>Fi ale te ti la</i>	You have bestowed on us.
<i>Fi gini ti</i>	You protected us
<i>Kpan niweni meena po</i>	Throughout the farming season,
<i>Ate weega, gbenma, goabaasa nueta aen</i>	From snakes, lions. Tigers, scorpions
<i>paa wae la</i>	

<i>Koi ale gebsa aen paa wao</i>	The hoes and cutlasses that we use.
<i>Ale tangbana ale sakpagsa</i>	Also from the evil spirits and witches,
<i>Ta ayen ti weenie ka boa</i>	What else can we say
<i>Agaam ti koma jaamte ka</i>	Than to thank you our fathers,
<i>Ase ti ala ate jam te ka</i>	As we thank you for all these
<i>Tan za ayen ti de ka feok nyiini</i>	We have not only come to celebrate our good harvest;
<i>Ti ayen ti maa teeri ka ti le jam ka</i>	But also to remember that we were once enslaved.
<i>yongma la</i>	
<i>Ale ti koma kpalin vari ti basi la</i>	And our fathers rose against the slave raiders.
<i>Ba kpalin nyin ziim ba gela kpi</i>	They fought and bled, they died.
<i>Ale ba jam yaak yom-daara ma kama</i>	And they won the battle.
<i>Dila ale soa ate ti biisinga jinla</i>	That is why our children today
<i>Ze yaa ba nya nidor wa Babatu</i>	Do not know or see the man Babatu

Thus through the libation the ancestors are not only being invited but they also get to know how grateful and appreciative the living are to them.

After the libation prayer, the hunt for Babatu and his allies is re-enacted. The warriors, led by a warlord, and in the midst of drummers and singers take to the bush in search of the notorious slave raider; Babatu. As they enter the bush, the flute blower leads in a war song that suggests the implication of the move to track down the slave raiders in the following song:

<i>Kuyan zagmee</i>	It has come
<i>Kuyan zagmee</i>	It has come
<i>Tugruka tommu</i>	Fierce war and shooting
<i>Tugruka tommu</i>	Fierce war and shooting
<i>Baalekule,</i>	Some will return
<i>Baalekule</i>	Some will return
<i>Baa kankule</i>	Some will not.
<i>Baa kankule</i>	Some will not.

The women singers echo this song in such a mournful mood that some of them weep; simulating a real war situation. The song serves to prepare the warriors psychologically for the hazards that are characteristic of war. They, therefore, fight not just to conquer the enemy but also to safeguard their own lives and to make sure they are among those who will return. The family members, upon hearing this song, are mentally and psychologically prepared for any loss of their members in the perceived war. As they sing, the warriors pass by the king's palace for further blessing and move into the supposed battlefield to confront the slave raiders.

Movement into the forest is irregular and stylistic in character. The leader moves fast and stops abruptly to signify impending danger (the approach of the enemy). He raises his hand to indicate a stop, points in a direction, and moves towards that, followed by the rest. The women follow the warriors, singing their praises and refreshing them with water. When the imaginary enemy is sighted, the singing, drumming and dance all take a different turn. The flute blower quickly changes to the following song:

<i>Fedan chiib</i>	If you are brave
<i>Zanitebon chaab</i>	Face me and let's butcher each other
<i>Fedan chiib</i>	If you are brave
<i>Zanitebon chaab</i>	Face me and let's butcher each other
<i>Tebon chaab</i>	Let's butcher each other
<i>Tebon chaab</i>	Let's butcher each other

The war leader, in a war cry, gives his command. The cry is echoed by the other warriors, with clubs, bows and arrows poised for attack. The leader then makes sporadic movements, sometimes drawing backwards to signify danger and indicating the need to retreat. He then strikes at an invisible enemy and advances. All the warriors do same at the ground or surrounding objects and move on.

