

Review Article

Beyond The Hausaland: An Image of Non-Hausa Communities in *Ruwan Bagaja (Water of Cure)*

Umar Aliyu Bunza

Department of Nigerian Languages, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sakkwato, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author
Umar Aliyu Bunza

Abstract: This paper titled 'Beyond the Hausaland: An Image of Non-Hausa Communities in Ruwan Bagaja (Water of Cure)' studies images of non-Hausa communities in Ruwan Bagaja (Water of Cure). Ruwan Bagaja is a novel written by late Alhaji Abubakar Imam in year 1933 as an entrant of prose fiction competition organised by the Northern Nigerian Translation Bureau under the colonialist (or colonial officer) Rupert Moultrie East. The paper therefore, examines image of non-Hausa communities in the novel and brings reasons such as trading, religion, exhaustion of traveler's needs, new culture and search of medicine behind it.

Keywords: Hausaland, Image, Non Hausa Communities, Ruwan Bagaja, Trading, Religion.

INTRODUCTION

Hausaland is situated in Western Africa. It almost dominated Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger. Therefore, typical Hausa people are found within these locations, where they live their daily lives. However, man is naturally a social being. Hence, the Hausa could not live a secluded life, but have to socialize with other national and international communities to satisfy some of their day-to-day needs. Therefore, non-Hausa communities could be regarded as any of those that are beyond the geographical boundaries of Hausaland as explained above. They could be near or far.

The Hausa have witnessed a lot of transformations in the areas of religion, commerce and politics to mention but few. This is subject to their interaction with strangers such as traders, missionaries and colonizers. However, the geographical setting of many works of Hausa prose fictions have been extended beyond the boundaries of Hausaland. The *Water of Cure* is one of such Hausa novels that take the readers to outside the Hausaland. This paper aims at revisiting such instances in the novel (*The Water of Cure*).

The Hausaland

It is difficult to trace the historical origin of the Hausa as well as the Hausaland. Some scholars are of the view that, Hausaland is located at the Central

Sudan. It has borders with Borno from the East, Dahomey (Benin Republic) from the West, the Sahara from the North as well as the Middle belt and the Nupe Kingdoms from the South (Dokaji, 1978). Adamu (1997), explained that, Hausaland lies between River Chad from the East and River Kwara from the West. This is why it is sometimes referred to as Western Sudan.

According to Robinson (1896), Hausaland or the country inhabited by Hausa people, extends, roughly speaking, from lat. 8 N., to 14 N., and from long. 4 E. to 11 E., and it includes an area of half a million square miles, the whole of which was within the British sphere of influence. Hausa is moreover the language of trade throughout the whole of the Central Sudan, and indeed the greater part of Africa north of the Equator. The land has base from Lalle and Asodu villages of the North Eastern Agadas in Niger Republic. Over time, the Gobirawa kept migrating from that location to today's Northern Nigeria (Alhassan, 1982).

Beyond the Hausaland

In Hausa literary works, there are many reasons leading to portraying other communities and locations beyond Hausaland. In *Water of Cure* by Alhaji Abubakar Imam for instance, there is a style employed to convey the full intended message. The book takes readers beyond Hausaland as a result of

Quick Response Code



Journal homepage:

<http://www.easpublisher.com/easjhc/>

Article History

Received: 15.02.2019

Accepted: 25.02.2019

Published: 20.03.2019

Copyright © 2019 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

DOI: 10.36349/easjhc.2019.v01i02.006

some factors ranging from itinerant trading, religious movements and search for cure among others. In this paper, we shall be looking at how these factors are utilized by Imam to take readers beyond Hausaland. The motifs behind such style shall also be analyzed.

Trading

Trading is one of the leading powerful factors which are pushing Hausa people to move out of their territory. Sa'id (2006), described the term (fatauci) as an act of trading that involves transporting goods from one place to another. It involves transporting goods to near and far communities. Sometimes, such traders tend to establish business in an entirely new community, where they usually marry and establish family.

Hausa are well known in its trading activity. History has it that Hausa people are used to export local goods to near and far nations as well as import other goods which they bring back to sell within the Hausaland. Goods exported include foodstuffs, animals, animal skins and other forms of natural resources. On the other hand, goods brought into the Hausa land include kolanut, salt and potassium alongside many others.

This form of trading has made many Hausa to establish their living in other places. Adamu (1978) is of the view that, trading and search for Knowledge have contributed a lot in the spread of the Hausa to other parts of the world. Trading is the first factor that is employed by Abubakar Imam to take readers beyond Hausaland. He said:

Bayan na yi kwana saba'in ina tafiya, sai na isa Tambutu. Na yi shiri irin na fatake, na isa gun Sarki, na ce ni falke ne, kayana Suna baya, za su zo bayan kwana uku. Abin da ya sa na ce haka, don na baro wadansu shanu ne a baya na wani falke (shafi na 7).

