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# The Salvation and Aesthetic Structure in "Sifr Ayoub" for Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab

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## Abstract

This study deals with the problem of searching for salvation and death in the poem Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab, "Sifr Ayoub", and standing by the aesthetic of artistic construction in saying the poet's visions and his perceptions towards himself and towards existence. He was known for his inclination in his poetry towards the dualities of life and death; at times he became entangled at first despite his suffering, and he resisted the second with the images of life, her love and the possibilities of supplication and begging in search of ways to survive in harmony with his internal psychological defeats on the one hand, and with the ugliness of what is happening in Iraq in the political and social realities on the other hand, to date in his poem "The Book of Job" for the last period of his life, clinging to what he could through the ways of salvation, looking for the emancipation of himself from the torments of the body of the soul, within many contradictions that make him in his interior a certainty of destruction that is ready to kill him. Al-Sayyab relies on various artistic techniques in building his poem in line with the inherited one time, outside it and again, as a pioneer in the poetic modernity movement in the twentieth century. The study adopted an analytical textual approach to approach. It consisted of a preamble, a presentation based on sub-headings dealing with the contents and problematic of the poem, and the conclusion and a list of references and sources.

## Keywords

The Salvation, Al-Sayyab, Commensurate, Inventory, Alienation

## 1. Introduction

Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab is a pioneer of modernity in Modern Arab Poetry (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 32). He was able to create poem that is commensurate in both content and shape with the characteristics of the contemporary reality in terms

of its new social, economical, and political circumstances.

He is considered one of the poets who renew their artistic poems by depending on modern new techniques to reveal their both opinions and perceptions, to rave their intellectual inventory, to demonstrate their conscious and unconscious emotional suffering as a result of subjective conditions and general conditions that are resulted from the peculiarity of this stage such as the political crisis that is reflected on constituting the contemporary educated society with its crisis and alienation.

In fact, poetry in general and creativity in particular are considered one of the insurgencies on the ugliness and weakness, out of the ordinary, rejecting the values of stability and inertia that is embodied in destroying the traditional format for Arabic poem and generating the activation poem in which Al-Sayyab was one of its pioneers.

Hereinafter referred to as (banan) since its inception. There is no doubt that Al-Sayyab was exposed to both oppression and suffering that was, on the one hand, represented in the political circumstances and in lung disease that admitted him in multiple constituencies. In addition to congenital edema that caused him a special kind of suffering that has been melted in Al-Sayyab poetry by considering him as a habitat for his ideas whether for himself or for himself and for human and universe in general by considering his innovative ability as a mean for achieving it.

Al-Sayyab poetry is devoid of both life and death. To illustrate, he sometimes tends to cling with the former despite of the suffer that might cause and resists the later due to his love of life and the possibilities with an invocation and begging seeking for survival methods. He was suffering from a terminal illness that kept eating him until he was unable to move. However, such ordeal might cause cute psychological fluctuations and tortures which have affected him and has targeted Sayyabian poem.

It is clearly obvious in "Sifr Ayoub" poem the subject of this study. This study will stand by these two forces that have attracted Al-Sayyab in his journey in searching for salvation. Its core is the modern poem with its artistic techniques and aesthetic structure since the form and content get together the poet's view towards life and death as a whole. He dated such period of his life clinging as much as possible with salvation means. In addition, he wanted to dispose himself from the agony in his soul in various contradictions in which he realized the destruction that might occur him.

## 2. Previous Studies

There is no study specialized in the idea of searching for salvation and death in the poem of Job of Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab, but was dealt with in the course of talking about renewal in Al-Sayyab as a pioneer of poetic modernity, as well as the poem or parts of it were studied in the study of various topics I mention but not limited to:

- *Symbols of the symbol in Al-Sayyab's poetry* by Layla Sara, which is a Master's thesis published at the University of Moulay El-Taher.
- The sexual intercourse in the contemporary poem of Bou Aisha Bou Amara in the Capital Magazine of India 2016.
- The possibilities of transformation in the poem sifer Ayoub by Nasser Shaker Al-Asadi in the Arab Gulf Magazine 2013.
- Narration of narration and poetry in the contemporary poetic discourse of Ziane Ashour.
- The effect of life and death on building the poem in the poetry of Al-Sailab by Abd Al-Basit Murshideh.

## 3. The Importance of Studying

The importance of this study comes as it deals with a new topic that no one has touched on studying independently, but the discussion came in the folds of studies dealing with other topics related to the poem, or when dealing with the general contents of the poem, or when examining the topic of renewal in Al-Sayyab's poetry in general as one of the pioneers of renewal in The modern poem.

The importance of the topic stems from the fact that it touches an important existential aspect in Al-Sayyab's life, and constitutes an important part of the formation of Al-Sayyab's ideas and beliefs, and his psychological formation that is reflected in his poetry, due to the troubles and sufferings that disturb him.

In addition to the fact that the idea of death and life is a concern in its various formations, it constitutes the tragic fate of man in general, who occupied all artists and creators of different affiliations and beliefs.

## 4. Analysis

Al-Sayyab poem "Sifr Ayoub" is consisted of ten parts that are moving from two big structures in which one of them dominate the other, namely death structure that dominates poem's language and structure. Life's structure in which the poet seeks for salvation by begging and clinging by the methods of accessing them in terms of peace and tranquility.

Analysis will be concentrated on the first five parts. Each one of them represents indicative unit in which each one of them immerse in one structure inside the body of the poem that has harmonious rhythm and content in accordance with death view and salvation that organize the poem because the poet is sick and concern about his destiny that represents the concern of the existential human as a whole which leads him to search for both salvation and its methods within emotional cases that varies from despair, pain, hope, and Sufi manifestations in searching for a light that drive him to embrace salvation. Most importantly, Al-Sayyab depends on various technical techniques in creating his poem that is either consistent or inconsistent with the inherited.

It is commonly known that Al-Sayyab is considered the best one in employing

legends, religious stories with its surveyed and Islamic reference in modern poem after he was one of the pioneers who wrote activation poem (free poetry) (Al-Attiyah, 1986: p. 34).

Al-Sayyab is regarded as the best poet in using Al-Qena (mask, it is a metonymy for a mysterious person) which stands for an artistic method used by poets to express their experiences indirectly and by technical mean, symbol, substantial equivalence, the dependence on the object pronoun, monologue, dialogue, interviews, and structural methods that surpass on predictive sentence, predictability and recovery technique by the presence of rich linguistic glossary that contains high linguistic outcome, extensive cultural acknowledgement, and remarkable referential richness (Al-Attiyah, 1986: p. 32).

> "Al-Qena (mask) poem contains symbol in its various structures and internal tensions. The symbol has a significant presence and existence in its plot, textual and indicative contexts, the relation between Al-Qena (mask) and symbol is a correlation between a part with whole and private with general. Al-Qena (mask) is a private and delicate from symbol parts it has its own characteristics and presence that distinguish it from other types or symbolic patterns and the context of Al-Muqana (a person who does not reveal his emotions or personality like wearing mask) text is considered as a bowl for the integration of poet's personality and its interaction with heritage personality. The symbol constitutes the string that connects this interaction and its entanglements in the new text" (Al-Musa, 2007: p. 34).

There is no Arabian poet used Al-Qena (mask) as the manner in which Al-Sayyab used it as well as his dependence on legendary, religious stories, heritage. He was the first one who has taken the form of unification with its symbol. He recorded the first steps towards the formation of Al-Qena (mask) (Bin, 2007: p. 13) to make the poet's nature completely identified with his conviction to reveal what he wants.

The poem named "The Crucifixion of Jesus" is considered among the first poems that is based on this technique (Kennedy, 2003: p. 185). Possibly Al-Sayyab tendency is attributed to his suffering that has led him to have violent physical and psychological upheavals that has affected him.

Al-Sayyab has pretended the personality of "Ayoub Abd Al-Salam" in "Sifr Ayoub" poem and Al-Sendbad in "Day Trips" poem. In fact, such personalities clarify the sufficient capacity to inspire his personal suffering, to hide himself behind it, and to reveal what he needs to say because of the fear of political oppression.

The poem of "Sifr Ayoub" expresses the poet's pain and agony once he appears that he believes in the proximity of his black death that is represented in death and align with his internal fears as he considered one of those people who believed in divine religions such as the torture that comes after the death, the punishment for sins and mistakes since he has acknowledged the philosophy of the universe and existence that is derived from people's experiences and perspectives. All of which enable him to realize the concern of death, the magnifying

of its image until the violence of its sentiment which prompted him to cling with (Shuqairat, 1987: p. 145) the life's aspects and beg with the miracles to survive. On the other hand, he is inclined to death concept because he believes that both awareness and speaking of death clearly. It does not reflect a dark moody it is merely as a raven croak instead it represents a progress in consciousness, logical thinking. If this perception was common among philosophers and constitutes a specific perception for time. As such, for present and future (Nasrallah, 2006: p. 221) that is embodied in a form of ideas and abstract theories addressing the worried wandering brain. For artist the poetry is considered as: "images and artistic formations that melts in the consciousness of the recipient after it has been considered as a squeezer for his soul and for tackling human suffering it consists of dramatic coordination and artistic image. Therefore, poetry is considered as existential process that is embodied in poet's awareness in creating self-component for poet" (Manaf, 2012: p. 79).

Sifr Ayoub poems represents a conflict situation between life and death and passing by the possibilities for transforming and pegging seeking for salvation in which all the details as well as possible and impossible scenarios are searching for its existence. In certain cases he clings to the mean of salvation, but in vain while in some cases he looks for another mean within absurd circle that drives him into an inevitable destiny resulted from severe illness that impedes all the means of Salvation.

## 5. Salvation Methods in Job's Poem

### 5.1. God

In reference with the salvation means that are existed particularly at the beginning of Al-Sayyab poem that he clings to beg God who constantly thank him even for his illness trying as much as possible to be satisfied for his calamity because he wanted as much as possible to approximate himself with Al-Qena (mask) rendered in his poem. Ayoub peace be upon him story (to enable him to draw a similar conclusion regarding his escape from death despite of his calamities that is commonly known as (Sifr Ayoub) in which the poet considered it as a textual beginning for his poem. All of which made the poem as a human saga for physical and psychological torture which prompted the self of the poet to either beg or cling within an interconnected case from possibilities and no possibilities.

In this regard, God almighty said: "and remember Our servant Ayyub, when he called upon his Lord: The Shaitan has afflicted me with toil and torment (41) Urge with your foot; here is a cool washing-place and a drink (42) And We gave him his family and the like of them with them, as a mercy from Us, and as a reminder to those possessed of understanding" (The Holy Quran, 631 AD).

In the old testimony, the story justifies the poet independence in eliciting the idea of his poem (Fikri, 2013: p. 6).

Al-Sayyab is not sufficient by employing his personal symbols, but he shares the experience without dealing with it external separated things from him. He

interacted lively by dealing, getting away, and getting close with it. In general, he regards himself as a hero moves between intimate species whether by his physical entity, financial reality by his unique experience (Nasrallah, 2006: p. 84).

He said: "thanks God even if the affliction has prolonged, the pain has dominated, thanks God for your blessing since the calamities are from your generosity" (Al-Sayaab, 1997).

Al-Sayaab started to get close to God more when his death was inevitable due to his severe illness. He believes that his closeness to God is one of the most effective means to get rid of his scourge when there was no mean for escaping. Ehsan Abbas believes that Al-Sayyab death gave an optimal form for the relation between human and Goddess (Abbas, 1978: p. 378).

Even if this relation was apparent, it is considered as a shelter for Al-Sayyan and as a solution for his expatriation resulted from his terminal illness. Death might be considered for Al-Sayyab as an adorable thing. He converted to a contemporary Ayoub in which the voice of illness, death, and satisfaction becomes prominent at the same time (Abdo, 1998: p. 47). The satisfied poet with God's destiny and reincarnated the character of Ayoub tries to defeat death by God's higher force. All of which was seeking to achieve it during his last days. He enjoyed his pain, agony, and late nights as a monk worships God. He believed that both pain and death are merely gifts from God. The pain is considered as a divine touch. The poet exaggerated his description by immersing in meditation circles, he touched the darkness in order to look for revelation and lightness which resembles Sufi imagination.

You are looking at me envying me because of the God's blessings…if the flame of the fire has touched my forehead, you will think it is a kiss from a flame of love. The night is beautiful because it cares of you until the stars disappear and my house window touches your shining light (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 249).

Begging and getting close to God by thanking and satisfying with his blessings and accepting Ayoub's agony—Peace be Upon Him—except the first poet's mean to cling with life and looking for salvation in spite of his harvest towards the impossible. The poet here lives in the time of miracle and waiting it the wait of the person who is ascertain from its occurrence after he was hopeless from the remedy, medicine, and cure. The only thing that was available for him is waiting the impossible (Bin, 2007: p. 189).

Al-Sayyab sought in the poem of first salvation to approximate between himself and the thirsty land who God gave it the rain. As such, it becomes thankful whether if the gloom or not. He believed in God's destiny who grants night and magic within a silent pray that beg him to ease his pain that was increasing since months. He added "these wounds are tearing me apart (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 97)".

The poet reveals the reason behind his selection for Ayoub Al-Qena (mask) that is attributed to his suffering and his attachment to the cure miracle in spite of his realization to the end of miracles. In spite of his sobering realization to the end of the time of miracles, he considers Ayoub as an objective corollary. They

unified in one soul. The poet yells and saying.

"If Ayoub Yells then this will be the call. Thank God who wrote our destiny and wrote after that the recovery" (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 98).

## 5.2. Absent Space

The second survival mean comes by remembering our destiny that is represented in the warm place whereas his home, Jaykur, children, and house. Although he suffered in the past from hunger, poverty, and coldness, but he was able to tolerate that. All of which will make the universe is open and the light is high and represented in stars. He moves from this nostalgia that made him clings to life more begging for overcoming death. Then he made indirect comparison to his reality abroad describing the coldness, loneliness, and disease which made him unable to resist.

Without illness I would fight hunger, coldness, and darkness. Without you, I feel that I am lost in the crowd (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 99). The expatriation is psychological which lead to being away from Jaykur and the family. The people in their new reality alien passers. Do not have intimacy. Bashlar stated that the intimacy of the place comes with the memories and dreams (Bachelard, 1984: p. 37) that have.

