

THE METRICS OF A BOLE SONG STYLE, *KONA*¹

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Most studies of the poetic metrics of living languages concentrate on metrical systems based on stress. Most studies of metrical systems based on syllable weight are of languages that are no longer spoken. Study of metrics in living systems based on syllable weight are thus of interest for a theory of metrics. Many languages of the Chadic family have a long/short vowel distinction, and linguistic rhythm is based on syllable weight rather than stress. The poetic metrical system of Hausa, a language with such a phonological system, is rooted in syllable weight and has been fairly well studied, but there are no studies of poetry or song in any other Chadic language. This paper is primarily a description of a song style in Bole, a Chadic cousin of Hausa, but as part of a broader agenda, it seeks to show how principles of metrics that apply to the weight-based system of Hausa also apply to Bole. After a summary of the bases of metrics in Hausa, the paper takes up Bole *kona*, which is a “style” comprising a particular text, song, and dance rhythm. The data consists of song texts from six different performances by women in Potiskum and Fika Nigeria, most a capella solo singing, but one with drum accompaniment and chorus. The song text is highly allusive and often difficult to interpret, suggesting a history of being passed verbatim from generation to generation. A structural analysis of the text shows that it breaks down into verses comprising couplets, each line of the couplet itself falling into two hemistiches. Examination of the phonological make up of the text shows that, despite numerous apparent irregularities, certain syllabic patterns predominate. These patterns suggest a limited set of textsettings in a metrical grid, and the proposed settings are confirmed by settings in live performance. A brief discussion of melodic aspects shows that there is a good correspondence between phonological tone and sung tune.

1. Metrics, Text Setting, and Human Psychology

Every human culture has a “folk” musical tradition, that is, one or more styles of music performed by people with no formal musical training. Typical of such music are songs sung during children’s games, work songs, songs embedded in stories, songs performed at events such as weddings or during holiday seasons, and songs performed simply to pass the time. Integral to all folk music traditions is the setting of linguistic text to a metrical and musical matrix. A study of folk music structure thus requires a study of the structure of folksong texts as well.

There is good evidence that in both “natural” music, by which I mean “folk” music of the type delineated above, and in natural language, there are universals, that is, elements of content and structure that all systems share, regardless of location, culture, or historical linkages. In music, some uncontroversial universals are the “sameness” of the octave (singers singing at the interval of an octave are considered to be singing the “same notes”); limited sets of pitch patterns (“scales”) that form the bases of “melodies”; the existence of recurrent rhythmic patterns (“time signatures” such as 4/4 or 6/8 in Western notation); and recurrent structural patterns (of which phrases marked by cadences in Western musical traditions would be an example). In language, some uncontroversial universals are construction of utterances from a limited inventory of sounds

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(“phonemes”); distinctive use of rhythm (stress, syllable weight) and pitch (intonation, lexical tone); and grouping of elements in a linguistic utterance into hierarchical arrangements (compound nouns, noun phrases, verb phrases, sentences, etc.). Such universals must be embedded in human psychology. Humans do not “learn” that music and language have melodic, rhythmic, and structural properties. They are presented with music and language, and they use their innate psychological abilities to recognize and utilize those properties.²

For the reasons stated in the previous paragraph, empirical studies of the metrics of song lyrics and the placement of those lyrics into a musical matrix are of interest not only for their own sake, but also as part of a program of understanding the bases of human cognition, viz. what is innate and what is learned? This paper seeks to enlarge our database of such studies by examining the metrical structure of one song style from the Bole people of northeastern Nigeria. As background I first outline some of the principles underlying poetic metrics in Hausa, a linguistic “cousin” of Bole with which it shares relevant phonological properties.

2. Quantity-Based Metrics: Hausa

The two primary bases of poetic metrics are STRESS and QUANTITY. The best studied living systems of metrics are stress-based, such as those of English, German, or Russian. The best studied quantity-based systems are those of languages that are no longer spoken, such as Ancient Greek, Latin, and Classical Arabic.³ Information from living quantity-based systems would thus be beneficial in a program that seeks to discover universals of metrics. A number of African languages have such systems, among them Hausa.

Most works on Hausa metrics have focused on meters that have their historical origins in the quantitative meters of Arabic—see, for example, Galadanci (1975), Hiskett (1975). Hausa poets adopted these meters in the 19th century primarily to compose works for religious instruction and religious praise, though in the 20th century, poets using these meters vastly expanded the range of themes. Hausa phonological structure is almost identical to that of Classical Arabic in the respects relevant to Arabic metrics. In particular, Hausa has only two kinds of syllables: HEAVY, comprising syllables of the structures CVC or CV (V = long vowel), and LIGHT, comprising syllables of the structure Cṽ (ṽ = short vowel). Virtually all the 19th century Hausa poets and most of the 20th century poets had strong Islamic educational backgrounds in which they were exposed to Arabic religious verse. In composing poems, the Arabic metrical patterns would thus have seemed second nature, and the phonological structure of Hausa would have naturally lain onto these meters, though it is evident that Hausa poets have created their own adaptations of meters of Arabic origin (Schuh 1999).

There is, however, another reason that the quantity-based Arabic meters would have seemed natural to Hausa poets: the meters of TRADITIONAL Hausa poetry/song⁴ are also

² A paradoxical corollary to the innate ability to acquire musics and languages is a critical age beyond which few individuals can achieve such acquisition to a native-like level in either music or language.

³ Modern Standard Arabic retains the properties of syllable quantity that served as the basis of Classical Arabic metrics, but studies of Arabic metrics, such as Wright (1967) or Arberry (1965), consider only poetry of the Classical period.

⁴ Hausa has a single word, *waka*, to translate both English ‘poetry’ and ‘song’. There is no principled distinction between these genres in Hausa (or in Bole, to which I turn below). The texts in question are always intended for oral presentation, whether they were composed in written form or not, and are always sung or melodically and rhythmically chanted.

quantity based. In part because traditional poetry/song is entirely oral, its metrical properties have received less attention than poetry in the Arabic tradition, which is usually written and is thus more accessible for study away from the actual performance venue. The earliest study of the metrics of traditional Hausa poetry is Greenberg (1949), who shows regular metrical patterns in songs collected early in the century by Prietze (1904). In several studies, I have similarly shown that Hausa traditional musicians compose using highly structured metrical patterns (Schuh 1994, 1995).⁵ As an example of metrics in a Hausa folk form, consider the children's verse below (Rhodes and Muhammad, n.d.):

<p>Daga mai gidā sayō tat-ta-sai ya burka tū-sā,</p> <p>v v — v — v — — — — v — v — —</p>	<p>After the master of the house bought peppers he cut a fart,</p>
<p>Mutan gidā sunā dāma kunū, kunū ya tsunkē,</p> <p>v — v — v — — v v — v — v — —</p>	<p>The people of the house were stirring gruel and the gruel went watery,</p>
<p>Karan gadon da bā shi da bākī ya hau sa-lā-tī.</p> <p>v — v — v — v v — — v — v — —</p>	<p>The frame of the bed that doesn't have a mouth (nonetheless) uttered a benediction.</p>

The notation of verse and scansion use the following conventions:

- — = heavy syllable, v = light syllable
- boxed syllables = strong beats (see below)
- **ts** = ejective alveolar affricate; **sh** = [S]
- ∇ = long vowel; unmarked vowels are short

This is a girls' verse, performed to the accompaniment of a *shantu*, a long, narrow gourd hollowed at both ends, with one end pounded against the thigh to produce a low-pitched sound, and with a metal finger ring tapped on the side to produce a high pitched sound.

