IRAQW *SLUFAY* AND THE POWER OF VOICE

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Introduction

This article presents a formal and stylistic analysis of the splendid performance of a *slufay*, a genre of Iraqw oral poetry best described as prayer poetry. It is performed in a strong recitative mode that includes the reciter and the audience with structurally substantial responses. It uses archaic and figurative language and cultivates an allusive style, which is sometimes even for the audience not transparent. Its form and style indicate that it can be seen as a lyrical genre (Finnegan 1970). The contents, however, make reference to the most central concepts of Iraqw lifeworld that evolve around procreation and peace, and express core cultural values, namely the wishes to have good relations with the neighbours, to integrate them into Iraqw society, and to be guided by *loo'a*, God.

While numerous versions of the slufay are documented in the literature (Wada 1978; Kamera 1988; Rekdal 1999; Hagborg 2000; Snyder 2005; Thornton 1980), the particular performance that we take as data base was recited by Hhawu Tarmo and recorded by Maarten Mous in 1988 in Haylotto in northern Tanzania during his field research on linguistic aspects of the Iraqw language. It was Thomas Geider, however, who raised our interest in orature and the idea for this analysis. It was also his teaching at the University of Cologne at that time that gave us the practical analytical instruments to approach this analysis and the courage to cross the lines between the disciplines. Subsequently, in 1990 we held a paper at the Afrikanistentag in Vienna to present some of our findings. The current Gedenkschrift gives us the space to present, after all these years, a written version which combines our linguistic and oralliterary knowledge.

Background

The Iraqw live in Northern Tanzania in Mbulu and adjacent regions where they practice mixed farming. Their language is Cushitic and stands out as different from the majority of Bantu languages in the country. Their verbal arts are rich and vibrant and includes stories (*ti'ita* and *alqaydo*), riddles (*sinik*), songs (*da'aangw*) and dances (*ne/ema*) as well as two indigenous poetic genres: *slufay* and *gireeda* (a poetic duel).[1]

1 The Iraqw orthography is used in this paper: / is a voiced pharyngeal fricative with creaky voice, hh is a voiceless pharyngeal fricative, ' is a glottal stop (not written but present word initially), sl is a voiceless lateral fricative, tl and ts are ejective affricates, the former with lateral release, ng is a velar nasal word-initially and word-finally and fol-

The noun *slufay* is derived from the verb *sluufiis* 'to praise' (Mous, Qorro and Kiessling 2002). The *slufay* is ideally performed in the early morning at sunrise at the end of the party celebrating the first beer of the new harvest of millet (the times differ in the different regions from end of August to beginning of November); the ceremony and this beer is called *geetla/angw* (Wada 1978: 41; Fukui 1970: 135). In actual fact the *slufay* is performed at many occasions. For example, the performance we base this analysis on was recorded in 1988 by Mous in the house of John Daafay. John had organised a party because people had helped him to clear a new field. The performer is usually somebody who is good at it, but everybody, every male person, is allowed to do so. This *slufay* is recited by Hhawu Tarmo who is well known in the area, Haylotto and neighbouring villages, for his ability in the verbal arts.[2] The *slufay* is presented inside the house. Men and women sit around the beer. The performer stands near to the open door (this place is also referred to as *geetla/angw* like the ceremony and its beer). Light must fall on him. The association of sunlight is with God, *loo'a* which is the word for 'sun, day' and 'God'. He has grass, *barsi*, in his hand which is a symbol for peace and blessing. The same *barsi* is put under the roof above the door if one enters the house of a friend with the aim of a serious request. It is also placed on the heap of cow dung before a sacrifice (Kamera 1978). In short, the *barsi* is symbolic for praying for blessing. He will dip this *barsi* into the beer.[3] A more direct link to *loo'a* is in Johnson's (1966: 55) report of the *slufay* which states that someone has to spit (bless) the first mouthful of the beer towards the rising sun, *loo'a*.

