

# **Freedom to Sing, License to Insult: The Influence of *Haló* Performance on Social Violence Among the Anlo Ewe**

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## **Introduction**

Contemporary approaches to performance in folklore, ethnomusicology, and anthropology define and explain performance events in relation to their sociocultural and symbolic universe, and according to contextual and human dynamics. Although these studies are capable of generating important information on the relationships between artistic events and the larger world in which they are situated, there still remains the problem of a precise determination of the boundaries of genres. The factor of genre distinction is important because it can increase our understanding of the social construction of performance, or the notion of cultural performance (Singer 1972, MacAloon 1984). The experience of performance as a social process and the blending of genres are two important characteristics identifying performance in Africa, as confirmed by Margaret Drewal in her review of performance studies in Africa (1991:64). However, work in these two areas is incipient. It is, therefore, the purpose of this essay to further our understanding of performance by exploring the unique ways in which the *haló* of the Anlo-Ewe not only exhibits social conditions but also structures and qualifies them. In this study the multidimensional aspect of *haló* will be highlighted and explained both as an aesthetic strategy and as an integral component in constructing the social significance of *haló* performance. In order to achieve this dual end, the study will focus on selective musico-artistic and social elements that distinguish the performance from other Anlo-Ewe musical or performance types, with focus on performance as a medium for generating and escalating social violence. Finally, the study will summarize *haló*

performance as celebration and affirmation of life, and as a social experience that draws on artistic framing in the consummation of social reality. This approach will thus increase our awareness of the ontological and symbiotic relationships between performance and its sociocultural environment.

### Historical background

*Haló* is musical-dramatic performance popular among the Anlo-Ewe, from ca. 1912 until its official proscription in 1960.<sup>1</sup> The etymology of the name *haló* (*ha* + *ló*, song + proverb) shows three related definitions that cumulatively stress the social consequences of *haló*, that is, the spectacular, the unusual, the precarious, havoc, danger, or challenge.<sup>2</sup> *Haló* can be summed up as a multi-media event, a sociomusical drama that involves songs of insult, dance, drumming, mime, poetry, spoken forms, costume, and a variety of visual icons. Although the music is constructed mainly along Anlo-Ewe models, there are special observances, devices, and techniques that are unique to this genre. As will be elaborated later, these devices and related art forms are employed primarily to effect purposes of aggression and violence, and to establish musical superiority. There are rules and procedures that are shared and observed spontaneously in each performance, and most of these procedures are directed toward achieving coherence in performance and toward minimizing on-the-spot violence.<sup>3</sup>

A performance usually involves two villages or two wards from one village, and is characterized by direct or comic forms of provocation, aggravation, and sung and spoken insults, which are sometimes exaggerated through dramatic enactments. Each *haló* context is a highly provocative and emotional one, with the two factions and their supporters competing at

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<sup>1</sup> Records from the National Archives also show that several musical genres have previously been banned in other societies in Ghana on the consent of the chief(s) and the colonial officers. The *haló* ban is in accordance with *Acts of Ghana, Criminal Code Act 29, S 295, 1960*.

<sup>2</sup> There are three basic definitions: “*halòlò*” (big song), “*haló*” (song-proverb), and *haló* (it is song!).

<sup>3</sup> Violence both takes place on the spot and continues long after the performance.

physical, verbal, and musical levels. The numerous police arrests that result from the performance and its related events are further indications of the grave and wider social ramifications of *haló*. This search for superiority in both physical and musical domains is also often accompanied by magical practices and related machinations against opponents. These practices also frequently involve the acquisitions of “singing gods” (supernatural powers with whom the sources of musical creativity are identified). In addition, individuals or groups also take precautions by *fortifying* themselves spiritually against enemy attacks (physical or spiritual). The sociodramatic aspect of *haló* is thus intensified through the physical confrontations, the musical and verbal exchanges, and involvement with the supernatural realm. The performance can, therefore, be described as a unique context for reevaluating and qualifying social and interpersonal relations. Statistics resulting from recent fieldwork show that about 88% of Anlo-Ewe towns have some history of *haló*, and that about 40% of factions have engaged in the genre more than once. These figures, the official ban, and the lingering of veiled forms of insult in contemporary practices confirm the social significance of the art form in Anlo-Ewe society.

The most common precipitates of *haló* are: (1) taking of someone’s wife from a different ward, (2) derogatory remarks on the music of another ward, (3) personal insults communicated directly or vaguely in song, and (4) interpersonal hostilities and aggressive posture due to the factor of social competition. Today there are social and musical incidents that intimate *haló*, but these contemporary examples are quickly contained by the traditional rulers in order to avoid breaking the law. Since each performance bears a cumulative effect, exacerbates a previous one, and carries consequences of forms of physical confrontation outside the performance context, one cannot simply describe *haló* as a tension-relieving ritual. The features outlined above would, therefore, suggest unique relationships between the performance and the social milieu, and that violence is central to the definition of *haló*.

### **Anlo-Ewe Social Framework**

The traditional society of the Anlo-Ewe, including government and politics, is generally described as a centralized one, with an official headquarters and a paramount chief. The administrative and political

powers and functions of the paramount office are invoked and acknowledged in ceremonial and parastatal contexts that are related to the welfare of the Anlo state and Ghana nation as a whole.<sup>4</sup> The political and social infrastructure is also articulated and exemplified in the four subdivisions (Ɖusi or We, Mia, Adontri or Dome, and Lasibi or Klobo) of the Anlo state.<sup>5</sup> Each subdivision has its own head or chief, and these heads owe allegiance to the paramount chief, Awoamefia Togbui Adladza II, and to his assistant, Agbotadua (“field marshal”). The Anlo society is basically patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal, and the privileges, responsibilities, and achievements of each *tó* (ward) are articulated and celebrated at social and musical levels. A village or town is further divided into a number of wards, each of which has its own heads or leaders (*tokɔmegãwo*, plur.), male and female. Musical participation is among the main social expectations, and since music is an important medium for construction and exhibiting group solidarity and social achievement, the factor of competition seems to constitute an indispensable trait among the performing groups of the different wards. As we have already noted, the element of competition encourages *haló*.

Forms of Anlo-Ewe musical organization also reflect and support the social hierarchy and patterns summarized above, and ensembles are also formed according to sex, age, occupation, and special interest grouping.<sup>6</sup> The system of government and politics described above does not, however, guarantee a trouble-free society. First of all, the existence of such superstructures represents an overt recognition of the possibilities of interpersonal and intergroup conflicts and other social problems. The division of villages into wards/performing groups is, as noted above, one of the inherent structures that is articulated and transformed into a catalyst that encourages group conflict. Any act, symbolic or real, that infringes on the territorial integrity and group solidarity of one ward is thus quickly interpreted as a challenge or test.

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<sup>4</sup> Villages and towns, however, exercise a certain amount of autonomy in many areas of life.