The formalization of the TEXTSETTING in this paper uses a pattern of STRONG and WEAK METRICAL POSITIONS, schematized over a METRICAL GRID (Hayes 1983, Prince 1989). The performance of this children's verse corresponds directly to the textsetting in the grid below. (In the font used for the grid, doubled vowels = long vowels):

	<u>St</u>	<u>Wk</u>	<u>St</u>	<u>Wk</u>	<u>St</u>	<u>Wk</u>	<u>St</u>	<u>Wk</u>
	x		x		x		x	
	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Da-ga	mai	gi-daa	sa-yoo	tat- taa-	sai	ya b'ur-	ka tuu-	saa
Mu-tan	gi-daa	su-naa	daa-	ma ku-nuu	ku-nuu	ya tsun-	kee	
Ka-ran	ga-don	da baa	shi da	baa-	kii	ya hau	sa-laa-	tii

The metrical grid consists of several levels of grid positions, represented by x's. At the lowest level are positions that would accommodate every syllable of a line if it consisted of all light syllables (an eventuality that never occurs). A second level in the grid accommodates syllables that are in metrically "stronger" positions than the lowest,

⁵ These papers can be downloaded from <http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/schuh/Metrics/>

minimally filled level. A third level in the grid is filled by syllables that occupy the metrically strongest positions. Note that the positions at these higher levels alternate as St(rong) and W(ea)k and further that the STRONG positions always begin in a heavy syllable. The WEAK positions usually do as well, though in the first line, the second weak position falls in the middle of the syllable **tat-**, and in the third line, the second weak position falls on a light syllable **da**. In Hausa metrics, there is a strong tendency for the equivalence of $vv = \text{—}$, i.e. at certain points in a line there may be either two light syllables or one heavy syllable. With this in mind, note that there are always the equivalent of two heavy (= four light) syllables between the boxed strong beats.

As far as I can determine, ALL traditional Hausa poetry (i.e. poetry not based in Arabic-derived meters) has the same basic metrical properties as this children's verse:

- Four strong metrical positions, alternating with four weak metrical positions
- Overwhelmingly strong preference to fill (or begin) strong positions with a heavy syllable
- Never more than three grid positions at the lowest level associated with one of the metrical strong or weak positions

This is not to say that all traditional Hausa poetry has the same METER. Some meters reverse the strong and weak positions (see for example, the meter examined in Schuh (1995)); most meters associate two rather than three grid positions at the lowest level with each strong or weak position; meters vary in whether they allow "extrametrical" syllables preceding the first position (such as **Daga, Mu-, Ka-** in the verse examined here); some meters allow certain weak positions to be filled with either a light or a heavy syllable.

Hayes and Kaun (1996:§2.3) note that

"the metricality of a line is not generally determinable simply from an inspection of its linguistic form. Rather, in order to establish metricality, one must know its actual rhythmic alignment with the grid."

The text of the children's verse above does not, itself, readily reveal a regular metrical structure. Hearing the performance, however, makes the regularities immediately perceptible. As Hayes and Kaun (1996:§2.4) also note, multiple textsettings are possible for a single text meter. Dan Maraya Jos, in the three songs studied in Schuh (1995), uses three distinct musical settings, but the texts of all three songs have the same meter:

vv — vv — vv — v — (vv = two lights or one heavy, — = one heavy, v = one light)

Below are representative lines from two of those songs, "Auren Dole" (AD) and "Jawabin Aure" (JW), showing a setting to the metrical grid, with the syllable pattern below each line. Note that the STRONG vs. WEAK metrical positions are the reverse of those for the children's verse above, and unlike the children's verse, where one or two line initial syllables are an EXTRAMETRICAL "upbeat", the "upbeat" in the lines below is part of the first metrical position.⁶ Note that the last syllable of a line counts as metrically heavy regardless of whether it is phonologically heavy or light. This seems to be a

⁶ At least two factors lead to this differentiation in analysis of the upbeat syllables. First, if the initial syllables in the Dan Maraya lines were not part of a metrical position, the line would be asymmetrical, lacking a WEAK to match one of the STRONGs, whereas in the children's verse, the upbeat syllables are "orphans", since all eight metrical positions are filled. Second, in performance, there is a *shantu* interlude between lines in the children's verse, and hence the initial syllables do not connect metrically with any preceding text, whereas in the Dan Maraya performance, the initial syllables typically immediately follow a preceding line of text with no break other than the "omitted" syllables indicated by the parenthesized (v).

universal feature of quantitative meters. In this setting, the syllable filling the last strong position actually falls at the grid position preceding the last strong metrical position, giving a syncopated effect.

	<u>Wk</u>	<u>St</u>	<u>Wk</u>	<u>St</u>	<u>Wk</u>	<u>St</u>	<u>Wk</u>	<u>St</u>
		x		x		x		x
	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
AD:	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	U-	waa	da	u-	baa	gaa	gar-	ga-d'ii
(v)	v	-	v	v	-	-	-	v
JW:	U-	waa	da	u-	baa	ko	su-naa	bi-ye
(v)	v	-	v	v	-	v	v	-

AD: 'Mother and father, here's an admonition'

JW: 'Mother and father indeed are right behind'

The diagrams below show alternative settings in musical performance:

AD: 

JW: 

The musical setting for “Auren Dole” is a binary meter and that for “Jawabin Aure” is ternary. Though “8/8” would normally be rendered as “4/4” in standard Western notation, I have taken the eighth note (♩) as the basic musical metrical unit for both transcriptions so as to render the musical settings more directly comparable.

The setting of “Auren Dole” is essentially a direct musical mapping of the grid above: each light syllable is performed as an eighth note and each heavy syllable is performed as a quarter note (♩) or two linked eighth notes, i.e. with exactly double the duration of a light syllable; the STRONG metrical positions in the text fall at the strongest musical beat positions, i.e. the first and fifth beats of each measure.

In the ternary meter of the “Jawabin Aure” performance, the mapping is more abstract. All syllables, light or heavy are performed with essentially equal duration of one eighth note each.⁷ Nonetheless, the basic metrical feel of the text is maintained by placing the strong text metrical positions at the strong musical beat positions, viz. the first and fourth beats of each measure.

Examination of the performance of a full text would reveal many details about what does and does not occur in text setting, e.g. the possibility of placing heavy syllables in some positions generally restricted to light syllables but not others, or stylistic extension or reduction of duration of selected syllables in performance. Suffice it to say here that a

⁷ In fact, they probably are NOT of exactly equal duration. A computer playback of the transcribed song has a mechanical, “square” feel compared to the human performance. However, any differences of duration are at micro-beat level and probably have more to do with artistic style than with intentional assignment of musical duration corresponding to syllable weight.

few principles seem to apply to all musical mappings of texts in the quantitative metrical system of Hausa: strong metrical positions invariably correspond to strong musical beat positions; strong metrical positions are amenable to durational extension in performance while weak positions generally are not; heavy syllables may be performed with either greater or equal duration to light syllables, but light syllables are never (systematically) performed with greater duration than heavy syllables.

There is another feature of text setting about which I will have little to say, namely the setting of text pitch (tone and intonation) to musical pitch (melody). All Chadic languages are tone languages, i.e. relative voice pitch from syllable to syllable in speech is distinctive. Tone plays both a lexical role (Hausa *kūkā* ‘crying’, with Hi Hi tones [⁻ ⁻], is distinct from *kūkà* ‘baobab tree’, with Hi Lo tones [⁻ ₋]) and a grammatical role (Hausa *yā zō* ‘he came’, with Hi tone on *yā* ‘he-completive’, is distinct from *yâ zō* ‘he will surely come’, with Falling tone on *yâ* ‘he-potential’). Intonation is also important. Most Chadic languages, including the two in this study, have DOWNDRIFT intonation in which the overall intonation of a sentence descends in pitch by virtue of the fact that a high tone following a low tone does not rise back to the pitch of a high preceding the low. The “neutral” downdrift intonation contrasts with other intonation patterns, for example, question intonation, which, in Hausa, suspends overall downdrift and (in one variety), gives an extra high pitch to the last high tone in the utterance (Newman and Newman 1981).