The *slufay* secures well-being of the community: peace, food, prosperity and fertility. The collective voice imposes community attitude and erases individualism (Kamera 1988: 21-22). A strong wish for peace and cooperation with all neighbours is expressed discussing the Maasai (North), the Nyiramba (West), Datooga and Gorwa/Fiome (South) and the Mbugwe in the East. The Hadza in the West are not mentioned.

The *slufay* is a central cultural text for the Iraqw. The text is a strong expression of who they are, how they relate to their neighbours and verbalizes their core cultural values. It comes to no surprise that various authors writing on Iraqw culture have cited from *slufay* performances to substantiate their points. Rekdal (1999) contains a chapter on the ritual essence of *slufay* and its central role in forming history. Hagborg (2001: 94-111) presents *slufay* extensively and comes to its central and dominant structure of meaning consisting of prosperity against poverty, inside

lowed by a voiced velar stop between vowels. Double vowels are long; (high) tone is only being marked on the first vowel symbol. Low tone is left unmarked. The following abbreviations are used in glosses: abl = ablative, f= feminine, freq = frequentative, inf = infinitive, instr = instrumental, m = masculine, obj = object, opt = optative, pf = perfect, dir = directional, ^ = question intonation.

2 Immediately after the last words of his slufay Hhawu Tarmo "signs" his performance by saying "We have finished. I am going home. I am Hhawu Tarmo, one day a white man" into the microphone.

3 Among the Hamar in Southern Ethiopia there is a similar chant called *barjo alá* and the word *barjo* 'word, life-force, well-being' is related to Hamar *bargi* 'sprouting green' according to Strecker (1979, 1988).

against outside, past against present, tradition against non-tradition, peace against conflict, elders against youth. Snyder (2005) presents the *slufay* in her final chapter entitled "Praying for Harmony". Thornton (1980) illustrates many points in his analyses with quotes from Iraqw verbal arts, often excerpts from *slufay*.

The overall structure of the *slufay*[4]

The *slufay* has a double bipartite structure. It consists of an introduction in normal speech and a recited part and this double structure is repeated for a shorter second time. In the introduction called *fiiro* from *fiiriim* 'to ask, wish, pray', the performer speaks in a strong voice which is supported by someone from the audience who intersperses *fiiro* with words expressing agreement (*aay, ee'ít, ee, éegan*, etc.). When making strong wishes and curses, i.e. "strong words" attributed with power, he raises his voice and shouts and the audience joins in saying 'let it cool' and point to the ground or raise and wave their hands. In the *fiiro* the performer discusses the state of the people and the land. For example, Hhawu Tarmo refers to a quarrel about the small quantity of beer earlier that day. Furthermore, he wishes that the people will recover from their illnesses and that the women will work hard in the fields, that that people have good health and that wrong doers are punished.

While the *fiiro* is adjusted to the specific circumstances of place and time, the main text of the *slufay* is conceived of as fixed. And indeed many lines are word to word identical in the various versions that were collected. There is, however, considerable variation between the seven versions that Mous collected. The reason for this is, according to the performers themselves, "mistakes" by the performer, forgetting lines and the like. However, as has been pointed out in comparative research, this can be observed throughout written and taped records of such European (Parry and Lord 1954) and Swahili (Vierke 2009: esp. part II, also 462ff.) epic literature and may be owed to the particular situative circumstances of performance as well as lapses of memory etc.

The recitation starts with the wish for peace, the wish "to like each other" (lines 9-12):

9	*hhoo' koomaane.* peace have:we:opt	Let us have peace.
10	*hhoo' koomaan.* peace have:we	Let us have peace.
11	*hhoo' ka koomaan.* peace it have:we	Peace we have.
12	*hhoo' ka koomaan.* peace it have:we	Peace we have.
13	*siiwa matlee,* time morning	The time of the morning

4 The full text can be found at the end of this article. Line numbers in the article make reference to this appendix.

14	*siiwa matlér ló'*,	the time of the early morning
	time morning:of true	
15	*matlér ló' tsatsa'aar*,	the early misty morning
	morning:of true cold	
16	*matlér ló' tsatsa'aar*	the early misty morning
	morning:of true cold	

There is mentioning of the fact that it is morning (lines 13-16) – in reality the time of day is the afternoon, a beer drinking party after a working party. This automatic reference shows that despite the variation mentioned further up the *slufay* is much more formalised and formular than the *fiiro*.