He indicated that:

Away from you in Jaykur, without my house and my children in which granite, asphalt, and boredom are pulling me (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 25).
Regardless the poverty and hunger in my home, but it is considered as the mean for self to observe its salvation, to survive from illness. The past for Al-Sayyab is regarded as a safe haven that nobody can break it into. It is unlike his painful present (Shuqairat, 1987: p. 123).
The expatriation is a general human phenomenon….it occurred to Al-Sayyab due to his weakness, psychological fluctuations, self and poetry duplication were considered as the core reason for his expatriation. In addition to physical, social, and political reasons (Shuqairat, 1987: p. 164).

In spite of the poet's illness, he revives the pain of expatriation and remoteness from Jaykur. It is demonstrated in poetic comparison between the features of life in his absence universe and the details of expatriation despite of its aesthetics that are converted according to Al-Sayyab psychological status into features devoid of life.

He says: there is no bird in the branches except fragments of steel that fall without fearing from rain, there are no flowers except behind glass façade…they lead to cemetery, jail, and hospitals (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 226).

## 5.3. Flowers

Regardless the beauty of flowers, but they turn into a dead specie behind a lifeless glass. They are only used for cemeteries, jails, and hospitals visits because it

might implicit for expatriates a closed place like jail, causing death and illness as indicated in his rendering to both hospitals and cemeteries which represent death concerns that pressing on the poet who tries to get rid of them.

The poet feels the inability to survive from death to cling to third aspect from salvation. He calls the florist who represents the aspects of beauty, love, and life. He is begging him and asking for an alive flower that resembles his country's flowers that awaken his internal feeling concerning the ability to survive by the dominance of his pain and expatriation.

O the florist

Do you have a lively flower?

Do you have a flower that evokes the feeling of love?

Do you have a watered red flower?

Oh there is a tropical sun (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 254).

Whenever he realizes the futility of appeal his face becomes angry until yelling:

Shall I scream in the deaf streets of London: give me my lovers?

In case if screaming who will listen to my suicidal yelling (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 256).

Screaming is absurdity, calling in the deaf space does not have memories. Within nostalgia and longing for lovers in the country makes Al-Sayyab a suicide soul. The more he clings to salvation means, the more his realization to the impossibility of survival and his pain exacerbate.

Al-Sayyab realizes that nothing will return. Therefore, he begs God due to his force that will rescue him as Ayoub. He complains about his expatriate, poverty, loneliness, coldness. He invokes God in the middle of the night, from the darkness of death, he has been exhausted from his illness and pain and wanted to get rid of it, survive, and return home in a verse in which Al-Sayyab and Ayoub unified into one person who enjoys an end that resembles his religious symbol/Ayoub.

## 5.4. The Symbol of Absolute Evil/Cain

The salvation methods in "Sifr Ayoub" his inclination towards the absolute human who begs God for salvation in spite of the wickedness implications, which has led Al-Sayyab to lose his faith with people by his calling to Cain:

My brother O You O Cain

Take my hand from sickness

I mean ease my pains and take away my sorrows (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 255).

The clinging is here is to cemetery to make death as a mean of survival from death:

"Who except you shall I pray among the stone cemeteries" (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 255).

Al-Sayyab selection to Cain from the evil he represents since the beginning of the humanity and calling him as a brother is just for atoning the evils of people. Thus, he has been symbolized as Cain and the victim Abel. His illness was mere-

ly considered as atoning from the sins of people (Bin, 2007: p. 107). It has been mentioned in more than one poem of Al-Sayyab.

The means of salvation are accelerating from the general to the specific. He begs the lord of Ayoub to bring him to life that is represented in his wife, children, and home because he was pained for their absence. He drew a picture for children running among the palms in Iraq. As he was drawing the spectacle of the life in his country which he misses. Rendering the photo of his wife who waits his return, but he was walking towards her without cane. He escaped death by returning to his country in spite of the political, economical, and social suffering. In fact, his nostalgia to his past is only his nostalgia to survive.

O Lord Return Ayoub to me

Jaykur, sun, and children running among palms (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 250).

## 5.5. Death

Al-Sayyab feeling towards death exacerbate in spite of his clinging to the various means of salvation because of his fear of the western cemetery. All of which prompted him to wait for the miracle in order to inhale the sun of his country, the smell of its mud. He was begging for salvation from these feelings even if his death is the solution provided being in his home. For him dying is less painful than being here.

He said: "I wish if there is a grave here (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 250)".

Begging for dying and choosing a cemetery seems impossible because he is residing in London for taking remedy. The death is getting close to him away from his country.

Al-Sayyab torture circles and his concern from hunger, poverty, and disease. Also, his despair and his worrying for the family only emerge from the humiliation need in which his death dominates his ability. Then he becomes unable for either resist or change. As such, Al-Sayyab invokes the coldness of alienation although there is no intimacy between them.

The utmost despair was his begging for the ruthless life details that looks like death. He waits for sympathy and mercy in the absence of the lively possibilities.

"O snow….Your mercy I am strange

I have a house in my beloved Iraq

My lover there on the stone (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 262)".

## 5.6. The Miracle

Al-Sayyab still considers Yaqoub as a bridge and a miracle for salvation. He tracks the occurrence of miracle hoping for getting rid of salvation. He wishes if he is the Lazarus to have the power to revive these bones when they have rotted away. Clinging to supernatural miracles is the only method for disposing of his inevitable destiny who is waiting it fearfully.

I wish if prophets' destiny has not been ended

I wish if I am the Lazarus to take the doves out from him

From the darkness of death

Al-Sayyab depended on religious symbols is only a mean for begging God and realizing that survival only occurs by extraordinary force.

## 5.7. Women

Calling and monologue woman is considered as a mean of salvation because she represents and motivates life, and memories partner in the country. He might render the name of (Iqbal) to denote his need for life to demand on him in order to take him out from despair and death:

I will come back do not give up my return

A phone before knocking the door has returned

Lazarus from the country of darkness and tears

Kiss me on a head in which death has destroyed it

Stare on the eyes which witnessed torture and despair (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 294).

Al-Sayyab justifies for himself his return and he sees in a woman a rescue in which her kiss removes his sickness. If he survives from illness, he will not his house and home whatever happened.

Even if Al-Sayyab conceives internally that death his inevitable destiny, but the flame of life and love is represented by his home, wife, children, and woman. Generally speaking, he was not completely despair. Sometimes he begs God to rescue him by his miracles within internal fluctuations and conflicts as the theosophist who stuck in manifestation and appearance. The poem moves from the imperatives and possibilities victorious over the imperatives that overcome all the means of salvation.

## 6. Technical Techniques

The time for Ayoub goes so slowly that commensurate with the poet's inability, sickness, and despair. Two opposite movements attract him, one towards the past despite of its poverty and hunger. However, it was considered a beautiful time for its relation with the first poet that is represented in home whereas lovers and memories. On the other hand, the present time is painful connected with closed spatial space that is alien as well as there is no intimacy except passers, illness, and suffering.

He said: "in London the night as a death a cold and boredom night the night is beautiful: the resonance of day, the car horns from distance and the groans of patients (Al-Sayyab, 1997: p. 294)".

If we try to explore the terms of the poem we will find it moves between three interconnected circles like despair and grief terms that imply an inevitable death he monitors to present the time of disappearance, such as: calamities, darkness, dominated, purpose, his pains, destruction, flame, night, interruptions, agonies, echoes of owl, the forests of night, clouds, granite claws, asphalt, the eyes of pain, loneliness, the darkness of the night, beasts, coldness.

On the other hand, he employs the terms that denote pain, cling to life, and salvation. It is worth mentioning that such terms have the least percentage comparing with the number of words in the poem which represents the stage of suffering seeking visibility, light, and salvation. For example: "thank God, gifts, donation, charm, rain, beautiful, light shining, moon, recovery, life, house, my children, flowers, lively floors, love, passion, I will forget, I will heal…".

In addition, this circle leads him return to disappearance without embracing or salvation to immerse in the inability glossary. For instance: "wasting, yelling silently, darkness, London deaf streets, graves, separated, lost, middle-aged, paralyze my movements, the whirlpool of destiny, a suicidal yelling, burdens, lost, orphans, blood, cold night, the night and its darkness, Cain, death, calamity, pains, alienation, the extreme darkness, my bones are trembling…".

The death in "Sifr Ayoub" poem is an inherited phenomenon that obsesses the inner feelings of poet. To clarify, he tries as much as possible to seek for salvation and emancipation means from his spatial and temporal space that manifests the life aspects. In order to revive a slow time and he seems unable to do anything just begging miracles for escaping from his inevitable destiny and dating the bereavement of human in general and the bereavement of self in particular and waiting for his death.

## 7. Conclusion

- Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab was able to create poems that are compatible in form and content with the privacy of contemporary reality, with his new political, social and economic circumstances. He is one of those who renewed the structure of their poems by relying on modernist techniques.

- Al-Sayyab tends in his poetry about the dualities of life and death; sometimes it becomes entangled in the first despite its suffering, and resists the second with the images of life, her love, the possibilities of supplication, and the plea in search of ways to survive.

- The poem Al-Sayyab "Sifar Ayoub" consists of ten parts that move within two large structures, one dominating one over the other: the death structure that overlooks its ten districts, and two aspects of the poem's language and perceptions, and the structure of life that the poet tries to be saved by begging, and adhering to the methods of reaching it where peace and tranquility are achieved.

- Each part of the poem constitutes a semantic unit that dissolves each in one structure within the body of the poem harmoniously rhythmically and securely according to the vision of the duality of death and the search for salvation that organizes the whole poem.

- Al-Sayyab used in the poem "The Book of Job" various technical techniques, such as the technique of mask, the objective equivalent, in addition to leaning on the conscience of the speaker, intimacy, dialogue, interviews, and construction methods that overwhelm the news camel, retrieval technology, forward-looking, and many others, In the presence of a rich linguistic dictionary

accessible from a high linguistic outcome.

- The "Sifar Ayoub" represents the state of conflict between death and life, and the passage of possibilities of transformation and promotion in search of salvation, which searches for its existence in all the details and possible possibilities.

- And it is not possible around him, while holding on to one of the means of salvation and does not help, we see him going to search for another within a futile circle that leads to his inevitable fate resulting from a severe disease that stands in the way of all the methods of salvation.

- Al-Sayyab recited various and different ways in his poem in his attempt to search for salvation and release from torment, ending with his choice of death as one of the ways of salvation.

- The poem moves between two times, within two opposing movements: a past time that overlooks a slow and heavy weight, but it is a beautiful time because it is related to the space of the first poet represented in the homeland, where loved ones and memories, and a painful heavy present time associated with a closed closed spatial space with no familiarity with it, and only transients and disease, and suffering.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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*The Holy Quran* (631 AD).

# The Narrative Characteristics of *The Da Vinci Code*

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## Abstract

The paper attempts to reveal the narrative characteristics of *The Da Vinci Code* from the perspective of feminist narratology. Based on interpretation of embedded narrative, the author discovers that structure of the story is covertly inscribed with male domination over female character. In analysis of sequential communal voice, it is proved that Langdon collaborates with Teabing to indoctrinate Sophie with patriarchal ideology, which further demonstrates the novel is fraught with textually marked male hegemony and female marginalization.

## Keywords

## 1. Introduction

Dan Brown's multi-layered fiction starts from deconstructing the traditional interpretation of Leonardo's artistic works, develops by self-reconstructing the symbolic system of the artistic and religious world, and terminates with an indefinite, thought-provoking ending. The novel purports to expose an ancient conspiracy of Vatican and the Priory of Sion, which according to Dan Brown conceals the marriage and offspring of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. In the critical circle of *The Da Vinci Code*, most of scholars tend to label *The Da Vinci Code* a feminist text in post-modernistic literary context, regardless of various perspectives and theories adopted by them. Under such academic circumstances, the author applies the feminist narratology to analyze the narrative characteristics of *The Da Vinci Code*, to justify that female character in the text is dominated by male narrators, and is suppressed to be speech-absent and consigned to

an objective, marginal status in the narration. This thesis attempts to interpret the narrative structure and voice of the novel from feminist perspective on three levels: "story", "narrative discourse" and "narrating". The feminist interpretation of the novel is not to reduce its literary value to political value but to be of great help to further studies on this novel.

## 2. Brief Review of the Feminist Narratology

For some twenty years in history, feminism and narratology have entailed separate inquiries of antithetical tendency: the one general, mimetic and political, the other specific, semiotic and technical. Robyn Warhol illustrates some compelling reasons in *Feminisms: an Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism* as accountable for their incompatibility. At first, the technical vocabulary (neology) of narrative poetics has alienated feminist critics who maintain special political concerns. Secondly, feminists are distrustful to the conceptual universe which is organized into the neat paradigms of binary logic in the traditional theory. Then "It is readily apparent that virtually no work in the field of narratology has taken gender into account […]. This means […] the narratives which have provided the foundation for narratology have been either men's texts or texts treated as men's" (Warhol & Diane, 1991: p. 612). This indicates the cannon on which narrative theory is grounded has been relentlessly, if not intentionally, man-made. If the two domains converge on some common issues, a double-edged effect would be achieved. On the one hand, the introduction of gender factor and social properties in the interpretation of narrative discourse can make up for the deficiency of narratology in its ideological orientation. On the other hand, the application of the techniques of narrative poetics in the exploration of feminist writing will make the feminism more objective. In 1980s, Feminist narratology entered the critical arena in North America as an interdisciplinary criticism that draws on both structural narratology and feminist criticism. "Feminist narratology shares some common grounds with traditional rhetorical narratology, such as concerns for the intention of author' s creation and the rhetorical effect of narrative structure, but their distinction is quite obvious for feminist narratology emphasizes in addition the "sexual politics" of the narrative structure" (Shen et al., 2005: p. 276).

