

## MARMO AND HARAGASI: IRAQW FOLK THEATRICALS

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**ABSTRACT** This paper is an attempt to expose and thus vindicate the theatrical potentialities that abound in folk rituals and ceremonies. It describes and presents the details of the observances and ritual procedures connected with the ceremonies of *Marmo* and *Haragasi* which usher youths into adulthood and the matrimonial estate among the Iraqw of Northern Tanzania.

*Marmo* is the girls' ceremony of coming of age and as such it is not only a critical stage of life but also a dramatic one. *Haragasi* is the dialogue that sanctions matrimony by discounting impediments, such as consanguinity, that might bar a marriage.

The slant of this paper is towards the theatrical appeal and symbolic significance with which the ceremonies are loaded. Such theatrical features and symbolism suggestively illuminate a hitherto unexplored field in functional aesthetics, for the two ceremonies discussed, show how theatrical techniques can be exploited for effective communal education.

### INTRODUCTORY

The flow of masses of people towards some focal point to participate in, to solemnize or to watch a social happening is usually marked by punctilious behaviour which is sanctioned by social custom. Among the Iraqw of Northern Tanzania for instance, puberty rites, betrothal and marriage ceremonies besides manifesting the occasions when and the stages in which individuals reorder their social relationships, provide an excellent context for examining and appreciating the theatrical wealth inherent in their communal celebrations.

*Marmo* and *Haragasi* are the two important ceremonies that usher youths into adulthood and the matrimonial estate among the inhabitants of 'Aya Iraqw' or the country of the Iraqw. This paper seeks, among other things, to present the details of the observances and ritual procedures connected with the two ceremonies, with view to revealing the theatrical potentialities of folk rituals which are realized in and inseparable from communal action. Above all, the description, will attempt to show that *Marmo* and *Haragasi* considered as art, in particular theatre, exploit the techniques and diction, forms and elements of theatre for effective, permanent and continuous education characteristic of rural communities. The four cycle female puberty rite, *marmo*, has mothers, women trainers, and the girl novices not only participating in but also watching the procedures of the rite. The rite is easily divided into four distinct cycles constituting an impressive pageant with varied scenes but with no change of characters. The first three stages make up a chamber drama symbolically enacted in a mysterious feminine world and is consequently managed, directed and witnessed by initiated women. The finale to this drama of becoming a female adult among the Iraqw, is a public ceremony in which the women and the newly initiated girls put on a spectacular show.

*Haragasi* is, strictly speaking, a dramatic representation of the dialogue of a traditional soiree for observing the details and affirming the decorum of marriage.

The dialogue is between men and women and it results from artistically balanced tenuous rhetoric of the conversationalists as they reel out home-spun analogies, highly polished prose and tangible metaphors in the ripple of casual talk. A typical and often popular figure at

these gatherings is the *Lihhtsumo* or the *Go-Between* who is not only cunning and full of excuses but also verbally allusive.

Both *Marmo* and *Haragasi* are widely publicized by word of mouth and enjoy considerable social patronage. As forms of theatre, they have well rehearsed and gorgeously clad unpaid actors, supported by an unpaying but participating audience. *Marmo* and *Haragasi* provide excellent instances of indigineous theatre which is not only moving but valuable. And though no amount of description and interpretive comment can be an adequate substitute for an actual performance, we are forced to do so, especially when dealing with culture that thrive on the spoken word.

### *Marmo*

The preparatory details and elaborate procedures connected with the training of girls for adulthood among the Iraqw, constitute a comprehensive curriculum of indiginous matrimonial instructions known as *maxat* which are imparted during the year long rite of *marmo*. Literally *marmo* is the gate-way to a new stage and a ladder to a higher status in the Iraqw social ranks.

The teaching is through verse, gesture and mime, and is conveniently divided into four dramatic episodes. The ceremonial dress and ornaments donned by the participants, the dexterity of action and solemnity of movement which are the main attractions of *marmo*, confer theatrical status to the entire series of the *marmo* cycle.

The drama starts with the assembling of fourteen year old girls in a designated place in the village. The task of bringing the girls together is the responsibility of their mothers, who also lead them to the village's custodian of the mysteries and lore of *marmo*. This celebrity, naturally, is an old woman well versed in the tribal feminine rites. On arriving at the old woman's home, the girls are received by special attendants and taken to an enclosure prepared in advance for the purpose. The girls are divested of all their clothes, have their heads clean shaven and are clad in animal skins. These rituals provide an overture to the long and exhausting but socially sustaining pageantry of *marmo*.

