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Culture and author's personality in the literary text: A rereading of Abubakar Imam's *Magana jari ce*

Abstract

The article is an attempt to look at the literary text as a manifestation of the author's personality and cultural background. The analysis concerns the book *Magana jari ce* 'Wisdom is an asset', containing stories from the native Hausa tradition and foreign motifs, adapted by the author, Abubakar Imam, for the Hausa text. The analysis is to demonstrate links between author's personality and cultural background in creative adaptation of the stories in the book. It is argued here that from the eighty-four stories in *Magana jari ce*, in most of them the scenery, characters, and the way they are presented are motivated by the author's personal experiences, which also show the values and moral standards recognized by him. Among cultural values, there is respect for clerics, admiration for the Hausa court, accepting patriarchal model of the society and low social status of women. Abubakar Imam's sense of humour and his feeling for language complement the features that determine the author's style and narrative features of the book.

Keywords: style, personality, Hausa literature, *Magana jari ce*, Hausa culture, Abubakar Imam

1. Introduction

At times, novelists conjure up what they underwent in reality and put it in fictional form. By implication, some stories establish not only truth but verisimilitude to the happenings in the author's self. *Magana jari ce* is an adaptation or an instance

of intertextuality and, as Adamu (2020) says, the text is no more like stories from Baghdad. The text, in its present form, is said to be one of the classic Hausa novels. The settings and the plots of the stories, all look like a traditional or pre-colonial Hausa society in terms of its aristocratic nature. It is along this line that this article suggests that the text reflects the author's culture, style, and personality. Style, which helps to shape or to portray an author's personality, is a manifestation of choice, addition of aesthetic quality, deviation, and individual idiosyncrasy in a writing or speech. Scholars such as Spitzer (1967) remark that style consists of the habitual choices and uses made by the author or speaker in a manner that it would enable the understanding of his or her psyche and worldview. Style focuses on an author's narrative techniques, application of figures of speech, synthetic style and lexical cohesion. According to Robinson (1985: 227), "[...] a literary style is a way of doing certain things, such as describing characters, commenting on the action and manipulating the plot". Based on this and considering how Abubakar Imam manipulates the original sources of his stories by given them new faces in terms of the settings; and by the way he describes the characters by given them human face through his adaptation, we can argue that his personality is at play.

People's culture in fact determines their way of thinking and worldview. It is culture that moulds the behaviours of members of a given society in the pursuit of their life and at that builds their personality. Keesing (1981: 92) says, "If personality were the internalization of culture, and culture were the projection of personality, then one could infer personality orientations from cultural beliefs and practices". An individual member of society learns a lot about his culture right from childhood to an adult, and things learned become part of his personality which can be portrayed at a later stage of his life. Further, Keesing says: "Personality is the psychological world of an individual viewed by a system. A person's personality includes his or her knowledge [...] of the way of life of the community, but it includes more than that" (Keesing 1981: 94).

The argument put forward by this article is based on the scholars' view, especially Abrams' Expressive Theory (1953: 21-26), which says all works of art are seen to express the personality of the artificer. The theory also sees literary works as a manifestation of author's personality that can be deciphered from his or her literary compositions. According to Colas (2010) and Robinson (1985), an author infuses elements of his personality in his literary creations such that the text can be seen as the rumination of the author's self. This article too argues that the author of *Magana jari ce*, Abubakar Imam, marked his personality in the text through his style and the choices he made in adapting foreign sources.

2. The author

Abubakar Imam was born in 1911 at Kagara, Niger State. Jeż and Pilaszewicz (2003: 6) say "[...] he was a famous Hausa writer, poet, teacher, journalist, Islamic learned man, politician, and court-translator". Imam's great grandparents were Kanuri. They served as Islamic clerics in the Dikwa Emirate of Borno State. They left the Emirate to Bida province in the company of Moi Ibrahim, one of the princes of Dikwa, who left the Emirate because he lost out to become the Emir. The Etsu Nupe received and settled them at Kutigi. He later chose Moi Ibrahim as their Emir.

During the Jihad of Shehu Usmanu Danfodio in 1804, Imam's great grandfather, Malam Muhammadu Gajibo, along with some followers, paid homage to the Shehu at Sokoto. He was then appointed as one of the ambassadors of the Nupe people having stayed in Sokoto. When he died, his son, Malam Badamasi, was given the role. Malam Badamasi was Abubakar Imam's grandfather. After Malam Badamasi's death, his father, Malam Shehu Usman, did not continue to stay in Sokoto; he went out visiting many places in search of knowledge.

When the British arrived in northern Nigeria around 1900 and established their rule, Imam's father, Malam Shehu, was invited by the Emir, Madaki Masoyi, to return back to Kagara from Malumfashi. He was given a number of responsibilities in the court as the Chief Imam, a judge, a treasurer, and then a cleric.

Imam was able to attend Western schools. This gave him the opportunity to work as a teacher and administrator in the Emir of Katsina's palace. Then, already working in journalism and later in the civil service, he became an author of many books. The most prominent novels that he wrote were *Ruwan bagaja* (1934) 'The water of cure', and *Magana jari ce* (1937) 'Wisdom is an asset'. *Ruwan bagaja* was the product of a writing competition organised by the Northern Nigerian colonial administration in 1933, under the supervision of Dr. R.M. East. The title won the first prize. Abubakar Imam died in 1981 (Mora 1989, Malumfashi 1998, Malumfashi 2009).

3. *Magana jari ce*

Scholars are of the view that Imam used different literary works from many nations of the world to come up with his *Magana jari ce*. He was given such large number of books by R.M. East, the then Northern Nigerian colonial education administrator, to use as sources. Mora confirmed this when he quoted Imam's reports:

He (Rupert East – S.P.) collected several types of books on European fables and *Arabian Nights* stories for me to use as background material. I spent about six months in Zaria in 1936 during which time I wrote the three volumes of *Magana jari ce* (Mora 1989: 24).