American scholar Susan S. Lancer is regarded as the initiator of feminist narratology on account of her research on the issue, and her *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* published in Princeton University Press in 1981 was the first to associate the narrative forms with feminist criticism, which inaugurated the practice of feminist narratology although the term was not formally adopted in this book then. As a formalist scholar, Lancer is deeply influenced by feminism, Marxism and speech act theory and she is the first to propose the theoretical framework of feminist narratology, besides some practical analyses. Her studies were succeeded by some academic papers on feminist narratology by Brewer, Warhol and Mieke Bal, whose concerted efforts helped to

bring feminist narratology in to bloom in 1980s. "Maria Minich Brewer is one of precursors of feminist narratology, and he criticizes the structural narratolgy for the overlook of social, historical context in its practice, in his article titled *A Loosening of Tongue: From Narrative Economy to Women Writing* published in 1984. He examines the narrativity of women writing and associates it with "sexual politics" in the analysis. In 1986, Robyn R. Warhol published *Toward a Theory of the Engaging Narrator*, in which he discusses narrative strategy from feminist perspective. In the interim from 1980s to 1990s, there appeared two important works on feminist narratology—one was *Gendered Intervention: Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel* by Robyn R. Warhol, the other was *Toward a Feminist Narratology* by Susan S. Lanser. The two American scholars made further explorations on the main objective of feminist narratology, basic standpoint and research approaches and carried out more systematic practical criticism in these books. Since 1990s, feminist narratology has flourished for its disputatious nature in a macro-political scope and concrete scientific studies in the forms and structures of literary works. The conflict and fusion between the two provide a new vision on the traditional narratology with consideration to the social and gender significance in the narrative analysis, and the employment of narratology in the feminist criticism enlarges the perspectives to the interpretation of literary works. Their interdependence and counterpoint not only enable the structural narratology to survive but also make the feminist narratology one of the most influential branches of postclassical narratology.

In *Toward a Feminist Narratology*, Lanser argues "feminism interprets a literary work from mimetic perspective, while narratology analyzes a literary text from semiotic perspective. Literature is an interwoven area between the two: it is representation of reality from mimetic perspective, and the reconstruction of language from semiotic perspective" (Lanser, 1992: p. 613). Realizing the duality of a narrative discourse, feminist should pay attention to the structural characteristics to make more scrutinous and minute analysis of the narrative by applying narrative theories. But some feminist scholars regard literary theory as the phallogocentric discourse of the patriarchy, which is to be subverted in feminist criticism, thus they are likely to resist the structural narratology. To erase the skepticism of some feminist to structural narratology, Warhol asserts, in *Gendered Intervention*, narratology does not essentially entail gender bias. His argument bases on three aspects:

> 1) Narratology aims to analyze the structural features of a literary work but not to make comment on it, which does not necessary involve hierarchical relationship typical of patriarchy; 2) Narratology is a dynamic and open system and a diversity of literary texts are to be included into its scope to enrich the theory, although the early theoretic framework is constructed on the male literary texts; 3) The construction of the 'gendered-discourse poetic' consists of two steps: narrative analysis serves as the first, and the second step is to associate narratology with historical context to examine

the relationship between the characteristics of literary works, and the gender concept in historical context (Warhol, 1989: pp. 14-16).

The often-asserted goal of feminist criticism has been to reveal, criticize and subvert the "patriarchal discourse". In terms of feminism, discourse designates that the language as semiotic system, writing techniques, thinking system, philosophical system and symbolic system of literature, and discourse represents an implicit mechanism of power-relationship, which has received a great deal of attention by feminists. Dale Spender's *Man Made Language* (1980), as the title suggests, considers that "women have been fundamentally oppressed by male-dominated language. If we accept Foucault's argument that what is 'true' depends on who controls discourse, then it is apparent that men's domination of discourse has trapped women inside a male 'truth'" (Selden et al., 2004: p. 128). From this point of view some feminists strive to contest men's control of discourse and some advocate women writers to adopt the "stronger" discourse of men if they wish to achieve social equality with them. In narrative poetics, discourse represents the technique level: the written words or the means by which the content is communicated as discussed in the introduction of this thesis. There lie obvious differences between feminism and feminist narratology in terms of the subject matters considering the analysis of the three-level of a narrative: story, narrative discourse, and narrating. Feminism tends to focus on the story level to reveal the distortion of female characters, the expression of female experience, female consciousness, position, identity, and the reconstruction of female subjectivity in the process of reading. "But on the story level feminist narratology mainly concerns the structural features and relationship: 1) the sexual discrimination embodied in the structure of men's literary works; 2) the differences in structures between stories written by men and those by women" (Shen et al., 2005: pp. 284-285). Contrary to feminism, the focus of feminist narratology mainly dwells on narrative and narrating level for which feminist narrative poetics bridges the polemic feminism with the systematic and scientific studies of narrative poetics, and makes the two mutually reinforced.

## 3. The Narrative Structure of *The Da Vinci Code*

*The Da Vinci Code* follows the traditional principles of thriller fiction by starting with a ruthless murder and developing with suspense through the detective process. The narrative mode of classical detective fiction provides *The Da Vinci Code* with sophisticated clues and breathtaking suspense emerging in the process of deciphering the mysterious, symbolic codes in the paintings of Leonardo and in the anagrams of Sauniere. The renowned curator Jacques Sauniere is interrogated by an albino monk for the whereabouts of something mysterious his brethren possess. Sauniere lies to the albino about the hiding place of the object that his brethren guard, only to be shot on the chest and informed of the death of the other guardians of his brotherhood. Deceived by Sauniere, the albi-

no monk is set on his quest of the object that Sauniere's brethren try to protect, as he confirms the whereabouts given by the four guardians refers to the identical place. In the fifteen minutes before his drawn-out death, Sauniere tries to pass on the secret to finish the mission with which his brethren have been entrusted for centuries. He spends the last minutes of his life arranging his own body in strange fashion: stripping off every shred of clothing, arms and legs sprawling outward like Da Vinci's The Vitruvian Man surrounded by a large circle, drawing with his own blood a five-pointed star, the pentacle centered on his navel, and writing a bizarre message with series of numbers and three lines of words. The last line of the message goes like this: "P.S. Find Robert Langdon" (Brown, 2003: p. 74). It is the last sentence on the parquet floor of the Louvre's Grand Gallery that involves Sophie Neveu and Robert Langdon into the inquiry of the symbolic world and the Holy Grail quest.

The summary made in the preceding paragraph is the first-degree narrative because other narratives are embedded in it and it serves as the primary structure of the story. In *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, "Gerard Genette has illustrated the basic structure of embedded narratives with the help of a naive drawing using stick-figure narrators and speech-bubble narratives" (Genette, 1988: p. 85). In Figure 1 below, first-degree narrative A contains a second-degree narrative B.

If the underlying structure of the novel is generalized in a sentence, it should be "Jacques Sauniere wants Sophie Neveu to reveal the secret". Some critics recommend that the generalization of the first-degree narrative be "Jacques Sauniere hands down a secret to Sophie Neveu". The former designates that the secret is still left to be interpreted and revealed by Sophie, while the latter means the secret is crystal clear to her. If the primary structure of the story is generalized with the second sentence, it is needless for Dan Brown to continue the story any longer concerning the purported theme of *The Da Vinci Code*. Thus in *The Da Vinci Code*, the first-degree narrative A in Figure 1 is "Jacques Sauniere wants Sophie Neveu to reveal the secret", and the second-degree narrative B should be "revealing the secret" or the "Holy Grail quest".

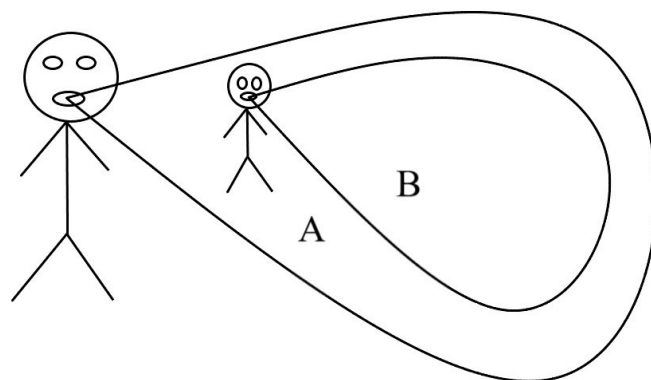The actantial grammar with its discussion on the semantics of event and role



**Figure 1.** Structure of embedded narrative.

relationships in sentence and the examination of textual unfolding of action as a pattern of practical reasoning provides a suitable springboard from which to launch an analytical overview of the narrative structure. "Algirdas J. Greimas points out that actants and predicates are two big classes to make up the 'semantic syntax', and they combine with each other to form the semantic kernel or nucleus of a textual micro-universe" (Budniakiewicz, 1992: p. 75). The actantial grammar is an extrapolation of the syntactical structure which cast subject, verb, and object as roles in a kind of dramatic representation. "A semantic micro-universe can only become or be defined as a meaningful whole insofar as the underlying structure can rise into view as 'a simple spectacle', as an actantial structure" (ibid 76). "An actant is a class of actors whose members have an identical relation to the aspect of telos (teleology of the fabula) which constitutes the principle of the fabula (Russian formalist term for story), and the shared relation is called the function" (Bal, 1985: p. 26). The most important relationship is between the actor who follows an aim and that aim itself, which may be compared to that between subject and direct object in a sentence. The subject-actant aspires towards a goal or an object-actant, and the intention of the subject is in itself not sufficient to reach the object, so there are always positive powers to facilitate the achievement of the aim or negative powers to block it. The power in many cases not a person but an abstraction: e.g. society, fate, time, human trait, cleverness, etc. "In principle the subject and the power predominate more, or are more active in a grammatical sense, than object and the receiver, because they are the agent, or the (grammatical) subject, either of the function of intention/ evasion or of giving/receiving" (ibid 28).

In the first-degree narrative of *The Da Vinci Code* as generalized in the preceding paragraph, the subject actant is Jacques Sauniere who aspires to bring about Sophie Neveu's revealing of the secret. And the object actant is a matter or a state Jacques Sauniere aspires to reach—Sophie Neveu's revelation of the secret. In this sense, the sender is Jacques Sauniere, and the receiver is Sophie Neveu, and the primary structure of *The Da Vinci Code* is characterized as male characters' domination over female character. The male characters are depicted central, active, while the female character marginal, passive.

The positive power represented by Jacques Sauniere's intricate, symbolic clues can facilitate Sophie's achievement and govern the whole process of the "Holy Grail quest". The negative power represented by the albino monk's intervention tries every means to prevent Sophie's "Holy Grail quest". If these power blocks are considered in the "sexual politics" of the narrative structure, Sophie is further marginalized to take an objective position in the primary structure. The positive power represented by the subject actant—Sauniere remains in the background to govern and guide the Holy Guest throughout the whole story.

A second-degree narrative is a narrative that is embedded in the first-degree narrative. In *The Da Vinci Code*, "Sophie Neveu's striving to reveal the secret"

serves as one half of the second-degree narrative while the albino monk's intervention occupies the other. As a result, the second-degree narrative is made up of a parallel narrative structure. The two parallel narratives of the second-degree narrative are constructed in the story consecutively. The same argument is held by Fu Hui on the construction of the second-degree narrative: Sophie's Holy Grail quest is the main narrative clue to promote the diachronic development of the story and the albino monk's intervention is the subordinate to enrich the synchronic expansion of the story. In the second-degree narrative Sophie's role changes from object actant into subject actant for she causes or undergoes functional events to some extent in the second-degree narrative. The last line of Sauniere's message: "P. S. Find Robert Langdon" entails that Robert Langdon is to enter the stage as a helper to Sophie in their quest of the Holy Grail in the second-degree narrative. It is the presence of helpers and opponents that makes a story suspenseful and readable. In the parallel narrative, the object both the protagonists and the antagonists endeavor to get is the truth of the Holy Grail, therefore it is important to understand the positional meaning of the object as an intersection of relationship lying on two relational axes (see Figure 2). The achievement of the object in the story indicates the terminal of the main dramatic movement of the story, the Holy Grail quest and the peak of the narrative. The object is the site of conflict and competition between protagonist and antagonist, which may serve as one instrument for generating the global unity of the story.

> The actantial model is a "staggered" system of relations that telescopes the passage of all actantial situations into one spatial summation. Within this passage two situations, in particular, stand out as representing the most important meanings of the model and they both start from the decisive culminating point, one looking backward to the initial situation and the other forward to the final situation (Budniakiewicz, 1992: p. 217).

The construction of the second-degree narrative of *The Da Vinci Code* follows the principle of the actantial model. The true nature or the whereabouts of the Holy Grail takes an object actant position, an object of conflict and competition between protagonist and antagonist. Urged by the murder of Louvre curator, the protagonists Sophie and Langdon with the ambiguous Leigh Teabing set out to reveal the truth of the Holy Grail; contrary to them the albino monk Silas, and bishop Aringarosa ordered by the Teacher try every means to conceal the truth of the Holy Grail. The parallel structure is constructed in such a way as The Priory of Sion vs. The Vatican, and Good vs. evil. In *Narratologies* edited by David Herman, the first article entitled "Not (Yet) Knowing: Epistemological Effects of
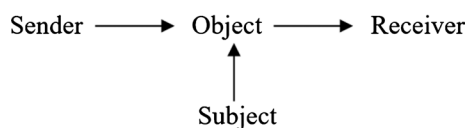


**Figure 2.** Syntactic & semantic relations.

Deferred and Suppressed Information in Narrative" is written by Emma Kafalenos to analyze the influence of deferred and suppressed information in narrative discourse on the interpretation of the story. Without considering readers and contexts, Kafalenos formulates the following narrative paradigm to describe the common structural features of narratives:

The Initial Equilibrium [not a function]

A  (or a) The Destructive Event (or Reevaluation on Certain Circumstance);

B  Somebody Summoned to Solve A;

C  C Actant Determined to Solve A;

C'  C The Primary Action Taken by C Actant to Solve A;

D  C Actant Being Tested;

E  C Actant's Responding to the Test;

F  C Actant's Getting Authorized;

G  C Actant Getting to Special Spatio-temporal Position for H;

H  The Major Action Taken by C Actant to Solve A;

I  (or Negation of I) H's Success or Failure;

K  Final Equilibrium (David, 1999: pp. 33-65).

In this narrative paradigm, Kafalenos adopts some concepts from other narrative grammars such as "actant" of Greimas, "overall development of a narrative" of T. Todorov, and "functions model" of Vladimir Propp. By applying Kafalenos narrative paradigm to analyze the second-degree narrative in *The Da Vinci Code*, the main narrative clue—Sophie and Langdon's Holy Grail quest comes under scrutiny in the follow paragraph to reveal the relative narrative lengths and status of the characters:

The Initial Equilibrium [not a function]:

The reconciliation between the Priory of Sion and Vatican

A  (or a) The Destructive Event: The mysterious murder of Jacques Sauniere, the Grand Master of the Priory of Sion, who leaves a maze of cryptograms to be decoded.

B  Sophie and Langdon are summoned to solve A in a bizarre set of circumstances.

C  C Actant (represented by Sophie and Langdon) Determined to Solve A: They are involved into deciphering the enigma left behind by Sauniere.

