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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-59666

Title: Status Figures in the Liwaga of the Naaba Yadega Troupe of Kadiogo: An Ethnolinguistic Study of Mottos and Social Cohesion Among the Moose of Burkina Faso.

Recommendation:
Accept with Minor Revisions……

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality		✔		
Clarity			✓	
Significance		✓		

Reviewer Name: Faheem Abdul Muneeb

Reviewer's Comment

The manuscript offers an interesting ethnolinguistic examination of liwaga songs performed by the Naaba Yadega troupe of Kadiogo, focusing particularly on the representation of four status groups in Moaga society: blacksmiths, warriors, mask guardians and masters of the word. Its central argument—that the invocation of these groups through traditional mottos (zabyʊya) expresses symbolic and ritual complementarity rather than merely reproducing a hierarchy of exclusion—is worthwhile and provides an engaging perspective on the relationship between oral tradition, social identity and collective memory. One of the strengths of the article is its effort to move beyond treating traditional musical performance as entertainment and to examine its role in preserving historical memory and communicating social values. The individual song excerpts, particularly those concerning the blacksmiths, the mask guardians and the masters of the word, provide useful material for understanding how occupational and ritual identities are expressed through poetic language. The manuscript is generally well organised and has the potential to make a useful contribution to the study of African oral traditions. A few clarifications and refinements would further strengthen its presentation and analytical precision.

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The methodology section would benefit from a slightly fuller explanation of how the five songs constituting the corpus were selected. The authors mention that the material was collected through live performances and recordings made in Ouagadougou between 2022 and 2024, and that the songs were transcribed in Mooré and translated into French. It would be useful to explain briefly whether the five songs were selected because they explicitly contained references to the four status groups or whether they represent a broader selection from the troupe's regular repertoire. The authors could also add a short clarification about the transcription and translation process, particularly how the meanings of metaphorical expressions and traditional mottos were established. This would help readers better understand the evidentiary basis of the ethnolinguistic interpretations.

The presentation of the corpus could also be made a little clearer. The article identifies five core songs, while the examples discussed in the analysis refer to Songs 2, 3, 4 and 5. Since Song 1 does not appear in the selected examples, the authors may briefly clarify whether it was used in another part of the analysis or whether the discussion focuses only on songs containing particularly relevant references to the status groups. A short table identifying the songs and the principal themes or status groups represented in them could also be useful, although this is not essential to the central argument.

A further point concerns the terminology used for the different status groups. The manuscript identifies the masters of the word through the terms yʊʊmba, benda and luse, while the discussion also distinguishes between the lead singer, genealogist and master drummer. Similarly, the terms wando, sukwaba and nyonyose appear in the discussion of masks and their guardians. Since these categories refer to different but related cultural roles, a brief clarification of their respective meanings and relationships would improve the conceptual precision of the article. The authors should particularly explain why the different figures associated with oral performance are grouped together under the broader category of masters of the word. This clarification would help readers unfamiliar with Moaga cultural terminology follow the analysis more easily.

The individual interpretations of the song excerpts are among the most valuable aspects of the manuscript. The discussion of the blacksmiths, for example, successfully connects their mastery of iron with agricultural production and the wider material life of the community. Similarly, the analysis of the warrior's motto draws attention to the imagery of the quiver, martial vigilance and courage, while the discussion of the masks highlights their spiritual and ritual authority. These interpretations could be made even stronger by occasionally distinguishing more explicitly between the conventional cultural meaning of a particular metaphor and the interpretation proposed by the authors in the context of the selected song.

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This would be especially useful in Example 1, where the imagery of the rainy-season duck and the ostrich is connected to the identity of the blacksmith, and in Example 3, where the monetary value of the quiver is discussed. The authors may also clarify the expression "sixty sous / three hundred francs" so that its linguistic and historical meaning is clear to the reader. These are relatively small additions that would enhance the quality of the textual analysis.