Imam used the stories given him “[...] and adapted them to the living conditions of the Hausa people” (Jež & Pilaszewicz 2003: 8). One who was never told or never read about the origin of some of the stories would conclude that they come originally from Hausa societies. In fact, Imam adapted the foreign motifs given to him to look like stories of the Hausa Emirs in pre-colonial Northern Nigeria.

The plan of the book is in three volumes, knitted with a main story. The rest of the stories are frame-stories, which Baldick (2008: 135) calls “a story in which another story is enclosed or embedded as a ‘tale within the tale’ or which contains several such tales”. The first volume contains the main story plus twenty-eight frame stories. The main story is that of King Abdurrahman *dan* Alhaji, of his zeal to have a son and the birth of Musa, his only son; and then of his war with the Sinarians together with his grandson Mahmudu and his victorious return. The frame stories that run across are the stories being told by *Aku* “the parrot” and are meant to delay the imminent departure to war of a headstrong prince (Musa) (Jež & Pilaszewicz 2003: 9).

The second volume contains thirty-three frame stories. According to Jež and Pilaszewicz (2003: 10), the stories are in the form of a “story-telling competition with the parrot Haziq which belongs to King Jama’anu who rules over a western country known as Sirika. The competition takes place in the palace of King Abdurrahman in the presence of large audience and judges who every day listen to the stories and bring in their verdicts”.

Volume three looks like a pedagogy using literary devise: *Aku* teaches his son Fasih the art of story-telling as this is his profession that takes him to an elevated position of being a vizier of human beings. So, *Waziri Aku*, as a father of Fasih, feels duty bound to train his son in the skill of storytelling.

As a whole, the three volumes of *Magana jari ce* contain eighty-four stories. Fifty-six of the stories revolve around the court, or they contain the quasi-court scenes. The breakdown can be seen thus:

Volume 1 with 29 stories, 15 revolve around court,
 Volume 2 with 33 stories, 25 revolve around court, and
 Volume 3 with 22 stories, 16 revolve around court.

Jež and Pilaszewicz (2003: 7) state that “the major studies of Imam's output, from the literary point of view, include those by Mora (1989), Pweddson (1977), Westley (1986), and Yahaya (1988/9)”. Subsequently, other researchers and scholars have written a lot on *Magana jari ce*, either to acquire degrees of BA, MA, and Ph.D., or to get the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) or diplomas at different academic institutions in Nigeria and beyond. Some have been published in the journals, while others were presented at conferences.

The first academic work for a degree on *Magana jari ce* was done by Zahra Nuhu Wali in 1976 at the Abdullahi Bayero College of Ahmadu Bello University (now Bayero University, Kano). The second one, still for an academic degree, came almost a decade later, in 1985, and was completed by Salisu Adamu at the University of Maiduguri. In 1986, Beata Jež submitted her MA thesis on *Magana jari ce*, entitled *Functioning of foreign motifs in Magana jari ce by Alhaji Abubakar Imam*, to the University of Warsaw.

Jež comes up with a lot of similarities between other foreign motifs in terms of plots, characters, structure, and setting with *Magana jari ce*. She has convincingly proven that:

- 11 stories are based on *One thousand and one night*,
- 2 stories come from the Indian collection *Pañchatantra*,
- 5 stories are close to those in *Tuti-Name*, a Persian version of the Indian collection *Sukasaptati*,
- 1 story is of Persian origin,
- 16 fables are adaptations from brothers Grimm,
- 2 fables are from Hans Andersen's *Fairy tales*,
- 7 short stories come from *Decameron* by Boccaccio,
- 1 story is based on a Biblical episode,
- 1 story is an adaptation of a Greek myth about the king of Macedonia,
- 1 story is inspired by a fable by W. Hauff,
- 9 stories seem to come from Hausa orature (funny stories of confrontations between a variety of Hausa stereotypes, such as the country bumpkin and the city slickers, the three thieves, the Fulani man and the butcher, and others), and
- 25 stories were derived from unknown sources (Jež & Pilaszewicz, 2013: 16-17).

Jež and Pilaszewicz (2013: 16-17) agree that “[...] the majority of its stories are based on the foreign sources; they are not merely translation. Each of them is an elaboration of the prototype and its adaptation to the reality of Hausa life”. So, in the process of the adaptation, the author uses his own imagination to portray the characters and describe the situations. Through his style, he deviously deciphers his personality, which this article attempts to portray.

In 1998, Malumfashi defended his Ph.D. thesis on *Magana jari ce*, entitled *Abubakar Imam: Nazarin tubali da ginuwar ayyukansa na adabi* [Abubakar Imam: The study of motifs and development of his literature]. The thesis, just like that of Jež, studied not only the foreign motifs, but also traced all the sources used in writing *Magana jari ce*, volumes 1-3. Findings of his work show that Imam used the following foreign sources that helped him to write *Magana jari ce*:

Alfu laila wa laila (known also as *One thousand and one night* and *Arabian nights*),
 Ibn Muqaffa's *Kalila wa Dimna*,
 Hans Andersen's *Fairy tales*,
 Aesop's tales,
 Grimm's *Fairy tales*,
 Shakespeare's plays,
 Stories from *Raudh al-Jinan* ('The oasis of heavens'),
 Stories from *Bahr al-Adab* ('The sea of literature'),
 Some Hausa oral stories.

Sulaiman (1993) completed his MA thesis on one of the stories from volume 3 of *Magana jari ce*, *Karen bana shike maganin zomon bana* [When the cat is away, the mice will play]. This work is also an attempt to trace the origin of that story. The thesis proves that the story is an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, a play adapted by Imam into prose form in *Magana jari ce*.

Another MA thesis on *Magana jari ce* was prepared by Usman (1998). The thesis studied the influence of oral literature on Abubakar Imam's text. Genres of oral literature identified in the text are folktales, legends, histories, myths, fables, verbal arts such as proverbs, praise epithets, and other humour stories.

