

The Role of Courtiers in Shehu of Borno's Palace: Preservation and Promotion of Linguistics and Cultural Diffusion

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Abstract

The traditional institutions are considered as the reservoir of language, culture and tradition of the society. History holds it that, in olden, traditional societies, people were acquainted with their cultures through the kings. The society was looking up to the traditional rulers and the people were proud of the institutions for the simple fact that the paramount leaders, in those days were the ultimate powers. Indeed, they were the real custodian of the language and culture of the people. The Shehu's palace is considered as repository of Kanuri poetry, songs and cultural epithet, Sheriff (1997:118-119). In line with this assertion, the paper looks inwardly and collect some cultural performances conducted by the courtiers during celebrations or investitures. The interview and direct participation in the performances is the key to this study. The role of the court poets such as *Babuma*, *Ngajima* and *Zakkam* in preserving and promoting the language and its literary endeavours has been envisaged. This includes the employment of figurative language by the poets and portraying several qualities of the King. Significantly, the courtiers serve as custodian and at the same time vehicle through which cultural heritages and traditional knowledge are disseminated. Therefore, the theory of ethnography guides and analyzes the extracts collected from the songs.

Keyword: *Babuma*, *Ngajima*, *Zakkama*, ethnography

1.0 Introduction

Human being is naturally dynamic in all ramifications. Cultural elements such as resources, ideas and social norms go along with the societal transformation and shared knowledge within and across societies. More specifically the linguistic and cultural issues are more susceptible to changes, modification and shift. This due to modernization and global influence thus warranted the changes. Within the span of time people homogenously living together in stratified setting, adoption and adaptation of one another's culture and values is inevitable. For example, a typical use of the foreign words *zauna dai dai* 'sit properly' in modern Kanuri praise songs is one of those influences manifested in linguistic and cultural changes frivolously used within the wider municipality. However, there are about eight professional court performers, namely *Babuma*, *Ngajima*, *Zakkama*, *Maarama*, *Mala Kunguru*, *Akama* and *Liwulama* (Abba et al, 2019). Each

performer has his/her specific role and a title of either *Zanna* or *Shettima*. They perform without encroaching into the others obligations.

The exploration of the cultural treasures in the palace of the Shehu of Borno, with a view of reviving, preserving and promoting the Kanuri language and culture and reemphasizing the functions of the three traditional court poets known as *Babuma*, *Najima* and *Zakkama* are the focus of this paper. The in-depth analysis of the functions of the court poets would follow suit. The study subjects the songs to scientific realizations and explains the mechanisms of the restoration, conservation and promotion of linguistic and literary tradition on one hand and maintenance and diffusion of the Kanuri culture on the other.

1.1 The Structure of the Shehu's Palace

“For the survival and restoration of cultural etiquettes, there should be a structural organization in place. The Shehu's palace consists of traditional title holders. This includes the male and female title holders according to the order of precedence. The title ‘Ya’ literally means ‘mother’ often added as honorific, for example, ‘Ya Maira’ the Mai's mother, ‘Ya Moworam’ the Mai's aunt, ‘Ya Dowoma’, leaders of the princesses, ‘Ya Gumsu’ senior wife of the Shehu, ‘Ya kurjiloma,’ second wife of the Shehu, ‘Ya Grema’ third wife of the Shehu” (Sheriff, 2011:53-58).

The activities and sitting arrangement of the title holders in the Shehu's court, known as *Kəndairam*, is observed during celebrations such as *Id el-Fitir*, *Id e- Kabir* and *Id el-Maulud* with the title holders sitting by the right and left sides of the Shehu, while the Shehu sits on a royal chair, with his traditional body guards standing near and behind him. Each and every set up of traditional council has its own way of executing the affairs of the council. The composition of the council consists of the Mai “King” himself as the chairman, Waziri as the secretary of the council. The following title holders serve as members, they are: Mallam Tərab, Ahmed Gonimi, Ibrahim Wadaima, Aji Sudani, Shettima Kanuribe, Kaigama, Galadima, Mai Machinabe, Zanna Uroma, Yerima, Kachalla Kamba, Zarma, Mala Kambar, Mala Badawai etc. (Alkali: 2013)

Professional Poet

Professional poet, is the poet that has gone through the process of initiation to become a professional in the act of performing poetry; in respect of formulation, composition, and performing, and in most cases he/she inherits it from fathers and forefathers, while non-professional poet, sometimes is addressed as freelance poet or performer, is the one who learns the act of performing poetry by virtue of associating with the performers or by coincidence and

he/she is not under any tutelage or guidance of a teacher. The non-professional poets are those who have performed for pleasure, especially during work and perhaps they are not necessarily remunerated for the services rendered. There is no single or specific patron. He performs for anybody that comes his way. Perhaps, nowadays our observation contradicts the general assertion that, the artists are born (Abba *et al* 2019: 2-3).