### *WauBahu*

The second happening in the *marmo* rite is known as *WauBahu*. It is besides been the kernel of *Marmo*, the most important, and hence the most feared stage. It is rigorously guarded lest its details become known to the uninitiated and to men. Male intruders are said to have been killed, and a certain *Mayega* has, in the lore of the tribe become the bogey man to scare curiosity seekers from prying into the secrets of *marmo*.

Essentially, *WauBahu* consists of endurance tests and exercises which last for several hours. The novices are subjected to strenuous muscle flexing exercises and repetitive oscillating movements characteristic of military body building exercises. The rough handling by the trainers and prolonged periods of physical strain often results in fainting and inadequate knowledge of life saving measures might occasionally lead to death.

At the end of the exercises mothers of the successful girls take their daughters home and keep them in seclusion for one year. During this time, the novices are not supposed to do any work. They are fed by special attendants, usually elder sisters or aunts, and are taught the details of house keeping, general cleanliness, feminine hygiene and sex education. Men and boys are not allowed to see the girls during this period, and even male members of a family with a girl in *marmo* must pretend not to know the whereabouts of the girl. It is interesting to note that the girl in seclusion must not betray her presence by sneezing or coughing thus in the event that she had to do so, she must tell her mother to tell the men and boys present

to vacate the house. The trainers have an explanation for this. They stress that *marmo* is conducted and understood only in the feminine world, and the physical disappearance of the girls from the public eye is a symbolic reminder that the girls have been sent to another world from which they will emerge translated into *Dena* or ladies.

The third stage of *marmo* is known as *Qupuqupi*. The girls in *marmo* are not allowed to touch water, instead they are bathed in smoke. The ritual of smoke bathing is called *Hhida* but the preparations that lead to this is designated *Qupuqupi*. Each mother with a daughter in *marmo* gathers loads and bundles of fresh twigs which when put on fire produce a smoky cloudy. The novice, covered from head to toe in animal skins, is made to sit close to the fire and is thus shrouded in the smoke. She sweats profusely, which is the *Hhida* proper, and perfumes herself with powder ground from special leaves. Such baths take place at least once a day, and the unfortunate mothers whose daughters did not come through the ordeals of *Wau Bahu* successfully, also prepare for the *Qupuqupi* stage as a memorial for their daughters. During this stage the novices keep themselves busy with cloth embroidery, gourd decoration and making bead coverlets, necklaces, bracelets and anklets which they will need on emerging from seclusion.

The finale to the rites of *marmo* which takes place two months after *Qupuqupi*, is not only a festive occasion, but also a grand affair.

Mothers fully adorned lead their daughters to the meadows to search for *Ayta Dena—Dageno tit—isa* or a floral tribute for the daughter. They leave for the meadows in the morning and by noon, after they have made garlands for their daughters, mothers and daughters each brandishing a flower, enter the village square in a dignified and colourful procession for the celebrations to mark the end of *marmo*. The rest of the day is spent in dancing and drinking, then the girls go home to resume their normal duties and are now known as *Dena* or ladies and are eminently marriageable.

## DUXOR OR MARRIAGE

Among the Iraqw two kinds of marriage are in practice. There is the *Duxor hanisa* which is accompanied by certain rites and formalities sanctioned by the people, and there is *Duxor harawathingw* which is a result of consenting youths to enter the marriage estate without going through the procedures laid down by the society. Obviously the first category of marriage is both colourful and grand, hence it is the preferred model, but the two types are practiced and once contracted are accepted.

### *Harawatlingw*

This type amounts to secular rather than civil or religious marriage among the Iraqw. It is initiated and effected by the consenting youths.