The Nigerian Television Authority, Kaduna, started televising drama form of *Magana jari ce* in Hausa around 1985. In 1987, the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) made a series of television presentations of *Magana jari ce* in an NTA drama programme. The essence of that programme was to further one of its programme objectives in the area of cultural development.

The MA thesis of Guga (2010) looks at the nexus between the plot and the settings of *Magana jari ce* and the Hausa court. The researcher identifies the good and the bad attitudes that make up the Hausa courts. The good attitudes are truth, wisdom, honesty, bravery, justice, while the bad attitudes are injustice, deceit, obstinacy, boastfulness, and hot temperament of the rulers. All these positive and negative attitudes are common in Hausa court, and are highlighted and brought forth in the research.

Guga avers that the author portrays these attitudes of Emirs in order to put across a message that the Hausa Emirs are good leaders and should be followed and deserve to be obeyed. On the other hand, the author of *Magana jari ce* was indirectly calling the attention of the rulers to handle their subjects justly. The research proves that the plot and the setting of the text revolve around Hausa *Sarauta* System. But this, according to Adamu (2020: 37), is “[...] intertextual device used by Imam in his re-reading of foreign tales into Hausa language [...] in understanding what might be called ‘contextual intertextuality’, [...] a process in which core narrative elements are retained and re-contextualised for different audiences”. This shows that the stories borrowed during the process of writing *Magana jari ce* “[...] were woven into Hausa narrative, obscuring the originating stories and adapting the plot line to Hausa society” (Adamu, 2020: 38). Based on this, *Magana jari ce* of Abubakar Imam can hardly be traced back to its origin. These stories have gone through the process of adaptation, involving intertextuality, and Imam, according to Adamu, “[...] refused to be a slave to the narrative” of the original source and changed *Magana jari ce* to look like a Hausa narrative.

4. Theoretical framework

The Psychoanalytic Theory of Criticism is applied here in order to portray how the author of *Magana jari ce* manifests his personality in the novel. Psychoanalysts see the work of literature as primarily an expression, in fictional form, of the personality, state of mind, feelings, and desires of its author. Following the views of Franz Alexander (1956: 3) “personality comes from the psychological study of human behaviour” and in the case of a literary text, personality is also deciphered from the plot of the text and type of characters. The explanation of the fact that artists express their feelings and emotions through their fictions can be found in a statement by Wilson (1952: 299) who says that “[...] we may legitimately ask whether it is fair to strip man of the only vehicle he possesses for conveying to others the shadings of his thoughts and feelings [...]”. In relation to adaptation of fiction from other cultures, such as *Magana jari ce*, the issues of the author's personality as manifested in the text may be even clearer.

The present analysis also takes into account the sociological approach to the study of personality, in particular theories that deal with the question of the relationship between psychoanalysis and social theories. “Just as psychoanalysis shows how psychological factors influence the course of history and society, sociological analysis reveals that psychoanalysis [...] is itself, to a considerable degree, a social product (Carveth 2013: 253). In this view, personality also has

its social context, as social factors determine people's expectations and imagination. Looking at the literary text, we can analyse the author's feelings and desires, but also his attitudes towards other people, which are shaped by his life experiences.

The cultural and the natural world the author portrays in his work is what Abrams (1953: 6) refers to as the universe which he says "is held to consist of people and actions, ideas and feelings, material things and events, or super-sensible essences". On the other hand, Liu (1982: 1-2) asserts that the world of the artist "consists of both the natural world and the cultural world in which every individual life, and although no two individuals perceive and experience exactly the same world [...]". Liu adds: "The world naturally affects the artist, who reacts to it, and this self – world interaction constitutes this artist's lived world. By exploring this lived world as well as other possible worlds, the artist then creates an imaginary world in a work of art" (Liu, 1982: 1). With this, we can say that Abubakar Imam, through his adaptation inserts his Hausa culture and worldview to deviously portray his personality. To confirm these arguments, we can also say the author of *Magana jari ce* does not escape from the influence of what he undergoes from his immediate community as his cultural world and thus reflects in *Magana jari ce* which directly or indirectly constructs his personality.

Psychoanalytic scholars, such as McCurdy (1949/1950) and Robinson (1985), show representation of author's personality from their literary works and come out with a nexus between the two: the author and the literary work. This is seen from McCurdy's (1949/1950: 42) argument that "Freud's psychoanalytic note on *Hamlet* and his observations on the kinship between dream and literary fiction [...]" suggests that "[...] the literary work of imagination is in some degree an objectification or projection of the author's personality". He further says (McCurdy, 1949/1950: 42-3):

The author of fiction, then, appears to convey into his work (as the dreamer into his dream) his experience of the world as selected and coloured and strongly shaped by his own particular nature. It is from this point of view that the analysis of literary work is simultaneously an analysis of the personality which produced it.

Not only the plot of the literary work or the characters reflect author's personality, it is also manifested in the style of writing. Robinson (1985: 228) says "[...] that style is essentially an expression of qualities of mind, attitudes, interests and personality traits which appear to be the author's own". This means that these qualities of mind, when combined, shape one's way of doing things which

generally may differentiate him from other individuals; whether in the manner of talking or writing. She further says “[...] that style is essentially a way of doing something and that it is expressive of personality”.