The text continues with wishes that there will be enough food for people and cattle (lines 17ff., 50ff.), that no cows will get lost (lines 19-25), that there will be peace in the neighbourhood (line 55), that many children, especially boys, will be born (lines 70-73), that there will be a good relation with the leaders (line 87), that there are no witches (lines 92), that the surrounding mountains will protect the people (lines 16-105).

The *slufay* also contains a "social geography" that states the relationships to the neighbouring peoples: in the North the Maasai, in the West the Nyiramba, in the South the Datooga and Gorwa, and finally in the East the Mbugwe. The message is that the Iraqw want peace and exchange of goods, such as the bracelet and the gourd from the Maasai, the pots and the baskets from the Mbugwe. Only the Hadza, also neighbours of the Iraqw, are not mentioned at all. Moreover, they want that their neighbours to become Iraqw. This message is a concise expression of the Iraqw philosophy of inclusion, the attitude of an immigrant society: all are welcome as long as they become Iraqw — only 3 of the 121 Iraqw clans mentioned in Nordbustad (1978: 22-23) claim Iraqw origin. In the second recitation there is again a wish for peace, and for a safe return home for the people present.

The very final lines of the *slufay* are again highly formalised. They consist of the presentation of two opposite concepts that are seen as inherently linked. Their close juxtaposition evokes perpetuity through the image of splitting in two that which always belongs together:

291	*tlawu nee daanda.*	the coat and the back
	sheet and back	
292	*ya/ati nee kolo.*	the sandal and the heel
	sandal and heel	
293	*ya/ati nee kolo.*	the sandal and the heel
294	*dawa nee picha.*	the hand and the camera
	hand and picture	
295	*át kuqú masongomo.* <u[5]>	us and the white man
	us that.one:of white.man	
296	*án nee gitsiimi*	I and my grass
	me and grass	

5 We indicate ululation from the audience by <u>.

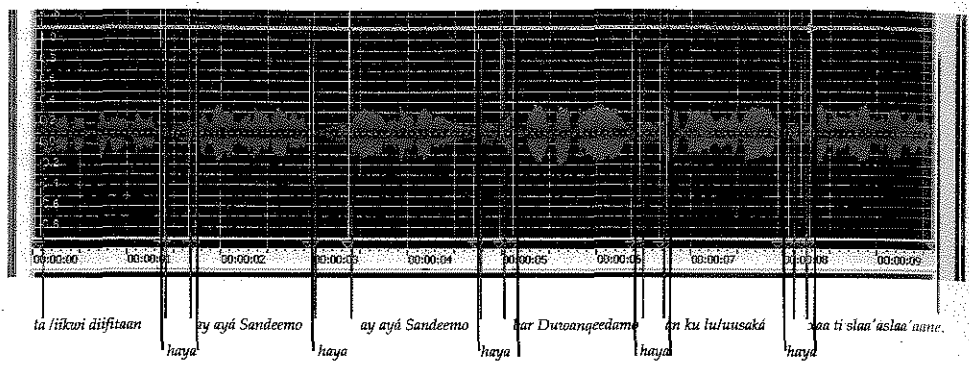
Line 291 mentiones that the Iraqw always wear a kind of a blanket, in line 296 reference is made to the bundle of grass, the *barsi*, that the performer holds in his hand (see further up). Every *slufay* ends in these lines, see Wada (1978: 50), but this performer, Hhawu Tarmo, takes the liberty to deviate from the conventional lines. He replaces 'the mouth' by 'the camera' rendering it 'hand and camera' and he introduces 'us and you, the European' and thus twice referring to Mous's presence. Other versions of the *slufay* also contain among these final lines: *ila nee saga* 'eye and head', *ma'ay nee deeqwa* 'water and razor', or, in Kamera (1988: 10), *ma'ay nee danu* 'water and honey' and *muusa nee kune* 'pestle and mortar', as well as a line that refers to sexual intercourse in a veiled manner: *nu/u nee nu/u* (words that are in disuse, probably taboo) or *toqa nee toqa* (literally: that and that).