At a point, the leader continuously stamps his feet on the ground, hitting it with his charms to signify a battle with the enemy (Babatu). This marks the turning point of the war. Finally, the leader snatches the nearest object from the ground, signifying the capture of the enemy, and raising it up for all to know that the enemy has been defeated. Here, the drumming and singing changes to a victorious song as the warriors return home. Women, children and the general public hail them for their courageous adventure. The dancers then assemble at the durbar ground where the invited guests are waiting. The King, all this while, is at his palace waiting for the result of the adventure. His elders then inform him that the battle is over and the warriors are back victoriously and waiting for his message and blessing. Amidst drumming and dancing, the King, on a horseback, is escorted to the durbar ground to deliver his anniversary speech.

Before the King delivers his message, he calls upon the warriors to demonstrate how Babatu was killed in the bush, since all the people around could not follow them to witness the event. This marks the end of the activities for the second day.

2.2 Day Three

The third and final day is devoted to a test of marksmanship, a kind of shooting competition meant to identify marksmen in the communities. An object is placed 50-60 meters away from the warriors. Each contestant is to aim and hit at the center of the object. This is to identify the village that has the best marksmen. The winner is carried shoulder-high amidst singing, drumming and dancing, back to his village.

3.0 Elements of Drama in the Feok Festival

It is important to note how the action of the warriors fall in line with classical theories of drama. Aristotle defines drama as “The imitation of an action”, This imitation of a battle fought long ago is indeed a good example of drama. Elements of drama in the Feok festival are examined with particular reference to; heroism, enactment, costume, characterization, linguistic content scenery, music and dance, and setting.

3.1 Heroism is a term used to describe legendary figures, who have made significant impact on the lives of a people at a time in history. The term hero was also used in classical times to describe people who belonged to princely classes. It generally refers to the main character in a literary work. In the Feok festival, Nab Ayieta Azantinlow IV, who was the initiator of the Feok Festival, and the longest reigning King in Ghana (1931 to 2009), represents the hero of the festival. As founder of the festival he is the embodiment of all the human virtues of the people. He is of royal birth and, therefore, an epitome of morality, and above all, of wisdom. It is for this reason that his anniversary messages are revered by all.

Moreover, the fallen heroes are remembered in the celebration. We see in the libation prayer, reference being made to those heroes who laid down their lives in defence of Builsaland and its people against slave raiders. Since King Ayieta Azantinlow IV was the hero, the festival is built around him. He was the one who convened a meeting of the sub chiefs to prepare for the festival. He directed them in the spiritual preparation for the festival. He oversaw the welfare of the people and undertook measures to ward off evil spirits during the festival. There is therefore, no doubt that the king is the embodiment of the Feok Festival and therefore, the hero by both traditional and classical standards of heroism.

3.2 Enactment and the Three Unities

Enactment in the Feok festival can be seen in three phases;

- i. Moving into the battle field,
- ii. The peak of the battle and the conquest of Babatu.
- iii. The victorious return to the town and the demonstration.

The war songs that the musicians sing are typical of a real war situation. The songs are sung in such a mournful mood that women and even some men could hardly withhold their tears. The wives of some of the warriors on parade shed tears because of the assumption that their husbands are going to war. The style of movement into the forest in search of Babatu is one of courage and maximum precaution. The warlord takes brisk steps, with sudden pauses to watch, listen and command before the next step. This is to ensure that the enemy does not take them by surprise. During this procession, each one wears a serious face. Each one puts himself in a fighting mood completely tensed up, emotionally charged, looking fierce and bloodthirsty, and can hardly afford a smile.

Others simulate wounded or injured warriors, whilst others run to their aid with herbs carried by women. When the enemy is conquered, the mood of the warriors changes from fury to joy, jubilation and

excitement. Here, people point at their relatives who took part in the search for, and conquer of Babatu and are returning alive. Though the action is an imitation, others wait in anxiety to see their relatives also appear from the bush alive.