The author is assumed to have directly or deviously expressed his emotions or feelings or views in a literary way. So, what we read from the author in his/her literary work is a bearing of his/her personality, tactfully crafted in a fictitious manner. In view of this, literary production cannot disconnect itself from the producer or the artificer, and to certain instances, from the work of adaptation, such as *Magana jari ce*. As a meta-author, Abubakar Imam applies his style of writings already manifested in his first and famous novel *Ruwan bagaja* (1934), and later in *Karamin sani kukumi* (1944), volumes 1 and 2. And even if *Magana jari ce* is based on borrowed motifs, the text is not independent of the Author's style, his morality and of course his ideology and personality. Even if it is not “the internal made external” of the author's mode of thoughts and feelings, we may argue that his mode of adaptation makes the text not look like a mere translation from other sources. It looks like a real literary work, as testified by Jež and Piłaszewicz (2003: 17): “When in August 2002 we went through *Magana jari ce* afresh once again we were stricken by its homogeneity and closeness to an African culture. The uniqueness of the piece results from its particular frame composition which makes it real literary work. Although the majority of its stories are based on the foreign sources, they are not merely translations. Each of them is an elaboration of the prototype and its adaptation to the reality of the Hausa life”. It is therefore the author's (Abubakar Imam) worldview expressed in the work. It is the author's ideology: his religious, political, economic, and other cultural views expressed in writing for his Hausa audience. In essence, whatever the readers come across in a text represents the author's personality because things do not just come by mere accident or a slip of the pen.

The aim of this article is a critical analysis of some frame-stories from *Magana jari ce*. Although the text was not originally created by Abubakar Imam, through adaptation and infusion of his style it looks like his own literary work. Thus, the stories vis-à-vis the author's biography will help to establish the argument that author's personality can be deciphered from the text of *Magana jari ce*, 1-3. On the one hand, the meaning of the text is determined by the psychological profile of the characters, but on the other hand, the moral message of the story, authorities to indicate solutions, and even the scenery in which the action takes place are deeply rooted in the author's personal experience. This means that author's biography refers to what is read from the text. From the psychoanalytic perspective, it is a reflection of the author's personality. By this, the critical analysis of

some stories will experience the distinctive subjectivity or consciousness of the author through the novel. This is what this article attempts to do on *Magana jari ce* and the author, Abubakar Imam.

5. Analysis of the selected frame stories

All the stories from *Magana jari ce* are set in the Hausa culture. Among the Hausa cultural values that are inserted into the source stories from other cultural areas are those that include the traditional Hausa ruler – *sarki*. His position in the Hausa society is indicated through the plot of the story, but also through direct statements of the characters. Other highly respected figures that are represented in the stories are Islamic clerics – *malamai*, who also belong to the elite of the Hausa traditional society. The area relevant for manifestation of the Hausa cultural norms and values is the attitude towards women and how they are treated. This attitude is demonstrated by characters; among them, the relationship between husband and wife is very common. The way this relationship is shown reveals Abubakar Imam's view on social order, cultural norms, and moral values.

There is another aspect of Hausa cultural value that specifically relates to the skills, experiences, and sense of beauty that define Abubakar Imam's personality. It is his feeling for language that, in terms of his style, makes the book a document of Hausa oral tradition.

The present analysis refers to Abubakar Imam's view on the above-mentioned aspects of the Hausa culture and the way they are inserted into the literary patterns from the borrowed sources. The article makes a selection of the frame stories and interprets them through Abubakar Imam's biography, characteristics of the Hausa culture, and the narrative style of *Magana jari ce*.

5.1. Abubakar Imam and Hausa court

We read from the author's biography that he was close to the Hausa traditional political institution. We also read that he was a grandson of an Islamic scholar that migrated from Borno to the Hausaland. He was born and brought up at the court of the traditional ruler – *sarki*, within the system which preserves social hierarchy and predicts patterns of behavior and communication between the traditional authority and the people. As regards his aristocratic background and romance with the royalty, we have stories such as *Sa'a wadda ta fi manyan kaya* and *Kowa ya dogara ga Allah, kada ya ji tsoron mahassada, balle keta*.

5.1.1. *Sa'a wadda ta fi manyan kaya*

In volume 3 of *Magana jari ce*, we read a story titled *Sa'a wadda ta fi manyan kaya* 'Good luck that is better than heavy load'. From the story, we learn how a teenager named Sumale, a son of Abdun Yana, works for an Arab trader. Although the story is not set at court, the author's view on aristocratic rulers (emirs) are incorporated into the story narrative. The boy is portrayed as disciplined and very obedient, but he acts like a simpleton. In the course of his life, he is sent to an Arab to learn trade and other things in life. When the boy messes up, the Arab merchant glares at him, frowning, and says:

"*Kai Sumale, Allah wadanka! Wanda ya haife ka ya yi aikin banza, tun da bai koya maka kome ba cikin al'amuran zaman duniya*". Sumale ya durkusa, ya ce: "*Ai ko ubana ba shi da laifi, don ya sa na hardace abubuwa uku masu taimakon mutum ga zaman duniya, kauna ga Sarakuna, biyayya ga iyaye, zumunci ga 'yan'uwa*" (Imam, 3, 1937: 194-195).

"Hey Sumale, may God curse you! Your father messed up by not teaching you anything in life". On hearing this, Sumale knelt down and said to his boss: "But my father was right because he taught me to memorize three things that would help one in life: **homage for the royalty** (emphasis mine Sh.H.), respect for parents, and love for one's relatives".

The expression 'homage for the royalty' indicates that the author of *Magana jari ce* reserves special respect for aristocracy. This can be proved from his background and upbringing. The traditional political institutions still exist in Hausaland and in other parts of Africa. Adherents of these institutions are very important despite the changes brought about by the postcolonial and modern democracy. There are established kingdoms with first- and second-class Emirs in Hausaland who are still relevant at the helm of affairs. The author, having benefited from that system, took it up and thus portrayed their importance and considered respect for them and even recommended paying homage to them as a religious duty. As can be seen from numerous examples of the stories about the Emirs themselves, Imam portrays them as religious, honest, gallant, brave individuals who are full of wisdom and having foresight when dealing with their subjects on legal and other domestic issues.

This story, according to Malumfashi (2009: 161-162), is an adaptation from two sources: *Clever Hans* and *The three languages*, both from Grimm's *Fairy tales*. The other source is a Hausa tale *The mother and her son* from Schon's collections. These source stories reflect a story of a foolhardy boy who does the opposite of what he is instructed to do. In *Magana jari ce* we read a story of this teenager named Sumale, a son of Abdun Yana, who behaves like Hans: always

does the opposite of what he is asked to do. His father tired of this foolishness, sends him to work for an Arab trader. In the course of his encounter with his Arab boss, Sumale says something that portrays the author's culture and morality which vindicates his closeness to the royalty, as indicated above.