Once a boy and a girl have agreed to marry they come with their peers to an agreed spot at night. It is common for the girl to be escorted by three or four girls. Likewise the boy is accompanied by two or three of his friends together with two girls who will accompany the bride once her escort goes back home. The two groups stand apart and the prospective groom approaches the bride and struggles until he succeeds to put a bead necklace around her neck. Once this is accomplished the girl will start crying and the boys will start entreating the girls' companions to go home and let the bride be taken away. After consenting the girls escort their friend for part of the way and then make a fast retreat. The bride walks very reluctantly and it is worth noting that for every valley, river, road or path they have to cross she comes to

a complete halt until she is given *laqw'li* or a gift. On arrival at the groom's home she is presented with two lambs and a calf and then she enters the house. Usually nothing special happens after this until the next day when dances commence. The celebrations have to be on a low key lest the parents of the girl discover the whereabouts of their daughter and come to claim her before she is formally married. Marriage for the Iraqw is, among other things, a formality and unless the rites in the following description are performed no marriage can be said to have taken place.

On the following day dancing resumes briefly and is stopped to give the boy's aunt time to prepare the *Quts'i*, which is the putting of two cooking pots on the fire and start symbolic cooking while the company watches the show. As the symbolic food cooks, a neat cow hide is spread to provide a carpet for the marrying couple and the attendants, of which one must be the boy's brother or a close blood relative. It is then time for *laqw'li* or gifts. The boy is given a he-calf and the girl a she-calf and the *Qararusmo* or the bridegroom's assistant who of necessity is a blood relative of the bridegroom is also presented to the marrying couple as a gift.

The couple move to the house accompanied by the *Qararusmo* who, using his left hand thumb, the index and the middle finger, unknots the girl's skirt. A signal is given for the boy to briefly join the girl the *Qararusmo* goes out. The marriage is then consummated and the boy returns and reports to the *Qararusmo* who, using the prescribed fingers helps the girl to tie the skirt into place. It should be noted during these activities there is no talking between the actors. Everything is carried out through gestures. The *Qararusmo* dashes out briefly and comes back as a stranger. He greets the girl who for a reply undoes her skirt. The two have a brief sexual contact aimed at proving that the boy and girl had successfully consummated their marriage. After proving this, the *Qararusmo* goes out and proclaims the news which is greeted with dance and songs by the men and women present. This practically confirms that the marriage is concluded but a few final touches still remain to consolidate it.

On the following day the husband and his companions go on a hunting expedition, while his mother shows her daughter-in-law the house. She shows her how to cook, grind corn, milk cows, clean the house and a host of other domestic chores.

When the hunting party comes back, the bride gives them the food she has "learnt" to cook. Towards afternoon the husband takes some hair from his wife's head and cuts her nails. The hair and the nail cuttings are given to his mother for safe keeping in the house.

In the evening the newly married couple make a show of been established as homemakers by jointly holding a spear over the cattle as they return to their sheds after the day's grazing.

#### *Duxor Hanisa*

The preparations for this type of marriage are lengthy and elaborate. They are prefaced by a period of courtship which may take up to four years, during which time the prospective bridegroom divides the labours of his hands between his own home and that of his intended. In the meanwhile a *Lihhtsumo*—Go-between- is appointed by the boy's parents to relay messages between the two families. The two families, through the *Lihhtsumo*, start investigating and determining the feasibility of the intended marriage by discreetly laying bare the ancestral histories of the two families and if satisfied that there is not affinity between them, the intention of the two families of coming together through ties of blood gets tacit encouragement. The girl may at this stage be informed by her mother, but the matter is tenuous and unofficial for there is no bond to adhere to.

The *Lihhtsumo*, who is an expert in the matrimonial procedures and rules of courtship, assumes his duties by paying a courtesy call on the bride's parents and presents them with token

gifts which are not counted on the day of bridal wealth reckoning. The *Lihhtsumo* must approach the intended bride's home with tact. He must make sure that both the girl and her mother are indoors for he must not be seen by them. Hence he announces his arrival using the password *Hodi* a good distance away from the house. In the event that the girl and her mother show themselves to the *Lihhtsumo* it is concluded that they are opposed to the betrothal and the intended marriage. The *Lihhtsumo* leaves his walking stick on the left hand side of the door, steps inside and makes sure that he also sits on the left side of the door on entering the house.

Faulty steps are marked and penalties are exacted by the congregation of elders as our illustrative case will show.

The *Lihhtsumo* tactfully discusses the issues pertaining to the impending marriage with the father of the girl, presents him with token gifts and returns to the boy's father to inform him of the progress attained. Such visits are innumerable, but time does come when the *Lihhtsumo* feels sufficiently confident of the progress made towards bringing about the marriage. He then approaches the bride's parents and makes arrangements for the elders of the two families to formally meet.