<sup>5</sup> See the “Appendix: Guide to Pronunciation and Transliteration” below, for the values of underlined and other letters.

<sup>6</sup> See Fiagbedzi 1977 for details on the musical types and social organization.

In familial and interpersonal relationships, disagreements and misunderstandings lead to open quarrel. Apart from the use of verbal insults to correct and direct anger at children, the exchange of insults resides at the core of conflicts among adults. These insults often escalate into physical fights, from which long-term interpersonal hostilities are also generated. Due to the influence of the Anlo-Ewe extended kinship system, a conflict originally involving two individuals thus quickly assumes wider social dimensions. Families are also involved because the Anlo-Ewe system of insulting allows the inclusion of relatives as a form of exacerbating the affective impact of the insult. Although there are guidelines and regulations from village elders and chiefs cautioning that individuals register their complaints for official redress and mediation, individuals can still take the case to an elder who has been endowed with the right to mediate minor differences. This elder, who is also of high moral and social disposition, arbitrates the case with the help of a coterie of other men of good repute. When the case is opened for the village chief, the judgment, referred to as *nyadɔɔ* or *vɔnudɔdrɔ* terminates with some form of punishment and retribution, minor and symbolic when compared with the severer result expected when government law enforcement agencies are involved. A final judgment does not, however, rule out the possibility of a repeat of the offense.

One other source of aggression and violence over which the system of rule has limited legal control concerns a situation where individuals attribute the death of a person to the practice of black magic by an imagined or real opponent. In many cases the mishap is perceived as a collective and calculated attempt to undermine and reduce the manpower of the opponent ward. On occasions of some deaths, effort is made to determine the cause or to find a reasonable explanation. The causes and persons behind the death of a person are, however, not easily determined with precision, even in modern civil lawsuits. Today, when a person is drowned, for example, an autopsy in a government hospital is sought. But in spite of medical reports certifying the type and cause of death, the Anlo-Ewe people do not rule out the possibility of the influence of an adverse magical practice by an enemy, who might well be a lifelong friend of the deceased. In this case the death is interpreted as a case of violence, and this cosmological stance is not much different from what has been reported from other parts of

sub-Saharan African societies.<sup>7</sup> In place of a formal system of inquiry into the causes of the death, the people allow (or compel) the suspect murderer to undergo a ritual ordeal known as *agbadada*. Results of the ordeal, which often confirm the suspicions, are sometimes contested by persons who sympathize with the suspect. Whether the suspicion and allegations are confirmed or not, the factions additionally express their opinions (attacks and counterattacks) through song composition and performance. These performances and singing of songs of insult finally develop into the the *haló* tradition, which may last for a month or linger up to a year or two.

### **A Prelude to *Haló***

In the survey on the Anlo-Ewe politics and government, we saw how individuals take advantage of the medium of song in aggravating situations of conflict. Let us now briefly examine three common causes of *haló*: wife-taking, interward marriage, and homicide through black magic. While interward marriage is neither forbidden nor sanctioned by any law or regulation, it is considered as an act of threat and challenge to the ward from which the wife is taken. Often these interward marriages raise no issue of contention, but when the incidence increases, then the ward most affected begins to express concern. The concern usually takes the form of the casting of insinuations and veiled attacks in song. The anger, provocation, and challenge are directed toward either an individual opponent or his/her ward as a group. Since the example of marriage across ward boundaries does not represent a particular infraction, there is, therefore, no official channel capable of condemning and punishing the act. The individual thus begins to seek and create his/her own means of vindication and revenge through song.

The employment of song as a medium of redress is a central factor in deciding the gravity, type, and social ramifications of the conflict. This is the case especially when the loyal group of the complainant lends support through a wardwide musical communication of the grievances and aggressive intents. This group support, in turn, aggravates the challenge to

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Heald 1986, Parkin 1986. There are different burial customs observed according to type of death, including that caused by violence.

the other ward, and counterattacks become possible.<sup>8</sup> A wider social dimension of the original conflict is thus created and the entire village becomes an active participant. It is at this juncture that the village chiefs (or chiefs from neutral villages) take the responsibility to call for peace and order, including arrests.

Related to the example of interward marriage is that of wife-snatching, in which a man forcibly takes the wife of another man of a different ward. This is one of the serious threats, challenges, and aggravations against an individual and the ward. Since polygamy is an inherent aspect of the social system and traditional marriages do not require certification from a civil court, traditional authorities are limited in the extent to which they can interfere with such cases. In wife-taking the implications are serious and numerous. The act is perceived as a more direct and assertive form of aggravation that mars the social morale and group prestige of the individual affected. It is also construed as an act premeditated to test, verify, and disdain the collective integrity of the victim's ward. A reaction in a form of counterattack through song performance is therefore the immediate response. There are, however, a few exceptions where, due to the gross outcomes of *haló*, a group would hold back a counterattack, although this reservation would be construed negatively by the aggressors to their own advantage.

Another example concerns the manner in which individual song composers from the different wards perceive themselves in relation to others. Apart from competition at the group level, there is also competition among individual composers due to the search for musical superiority, a situation that increases tension among these composers from different wards. These composers often take opportunity of the song medium to project their individual images through boast, challenge, and provocation. For instance, the following is an excerpt from a pre-*haló* song:

EXAMPLE 1

A

1. Miga tso gbosusu miano glodzo    You should not glory in your bigger number  
       domme o

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<sup>8</sup> This influence of group support on violence is well noted in the following observation (Burma 1972:2): "Nothing seems more obtrusive in modern society than the dependence of individuals upon groups as means of reading their ends and the collective context in which ends and means assume importance."

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 2. Adidi le vie ha wo edada wo kudo              | An ant is tiny but performs its mother's<br>burial                        |
| 3. Be "Aklika mate go gbe                        | Says "Aklika which you cannot drag outside                                |
| 4. Ne hawovi te wo kpo dzi natee<br>bali me".... | If you peer drags you uphill, drag him/her<br>downhill" <sup>9</sup> .... |
| 5. Miva made rakontee nami                       | Come, let me explain things to you  |
| 6. Mia dze sii be heno xoxoe yae<br>menye, hee.  | So that you know I am, indeed, an<br>experienced composer.                |

## B

...nukpomm, kese sie woxo adiba le....

..Gazing, like a monkey from whom pawpaw has been snatched....

In Ex. 1 line A1 there is there is direct reference to the larger size of the opponent ward; this reference is constructed to provoke the opponent. In line A2 the composer and his group accept their status as encoded in the analogy and metaphorical construction. Line A3 introduces a boast of strength, and line 4 completes it by asserting an ability to match an enemy in a duel. In line A6 the composer boasts of his skills and experience, which are calculated to exacerbate anger. The whole text is carefully constructed in such a way that it speaks to the individual (composer for the other ward) and the whole enemy group; this use of second person plural is a common technique in *haló*, which masks the individual addressed and at the same time provides a context for wider interpretation at the ward level.