Sheriff (1997:116-117) has classified the artist as the one who lives by singing. No one wishes to be known by the term *Duwú* (Professional Artist). Of course, the term *Duwú* in Kanuri society implies very highly negative connotation and derogatory at the same time, it all depends on the nature and function of their performances. As Okpewho (1979: 1-31) pointed out that,

“The traditional African artist grows in the old tradition; one in the service of ritual and the other under the patronage of royal court”.

Sheriff (1997:118-119) once again stated that, the Shehu’s palace is a repository of Kanuri poetry. Special days like Fridays, Sallah days, wedding and circumcisions in the palace give rise to different forms of songs. Therefore, in the palace the *Zanna Babuma*, *Zanna Ngajima*, *Zanna Zakkama* and *Zanna Liwulama* etc are considered as professional court performers.

However, these classes of poets are entirely persons of distinct background and proven integrity. Perhaps their poetry might tend to influence each other in outlook, style and techniques and it becomes less homogeneous than its previous form. Kanuri people have very rich tradition of powerful empire that lasted for over one thousand years, which equates with a strong Islamic religion, influences the style and content of the original poetry. Similarly, Olajabu (1981:77) explains that,

“the Yoruba oral poetry is an art which depends for its execution on the talent, training, skill, industry and initiative of the artist/composer who performs it. In composing the poems the artist is fully aware and always conscious of the techniques, situations, factors and elements controlling the performance”.

Similarly, Kanuri court poet is fully endowed with the culture and tradition of the people perhaps the occasion that the poet find himself, guides and controls the performance. For example, a female court performer such as *Akama* usually plays the role of the court jester; she performs mostly when the *Mai* is in unpleasant mood. She serves as court jester Abba, (2008), that is for

the friendly relationship between her and the *Mai*. She performs in such a way that pleases the *Mai* and in return reward her handsomely for the services.

1.2 The Profile of the Three selected Poets

The background information relates to the three court performers selected for the study includes the environment, social status, educational background as well as their functions in the court. Therefore, this section of the paper focuses on the biographical information of the artists. The performers' parental background, linguistics, social, cultural, and political influences in the palace as well as nature of their performances, audience and the occasion are very useful information to our credit. Before looking at the profiles of the artists in question, it is of relevant importance to observe the western perception of the African poetry, as described by Akpabort (1986:67),

(Western) scholars continued to collect African poetry but did not investigate it as poetry looking for its stylistic rules... it has remained a treasure trove of manners and customs, a storehouse of vocabulary, a reservoir of archetypes, an inexhaustible source of the historian, a training ground for the Phonetician, a quarry for the anthropologist, a paradise for myth collectors. But as literature, as poetry, it has remained unexplored territory"

Artists, bard, court poet or praise singer, freelance bard etc are people of special skills and talents. Sometimes, they see beyond the ordinary vision and perception of things. Opoku (1985:1

) says that "bard" is necessarily well versed in one or two if not all three of these sister arts", in which artist has the capacity to present his rendition. The oral performer functions diligently to achieve his desire in maintaining and delivering what is expected of him as well employs all the techniques at his disposal to achieve different purposes. The praise singer as an artist has the demonstrative powers to compare and deliver his composition.

1.2.1 Brief Profile of Babuma

Patterson (1925: 5-7) stated in the introductory note to the Kanuri Songs that, the article +*ma* is the usual Kanuri suffix indicating possessor. The *Babu*, is presented in the following words:

"The Babu is a curiously-shaped metal head 8^{1/2} inches long mounted on an ebony shaft. The singers state that it is made of silver. On top of it are three small studs, and below them

for a depth of 21/4 inches the metal head is flanged with ten flanges... the 'Zaka' apparently was a small silver bowl, and the Ngaji, it is said, was a silver orb. Both of these articles like the 'Babu' were mounted on ebony shafts"

(Patterson 1926:1)

According to the pilot study, some of the titles and the performers are no longer active or in existence. For example the title of Babuma has been merged with the Ngajima. Now the *Ngajima* plays double roles at a time.