There is one main performer who recites the *slufay*, but in fact there are three parties involved. The audience has a prominent role in chanting *haya* 'okay' after every line of the *slufay* proper and by doing so sets the pace and the rhythm of the performance. Further there is also one particular person in the audience who sings a basic melodic line through the lines that the main performer recites.

Formal aspects of recitation

On the basis of its aesthetic – poetic, rhythmic and melodic – properties we have characterised the *slufay* as a poetic genre. The poetic properties, i.e. the verbal patterning, can be seen in the formulaic opening and closing of the recitation that includes the well wishes in the beginning and the parallelisms of the last lines (see above), metaphors (see below) and the use of archaic language: the very first line *hhoo koomaane* 'let us have peace' contains an optative verb form *koomaane* which is no longer in use in the language. Another example is the expression *tsifrirén /aandur* 'our sweet tongue'. It contains the word */aandur* which is not used at all in Iraqw except for the *slufay*. In Rendille, a related Cushitic language, the word occurs as */aandu* 'good language'.

Characterising the rhythm provided a major challenge to us. An initial observation is obvious and crucial: the audience responses (Reuster-Jahn 2002) provides the rhythm. The response *haya* 'okay' is chanted after every line of the *slufay*, and this soon becomes an automatic rhythm that the performer has to obey. He needs to fit each line into the short timespan between two *haya*'s. This provides a very rigid rhythmic structure of around 1,8 sec, that is, roughly 1,4 to 1,8 seconds of recitation and 0,4 sec of chanting, often with some overlap. The following sequence (lines 106-111) consists of 9,6 seconds, with the recited lines of 1,3 to 1,4 and the response lines of 0,3 to 0,4 seconds:



106	*ta /iikwi diifitaan.*	1,3	Let us spread out to the North
	us north spread:we		
	haya	0,3	yes
107	*ay ayá Sandeemo*	1,4	to the land of Sandeemo
	to land:of S		
	haya	0,4	yes
108	*ay ayá Sandeemo.*	1,4	to the land of Sandeemo
	haya	0,4	yes
109	*bar Duwanqeedamo*	1,4	the Maasai man
	if D		
	haya	0,4	yes
110	*án ku lu/uusaká.*	1,4	I don't curse him
	I you curse:inf:not		
	haya	0,35	yes
111	*xaa ti slaa'aslaa'aane.*	1,4	let us love each other
	well us freq:love:we:opt		

In a search for even more rhythmic structure we have counted syllables, heavy and light, moras, and vowels, without reaching a convincing rule, even when allowing for variation. Lines with **7** syllables amount to around 33% (81 of 236); those with 6 or 8 account for roughly 25% each; 22 or 9% of the lines have 9 syllables. Over 80% of the lines thus consist of 6 to 8 syllables. Only **7** lines contain more than 9 syllables but also 18 with only 5. Other genres of Iraqw oral poetry, such as songs, are similar with a lead singer and the audience joining in with a fixed meaningless reaction after every line. In these cases, too, the lines have a limited number of syllable varying between 5 and 9.

Most probably the rhythmic pattern is circumscribed by more than the syllabic or moraic duration of the line, and requires a beat or pulse (see below). This is indicated by the fact that some lines contain fillers. In

111	*xaa ti slaa'aslaa'aane'*	let us love each other
	well us freq:love:we:opt	

the first word *xaa* has no meaning and appears to be present to fill a gap. The same is true for

121	*kar lo /ameenár doorén*	well, the women of our house
	well well women:f:of house:our	

in which *kar* is best translated as 'well' and also *lo* 'true' has very little semantic contribution to the line. These fillers exclusively occur at the beginning of lines. A possible explanation is that they serve to gain time for the performer to remember the line, but that is most probably not an appropriate explanation for two reasons: First, the lines pass very quickly in less than two seconds. Secondly, in many cases they reappear when lines are repeated:

127	*kar boyo dinkwa*	well, the boyo-dance together
	well boyo.dance together	
128	*xa boyo dinkwa*	well, the boyo-dance together