On the appointed day the elders both male and female of the two families come for a public discussion of the lineal history of the families with view to discover any relationship that might possibly exist between the marrying partners. The drama of determining and finally establishing the possibility and rightness of the marriage is played out at the congregation known as *Haragasi*.

#### THE STAGING AND PERFORMANCE OF THE ELDER'S CONGREGATION HARAGASI

On the final day of marriage all men and women elders of the village or county meet.

They discuss the lineage of bride and groom to make sure they are not relatives. Elders who are experts in memories of clans are brought. This day also imposes fines on the groom and his relatives for all their misbehaviorous during courtship. Men sit in the cowshed section and women in the women's section of the house. They never sit together. The day was 24/9/75 at Sabito at Mzee Gwandu Daata's son's marriage.

- Chairman: *Gimse ax qwala, ax gwala ia e gaware.*  
Please come, come, give something to my ears.
- One elder: *Gar slaqwararoka. gar ta netorr aay ti hami tlakwalu aga audi.*  
This is not war, it is something serious but approached in a playful way—which is very clumsy indeed (laughter).
- Expert elder: *Karam Qawogu do Manangit: Gemuhu Kopa: Ala didane.*  
They come the Qawook of Manangit, the Gemuhu Kopa family.
- Expert elder: *niwa tlerr ina dat do Gwatge, Wray Jorogic: Iri diri.*  
From there the line entered the house of Gwatge, the clan of Jorogic. It closed here.
- Another elder: *Gimse karra, tlaafi!! Ax disi arare. Ax taqa ne taqa dinkwari xwaranxwere: Dir baba ne baba ala mawak; dir dasi ne garma na komare.*  
Now come—hearth!! You women please examine this part. Combine this and that and mix it. Leave aside the relationships between both fathers. Concentrate on the bride and groom first.

- Women elders: *Tigo slayaa ala. Muksi ti slayka ye.*  
These people are not relatives, I think those people are not relatives.
- Chairman: *A Anang'u ne Guwango daxata!*  
Do you mean they are like Mount Hanang` and Mount Guwang'w!!
- Another elder: *Mukwi ang garr—in ng'ina garo tahhiye ador ir gon.*  
These people knew before hand that their thing was alright.
- Another expert elder: *Gim ala ar baba a Antlawtoo: ina tlar do Gewo Qewa, mukda Sulla Hhay Hhutlemi. Didadane Giteyna gana did lehh—Hhay Bukhay: ala dir Gitaynuwo, Layda gana did lehh: Hhay Jorogic.*  
Now then the father's line began at Antlawtoo; and entered the house of Gewo Gewa, the people of Sulle and Hhutlemi clan. From there Giteyna took it—that is Bukhay clan. From Giteyna another person called Layda of Jorogic clan took it.
- Elders: *Gimse qwala dirqa qaware in ayo!! Dirna aude?*  
Now you mothers. come and fill that gap!! Have you seen anything?
- Women: *Tam baarmo i Kalih.*  
There is nothing the size of a house fly in it!!
- Chairman: *Hhatsing'w bira fak qafu ki inkuainke aha?*  
When the sugar cane is eaten raw isn't the waste matter collected and tied together?
- Elder: *Gaka xurumit dir Qamara. Qamara kar naamo nai oharo guna naai?*  
I suspect something with Qamara. Did Qamara fear to get hold of a live Naamo tree?
- Mzee Qamara (also an elder): *Karu duqumana oryo oryo bari asmo kuwa niimau agokwi.*  
Friends, why should I hide it when we celebrated in this very house the last time?
- Another elder: *Kavu bare gan na arma i kakh aryok.*  
But we haven't spotted a thing yet!!
- Chairman: *Kara tsabuwoke ala. Dirki dakusi.*  
Then let the axe work. How could it be missed?
- Women: *Gar mu kus hartlaqi idero ala?*  
Is there any reason of grouping people?
- Chairman: *Dir tsabu daxa gimse didane sagw—e gwaamamitika.*  
When it comes to cutting with axes, my head is always cloudy.
- Elder: *Slukumar baba in girindake ala.*  
Bribing the bride's father comes first.
- Another elder: *Disi derr.*  
Something like that exists.
- Elder 1: *Slukumar baba doqa.*  
Yes, I think, bribing bride's father.
- Elder 2: *Karr tsabu.*  
Then conclude.
- Elder 3: *a mila ala.*  
What else.
- Elder 4: *Karr—awn.*  
Than a bull.
- One women elder: *Aha yaa barise, gern ako Qamara iwa amosi kakay yaa....*  
I have one complaint to you elders; especially on the behaviour of Qamara when he used to come for negotiations....