1.2.2 Zanna Ngajima

Zanna *Ngajima* is a traditional title holder in the palace and serves as official court poet to the Shehu. The late Zanna *Ngajima* was a retired police sergeant; his name was Saje Modu Zanna *Ngajima* and served as a police orderly to the late Shehu. The present *Ngajima*, Baba Kura, is a technician, graduate of Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri. He works with the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital (UMTH). He inherited the title from his father. The thirty-three year old Baba Kura was installed as Zanna *Ngajima* of Borno by his Royal Highness, the late Shehu of Borno, Alhaji (Dr.) Mustapha Umar El-Kanemi, when the father passed away in 2006. Ever since, he is the Zanna *Ngajima* of Borno, a professional court performer.

The occasion, manner and nature of the performance, is synonymous to the other performers. In most cases *Ngajima* performs on the eve of *Idel Al-Maulud*, on Fridays after *Jumma'at* prayer and on the investiture of traditional titles.

Baba Kura said *Ngaji* is referred to an emblem-like instrument with a head decorated with silver. He further claimed that, nowadays the title of *Babuma* is merged with *Ngajima*. It has become one title. Therefore he performs dual roles in the palace, and he is the only *Ngajima/Babuma* around who serves Borno, Bama, Dikwa and Yobe Emirates during installation and investiture of new emir. Alkali (1983), also confirmed the survival of the title *Babuma*, in Kanem-Borno under the *Sayfawa* Dynasty.

1.2.3 Zakkama

The profile of this great court performer Zakkama was not available during the course of conducting the research. He is a male and talented performer. He is well versed in the Kanuri language and culture. He plays role of a praise singer at different occasions, like the rest of the court performers. His life style outside the palace is not known to us. Nevertheless, the little information we collected regarding the title, we understood that most of such titles were

inherited from the fore fathers by the progenies of the late Zakkama, as the case may be. However, Zakkama is one of the court poets in the palace. He performs his rendition, during Sallah festivities and installation ceremonies.

2. Data Presentation and Analysis

This section of the study presents the Kanuri song-text composed by the selected performers and the songs compiled by Patterson (1926). The song text is used as the primary data to analyze the linguistic and literary aspect of the message in the songs. It was subsumed under the two major headings; **Language/Linguistics** and **Literary** analysis. The analysis begins with accounting the nonstandard spelling of the Kanuri words, which perceived to be archaic nature of the language used in those days.

2.1 Language/Linguistics Consideration

2.1.1 Orthography

Orthography is the accepted and standard spelling system of language, which is used across the dialects, in conformity with the standardized spelling system of the language. Kanuri language is at least consisting of six dialects namely; *Dagāra*, *Manga*, *Mowor*, *Suwurti*, *Bilma* and *Yerwa* of which *Yerwa* dialect is considered as the standard, Bulakarima (1997:70). The old spelling system used by Patterson (1926) in compiling the Kanuri songs cannot be easily understood by the modern Kanuri readers, (Sheriff 1997:120). For example,

Kuri ku nite kurgun dunyabe:

Whereas Kanuri has been reduced into writing and the modern spelling is currently in use. Cyffer (1979:8) therefore, the same line is transcribed into the modern spelling system see below:

kuri ku nyidā kurwun dunyabe

Patterson (1926:8) has made it clear that,

“The system of spelling has been adopted in the Kanuri version of the song is that recommended by the Royal Geographical Society. Vowels are pronounced as in Italian: Consonants as in English. The sound represented by ɛ̃ is like the vowel sound in the French masculine article le”

Patterson's explanation on the spelling system was achieved before the introduction of the Kanuri Standard Orthography (SKO) in 1979, the unified spelling system. The old spelling is no longer in use.

The study yet, observed prominent phonological features in the song of *Babuma*, The phoneme /n/ to [ny] before high front vowel /i/ and /e/, are productive in the Yerwa dialect. Likewise the plosive voiceless consonant /t/, changes to [d] plosive voiced, intervocalically, in the current realization. The plosive velar /g/ when preceded by a liquid consonant /r/ takes up the features of sonorant /w/ in the present Yerwa dialect of Kanuri language, for example, in the song, *nitā>nyidā* 'you' and *kurgun>kurwun* 'solution' etc.