B is a momentary interjection of an insult in a normal song composition, a technique common in the non-*haló* corpus. The unexpected appearance of this text, although brief, carries much weight and potential for inciting *haló* because of the depth of the insult (personal physical features are among the most affective and incisive according to the *haló* and general Anlo-Ewe system of insult). This example of exchange of aggressive gestures finally leads to full-scale *haló* with diverse and grave consequences for both individuals and the society as a whole. Although the composer is basically negotiating his identity among the many vying for social recognition, the situation gets out of hand as they vent anger and trade tirade, boast, and insult through song. For example, the above

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<sup>9</sup> This is a quotation and appropriation of the qualities of a particular "drinking" name. The psychology and power in the *ahanonko* or drinking name performance is fully described in Avorgbedor 1983.



excerpts were partly responsible for the two-month *haló* between two wards of a particular village in 1957, which lasted for three months.<sup>10</sup>

Once a *haló* is begun, a vicious cycle is initiated, with each subsequent performance exacerbating anger and violence, until mediation by official intervention. In some cases two factions cease on their own accord without an intervention from a third party. Even when overt hostile activities have ceased, however, violence is continued in the spiritual realm, where opponents secretly practice black magic against each other. This post-*haló* activity is also true of those *haló* events that were formally ended. Deaths are associated with these evil practices, and further suspicions are generated. These suspicions lead to further violence, in both the spiritual and physical domains, and suspects may be made to undergo a ritual ordeal, as described earlier. Songs are again an important social vehicle through which suspects are addressed indirectly. Although *haló* is no longer a sanctioned medium for expressing revenge, the composition and performance of songs of insinuation continue as an integral part of the regular musical tradition. For example, examine the following contemporary non-*haló* song text:<sup>11</sup>

## EXAMPLE 2

A

...Kpevõ be nyõnu adzetõwoe  
Kakam de ye nu dua me haa  
Ye wotsõ yefe nyavõe  
Gahe yi de asia me, Malata....

...Kpevõ says the witch  
She is provoking me, in the town  
And she took the evil report about me  
Into the market, Malata....<sup>12</sup>

B

Kinkaviawo, nye dzum loo  
Nyõnuvia ye dzum a  
Nyõnuvia nõ ye dzum le atsiawo te  
Be yeme see oo hee....

Kinka performers, (she) is insulting me  
The girl was insulting me really  
The girl was insulting me under the tree  
(She) thought I did not hear it....

<sup>10</sup> This particular example comes from Seva, the author's hometown; other examples are available in Kukuiah 1979.

<sup>11</sup> This song text is an excerpt from the author's dissertation (Avorgbedor 1986). The text was collected among urban Anlo-Ewe performing groups in Accra.

<sup>12</sup> Malata is a popular open market in the sector of Accra known by the same name where many Ewe women do their trading.

Kinkaviawo meḍi tsa yi afeawo me  
Atago kple dada wono monye kpom

Moḍi mo nawo wo katã woto mo deka

Atago mo lobo ye do wode gbe....

Kinka performers, I visited the house  
Atago and her mother were looking  
into my face

Their faces looked similar, they all  
had the same face

Atago with long mouth spoke her  
native tongue....

## Performance Strategies and Modes of Aggression

### *Song Composition and Performance Style*

*Haló* is a multimedia event that begins with formal composition and learning of new songs (they may include contrafacta). Since songs constitute the primary medium of communicating insults, care is taken at the level of creativity and performance. The textual material of each ward composer is built mainly on selections of negative private histories and biographies, specific insults about the individual opponent's physique, and fictive constructions. Ward elders are largely responsible for providing information on individual biographies, and the composer works out the material, drawing on the regular Anlo-Ewe melody, drumming, and general performance models. Since the nature of *haló* assumes the form of attack and counterattack, there is greater pressure on composers to come forth with fresh songs in response to attacks or previous performances by the opponent group. The compositional process also follows the general practice of intense night rehearsals where the songs, dance, dramatization, and drumming type are first learned in secrecy. This secret dimension of the rehearsals is closely guarded in the *haló* context because of the highly provocative nature of the textual material—a targeted individual would want to disrupt the practice sessions prematurely and out of revenge, thus also undermining the aesthetic element of surprise that is part of the Anlo-Ewe musical tradition.<sup>13</sup>

Before a new song is performed publicly in the normal musical situation, a special session known as *havolu* is held in secret. In this session allusions, metaphorical references, and facets of personal biography and

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<sup>13</sup> For further information on this aspect of the debut of new ensembles, see Ladzekpo 1971.

history not commonly available, which are contained in the song texts, are explained to members of the performing group. In the context of *haló* the *havolu* is re-created with added dimensions of meaning and affect; it is then known as *hagomedede* (lit., exposing the inside of song), which will be elaborated later.

The song component of the integrated art form is in the traditional through-composed form, consisting of *hadada* and *tatɔtrɔ*, performed in an ABA format.<sup>14</sup> In the standard drumming types such *adzida*, *kinka*, or *dunekpoe*, two song types are usually employed: a group of shorter and repetitive ones for the full-scale drumming, and a group of extended ones with a minimal amount of repetition (either of segments of a line unit or whole phrases). This second category, known as *hatsiahawo*, is performed in both *haló* and ordinary contexts during the segment of the drumming known as *hatsiatsia* (lit., main song and stylization).

In *hatsiatsia*, as the name suggests, only the extended song types are performed, to the accompaniment of bells (*gankogui* and *atoke*) and gesticulation. Due to the highly coded contents, a minimum of sound and dance accompaniment enables the audience to focus attention on the text.<sup>15</sup> The structural design and procedures involved in *hatsiatsia* are also manipulated toward an effective transmission of the song to the audience. A select group with lead singers (male and female, in pairs) perform the songs during *hatsiatsia* counterclockwise, within the performance arena circumscribed by the audience.<sup>16</sup> The counterclockwise movement presents shifting visual orientation and enables different pairs (lead singers) to take turns in presenting personal renditions of the same song. This spatial and visual design is also underscored by the *hamekoko* (gestural interpretation) of the lead singer, and in *haló* additional narrative and dramatic devices are employed to enhance the communication of insults and to accent humor.

Additional strategies are adopted in the *haló hatsiatsia*: temporarily halting the performance to allow the insertion of spoken comments, and most importantly the verbal exegesis of the song texts, including

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<sup>14</sup> See Anyidoho 1983 and Avorgbedor 1986 for full description of the song form.

<sup>15</sup> *Hagbe* or melody is also important in the overall consideration of the effectiveness of the song.