- Chairman: *Nada Xerika, Kuriti sing ma kisara ala ale. Iqo handat. Dirang'w i ala warahni.*  
No, no, the time for action is not yet arrived. Don't open the lid of that granary for the time being. Just be patient and the time will come. Wait for the lion to pass first.
- Elder 1: *Slukumar baba an wakeke ala.*  
First on the list the bribing of bride's father.
- Elder 2: *Gar taar awu gwanduwoke raqhay.*  
And these things are scarce these days.
- Elder 3: *Gim garka mura ku adtlakw*  
Bride's father's bribery is a whole bull.
- Elder 4: *Slukumar baba awu.*  
Again bride price is a bull.
- Elder 5: *Bara male kian gwada awu.*  
From here we jump: The uncle always grows old.
- Elder 2: *Diriwa akutau: mamay idimdadinke.*  
How can you go outside when you are not yet through with the inside?
- Elder 3: *Karr guru done bira fakika ya, tsea ador kira i tiite?*  
Stick there, stick there.
- Elder 4: *Ax dirqa, ax dirqa nakoma Isangao amamili: Awu.*  
Another bull for Bride's mother for her daughter's memory of evening entertainment of "women's guards". (Isangao Amamii).
- Elder 1: *Hhaware a awu.*  
A bull of children's company (Hhaware).
- Elder 2: *Aa, Hhaware a gurta kargan?*  
No, no Hhaware costs a male goat.
- Elder 3: *Gwandu ayo.*  
The mother takes a ram.
- Elder 4: *Awu gwada, gaka slukuma, Hhaware gurta, Isango amamii—gwanda, daxa tawa tsar—a awu: Slemero a awu.*  
The bull for bride price, the bribery, the male-goat for "Hhaware", the women's "Isangai"—take a ram, since they are two, it could be a bull, altogether it takes a bull.
- Elder 5: *Kian: gurtu mamay: tlako dii.*  
We come again: the Uncle's male goat and the bag of oil (tlako dii).
- Elder 1: *Lakit, tlako dii a mila.*  
Wait, what is the cost of "the bag of oil" (tlako dii).
- Elder 2: *Deremur bei.*  
The young sheep.
- Elder 3: *Kara gurtu mamay—O dakat.*  
The eighth thing—the male-goat for Uncle.
- Elder 4: *Slemero gwalele.*  
Altogether they're nine.
- Elder 5: *Garka mila?*  
What else?
- Elder 1: *Hhaware ng'a Oan. Ayshiga gwanda. Amanii gwanda....*  
We have said "hhaware" and the aunt takes a ram. Old women take a ram.
- Chairman: *Ax Qwala ax qwala in ayo kar dang'w a huu daxta.*  
Now come, come women now the elephant has fallen.
- Women 1: *Da tsatii ng'i slawan.*