2.1.2 The use of Language

The use of simple sentence make the message to have direct impact on the patron, and the poet presents ideas sequentially, and make narration rapid and successive actions easy Sharndama (2008:83-94). For example in the song of *Ngajima* to *Ya Maira*, simple sentences could be observed:

*Ya Maira Ya Maibe,
Bagirmi bārtarama:
Wadaibe ngaliwo kirwuramma*

Magira: Mother of the King,
Magira:
You the cause of Bagirmi's hurrying:
You the battle axe, the whip of Wadai:

2.1.3 Vocative Case

In the same way, *Babuma*'s opening song is directed at the Mai 'King'. This kind of style is used for rapid comprehension. For the word *kuli...nyi*, is directed at the subject for immediate function or vocative realization. (Quirk *et al* 1973:183) described vocative as nominal element added to a sentence or a clause optionally, denoting the one or more people to whom it is addressed".

Furthermore, a vocative case is a construction in which a speaker or writer directly addresses another individual who is addressed. Conventionally, that individual's name is set off by a comma. Mostly this act is done to capture audience's attention. From the opening song of *Ngajima* (court poet) to *Ya Moworam*, (Mai's aunt), the first line starts with direct address or vocative case:

Ya Moworam,
Ya Moworam AisaDunamaram:
 Cidi kurkuri kurnabe:
 Nyima Ya Moworam:

Moworam,
Moworam Aisa Dunama's daughter of the fruitful
 Land of 'kurna' tree:
 You are the owner, Magaram:

Zakkama on the other hand, uses the forms of simple sentences, direct speech and vocative case. Yahaya (2010:45-58) has explained that vocative in Hausa language is used in addressing someone and the vocative is also used to maintain the rapport between the first person, the addresser and the addressee. Therefore, this study finds it relevant while treating the vocative and nominal case in the Kanuri court poetry. See the song presented to *Ya Gumsu*:

Ya, Gumsu,
Karkarema kargema:
Disalamma, waji nyiro lafiya

Gumsu,
 The whole earth is yours:
 Ruler of Islam (May you be) always happy:

Several poetic devices are also used to serve as a means of dressing the content of speech. This sometime makes the message or information valid so as to evoke or stir the emotion of the patron in praise. For example, in the song of Babuma to Mai Ume Jilmi,

Kuri ku nyi kurwun Dunyabe
Zannama ku nyi Zanna Dunyabe
Suwuwima ku nyi shuwur dunyabe

Hail all power! Today you are the world's health-giver
 Who hold destiny in your hand, today you have made
 The world a paradise:
 With whom lies the power for good or evil, today
 You are the world's sweetness:

The song symbolizes courage and absolute power the *Mai* 'King' exercises. He is the solution to world problem, destiny lies in the King's hand. The performer selects words and organizes language to depict several poetic and stylistic devices. This could preserve and promote the language at different levels of linguistic and literary development.

2.1.4 Article +*də* determiner

There are articles in Kanuri language attached to the substantive. It is a disyllable morpheme (+*də*), Benton (1968:20). The +*də* element is grammatically productive in the morphology of Kanuri language. It denotes a definite article or determiner, for example,

Magaramdə, dəli bulyin zəpciyaye,
Duwu sarawima:

Magaram, who event when she camps in deserted bush,
Distributes a thousand bowls of food:

The article +*də* also takes the emphatic meaning and mostly employed by the *Ngəjima*, to draw the attention of his audience as well as elicit esthetic values of the presentation. In whichever way, this element is being used by the poets across their renditions.

2.1.5 The Suffix + *mì*

In most basic and the productive use the low tone suffix +*mì* may be applied to any proper human noun to form a nominal meaning ‘*the son of*’ the person to whose name is affixed (Hutchison 1981:58).

Among other things, the use of various forms of possessive markers such as *Aminami*, *Hawamiram*, *Aminabe* etc indicating ‘*the son of*’ or ‘*daughter of*’ and of *Amina* used at different levels of the song to give both aesthetic and poetic value to the song. The following excerpt addressed to *Ya Moworam*, by *Babuma*,

Amina Njimiram:
Njimi Tələm Hawamiram:
Maina Karabe Amimibe:

Amina, a **daughter of** Njimi town:
Njimi of Tələm, **Hawa’s son**
And (Tələm’s) son the Prince Kara,
Whose mother was Amimi:

Invariably, this feature is not common in almost all the songs of *Babuma* and *Ngəjima*. Despite the fact that, the linkage of man to his or her maternal lineage is not allowed even in Islam, though the poet *Zakkama*, for one reason or the other has vividly demonstrated it. We also noted above, perhaps this confirms the claim made by Opoku (1985:2-11) that, “in an aristocratic setting, the first and perhaps the greatest service a praise singer can do is to endear himself to a patron or client is to establish his noble blood by tracing it through a long list of royal lineage”.