The lines referring to the image of the double birth water both start with such a filler but the first one,

134	*gim doorén tsa/tay tsara*	well, (in) our house, double birth water
	well house:our birth.water twice	
136	*kar tsa/atay tsara*	well, (in) double birth water

contains a word (*doorén* 'our house') or two syllables more than its repetition. Despite the difference in length both start in a filler. Hence it is not likely either that the fillers serve to arrive at sufficient length of the line. What does correlate with the difference in length is the full realisation of the epenthetic vowel in *tsa/(a)tay* 'birth water' in the shorter but not in the longer version. We suspect that an important function of the fillers is to have a beat on the first content word.

While the line itself undoubtedly provides the most prominent structuring principle, we cannot propose a rhythmic pattern in terms of a prescribed sequence of metrical elements. Still we do feel that there is more to it than just the fixed duration of each line provided by the participation of the audience and a limited range of syllables. Certainly every line consists of 9 to 11 pulses, the smallest rhythmic unit. At least one, sometimes (or arguably) two beats can be heard in one line. At the beginning of each line, usually on the first content word, we hear a beat for sure, maybe produced by a stress or accent phenomenon. The very first lines, for example, have the first beat on the first syllable:

9	*hhoo' koomaane.* peace have:we:opt		Let us have peace.
10	*hhoo' koomaan.* peace have:we		Let us have peace.
11	*hhoo' ka koomaan.* peace it.f have:we		Peace we have.
12	*hhoo' ka koomaan.*		Peace we have
13	*siiwa matlee,* time morning		The time of the morning
14	*siiwa matlér ló',* time morning:of.f true		the time of the early morning
15	*matlér ló' tsatsa/aar,* morning true cold		the early misty morning
16	*matlér ló' tsatsa/aar*		the early misty morning

Syllables with high tone or one with a long vowel often carry a beat:

112	*kar sixmó dakók* well bracelet:of arm:his		and the bracelet on his arm
113	*aakó doorén ngu qaasi* father:of house:our it.m put:he:opt		will be worn by our father
114	*kudú daktó /iiya'i.* that.one:of arm:his:of right		the one of his right hand
115	*bar tsataydú doohúng* if knives:of house:your		and the knife of your house
116	*kudú bará Duwanqeet* that.one:of in D.		the one of the Maasai
117	*i yaami huwi* s/he earth:dir fall:he:opt		will fall into the ground
118	*i yaami huwi.*		will fall into the ground
119	*bar tseepá doohúng* if milk.gourd:of house:your		and the milk gourd of your house
120	*bar tseepá doohúng*		and the milk gourd of your house
121	*kar lo /ameenár doorén* well true wives:of:f house:our		well the women of our house
122	*ameena girwa xúf* wives it.f.obj:instr:abl drink		will drink from them
123	*ameena girwa xúf*		will drink from them

Syllable length is reflected for example in line 115, but not in 114, neither does every syllable with a long vowel contain a beat. More often than not, a heavy syllable is realised in the recitation as long. Syllables in Iraqw can consist of CV, CVV, CVC or CVVC. Only the first type is light, the others are considered to consist of two morae and thus heavy (Mous 1993: 24-30).

As we can see, all lines have a long ultimate or penultimate syllable, and these are often expressively lenghtened, with added pharingealization and frequently a drop of voice. While this is more a stylistic device, albeit a highly expressive one, it interacts with the beat and the melody.

Tone and melody to some degree also interact. Iraqw is a very restricted tone language with tonal distinction limited to the final syllable(s) of the word and serving primarily grammatical function. One of these grammatical functions is expressing tense on the final syllable of the verb, which in turn is sentence final. However, what we see in the *slufay* is that the *slufay* melody overrides the grammatical tone on ultimate syllables of the lines.

In the example above the high tones in lines 112, 115, 119, 120 and 121 are transferred into beats, in lines 114 and 116 the first beat coincides with the first high tone, while in line 113 the beat does not conform with the existing high tones.