The obvious question concerns whether linguistic tone and intonation are mapped onto performance melody. The answer is a qualified, “Yes.” The only published studies of Hausa tone-tune match are Richards (1972) and Leben (1985). Working from a Hausa song transcribed by A.V.King, Richards (1972) finds only a slightly better than 50% correspondence of direction of tone change corresponding to direction of melodic change. Leben (1985) shows that with two adjustments to Richards’ observations, the tone-tune correspondence is virtually 100%. The first adjustment is simply to correct the tones on the frequently recurring word **Nàjēriyà** ‘Nigeria’, which has LHHL tones but which Richards notated as LHLL. The second adjustment emerges from a study of the remaining mismatches. It turns out that the mismatches are not a random selection of all the possible mismatches that could exist but rather are virtually all cases where syllables that differ in phonological tone are sung on the same musical pitch. Moreover, these “same sung pitch” mismatches correspond to cases where the INTONATION pattern of Hausa assigns (nearly) the same spoken pitch to the two syllables rather than changing pitch based on underlying lexical tones.⁸

My observations match those of Leben, viz. the tone-tune match is very good in Hausa singing once some adjustments are made. In the two sample lines from the Dan Maraya songs above, a lexical tone change always corresponds to a change in musical pitch. In two cases, the second of identical tones is sung on a lower pitch than the first (in “Jawabin Aure, the first word, **uwā**, has Hi Hi tones, and the antepenultimate and penultimate syllables, **-nà bì-**, have Lo Lo). Though not illustrated in these lines, syllables with differing lexical tones are not infrequently sung on the same pitch, as

⁸ I believe that Leben actually mistakes the facts in the small sample of data he presents. He claims that most cases of the tone-tune mismatches involve HLH sequences where the L is sung on the pitch of the preceding H. However, if one looks at just line internal HL or LH sequences, 5 of 9 HL are sung level while 7 of 10 LH sequences are sung level. As I interpret it, this latter correspondence also is a better match with an intonation tracing of spoken Hausa that he presents. Regardless of the facts for this particular set of data, however, I think Leben is correct in his insight that sung pitches must take into consideration intonation as well as lexical tone.

observed by Leben. What is rare, with one systematic exception, is a CONTRADICTION between sung melody and linguistic tones, i.e. a rising sung melody but descending tones or vice versa. The systematic exception is in performances where verse ends are signaled by a descending melodic contour. In this case, a tone pattern that would rise in speech will nonetheless be performed as descending.

Likewise, sung melodies typically parallel the downdrift intonation pattern, as in the representative lines above, where the overall melodic contour of the line descends.⁹

This brief discussion of the basis of quantitative meters in Hausa and how texts are set in performance provides background for looking at other Chadic languages. All West Chadic languages are like Hausa in having only CVC, CV, and C̄V as possible syllable types.¹⁰ The question thus arises as to whether the organizing principles that we have been able to uncover for the quantitative metrics of Hausa also apply to poetic metrics in these languages. I now turn to an examination of metrics in another West Chadic language, Bole.

3. Bole

Bole is a Chadic language of the “A” subbranch of the West Chadic Branch (Newman 1977), the same subbranch to which Hausa belongs, though Bole and Hausa are only distantly related within this subbranch, and until the spread of Hausa in the 20th Century, the Bole and Hausa speaking areas were not geographically contiguous. The Bole-speaking area is in southern Yobe State and northern Gombe State of Nigeria. The traditional Bole capital is Fika, in southern Yobe State, and the autonym of the Bole people is **bìya Pikkà** ‘people of Fika’, though since the 1920’s, the Emir of Fika, one of the preeminent traditional rulers of northern Nigeria, has resided in Potiskum, the largest town in Yobe State.¹¹

4. The Bole Song Style *Kona*

Kona is a song/dance “style”. In full performance, it features a distinctive drum rhythm, dance, and song theme. One line of the *kona* song says, **Nà konà wòntà dīdō Tandu Àdamà** ‘They say *kona* is movement of the neck, Tandu Adama’, referring to a particular way of moving the head during the dance. Women are the primary singers of the song, though during one performance, a man took the singing lead for a period. Women perform the song a capella outside the full performance venue, perhaps most commonly while doing domestic work. During one discussion in which the women are noting that singing *kona* and other songs is dying out, one woman says, **Bòlo ka ossò sa ka āru sa**, ‘Well (if) you don’t grind you don’t sing’ (Alkama Anna in an undated recording made by Alhaji Maina Gimba).

Kona must have a fairly long tradition among the Bole people. The Bole population seems to be universally familiar with it, and a number of performers gave renditions of it

⁹ This is in contrast to music in European traditions, where musical melodic contours are unrelated to intonational contours of speech, and in fact, often rise toward the end of a phrase for emotional effect.

¹⁰ Bade, and perhaps some of the southerly West Chadic languages have extra-heavy syllables, with a long vowel in a closed syllable. There are, as yet, no studies of metrics in these languages, but I assume that such syllables would fall together with heavy syllables for metrical purposes. No Chadic language allows consonant clusters at syllable margins.

¹¹ For further information about the Bole people and language see <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/aflang/Bole/>

at different times in different venues. We have transcribed recordings from five different performers, some recorded on audio cassette by Alhaji Maina Gimba in the early 1990's and some videotaped during the summer of 2000 by Gimba and myself. The recordings with transcriptions are as follows:

- **Yàgàna Ābà:** Audio recording of a capella solo performance made by Alhaji Maina Gimba in Potiskum, early 1990's.
- **Ālkāmà Ānnà:** Audio recording of a capella solo performance made by Alhaji Maina Gimba in Potiskum, early 1990's.
- **Gājìya Ābàrì:** Audio recording of a capella solo performance made by Alhaji Maina Gimba in Potiskum, early 1990's.
- **Yàgàna Ābà:** Video recording of a capella solo performance made by Russell Schuh and Alhaji Maina Gimba in Potiskum, August 3, 2000.
- **Hajjà Addè:** Video recording of a capella solo performance made by Russell Schuh and Alhaji Maina Gimba in Potiskum, August 3, 2000.
- **Hajjà Ba'i:** Video and audio recording of performance with drums and dancing made by Russell Schuh and Alhaji Maina Gimba in Fika, August 22, 2000.

In the latter performance in Fika, the ensemble consisted of a chorus of women singers and dancers and two drummers. The primary female soloist was **Hajjà Ba'i**, but occasionally other women would take over, and a male soloist, **Bàba Dătà**, took the solo role for part of *kona* and two other song styles that the group performed. The drums were a large double headed *ganga*, played by **Gùduku Màì Gànga**, and a small hourglass-shaped *kuntukuru*, played by **Gimbà Kūbè**. The *ganga* is held on the knees and played with strokes of a curved drumstick and the fingers of the left hand, the *kuntukuru* is suspended from the neck at chest height and played with two leather beaters.

During this performance, I used only the internal microphone on the video camera. The drum rhythms are clear, but the singers are nearly inaudible. However, Gimba simultaneously made an audio recording on a Sony minidisk recorder in which he directly miked the soloists. The solo voices are quite clear in these audio recordings. During part of *kona*, the male singer took over the lead, but Gimba did not mike him during this song, and his singing thus is not audible enough over the drums to transcribe accurately.

Aside from text setting issues to be discussed below, there is one major difference between the a capella and accompanied performances. In the a capella performances, the singers move directly from one verse of the song to the next. In the accompanied performance, each verse sung by the soloist is followed by a chorus in the call-and-response mode perhaps universal to African traditional music. Because of the recording environment, the chorus is not usually easy to hear, but from segments where I was close enough with the camera to pick up the chorus with the internal microphone, they often echo the verse that the soloist has just sung.