2.1.6 Epanalepsis

Epanalepsis is the repetition of initial word or words of a clause or sentence at the end of a clause or sentence. For example, in the song addressed to *Ya Moworam* by *Ngajima*,

Nyima Ya Moworamwo:
Hadisharam Gabalam,
Nyima Ya Moworam:
Kandagərma, Ya Moworam
Alagarno kəlenowama:
Nyima Ya Moworam:

You are the owner, *Ya Moworam:*
 You are the owner, *Ya Moworam:*
 Yours Kindawuri, *Moworam:*
 Of Alagarno, The Sultan's camp:
 You are the owner, *Ya Moworam:*

2.1.7 Context and Cohesion

Simply cohesion is how a text is internally linked to another, for example how sentences are connected, whereas context is the external relation of a text or part of a text. This is rightly essential in analyzing the stylistic presentation of the court songs. The study of context reveals the style adopted by a particular writer, speaker or poet in the course of presentation.

For example, extract from the song of *Babuma*:

Nyidə səliwoma, ashirma:
 you are our custodian the one who safeguards
 our secrets:

Səliwe nzəliwiye *fato dunyabelan*

Protect us and we shall safeguard you here on earth:

Contextually the element '*səliwo*' occur in three different environments where *səliwo +ma* refers to the Sultan or the Mai as the protector while in the second line they seek to be protected by the Mai, "*səliwe*" directly addressed to the Sultan once again but in verb form, the form is imperatively used, and the third person plural element '*nzəliwiye*', 'we will protect you' is inflected from the same root '*səliwo or səliwotə*'. Each form if juxtaposed with certain grammatical element in different environment, it expresses different meanings. At certain point, the form occurred as a *noun*, *verb* etc. at another point, the object marker is prefixed to the person element (both in singular and plural forms). Coherently each form contributed to the

continuity of the meaning of the whole sentence or phrase. This clearly shows that a mastery of language has been envisaged at the side of the poets. This shows that, how agglutinative the Kanuri language is.

3.0 Literary Devices/Figure of Speech

Figures of speech are the literary devices most often used to beautify and uphold the audience's attention. Among other things, alliteration, assonance, archaism, metaphor, symbolism, simile, personification, hyperbole, imagery, etc. of course not necessarily that all the devices are used by the court poets, though most of the songs have been presented figuratively, thus is the characteristic features of praise song. Sometime, the singer selects some qualities be it animal, or otherwise to dress his composition in ornamented language. See example of alliteration and assonance:

3.1 Alliteration and Assonance

Alliteration is a repetition of the same sound beginning several words in sequence while assonance is repetition of the same sound in words close to each other for example,

Kuli ku nyidā kurwun dunyabe:
Zanama ku nyidā zanna dunyabe:
Suwuwima ku nyidā shuwur dunyabe:
Kowu Dislambe ku nyidā wasāla dunyabe:

Tekami, ngaranmi, ngaran kongawabe:
Kade kadema ka dandalbe:

Hail all powerful! To-day you are the world's problem solver: Who
 hold destiny in your hands,
 To-day you have made the world a paradise:
 With whom lies the power for good or evil, to-day
You are the world's sweetness:
 Islam's disposer, to-day you are pillar supporting the world:
You are bush-cow of men
 You have fought in many parts and put up the (mosque in the)
 dandal:

3.2 Antithesis

Antithesis is juxtaposition of opposing or contrasting ideas, for example, the following line of poetry by Babuma, indicates the antithesis,

Bune bi sālamma, wai waiya Luwuran mukonna:

At **night** (a **warrior**) on a coal-black horse:
But when **day** dawns he (is to be seen) with his **Kuran** in his hand.