C'  C The Primary Action Taken by C Actant to Solve A:

$$\text{C Actant}\begin{cases}\text{Sophie's deciphering of the third anagram}:\\\text{Madonna of the Rocks}\\\text{Langdon's deciphering of the 1st \& 2nd anagrams}:\\\text{Leonardo da Vinci and The Mona Lisa}\end{cases}$$

—obtaining the key to a deposit box in a Swiss bank.

D  C Actant Being Tested: C actant is challenged to open the deposit box transferred to them by Sauniere.

E  C Actant's Responding to the Test: They figure out Fibonacci are the account numbers and extricate the "cryptex" or the "keystone" from the

bank.

F   C Actant's Getting Authorized:

1) Mutual recognition of each other's status (receivers of the mission entrusted by Sauniere);

2) Realizing their being on a Holy Grail quest (chapter 51).

G   C Actant Getting to Special Spatio-temporal Position for H:

1) Sophie & Langdon get to Chateau Villette to find Leigh Teabing, with the help of whom they crack the first code—SOFIA of the "cryptex".

2) C Actant (represented by Sophie, Langdon and Teabing) flies to Great Britain the next morning.

H   The Major Action Taken by C Actant to Solve A:

C Actant (represented by Langdon only) figures out the final code—APPLIE of the "cryptex".

I   (or Negation of I) H's Success or Failure: Langdon's epiphany leads him to the final resting-place of Mary Magdalene (Langdon succeeds in locating the whereabouts of the Holy Grail).

K   Final Equilibrium: The true nature of the Holy Grail and its final whereabouts remain hidden to the public.

In the narrative paradigm above, the components of C Actant undergo changes during the overall development of the story. By analyzing the narrative lengths of each component, readers will realize Langdon goes further in the Holy Grail quest than the other characters—Sophie, Teabing etc. Starting from the same critical point, Sophie gradually lags behind Langdon and totally lost in the end of revealing the whereabouts of the Holy Grail. This kind of arrangement of the narrative indicates that female character is marginalized to obscurity in the narrative. In the process of decoding the intricate maze of cryptograms, Langdon outwits Sophie; therefore the male character in *The Da Vinci Code* is superior to the female character. The structure designed by Dan Brown relegates the female to a subordinate and inferior status compared with the males'.

The embedded narrative structure of *The Da Vinci Code* can be generalized to great accuracy by the following "Chinese-boxes models":

The "Chinese-boxes models" indicates both the relative lengths of the various narratives as well as their potentially "open" status. In Figure 3, A is the first-degree narrative, and B embedded in A is the second-degree narrative. B is constructed on a parallel narrative structure: B2 represents albino monk's intervention, and B1 represents Sophie & Langdon's Holy Grail quest. Furthermore, y
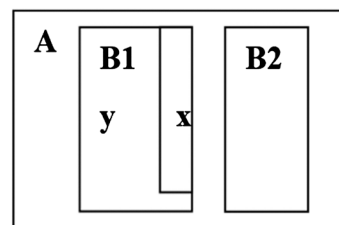


**Figure 3.** Chinese-boxes models.

with a larger area indicates narrative directed to Langdon, but Sophie accounts for much smaller area labeled with x. From the analysis above, it is safe to say that the structure of the story in *The Da Vinci Code* is covertly inscribed with sexual discrimination and male domination over the female character. The structural arrangement is implicitly influenced by the patriarchal ideology of the male author.

## 4. The Narrative Voice in *The Da Vinci Code*

"Voice" has been a heated topic in the feminist narratology but it has been ignored in conventional narrative poetics. As a narratological term, "voice" attends to the specific forms of textual practice and avoids the essentializing tendency of its more casual feminist usage. As a political term, "voice" rescues textual study from formalist isolation that often treats literary events as if they were inconsequential to human history. The concept of "voice" in feminist narratology is adopted from classic narratology for its technical categorization of narrative voices. This concept is applied in feminist narratology to reveal its social and political indication by combining the technical studies of classic narratology with the political and ideological concerns of feminism. Feminist narratology is committed to discovering the historical and contextual reasons for the author's choice of specific narrative voice in literature. In feminist narratology, voice focuses on examining the intertwined relation between social status and textual structure, and serves as the chief technique to express ideological orientation. Structuralists consider the relation among narrator, narratee, and narrative object only structural, but "Lanser regards it as the site of crisis, contradiction, or challenge that is manifested in and sometimes resolved through ideologically charged technical practice" (Lanser, 1992: p. 7). For feminists, the choice of an appropriate narrator, who takes control of the right of "voicing", has become the signifier of achievement of women's social status and power in the hierarchical power system. Lanser argues, "Despite compelling interrogations of 'voice' as a humanist fiction, for the collectively and personally silenced the term has become a trope of identity and power: as Luce Irigaray suggests, to find a voice (voix) is to find a way (voie)" (Lanser, 1992: p. 3).

Lanser's originality on the subject of narrative voice is manifested in her distinction of three molds of narrative voice: authorial, personal and communal voices in *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (1992). In this book, Lanser explores certain configurations of textual voice in fictions by women of Britain, France and United States, writing from the mid-eighteenth century to mid-twentieth, and she defines that "female voice—a term used here simply to designate the narrator's grammatical gender—is a site of ideological tension made visible in textual practices" (Lanser, 1992: p. 6).

In Lanser's distinction, "authorial voice" identifies the narrative situations that are extradiegetic, public, and potentially self-referential, and the authorial mode is directed to a narratee who is analogous to a reading audience; "per-

sonal voice" refers to narrators (autodiegetic or extra-homodiegetic) who are self-consciously telling their own histories; "communal voice", a category of underdeveloped possibilities that has not even been named in contemporary narratology, means a spectrum of practices that articulate either a collective voice or a collective of voices that share narrative authority (Lanser, 1992: pp. 15-21).

To differentiate the authority of the narrators and narrating characters, Lanser's distinction is to be applied in the successive parts. Dan Brown relates *The Da Vinci Code* from omniscient points of view and he adopts a "public voice" that suggests the narration directed toward a narratee outside the fiction. The omniscient narrator is not present as a character in the story, and even outside the fiction; thus the narrator of *The Da Vinci Code* is an extradiegetic narrator. In the first-degree narrative of the novel, readers cannot discover the textual distinction between the author and a public, heterodiegetic narrator; so it is safe for readers to equate the narrator with the author, because "Lanser argues if the distinction between the (implied) author and a public, heterodiegetic narrator is not textually marked, readers are invited to equate the narrator with the author and the narratee with themselves (or their historical equivalences)" (Lanser, 1992: p. 16). The omniscient narrator, the author Dan Brown claims the "authorial voice" in the first-degree narrative. The second-degree narrative is also unfolded from omniscient points of view, but the voice is shared among diverse narrating characters. The omniscient narrator attends to the synchronic and diachronic development of the whole story, while the narrating characters focus on the diachronic development of the Holy Grail quest. "Moreover, since authorial narrators exist outside narrative time (indeed, outside fiction) and are not 'humanized' by events, they conventionally carry an authority superior to that conferred on characters, even on narrating characters" (Lanser, 1992: p. 16). As a result, the male author, Dan Brown as an omniscient narrator in superior to those narrating characters in the novel. The salient narrative feature of the parallel narratives in the embedded narratives is the alternation of the role of narrator and narratee among protagonists in the process of searching for the truth of the Holy Grail. Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon serves as the initial narrating character for he is the first among the protagonists to emerge on the scene of the murder. Langdon is a heterodiegetic narrator in that he is not present as a character in the story he narrates. Langdon takes a private voice and directs his narration toward the narratees who are fictional characters. The first narratee of Langdon as a heterodiegetic narrator is Captain Bezu Fache, to whom Langdon explains the symbolic implication of Pentacle in the pagan religion, the harmony between male and female indicated by The Vitruvian Man exhibited by Sauniere. Langdon's symbolic interpretation becomes more and more complicated as the narrative develops, so that Sophie as a more adequate narratee emerges in the narrative. Although Sophie is a cryptologist, she is much less sophisticated compared with Langdon in terms of the interpretation of religious symbols. From Lang-

don's narration, Sophie acquires the knowledge about the "sacred feminine", AMON L'ISA symbolizing union between male and female, Vatican's conspiracy in early Christianity, Holy Grail as Sangreal, Knight Templar, and the Priory of Sion. Robert Langdon's narration actualizes the indoctrination to Sophie with the worship of the "sacred feminine" and on the symbolism of the Holy Grail, but his narrating declines after he and Sophie manage to extricate the "cryptex" from the Depository Bank of Zurich. Incapable of deciphering the first code to the cryptex, they seek help from Leigh Teabing. Teabing succeeds Langdon's role of heterodiegetic narrator to Sophie. If Langdon acquaints Sophie with the feminine symbolic indication of the Holy Grail, Teabing is the terminal narrating character who persuades Sophie to accept the connection between The Last Supper and Mary Magdalene, Council of Nicaea and Jesus' divinity, royal bloodline (Sang Real) and the Holy Grail, the womb and the holy vessel (the chalice), Mary Magdalene and the sacred feminine, as well as the subversive interpretation of some Christian documents. In the second-degree narrative Langdon collaborates with Teabing to indoctrinate Sophie besides readers to accept the patriarchal ideology of the male-centered community. The ideology coincides with the three major premises on which *The Da Vinci Code* is constructed.

In communal narration, narrative authority is invested in a definable community and textually inscribed either through multiple, mutually authorizing voice or through the voice of a single individual who is manifestly authorized by a community. According to Lanser's further distinction, "a singular form in which one narrator speaks for a collective, a simultaneous form in which a plural 'we' narrates, and a sequential form in which individual members of a group narrate in turn" (Lanser, 1992: p. 21). Based on Lanser's distinction, readers can discern that Langdon is allied with Teabing to constitute a sequential communal voice in the embedded narrative, which is quite contrary to Lancer's observation, for she argues "unlike authorial and personal voice, the communal mode seems to be primarily a phenomenon of marginal or suppressed community; I have not observed it in fiction by white, ruling-class men" (ibid 21). The sequential communal voice is most obviously embodied in Chapter 56 of the novel:

> Sophie stared at Teabing a long moment and then turned to Langdon. "The Holy Grail is a person?" […] Langdon could tell they had already lost her. […] Teabing apparently had a similar thought. "Robert, perhaps this is the moment for the symbologist to clarify?" He went to a nearby end table, found a piece of paper, and laid it in front of Langdon. […] "I should add," Teabing chimed, "that this concept of woman as life-bringer was the foundation of ancient religion." (Brown, 2003: pp. 257-259).

Sophie's narration is characterized by flashback and recalling of her former personal experience with her grandfather so she is an extra-homodiegetic narrator. Her narrative is trivial, tentative, hesitant and emotional, which covers a diversity of life details: Using Fibonacci numbers, playing Tarot cards for fun, the Divine Proportion, PHI, cryptex, P.S. etc. Sophie adopts a personal voice to tell

self-consciously her own stories, but some of her recollection of the past experience is interior monologue which should be excluded in the exploration of personal voice based on Lanser's theory, such as recalling her experience of Hieros Gamos in Chapter 32. The "authorial voice" (re)produces the structural and functional situation of authorship. The authorial narrator claims broad powers of knowledge and judgment, while a personal narrator claims only the validity of one person's right to interpret her experience. Unlike authorial and personal voice, whose singularity corresponds to that of conventional authorship, communal voice arrogates to an individual author the self-reinforcing pretense of multiplicity. In *The Da Vinci Code*, the male narrators are privileged to take structurally superior position and to constitute narrating community, while female character is limited to the narrow scope of her life experience. Based on the analysis of narrative voice, the novel is characterized as textually marked men's hegemony over women. Female character's voice is suppressed under the pervasive male voices. If the controlling of the right of "voicing" signifies the achievement of women's social status and power in the hierarchical system, women in *The Da Vinci Code* are apparently lower, weaker than man in these respects.

## 5. Conclusion

*The Da Vinci Code* is a story of the Holy Grail quest, or according to Dan Brown, a story to rediscover the "sacred feminine" to revive the "Goddess Worship" and to subvert the traditional Christian culture. On account of the acclaimed theme of the story, some critics take it for granted that the novel is a feminist text that strives to rediscover the identity of the female. To erase the ambiguity concerning the story that purports to do justice to women, the author of this thesis applies feminist narratology to examining the structure of the narrative and the voice of female character in the novel. The novel is interpreted not only on its political orientations but also on the narrative structure in which the political concerns are encoded. To the disappointment of those credulous critics, the female marginalization and patriarchal domination are pervasively embodied in the structure of the story designed by the male author. The patriarchal domination deprives female character of the rights of "voicing" in the narrative, thus woman in the novel is speech-absent and obscure. The male characters occupy the subjective position and the female character is forced to take an objective position. Feminist literary critics regard literary discourse as the site of power struggle; therefore woman in *The Da Vinci Code* loses the fight against the oppression of the patriarchy because her voice is suppressed by the male characters in the process of narrating. Outside the fiction the male author claims the authorial voice, and inside it the male narrating characters constitute a sequential communal voice. The female voice is suppressed under the pervasive male's hegemony over the narrative voice. Sophie is taught, in the process of being indoctrinated, to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology and so she is conditioned to derogate her own sex and to cooperate in her own subordination.

Three major premises serve as the foundation to the construction of the novel: 1) The worship of sacred feminine precedes the monotheism of early Christianity. 2) The Vatican has conspired to conceal the marriage between Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. 3) The Holy Grail symbolizes the seeded womb of Mary Magdalene, who carries the divine ancestral bloodline of Jesus Christ. The novel purports to rediscover the "sacred feminine" to revive the "Goddess Worship" and to subvert the traditional Christian culture. But the patriarchal domination represented by the religious organization, the police and powerful men historical and present, makes it inconceivable for a male author to fulfill the prescribed theme of the novel. It is strongly recommended that further studies of *The Da Vinci Code* should be carried out from the perspective of deconstructionism to evoke an insightful interpretation of the multilayered story.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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# Power Relations, Contestation and Identity Construction in Hausa Folklore from Niger Republic: A Case Study of Two Tales*

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## Abstract

In this paper, I focus on the attitudes of S*arki* (chief or king), *Malamai* (Islamic leaders or elite) and *Azne* (non-Muslim or pagan) as well as on their motivations for actions and on how they end up constructing identities in the process. For the sake of methodology, I will begin with summaries of the two tales to help readers not familiar with them; then I will follow the theme of power relations exploring the attitudes of the three characters through their interactions in the light of historical facts. The exploration will serve as a background for the contestation of the legitimacy of the political authority of the Sarki by Malamai and of Sarki's claim on the land by *Azne*. The background will also help better understand the ideological, social and cultural implications of the characters' actions, mostly the contestation which adds the identity dimension to their relations and sheds light on some of the social and cultural crises facing the Hausaland today. Then the process of identity creation will be the last section before the conclusion followed by a short biography of the storyteller. The tale *Azne* is the main primary source on which I will base my interpretative analysis, although some references will be made to some tales collected by (Stephens, 1981) that illustrate contests between a representative of the Malamai and one of the royal family on the one hand and another tale dealing with power relation and contestation that involves a Sarki and an *Azne* from Ciibaw's collection under study. The second tale is titled *Babu sarki sai Allah* (There is no king but Allah). The limitation to few primary sources will somehow make any conclusions provisional and it also suggests further research for a more comprehensive approach to the

topic in particular and to the work of Albarka Ciibaw who is yet to receive adequate critical attention from scholars on Hausa oral literature.

