

EQUALITY IN AFRICAN ORAL POETRY: MORALIZING THE HAUGHTY WEALTHY IN DAN MARAYA'S *WAKAR MAIAKWAI*

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Abstract:

This article analyses *Wakar Mai Akwai da Babu*, one of the songs of the oral poet and traditional singer: Dan Maraya Jos from Nigeria. *Wakar Mai Akwai da Babu* can be translated as “*The Song of the Wealthy and the Poor.*” It aims at moralizing and reminding humanity, especially the haughty wealthy, about the equal nature of all men without exception and regardless of their social conditions or positions. The paper adopts data presentation and analysis as a theoretical underpinning. To do so, we collected, transcribed, translated and analyzed the above-mentioned song. The article concludes that whatever the knowledge, power or wealth an individual possesses in the society, it is only a privilege from God that He bestows on His servants to test them to see whether or not they will stay human; help and sustain each other for the well-being of humanity.

Keywords: Moralization, Equality, African Oral Poetry, Dan Maraya Jos, Hausa Oral Poetry

Résumé:

Cet article offre une analyse de *Wakar Mai Akwai da Babu*, une des compositions orales du poète et chanteur traditionnel: Dan Maraya Jos du Nigeria. *Wakar Mai Akwai da Babu* peut être traduite comme “*La Chanson du Riche et du Pauvre*”. Elle a pour but de moraliser et surtout de rappeler à l’humanité, spécifiquement aux plus nantis, le caractère égal de tous les humains sans exception, et ce, peu importe les conditions ou rangs sociaux des uns et des autres. Le travail adopte

comme support théorique la présentation et analyse des données. Pour ce faire, nous avons collecté, transcrit, traduit et analysé la chanson mentionnée ci-haut. L'article conclut que quel que soit le degré de savoir, de richesse ou de pouvoir qu'un individu possède dans la société, ceci n'est qu'une faveur venant de Dieu, qu'Il accorde à Ses serviteurs, dans le but de les tester afin de voir s'ils restent et demeurent humains, s'ils s'épaulent et s'entraident pour le bien de tous.

Mots Clés : Moralisation, Egalité, Poésie Orale Africaine, Dan Maraya Jos, Poésie Orale Hausa.

Introduction

Throughout the history of humanity, both secular and religious scriptures put emphasis on the sacred character of mankind. In addition to this sacredness, the same scriptures make mention of the transience of the present life and the equal nature of all 'Men' in it (Muzaffar, 2003, p. 31). This notion of equality has been deeply discussed in the texts of great religions namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Concerning the latter, almost all its devotees are aware about this equality and try their best to implement it and call their mates to do the same in their everyday life. They agree that one may be richer, more knowledgeable and more powerful than others but not necessarily better than them.

Ronald Dworkin, one of the outstanding scholars in the field of moral theories dealing with equality, explains that in any society, people's basic needs have to be fulfilled, "...; if everybody's basic needs are upheld, then it is fine for others to seek for opportunities to make their lives much more exciting, productive, varied or interesting" (2003, p. 198). *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* simply defines equality as "the state of being equal" (p. 342).

Nevertheless, it is quite common today to meet people who because of their wealth, knowledge or position, forget about the ephemeral character of life and think they are superior to, and even

better than, others. In the fight against this satanic idea¹, much ink and saliva has been spent. In this noble combat, oral artists are not left aside. One of these valuable human rights defenders is Dan Maraya Jos. He was born in 1946 in Bukuru, the South local government area of Plateau State, late Alhadji Adamu Waya Muhammad, popularly known as *Dan Maraya Jos*, did not attend formal school, despite efforts by his guardians. He lost his parents at an early age, where he got his nickname *Dan Maraya (the orphan)*. As a child, he was told about his father's career as a *kotsho* musician, and he vowed to take after his father. His style of *kuntiji* music made him popular across the world, as he produced many albums, which earned him a household name in music scene in Nigeria. *He was the first black African local musician to be hosted on the BBC, and received many national and international awards, including Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) and Member Order of the Niger (MON) [...]* He was also honored by the University of Jos with an honorary doctorate degree in Law as a result of his contribution to societal development [...] His wife, Hadjia Habsatu Adamu, and some of his adopted children eulogize him as a dedicated father, and generous to all. He was buried at the Zaria Road Cemetery, according to Islamic rites. (NTA News, 2015; emphasis added)