- Let us collect our knives.
- Women 2: *Axwesani lari fak Qamara tida tawa Lehahhit. Lara hhoa wate.*  
And Qamara's expeditions for negotiations will be finalised today. Today you will go home peacefully and contented.
- Elder 1: *Gim wala kar ala. He bir gow in gow. Koko do Tlatlaa loar wake qafing'u iwa xerr inu akut ana dida. Nntswa—aya la na kiika. Slim hikwa ki urekatam.*  
Let's get started. Anybody who wants to escape can escape. One guy in Tlatlaa family some day ran away when the time for hiding the skin arrived—I was there. Ntswaaa—he disappeared till today. And the cattle demanded were not many—only three.
- Elder 2: *Akodu hhay Axweso.*  
Yes, that man belongs to Axweso clan.
- Elder 3: *Do a tlay a harakiimisuwoka.*  
A home with matured children who have dispersed shouldn't be returned to the first phase.
- Women: *Lehtusmo dir ayihe gar i ain i kahh, ala a inusmowoke? Ayo bare ga wararahh.*  
The negotiator (lekhetusmo) never says anything to the bride's mother. We thought he comes to demand his borrowed money or something else. Why does he always bypass the mother?
- Chairman: *Ama gau wa warahhahhati?*  
So he always by-passes the mother!!
- Women: *Gidabahe amanii kirkay aha bar akwi derr!!*  
Does it mean that the mother should be despised because there is bride's father to deal with the whole thing?
- Chairman: *Aaaa, bare yundu kila ng'una as sleere.*  
Aaaa, now you have found a real hammer.
- Elder: *Gim qwalas.*  
You can come with it.
- Women: *Doqa inaros daxa ka buu.*  
Maybe today he will get his debt paid.
- Qamara: *Aslaay ayo u inaroka.*  
No, mother it wasn't a debt.
- Elder: *Aha ako ugwa yahasiika ayo gitlasing gar i inusi a mila?*  
Mother, didn't you ask the father whether Qamara's visits always implied something like a debt?
- Women: *Nu har yahamisau lari.*  
Why should we?
- Another woman: *Kongkomowos burungwa kilos ay.*  
He has eaten his own cock himself.
- Elder 1: *Yay Qamara, kuta bayi amor ayo ma ohimar ana ido.*  
But Qamara, did the father tell that he was enough and you shouldn't talk to the mother?
- Qamara: *aa.*  
No.
- Elder 1: *Kar qaayok aye.*  
Then suffer you consequences.
- Qamara: *Akuri tsea. innao banadooka gomadddae.*  
The father was outside when I arrived. He wasn't inside at that time.

- Elder 2: *Gar tlakw a gar tlauka ayo. Inos (Qamara) i tlankika.*  
The worst thing is denial. But he (Qamara) doesn't deny anything.
- Elder 3: *Manakwi bara qaymoro binda tiit garos a tuutoka, a kwasiri.*  
If you come across a spinach in your shamba you don't up-root it, you just prune it for vegetable.
- Women 1: *Nanu inaqo qwarr.*  
In fact we are missing vegetable.
- Women 2: *Gar slaama ng'i oan.*  
We better talk big things.
- Bride's mother: *Loarkar hatlae bihha dimbe ginarqor dah dah tam bunet sleme ng'a aika. Loaytler afeni ganar warahh.*  
The other day he just popped in without saying a "HODI" and he entered the house from a wrong side (or sight). The next day he just passed in front of the house without greetings.
- Qamara: *Ami barado, akwi twea. Tanao ama a fiqitu err bara qaymo.*  
The mother was inside, the father outside. They told me that the mother had gone to harvest in the shamba.
- Bride's mother: *Ar loekar? Tam laway sleme in kakh ala!*  
Isn't it true? You didn't even greet!
- Qamara: *Aha dasi ka tlabo wasle?*  
But wasn't the would-be bride dressed then?
- Elder: *Dohhor dakusari a Gwanda.*  
The five for that misconduct is a ram.
- Qamara: *A siasiaka, ilaohare.*  
I am not refusing. accept me.
- Ayshiga: *Anakayaa barise: Nafasir e lari kakh ar naay iwa tiit.*  
I have this to say to all elders: that today I have no time to release my child!
- Elder: *La waya ka gwerr.*  
Today the fence is open.
- Ayshiga: *Ng'i saga oo: Loan wake an tina lohiri gexay xwerawo aw an bahu bira ayiye yahasaki.*  
Just to say a bit of it: One day these boys refused me a lift in their tractor in the late evening—if the hyenas eat me where could they have got this child they want to marry? Please ask the children for more of this.
- Elder: *Amar a urer kay kay ayo?*  
They thought a very old mother is useless.
- Ayshiga: *Gerawo ahaga mak qafaas amor ini ale taxes tana oki lawee ayo nafasi kakh bara taraktaro.*  
First I thought if I ask them to help me I thought they would agree but they said you go on foot because the tailor of a tractor has no more space.
- Chirman: *A gwanda ayo, ka hasauntsito wasl. Yaawok i kwaiake daxta?*  
That will be a ram, Mother, without any deceit. Won't that strengthen your feet now?
- Shangazi: *Ayo a hema ala?*  
Do you know which mother is talking?
- Chairman: *A ama Annaay.*  
The wife of Annaay.
- Groom's father: *Homo ne Yohani tan Endasak dahh ayo kay sii.*

*Homo mi bal. Gera amorqa dir gwanduqa ng'uwa sler?*

That foreigner and John (his son) were coming from Endasak when they refused to help that mother with a lift. The foreigner of course knew nothing. After all, where else could that mother get such a ram?