I reached Mali after journey of seventy days: I dressed like an itinerant trader and want to meet the king. I told him that I am a trader and my goods will arrive in three days. I said so because, I left herds cattle on the way, which belong to a trader. (page 7).

Tambutu in Mali is a nation which Hausa people used to trade there even before colonialism. Many explorers had proved that, Timbuktu is one of the important places Hausa people are found. Dorugu in his explanation of Hausa people has emphasized that, he witnessed many traders in Timbuktu among them are many Hausa (Schon, 1885). In this novel, Water of Cure, Abubakar Imam portrays this land as one of the famous lands in which Hausa traders export goods and import back foreign goods. He mentioned herds as kinds of goods exported by Hausa traders to represent rest. The choice of Timbuktu is based on his interest not because it is only the nation Hausa people trade with, but only to justify how Hausa trade to distant lands.

This is enough for readers to understand the basis of taking him out of Hausaland by the author.

Religion

Religion is a path by which one chooses to worship one's lord. In Hausa land, Islam is the most accepted and practised religion. Majority of Hausa worship God through Islamic teaching. Islam was introduced to Hausaland by some Arabian scholars. Historically, by 14th century, there were Muslims in most of the cities of Hausaland such as Kano, Katsina, Zariya etc. History shows that, around 1349-1383, a group of people under the leadership of Abdurrahman Zagaiti from Mali on their way to hajj passed through Hausaland, where some of them resided in some cities of the land. About forty of them went and settled in Kano during the reign of Emir of Kano named Aliyu Yaji (Clarke, 1982 and Yahya, 1988). Since that time Islam continued to spread within the Hausaland especially in palaces and dominated lives of Hausa people. Islam civilized Hausa people by training them in some important social life such as reading, writing and historical documentation etc. This is why the Hausa associate everything religious to the Arab countries. However, Alhaji Abubakar Imam takes readers to some Arab countries where he says:

'Da fitata, maimakon in bi hanya shararra sai na yanki daji. Bayan na yi tafiyar kwana arba'in da dāya, sai na isa wani gari wai shi Saburi, wani babban birni ne. Amma duk garin jahilai ne na innalillahi, ba wanda ya san ko alif sai ni fa da na isa yau.....Da zuwana na sami wata doguwar tasbaha, na nufi wajen Sarkin na ce ni malami ne. Ya ce, 'Daga ina?'Na ce, 'daga kasashen Larabawa.'

"The time a set out, I followed bush instead of the normal road. After forty one days, I reach a town called Saburi. Unfortunately, the citizens of the town are completely illiterate. Nobody knows any things only I who was just arrived the town."

As I arrive I found a long Tasbaha and approaching the king whom I told that I am an Islamic Scholar.

He asked: "from where?"

I answered: "from Arab countries"

Islamic scholarship was first established among the Hausa after their interaction with the Arabs. Here, therefore, the writer refers to Arab countries resulting from the Hausa's perception that those countries are the basis of Islam as a religion.

In view of the above, it will be understood that, the writer talked about this part only to show Islamic injunction on the matter as everything is connected to its origin. Teaching services were the first things known to Hausa people as a result of their interactions with the Muslim Arabs. At the initial stage of the spread of Islamic religion, leading of congregational prayers and preaching were both carried

out by the Arabs as it so happened when Alhaji Imam met the illiterate people of the town-Saburi because he related himself to Arabs. Though they were illiterates, had it been Alhaji Imam had not related himself to the Arab states, the king wouldn't have believed him to become a cleric in their domain. In page 34, Alhaji Abubakar Imam also talked in similar way where he said:

....ba mu kwana wannan gari ba, muka bi dare sai Baitul Muƙaddas. A wannan gari mai albarka Malam Zurke ya ce mu tuba da irin ayyukanmu na saƙo hakanan. Na yarda da magana tasa, muka tara malamai aka yi mana addu'a don kada Shaidan ya sake wasa da zukananmu.

“...we have not had sleepless night to this town but for Baitul Muƙaddas. It was in this blessed town Malam Zurke hinted we should seek forgiveness of our sins. And I believed him where we called clerics and they prayed for us so that devil should not misguide us again.”

Repentance is very important in the life of every Muslim. Repentance means turning to Allah by avoiding all that is hateful in His sight. It is with repentance that one could get closer to Allah.

Baitul Muƙaddas on the hand to which the word 'repentance' was attached, was a city of great concern as far as Islamic history is concerned. A third most important mosque in the world is situated there. Also, there were Islamic clerics who know the laid down conditions of genuine repentance. Alhaji Imam and Zurke have therefore decided to repent because of the blessings of this town. This was what necessitated them to declare their repentance while the clerics prayed for them.