The spiritual preparations that precede the war dance and hunt for Babatu are also enacted through libation prayer and sacrifice to the ancestors. The chief priest, dressed half naked and bare footed puts himself in a special mood. He is virtually in a trance or is spiritually possessed as he communicates with the ancestors. The libation at the durbar ground is directed to the conquered Babatu and any other person with evil intention. It goes as follows:

Te ter ti koma jiem	We thank you our ancestors (<i>hands outstretched</i>)
Ba bas te te ko Babatu	For putting Babatu under our feet (<i>pointing to the ground</i>)
Ti ba ko wa	We have conquered him (<i>pressing one hand on the ground</i>)
Ta nye jiem	We give you drink for that (<i>pours drink on the ground</i>)
Nuri biem nam bote poh	Any other evil doer here (<i>points and looks around the crowd</i>)
Funi bagba a nya	You can see such people (<i>placing second finger by the eye</i>)
Weh bani sema	Break their hands (<i>twisting one fist</i>)
Ba kan bak tong	So they cannot shoot (<i>flings an arm</i>)
Weh bani nansa	Break their legs (<i>twisting one leg with the hand</i>)
Ba kan bak chule	So they cannot run
Ju bat ii tanga	Set their evil charms on fire
Bakam bak ta paarima	So they will forever be powerless

The third and final day of the celebration is also marked with a performance of the shooting competition. An interview the researcher had with one of the elders revealed that the shooting competition is not just to identify who is the best marksman, but also to know who would have been first to hit Babatu or his allies should they happen to appear in the present day. Thus the shooting event reminds the people of the need to prepare in advance against what happened in the past.

The three-day celebration can be seen to be united in one whole activity. None of the three parts is completely different or independent of the other two. This suggests that the absence of one part would render the whole festival incomplete. The first day's activities, which comprise spiritual preparations and consultations with the gods, are vital to a successful celebration. If the gods or the ancestors foresee danger, the festival will be cancelled. It is the ancestors who grant the permission for the celebration and guarantee protection to the actors. This makes the people feel comfortable to celebrate. The war dance itself marks the climax of the festival, and it is this that serves to recall, in vivid terms, what happened several decades ago. Very little will be known about the festival without this component. These three indispensable parts of the festival, which come together to constitute one Feok festival, make it fit well in the unity of action.

With the unity of time, it is possible to see the entire festival performed within twenty-four (24) hours as postulated by Aristotle. With the exception of other distant preparations such as acquisition of some materials, it is possible to perform the sacrifice, the war dance and the shooting competition all within one day. It is not an action that necessarily requires many days to perform. The audience can, therefore, stay and watch the festival acted within a few hours that would not be too long or too short enough to cause displeasure.

The Feok festival is also appropriate as drama in terms of its unity of place. The entire action takes place within one geographical area, that is, within the Sandema township. The action moves from the centre of the town to the King's palace, to the neighbouring forest or bush and then to the durbar ground, where the end of day two takes place. The shooting competition also takes place at the outskirts of the town.

3.3 The Use of Costume

The use of costume is also prominent in the celebration of the Feok Festival. All the war dancers and warriors wear similar attire. They wear brownish smocks, mostly tattered ones, but decorated with talismans, cowries and other materials that they can lay hands on. On their heads, they wear calabashes with horns of wild animals such as the buffalo. Each one carries his weapon (bow and arrows) in a quiver, machetes, hunting knives and tails of wild animals either for decoration or as charms for protection. Each warrior has a cudgel hang on the shoulder. The attire is worn only in war situations and since the Feok depicts a war situation it is the appropriate costume for the occasion. The paramount chief and King of the traditional area also has a specific outfit which is worn on the occasion.

3.4 Characterization

The active characters are:

- The paramount chief (King)
- The chief priest
- The war dancers /the war leader

- The drummers /singers
- The women/audience participants

The various roles that these characters play in developing the plot of the festival is what gives the festival an element of characterization.