## Keywords

## 1. Summaries of the Two Tales

Tale 1: *AZNE*

The tale begins with an argument involving *Sarki* (the chief), *Malamai* (the Islamic religious clerks or leaders) and *Azne* (the non-Muslim or pagan). Sarki and Malamai claim legitimate right over the land and its people while Azne thinks they only have political power on the people but not on the land which he considers as his rightful legacy from his ancestors. Days after the discussion, Sarki sends his old mother into the village with a bull intended for anyone who is courageous and who has enough faith in Allah to accept to be buried alive with his mother when she dies. The old woman first meets the Malamai who hasten to grab the bull as they think it was some alms from her son to them. But when they learn about the conditions attached to the bull, they quickly tell the old woman to continue with her quest. No one dares accept to take the bull except *Azne* against the wishes of his family and friends who are convinced that he will be buried alive with the corpse of the mother of the chief. When *Azne* kills the bull, he secretly takes some entrails to *Gaba* (an eagle-like bird) into *dagi* (bush) and asks her for help on the day the old woman dies. Gaba accepts the offer and promises to help him. So, on the D-Day, Gaba stays very high in the sky, just above the cemetery to grant him anything he asks for from Allah. On that day, before the people place the dead mother's body on top of Azne in the tomb, he asks for permission to say his last wish. He is granted the permission after some debate. He then calls Allah (Gaba) and asks Him not to provide the land with rain for seven years to be repeated three times, which makes twenty-one years. Allah (Gaba) accepts. The panic-stricken assembly is divided between those who think they have to inform the chief and the others who think they should burry the woman in spite of Azne's threat. The first group wins and they send a delegation to inform the chief. Several delegations will have to come later to the cemetery to verify the previous information. Finally, the chief becomes impatient and decides to go and see for himself. Upon arrival to the cemetery, he angrily orders his mother to be buried. But his subjects refuse and demand that he accepts to hear the conversation between Azne and Allah. After the conversation, the chief orders Azne to come out of the tomb and let his mother be buried alone. Azne poses some conditions before coming out: that even after his death, the chief's children should not ask Azne's children to pay back the bull and that he (Azne) is the rightful owner of the land not sarki, the

chief. The latter accepts Azne's conditions. The tale concludes with an explanation of the tradition by which Sarki, who is Muslim, provides a bull for the pagan ritual ceremony of *budin dagi*[1] still being held every year at the village of Massalata in the local government of Konni, in Tahoua state.

Tale 2: *BABU SARKI SAY ALLAH*

This tale is about Azne and Sarki. Although a member of the chief's court, Azne refuses to greet Sarki in the usual "*ranka ya dade*". Instead, he says "*babu Sarki say Allah*" (There is no king but Allah). This attitude irritates the village chief who considers it as a disrespect of his personality and authority. To punish Azne, Sarki bribes Azne's wife with two bulls after he has given her husband a ring to keep safe for him. Then he asks Azne's wife to steal the ring and return it to him. Once he has the ring, Sarki throws it in a river where a fish swallows it. The same day Azne goes to the river and buys some fish, including the one that swallowed the ring. While preparing the fish, Azne discovers the ring which he left in a secret place in his home. He changes the hiding place and keeps everything to himself. Four years later, Sarki asks Azne to return his ring but Azne tells him that he has lost it. After threats from sarki, Azne presents the ring to him. Surprised, Sarki tells Azne and the court about what he did to trap Azne and the latter tells in turn how he got back the ring. Sarki becomes convinced that Azne is right: "there is no king but Allah" and offers apologies and compensatory gifts to Azne. It is also important to note here that the expression "*babu Sarki say Allah*" is a translation into Hausa of the Arabic "*la-illahu-il-Allahu*" which is a testimony of the uniqueness of Allah and one of the five pillars of Islam. Finally, the chief authorizes Azne to continue saying "there is no king but Allah" anywhere he wants.

## 2. Introduction

After examination of some Hausa tales (Furniss, 1996: p. 65) concludes that, in addition to the didactic and entertainment functions, tales can be an arena of contestation, a space in which human interactions reflect power relations; specifically, between *talakawa* "ordinary people" and *sarakuna* "the ruling class". "This space for the expression of anger", as (Rufa'i in Furniss, 1996: pp. 65-66) contends, "is perhaps what prevents the ordinary people from rising up in revolt that could damage both themselves and others. In my view, this space, this arena is rather like Speakers' Corner in London's Hyde Park where people can come

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[1]*Budin daji* or "opening of the bush" is a yearly pre-jihad ritual ceremony that is still held, with the participation of local and sometimes national political authorities, to prepare the hunting season. It takes place in the fourth month of the (now) Muslim calendar when famous diviners (*sarakin tsafi*) are gathered to appease the gods of the ancestors for a good hunting season and to make predictions for the year to come. The usual place for the ceremony is the village of Massalata, in the local government of Konni in the region of Tahoua. Delegations come from Niger and Nigeria (mostly from Kano, Katsina, Zaria and Sokoto). The French anthropologist, H. Raulin (1962), who was a participant observer of the ceremony in 1961 and 1962, comments that although budin dagi is a pagan agrarian ritual, it is also to some extent an allegiance to the political power of the Sokoto Emirate. Raulin has given some explanation to this apparent contradiction to which I will come back later in the paper.

and say whatever they like in their attacks upon those in power and then go back home to sleep in peace". Given the fact that Fulani have become the new rulers after the Jihad, Rufa'i's argument can be indicative of the type of joking relationships which, according to (Bichi, 1983/1985; Furniss, 1996) and Rufa'i quoted by (Furniss, 1996), exist between the Hausa and the Nomadic Fulani in general.

But (Furniss, 1996: p. 66) also cautions that Rufa'i's argument presenting tales as "safety valves in the maintenance of the status quo" needs more case studies of contexts in which political, religious, as well as social and cultural tensions are solved by involving the manifestation of symbolic representations such as the ones of the Sarki, the Malamai and the Azne in the current two tales under study. Similarly, the notion of tales as safety valves in helping the talakawa to vent their frustrations at the Nomadic Fulani in general and the rulers in particular, without fear of punishment, is reinforced by the joking relationships between the former and the latter. Such joking relationships offer indeed interesting perspectives from which we can look at Azne's apparently rebellious relations with Sarki and Malamai as representatives of the Fulani ruling dynasty in Sokoto. In fact, in addition to representing the ruling class, the Sarki as well as the Malamai represent the new triumphant religion of Islam which, following the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio, has turned the Hausa land into a theocracy. This political change is reflected not only in tales but also in Hausa oral poetry. Thus, commenting on some praise songs about the ruling class in the post jihad Hausa land, (Bello, 1976: pp. 24-25) observes that

> The leaders, especially the current ones and their immediate predecessors, came into power because of Jihad. As a consequence, since the Jihad (1804-1808) in Hausa land the enthronements of community leaders have depended on the Caliph in Sokoto. In other words, any newly enthroned leader is the representative of the Caliph and the leader of the Muslims of the area in question. This is why those rulers have been called Islamic rulers. (…) The Fulani community leaders who fought the Jihad took power from Hausa rulers in order to impose Islam[2].

It is clear from the above quote that there is no need for new rulers to come from traditionally well-established ruling families. This is because the most important criteria to become a ruler are to be a Muslim, to have belonged to the class of those who fought for the Jihad and to show allegiance to the Caliph of Sokoto and his ruling dynasty[3]. These criteria are the reason why the new rulers

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[2]Sarakuna, musamman dai na yanzu da kuma na nan baya kadan ba da dadewa ba asalin shigansu gidan sarauta addini ne. Watau abin nufi a nan shi ne, kowa ya sani tun bayan kare jihadi wanda aka yi kan jaddada addini a karar Hausa daga 1804-1808, nadin sarauta ya koma hannun Sarkin Musulmi a Sakkwato. Watau duk wanda aka nada ya zama wakilin Sarkin Musulmi a kasar ikonsa, kuma shi ne shugaban addinin wurin. Don haka ne ma ake kiransu sarakunan addini. (…) Sarakunan Fulani sun yi jihadi sun karbi mulki daga hannun na Habe don su gyara addini ne… (pp. 24-25).

[3]Y. Urvoy qtd by Raulin (p. 256, note 1) reports, for example, that Konni at the time did not depend directly on Sokoto but on one of Usman Dan Fodio's sons called Sarkin Maky who was living in Binji, northwest of Sokoto.

have been called "sarakunan addini" (Islamic rulers). But their failure to rule by Shari'a principles in accordance with the theocratic ideals quickly led to problems like corruption, nepotism, tribalism and racism as pointed out by (Nwabara, 1963); (Hiskett, 1989); (Mahaman, 2006); (Mahamane and Mahaman, 2006) and (Bunza, 2009) among others.

In fact, Bunza has made critical observations about the political changes that came after the Jihad. Many of the problems he pointed out are the same social ills that paved the way for the Jihad and its success in the Hausa land. As he reports,

> The political situation started to change between the 18th and 19th centuries. The Jihad led by Sheikh Usman Danfodio changed the political organization in Hausa land. Since the victory of the Jihad leaders, they have become the new rulers and Islam the new dominant religion. First the rulers attempted to rule by Islamic principles, but soon they became lured into nepotism and injustice against the teachings of Islam. This led to hypocritical practices such as tribalism. It was at the peak of such nepotism, of pride in one's origins and social ranks, of deception and of tribalism that colonization started (2009: pp. 95-96)[4].

This quotation provides a good background against which we can explore the possible tensions between the first two protagonists and Azne in our tale. These tensions are mostly cultural, political and religious. An indication of religious tension is inherent in the term *Habe* by which the Fulani in general call the Hausa people. In fact, according to (Nwabara 1963: p. 231) and (Baumgardt[5], 2011: p. 232) the term *H*abe means pagan and as such he was the target of the Holy war or Jihad. Traces of religious tensions in the Jihad are found in some praise songs by singers like Narambada[6] who sang for Sarkin Gobir Ahmadu Na Issa (Bunza, 2009). The titles of two of his songs are revealing: "*Toya matsafa*" (2009: p. 29) ["He who burns the pagan shrines"] and "*Mai shirin faɗa da arna*" (2009: p. 29) ["He who is getting ready to fight the pagans"]. In the second song, the singer praises the previous rulers who fought the pagans before Sarkin Gobir Ahmadu in order to encourage him to fight them as his predecessors did.

Storytellers are also important witnesses of these changes and their narratives

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[4]"Daga karni na goma sha takwas zuwa karni na goma sha tara abubuwa suka fara sauyawa. Yunkurin jaddada addinin musulunci da mujaddadi Shehu Usman Danfodio ya jagoranta ya sauya tsarin siyasar Hausa. Da aka ci nasarar jihadi musulunci ya ci kasar Hausa sarauta ta koma hannun wadanda suka jagoranci jihadi. Da farko abin ya so ya bi tsari irin na Musulunci da baya abin ya sauya son zuciya ya shiga ciki aka bi tsarin gadon-na-gaje-ka ba tare da bin cancanta ta shari'a ba. Wannan shi ya rayar da wani sabon munafunci a zukatan wasu masu mulki da kabilun da suka fito daga ciki na kabilanci ba tare da kula da musulunci ba. (…) Ana cikin wannan hali na bugun gaba da asali da gado da yaudara da kabilanci Bature ya bayyana" (pp. 95-96).

[5]Baumgardt is specialist of Fulani oral literature from Adamaawa, a region of northern Cameroun that was part of the Sokoto Caliphate (p. 231; notes 4 and 5).

[6]Aliyu Muhammadu Bunza wrote a trail blazing critical work on this famous praise singer. The book is titled: *Narambada*. Lagos: Ibrash Islamic Publications Centre Ltd., 2009. To my knowledge, this is the most complete critical work in Hausa language devoted to this well-known singer, apart from B.A, MA theses and Ph.D. dissertations.

are the result of a mediation between historical events and their imagination, between reality and fantasy. In the same line of thought, (Yahaya; 1972: p. 37) has aptly observed that "Stories are fantasies shaped out of realities". Franz Boas quoted by (Bichi, 1979: p. 100) also notes that "In the tales of a people, those incidents of everyday life that are of importance to them will appear either incidentally or as the basis of a plot. Most of the references to the mode of life of the people will be an accurate reflection of their habits".

In our tale, these incidents are in fact the basis of the plot of the story through the mediation of the three major stock characters of Sarki, Malami (pl. Malamai) and Azne. Of course, there are other characters, mostly the Talakawa or ordinary people. But by introducing the three characters in a debate at the very beginning of the tale, the storyteller foregrounds their importance in the narrative. So as the story unfolds, we learn more about each of them in their relations one to the other, especially between Sarki and Azne, both contesting each other's legitimate influence and legal right on the land (kasa). In fact, Azne claims legitimate tenure on the land as a legacy from his ancestors while Sarki has only political and religious (Islamic) power on the people of the land. But the latter claims political control (iko) on the land as well as on the people. On their part, the Malamai equally claim political power on the people and the land. Moreover, Azne's opposition to such claims adds an identity dimension to the contest as he represents local beliefs and Talakawa (ordinary people) while Sarki and Malamai represent the new theocratic sarauta (political power) and elite respectively. All this has created a complex network of relationships colored by manifestation of power by some and its contestation by others for diverse reasons.