<sup>16</sup> See Avorgbedor 1985 for details.

explanation of allusions and metaphorical constructions. When this segment resumes and the *halóga* (the bell accompaniment identified with *haló* songs) sounds, both performers and audience are usually fully alert and their emotional levels and expectations heightened. Lead singers provide vivid and verbal interpretations (*hagomedede*) of the song texts and improvise new text and comments. This is the moment when exaggerations are also appropriate, coupled with selective enactment or dramatization of specific scenes. At this stage audience reaction is influenced most by humor, satire, and exaggeration. Depending on the weight of the false allegations and insults, the opponent may react violently and in physical confrontation with the singer. This highly volatile nature of *haló* is explained in part by the nature of the rules and protocol that factions must observe in order to ensure smooth performance and to support the overall aesthetic impact of the music. These rules and procedures, unique to *haló*, are described below.

### *Performance Rules and Procedures*

There are no written rules in this oral tradition, but performers and factions observe certain formalities in a spontaneous fashion at interward and intervillage levels, as stated earlier. The most significant of these formalities can be reformulated as:<sup>17</sup>

1. The target opponent or a close relative must be physically present to provide the audience
2. The warring groups must perform in turns
3. The audience must be demarcated from the performers/ performance arena by a rope to guard against unexpected and violent reaction from audience
4. The target opponent, or surrogate, must stand on a raised platform or chair to facilitate identification when his/her insults are being performed
5. The two groups must perform before an impartial judge, usually a chief from a neutral village
6. The songs must be “buried” after a winner has been determined

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<sup>17</sup> These rules are often broken when opponents can no longer contain their anger.

and differences settled

In order to allow maximum effect and attention from the opponent group, simultaneous performances are discouraged, except in a few cases where a counterattack is also strategically calculated to subvert the efficacy of each group's performance. In this case the two groups would perform, in disregard of convention, either in the same spot or in each ward's own public arena. Such simultaneous performances thus deprive each other of the necessary audience; hence the purposeful encouragement of disorder and defiance at this level of the conflict.<sup>18</sup> Fieldwork investigation also documents cases where targeted individuals were incensed to such a degree that they broke through the line safeguarding the performers from the audience, sometimes with a weapon. The rule that opponents must identify themselves as listed above not only tests the tolerance levels, but also allows the rest of the audience to judge the relevance and applicability of the insult or biographical text. The involvement of a third party in resolving the conflict also explains the factor of musical competition and hence principles of musical excellence.

*Haló* events take varying lengths of time, sometimes up to a year to resolve. While the conflict may dissolve naturally without any formal cessation, the convention is for the two warring groups to perform before a predetermined judge in a different village. After pronouncing the winner, the village chief (invariably the judge) then symbolically buries the songs in the ground and warns both parties to cease from *haló* acts. The two groups are fined and sanctions imposed. The ritual also portends great personal disaster should one resume the performance of *haló* songs at any time thereafter. Incidents of previous arrests, ritual sanction, and the government ban combine to provide an effective deterrent for anyone who might want to resume the performance of *haló*, either the total event or the just the songs. The elements that are considered in determining a winner include a wide range of musical, poetic, dramatic, and social factors. In the case of the latter, the criteria involved may not be wholly relevant and may therefore influence the ultimate decision from the judges. The proper observance of the rules and procedures outlined above are also essential to the quality of the outcome, and they also influence decisions in the several

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<sup>18</sup> Sometimes an opponent group mounts a simultaneous performance to heighten the moment of challenge and aggravation.

domains of the event.

### **Increasing the Affective Impact of Insult through the Multimedia**

In general many of the techniques, materials, and devices employed in *haló* are unique and are capable of inducing specific social responses. The integration of the related art forms is also a special feature of *haló*, as mentioned earlier. We shall now briefly examine samples of these characteristics, noting their impact on audience response and social violence.

#### *Poetic Devices*

Scholars have commented on the importance of the skillful employment of poetic speech in African communities; the Anlo-Ewe are not excepted (Anyidoho 1983, Peek 1981, Yankah 1991). Among the Anlo-Ewe the spectacular musical and socio-dramatic context of *haló* provides further justification for the use of highly artificial or decorative language. Judges of *haló* performance therefore pay great attention to poetic language in addition to elements such as good voice quality, level of participation, ensemble coordination, specialized musical skills, and judicious employment of set devices and structures.

Analysis of selected song texts, such as Example 4, shows the following prosodic features: proverbs and idiomatic expressions, metonymy, hyperbole, analogy, ideophone, reduplication, parallelism, rhyme, assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, apostrophe, and the use of graphic imagery in narrative lines. Proverbs are manipulated in three ways: whole quotation, paraphrase, and original. Interpreted within the cultural framework, the proverb exhibits the wisdom and language skill of the artist, and it also widens the cognitive and affective dimensions of the proverb context.

While the proverb is employed sparingly and at strategic moments to allow maximum aesthetic and incisive communication, the role of simile and related glosses resides at the core of Anlo-Ewe tradition of insult. The simile is employed in the intensified form of insult and insulting known as *dzuwafifo*, subtechniques of which are referred to as *dzumamla* (lit.,

weaving of insult) and *dzutɔɔ de ame ɲu* (lit., linking insult to another person). The insult phraseology and performance structure also approximates the pattern common to the Anlo-Ewe nickname system known as *ahanɔŋkɔ*.<sup>19</sup> For example, here are two verbal insults, A first performed by one aggressor, and then B by two persons (an aggressor and his/her supporter in insulting a third person):

## EXAMPLE 3

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| A:               |  |
| 1.               | Emo ʋeʋe wò abe 'kagae ku de adukpodzi ene<br>Your smelling face like that of a dead vulture at a garbage dump |
| 2.               | Ekɔ tsralawò abe Klu fe abɔ ene<br>Your tall neck like Klu's arm   |
| B:               |  |
| <i>aggressor</i> | <i>supporter</i>   |
| 1.               | Emo ʋeʋe wò abe kagae ku de adukpodzi ene  |
| 2.               | Ekɔ tsralawò abe Klu fe abɔ ene  |

Since the insult pattern is shaped by them, the artistic constraint of the song mode pattern A is favored. In addition, these samples are subject to further linguistic and poetic elaboration: for example, item 2 might be rephrased for added impact: *ekɔtsrala/ne 'kpoe nabube Klu tɔe* [Tall neck / if you see it you will think it's Klu's] (see other examples in 4A-B, 5). Both the *dzutɔɔ de ame ɲu* and the *dzumamla* (especially by a supporter) serve to widen the social dimension of the conflict through the linking process and the supporters' involvement. In *haló* performance these devices and structures are explored and intensified. Although the song and dramatic modes predominate, the immediate social relevance of the performance encourages the interjection of verbal comments and insults. Thus after a song a two, a pause is observed to allow the re-creation of spoken insults in the pattern described above.<sup>20</sup>

## EXAMPLE 4

- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| A:                    |                          |
| ...Axxx tsɔ ava gbɔlo | Axxx then took raw penis |
| Gakplɔ nyɔnuwo dɔ     | Then pursued the women   |

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<sup>19</sup> See Avorgbedor 1985 for further information on the name system.