5.1.2. *Kowa ya dogara ga Allah, kada ya ji tsoron mahassada, balle keta*

Historically, we have read that from his pedigree, he was a grandson of Islamic scholars and court clerics. This made him to reserve special respect for them in the main story and the frame-stories. From the frame-stories of volume 3, we have *Kowa ya dogara ga Allah, kada ya ji tsoron mahassada, balle keta* 'Whoever depends on God, should not be afraid of transgressors or wickedness'. This is a story about the arrival of a guest by name Abdun Ugu to a certain town, and how he is warmly received by the Emir because the Emir realizes that the guest looks like a learned person. Enquiries about his personality by the Emir reveal that:

Abdun Ugu ya ce shi mutumin yamma ne, kuma ya dan taba ilimi. Da Sarki ya ji haka, sai ya yi murna, ya fa shiga jarraba mutumin nan, ya kuwa same shi duk inda malami ya kai, ya kai. Da ya ga haka, sai ya daukaka shi. Da ma Sarki ba abin da ya ke bukata kamar mashahuran malamai. Ko wace shawara za a yi sai an tambayi malamin nan (Imam, 3, 1937: 9).

'Abdun Ugu says he comes from the West, and he is a scholar. When the Emir hears this, he is happy, and he starts testing him and he finds the man well educated. From there on, he respects him very much. This is the habit of the Emir that he respects great scholars. Whatever he does he consults this scholar.'

The interpretation here is that the arrival of this guest to the Emir's court looks like that of the arrival of the author's great grandparents within the entourage of the Moi Ibrahim to the Emir of Tgina, and how the Emir of Tgina received them. And this also looks like the arrival of his great grandfather, Malam Muhammadu Gajibo, to the court of Shehu Usman Danfodio at Sokoto when they paid him homage.

The source of this frame story from *Magana jari ce*, is *Kalila wa Dimna*. The original title is *Tale of a lion and a bull*. Imam changed the plot, the setting, and the characters to look like Hausa, and the action takes place in a court of a certain Emir. The abridged version of the original story looks like this (Ibrahim, 2021: 81-94):

[...] from there the eldest son went to a certain swampy and muddy farm in an area called Mayyun, with his two bulls pulling his cart. One of the bulls got stuck in the mud. They tried to free it but could not. They left it there under the care of one of his servants; hoping

that the mud would dry up after some time so that they could free the bull. But the servant, after spending some nights in the forest, left the bull, followed his master and informed him that the bull died.

When the bull freed itself, it continued grazing in the farm and grew fat. It always mows loudly which sends a frightening sound to the lion, the king of that forest. Dimna, one of the lion's viziers, noticed the fear in the lion, calmed the lion by telling him that he will persuade the bull to come to him and they will even become friends. The lion agrees. They eventually become trusted friends. The lion brings the bull closer to him and consults him on all issues. This closeness angers Dimna, who thus conspires against the bull that he was planning to kill the lion. The lion falls to the deception of Dimna, and eventually the lion kills the bull. (my translation Sh.H.)

This is the source story. Abubakar Imam adapted it by giving it the title *Kowa ya dogara ga Allah, kada ya ji tsoron mahassada, balle keta*. Malumfashi (2009: 248) reports that Abubakar Imam changed the animal characters to humans, thus the lion becomes a certain emir in Sudan, the bull (Shartaba) becomes Malam Abdun Ugu, and Dimna becomes the Emir's vizier. Whatever happens between the bull, the lion and Dimna was adapted as what happens between the Emir (*Sarki*), the vizier (*Waziri*), and Abdun Ugu with some modifications in order to suit what Imam intends to improve in his own adaptation.

5.2. Abubakar Imam and Islamic clerics

Abubakar Imam portrays Islamic clerics as highly respected persons. This is not surprising, considering his pedigree from his great grandfather, Malam Muhammadu Gajibo, who was among the clerics at the palace of Emir of Dikwa. Malam Muhammadu Gajibo was among those who followed the entourage of the prince, who lost out to become an Emir of the Emirate of Dikwa, to the Hausaland. His grandfather, Malam Muhammadu Badamasi, and his father, Malam Shehu Usmanu, were all clerics and highly respected at whenever they settled in the course of their life. His father Malam Shehu Usmanu was an imam, treasurer and Islamic teacher at Kagara, where Abubakar Imam was born.

Having been born and brought up in this Islamic family, Abubakar Imam has special respect and consideration for the clerics. This respect and kind regard are reflected in the main and in some frame stories. The first instance to be cited is the main story in volume 1, where the situation of Emir Abdurrahman dan Alhaji is described. Though, this situation is the same as in the source story – the Emir had no male heir who would inherit the Emirate from him after his death. In the original story, it is shown that the Emir had been advised by one of his viziers that if the Emir would concentrate on prayers for Allah to solve this problem, it

could be answered. The Emir then performed ablution, prayed two *raka'at*, and then went to his wife, with that intention of having a male child. He slept with her for two weeks. Miraculously, the wife conceived and later delivered a bouncing baby boy (Malumfashi, 2009: 117).

The scenario is different in *Magana jari ce*:

[...] as he was in that critical situation, one day a certain learned scholar came to him saying "I had a dream yesterday and I was informed that if you gathered forty clerics and pray for you for forty days, your wife will conceive and get a child [...] before the week ends the Emir ordered forty learned scholars [...] Allah answered their prayer [...] the wife of the Emir conceived [...] and delivered a bouncing baby boy (Malumfashi, 2009: 117).

The replacement of the vizier's advice to the Emir that he should pray for Allah himself with the involvement of a learned Islamic scholars to pray for him for forty days is tantamount to say his culture which shapes his personality is at work. This shows his closeness to the Islamic clericalism and special respect he has for them being born and brought up under the system.