3.4.1 The King of the Builsa traditional area is the living ancestor of the people. He is the hero of the Feok festival since it was him who instituted it. Having taken part in the war and subsequent conquest of Babatu, Nab Ayieta Azantinlow IV is seen as an epitome of the disunity of the Builsa people. His role in the Feok festival is very vital. It is the King who initiates preparations for the celebration each year. He sits at his palace to receive the warriors and to give them his blessings before they set off to meet the enemy. His anniversary message, which is what many are often eager to listen to, is often loaded with wisdom and advice to the youth. He also cautions the citizens against any impending evil, or danger.

3.4.2 The Chief Priest plays a very important role at the preparatory stage. He is tasked with the making of libation and inviting the ancestors to offer protection for the celebration. He ensures that the spiritual demands of the festival are met. He offers thanks for the good harvest and prayers for the living.

3.4.3 The War Dancers are the most conspicuous group of characters in the Feok festival. They perform the actual action in the festival, bringing out its themes and plot and sub plots. Though, these men do not utter many words, their gestures, and simulations give expression to what they want to say. Their audience understand the gestures perfectly and this, therefore, leaves no communication. Gap. The war dancers engage in many days of rehearsals before the actual performance. They also engage in the shooting competition; during the third and final day of celebration.

3.4.4 The Musicians (Drummers /singers) comprise a group of characters that provide the accompanying music, which is part and parcel of the Feok Festival. The flute blower uses his instrument to send special war messages to the warriors and the entire community. The drummers serve as a motivating element to the war dancers, urging them on in their mission. The songs that the musicians perform also relate a great deal of the history of the people, especially the ancestors, the past heroes and chiefs.

3.4.5 The audience participants are not left out. One unique characteristic feature of traditional drama in Africa is that the audience is not a passive observer of the action in the drama. The Feok festival is no exception. They take active part in singing, dancing and acknowledging the performance of the musicians and war dancers by either giving money to the singers or singing the praises of the war dancers. Women, for instance, use locally made fans to fan the dancers as they dance.

4.0 Linguistic Content

Generally, indigenous African language is adorned with literary devices, even in ordinary conversation. There is a careful selection of phrases and sentences that make judicious use of proverbs, metaphors, euphemisms and exaggerations. The King, for instance, speaks in parables using proverbs metaphors and rhetorical questions. For instance in advising the people to safeguard their sovereignty from any possible slavery, the king warns: "It is only a fool's testicles that are stepped on twice". This injects some kind of humour into what has been said, thereby, reducing tension and holding the attention of the audience. Similarly, the language of the chief priest in the course of the libation is full of imagery. These figures of speech help to heighten the meaning and effect of what the characters say.

4.1 Plot

The Feok Festival has a definite storyline, with a definite ordering of incidents. The organization of the festival right from the first day through day two to the third day, comprises events that are systematically and logically arranged. The classical theory of drama requires that the plot of a play should have a beginning that gives some form of exposition, a middle which consists of the major events that lead to the complications, and finally the end that gives some kind of resolution. This pattern is characteristic of tragic plays. The plot of the Feok Festival is very similar to the pattern stated above. It can also be regarded as a tragedy of some kind since it involves the death of an important historical figure, Babatu the slave raider. The three parts of the Feok festival can conveniently be illustrated as follows;