The recitation is further characterised by the praise performed in a half-singing voice. Three simple melodies, consisting of three notes, are used, and there is a fairly clear correlation with tone. The three melodies are characterised by a final rise (eg. lines 112, 115, 116, 118, 119), a final fall (118) or a stable melody (113, 114, 117). In addition to the final rise, one can perceive an earlier rise in some lines (eg. 112, 115, 116, 118, 119) which correspond to high tones, thus the *slufay* melody is adjusted to inherent linguistic tone in syllables in the first part of the line, and adding to the perception of the first beat. Wada (1978: 52) distinguishes four melodies which correspond to our rising and stable melodies with or without an earlier rise. He does not have a falling melody.

There is no strict sequence of melodies. Repeated lines are sometimes identical in melody and sometimes different; if they are different we observe stable melody after a falling melody or a stable one after a rising one in repetitions of lines but also a rising one after a stable one. Falling melody does not seem to signal the end of a theme in the text of the *slufay*. The repetition of lines is for emphasis of content, or for ending a topic more than anything else. The following is an impressive succession of emphatic fall:

124	*bar manomó /uuwa* if bantu west		The Bantu from the west
125	*nee dasú doorén* and girls house:our		let the girls from our house
126	*dasú Maanda* girls bantu		and the Bantu girls
127	*kar boyo dinkwa* well boyo.dance together		dance together
128	*xa boyo dinkwa* well boyo.dance together		dance together

In addition to the melody that the main performer recites, there is a second melody that is sung, not permanently but now and again, by one person in the audience. This melody is a basic low-high-low with an interval of a third in equal duration and pitch difference. This voice is hard to discern on the recordings. More information is lacking, but it would be interesting to see whether this singer contributes to the cohesion of the recitation and the meaning of his song.

Contents

The *slufay* expresses a strong wish for peace and prosperity and for a peaceful expansion of the Iraqw by absorbing neighbouring peoples. It is seen by insiders and outsiders as a core text of Iraqw cultural values. The expression of these values is arrived at by powerful metaphoric images of various sorts. On the one hand the

power of the word is achieved through collocations that are common in other instances of Iraqw verbal arts. Examples are phrases such as

138 *yaqamú saga boo/* 'the leading bull with the black head'
big.bull:of head black

referring to a very strong bull or man;

269 *naanú dixte* 'vegetables in decay'
vegetables:of decay

referring to sharing even the last vegetables that one has. The repetition of this line (270) was greeted by the audience with expressions of excitement which show the appreciation and importance of such formulae.

The powerful poetics are also reached by strong images such as that of two rivers of birth water leaving the house: from where the cattle stay and from the women's area.

134	*gim doorén tsa/(a)tay tsara.*	from our house, double birth water
	well house:our birth.water twice	
135	*dooróo mangór gwa/ami.*	our house at the old mangoot tree
	house:our:of mangoot.tree:of G	
136	*kar tsa/(a)tay tsara*	double birth water
	well birth.water twice	
137	*ngi tlafírwa /a/akuut.*	will flow from the bedroom
	will room:abl freq:go	
138	*yaqambú saga boo/*	a black headed bull
	big.bull:of head black	
139	*ngi tlafirwa giirin.*	will come out of the bedroom
	will room:abl go.in.front	
140	*kar koko matla/angw*	and another one from the cattle room
	well this.one. cattle.room	
141	*ku matla/angwi ay,*	will be met in the cattle room
	it.m.obj cattle.room:dir go	

It is thus the idea of a double prolificacy, that of people and of cattle, that is evoked here. As in many societies with a strong cattle-keeping tradition (Herero, Maasai, Fulbe), women and cattle are likened to each other in metaphorical ways: when the women and the cattle returning home at the end of the day are compared, both with a hump (line 45), the bundles of firewood on the backs of the women (line 53). Happiness of the cattle is expressed by movement: of the tail, of the stamping of the feet, of the */alay*-bird dancing on their backs (lines 32-37).