<sup>20</sup> Due to the highly sensitive matter contained in the song texts all personal names mentioned have been replaced with letters of the alphabet followed by xxx.

Akpɔtɔ vie woado figbe  
 Bxxx lɔfii maɗi bolobolo tsi  
 Totrui, maɗi avɔkli ye ku de kedzi  
 Meɗi ganɛ  
 Goglome lakpɛ  
 Maɗi aditsi fe goglome ene  
 Yae ɲtɔe dzro ha ve  
 Nayi Cxxx gbɔ naɗe kuku  
 Nye me lɔ be hanye nadzu Bxxx  
     fomeawo  
 Yaɲtɔe tsi bome hee  
 Wotsɔ koloa de du gbadza  
 Ame katã nɔ mɔmɔm  
 Amenublanui yae woe  
 Bxxx lee, amenublaniue wɔwɔ  
 Dada Dxxx yae mɔ ava la uuu  
  
 Wokplɔ de xɔ de Xavi  
 Fofɔavia ganɔ mɔmɔm  
 Wodzi vi blibo de me  
 Evi ɲgɔgbia zu fofoviawo tɔ  
 Numa ga zu nukpe nawo  
 Yee wodzi Exxx  
 Wova dro de goku gbɔ  
 Yee wodzi Bxxx[i]  
 Wodze Abɔxoxo la dzi  
 Kplaxakplaxa, wɔle dudzi de ava ɲu  
 Ati ɲe de agɔme nɛ  
 Bxxx fe atadeka xatsa de ava la ɲu  
 Woave gbɔgblo ge na emɔlawo be  
 “Tokunɔ mesea nufe vivi o”  
 Ava lokpoa yae tea dome  
 Wotsɔ ɲkɔ na ava la bena  
 “Ati kɔtsrala wɔ  
 Evivina akpã”  
 Dadadu yae wɔm alea  
 Đeko makude eme hee

B :

...Alɛtɔ nezɔ mlã  
 Axxx be alɛtɔ nezɔ mlã  
 Mialé alea miadzo  
 Wòlé ale la  
 Hedzra na Awusatɔwo

Very soon he will become a thief  
 Bxxx tall thin like uncircumcised penis  
 Twisted like a dead *avɔkli* on a sand-top  
 Angled buttocks  
 Thin narrow inner face  
     Like a monkey's inner face  
 He himself courted song  
 You should visit Cxxx to beg him  
 I wouldn't allow my song to insult Bxxx's  
     family  
 She herself became useless  
 Open wide her vagina to the whole town  
 Everybody was having sex with her  
 She is to be pitied.  
 Bxxx! You deserve pity  
 Her mother Dxxx she had sex with men for  
     long  
 People locked her up in Xavi  
 Having sex with her own brother  
 They even had a child in it  
 The firstborn is her brother's  
 This then became a shameful deed  
 Yes, they gave birth to Exxx  
 S/he came to *goku*  
 Yes, they gave birth to Bxxx[i]  
 She fell on old Abɔ  
*Kplaxkplaxa* (onom.), she raced after penis  
 “Stick” got broken in her vagina  
 Bxxx's one leg got wrapped around the penis  
 Then she began to tell her lovers  
 “The deaf does not hear sweetness”  
 Thick penis gets vagina swollen  
 She named the penis thus  
 “Long-necked stick  
 You are too sweet”  
 “Mothertown” (i.e. vagina) made me this way  
 I shall only die in it

...let the “sheep owner” walk fast  
 Axxx says let the “sheep owner” walk fast  
 So that we can catch the sheep and go  
 He caught the sheep  
 And then sold it to the Hausas



Ɖɔkɔ kpɔ aleawo dze sii	The “foreign” one identified the sheep
Yee wole Bxxx hede ka ali nee	Then they caught Gxxx and tied a rope around his waist
He kplɔ yi Cxxx gbɔe	Then led him to Mr. Cxxx
Wòzu ɔɔnu wodrɔ na	It turned out to be court arbitration
Axxx tsɔ patapa	Axxx took up defiance
Ade nya de srɔ dzi	He then implicated his wife
Yee wolo Dxxx de mɔ de Keta	They then jailed Dxxx in Keta prison
Awusatowo he mɔna	Hausas had sex with her
Fua le fo fifia	She is now pregnant
Yee wogbɔ ve Axxx gbɔ	She then returned from prison to Axxx
Bxxx[dɛ] dzo lã ntu	Bxxx! You really are a big fool
ɲkume gobui, maɖi adzexe fe mo ene	Deep narrow face, resembling an owl’s face
Mo blabui, maɖi avege fe mo ene	Face <i>blabui</i> (untrans.) resembling a monkey’s face
Nunya deke mele mo nee o	There’s no wisdom in his face
Axx+ Axxx yae dzi ha de Exxx be	It’s Axxx Axxx who sang about Exxx that
Exxx de nyɔnu	Exxx married a woman
Mekpɔ ahiãnu le ga o	He did not have bridewealth
Fxxx sie woxɔe le	He got the woman from Fxxx
Gxxx movitɔ	Gxxx stupid one
Ɖe nyɔnu de kɔ di	Married a certain type of woman for us
Lãkevi me dɔa xɔme o	Fishbasket doesn’t stay long in a room
Gxxx do kete, nya mele kuge	Gxxx started a “train,” I will drive it
Hxxx emo globui, nya mele kuge	Hxxx narrow deep face, I will drive it
Hxxx mo lakpa, nya mele kuge	Hxxx long dry face, I will drive it
Gxxx mo klolui, nya mele kuge	Gxxx face <i>klolui</i> (untrans.) I will drive it
Hxxx mo nogui, nya mele kuge	Hxxx small round face, I will drive it
Be hũu, nya mele kuge	Say “ <i>hũu</i> ,” I will drive it
Exxx be maɖo ɲu ne woase	Exxx says let me answer for him to hear
Efififi kple gadodo kae nye nukpe	Theft and borrowing become shame
xxxwo, xxxwo midɛ gɔme	xxxs, yyys explain it
Dumegãwo midɛ ɛɲu nam	Elders, answer me
Miyɔ ixxx madzu kpɔ	Call Ixxx for me to insult a while
Ixxx emo fodi, dzofãkala	Ixxx dirty face, diviner with black magic
Wofɔ lãsiwo de abɔ dzia	He carried the switches on his shoulder
Hadzim Jxxx dem	Singing about Jxxx
Meyo Kxxx de hame	I mention Kxxx in song
Ixxx dee	Ixxx! Attention
Ɖe ne ɲlɔ mamawo bea?	Have you forgotten your grandmother?
Menye lxxx dada yae nye amedɔgã de	Isn’t it Lxxx’s mother the big benefactor?
Menyea ɲɔ gbe kuna o	Does not flatulate without bushes burning
Tɔgbuiwo Mxxx nye ameklikoa de	Your grandfather Mxxx was a rough careless