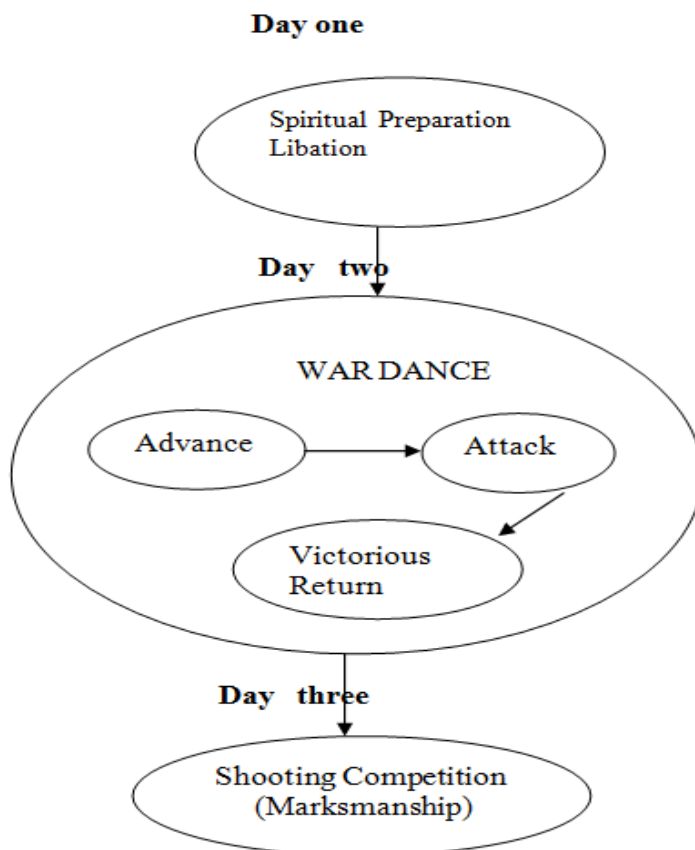


Fig.2 The Storyline of the festival.

Each of these three major parts is, on the average, of appropriate size. For instance, it is not possible to skip any of these steps, neither is it convenient to perform the middle or the end without starting with the first. This would mar the beauty and purpose of the entire festival. The plot can further be constructed as follows;

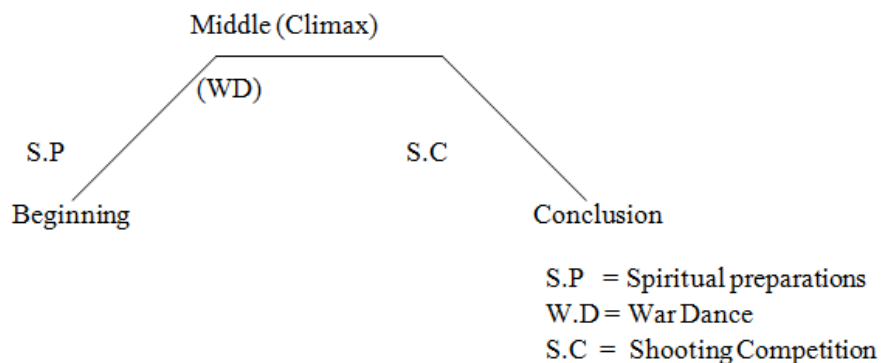


Fig.3 Plot of the festival

4.2 Music and Dance: Music and dance are key in most performances in Ghana and Africa at large. This is, however, not peculiar to traditional African drama. Musical interludes are supplied either by the chorus or other characters in Greek plays. On the surface, the music serves to entertain the crowd and ginger the war dancers on. However, there is a much deeper significance of it. The drums are used as a medium of communication with the dead. For instance, the researcher was informed that particular sound of the big drum signifies a desperate call for help, in which case the ancestral warriors would respond. If that sound is beaten without any impending danger, a calamity will befall the drummer and sometimes the entire village. Alternatively, great sacrifice may be required to appease the ancestral warriors for being invoked in vain. The drumbeat also communicates special messages to the warriors during the search for the enemy, whether to advance, assault or retreat. They are also used to sing the praises of the King, and the war dancers to embolden them in the action. Basically, the music is part of the dramatic techniques adopted in unveiling the festival. Just as in any literary piece, the music and dance in the Feok Festival is essential for breaking boredom and fatigue. It also supplements what the characters

say or do.