For example of antithesis, in the song addressed to *Ya Maira* by *Ngajima*, the excerpt goes on as follows,

*Kam nyia **saraqanadaro** ye kamagan, sa:*
*Nyia **wazanadza**, yeje girne, kolle:*

To the man who **likes** you, **give honey** to drink:
Him who **dislikes** you, **kill**, drag away and leave (unburied):

Similarly, the contrasting idea could be observed in the song presented to *Ya Moworam*, for example,

Gana ganabega, *Yanza Ya Moworam:*
Kura kurabega *yaanza Ya Moworam:*

Of the women of **small** importance,
You are the mother, Moworam:
Of the **great** women you are the elder sister
Moworam:

Zakkama, has also demonstrated the device, for example, the contrasting ideas ‘valiant’ as courageous and heroic while meek humble and gentle at home used by *Zakkama* in the song presented to *Galadima* as follows:

Zau dāli bulbe: kalali fatobe:
Galadima banyibe gayiya,
Kaalawa banyibe mewun luko
Talon kaala bawo:

Outside the capital you are a **valiant**
Warrior but **meek** man in the town:
When *Galadima* comes to the capital,
Eleven of the *bany* titles cease to exist:

3.3 Hyperbole

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (2010) defines hyperbole as an “exaggeration for emphasis or for rhetorical effect in a line of poetry” for example, in *Babuma*’s song presented to *Mai Ume Jilmi*,

Nyida Mai Bundibe:

Mai nyidā sanduwa Luwuaranbe

You are the Sultan of all the lions (All the great):
O! Sultan, you are the Ark (box) of the Qur'an

Maidā Malaiya Alabe
O! Sultan, Angel of God

The attributes of the Sultan are highly exaggerated and in other words inflated to the level of an Angel. The Mai is addressed as a container of the Holy Qur'an, this is also another feature that symbolizes the Sultan as an Islamic disposer, realm of the Islamic knowledge is contained in the Holy Book and the Qur'an is referring to the Sultan and he serves as an Angel of God.

3.4 Idiomatic Expression

Idioms are words, phrases or expressions which are commonly used in everyday conversation by native speakers. They are often metaphorical and make the language more colourful. An idiomatic expression has special feature, a figurative meaning that is comprehended with regards to common use of that expression that is separate from the literal meaning or definition of the words of which it is made.

In linguistics, idioms are usually presumed to be figures of speech contradicting the principle of compositionality. For example,

Jiredā fajar diye
'Truth is like the light of dawn',

In the common sense of the word there is no direct relationship between the *truth* and '*the light of dawn*' though the source domain and the source target has some things in common like in another saying '*truth is light*' etc. therefore, idiomatically could be conceived as literary device. Relatively, *Zakkama* has depicted idiomatic expressions in the following lines,

Wande Alaro shirgataḡami:
Ngawulye ngamashimga kururo dapcin Ala maiye:
Ngawulma kanqasaro walji:
Kamgana kam kuraro walji, Ibrahim Mairammi:
Jireman lene de, Ibrahim Mairammi:
Jiredā fajar diyede, Suwu Mairammi:
Jire nambutā mairuwu diye, Ibrahim Mairammi:

Do not match yourself against providence

God is all powerful:
He prevents the eye from seeing the eyelashes (near it):
Eggs become the great one, Ibrahim Mairammi:
The small man becomes the great one, Ibrahim
Mairammi:
Stick to the truth Ibrahim Mairammi:
Truth is like the light of dawn, Suwu Mairammi:
Untruthfulness is like the darkness at sunset, Ibrahim
Mairammi:

3.5 Imagery

The imagery of literary work thus comprises the set of images that is used which need to be mental ‘pictures’, but may appeal to sense other than sight. Excerpt from the song addressed to

Ya Maira,
Karagānām fuwu fatobe nyiya kāmbaramma:
Ya Maibe Maira Aisa, Dunoma Dabalemiram:
Kāntawul *bāla Njimibema:*

In the Acacia tree before your houses:
The people pound the honey cakes:
Mother of the King, Maira Aisa,
Daughter of Dunoma Dabalemi:
You are the glowing **embers** of the town of Njimi:

Miruka (1990) has stated that “image is the single most pervasive, most dominant of literary devices...” in fairly general terms an image is a mental impression of such abstract notions as colour, size, smell etc. the body of images used in a literary piece is referred to as imagery. Therefore in the case of *Zakkama* he described the Mai as the *chosen Arab*, *fair of skin*, *the light skinned Debaba Arabs* are all features one could perceive through the application of the mental impressions and *Zakkama* has depicted them in the following song, devoted to the Sultan of Borno,