The way and manner Abdun Ugu was received by the Emir in *Kowa ya dogara ga Allah, kada ya ji tsoron mahassada balle keta*, also vindicates this argument that Abubakar Imam hails Islamic clerics as people that deserve to be respected.

The author's background, i.e. that his father was a cleric at an Emir's palace in Tgina and his great grand fathers were clerics in the Emir of Dikwa's palace, is a factor that justifies the presence of clerics in the stories, even when they were absent in the stories used as a source. Normally, such clerics are appointed as judges, advisors, and even treasurers at the palaces. The Emirs then used to give special considerations to these types of clerics. Having grown under the system which became part and parcel of him and thus shaped his personality, Abubakar Imam imbibes it and then portrays how the clerics are welcomed and respected at the palaces.

5.3. Abubakar Imam's patriarchal model of the Hausa culture

Through the adaptation of stories from foreign sources, and in some instances his manipulation of original Hausa tales, Abubakar Imam has shown Hausa cultural norms relating to the role of women in the society. His patriarchal model of the family and society as a whole is reflected vividly in some stories. Socially accepted behavior and attitude towards women have an impact to portray women in *Magana jari ce* as backward, weak and lazy. In the frame-stories, women appear only as housewives and are kept in seclusion. They are not given any

meaningful role nor are they allowed to participate in some activities which the Hausa culture has reserved for men. Women's role is to reproduce and to take care of the house. To buttress this argument, Adamu (1978: 14) says: "Hausa culture assigns for each gender its role in the society. Hausa woman is assigned to look after the children and other domestic affairs. But the most important are cooking, fetching water and cooking food".

This patriarchal Hausa culture manifests itself in so many stories in the *Magana jari ce*. We may assume that this attitude was compatible with Abubakar Imam's views of the social role of women in society at a time when he lived and wrote his book. Some stories that portray such patriarchal model of a culture in the text are: *Labarin Sahoro da Sahorama* 'The story of Sahoro and Sahorama', *Labarin wani aku da matar ubangidansa* 'The story of a parrot and the wife of its master'; *Yadda muka yi da ubangijina Ojo* 'How it happened to my master, Ojo' etc.

In volume 1 of *Magana jari ce*, from the main story, we read that when the King was about to go for the war expedition, he instructed his two parrots not to allow Musa (the only son and heir) to come out of the house to follow them. On the first night, Musa comes and meets the parrots in order to tell them that he is going out to meet Mamudu (his cousin). He finds that the male parrot is slumbering, and he says to the female parrot: *Na zo in gaya muku ne don ku sani, za ni bin Mahmudu, duk abin da zai same shi ya same mu tare* (Imam, 1937: 11) 'I come to tell you that you should know I am going out to join Mahmudu (at the war front); whatever is going to happen to him should also happen to me'. On hearing this, the female parrot shakes her head and says: *"A! Wannan ko kusa ba shi yiwuwa. Yaya Sarki zai bar mana amanarka, sa'an nan mu saba?"* (Imam, 1937: 11) 'No, this will never happen. How can the King entrust you to us and we betray?' This answer angers Musa and he strangulates her. Then the male parrot wakes up and sees what happened to the female parrot (his wife). Then Musa asks him the same question, but he keeps quiet thinking. Musa asks: "Why are you quiet, or are you too trying to stop me, as your wife had attempted?" The male parrot then says:

Mamakin abin da ya sa ka ba mace shawara na ke yi. Ai magana irin wannan sai mu tsakinmu maza. In ba rashin hankalin mata ba, ina mutum zai ce za shi ga dan'uwansa, sa'an nan a hana shi? (Imam, 1, 1937: 12).

'I was just wondering why you in the first place seek for advice from a woman. This type of issue should only be discussed between us men. If not for the stupidity of women, why should someone say he is going to join his relations, and you think of stopping him?'

This shows that women lack wisdom and in no way have any capacity to be consulted for any advice. Though, what led Musa to kill the female parrot was the negative answer with full of authority she gave him when he came asking for their permission to go out. There is no indication from the text that Musa is violent, hot tempered or misogynist. The incapacity which refers to woman as not worthy to be consulted comes from the mouth of the male parrot. According to him (the male parrot), all serious issues in life should only be discussed with and find solution from men. This is a reflection of the Hausa patriarchal culture, which invariably shaped Imam's worldview.

Similar story in volume 1 that portrays women as the weaker sex are *Labarin Sahoro da Sahorama* 'The story of Sahoro and Sahorama'. This is the story of a lazy couple. For them, any efforts to look for something to eat is considered a gigantic work. They looked for so many alternatives for easy life but they could not find. What was left for them in the whole world was a gourd of honey. They concluded that they would sell it to buy chickens so that the chickens would be laying eggs and be hatching chicks for them. But Sahorama (the wife) said if that is the case, then they must look for a boy who would be taking care of the chickens for a pay. This is because, according to her, taking care of chickens is a very difficult job. Because nowadays children are lazy and careless, Sahorama picked a stick and demonstrated how she will whip the boy if he fails to work hard. Accidently, she hits the gourd with honey, which breaks. The honey spills. When the husband sees what happened, he starts insulting the wife that she is lazy and cannot even look after two chickens. She had broken the honey container and the honey has spilled. He said she was very stupid, a worthless idiot and big for nothing. They ended up fighting. But none was able to defeat the other because they are all weak and lazy. They separated.

The couples are considered as lazy. When the incidence happened, the husband had the courage to blame his wife. Both are supposed to share the blame. Yet, the author favours the husband while the wife is criticized, maimed, ridiculed, and punished.