The writer had therefore travelled out of Hausaland to keep away from land of sins and to show the importance of true repentance in Islam especially in the holy place.

Exhaustion of Traveler's Needs

It is very important for a traveler to stockpile basic items that may be needed. Basic items that a traveler needs include money, food and the like which will help him to have a smooth journey. Hausa people stockpile things as food and money whenever they intend to travel far. Any time a traveler's basic needs finished, he will either engage in labour, or beg or move to another place to seek assistance.

Abubakar Imam talked about states outside Hausaland because of shortage of basic items which necessitated the character of his book, Alhaji Imam, to move to Nasarawa. This was what he said on page 30: 'Ka san kayan zalunci ba shi albarka. Nan kudinmu suka kare sarai. Muka tashi daga wannan gari, muka

kama hanya, sai ga mu a birnin Nasarawa. Nan muka rabu da Malam Zurke, ya ce Shi za shi gaba....'

“unlawful gain last not longer. This is where we have exhausted our money.

We have to move to Nasarawa. At this point Malam Zurke left us and moved on...

The above statement shows that Nasarawa was only introduced because of the shortage of basic items that travelers had. Alhaji Imam and Zurke have exhausted their money that was why they left Miska to Nasarawa. Had it been their money had not finished, Alhaji Imam wouldn't have travelled to Nasarawa.

New Culture

Culture means the total way of one's life from birth to death. Wherever one finds oneself, the way they plan and put their life on will be regarded as their culture. There is no community or society on earth that lives without adopting a particular identifiable culture (Bunza, 2006).

Socialization and migration bring about changes in community's culture. As time goes on, there may be intrusion of foreign cultures. The foreign cultures can be in areas such as wedding ceremonies, dressing, foods, and economy and so on.

Alhaji Abubakar Imam had brought a state outside Hausaland in his book in order to introduce livestock management engaged in by Alhaji Imam as a strange culture; where he says:

'Da na tashi daga nan ban zame ba sai wani kauye ana ce masa Sarai. Na tarad da mutanen ba su da wata tabi'a sai tarkon aku. In sun kama, sai su yi ta koya masa magana, su yi ta bin gari suna sayarwa. Ni kuma sai na sami daya na kama, na ki koya masa wani abu sai in aka tambaye shi, ko wace irin tambaya ce, ya amsa ya ce, 'Haba dattijo, ka dubi kamata ka ce ban yi jaka guda ba.' (Shafi na 32).

“As I left here, I settled at Sarai. The people I met have no habit but that of trapping parrot. They use to train the parrot how to talk and eventually sell at nearby towns. When I caught one, I refused to train it. Whenever it is asked any sort of questions, it will say 'O dear, you look at me and say I'm not worth Two Hundred Naira (page 32).

The tradition of keeping a parrot is not common in Hausa states at that time, because it isn't among the birds found in the area. Therefore, talking about parrot here, shows that, Sarai is a setting outside Hausaland. At the same time, this is very important because placing of culture in a wrong position will be avoided. The writer has also, on page 34 moved outside Hausaland for parrot marketing; where he says:

'Da gari ya waye na ce masa ni zan wuce zuwa Birnin Kudus ina ujila ne. Ya ce, 'To mu tafi, me ne daure a nan?' Muka rangada sai wani gari kato. Na dauki akuna na tafi kasuwa. Yana ce mini mene ne haka na ke fama da kayan tsuntsu? Na ce ya sa mini ido dai. Ko da wani Bature ya gan ni sai ya ce, 'Akun na sayarwa ne?' Na ce, 'I' Ya ce mini, 'Nawa za ka sayar mini?' Ni kuwa na ce, 'Jaka guda' Sai na ji Bature ya yi wata irin magana, ko me ya ke nufi, oho. Na ji dai ya ce, 'Go away, you poor fool.' Sai na ka da baki na ce, 'Kada ka zage ni, don ka san ban iya Turanci ba, in kana shakkar abin da na ce ne tambayi tsuntsun ka ji mana.' Sai na ga ya dubi aku ya ce, 'Wai haka nan ne, aku?' Sai aku ya amsa ya ce, 'Haba, dattijo, ka dubi kamata ka ce ban yi jaka guda ba?'Ya kawo jaka guda sukutum ya ba ni. Ba mu kwana wannan gari ba...'