4.3 Scenery. The Feok Festival does not easily lend itself to clear cut divisions of scenes. It nevertheless, has its activities taking place in different places within the town. Also, the activities are ordered and performed in such a way that one can carefully trace one scene to the end and beginning of another. The preparatory stage where spiritual fortification and purification takes place constitutes scene one. The movement to the Kings palace for his blessing can be described as another Scene (Scene two.) The movement into the forest in search of the enemy constitutes the third scene. Rallying at the durbar ground to reenact the defeat of Babatu and to listen to the King's anniversary message is scene four. The fifth and final scene is that of the shooting competition. The costume used in most of the scenes remains the same, (war gear) made of traditional weapons. No one handles a gun. This is because the story has it that the notorious slave raider was killed using bows and arrows.

4.4 Setting

It is important to note that the scenes take place at different geographical settings. The setting of the Feok Festival can be assessed in three dimensions; namely geographical, historical and cultural. The festival takes its geographical setting in the traditional capital of the Builsa people, Sandema. However, within Sandema the festival takes place in a number of places as described earlier. The geographical setting can be diagrammatically illustrated as follows:

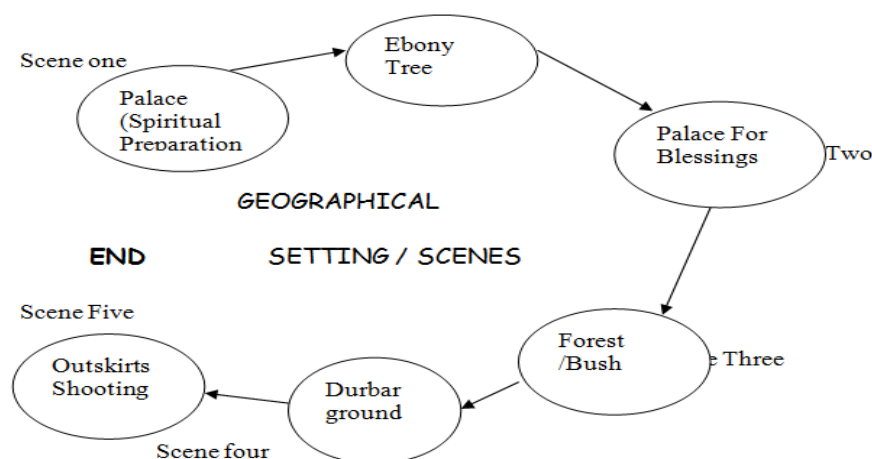


Fig. 3 Geographical setting of the Festival

All these places provide different geographical environments that provide a variety of scenes that a good play requires. The temporal setting is also significant. The festival takes place in the dry season, especially, mid December. This is the time when all crops will have been harvested and people will have some financial resources and ample time to celebrate.

The historical setting dates back to the era of slavery in Ghana, when slave raiders emerged from the southern part of the country to capture people from the northern area as slaves. The need to stop the slave trade was what gave birth to the war dance.

Culturally, the festival reflects the system of worship of the people in the area. They worship the almighty God through their lesser gods and ancestors. Hence, the need to sacrifice to the gods and the ancestors for a good harvest. The libation prayer performed by the chief priest also highlights the cultural milieu of the festival i.e. the belief in life after death.

5.0 Changes in the Feok Celebration over Time

The celebration of the Feok Festival has undergone very little change in terms of originality. The fundamental components are kept intact. For instance, bows and arrows and cudgels are the weapons used though we are in an era where guns are common. The festival is also now used as a forum for initiating development projects for the area. The exchange of cooked food has also been extended to include other forms of gifts and souvenirs. People use the occasion for courtships that often lead to marriages. The weapons are also no more kept under the historical ebony tree. They are brought from the homes of the warriors who only dance past the ebony tree symbolically. In the making of the libation prayer schnapps, is used instead of the traditional drink.

5.1 Conclusion

My main objective of carrying out this study has been to help bring to rest the seemingly endless argument as to

whether Africa has something called well structured drama; an issue that has engaged the minds of many literary scholars over the years. The investigation lends great support to the earlier works of Charles Nyakiti, and Enoch S. Timpunza Mvula. The findings, therefore, validates the argument that Africa has performances that do not only have dramatic elements, but are classical drama in themselves.

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