The discussion of the mask guardians in Section 4 is particularly interesting because it connects ritual authority with the historical relationship between autochthonous communities and conquering political powers. The argument that mask traditions represent a form of spiritual and territorial authority distinct from secular political power provides an important dimension to the article. The authors could strengthen this passage by making the connection between the specific song excerpts and the broader historical interpretation slightly more explicit. In particular, the analysis could explain how the imagery of the mask's remedy, supernatural power and prohibitions reflects the authority of the communities responsible for preserving these traditions. This would further demonstrate how the ethnolinguistic material supports the article's wider sociopolitical argument.

The section on the masters of the word also deserves particular attention. Example 6 presents the singer as a figure who preserves collective memory and provides moral counsel, but who is also dependent on the favour of political authority. The account of the singer's unsuccessful attempt to reach the chief, together with the image of the drum strap causing physical pain, introduces an interesting element of vulnerability into the discussion. The authors could develop this observation slightly further to show that the authority of the oral performer is not limited to the preservation of social harmony; it can also provide a means of expressing criticism, frustration and the limits of political power. This would add further depth to the article's argument about the social and political functions of liwaga.

The central argument concerning the complementarity of status groups is important and gives the manuscript its distinctive perspective. The discussion of the relationship between secular political authority (naam) and spiritual or territorial authority associated with the autochthonous groups is particularly useful. The authors may, however, clarify that functional complementarity does not necessarily mean the complete absence of differences in social status or privilege. This distinction would make the argument more nuanced. The introduction describes the term "caste" as contested, while the later discussion contrasts Moaga status groups with the caste system of the Indian subcontinent. A brief explanation of the limitations of applying the term "caste" to the Moaga context would strengthen this

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discussion and help readers understand the conceptual distinction being made. The authors need not change their central argument; a little more qualification would make it more persuasive.

The comparative table on page 10 is a useful addition because it brings together the four status groups, their associated patronymics, material attributes, spheres of competence and roles in social regulation. It provides a convenient overview of the analysis. The authors should, however, clarify the source of the table. The line beneath it refers to Ganou Souleymane and Taoko Rabiatou but does not provide a date or full bibliographic information. It would be helpful to indicate whether the table is an original synthesis based on the authors' analysis or an adaptation of an existing source. A few expressions in the table, such as "praetorian guard" and "counter-power to the conquering kings", could also be briefly explained or more closely connected to the historical literature cited in the article.

The discussion of the urban transformation of liwaga in Kadiogo is another useful dimension of the manuscript. The authors argue that the performance of traditional mottos in an urban setting helps maintain clan recognition, inter-ethnic relationships and intergenerational transmission. This is an important extension of the article beyond the historical and symbolic interpretation of the songs. A brief clarification of the basis for these observations would strengthen the section. For example, the authors could indicate whether the argument is based on observations made during performances, interactions with members of the troupe or an interpretation of the social significance of the repertoire. If the evidence is primarily textual, the authors may present these functions as the potential social significance of the performances rather than as effects directly established by the study.

Finally, a few bibliographic and editorial adjustments are recommended. Herskovits (1950) and Servier (1986) appear in the reference list but are not cited in the main text. The authors should either incorporate these references where relevant or remove them from the bibliography. The reference entries and spelling of names should also be standardised. Since the article relies extensively on Mooré expressions, particular care should be taken to maintain consistency in their transcription, diacritical marks and singular and plural forms. A final proofreading of the English text would further improve readability.

Overall, the manuscript presents an interesting study of the relationship between traditional musical expression, status identities and social cohesion among the Moose of Burkina Faso. Its principal strength lies in the use of actual song material to examine the symbolic significance of different social and ritual groups. The article's argument that liwaga serves as a medium of collective memory and mutual recognition is worth developing, and the authors have provided a useful foundation for this discussion. The suggested revisions are mainly intended to improve methodological transparency, clarify certain

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cultural categories, strengthen the connection between textual examples and their interpretations, and refine the presentation of the central argument. These changes can be incorporated without altering the overall structure or research design of the manuscript.

Final Recommendation

Decision: Accept with minor revisions.