"As the day break, I told him that I will move on to the city of Kudus and he said let's go. We moved on and came across a very big town. I took my parrot and head to market. He was cautioning me, why I was suffering myself on a bird? I told him to just look at me. A white man confronted and asked me, 'is this parrot for sale?' I replied 'yes'. He now asked 'how much will you sell it to me?'/Two Hundred Naira' I answered. He then talked in a manner I couldn't understand. I can recalled he said 'go away, you poor fool'. I however, said, 'don't ever insult me because I don't understand English, if you doubt what I just said, ask the parrot'. He then looked at the parrot and said 'parrot, is he right?.The parrot now answered 'O dear, you look at me and say I'm not worth Two Hundred Naira?...' he then gave me Two Hundred Naira. We have not slept in this town...

Considering the above, it will be understood that, Alhaji Abubakar Imam had travelled out of Hausaland, because of the strange culture he introduced. Marketing of parrot in Hausaland was a new tradition as the bird is not commonly found in the land. This was what necessitated Alhaji Imam's travel to the City of Kudus where he met the white man who bought the parrot.

Search for Medicine

Medicine refers to the processes used for the prevention, control, treatment or total elimination of a disease or curtailing of any life-threatening issues. The processes can either be conventional or traditional (Sarkin Gulbi, 2013). In search of medicine, Hausa people travel to very distant places – sometimes outside their country. Hausa people are kind of people who travel widely in search of medicine to their life-threatening ailments. Alhaji Abubakar Imam had explained how search for medicine made the character in his book, Alhaji Imam travel out of Hausaland, passed through some countries, up to a very distant place of fifteen years journey. Alhaji Imam found the medicine he was searching for in a place outside Hausa territory, where he says:

'Sa'annan aka kira wannan tsoho, aka ce ya ba ni labari.Ya ce, 'Ruwan Bagaja dai yana cikin kasar Irami ne, kasar Irami kuwa kasa ce ta aljannu....' Da gari ya waye na shiga jirgi, muka tasam ma kasar Iram.....' (shafi na 35). Shekara goma sha biyar ke nan na yi cur tun daga fitata, har ran da na sauka gidanmu... (shafi na 42).

"An old man was called to brief me. The old man said '*RuwanBagaja*' was in Irami, an abode of spirits...As the day break, we boarded a canoe and headed to Irami....(page 35). It is exactly fifteen years since I left home (page 42).

Alhaji Imam, a character of the novel, left his home town purposely in search of medicine called '*Ruwan Bagaja*'. The points above indicated that *Ruwan Bagaja* was only found in very distant place. Irami land was a very far place from Hausa land, a home of spirits, but Alhaji Imam was able to cope with all odds and got there. He was able to get *Ruwan Bagaja* and came back home after fifteen years where ill-Yarima was treated. This shows that it is a common behavior for a Hausa man to travel in search of medicine for himself or his relation.

CONCLUSION

It was clearly seen from the above explanations how the introduction of foreign cultures was perceived along with evidences as indicated by the writer of the book. Reasons such as trading, religion, shortage of traveler's needs, introduction of foreign cultures and search for medicine have been clearly explained.

Another important point to note is that, the book entirely focused on African and Arabian empires, this relate to the fact that the writer is extremely conscious of African states and Islamic religion hence they (African and Islam) have significance in his life. Even where a white man was mentioned, he was not mentioned as superior of a English man but as someone who appeared like an Arab man speaking English language.

At the end, the writer was able to come up with a book that interest the readers and even indicates strangers can equally play significant roles in the development of community culture and can become great icons in a community.

REFERENCES

1. Dokaji, A. A. (1978). Kano Ta Dabo Ci Gari. Zaria: NNPC
2. Adamu, M. (1978). The Hausa Factor In West African History. Zaria: ABU Press
3. Robinson, C. H. (1896). Specimens of Hausa literature. London: Cambridge University Press
4. Alhassan, H. da wasu (1982). Zaman Hausawa. Zaria: Longman

5. Sa'id, B. (2006). Kamusun Hausa. Zaria: ABU Press
6. Adamu, M. (1978). The Hausa Factor In West African History. Zaria: ABU Press
7. Schon, J. F. (1885). Magana Hausa Native Literature Provers, Tales, Fables and BistoFragments in the Hausa Language. Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge. London: North Umberland Avenue
8. Clarke, P. B. (1982). West Africa and Islam. A Study of religious Development from the 8th to the 20th Century. London: Edward Arnold Publishers.
9. Yahaya, I. Y. (1988). Hausa A Rubuce :Tarihin Rubuce-Rubuce Cikin Hausa. Zaria: NNPC
10. Bunza, A. M. (2006). Gadon Fedè Al'ada. Lagos: Tiwal Nigeria Ltd
11. Sarkin Gulbi, A. (2013). Tsafe-Tsafen Dimokuradiyya. A paper presented at first national Conference organised by Centre for Hausa Studies, Kano: Bayero University on 14-16 January, 2013.