*kona* performance*kona* chorus

Yagana Aba



Hajja Adde



Hajja Ba'i

4.1. The Text. For someone from outside the culture, the song text of *kona* appears unfathomable. As an example of representative verses, consider the selection below from the version presented by Alkama Anna.

11a **Dùngun Zāna jōjìn konà,**
11b **Àudu Yāyè yā zō yira.**

Dungun Zana “judge” [i.e. expert] of *kona*,
Audu Yaye came to chat.

12a **Dàda Jūmà ndag gòma Ngarà,**
12b **Dèiti Dīsà bò pàllasà.**

Dada Juma went to the Ngara market,
And left Disa because of gossip (about him).

13a **Nà lūla Dīsà jūtū ko bìn,**
13b **Wòrdò Dīsà pòyyū gulè.**

They say the cries of Disa raised the hut roof,
Disa’s fart shattered a calabash.

14a **Bàba Dīsà ken Kàuwà,**
14b **Dàda Gōrò ken Kàuwà.**

Baba Disa married Kawuwa,
Dada Goro married Kawuwa.

15a **Àuta Līlì bè 'yar Kanò,**
15b **Àli Gargà bè Yarīmà.**

Autalili the son of the Kano girl,
Ali Garga son of Yarima.

16a **N tòwà Dīsà sa n tòwwe lò?**
16b **Dalà Mangà bè Kàuwà.**

I will not praise Disa who might I praise?
Dala Manga son of Kawuwa.

17a **Yàya Annà rī mālani,**
17b **Daudù sùbà sùlkenò.**

Yaya Anna entered his bush (he disappeared),
Daudu, my gown of chain mail.

- 18a **Sùbà sùlke rìgar sà’i,** Gown of chain mail, woven gown,
 18b **Daudu màì sùkùni.** Daudu, the one of sufficient means.
- 19a **Àuta Lìlì bè ’yar Kanò,** Auta Lili the son of the Kano girl,
 19b **Àli Gargà bè Yarimà.** Ali Garga son of Yarima.

Most of the versions that we have start with a verse mentioning *kona*, as in the line, **Nà konà wòntà dìfò Tandu Àdamà** ‘They say *kona* is movement of the neck, Tandu Adama’, cited above, but singers then perform verses with no fixed order, often interpolating verses sung earlier in the performance. Certain verses recur in most or all of the performances we have recorded, other verses are unique to one performer or performance. The verses above were selected as representative because they incorporate a number of the verses that appear to be part of the *kona* “canon” as well as illustrating repetition of verses—verse 16 repeats verse 4 (not included in this selection) and verse 19 repeats verse 15.

If one reads through the lines, it becomes readily apparent that the *kona* text does not tell a running story, paint a picture in a systematic way, elucidate philosophical or cultural notions, or the like. It is highly allusive, with many lines simply stating names or epithets. Taking the totality of the available *kona* texts, however, one pieces together a general theme of adultery and dalliance. One name is prominent in every rendition of *kona*, **Disà bè Kàwuwà** ‘Disa son of Kawuwa’, and a picture emerges of Disa as an attractive philanderer who leads women astray. But Disa is not entirely lucky. Verse 13, which appears in some form in most of our recorded versions, usually evoking laughter because of the picture it summons up and its slightly off-color wording, tells us what happened to Disa when he was caught with another man’s wife.

The allusive and formulaic nature of the text suggests that *kona* has been passed down across generations. Many names and phrases seem interchangeable as long as they fit metrically. For example, the singer of the song above repeats verse 12 later, substituting **Gòrò** for **Jùmà**. The *kona* verse repertoire seems amenable to renewal by interjection of new verses. This is particularly evident from the presence of words and even full verses in Hausa in a song whose origin must predate the current heavy influence of Hausa in this region. For example, in line 11a of the sample above, the phrase **jōjìn konà** ‘judge-of [= expert-of] *kona*’ is Hausa in structure, with the Hausa genitive linker, **-n**, connecting the English loan **jōjì** to the native Bole **konà**, and in line 11b, the proper name is probably Bole, but the rest of the line is entirely Hausa, with only some adaptation to Bole phonology (cf. Hausa **yā zō hīra** ‘he came (for) chatting’).

4.2. Verse Structure. The *kona* text divides into verses that, themselves, consist of couplets as in the example above. Evidence that the song divides into discrete verses comes from the performance with musical accompaniment. The soloist consistently sings what corresponds to one verse over eight measures of drum rhythm (interpreted as a 4/4 or 8/8 meter), the chorus responds over the same duration of drum pattern, then the soloist resumes.

Evidence for internal division of verses into couplets comes from structural properties of the verses. Hayes and MacEachern (1996) note the metrical grid that underlies the metered language of folk verse is continuous—think of the drum rhythm to which a singer could, in principle, sing continuously, with only physical and mental constraints as limiting factors. Nonetheless, in the English folk poetry that Hayes and MacEachern

examine, they find a number of diagnostics for the reality of “lines” as an integral property of metrical organization. One such property is the fact that linguistic phrasal boundaries consistently coincide with or are bounded at specific locations in the grid, viz. the locations referred to as line beginnings and ends.¹² In *kona*, each line of the proposed couplets begins and ends with a major phrase boundary. Moreover, in a substantial majority of verses, the two lines of the couplet are related in some way that gives a conceptual reinforcement to the binary division of the verse. Some of these relations between lines are the following:

Question and answer	N tòwwà Dīsà sa ò tòwwè lò? Bàba Dīsà bè Kàwuwà. <i>Hajja Ba'i video, verse 7</i>	I won't praise Disa who might I praise? Baba Disa son of Kawuwa.
Two related events	Nà Dàda Gōrò ndag gōma Ngarà, Dèidi Dīsà bò pàllasà. <i>Yagana audio, verse 13</i>	They say Dada Goro went to Ngara market, She left Disa because of gossip.
An event and a comment related to it	Yàya Banya ngātù konà, Yàya Gimba wònà làduwò. <i>Yagana audio, verse 7</i>	Yaya Banya has prohibited <i>kona</i> , Yaya Gimba, the dance is cancelled.
Clauses of parallel structure	Bàba Dīsà ken Kàwuwà, Dàda Gōrò ken Kàwuwà. <i>Alkama audio, verse 14</i>	Baba Disa married Kawuwa, Dada Goro married Kawuwa.

Even in verses that do not seem to relate the two lines in some conceptual way, each line bounds high level phrasal boundaries. Particularly common are lines consisting of four noun phrases. These noun phrases are often proper names with an accompanying term of reference, the most frequent being **Dàda** “Big Sister”, **Yàya** “Big Brother”, and **Bàba** “Uncle, Dad”. In a verse like **Gōrò Dàda sarkin konà,**¹³ **Ai Dīsà bè Kàwuwà.** ‘Goro Dada [is] queen of *kona*,/ Oh, Disa [is] son of Kawuwa’ (*Alkama audio, verse 9*) there is no question that the line boundaries are also high level phrase boundaries, but the exact structure is ambiguous. In Bole, there is no copula. Equational sentences consist of simply juxtaposing two noun phrases, e.g. **tèmshi dabbà** ‘a sheep (**tèmshi**) is an animal (**dabbà**)’. One can therefore not be sure whether the lines are complete clauses (the interpretation with the bracketed “[is]”), juxtaposition of noun phrases in apposition (an interpretation substituting a comma for the bracketed “[is]”), or, in some cases, a unitary noun phrase (an interpretation omitting the bracketed “[is]”).