In volume 2, we have *Labarin Kalala da Kalalatu* 'The story of Kalala and Kalalatu'. This story portrays Kalalatu, the wife of Kalala as greedy, stingy, and a charlatan. Then, there is *Labarin wani Sarki da yaronsa* 'The story of an Emir and his servant'. This story portrays a greedy widow whose Emir's servant is a suitor. It also portrays the Emir as one who had read a lot about women and claimed that he had mastered all their intrigues:

Da akwai wani Sarki wanda ba shi da wata ta'ada sai karanta labarun mata da irin maki-darsu. Da dai ya fahimta lalle mata sun kai matuka cikin iya makirci, ya ga babu shakka tarkunansu na makirci, kowa suka kafa masa babu daro sai sun kama. Saboda tsoronsu ma bai yarda da ko abinci su rika yi masa ba, ya sami wani yaro ya sa shi ya rika dafa masa (Imam, 2, 1937: 92).

'There was a King who had a habit of reading stories of women and their intrigues. When he realized from his readings that women mastered all sorts of intrigues, and that their trap, when set, no one could escape, he started avoiding them and do not accept any food from them, he employs a boy to cook for him'.

Similar stories portraying women as insincere, wicked, and weak of mind and character are many in the three volumes of *Magana jari ce*. This representation or misrepresentation of women in *Magana jari ce* which could be from the original sources are in consonance with Hausa patriarchal culture. The selection of stories confirms that Abubakar Imam shared the views expressed in them about the characteristics of women and their social role.

5.4. Abubakar Imam's language and style

The source stories which constitute the text of *Magana jari ce* were adapted not only to the characteristics of the Hausa culture, but also to the Hausa language. Abubakar Imam is recognized as a master of the Hausa language at its highest standards. In *Magana jari ce* he was able to combine Hausa oral tradition and foreign literary sources (Furniss 1996: 24), using linguistic devices mainly derived from oral tradition. Among them, phraseological expressions, proverbs, and poetic insertions are the most common.

Commonly, style means how an author describes his setting, portrays his characters, manipulates his plot. I will focus here on Abubakar Imam's language, his choice of words and application of figures of speech. As a special characteristic of author's personality, his humorous nature which appear in his writings will be discussed.

5.4.1. Cultural features in a literary text

Abubakar Imam's style in *Magana jari ce* "is marked by florid language, numerous onomatopoeic words, and ideophones", as testified by Jež and Pilaszewicz (2003: 18). Rich phraseology of the text is the basis for linguistic research in which structural features are interpreted in terms of cultural values (Pawlak 2021). The phrase *ji gudar haihuwar yaro* 'learn about the birth of a child' is in fact a description of how the information about the birth of a child is distributed in the

Hausa society (i.e. through *guda* 'a joyful shrilling by women'). However, the most distinctive feature of the author's style in *Magana jari ce* is the use of proverbs. Apart from the proverbs that interject within the stories, the title of many stories are proverbs. For instance, in volume 1 with twenty-eight stories, the title of ten stories are proverbs, such as:

Banza ta kori wofi 'A worthless thing chases away a useless thing',

In ajali ya yi kira, ko babu ciwo a je 'When time (for death) calls, even if one is healthy should go',

Munafuncin dodo yakan ci mai shi 'The intrigue of goblin goes back to it'. etc.

In volume 2 with thirty-three stories, fifteen are titled with a proverb. Examples are:

Yaro tsaya matsayinka, kada zancen 'yan duniya ya rufe ka 'Hey boy, stop where you are, don't be deceived by some people's comment',

Ba ruwan arziki da mugun gashi, wanda Allah ya ba hakuri ya fi a zage shi 'Good fortune has nothing to do with disagreeableness of character',

Mara gaskiya ko cikin ruwa ya yi jibi 'A guilty sweats even inside water'.

And lastly, in volume 3 with twenty-two stories, nineteen are titled with a proverb. Examples here are:

Kowa ya dogara ga Allah, kada ya ji tsoron mahassada balle keta 'Whoever defends on God, should not fear transgressors or wickedness',

In Allah ya taimake ka, kai kuma ka taimakai na baya gare ka 'If God helps you, then help who is below you',

Girman kai rawanin tsiya 'Arrogance is the turban of destitution'

Dan hakin da ka raina shi ke tsone ma ido 'An apparently trivial thing may do one much damage', etc.

Still as part of his style, Imam introduces oral songs in some parts of his main stories, especially at the end of volume 1. In volume 2, at the end of the frame story titled *Labarin Ja'iru 'Dan Sama Jannati*, we have seen how Waziri Aku wanted to impress his audience with a song with his croaking voice. When he started, his voice scared away the birds and the chickens:

Ya Allah, ka yi mana gafara,

Ka tsare mu ga sharrin tasari!

Domin alfarmar Annabi...

'Oh God forgive us,
Protect us from the taste of loss!
Because of the favour of the Prophet.'

Oral songs available in the three volumes are found both in the main story and in the frame stories. From the frame story of the volume 3 *Mai arziki ko a Kwara ya sai da ruwa* 'A lucky man may get rich in selling water even in Niger', we learn how praise epithet is done during Hausa *bori* cult performance:

*Inna uwa ma ba da mama,
Tafiya ba taki ba, kina bidar takalma,
Domana shiga ba a saki ba...*

'Inna the mother who gives milk,
The journey is not with you, but looking for your shoes,
Domana involve yourself without having been invited.'

Again, in the story titled *Kowa ya daka rawar wani, zai rasa turmin daka tasa* 'Whoever tries to imitate someone else's dance, will end in adversity', the author composes a caricature song against women:

*Ya ku jama'a, ku taho ku jiya,
Zam ba ku nasiha na sake.
Ba mai rigima nan lardin,
Kome ya rufe muku na bude.
Ku lura da mata sai ku sani,
Kwarammu su ke yi mun kyale.*

'Oh, people, come and listen,
I will counsel you,
There is none like me in causing uproar in this province,
Whatever becomes difficult for you I will open it.
Study women then you will know,
They are cheating us we kept mute.'