Yi wòkua, fe lae ma va gbã de nxxx dzia?	person When he died, the debts faced Nxxx?
Wole Oxxx nò dzadzram Fimadzia wóklóna Pxxx Fimae lxxx xe fe la le, lxxx lee Womegblò nese oa? Emo nogui maḍi dzekòvia de	They caught Oxxx to sell There they led Pxxx There Lxxx paid off the debts, lxxx! Didn't you hear it said? Round small heavy face like a small mound of salt
Afòtotrui, maḍi kpedevi fe afò Nyemelò madzu de Viwo lxxx dòwo hee Exxx be amegbetòe ma dzò lã alegba fe dzòdzò Kò dom abò dzi Ne mia dzi avòvia de mia do de ḡgò	Twisted foot, like an infant's foot I did not want to insult It's your child who sent you into this Exxx says no human takes after a sheep's business Pride showing at his head and shoulder Let's find some small cloth to spread before him
Rxxx kpoe le vovo lxxx ny vinòakò Manye ekpavò o Ameḡḡa la menya dena o loo Agòvaya wonye do nufò na agò	Rxxx saw it but thought differently lxxx was nursing a baby Did not know the cloth which bore him "Human hair is not easily removed" "It was wide-winged agò tree that made agò talkative
lxxx yae do nufò na agò Agòvaya wonye do nufò na agò	It is lxxx who caused agò to talk It was wide-winged agò that caused agò to talk
Agò vayae Exxx be amedò fe nya wonò gblògblòm la Medzea ye ḡu o Miawoe miadzi aha via de Ada akpee na Nxxx Sxxx yae nye amenuvea loo lxxx awo lodonu pè Le tògbuiwó de hame Tògbuiwó, mamawó de hame hee.	It's wide-winged agò Exxx says the lazy one's matter people discuss I never believed it You should try and find some drink To thank Nxxx Sxxx is the benefactor, really lxxx caused a thing of proverb Led grandfathers into song Grandfathers, grandmothers into song, truly.

The argument for conflict-escalation is also supported by specific practices. For example, when the factions are invited by a "neutral" village to perform in order to judge the competition, the loser carefully considers elements of bias. When traces of bias are discovered, whether they can be validated or not, the loser may initiate a second round of *haló* in retaliation against the judges and their loyal ward. A cycle of *haló* is thus triggered

and participants increased. In one case studied, the losers not only protested the judgment in song but also took the judges to a district court. The case was dismissed, and the two factions were warned against further violence. In another situation the man who pronounced one faction a winner through the presentation of a white flag was made to undergo a curse for the rest of his life.<sup>21</sup>

The examples above suggest that violence and aggression are escalated and continued in diverse forms, even many years after the actual performance of *haló*. The official procedure of reconciling factions through the imposition of fines by the district and traditional courts is the last resort for ending conflicts. These legal and ritual formalities in controlling *haló* and its associated violence and aggression are not totally safe and reliable. While they provide checks on the direction and extent of individual and group involvement in conflict, they do not guarantee total peaceful coexistence. They do not prevent individuals and groups from internalizing conflict and aggressive behavior. Hostilities, inhibited for a time, are carefully expressed during discussions of affairs that involve cooperation between the two factions. Preliminary results of a comparative analysis of non-*haló* and contemporary song traditions indicate that without the existing instruments of restraint, the genre could still be a popular medium for initiation and escalating conflict.

### *Speech-Song*

The Anlo-Ewe distinguish between the normal mode of singing, *hadzidzi*, and special half-spoken forms collectively referred to as *hamelo* (lit., in-song-proverb). This half-spoken or rhythmically patterned genre is employed strategically in normal music-making to (1) diversify the musical and aesthetic import, and (2) serve as a slogan and a special cue that provides an identity for the music as well as for the performing group. The *hamelo* is a brief tonal and rhythmic construction interjected during the *hatsiatsia* section. In Ewe, which is a tonal language, tone is phonemic: the meaning of a word depends upon one of three basic tone levels, with

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<sup>21</sup> The particular individual on whom a curse was supposedly placed entered exile in the Ivory Coast, then returned and died three or four years ago.

variations between them.<sup>22</sup> The musical and phonemic properties are therefore essential in the construction of the *hamelo* and other forms from the speech-song continuum, as elaborated below.

In *haló* the dramatic and communicative impact of *hamelo* assumes special consideration, and its performance includes mime and gesticulation, all intended to highlight and transport the semantic and musical meaning to the audience (in this case the opponents involved in the conflict). Because of the purposes of provocation, challenge, and the exacerbation of conflict in *haló*, the *hamelo* takes on a more direct and denotative meaning, especially when interpreted further through the media of mime and dramaturgy. In normal musical contexts, the *hamelo* is constructed and performed with parameters that present allusive and ambiguous references. Since the musical contest and contexts of *haló* involve direct confrontation with a target opponent, the references are explicitly formulated and directly communicated through the use of personal names and features unique to the opponent. Here is one illustration:

EXAMPLE 5

A Leader: X fi ago ta (X stole and wore a velvet)  
Group: Duawo mikpoe (All towns[people], look at him)

B Leader: Yxxx vōku vōku loto (Yxxx scrotum, scrotum rotund)



Group: Edzi be yeawo todotodo (It wants to burst)



<sup>22</sup> See Ansre 1961 for full information on the Ewe language.

- C Leader: Yxxx, Yxxx, Yxxx ta gã tsitsi dududu (Yxxx, Yxxx, Yxxx big head, rheumatism *dududu* (untrans.))



- Group: Fia ka fome vie? (What kind of chief is he?)



The semantic construction of the insult is also made more effective and hence more provoking by the ingenious use of such prosodic features as assonance (*ta gã, fia ka, lètò, vōku, wò*) and reduplication (*dududu, todotodo*), as illustrated above. The speech-song mode, therefore, not only diversifies the musical moment aesthetically and structurally, but also allows the alternative interpretation of insult, and heightens the drama necessary for an incisive communication of insult.

### *Drum Encoding and Visual Display*

In normal Anlo-Ewe music performance visual icons or special carvings known as *dufozi* are sometimes displayed to enrich the performance. They also direct the audience's attention to specific segments of song texts that are represented in a concrete form and as part of the *dufozi* complex.<sup>23</sup> In *haló* such visual forms (including a group's insignia or flag) are moldings of personal insults, albeit in exaggerated forms. Insults may also be graphically coded into the inscriptions on flags. In one case, in addition to the verbal depictions and suggestions in the *hamelos*

<sup>23</sup> The use of the concrete medium to emphasize a message is documented in Avorgbedor 1985.

above, an icon in the shape of a scrotum was employed and manipulated to underscore the insult. The rhythmic or musical content of these verbal forms is also usually supported by the accompanying drum ensemble. For example, the leader (antecedent) part is initiated by the master drum, and the group (consequent) part is taken by the support drums.<sup>24</sup> The prosaic rhythmic framing generates musical interest, while the mime and gross icons add humor, drama, and interpretive commentary.