In addition to a well-supported division of verses into lines, the lines themselves fall into hemistiches with a caesura at a metrical position that I describe later. Compared to Hausa traditional poetry that I have examined, this is unusual. While there is a clear correspondence between metrical line boundaries and linguistic phrasal boundaries in Hausa, I have not found any variety of Hausa verse that places metrical strictures of any

¹² Hayes and MacEachern (1996) give two other diagnostics for the reality of lines in English folk poetry: the location of rhyme and the necessity for recognizing “empty” beats, i.e. metrical positions obligatorily NOT filled by linguistic material as in the beat represented by \emptyset in, *Hickory dickory dock* \emptyset ,/ *The nouse ran up the clock* \emptyset . Traditional Bole verse does not have rhyme, and in the poetry/song that I have so far examined, there are no types with obligatory empty beats. These criteria are thus not available for testing line boundedness in Bole metered text.

¹³ In the second noun phrase, **sarkin konà** ‘queen-of *kona*’, the word **sarki-n** is lexically and structurally Hausa, with the Hausa genitive linker **-n**. The word in Hausa is actually masculine and means “king-of”, but Bole lacks grammatical gender, allowing the word to refer to **Gōrò Dàda**, an unambiguously female referent in Bole.

kind on the internal phrasal structure of a line. Further research will be necessary to determine whether this is a general property of Bole poetry or of particular poetic styles.

The caesura sometimes corresponds to high level clausal boundaries like those at line boundaries.

two clauses	Ñ ndī gā̀ gòma ñ gòjje zottò <i>Yagana, video 1a</i>	I went to the market (and) I bought a wrapper
comment-question	Ñ kùmè lū̀lā̀ zònge d'ò̀ lè? <i>Gajiya audio, 4a</i>	I heard cries, (was it) a hyena or what?

A frequent realization of the caesura is in lines with two juxtaposed noun phrases, mentioned above, ranging from those that consist of two noun phrases in grammatically unrelated juxtaposition to those with either an appositional or equational interpretation:

juxtaposition	Ànīni bò̀lou ànīni kunùm <i>Yagana, video 11a</i>	Two 10 th pennies three 10 th pennies
apposition or equational	Nà Dà̀da Gò̀rò bà̀ti Kà̀wuwà <i>Gajiya audio, 3b</i>	They say Dada Goro [is] daughter of Kawuwa

In contrast to line boundaries, which are always at the clause level, the line internal caesura may fall at a clause internal phrasal boundary.

subject-verb	Yà̀ya Bà̀nya ngā̀tù̀ konà <i>Yagana, audio 17a</i>	Yaya Banya has prohibited <i>kona</i>
topic or vocative -comment	Dò̀go Gallà̀ wā̀nì ye lè? <i>Adde video, 5b</i> Yā̀ya Gimbà wò̀nà lā̀duwò̀ <i>Yagana audio, 17b</i>	Tall Galla what has befallen him? Yaya Gimba the dance is cancelled
VP-adjunct	Dè̀idi Dīsà̀ bò̀ pà̀llasà̀ <i>Yagana audio, 13b</i>	She left Disa because of gossip.

Of the approximately 140 lines examined, only one line that is clearly metrical does not have a caesura at the expected position, and interestingly, this line is in Hausa: **Ai konà ar- | zikin dū̀niyà̀** ‘Oh *kona* [is] worldly wealth’ (*Hajja Ba’i video, 3b*). Metrical analysis would predict that the caesura should fall at the position of the vertical stroke, which, in this case, is in the middle of the word **arzikì** ‘wealth’. One other line, variants of which come up in most of the recorded versions, has a questionable analysis in terms of caesura: **Ñ tò̀wwà̀ Dīsà̀ | sa ñ tò̀wwe lò̀?** ‘I won’t praise Disa, who might I praise?’ (*Hajja Ba’i video, 7a and others*). Here, the prediction is that the caesura should fall before **sa** ‘not’, which is in constituency with the preceding verb phrase. It may be that the phrasal boundary between VP and negation is high enough to support the caesura. There is also an alternative explanation. Phonologically, **sa** ‘not’ + **ñ** ‘I’ form a single syllable. The placement of **sa** may thus be ambiguous, remaining syntactically a constituent of the first hemistich but phonologically (and metrically) a constituent of the second hemistich. In examples below, I have analyzed **sa +n** as part of the second hemistich.

4.3. Metrics. To arrive at conclusions about metrical analysis, one must rely to a certain extent on numerical preponderances. Song is art, and all the performances studied here

were live and unrehearsed. Variation and performance uncertainty inevitably creep in, requiring a certain amount of abstracting away from the data to project the ideal. The following numbers apply:

- Total corpus: 215 lines (as defined in the preceding section) performed by five different women (one performer at two different venues)
- Distinct lines: 151 “different” lines. Different” here refers to lines used by one performer in one performance. Many of the lines or nearly identical variants recur in several of the performances. The first occurrence of such a line for each performer is counted as “different” under the assumption that each performer has learned and is producing the line independently.
- Lines considered for analysis of metrics: 133 lines. Of the 151 “different” lines, 7 are incompletely transcribed, 6 are uncertain in terms of their syllabic constituency, and 5 are so deviant in syllabic constituency that they probably represent some sort of performance error.

Of the 133 lines considered for metrical analysis, 43 (32.3%) have the following syllabic constituency, shown with 5 representative lines having different linguistic structure. I have included vertical strokes marking the two hemistiches. Recall from an earlier section that line final syllables always scan as heavy regardless of phonological weight.

v		—	v	—	v		—	—	v	—	
		Lū-	la	Dī-	sà		jū-	tū	ko	bìn (<i>Hajja Ba'i, 26a</i>)	
		Dei-	di	Dī-	sà		bò	pàl-	la-	sà (<i>Yagana audio, 13b</i>)	
		Gō-	rò	Dā-	da		sar-	kin	ko-	nà (<i>Alkama, 19a</i>)	
Nà		ai	ma-	kā-	pò		mài	jàr-	ra-	bà (<i>Gajiya, 5b</i>)	
N		tòw-	wà	Dī-	sà		sa	n	tòw-	we	lò? (<i>Hajja Ba'i, 7a</i>)

(*Hajja Ba'i, 26a*): ‘The cries of Disa raised the hut roof’

(*Yagana audio, 13b*): ‘She left Disa because of gossip’

(*Alkama, 19a*): ‘Goro Dada queen of *kona*’

(*Gajiya, 5b*): ‘They say, oh, blind one who has overmastering desire’

(*Hajja Ba'i, 7a*): ‘I won’t praise Disa, who might I praise?’

Eleven of the 43 lines have a beginning light syllable, which I consider to be extrametrical. This syllable is always the quotative marker **nà** “they say” or the 1st person singular subject pronoun **n** ‘I’. All the lines with **nà** occur in other versions of the song without it. The subject pronoun is often not audibly syllabic in normal speech and may not be in the songs either, though I did not carefully check each instance. In short, the presence or absence of an initial short syllable is not an integral feature of the line schema.