In this paper, I focus on the attitudes of the three major characters, on their motivations for actions and on how they end up constructing identities in the process. For the sake of methodology, I will begin with the theme of power relations by exploring the attitudes of these characters through their interactions in the light of historical facts. The exploration will serve as a background for the contestation of the legitimacy of the political authority of the Sarki by Malamai and of Sarki's claim on the land by Azne. The background will also help better understand the ideological, social and cultural implications of the characters' actions, mostly the contestation which adds the identity dimension to their relations and sheds light on some social and cultural crises facing the Hausaland today. The process of identity creation will be the last section before the conclusion followed by a short biography of the storyteller. The tale Azne, about seven (7) pages long, is the main primary source on which I will base my interpretative analysis, although some references will be made to another tale dealing with power relation and contestation that also involves a sarki and an azne from the same collection by the same author. The tale is titled Babu sarki sai Allah (There is no king but Allah). The limitation to a few sources will somehow make any conclusions provisional and it also suggests further research for a more comprehensive approach to the topic in particular and to the work of Albarka Cii-

baw who is yet to receive adequate critical attention from scholars on Hausa oral literature.

## 3. Power Relations and Contestation: The Interactions among Sarki, Malamai and Azne

### 3.1. Sarki and Malamai

While the title of the tale foregrounds Azne as the would-be hero of the tale, the debate with which the tale has begun is a good indication of the importance of the relationship involving Azne, Sarki and Malamai in the story. Sarki represents political and religious authority while Malamai stands for intellectual and religious elite. As shown in the quote from (Bello, 1976) above, Sarki and Malamai represent respectively the post Jihad rulers and elite of the new theocracy in the Hausa land. In other words, they stand for royalty and aristocracy respectively. In fact, Sarki and Malamai are representatives, at different levels, of the Caliph of Sokoto whose influence on the land that is known today as Republic of Niger has been historically established. For example, (Maikorema, 2006: p. 152) explains that the Sudan, which includes Niger Republic, witnessed the emergence of a big political entity, the Sokoto Caliphate, composed of about thirty emirates with large autonomy even if, it is true, to some extent the Caliphate in Sokoto had an influence on each of the emirates mostly through the issues of enthronement, of the payment of yearly or bi-yearly tributes, of the implementation of Shari'a and of mutual assistance in war situation.

On the social level, in line with the Jihad which was a trans-ethnic movement, the social division was operated on a purely ideological basis: Muslims on one side and non-Muslims on the other side, paving the way for a community of believers. Moreover, *the Jihad also led to the creation of a new ruling class essentially composed of religious persons whose political legitimacy depended on their Islamic piety and knowledge* (emphasis added).

The above quotation brings a good historical illustration of and a significant commentary on the social, cultural and ideological context that serves as background to the story of our tale. Moreover, it helps us to better understand the tensions that characterize the relationships among the village chief (Sarki) and Azne on one hand and between the chief and Malamai on the other hand. As a matter of fact, the tale opens with a debate on the legitimacy of each of these characters concerning the land and the people of the village. While Azne concedes that Sarki and Malamai have political control on the people, the last two characters claim political as well as religious legitimacy on the land and on the people.

In the quote below from the tale, the storyteller shows Azne and Sarki in a direct dialogue that illustrates a verbal confrontation: Azne contests Sarki's claim on the land, posing himself as its unique and legitimate inheritor. The storyteller also comments that Sarki does not agree with Malamai concerning their claim of political authority on the people and the land:

It is an argument over land issue involving Azne, Sarki and Malamai. Azne claims to be the unique legitimate owner of the land, Malami (sing. of Malamai) and Sarki also claim ownership of the land. Azne said: "Sarki, the people are under your political authority; but the land is my property: it is a legacy from my father".

Sarki replied: "even if it is a legacy from your father, the authority can take it from you: in fact, I seize it from you".

Azne said: "No. You can't mix your things with mine. It is better you keep on your political leadership role. Because I am the only rightful owner of the land. You have political authority on the people. Every person in the land is under your political authority. But this land, on which we are, belongs to me by native right: this land is mine as a legacy from my father[7]".

Malamai also claims that the land and the people belong to them. But Azne and Sarki do not agree with them (p. 29)[8].

The last comment by the narrator indicates another contest between Sarki and Malamai over the land and its people. In fact, (Bello, 1976) in the quote above has already pointed out that any post-Jihad ruler is a representative of the Sokoto Caliph in the land under his political administration. From this perspective, the Malamai are in competition with Sarki when they claim equal rights with him concerning the administration of both the land and its people. Historically the competition can be related to the Jihad which, according to Maikorema in the quote above, has brought a new ruling class composed of intellectual and religious elite whose authority and legitimacy are rooted in their piety and religious knowledge. So as members of the new ruling theocracy (Nwabara, 1963: p. 237)[9], the Malamai and Sarki owe allegiance to the same Sokoto Caliphate and its ruling dynasty. As a consequence, Sarki and Malamai have to work together to implement the *Shari'a*, for example. But their claims for the same rights as Sarki is indicative of conflicts of interests because they consider themselves as representatives of both the royalty and aristocracy in their position as religious elite.

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[7]Historians Mahamane and Mahaman have reported two categories of Azna in the Adar region which includes Tahoua state: "*The oldest group settled in Adar is that of Azna: among them we distinguish Aznan ramu or Azna of the caverns whose collective memory has lost the traces of migrations and who consider themselves as "Yan kasa" (indigenous) compared to Azna Mahalba who came after. It is these Aznan ramu who will keep, even after the advent of centralized political powers [i.e., Caliphate], the traditional power linked to earth worship. The Azna Mahalba, on the other hand, who have known more advanced organizations, contributed to the founding of the village communities*" (p. 50).

[8]Gardamak kasa ce da anka yi da azne, da sarkin gari da malamai. Azne ya ce shi adda kasa, malami ya ce shi adda kasa, sarki ya ce shi adda kasa. Azne ya ce: sarki, mutane ag gareka, ni kasa tawa ce, ga ubana na gade ta.

Sarki ya ce: ko ka gade ta ga ubanka, iko babu abun da bay yi ba, na amshe duk.

Azne ya ce: a'a, ba ka gama naka da nau. Kay de koma busa ga kay ka ikona. Amma hwa ni ka ikon kasa, kay ko kay ka ikon mutane. Duk inda mutun ya kwan ya tashi naka ne. Amma hwa ƙasa wagga da mu ke takawa, ni ka ikon ta, tau ce, ga ubana na gade ta…

Malamai sunka ce su ko da kasa da mutane, su na so duk na su ne. Azne ya ce bay yarda ba. Sarki ma ya ce bay yarda ba (p. 29).

[9]According to (Nwabara, 1963), each Emirate was administered by a member of the Fulani dynasty as Emir assisted by a Wazir as Chief Adviser, an Alkali as Judge and Chief of Police and an Imam. All of these are members of the Islamic elite mentioned by Maikorema.

Such conflicts are illustrated by tales collected in Niger Republic by Connie L. Stephens (1981: pp. 511-18) for her Ph.D. dissertation. Based on this Ph.D. research, she carried out further research on selected tales (Stephens qtd in Coles and (Stephens, 1991: pp. 221-231) involving competitions between a *Malam*'s *daughter* and her husband, a *prince,* who has her as a second wife. Soon after their marriage, the prince-husband challenges his second wife by asking her to make him meal out of stones while giving rice to his first wife to do the same. The second wife consults her father who uses his religious powers to transform his daughter's stones into rice and the first wife's rice into stones, thus allowing his daughter to win the contest against her royal husband. Then in another contest, the prince decides to travel to a far country. But before leaving he orders his second wife that her mare bear his stallion's colt while she herself bears his own son before his return. As soon as she informs her father, he uses his religious powers again to send her after her husband who she easily seduces, as a whore, into sharing his bed on condition that he accepts their horses to copulate. So, by the time he returns home, the *Malam's daughter* is pregnant by him and her mare by his stallion. Once again, the *Malam's daughter* wins against her royal husband. The wife's victories represent the superiority of the *Malam's family* over the *royal one*, which is a good illustration of the tensions between the two classes of the new Islamic theocracy.

From the tale collection under study, there is another illustration of a religious or ideological conflict between Sarki and Malamai when the former's mother comes near the latter with her bull. The Malamai hasten to take possession of the bull, thinking it was some alms from the Sarki to them. Their reaction is not only illustrative of their expectations but also of their dependency towards the chief, as representative of the Emir, while it equally suggests that they live mostly by alms. But the most important ideological aspect of their attitude is their refusal to take the bull on Sarki's conditions, which implies a form of pagan practice through which rulers' parents are buried with people alive. In a dialogue between Azne and gaba, the latter alludes to these cultural practices when she reminds Azne that "*sarki's mother cannot be buried alone….*" (*Azne* p. 32; emphasis added)[10]. In other words, the condition that Sarki attaches to the bull illustrates a form of religious syncretism which some of the post-Jihad Malamai might not be willing to accept. In this sense (Mahaman, 2006: p. 122) reports a categorization of the Malamai or religious elite as *Ulama al-sul* (the elite very close to the ruling class) and the *Ulama ad-din* or *Ahl-al-Zikr* who are very close to the people and who do not care much about the radical and purist ideology of the Jihad (note 4; Nwabara, 1963: p. 238). Therefore, the first category of *Ulama al-sul* may be the ones in our tale as they seem to refuse to side with Azne who represents the common people.

Other situations of conflict of interests at the level of the ruling dynasty are well described by (Bunza, 2009) as quoted above. The critic shows how nepotism, the pursuit of personal interests and corruption have characterized the post

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[10]"Ita uwagga taashi baa a iya binnee ta ita daya ba…".

Jihad period. But the worst aspect that dominates in this period is the feeling of tribalism and injustice even among the ruling class mainly because the old traditional social structures have been replaced by new ones with a mosaic of actors from different social, cultural and religious backgrounds. On top of all these problems, there are the facts that old ruling families have been put out of competition apparently for religious reasons and the failure of the new rulers to govern by the principles of the Shari'a as promised during the Jihad. As Bunza reports,

> The Jihad led by Sheikh Usman Danfodio changed the political organization in Hausa land. Since the victory of the Jihad leaders, they have become the new rulers and Islam the new dominant religion. First the rulers attempted to rule by Islamic principles, but soon they became lured into nepotism and injustice against the teachings of Islam. This led to hypocritical practices such as tribalism. It was at the peak of such nepotism, of pride in one's origins and social ranks, of deception and of tribalism that colonization started (2009: pp. 95-96)[11].

This quotation indicates that the new rulers may not come from local ruling families but from different ethnic groups since the most important criterion for becoming a ruler is the religion of Islam. The possibility of having a ruler who is not from the community over which he is ruling is reinforced and illustrated by the argument between Sarki and Azne who considers himself as the inheritor of the land by native law.

## 3.2. Sarki and Azne

I took with me pagans of many tribes, with trumpeting and drumming in the gathering at Kano (Aliyu, Emir of Zaria qtd in Skinner, 1977: p. 53).

Some preliminary questions that quickly come to mind are why does Sarki send his old mother with a bull and conditions attached to it, especially not very long after his argument with Azne over the right to the land and to the people? Is Sarki's request through the bull in accordance with the principles of the Shari'a? What are the cultural implications of Sarki's request, of the Malamai's refusal and of Azne's acceptance of the bull? In the following analysis, I intend to provide some answers to these questions.

As suggested earlier, Sarki's request may have originated from a pre-jihad cultural practice and that he may belong to the generations of migrants living in Hausa land, especially in the region of Tahoua. In fact, (Oumarou, 2018: p. 4) quoted Mahamane and Mahaman, two historians from Niger Republic, who de-

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[11]Yunkurin jaddada addinin musulunci da mujaddadi Shehu Usman Danfodio ya jagoranta ya sauya tsarin siyasar Hausa. Da aka ci nasarar jihadi musulunci ya ci kasar Hausa sarauta ta koma hannun wadanda suka jagoranci jihadi. Da farko abin ya so ya bi tsari irin na Musulunci da baya abin ya sauya son zuciya ya shiga ciki aka bi tsarin gadon-na-gaje-ka ba tare da bin cancanta ta shari'a ba. Wannan shi ya rayar da wani sabon munafunci a zukatan wasu masu mulki da kabilun da suka fito daga ciki na kabilanci ba tare da kula da musulunci ba. (…) Ana cikin wannan hali na bugun gaba da asali da gado da yaudara da kabilanci Bature ya bayyana (pp. 95-96).

scribe the Hausawa from Niger as not forming "a homogenous group that originated from a precise place. Many groups [of migrants] came from diverse horizons and they succeeded in integrating themselves in the migration tradition of the Hausa people. Others were not certainly from Hausa origin, but they have been assimilated by glottophagia [the loss of their mother tongues in favor of the Hausa language] while keeping their own migration tradition alive".

Sarki and Azne may therefore belong to different ethnic groups, but they both seem to continue practicing a form of cultural and religious syncretism by which they mix pre-jihad with Islamic traditions. Syncretism is indeed a characteristic of the period before and after the jihad (Mahamane, 2013; Bunza, 2009; Hamani, 2006[12]; Besmer, 1973; Raulin, 1962). This characteristic can help to explain why Azne grants Sarki only political authority on the local population and deny him any claims on the land. As anthropologist Raulin has pointed out, the search for peace and the difficulties to rule over a vast Caliphate forced the Sokoto ruling dynasty to grant some cultural autonomy to some populations in Niger Republic in order to secure their collaboration. Raulin's argument is supported by (Nwabara, 1963)[13] and (Mahaman, 2006: p. 135). The latter points out that "... *even before the death of the Shehu, the new jihad-based administration had difficulties in being respected by the citizens of the Hausa land, who were accustomed for centuries to a Hausa system of administration. To solve this problem, Muhammad Bello would have asked the Shehu for permission to use the titles used in the Hausa administration, which the Shehu agreed to*" (emphasis added). Thus, the Jihad leaders "sought collaboration with the Hausa people, whether Muslim or animist. This fact is so well established that the warlords of Usman Dan Fodio (...) *recognized to the natives the control of the land, not only in the legal sense, but with regard to all the religious traditions related to the soil*" (Raulin, 1962: p. 254; emphasis added). As a consequence, Raulin reports two types of Islamization in Niger Republic.