5.4.2. Sense of humour

The Abubakar Imam's unique sense of humour is confirmed by his friends and colleagues right from elementary school in Katsina. One of his friends at the elementary school, late Alhaji Isa Kaita, the then Waziri of Katsina, and a Northern Regional Minister of Education in the Nigerian First Republic (1960-1966), testifies the humorous nature of Imam when he says:

It was worth recalling that during the school holidays we would take a pledge that we should all write each other. Imam would always be the last to write each one of us, and believe me, almost all of us would receive somebody else's letter, that is, the letters were deliberately misaddressed containing all the humour and rubbish which Imam could write to make one laugh like mad. When any of us received Imam's letter, he had to go into the bush to read it because if one read his letter in the public where people were around, one could not help laughing to attract the attention of the people around who might think that one was mentally deranged (Mora, 1989: 254).

His humour is reflected in so many stories of *Magana jari ce*, 1-3. He does this in his stylistic presentation or description of events or characters in the stories. For instance, we read how he jokingly refers to a certain man as a 'fool' in one of the frame-stories, *Sauna kira mana shashasha, in ka ga sakare ku taho tare* 'Fool, call for us an idiot, if you see a moron, you come together'. According to Malumfashi (2009: 273), this story is Abubakar Imam's creation. In this story, the author uses his humorous nature to caricature one Hausa man who finds himself in a Yoruba land where he can not speak his language nor understand it, and nobody understands him. Whatever he sees them doing, he asks a question. But all the answers are the same, "I do not understand". He thinks that "I do not understand" is the name of a person. So, he thinks everything in that land belongs to an individual call "I do not understand". One day, he sees some people carrying a coffin heading to a cemetery. He asked them and their answer was the same. This Hausa man thought that that wealthy man (I do not understand), who owned everything in the land, has finally died and left all the wealth for his heirs. He sympathised with him and came back home saying he would not waste his time acquiring worldly things as he will one day die and leave everything.

His style and his humorous character are also reflected in the choice of words, phrases, sentences, and names given to the characters in the frame stories. As an example, the Hausa term for 'fool' *wawa* has its more 'emphatic' equivalents, when referred to the names of the story characters, such as *Susususu* and *Shashasha*, *Kalala* and *Kalalatu* (male and female respectively). Their contextual evaluation is based on symbolic values of a particular sequence of sounds. The use of phrases that have their literal meaning and contextual meaning also represents figurative strategies that are left for reader's interpretation. Examples of words that are now archaic are: *awalaja* 'the price for an item sold' (a borrowed word from Yoruba language), *kirshen bante* 'secure cloth round the loins' (a pants or boxer in today's sense). In '*Labarin Sususu da Shashasha*' (volume 3) they are used as follows: [...] *aka fara tayawa sule da sisi, sai ya karfi awalajar, ya sawo*

*mana dan hatsi kwano ashirin da daya babu*¹. Am fara jera katangi bisansa, za a yabe da kasa, sai ga Sususu, daga shi sai **kirshen bante**, yana tafe yana takama².

And when he was describing the incidence happened to the husband in Kowa ya daka rawar wani (volume 3), Abubakar Imam uses his humorous nature to make his readers laugh:

Da ya sarara, sai ya tashi, ya kama tishi, yana cikin yi ashe jakin da ke bayan daki ciyawa ta ja shi har ya kai bisa rufin dakin da ya ke, [...]. Maigida bai sani ba, yana ta nika. Ba shi da sannnen ciki sai ya ji am fizge shi fyu, an yi sama da shi wajen tagan nan. Ya yi ta kame-kamen dutsen nika, da randar da matar ta ajiye kullu da za ta yi koko. Af, duk a banza ! sai ga shi yana reto kai kasa, ga kafa guda can daure wajen taga.

'He stood up after a short recess, and continued with the grinding. As he concentrates grinding the grains, his donkey that was in the backyard was attracted by the grass and it reaches the top of the roof where the head of the household was [...]. Before he realized what was going on, he was forcefully pulled towards the window. He effortlessly tried to save himself by attempting to hold the grinding stone, the container for porridge ingredient, but it was a futile attempt! He was hanging with one leg tied to the window.'

One could hardly control his laughter when reading this story. Regardless of whether the original source story contains same sense or not, his choice of words and description of the scene adds colour to the story and gives it a literary vitality.

With these few examples we can realize that linguistic means and discursive strategies used in *Magana jari ce* follow the best practices of Hausa oral tradition. The author's sense of humor, however, is a reflection of his personality. His style of choosing the right words at the right place, his style of composing oral songs to suit the plot and setting of his story, his choice of funny words to describe his characters or the scene in the stories are appreciated by the readers who find in it the canons of beauty typical of the Hausa literary texts.

6. Conclusion

From this brief analysis, we can agree with the views of some scholars that literary works have a direct or indirect bearing with their authors. And *Magana jari ce*, which is a product of adaptation and intertextuality (Jež & Pilaszewicz, 2003,

¹ Translation: A Yoruba expression meaning the offering to the actual cash one is prepared to pay for an article. (see Bargery 1934: 45).

² Translation: means a secure cloth round the loins. It is traditionally worn or done to show readiness for action or as an attire, normally for children. (see Bargery 1934: 611).

Adamu 2020), portrays things that decipher the personality of the author, Abubakar Imam, through the lenses of his culture, style, and morality. The article briefly discusses the author's biography. From the biography, it is worth noting that he had close contact with the Hausa court which shows his sympathy for and romance with the traditional political institution, sympathy with Islamic scholars and scholarship. He is also a pillar for uplifting the patriarchal Hausa culture because of his upbringing. All of these have perfectly appeared in the three volumes of *Magana jari ce*. His humorous nature, as testified by one of his friend, mate and colleague since childhood, also appear to buttress the argument put forward by this article.

The article proves that even though the stories are adaptations from other cultures, the author has succeeded by carefully crafting the plots, the settings, and the characters to create a piece of literature resembling the original Hausa work, through which he foregrounds his own personality.

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