If we look at the two hemistiches separately, an even more regular picture emerges. The SECOND HEMISTICH exhibits the following patterns:

(a)	— — v —	75 lines (56.4%)	(Lùlà Disà) jūtū ko bìn (<i>Hajja Ba'i, 26a</i>)
(b)	vv — v —	11 lines (8.3%)	(Yāya Gimbà) wònà làduwò . (<i>Yagana a., 17b</i>)

(c)	— vv v —	3 lines (2.3%)	(Dàda Jūmà) ndag gòma Ngarà (<i>Alkama, 12a</i>)
(d)	— v — —	29 lines (21.8%)	(Nà nontì Tùnkù) nontì Dādà (<i>Yagana v., 6a</i>) (N kù mè lùlà) zònge d’ò lè? (<i>Gajiya, 4a</i>)
(e)	— — — —	6 lines (4.5%)	(Gòrò Dàda) lingè-lingè (<i>Alkama, 3a</i>)
(f)	others	6 lines (4.5%)	(Ndī dà wùya) zàlì dà wùya (<i>Yagana a., 4b</i>) v — v v — (Gà mòrd’o) mana gà sōro (<i>Yagana v., 7a</i>) v v — — —

- (a) ‘(Disa’s cries) raised the hut roof’
 (b) ‘(Yaya Gimba) the dance is cancelled’
 (c) ‘(Dada Juma) went to the Ngara market’
 (d) ‘(They say the mother of Tunku) the mother of Dada’
 ‘(I hear cries) [is it] a hyena or what?’
 (e) ‘(Goro Dada) is pulling back and forth’
 (f) ‘(Going is difficult) beginning is difficult’
 ‘(In the millet farm) as in the house’

In the second hemistich, pattern (a) [— — v —] is not only the most common single pattern, but this pattern alone accounts for nearly 60% of all lines. Recall from an earlier section that in Hausa metrics, two light syllables are metrically equivalent to one heavy. Patterns (b) and (c) differ from (a) only in having two lights (vv) at a position where (a) has one heavy (—). Patterns (a-c) as a group account for 67% of all lines. Pattern (d) differs from (a-c) in reversing the positions of the internal light and heavy syllables, while retaining the overall weight of the whole pattern. There are even a few cases where line variants differ between types (a) and (d) in the second hemistich:

Nà lūla Dīsà jùtū ko bìn, v — v — v — — v — Wòrd’o Dīsà pòyyū gulè. (<i>Alkama, 3</i>) — v — v — — v —	Lūla Dīsà pòyye Pikkà, — v — v — v — — Wòrd’o Dīsà pòyyū kulà. (<i>Yagana a., 24</i>) — v — v — — v —
Kānà Dīsà bè Kāuwà (<i>Yagana a., 10c</i>) ¹⁴ — v — v — — v —	Kānà Dīsà bè Bālāwò (<i>Yagana a., 11c</i>) — v — v — v — —

(*Alkama, 3*): ‘They say Disa’s cries raised the roof of the hut,
Disa’s fart shattered a gourd.’

(*Yagana audio, 24*): ‘Disa’s cry shattered Fika,
Disa’s fart shattered a pot.’

(*Yagana audio, 10c*): ‘What do you know, it’s Disa son of Kawuwa’

¹⁴ Although nearly every *kona* verse is a couplet, there are five verses in the full corpus (not counting repetitions of the same verse) that have three lines, hence an unexpected “c” line. Four of the five are in the audio recording of Yagana Aba, whose performance shows more variation than those of other performers in other ways as well.

(*Yagana audio, 11c*): ‘What do you know, it’s Disa son of Balawo’

In the *Yagana audio, 24* example, the singer uses the subjunctive **pòyye** in the first line but the perfective **pòyyū** in the second, taking advantage of the differences in final vowel length of the verb forms to accommodate the differing weights of the following syllables.

Pattern (e) differs from (a-d) in having all heavy syllables where as (a-d) have one light syllable that does not pair with another light. The textsetting analysis below will suggest that pattern (e) is a direct fit with the overall weight of each hemistich, though it deviates from the general “feel” of *kona* performance. Of the six lines that do not directly fit the patterns in (a-e), at least the two illustrative lines in (f) fit with other patterns in terms of overall weight: The *Yagana audio, 4b* line fits with (b) or (c) by interpolating a heavy between the paired lights, and the *Yagana video, 7a* line fits with (e), substituting two lights for the first heavy. This leaves only four of the 133 lines examined where the second hemistich does not clearly fit with any recurring pattern.¹⁵

Metrical patterns of the first hemistiches present a more murky metrical picture, though certain patterns predominate, allowing a fairly firm idea of the “canonical” pattern. Following are the patterns found in the first hemistich:¹⁶

(a)	— v — v	40 lines (30.1%)	Lūlà Dīsà (jūtū ko bìn) (<i>Hajja Ba’i, 26a</i>)
(b)	v — v — v	17 lines (12.8%)	Nà ai màkàpò (mài jàrrabà) (<i>Gajiya, 5b</i>)
(c)	vv v — v	7 lines (5.3%)	Ñ kùmè lūlà (zònge dō lè?) (<i>Gajiya, 4a</i>)
(d)	v — — v	4 lines (3%)	Ònan dīrè (bò sallamà) (<i>Alkama, 2b</i>)
(e)	— — — v	3 lines (2.3%)	Dungun Zāna (jōjìn konà) (<i>Alkama, 11a</i>)
(f)	v v — v	15 lines (11.3%)	Kala Gimbà (wònà làduwò) (<i>Yagana a., 16b</i>)
(g)	— — v	12 lines (9%)	Dà Yāyà (lèkìbèr ngudì) (<i>Yagana v., 6b</i>)
(h)	v — v	2 lines (1.5%)	Makāpò (mài jàrrabà) (<i>Alkama, 6b</i>)
(i)	— v	5 lines (3.8%)	Gallà (yàyan Atè) (<i>Adde, 3b</i>)
(j)	other — v	2 lines (1.5%)	Bàba Yāyāyi (jōjìn wàsa) (<i>Yagana a., 7a</i>) — v — — v
(k)	... v v	10 lines (7.5%)	Jībìr Dàda ye (mài bùkàtà) (<i>Yagana a., 21a</i>) v — — v v

¹⁵ The four deviant patterns are as follows: v — v —, v v v v —, — — —, v — — —. The last actual fits in terms of overall weight but would be rhythmically deviant. The other three all lack the equivalent of one light syllable.

¹⁶ The total is 126 rather than 133, the number examined with respect to the second hemistich. There are several lines of uncertain scansion in the first hemistich because of false starts or unclear syllables.

(l)	... —	9 lines (6.8%)	Làwò ndimmun (gà kùshi konà) (<i>Yagana a., 2a</i>) — v — —
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- (a) ‘The cries of Disa (raised the hut roof)’
- (b) ‘They say, oh, blind one (the one with overmastering desire)’
- (c) ‘I hear cries, (is it a hyena or what?)’
- (d) ‘They gave a *dire* cloth (as compensation)’
- (e) ‘Dungun Zana (judge [expert] at *kona*)’
- (f) ‘But Gimba, (the dance is cancelled)’
- (g) ‘Da Yaya (extremely lazy)’
- (h) ‘Blind one (the one with overmastering desire)’
- (i) ‘Galla (elder brother of Ate)’
- (j) ‘Baba Yayayi (the judge [expert] at games)’
- (k) ‘That Jibir Dada (the needful one)’
- (l) ‘A boy came to us (at the *kona* baobab)’

The larger amount of variation in the first compared to the second hemistich exemplifies the “beginnings free, endings strict” phenomenon common in prosodic systems throughout the world (Kiparsky 1968), true of Hausa traditional poetry as well (Schuh 1994, 1995). Still, there is good reason to view the canonical shape of the first hemistich as being — v — v. Almost a third of the lines actually have this shape (type “a”), and type (b) differs from type (a) only in adding extrametrical **nà** “saying” or **ñ** ‘I’ at the beginning of the line. Type (c) is metrically equivalent to type (a), substituting two light syllables (vv) for one heavy (—), and type (d) is metrically equivalent, with the initial heavy and light inverted. Type (e) is parallel to type (e) of the second hemistich, with an internal heavy in place of an expected light, but as the textsetting below will suggest, this pattern is a near direct fit with the metrical grid. Patterns (a-e) are thus essentially equivalent and together constitute 53.5% of all lines.

Pattern (f) is ambiguous, either going together with (a) but with a light syllable substituted for the initial heavy, or going together with (g) but with two light syllables instead of an initial heavy. My preference is to take all the patterns (f-i) as conforming to the metrical grid, but omitting the first or the first and second metrical positions (see below). Omission of material at line beginnings is fairly common in traditional Hausa poetry/song.