The first type concerns the predominantly Zarmaphone region of western

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[12](Hamani, 2006) claims that in most of the Hausa lands the *sarki* or ruler was elected by electoral colleges such as the *Taran-Gobir* (the Nine of Gobir); the *Tara-Ta-Kano* (the Nine of Kano) and the *Sarakunan Karaga* (the six members of the electoral college) in Katsina. Hamani adds that the political organization in those Hausa lands was [and may still be] characterized by "*The presence of pagan religious leaders among the voters, even after the Islamization of rulers: Durbi, in Katsina; Sarkin Anna in Gobir; the pagan religious leaders of Kwanni*" (176; emphasis added). In addition, each newly elected sarki has to undergo a ceremony with pre-Islamic origin known as *Wakan Sarauta* (enthronement ceremony) which, according to Hamani, "symbolized the marriage of the prince with the land. (…) In Katsina his [the prince's] alliance with the soil was symbolized by an ear of millet, an ear of sorghum, of maize and beans that he had to hold in his hands at a certain moment" (ibid.). Still more interesting is the case of Kwanni in Tahoua State "*where an electoral college exclusively composed of pagan religious leaders was to propose to the (Muslim) dignitaries the name of the souvereign*" who would be elected (ibid.).

[13](Nwabara, p. 238) contends that after the death of Bello in 1837 the empire faced a new and difficult period when the religious fervor declined as the result of political leaders much more interested in worldly matters: "It was an anticlimax of all that Usman had stood for, and critics were many who saw in the period a means whereby his reforms were described as a complete failure. Indeed, anarchy had set in in many of the Emirates, reminding one of the pre-Fulani period, and revolt against the authority of Sokoto was constantly being led by Hedeija in 1851".

Niger, mostly along the Niger River valley that covers the regions of Say and Birni N'Gaouré in particular. According to (Raulin, 1962: p. 252), in these regions, Islam was introduced by the Torobé and Bitinkobe ethnic groups. He argues that "Their action, now brutal, now skillfully conciliatory, was intended as much to get land as to impose their power. (…) Land occupation, religious and political facts are intricately linked that there is no question of dissociating them". But Raulin adds that in Gourmantché and Téra regions, "Islamic rituals and pagan practices are closely related. *Each of the two religions has its own sphere of action; the first is linked to people, the second to Mother Earth…*" (1962: p. 252; emphasis added). The anthropological facts from the quotes above shed some light that can help us to better understand the dispute between Sarki and Azne. It is indeed clear from the quotes that land, or Mother Earth, is the domain of Azne who, as his name indicates, is linked to the soil as a native. Azne's attachment to the soil is an indication of his status as a *Talaka* or common person and of his traditional beliefs which make him a rightful claimant against his Sarki. As for the latter, the quote suggests that his legal authority is limited to the political and religious administration of the people.

The second type of Islamization relates to Eastern Niger, covering most of the Hausaphone land. "Contrary to the land and religious conquest led by the Fulani in the Niger River valley, the holy war (Jihad) in Hausa land was more concerned with politics and religion than with territorial conquest. The Fulani leaders sought less the creation of a coherent state than the imposition of their will on the sedentary farmers of the lands on which they led their cattle to pasture" (1962: p. 253). This quote also suggests that post-jihad rulers have mostly political and religious power on the local populations while the lands remain the property of the indigenous peoples with whom the rulers can negotiate pasturage for their livestock. It follows from the two quotes above that the two types of Islamization in Niger have left the local land issues under the control of the indigenous populations. From this perspective, one can infer that Sarki in our tale has abused of his power by confiscating Azne's land. There is also abuse of power by the Malamai through their claim on the land. Similar tales that expose the abuses of power and injustice by rulers in Hausa land have been documented by scholars like (Bunza, 2009), (Mahaman, 2006), (Furniss, 1996) and (Yahaya, 1972). In the next section, I intend to explore the impacts of the interactions among Azne, Sarki and Malamai and how they expose their identities in the process. In other words, I will investigate how the storyteller Albarka Ciibaw constructs a Hausa identity in his tale *Azne*.

## 4. Identity Construction: Symbolic Representation of *Talakawa* and *Sarakuna* by *Azne, Sarki* and *Malamai*

Hausa folklore is a deep well from which we can draw ample data for our insights into the cultural conceptions and behavioural attitudes of the Hausa people (Kirk-Greene in Ahmad, 2018: p. 1).

Commenting on Frank Edgar's collection of *Hausa Tales and Traditions*, (Skinner, 1980), who translated the collection from Hausa into English, notes that the prime character of Edgar's story-tellers is the non-Muslim Hausa known as Azne or *Bamaguje*. He figures in many tales of contest between him and M*a-lam* (singular for Malamai). Skinner sees the contest as symbolic of the historical conflict of Jihad. It is important to recall that Major Frank Edgar was a British colonial administrator in Northern Nigeria from 1905 to 1927 (Aminu, 2014: p. 18). In other words, Skinner's observation is based on Hausa tales mostly from Northern Nigeria; but the observation is also useful for the context of Niger Republic, especially for the tale under examination. In fact, it opposes azne to Malamai on the one hand, and Azne to Sarki on the other hand. Because the latter and Malamai are under the influence of the Caliph of Sokoto, they represent Islamic ideology and identity while Azne symbolically represents a mixture of local beliefs and Islam which may be the most important reason of his indirect conflict with Malamai. By indirect conflict, I mean a lack of direct verbal confrontation as there is no direct dialogue between Azne and Malamai. But why isn't there any direct dialogue between Azne and Malamai? Is the absence of direct dialogue synonymous of indifference or of religious intolerance?

Recognizing the importance of conflicts or contests achieved through dialogues in Hausa tales, (Furniss, 1996) argues that the conflicts are usually acted out by way of encounters and interactions between characters. Furniss recalls the classic dual representation of human characters in Hausa tales as a way storytellers contrast partners in joking relationships such as the city slicker against the country bumpkin; the non-Muslim Hausa, the B*amaguje* (or *Arne*), against the Islamic teacher, the *Malam*; the Kano man against the Katsina man, etc. According to Westley quoted by (Furniss, 1996: p. 58), such dualities represent the embodiment of ideas and identities. What is more, the interactions of opposed characters represent the storyteller's working-out of ideas that contain within them internal contradictions as illustrated by Azne, Sarki and to some extent the Malamai.

We know already that Azne shows some signs of conversion to Islam through his speech. For examples, when Sarki's policemen come to arrest him at home, they announce their arrival in the usual Muslim greetings: "*salaamu aleekum may gida*" (peace be upon you, household leader). Azne replies: "*ammin aleekus salaamu*" (peace be upon you, guests). It is also important to recall that Azne does not deny Sarki's or Malamai's politico-religious claims on the people of the village. He rather claims native rights to the land, which is illustrative of the historical agreement by which the Jihad warlords "*recognized to the natives the control of the land, not only in the legal sense, but with regard to all the religious traditions related to the soil*" (Raulin, 1962: p. 254; emphasis added). It is very interesting to note that Sheikh Usman Danfodio himself might have given some support to this agreement probably in the hope that with time Islam would definitely become the dominant religion. As a matter of fact, (Raulin, 1962: p. 155)

reports that some Azna priests he met during the *budin daji* ritual ceremony informed him that the Sheikh "*would have put to the contest the title of Serki n' Safi* (*in the sense of chief of the diviners*). *It is an ancestor of Dan Deguel of Massalata* [*village*] *who would have prevailed being the only one to guess what was hidden under a calabash: a rabbit*" (note 3; emphasis added). Raulin cautions however that the story may be a myth created by the Azna priests to justify the recognition of their power by the Jihad warlords. For my part, I think it may also be a way for the Sheikh to effectively test the priests' divination capacity in making accurate predictions. In any case, these syncretic traditions are reflected in the character of Azne whose name symbolizes his attachment to the land and to the local cultural traditions. In this sense, Azne is equivalent to the Fulani term Habe, which means pagan.

Further illustrations of Azne's symbolic representation of the pagan identity are shown during the melodramatic scenes at the cemetery where he is taken to be buried alive with the corpse of Sarki's mother. First, he asks permission to reenact and represent something he calls his "tradition": "*Inaa son nii koo ku bar ni in yi taw al' aada*" ["I would like your permission *to practice my tradition*"] (p. 35; emphasis added). But it is interesting to know that that tradition refers to the agreement between Azne and gaba, the bird who is going to play the role of Allah. So, when he calls Allah, gaba answers with the confirmation of his wishes that after he is buried with Sarki's mother Allah will not rain for twenty-one years. When the gullible crowd gathered for the burial of Sarki's mother hears the positive reply from Allah, they are all dumb stricken because they did not expect Allah to answer positively to the wishes of someone like Azne who believes more in his traditional religion than in Islam. The following expressions are illustrative of the reactions from the crowd to Azne's dialogue with Allah:

"*dada gaa Azne Allaa yaa baa shi. Azne yaa kiraayi Allaa, Allaa yaa amsaa mishi*" (p. 35).
"Wow, Azne has become Allah's elect. Azne called Allah and Allah answered him".
"*kay wani rikicii mutanenku Allaa gaa wani shammaataa. Azne yaa kay haka, hadda magana da Allaa…*" (p. 37).
"Hei! there is a problem, here is deceptiveness. Azne has reached the point where he can talk with Allah" !

These expressions translate the people's surprise and doubt at Azne's revealed position as someone special who has been able to talk to Allah and receive what he has asked Him for.

At first the crowd is divided on what to do because they do not want to inform Sarki for fear of brutal punishment and they do not want to refuse Azne's request and face the terrible consequences. The narrator summarizes their dilemma as follows: "*Bizneewaa lahanii kuma hwadawwaa* [*sarki*] *lahanii*" ["to bury Sarki's mother is a crime and to inform Sarki about the situation is also a crime"] (p. 35). But they end up deciding against Sarki's order to bury his moth-

er because they argue that he is not Allah: "*sarki baa Allaa nee ba*[14] ["Sarki is not Allah"] (p. 36). This announces Azne's victory even before Sarki is informed about the new situation. As a matter of fact, when Sarki hears the conversation between Azne and Allah he orders him to get out of the tomb and let his mother be buried alone. But Azne refuses first and when Sarki insists he poses his conditions: "*Azne said: no, I do not agree; I agree on one condition: you have political control over the people and I have the right on the land. Sarki replied: "get out of the tomb, I give you back the land, I keep political control over the people*" (p. 39; emphasis added)[15].

It is important to recall that sarki gave the bull to his mother to look for someone who is courageous and who has enough faith in Allah to accept to be buried alive with his mother when she dies. This is clearly a test for bravery and faith in Allah[16]. In this sense the malamai's refusal can be considered as their critique of the pagan aspect illustrated by the burial of people alive with Sarki's dead mother and at the same time as indicative of their desire to keep Islam clean of any pagan tradition. As a result, their action marks their difference from both Sarki and Azne. But the latter's acceptance of the bull not only likens him to Sarki through the pagan practice of burying people alive with dead bodies but also shows his courage starting with his attitude to sarki's mother while accepting the bull: "*too kaawoo saa in kiz zoo yaw kak ki ini, mutu*" ["Alright. Give me the bull and I don't care if you stay alive for the rest of the day: die"] (p. 31). Similarly, later in a discussion with his family members Azne explains that he has accepted the bull "*by bracing up his courage, out of pungent courage, because this bull has been shown to malamai and they fail to take it*" (ibid.; emphasis added)[17]. When his family members insist that he should return the bull, Azne asks them: "if I return this bull will my action be considered courageous? They

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[14]In the tale "*Babu Sarki Sai Allah*", another Azne character challenges the authority of the sarki or village chief by refusing to greet him in the proper traditional way like "*ranka ya dade*" or "*Allah ya baka nasara.*" Instead, the Azne enters the chief's court, of which he is a member simply saying "*babu sarki sai Allah*" (there is no king but Allah). This attitude irritates the village chief who sees it as a disrespect of his authority to the point that he seeks the complicity of Azne's wife in order to trap Azne and have some reasons to physically eliminate him. In that sense, sarki gives his ring to Azne for safe keeping until the day he asks Azne for it. Afterward sarki bribes azne's wife with two bulls and she returns the ring hidden by her husband to sarki. The latter throws it in a river where a fish swallows it. By coincidence, the same day Azne goes to the river and buys the same fish that swallowed the ring. While preparing the fish himself, Azne discovers the ring which he later hides in new secret place. Four years later, sarki asks for his ring. At first azne tells him that he has lost the ring; but when sarki threaten to cut off his head Azne brings back the ring. Surprised, sarki tells him how he got the ring from his wife and threw it in the river. Then Azne tells sarki how he got back the ring with Allah's help, which convinces sarki that Azne is right; babu sarki sai Allah. As a result; sarki offers apologies to Azne with many gifts to right the wrongs he did to him and gives him the permission to continue greeting him as he has always done by saying "*babu sarki sai Allah.*" Once again, Azne has won against sarki.

[15]"*Aznee ya cee: aa'aa, nii ban yarda, yardaataa daya cee, kay ad da mutaanee nii ad da kasaa*. Sarkii ya cee may: *hutoo naa ba ka kasa, nii da mutaanee*" (p. 39; emphasis added).

[16]Note that in the tale *Babu sarki say Allah*, it is rather azne who tests sarki's faith in Allah, a test that sarki fails. These tests of faith in Allah are perhaps indicative of some doubt concerning the nature of the characters' true faith in Islam.

[17]"*busa karhin zucciyaataa na amsoo shi, busa yaajin uwaz zuciya, dan sabooda san nan, an kay shɪ ga maalumay sun cee baa su amsaa tay*" (ibid.).

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said: if you return this bull, that will be considered as a courageous action. He replied: no, I will not be courageous by returning this bull" (ibid?)[18].

So, through the acceptance of the bull Azne exhibits his bravery by taking up the test of Sarki. He also proves that he is more courageous than the Malamai who fail to take up Sarki's challenge. All this is indicative of the tensions that characterize the relationships among these characters and features their different identities in the process. The most evident expressions of these identities are sarauta symbolized by Sarki, religious elite symbolized by Malamai and Talaka and traditional beliefs symbolized by Azne. But what is very interesting about this tale is Azne's victory against both Sarki and Malamai. The victory shows them as fools who have not been able to discover his deception. In his attempt to categorize the Hausa tales in *Hausa Tales and Traditions*, Skinner finds out that "nine out of ten times it is *Arne* that prevails and the learned Malam shown to be the fool" (1980: p. 34). Our tale belongs to this category because Azne's victory against Sarki, who represents religious and political power, and against Malamai, who are the religious elite, makes them all look like fools. In addition, Azne also wins the support of the Talakawa during his struggle with Sarki. In fact, after the surprise at Azne's power to talk with Allah, the crowd decides to go and inform Sarki: "Let us go and tell Sarki because Allaa has accepted his wishes. He who has Allaa's mercy must be obeyed" ["*mu hwadoo ma sarkii tunda Allaa yaa baa shi* [*azne*]. *Wanda Allaa ya baa, ay biyaa tay a kee doole*"] (p. 37). Of course, the Talakawa are also made to look like fools by Azne's deceptive redemption, but if he can deceive Sarki and the Malamai who consider themselves as the elite, why not the Talakawa who are considered as ignorant or illiterate?