Drum encoding in these examples takes on special advantages for many reasons. For one, in ordinary musical contexts a master drum would take the liberty to reproduce the name of a friend or an important person present at the performance. The person so called immediately receives special attention from the crowd, and his social prestige is temporarily elevated. In *haló*, the situation is reversed, and the performance leaves a lasting negative impression on both the individual opponent and the larger audience. A second reason is that each musical type among the village groups has its own drum vocabulary. Whatever additional vocabulary is invented, accepted, and played often thus becomes an integral part of the standard vocabulary. In addition, people easily remember or identify these vocabularies; the negative ones from *haló* music consequently assume wider social impact. It is, therefore, a strategic way of exacerbating anger and insult whenever insults are reformulated into drum codes. The range of insult represented in *haló* is limited only by the creative skills of composers, singers, and aggressors, and in the performance there is deliberate attempt to provoke an opponent to the highest degree. Exaggerations of physical features and family history, as well as scatological texts of insult, therefore constitute the core of *haló* texts. For example, examine the following complete song text:

EXAMPLE 6

Ha *fe* nya ku le eme agbe le eme

The matter of song involves both life and death

Miyɔ Axxx nam madzu kpɔ

Call Axxx for me to insult

Axxx atala gbabee

Axxx with thin flat legs

Aklito wo *fu* abɔdzɔdzɔ

Bony loins and hanging and loose arms

Axxx *kili* do kpeta sesi

Axxx *kili* shows a hard buttocks

Axxx hameloe dzrowo hee

Axxx it's "song-deed" that you wished

Kanvas ke *de* ne duie nye ma ?

Canvas (shoes), Is that how you wear it?

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<sup>24</sup> The Anlo-Ewe grade their drums at three basic pitch levels.

Afokpodzi mede anyigba o	High heel does not touch the ground (canvas)
Kanvas gobo tawoe mavayi hee	It's oversized canvas-wearer passing by
Axxx emo lakpee	Axxx small narrow face (no direct transl.)
Axxx no nu kpom	Axxx gazing
Maḍi kesevi fe mo	Like the face of certain small monkey
Axxx do hanye	Axxx caused my song
Bxxx be hanye lae ma li dzo de Afegame	Bxxx says my songs set fire in Afegame
Afegameviwo di kodzo de n̄unye	Afegame people called a meeting on me
Wotsi alomad̄o de ye n̄u	They were sleepless on me
Miadzi vu, hagbe mele eme nami o	We'll sing it long, you're (plur.) not born with song
Axxx fiad̄igbo yae du hafia	Axxx useless chief became chief of song
Axxx menyē fia o	Axxx is not chief
Axxx tso mumevivi xo fia na Ad̄otriawo	Axxx obtained the chiefhood for the Ad̄otris through lie
Ad̄otriawo tsi mavo dzi	The Ad̄otris remained disturbed
Axxx du fia gafovi mele esi o	Axxx became chief but did not have an announcer
Eyaha nagblo hanya	Should he also talk about song?
Yee wole mavo via de de asi na Axxx	Then they put some regalia into Axxx's hands
Yiha nan̄o kpokp̄om	For him to be looking at
Axxx emo yalui yae ble Ad̄otriawo	Axxx's face—(insult) he is one who deceived the Ad̄otris
Fiad̄igbo fe d̄e	That's a useless chief's job
Cxxx be nu menyā w̄ona na Ad̄otriawo o	Cxxx says the Ad̄otris are incapable of anything
Megan̄o edzi mave ha dzi ge	Don't force me to start a song
Mava dze aḡo le fiawo dzi o	To infringe the laws of the chiefs
Tanye nu kpl̄o lo le t̄o me	(Proverb) A wise head dragged crocodile underwater
Bxxx be makle fiawo madzu Axxx	Bxxx says "Let me inform the chiefs to insult Axxx"
Bxxx be mele do na amegawo	Bxxx says "I entreat the elders"
Dxxx lee enu le do nawo hee	Dxxx (elder) I bow for you
Exxx taflatsee	Exxx (elder) I seek your permission
Cxxx be mede taflatsee nawo le keke etsie daa	Bxxx says "I see your permission" from the distant land of the dead
Madzi aha via de de gu nawo	To find some drink for your pocket
Axxx yae gbl̄o ha fe nya	It's Axxx who talked raised the matter of song
Axxx aklito ḡodz̄o yae gbl̄o ha fe nya	Axxx ragged loins spoke the matter of song
Amega Fxxx kple Gxxx hawo	Elder Fxxx and Gxxx's company
Bxxx be mede taflatsee na mi hee	Cxxx says "I seek your permission really"

Adzofia kple Hxxxx Cxxxx be  
 Manye treyi mano miakome  
 Madzi ha viade madzu Axxx  
 Aklito gɔɖɖ maɖi adrako  
 Axxx aklito bido maɖi dzogbeko  
 Xeblanawo kple Vezo  
 Ixxx hawo mele do nami hee  
 Dzoku tefe me voame o  
 Axxx be mede taflatsee nawo hee  
 Jxxx kple Kxxx  
 Lxxx be medo ago nami hee  
 Mele agboawonu kple ha  
 Cxxx de taflatsee madzu Axxx  
 Made Axxx gome miase hee  
 Axxx menye duametowo o  
 Axxx be fia xo ge ye  
 Tɔgbuiwo tso Tefle  
 Tɔgbuiwo tso Tefle ke  
 Gava do de Fenyi  
 Wonɔa nudzrawo wɔm  
 Woamo Fenyitowo dufia fe nyinoeyovi  
 Tɔgbuiwo tsi gbesi  
 Ye wole tɔgbuiwo he dzra na Vetatowo  
  
 Vetatowo womese egome o  
 Kaka woaxo dzinu etoa Fenyitowo do  
  
 Fenyitowo de egome na Vetatowo  
 Vetatowo melo o  
 Ye wole tɔgbuiwo he dzra  
  
 Na Exitowo fekafli zigbozi eto  
  
 Ye wole tɔgbuiwo he dzra na Dzodzetowo  
  
 Adzofia he xo  
 Adzofia xo tɔgbuiwo hedo de Fiagbedu  
  
 Mxxx ke fiafitoe ye wotso dava dze  
 Wodze dava la wotso gbeka gaa de  
 De ali na tɔgbuiwo  
 He kplɔ yi dzogbedzie  
 Ye wole tɔgbuiwo he bla de dzogbetiawo