I suspect that some of the remaining patterns in (j-l), constituting 15.8% of the first hemistiches, may be mistranscribed or were misperformed. Nonetheless, some would have credible textsettings in the framework laid out below, and there are enough, especially of types (k) and (l), to lead one to believe that at least some are valid *kona* lines.

4.4. Textsetting. The grid below shows a possible textsetting of a variety of *kona* lines. Doubled vowels represent long vowels. The two characters in parentheses at the beginning of a line represent the types for each hemistich, e.g. “(aa)” means both hemistiches are of the respective “a” types. Because all these lines appear above with translation, no translations are provided here.

	<u>St(1)</u>	<u>Wk(1)</u>	<u>St(2)</u>	<u>Wk(2)</u>	<u>St(3)</u>	<u>Wk(3)</u>	<u>St(4)</u>	<u>Wk(4)</u>
	x		x		x		x	
	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	x x x	x x	x x	x x	x x	x x	x x	x x
(aa)	Luu-	la	Dii-	sa	juu-	tuu	ko	bin
(ba)	Na ai	ma-	kaa-	po	mai	jar-	ra-	baa
(ab)	Yaa-	ya	Gim-	ba	wo-na	laa-	du-	wo
(ac)	Daa-	da	Juu-	ma	ndag	go-ma	Nga-	ra
(bd)	Na non-	ti	Tun-	ku	non-	ti	Daa-	da
(ae)	Goo-	ro	Daa-	da	lin-	gee-	lin-	gee
(da)	O-	nan	dii-	re	boo	sal-	la	ma
(cd)	N	ku-me	luu-	la	zon-	ge	d'oo-	le
(ea)	Dun-	gun	Zaa-	na	joo-	jin	ko-	na
(fb)		Ka-la	Gim-	ba	wo-na	laa-	du-	wo
(gb)		Daa	Yaa-	ya	le-ki-	b'er	ngu-	di
(ha)		Ma-	kaa-	po	mai	jar-	ra-	ba
(ia)			Gal-	la	Yaa-	yan	A-	te
(kd)	Ji-	bir	Daa-	da	ye mai	bu-	kaa-	ta
(ld)	Laa-	wo	ndin-	mu-n	ga	ku-si	ko-	na

Note that each St(rong) and W(ea)k metrical position corresponds to two grid positions even though the syllable corresponding to that METRICAL position is sometimes light and hence fills only one GRID position. The grid position at the lowest level must accommodate the maximum number of syllables that can occur in each grid position, and the strong and weak metrical positions must be evenly spaced in the grid.

In FIRST HEMISTICHS of the frequent types (a, b, c), where Wk(1) and Wk(2) are filled by light syllables, the textsetting is an abstraction from spoken Bole. In speech, heavy syllables actually have greater temporal duration than light syllables. A textsetting directly reflecting this would distribute the syllables as below, giving light syllables just one grid position and extending the domain of the heavy syllables to fill out the grid:

	<u>St(1)</u>	<u>Wk(1)</u>	<u>St(2)</u>	<u>Wk(2)</u>
	x		x	
	x	x	x	x
	x x x	x x	x x	x x
(a...)	Luu-	la	Dii-	sa ...

As we will see below, recorded performance supports both the possibilities above as metrically valid textsettings, though the former is by far the more frequent. In this setting, the “feel” of phonological weight differences between syllables is derivative on whether a syllable is in a STRONG or WEAK metrical position.

SECOND HEMISTICHS raise a different kind of issue. The textsetting of second hemistich types (d) [— v —] and (e) [— — —] fit the grid as expected. However, for the overwhelmingly most frequent type, (a) [— — v —], the textsetting above counterintuitively forces a light syllable to fall on a strong metrical position. In Hausa metrics, strong metrical positions ALWAYS require a heavy syllable, and single light syllables always fall in weak metrical positions. Textsettings of *kona* in performance suggest a solution. In (a) type second hemistiches, both accompanied and a capella singers virtually always lengthen one or both of the heavy syllables at the beginning of the hemistich. Such a performance pattern would use one of the textsettings below or perhaps something intermediate where the second heavy syllable falls between grid positions. The syllable that is given extra duration is capitalized:

	<u>St(3)</u>	<u>Wk(3)</u>	<u>St(4)</u>	<u>Wk(4)</u>
	x		x	
	x	x	x	x
	x	x	x	x
(aa)	... juu-	TUU		ko bin
(aa)	... JUU-		tuu	ko bin

In both cases, the light syllable (**ko** in this line) is displaced to the grid position following the rhythmically strong position, St(4). It thus has the effect of being an upbeat to the last syllable (**bin** in this line) rather than being on the downbeat of St(4). In either textsetting, the second heavy syllable (**-tū** in this line) extends into St(4). I suggest that St(4) actually “borrows” the heavy syllable of Wk(3), creating a syncopated rhythmic effect by anticipating the strong beat at St(4). This adds rhythmic interest and the “upbeat-downbeat” pattern of the last two syllables provide a line-end metrical cadence.

4.5. Rhythmic textsetting in performance. The first performances that I examined were those by a capella solo singers. Rhythmically, these performances tend to be fluid and variable from line to line, and pauses between the constituents that I have defined as “lines” vary in duration. Though I assumed the singers were performing to some underlying textsetting that they felt, the metricality¹⁷ of the *kona* text was not obvious to me as someone unfamiliar with this style of poetry/song. Examination of the syllabic constituency of enough strings of text would probably have revealed the regularities described above and would have allowed abstraction away from the performance to a likely textsetting, but fortunately, a recording of *kona* sung to drum accompaniment made this task unnecessary.

The drum accompaniment is a clear duple rhythm, which I interpret as 4/4 time (quarter note = about 192 beats per minute). The two drummers, a *ganga* player striking the drum head in two places with a curved stick alternating with left-hand finger strokes and a *kuntukuru* player playing rapid beats with leather beaters, create too dense a rhythmic texture for me to transcribe, though for at least part of the performance, I hear an underlying pattern something like

♪|♪♪♪♪♪♪♪|♪♪♪♪..♪| etc.

Interpreting the basic rhythm this way, the soloist sings for four measures and the chorus answers for four measures. At the end of this section is a transcription of selected verses as sung by the soloist. The numbers of the verses within the full transcribed performance are to the left-hand side of the first line of each couplet. I have omitted the intervening choral responses because the chorus is not audible enough to accurately transcribe either the text or the melody they sing. Following the musical transcription are waveforms showing the actual durations of syllables

The musical transcription is somewhat regularized, but I have tried to stay as close to the actual sung melody and rhythm as possible without resorting to micro-transcription.

¹⁷ As Hayes and Kaun (1996:§2.3) point out, “metricality” is a property of TEXTSETTING, not of a line of poetry per se. If, for example, one took a typical “aa” line of *kona* and set the first syllable to the first nine grid positions and the remaining seven syllables to the remaining seven grid positions, this would surely be “unmetrical” to the ears of any Bole listener. On the other hand, it is not the case that any string of text could be set so as to constitute a line in *kona*. For example, I feel confident in saying that a string of eight heavy syllables or a string of eight light syllables would not feel like a valid *kona* line to any Bole speaker, regardless of how it was set.

Overall, the soloist's textsetting corresponds closely to that predicted in the preceding section. Verses 018 and 027 of the sample are repetitions of the same text. The grid below shows my interpretation of the sung textsettings for those two verses:

	<u>St(1)</u>	<u>Wk(1)</u>	<u>St(2)</u>	<u>Wk(2)</u>	<u>St(3)</u>	<u>Wk(3)</u>	<u>St(4)</u>	<u>Wk(4)</u>
	x		x		x		x	
	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
018a		Baa-ba	Dii-sa		ken		Kaa-	wu-wa
018b	Daa-	da	Goo-	ro	ken		Kaa-	wu-wa
027a	Baa-	ba	Dii-	sa	ken		Kaa-	wu-wa
027b	Daa-	da	Goo-	ro	ken		Kaa-	wu-wa

- a. 'Baba Disa has married Kawuwa,
- b. Dada Goro has married Kawuwa.'