Azne's attitude towards sarki and malamai is illustrative of Rufa'i's insightful interpretation of the way the Hausa lower class views the predominantly Fulani upper class and the Nomadic ones as the result of the historical Jihad that has transformed the social and political organization in Hausa land. According to (Rufa'i, qtd in Furniss, 1996: p. 65), living side by side has created familiarity and joking relationship between the Fulani and the Hausa people in general. If this is not the case, Rufa'i concludes, "then it must be that Hausa people are venting their frustration at the fact that the Fulani have come to rule over them. Their frustration appears in tales where they can say what they like to indicate to the Fulani that it is not intrinsic cleverness that has brought them to power. Put another way, how could it be that wandering nomads have the wit to hold down city people? …"

The victory of Azne over Sarki and Malamai as representatives of the ruling class is perhaps an artistic answer to Rufa'i's questions. Moreover, the victory is an illustration that tales often show "the victory of the weak over the strong; not through an open confrontation, but because the weak resorts to wittiness" (Baumgardt, 2011: p. 238). The incidents that have made up the plot of the tale are also indicative of the creativity of the storyteller in his capacity to shape and

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[18]"*in na mayda sanga naa yi mazaakuuta? Sunka cee: in ka mayda sanga ka yi mazaakuuta. Ya cee: aa' aa, bun yi mazaakuuta ba in na meeda saa*" (ibid).

reshape local people's identities. For those who seek to understand some of the current social conflicts facing the Hausa heartlands in Niger, the tale also reveals some of the early episodes of the conflicts. As such the tale illustrates the resilience and dynamism of folklore in its capacity to integrate old and new situations and concerns in order to put them into newer perspectives.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has shown how storytellers like Albarka Ciibaw are able to cast critical looks at their societies' social, political and cultural organization through the depiction of the relationships among characters. It has turned out that the relationships presented in our tale have historical origin in the post Jihad Hausa society which has witnessed important changes on the political, social and cultural levels. One of the most important characteristics of this society is the joking relationship between the (Nomadic) Fulani and the Hausa peasants. Storytellers have used this joking relationship to create spaces for the expression of anger and frustration by characters confronted to various forms of injustices perpetrated by the new theocratic rulers. In *Azne*, our tale, the expression of anger and frustration has led to Azne's contestation of the authority of the chief and of the religious elite, represented by the Malamai, on the matter of land. Therefore, through the attitudes of these characters, the tale has become an arena of the expression of power by Sarki and Malamai and a space for contestations against the ruling class by characters like Azne. The victory of the latter on the former has been the storyteller's artistic response to Rufa'i's interrogation about the Nomadic Fulani who have had the wit to hold down Hausa city dwellers. But beyond this humorous and artistic answer by the artist Albarka Ciibaw, the tale has also opened some windows of opportunity for those trying to understand some of the salient social and cultural crises facing the Hausa communities in Niger today, mostly by revealing some of the early episodes of conflicts that have resurfaced under different disguises. Of course, given the fact that this study has been based mostly on one tale by the storyteller Albarka Ciibaw, this conclusion and any other previous inferences are to be taken with caution. There is therefore a need for further investigations on a wider corpus of tales by the same storyteller and others from Niger.

## 6. A Short Biography of Albarka Ciibaw

Albarka Ciibaw, from whose repertoire the above tales have been taken, was born in Tahoua, the capital city of Adar in the north-eastern part of Niger republic. He never attended any Quranic or Western school and he was about 50 years old when he was invited to Niamey in 1971 for the recording of his tales at the Center for Linguistic and Historical Studies by Oral Tradition (Centre d'Etudes Linguistiques et Historiques par Tradition Orale/CELHTO), an OAU/AU institution. He claimed to have inherited his storytelling performance from his father and he was happy to pass down his art to his son, Mahamadu. Proud of his her-

itage, Ciibaw advised people to take care of their cultural traditions because for him "There is harmony in a home where children observe tradition; where children walk in the steps of their parents even if the latter are non-Muslims" (5)[19]. The storyteller's comments are a clear indication of cultural and religious tensions as the result of the political changes brought about by the Jihad. Ciibaw died some years ago. The following are the summaries of the two tales.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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[19]"kyaawan gida shi zan da magaadaa, uban mutun koo daa dooguwaa ya ajee shi ɗooki abuutay…" (Dankuusu and Mahaman 5).

The page numbering of the tales refers to the original versions with nonstandard transcription. But I sought the help of two Hausa linguists: Yawale, a Ph.D. student, changed the transcription into the standard one, available upon request. The other is Prof. Mahamane Laoualy Abdoulaye who read the entire article and made some suggestions. To both of them I express my deep gratitude.

NB: All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

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# The Colonialist Connotations of the Term "German Language"

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## Abstract

Linguistically speaking, the family of West-Germanic languages contains English (Englisch/Engels), Hoch-Deutsch (Duits/German) and Nederlands (Dutch/Niederländisch). All of them have Germanic roots to a certain degree but each one differs a lot from the languages spoken by any German tribesman in Ancient Roman times. The list shows at once that the terms "Deutsch", "Duits" and "Dutch" seem to be derived from the same root, while the attributes "hoch", "nieder" and "neder" refer to geographic distinctions in terms of altitude, i.e. "hoch" or "high" meaning the language spoken in mountainous regions and "neder" or "low" meaning its counterpart of the coastal areas. In this article the process is analyzed in which one of these three languages came to be singled out and referred to as "German" in the early 18th century, while its correct name "High Dutch" was all but completely replaced by the year 1800. This process coincides with the political doctrine of the British Empire as heir to the Roman Empire being developed. The article argues that nothing precludes us now from once again using the correct terminology after the end of this temporary political entity.

## Keywords

German Literature, Post-Colonialism, Schiller, Goethe, Wallenstein

## 1. Introduction

Living languages exist in various dialects and sometimes it is difficult to decide at which point a dialect has become a language of its own right. On the other hand, the speakers of a language will not only communicate with each other but also draw conclusions about geographical peculiarities, social status and level of education when they heard the other one speak.

When Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) from Ireland wrote his novel "Gulliver's

travels" in 1726 he had his hero Doctor Lemuel Gulliver illustrate the fact that he is a well-educated man of letters by pointing out that he is fluent in both "High Dutch" and "Low Dutch". Forty-six years prior to that the first dictionary had been published under the title "High Dutch Minerva" and dedicated by its anonymous author (possibly a certain Martin Edler from Jena) to Prince Rupert, Count Palatine of the Rhine, Duke of Bavaria and Cumberland and Vice-Admiral of all England.

But in 1731, Benedikt Beiler from London published his dictionary under the title "A new German grammar". How come the language had suddenly changed its name? Beiler justifies his endeavour with "the accession of the illustrious House of Hannover to the throne of Great-Britain", which had "… necessitated some, and induced others", of all ranks and degrees, reciprocally to the British and German languages. Anxious to be politically correct in the recently founded United Kingdom, the "Clerk of the German church in Trinity-Lane" invents the "British language", which has never existed to this day and refers to his own mother-tongue as "German".

Human beings are, to a large extent, defined by their way of talking and by the languages they master. Debasement of languages has always been a hallmark of colonialism—after the Thirty years' war, the Holy Roman Empire was debased for its very name.

## 2. West-Germanic Languages

When German tribes settled in various parts of the late Roman Empire, they interacted with the Romans and adopted many aspects of their culture. In France, Italy and Spain new Romance languages developed, while in other areas of Western Europe the three West-Germanic (Brockhaus, 1999) languages English (Englisch/Engels), Hoch-Deutsch (Duits/German) and Nederlands (Dutch/Niederländisch) grew from the same roots.

During Ancient Roman times there had been two provinces called Germania superior et inferior, referring to their geographical situation at "high" and "low" altitudes, respectively. In the Middle ages, when these areas had belonged to the Holy Roman Empire, they had Latin as their official *lingua franca*.

By Jonathan Swift's lifetime, England and Scotland had joined forces to colonialize several parts of the earth, mainly in North America and Africa. As a sea-power, the British had adopted the peculiar method how the Portuguese and Spanish conquistadores laid claim to "newly discovered" lands: whoever controlled the mouth of a river at the sea coast was regarded to be the legitimate ruler of all the hinterland draining into this particular river. In many instances people did not even know that they had been "discovered"—until the first boats with tax collectors showed up.

## 3. *"Auf Deutscher Erde Unwillkommen"*—Not Welcome on Dutch Soil

When talking about Rupert's land" we refer to a diocese in Canada today, an

area which had been a private colony of the Hudson's Bay company for centuries. But it is only by chance that "Rupert's land" was not situated in the heart of Europe. Prince Rupert, the very same Count Palatine of the Rhine mentioned above, had been born in Prague in 1619 and had been declared Prince of Lusatia (a region in Saxony at the border to modern-day Poland) immediately after his birth. The accession of his father, Frederick V of the Palatinate, to the throne as King of Bohemia, triggered the start of the Thirty year's war—a war which lasted longer than the average life expectancy of Europeans at that time, laid waste to whole countries and reduced the population of what is Germany today by two thirds.

This catastrophic situation attracted adventurous types from the whole of Europe to fight as mercenaries—men of basically the same mindset as Cortez, Pizarro, or other pioneer colonialists. Far from fighting for religious reasons in this alleged conflict between Catholics and Protestants, their goal was to carve out chunks of land for themselves.

Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) has Colonel Buttler, a character from his "Wallenstein" trilogy, praise these unlimited opportunities as follows:

> "We have arrived at a great moment; our Times smile upon the brave and resolute. The way small change will wander hand to hand A city and a citadel now switch Their fleeting occupant. Grandsons of ancient Houses take flight, new names, new coats of arms Crop up. A northern people would resume To settle German lands against our will. The Prince of Weimar arms himself to found A mighty principality. And Mansfeld And Halberstadt lacked only longer life To conquer vast possessions by the sword. Among these men who is our Friedland's equal? No object stands so high that a strong man is Not privileged to set his ladder there" (Kimmich, 2017).

For the focus of this article, the translation of the line "To settle German lands against our will" is most revealing. The translation was done in 2017 but the translator seems to have shied away from Schiller's irony in that he has a Catholic Irishman point out that the Protestant Swedes are "not welcome here". In Schiller's original line "auf deutscher Erde unwillkommen" there is no "our will" and who is "we" supposed to be in this context? Buttler fights in the army of General Wallenstein, the Prince of Friedland (whom he murders at the end) and hopes to settle as the owner of some "city or citadel" just like the Swedes he fights against. Noteworthy though, some of the native princes have started to behave like colonialists in their own country—Colonel Buttler mentions Bernhard von Weimar in particular, forefather of the Duke Schiller worked for when he wrote the play.

## 4. High Dutch Literature

Apart from being a playwright, Schiller was also an eminent historian especially

of the Thirty years war period. He knew about the fate of Prince Ruppert, one of the native "grandsons of ancient houses", who emigrated to England, fought for the royalists as a general in the English civil war and later took possession of "Rupert's land" in the Hudson Bay—or that of the migratory mercenary Johan Printz from Sweden, who went on to become governor of the Delaware river hinterland in North America after he had been chased out of the city of Chemnitz in Saxony by a Saxon army.

But the play "Piccolomini" (part two of the trilogy) from which the quote of Colonel Buttler is taken, deals primarily with the decision of Wallenstein, the powerful general, to mutiny against his overlord, the Habsburg Emperor in Austria, rather than sending eight of his regiments to support the Spanish army on their way to the Netherlands. The Low Dutch had been the first to rise-up against the Spanish colonialists and the High Dutch Wallenstein would switch sides rather than help their oppressors—who were certainly not welcome on Dutch soil.

What Friedrich Schiller wanted to achieve with his trilogy was by no means to paint an idealized picture of Wallenstein, whose goal was not so different from that of Buttler after all, although he also wanted to rid his homeland of Spanish, Swedish and any other foreign occupants. Schiller wanted to show the consequences of endless war on the fabric of human society and the desperate struggle to make peace at last.

And he also wanted to establish High Dutch as a language of literature – with himself being the "Deutscher Shakespeare". Johann Wolfgang Goethe, ten years older than Schiller, had written the first "Shakespearean" play in High Dutch: His "Götz von Berlichingen" deals with the struggles of the reformation in the 16th century. If this was a High Dutch scenario, his second play—"Egmont"—is set in Brussels and is about the fight for freedom of the Netherlands against the Spanish. While both Schiller and especially Goethe were fluent in French and Italian, they chose High Dutch as well as Low Dutch subjects for their plays and saw no reason to believe why one of the two should be more Germanic than the other.

## 5. Conclusion

It may be co-incidental that the High Dutch language started to be referred to as "German" around the same time when the English (and Scottish) set out to become the heirs of the Roman Empire. In any case, what used to be known as the Holy Roman Empire was—linguistically, so-to-speak—turned into a colonial hinterland inhabited by people speaking "German", while now only the occupants of the coastal areas with the mouths of the rivers Rhine, Maas and Scheldt spoke "Dutch".

But whatever the political reasoning may have been at that time, it is now up to us to correct a twisted terminology—if only for the deleterious effects this has in any science.

Post-colonialism has been applied to Europe over the last twenty years (Pucherova & Grafrik, 2015), by Eastern European authors especially from Poland, but we need to go beyond the Austrian and Prussian Empires (both of which ended more than a hundred years ago) and also beyond 1989 when the Soviet Empire ceased to exist. Now it is time at last that the true names of the two old European languages, High Dutch and Low Dutch, be restored to their proper meaning.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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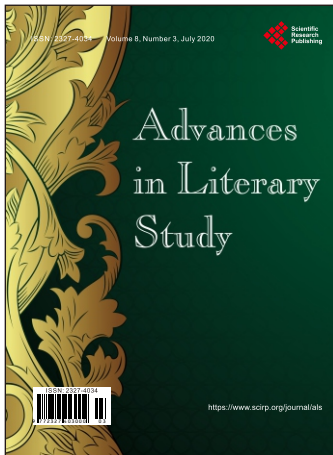
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