Chairman: *Toka hanoqay, ayo ax ilawatsang. Ama Darabe a x wal—i awang. Ku Oimare.*  
Another one is there. Mother, please talk.

Darabe's mother, please talk and tell us everything.

Ama Darabe: *I kahh aten na fakisan.*

There's nothing. We are through.

Shauri (Bride's father): *Ako Gwandu (Groom's father) anina bay "mulqayi" asma iiraros anana bun mama ana yaav, Gera is ne mama tiwa slaye anne inos tina dogan Ar tsare—inaros anakoma burungetay tsar una kirik baraa dukaniros wa ale. Buutuwoos na kayka. Tina dogaan. Gam kar ivar e tida galay?—tlut ar kunday. Inqwari gay aweris bara kunday, guhhulay gway amohkees. Inaros ng'ay hamilidar kilawa slaw ana lelehhit. Digir ne kuqa tiayye, aqo hamir kila una dohhis.* Mzee Gwandu (who was groom's father). Once told me "mulqayi". I had his debt and sent his son to pay it. Before the son saw him, I met Gwandu on the way. Secondly, I had his debt; lent me two blankets from his shop. The time we agreed for payment hasn't arrived: We met. He demanded an immediate payment of his debt and started beating me with his fists and then he proceeded to prepare his club and rolled clothes on his other hand ready for a real fight. I had to search and found money for his debt immediately from nearby peoples. A foot for a foot, today he must pay me my five on the spot.

Elder 1: *Dohhor laway—umu ama miberi tear.*

Failure to greet women the fine is twenty Shillings each mother.

Elder 2: *Aa laqa gwanda—dir amar Baha Laga miberi tsiyahh. Ne amar ta do al merr—ama Gwatge*

No, or a ram—especially to Baha's mother or forty shillings. and the second mother whose house you boycotted to visit—Gwatge's mother.

Ayshiga: *Ananao yaa barise, gwandu slohho an slayy!!*

Please elders, I don't want a weak ram with mucus.

Elder 3: *Ama Gwatge ar nina shillingi miberi tsar. Amar lohi: Gwanda.*

Gwatge's second mother Shs. 20/= . This mother left on the road—Shs. 20/= .

Shauri: *Aymuwu "mulqai" kidabaras a mila kang'w Joqwaro?*

This word "mulqai"—what does it mean in Iraqw?

Elder: *A al—aymusmo.*

It means fraudulence.

Amnaay: *Dohhor kunday a shiling tairu. Amadar Amadar hatla, ama Gwatge, garos a bei.*

The fine for beating with fists is Shs. 100/= . The other mother, Gwatge's mother (2nd), she must get one sheep.

Amar lohi (Ayshiga): *As, bei ana slaaka.*

No, no! I don't want a sheep.

Chairman: *Aa, axweni barrto gawti tlaqutaan odor impirmo dirta awan i kahh.*

I protest. If we just shoot up words like football we won't get anywhere.

Once it is established that there is no impediment to the marriage, *Gweda* or Dowry. Can then be persented. and fines on any misdemeanour on the part of the *Lihhtsumo* are exacted.

The wedding ceremony is performed by the female parents and relatives of both families. The bride groom's sister puts a white bead necklace around her brother's neck and then takes it away and adorns the bride with it. Then the bridegroom's mother puts bangles on both wrists of the bride's mother. After these actions, the assembly bursts into song and ululations. The songs proclaim that the bride was betrothed and is given in marriage according to the social custom.

Below is a song typical of the betrothals and marriages:

*Oh hiyeee, Oh hiyeee*  
*Toren o Lakambero or Kainam or simpa uuu*  
*Mao ohiya he mao, oyahe mao.*  
*Maor dasu Mao ohiyahe mao*  
*Maor dasu Mao Ohiyahe mao*  
*Qwarintlay kwarsaah, Mao ohiyahe mao*  
*Qwarintlo dasu, mao ohiyahe mao*  
*Toren tsahayang'w gwatsoh odaba ayoro, ohiyahe mao.*  
 Oh hiyeee, Oh hiyeee  
 Of our generation, from Kainam  
 Clapping hiya he clapping  
 The clapping of Girls—  
 The gourds touch and rattle  
 Our girls competing to leave the mothers' hands.  
 Clapping hiya he clapping.