Each hemistich falls into one measure of 4/4 time. On the page following the musical transcription are waveforms for the four lines, with each hemistich displayed separately. The musical duration into which each hemistich fits is about 1.25 seconds. In an idealized performance, the text for each hemistich would begin at 0.00 and end at 1.25. This is almost exactly the case for the second hemistich of the "a" lines and very nearly so in the first hemistich of the "b" lines. Note that these are the interior lines of the verse. There is more freedom at verse margins. The final note of each verse is extended for several beats as the chorus takes over. The singer tends to start the first line of a verse late and also to come in slightly behind the beat at the beginning of the second line. This is the performance counterpart of the "beginnings free, endings strict" principle mentioned earlier. In line 018a, she starts at least a full beat late (compare the wave form of 018a with that of 018b), but she still allots about equal sung duration to the four syllables. In the grid above, I have represented this late start and syllabic duration directly in the text setting, but I suggest that the "real" setting is probably like that in 027a, with the singer compensating for the late start by shortening the duration of each syllable in order to complete the hemistiche in time to begin the next hemistich at the rhythmically correct spot.

Of interest is the sung setting of the first hemistich in line 027b. All but one of the lines in the sample verses here has a hemistich of the form [— v — v]. This syllable pattern is usually set so as to give each syllable nearly equal duration, but with the light syllables falling at weak metrical positions. In line 027b, however, the singer chooses a different setting, allotting three metrical positions (musically, the equivalent of three eighth notes) to the first heavy syllable, one metrical position (one eighth note) to the following light syllable, and about 2.5 metrical positions to the second heavy syllable (2/3 of a triplet). This textsetting was also predicted as possible, being more directly related to durational differences between heavy and light syllables in speech than the more frequent textsetting.

Textsettings in second hemistiches also correspond to predictions made from the syllabic constituency. In particular, in lines where the penultimate syllable is light, this syllable never falls at the strong metrical position St(4) even though this would be a reasonable setting on a straight alignment of one syllable per beat, as is typical of first hemistiches. In fact, I hear, and have notated in the music, the light syllable **-wu-** as falling on the final Wk(4) in lines 018b and 027b, though the waveforms do not

obviously support this. Because the word **Kàwuwà** is composed of all sonorant segments following the initial obstruent, it is impossible to locate exact syllable boundaries within the waveform.

In short, this small study of textsetting in live performance confirms predictions that follow from the types of syllabic constituency typical of lines in the Bole song *kona* and more general principles of textsetting of quantitative meters in a metrical grid.

Kona verses as sung by Hajja Ba'i, Fika, August 22, 2000

007



Ntòw - wà Dī - sà sa nì t'w - we lò?



Bā - ba Dī - sà bē Ká - wu - wà.

008



Ko - nà gow - wo tìn - ku bā - bù,



Yā - ya Dā - dà lē - lē wa - ya.

018



Bā - ba Dī - sà ken Ká - wu - wà,



Dā - da Gō - rò ken Ká - wu - wà.

026



Lū - la Dī - sà jū - tū ko bìn,



Wòr - do Dī - sà pòy - yū gu - lè.

027



Bā - ba Dī - sà ken Ká - wu - wà,



Dā - da Gō - rò ken Ká - wu - wà.

Hajia Ba'i, Verse 018	
0.00 MINUTES 0.00.5 0.01	0.00 MINUTES 0.00.5 0.01
Bà- bà Dì- sà	ken Kà- wu- wà,
0.00 MINUTES 0.00.5 0.01	0.00 MINUTES 0.00.5 0.01
Dà- da Gô- rò	ken Kà- wu- wà.
Hajia Ba'i, Verse 027	
0.00 MINUTES 0.00.5 0.01	0.00 MINUTES 0.00.5 0.01
Bà- ba Dì- sà	ken Kà- wu- wà,
0.00 MINUTES 0.00.5 0.01	0.00 MINUTES 0.00.5 0.01
Dà- da Gô- rò	ken Kà- wu- wà.

4.6. Tone-tune correspondence in textsetting. Turning briefly to the tone-tune setting, the facts in this sample closely match those made for Hausa. As in Hausa, the sung melody follows a pentatonic scale.¹⁸ By and large, sung pitch transitions match spoken tone transitions—HL tones are sung as a higher pitch followed by a lower pitch and vice versa for LH tones, and consecutive syllable on the same tone are sung at the same pitch. The most frequent deviations from this tone-tune match are cases where LH tones are sung at the same pitch, a correspondence which is also common in Hausa and seems to reflect spoken intonation patterns (cf. fn. 8). There are four cases where HH is sung as HL. These are all across word boundaries and seem to be dictated by melodic features (cf. the first measures of 007b and 008b). There is only one case of contradictory tones, viz. the syllables **-rò ken** in 027b, where LH tones are sung as HL. Note that this contradiction does NOT occur in the identical line 018b.

This last remark brings up an issue for future research. Aside from the difference just noted and one other slight difference in the respective first measures of these verses, the melodic lines of verses 018 and 027 are identical, as are the texts. Looking at all the musically transcribed lines, it is obvious that there is not an overall “*kona* melody” to which all verses are sung, as would be the case, for example, in European folk music. This is not surprising, given the fact that melodic line is closely tied to phonological tone. However, the melodic lines of 018 and 027 raise the question of whether individual VERSES of a song have their own melodies in songs shared by many singers.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined aspects of the linguistic structure, metrics, and textsetting in one poetic/musical form in Bole, a language for which there have been no previous studies in metrics. Bole is a linguistic relative of Hausa and resembles Hausa phonologically in that syllable weight is the primary factor in determining the rhythmic properties of the spoken language. Studies of Hausa “art poetry” composed using Classical Arabic meters and Hausa traditional poetry/song show that syllable weight is the basis for all poetic metrics. The principles of textsetting of lines of Hausa poetry to a metrical grid are fairly well-understood. Prior to the 20th century, Bole probably had only limited contact with Hausa. Hence, if the poetic metrical properties of Bole and Hausa resemble each other in significant ways, this fact must be rooted not in direct borrowing of patterns from one language to the other, but in the psychology of the perception of rhythm in language or in historical inheritance in the two languages from a common source. These two possibilities are not mutually exclusive, of course, though insofar as the same metrical properties can be found in weight-based systems in languages that are linguistically and geographically remote from Bole and Hausa, a psychological explanation becomes primordial.

This study shows that Bole and Hausa metrics resemble each other in non-trivial ways. Syllable weight is essential in understanding the setting of lines of poetic text. The languages share certain correspondences, such as strong preference for setting heavy syllables to strong metrical positions and the basic metrical equivalence of two light syllables to one heavy. Recurrent patterns of syllabic constituency and patterns in performance support an analysis of lines comprising four strong beats alternating with four weaker beats. One difference between what is known of Hausa poetic texts and the

¹⁸ The scale notes are B, C#, D#, F#, G#, B. These are the notes the singer starts on. As she progresses, she shifts up to C# as tonic, but I have adjusted the pitches to be consistent with one scale.

one Bole text examined is that Bole, unlike Hausa divides lines into hemistiches separated by a structural caesura. It remains to be seen to what extent this is a general property of Bole folk poetry/song.

The study briefly discusses the match of phonological tone to musical tune, showing that the match in both Bole and Hausa is close, with most apparent deviations having an explanation in intonation as opposed to lexical tone. A detailed examination of this aspect of textsetting must await subsequent research.

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