Suruyen, waji:
Yambo kānasaram:
*Kargatabe Shuwa **kimergema**:*
*Debababe Shuwa **kimeqerma**:*

To see you is to see the world filled with light:
And to attain one’s desire:
You are the chief of the chosen Arabs, fair of skin:
And you the chief of the light skinned Debaba
Arabs:

3.6 Metaphor

Metaphor is implied comparison achieved through a figurative use of words; the word is used not in its literal sense, but in one analogous to it. Bwala (2007:60-64) explains, metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing, or one idea or one action, is referred to by a word or term or expression normally denoting another thing or another idea or another action, the ultimate aim being to suggest some common quality shared by the two. Metaphor is the most common poetic feature in songs. For example, *Babuma* presented these lines of poetry to *Mai Ume Jilmi*, consider the expressions in bold,

*Kasuwu fər ngərmabema, Ume Jilmi:
Tekami, ngaranmi, **ngaran kongawabe**:*

Yours the **market of the finest horses**, Ume Jilmi:
He whose mother was Tika, son of a warrior,
A bush cow among men:

Furthermore, metaphor is one of the poetic devices used by the poet to beautify, and give esthetic value to the compositions. The examples of metaphor are featured in the following songs addressed to *Ya Maira* by *Ngajima*, whole of the stanzas are characterized by the metaphoric expressions,

*Yamaira: Ya Maibe, Maira:
Bagirmi burtarama:
Wadaibe ngaliwo kərweramma:
Zazarma zaji shorobe:
Kurwuli baltebe, tada kalawua:*

Maira: Mother of the king, Maira:
You the cause of Bagirni's hurrying:
You are the **battle-axe**, the whip of Wadai:
You, the **leopard** (that lies) in the Cassia bush:
You the **lion** (hungry until) forenoon, with a cub beside it:

There are lot of metaphorical expressions in the song presented to *Gumsu*, in the first three lines by *Zakkama*, captured the device,

*Nyimade Gumsu Mai Kamuwabe:
Kālewū rowondimibe, bulām jiwatobe:
Kam shiga kariyaye sai bawo:*

Gumsu, chieftainess of women:
You are (like) flour made from the 'Rowondimi'
Snake, (like) porridge made of a pythom:

the man who cooks that (porriadge) will not drink:

Nyi kambal deriaqai:

Shillewu suwa fajarbe:

Dinar Ngarannamma,

Ngaran kamuwabe

Gumsu kurwuli, biramma:

Kurwuli, dinar kamuwasobe:

You **are (like) the moon at its full:**

(like) the morning star:

Precious as **gold**, daughter of a bush cow,

You are bush cow among women:

Gumsu daughter of a lion:

She is a lion as precious as gold, among all women:

And the above stanzas have clearly demonstrated the metaphorical expressions, within the context beatification of the general presentation of the songs.

4.0 Conclusion

The study of Kanuri court songs has revealed considerable information in which lexical, grammatical, poetic devices, cohesion and coherent are featured in the songs. These features characterized the court poetry as distinct songs. There are also lots of literary and linguistic information including syntax where simple sentences and vocative cases are predominantly used in the songs.

5.0 Recommendations

This study put forward some suggestions to researchers specifically in the field of stylistic and generally to those who engage in the field of literary studies should reckon with the followings. For, the African literature is very vast area with many branches; there is need to apply a kind of inter disciplinary approach to the study.

The court musicians are still custodian of language, history and culture of the society. Therefore, they are people of latent skills and techniques endowed with special verbal techniques. That is why they are called oral artists or performers.

In that regards, an in depth study of African oral literature should be encouraged both at tertiary and universities levels, with a view to draw and tap the wisdoms of the forefathers. As such the languages and literary cultures of the society would be resuscitated. Despite the enormous

written literatures being circulated and available access provided as a result of modern information technology, still the court musicians, poets in their capacity as oral performer, should be given opportunities to broaden their horizons of knowledge.

The roles and functions played by the court poets as the custodians of culture and traditions should be encouraged by rewarding them handsomely by the patrons. In no small measure, the study of Kanuri court poetry revives and enriches the Kanuri lexicon and vocabularies which are not in everyday use.

The roles of the traditional rulers as the patrons of the court poets should be reemphasized. There should be a close working relationship between the Universities and palace so as to tap and expose the treasure of wisdom and traditional knowledge to the public.

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