The bride is then given *Laqw'li* or presents in the form of cows, goats and sheep by her parents and relatives. If the family is a rich one, the *laqw'li* often exceeds the bride price. The bridegroom in the company of his friends and the *Lihhtsumo* come to claim the bride. She is escorted by her aunt to her husband's home. This is said to be the longest journey as the pace is unusually slow and then bride has to be coaxed by gifts to hasten her pace so that they get home before sunset. On arrival the bride is given a sheep with a black head by her mother-in-law and nuptial celebrations follow.

sunset. On arrival the bride is given a sheep with a black head by her mother-in-law and nup-

The relatives retire at about 10 p.m. leaving the newly weds in the company of *Lihhtsumo* and two assistants. The assistants embark on erecting a symbolic house in the sitting space of the house as the bride and groom watch in absolute silence. When this symbolic house is ready the bride retires for *Qwarara*—that is she lives with her brother in law for two days after which her husband or brother-in-law shaves her hair, and the elders present her with a baby as a token of goodwill. From that moment the couple starts living together and are accepted as full members of the society.

## CONCLUSION

The ceremonies of *Marmo* and *Haragasi* abound in forms and features of a theatre with a recognizable social background which is inextricably tied to the daily activities which nourish and colour the daily lives of millions of people in peasant communities. It is not a theatre which is trying to be part of reality but which is itself an enactment of reality.

To an audience nurtured on Aristotelian aesthetics this theatre has no dramatic value in terms of its been an imitation of life. But it has no need to be like life for it is reality to the actors as well as to all those who come together to see a social happening. Both *Marmo* and *Haragasi* are enactments of social issues with the ultimate purpose of regulating behaviour and provide a vent for creative expression. Symbolically the girls are reborn and through the stages of *Marmo* they enter into the dignities and secrets of their community. The stages as it has been shown, consists of lessons in sexuality procreation and motherhood, and are accompanied by painful trials meant to ascertain the girls' readiness to become women.

What participants of *Haragasi* do on stage and out of it throws light on the very stuff of life in the community. The congregation of the elders is symbolically the community which is embodied in the individual families in the scattered homesteads. The people assembled thus, are invited to follow geneologies and trace ancestries with view to determining and ascertaining their roots and thus come to know themselves as a people and as a society.

*Haragasi* is a staging of a current event before a concerned rather than a bored audience yearning for the numbing effect of the illusionistic theatre. It is, therefore, a theatre that yields tangible and lasting effect on the audience, as it calls forth the dead, controls the living and consciously prepares for those to be born. It is a conscious and an uncompromising display of the terms and conditions which define and control the relationships which exist between the people. Among the Iraqw, we understand from the unseen cultural text on which the drama of *Haragasi* is based, betrothals are announced and marriages are arranged but await collective assent and social sanction which are, dramatically speaking, *done* at the congregation of the elders whom we see in the "noble task of helping in the thorough reshaping of men's life together". The result is a theatre with the ability to master the rules governing the social processes of, people in a given age. It attracts capacity audiences and gives us an insight into the life of the community of the Iraqw.

The two ceremonies are illustrative instances of spectacular drama which thrives on folk imagination and collective creativity. The aesthetic base of such a theatre is embedded in the habitual actions of the people as they struggle to satisfy the practical needs of their society. Their daily habits constitute an unbroken chain of communal ritual which is verbally articulated and affirmed by their traditional narratives. The action in such a theatre appears to be energized by controlled spontaneity as it freely engages and employs the limbs and the voice as "instruments of feeling" which results in, "a drama of free self expression (whose) imaginative release and had no objective but to express beautifully and colourfully race folk life". As such the two ceremonies provide not only a show but also a performance at and during which the basis for formulating, designing or creating common goals "by or through collective obligation or voluntary agreement," is given new ritual lease.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** I wish to record with gratitude the generosity shown me by Martha Qorro, Mary Mombo, Tahhani Haali, Nade Margwe and John Burra who tirelessly helped me understand, appreciate the texts, and interpret the facts of the Iraqw life and culture. Thanks also go to the Research and Publications Committee of the University of Dar es Salaam which funded the field work on which this paper is based.

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