Adzofia and Hxxx, Cxxx says  
 To be ritual calabash in front of you  
 To sing some songs of insult for Axxx  
 Long ragged loins like an anthill  
 Axxx long pointed loins like a desert anthill  
 Xeblanawo and Vezo  
 The company of Ixxx I entreat you  
 (Proverb)...(untrans.)  
 Axxx says "I beg your pardon)  
 Jxxx and Kxxx  
 Lxxx says "Lend me your ears"  
 I am at the gate with songs  
 Cxxx seeks permission to insult Axxx  
 To reveal Axxx's background for you to hear  
 Axxx is not from the town  
 Axxx insists on becoming a chief  
 Your grandfather came from Tefle  
 Your grandfather came as far as from Tefle  
 Then came to Fenyi  
 He was tricky  
 Had sex with Fenyi chief's female calf  
 Your grandfather was lost in the wilderness  
 Then they caught and sold your grandfather  
 to the Veta people  
 Veta people did not understand this  
 As soon as it was three months Fenyi  
 people appeared  
 Fenyi people explained it the the Veta people  
 Veta people did not consent  
 Therefore they caught and sold your  
 grandfather to the people  
 Then they caught and sold your grandfather  
 to the Exi people  
 Then they caught and sold your grandfather  
 to the Dzodze people  
 Adzofia (interim chief) then retrieved him  
 Adzofia got and sent your grandfather to  
 Fiagbedu  
 Mxxx, a thief, then he became insane  
 In his insanity they tied a big rope  
 Around your grandfather's waist  
 Then sent him to the wilderness  
 Then tied your grandfather to a tree in the



nu	wilderness
Tɔgbuiwo yi dzieso	Your grandfather died
Cxxx be dzogbe laklẽwo he ɖu	Bxxx says wild animals then ate him
Axxx ya mebia hlõ o	Axxx did not revenge from death
Axxx fia ɲutsu hee	Axxx a “man” chief indeed
Dzadzaglidza tu meɖi o	<i>Dzadzaglidza</i> (onomatopiea) there was no gunshot
Axxx ɖewo võ na	Axxx was a timid one
Axxx be yeaɖu fia	Axxx insisted on being chief
Woe nayi dzogbedzi naxo tɔgbuiwo fe ta	You should go to the wilderness to retrieve your grandfather’s head
Hafi naɖu fia	Before you become a chief
Fia ma ɖewo vivina	That type of chief is an enjoyable one
Ameade meɖu nee o	Not everyone can become one
Axxx ɖu ’davafia na Aɖotriawo.	Axxx became an insane chief for the Aɖotris.

## Conclusions

The types of violence accompanying *haló* performances are summarized in the following: physical confrontation, including the use of a weapon; destruction of personal property; and magical practices to overcome or destroy an opponent, both physically and spiritually. While activities in the spiritual realm cannot easily be identified objectively, reports of cases linking singer-composers’ deaths to such practices are overwhelming. Since much of the violence is perpetrated in the spiritual realm, government courts focus on cases with more overt manifestations, such as evidence from song texts or physical injury. While the Anlo-Ewe kinship and legal systems seek to provide a congenial environment for interpersonal transactions at the familial and societal levels in order to preserve the peace, the phenomenon of *haló* both transcends and challenges the efficiency of such systems; it also brings up the challenge of defining the boundaries of artistic license.

In *haló*, we come across the interplay of humor, play, the ugly, and satire. These techniques are situationally patterned to enhance both the goals of musical superiority and the affective and incisive communication of insult. While the technique of humor and comedy is generally employed to temporarily minimize the level of tension generated in *haló* performance, it is also attention-structuring. Humor and comedy are particular aesthetic devices employed to diversify and elevate the artistic experience, and the

effectiveness of these devices in social conflict has been acknowledged by some scholars (Bateson 1972, Burma 1972). The following observation makes the point clear (Burma 1972:201): “In conflict, the involved parties make use of a variety of techniques to gain ascendancy or temporary advantage. Since subtle barbs often strike more telling blows than gratuitous insult or rational argument, not infrequently these techniques include humor, satire, irony, and wit.”

In sum, we can conclude that *haló* is a unique socio-musical drama that draws on a variety of artistic channels for the sake of incisive, aggressive, and superior communication of insult and musical affect. The genre maintains a link with the total culture by drawing on and extending the musical and artistic parameters already available among the Anlo-Ewe culture and society. In addition, social process is exhibited and updated through the musical performance and the social consequences also reflect on the role and status of the music. These examples thus confirm the previous speculations about musical and social relationships, and expands on the nature of performance. Focus on *haló* as a social reality, rather than as merely a symbolic and routine act, allows us to delve deeper into the web of social relations in which performance is situated.<sup>25</sup> While language use is at the core of the performance, the Anlo-Ewe example also shows several ways in which musical excellence is achieved, as well as the mixing of the fictive and the real. The investigator of *haló* is also presented with a rich source of data offering new insights into verbal art and the performative in Africa. This study therefore bears many implications for new perspectives in performance studies, including those of sociolinguistics, ethnomusicology, and ethnonaesthetics. Evidence given above should also urge caution toward those analyses that describe and see the ends of performance as simply tension- or conflict-resolving. The ideas and issues raised in this essay seem rather to support perspectives that acknowledge the continuity of tension and conflict, as properly observed by Igor Kopytoff (1961) in a study of a Congo society. The field study of *haló* also raises many problems that pertain to field theory and practice. For example, new techniques, strategies, and procedures developed and employed during the field investigation provided certain types of significant information that

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<sup>25</sup> Some of the studies that have focused on symbolic and ritual employment of verbal aggression include Avery 1984, Brempong 1978, Eckert 1980, Flynn 1977, Herndon 1971, and Kleivan 1971.

would not otherwise have been available through traditional channels (cf. Avorgbedor 1990-91). The full potential of *haló* as a resource for building new hypotheses and analytical perspectives in performance studies remains to be explored.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The fieldwork from which this essay derives was made possible by a grant from the H.F. Guggenheim Foundation, 1988-89.

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## Appendix

### Guide to Pronunciation and Transliteration

- [ɔ] As in caught.
- [f] Air passes through a narrow opening between the lips, as in blowing out a candle (voiceless bilabial fricative).
- [v] Similar to above but voiced (bilabial fricative).
- [ɣ] Air passes through a narrow bridge formed by raising the back of the tongue toward the soft palate (voiced velar fricative).

- [ŋ] A velar nasal, similar to English ng as in “sing.”
- [d̥] Similar to the Spanish “r”; the upper case is Ð.
- [ny] Pronounced as in French gn, as in “igname.”
- [dz] As in English “pads” or as j in “jam.”
- [ts] As in English “mats” or as ch in “cheer.”
- [gb] Pronounced at the soft palate through a simultaneous closure of the lips and relaxed simultaneously without aspiration (voiced labiovelar stop).
- [kp] As above but voiceless.