Geography provides a third kind of suggestive image. The mountains that surround the Iraqw area (in particular the home land *Irqwa da/aw* 'Eastern Iraqw') and provide the feeling that this area is a world on its own, are forwarded as protecting the people:

96	*atén tloom'i ti yawiyé',*	We are protected by mountains
	us mountains us protect:they:pf	
97	*tlooma ló' ti yawiyé',*	the mountains protect us
	mountain true us protect:they	
98	*Hharu ló(') tír yab,*	Mt. Hharu protects us
	H true us:instr protect:she	

99	*/Aanka tir /eetin,*	we descend Mt. Aanka
	A us:instr go.down:he	
100	*/Aanka ló' tir /eetin,*	from Mt. Aanka we descend
101	*/Aanka ló' tir /eetin,*	from Mt. Aanka we descend
102	*Guwang ló' tir ga/ay,*	Mt. Guwang we look at
	G true us:instr watch:he	
103	*Guwang ló ir xuumis,*	Mt. Guwang is watching
	G true he:instr watch:he	
104	*Kandami (i) /uumin,*	Mt. Kandami fosters us
	K (he) foster:he	
105	*Kandami ló(')y /uumin.*	Mt. Kandami fosters us

Trees are used to refer to places: Haylotto, where this performance took place, is referred to by the *mangoot*, an impressive tree of this sort marks the centre of Haylotto (line 135) and the *gwa/ame* tree (line 61). Especially the latter can be found in expressively repeated lines (189/190, 278/279). Other metaphors are liana (binding) for witchcraft (line 92), or grass for being together:

22	*kar gitsiimír nuqunuuq*	with the fresh grass
	well grass:of:f sweet	
23	*gitsiimír nuqunuuq*	the fresh grass
262	*atén ti slaa'asla('a)an.*	Let us love each other
	us us freq:love:we	
263	*atén bara gitsiimi*	We are like our grass
	us if grass	
264	*atén bar gitsiimír naa/.*	we are like our wet grass
	us if grass:of:f wet	
265	*xa masongomo*	you are a white man
	well white.man	
266	*án ti boo/aboo/.*	I am deep black
	me me intens:black	
267	*ís kudú /awáak* <u>	he is white
	him that.one white	
268	*xa naanu ku eemaan*	let us eat vegetables together
	well vegetables it.m.obj eat:we	
269	*ga naanú dixte*	even the rotten ones
	thing vegetables decay	
270	*ga naanú dixte*	even the rotten ones

In the second example, the sense of togetherness is extended to the European present at the beer party, Maarten Mous, and amplified with the formula, or strong word of sharing even rotten vegetables, with the audience breaking out in excitement. This can be seen as both the flexibility of the *slufay* to adapt to a concrete situation as well as inclusion to be a cultural practice deeply embedded in Iraqw society.

Of paramount importance throughout the slufay is the repetition and thus emphasis of wishes, first an foremost the wish for prosperity, as expressed in the beginning of the *slufay*: that there will be enough food for people and cattle, that no cows will get lost, that many children, especially boys, will be born. A second

group of wishes pivot around the notion of peace: peace in the neighbourhood, that there will be a good relation with the leaders, that there are no witches.

The wish for peaceful expansion is a central and substantial part of the *slufay* and is discussed mainly with regard to the neighbouring peoples, the Maasai in the North, the Nyiramba in the West, the Datooga and Gorwa in the South and in the East the Mbugwe.

The Maasai, lines are referred to as the "land of Sandeemo", presumably a famous person, or as *Duwanqeed* (cf. line 109). The wish is that the Iraqw elder wears the bracelet of the Maasai, that the Maasai knife is no longer used for killing, and that the Maasai milk gourd is used by Iraqw women. The relations with the Maasai have been problematic in the past and the fear for the warlike Maasai echoes in the *slufay*, for example in the antonymic "we do not curse you". To the West and the East reference is made to the Bantu neighbours, the Nyiramba, and the Mbugwe respectively. The *slufay* wishes that the Nyiramba girls dance together, that they sleep with Iraqw men so as to produce Iraqw offspring (lines 124-133). In fact, several Iraqw clans claim Nyiramba origin. The East Bantu (Mbugwe) are more seen as traders only:

172	*tumbi ló' ka alaan*	let us inherit the beer-sieve
	sieve true it.f.obj inherit:we	
173	*tumbi ló' a Manda*	the Bantu beer-sieve
	sieve true is Bantu	
174	*tumbi lo(' oo) Manda*	the Bantu beer-sieve

Indeed the Mbugwe are famous for their basketry. However, expansion into the east is not a real option for the Iraqw because of the Rift valley. The Iraqw live on the high part of the Rift wall and the much lower areas where the Mbugwe live are not attractive to the Iraqw.

With all these peoples the Iraqw want peace and exchange of goods, such as the bracelet and the gourd from the Maasai, the pots and the baskets from the Mbugwe. Moreover, they want that their neighbours become Iraqw.

The Datooga in the South are and have been for centuries the real competitors of the Iraqw and many wars have been fought between them (see Kiessling 1998). They have a strong culture of cattle keeping, but the Iraqw want them to become agriculturalists, expressed in the metaphor that the mother of the house should find her bracelet amongst the pumpkins (that have been planted, a sign for sedentary planting activities):

144	*kara tarmóo oorí*	As regards the Datooga
	well Datooga:of Oori	
145	*bar tarmóo oorí*	regarding the Datooga
	if Datooga:of Oori	
146	*bar tarmóo oorí*	regarding the Datooga
147	*naanú ku eemaan*	let us share the vegetables
	vegetables it.m.obj eat:we	
148	*kar naanú dixte.*	even the last ones
	well vegetables decay	
149	*bar sixmóo dakw(')ée'*	and the bracelet of my arm
	if bracelet:of:m arm:my	

150	*kar ló' aayór doorén*	the mother of our house
	well true mother:of:f house:our	
151	*ngu b(a)rá pwiiwa sléer*	let her get it among the pumpkin vines
	it.m.obj if pumpkin:abl get:she	
152	*b(a)rá pwiiwa sléer*	let her get it among the pumpkin vines
	in pumpkin:abl get:she	
153	*bará pwii ar /aamu*	among the vines of the pumpkin
	in pumpkin.leaves f.of pumpkin	
154	*kar gur dakosi qás*	and put it on his arm
	well it.m.obj:instr arm:his:dir put:she	
155	*kar gur dakosi qás*	and put it on his arm

The current development is that many Datooga take up agriculture and thus become more Iraqw-like. The message to the Gorwa is a different one: they should become fewer and disappear. Gorwa is the closest relative to the Iraqw and the two peoples probably split up relatively recently in the migration of both of them north, from the common area of origin near Kondoa Irangi where the other two West Rift Southern Cushitic languages are still spoken. The Gorwa (also called Fiome) are very small in number, roughly one-tenth of the number of Iraqw and are in the process of adaptation to Iraqw, or to other peoples such as the Mbugwe and the Rangi.

Power of words

Although made up of three parties contributing to the performance of the *slufay*, it speaks in one voice, and a powerful one. This is achieved by the intricate and precise interaction of reciter, audience and singer, but just as much by the rhythm and melody of their recitation, the expressive voice, the archaic and metaphorical language. Contributing, furthermore, with shouted agreement and ululation, the audience is not only in dialogue with the main performer but uses him as a spokesman, supports his voice and thus creates a common understanding of his words by the regular *haya* between the lines. In the *fiiro* introduction curses and wishes preshadow those of the *slufay*, where repetition and expressive voicing, marked by high pitch and fast speech and body movement create "strong words" as an image of Iraqw lifeworld perception and the importance accorded to it.

The text and the recitation of *slufay* thus make up one performance, one kind of speech act vested with a particular illocutionary force. The effect of recitation, more that of singing than that of saying is indispensible to the power of the word, just as formalised language diminishes the propositional force and augments the illocutionary or performative strength. The recitation thus creates a distance and with it authority (Bloch 1989); at the same time the speech acts are present by the whole company. The recited *slufay* in performance becomes the curses or "strong words" themselves that it is meant to represent: that of a ritually empowered common sense of what it means to be Iraqw.

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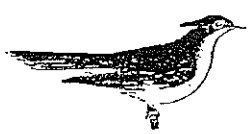

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