Among his masterpieces, Dan Maraya composed *Wakar Mai Akwai da babu* in which his core combat is to show the equality between people regardless of their social conditions or positions. Right in the first three opening lines of the song he states:

N°	Hausa Transcription	English Translation
0001	Wakar mai akwai	Song of the [Haughty] Wealthy
0002	Amma mai akwai da babu	The wealthy and the poor
0003	Duka dangantakarku dai	Are all equal

¹ This idea is satanic because according to the Qur'an, Allah ordered Satan to prostrate for our forefather Adam but Satan refused pretending that he is better than Adam.

The examples he cites to support his ideas are convincing ones. Together, let us discover them in the above-mentioned song from its beginning till its end.

Humans' Equality in **Dan Maraya's *Wakar Mai Akwai***: socio-religious proofs

Religious Proofs of Humans' Equality in *Wakar Mai Akwai*

Toyin Falola holds that in spite of the rampant secularization and modernization that is witnessed in Africa, religion and culture still have tremendous value; Africans are deeply religious, and their actions are defined by their fear of punishment and craving for reward in the afterlife (2003, p. 202). Concerning **Dan Maraya**, his attitudes in his *Wakar Mai Akwai* are overwhelmingly based on the Islamic religion.

In fact, if our oral artist so heavily supports his contention with Islamic proofs, it is because religion in its emphasis on justice and human dignity, once correctly grasped and implemented, is more holistic than secular systems established by men (Muzaffar, 2003, p. 32). In fact, just after his introductory notes from line 0004 to 0007, **Dan Maraya** contends that the notion of equality between the wealthy and the poor derives from Allah (God) not from him, otherwise people would have treated him as a liar:

<u>0004</u>	Allah ya ke faḍa	Allah is saying
<u>0005</u>	Haka, ba ni na ke faḍa ba	This, not me
<u>0006</u>	Da ni na ke faḍar	Were I the one saying
<u>0007</u>	Haka, da sai ku karyata ni	This, then you would not believe me

In the first of the above four lines, **Dan Maraya** begins his statement with the word Allah without giving any explanation about it; taking for granted that his audience knows Him. According to Islam, Allah is the One God Who created the world and all that it contains. He is also the Deity Who sent all the messengers and prophets with revealed books to guide humanity from darkness to light. He gave the

Thora to Moses, the Gospel to Jesus, and the Qur'an to Muhammad (peace be upon them all). The Qur'an, which is the sacred book of Islam, has no specific chosen people; rather, the entire humanity is chosen (See Qur'an chapter 17 verse 70).

Talking about Muhammad (PBUH)², Cheik Hamidou Kane ([1961] 2011, p. 46) enlightens that "God closed the sublime line of his envoys with our prophet Mohammad." In verse 13 of chapter 49 of the Qur'an given to Muhammad (PBUH), Allah says, "O humanity! Indeed, We [Allah or God] have created you from a male (Adam) and a female (Eve), and made you into peoples and tribes [ethnics] so that you may 'get to' know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware (Qur'an chapter 49 verse 13)." The most noble among us in the sight of Allah is the most righteous not the most knowledgeable, nor the most powerful, nor the richest. Except in righteousness, we are all equal in the eyes of Allah. So, seeing oneself better than others based on any other consideration is not just. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) highlights it in his farewell message:

... Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will meet your Lord, and that He will reckon your deeds [...] So, beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone. All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also, a white has no superiority over a black nor does a black have any superiority over a white ..."³

By mentioning the name of Allah first, Dan Maraya seeks to convince his audience that it is not he that has first said that the wealthy and the poor are equal; rather, it is a teaching of Islam which has unequivocally been, first, expressed by Allah Himself, second, by His messenger, Muhammad (PBUH). As the Muslim is obliged to revere

² PBUH stands for Peace Be Upon Him

³ Sahih Al-Bukhari, Hadith 1623, 1626, 6361

Allah and His messengers, and to submit himself to their teachings, the oral artist hopes that the moral value he is offering will be accepted and acted upon by his listeners. However, given the fact that some of those listeners may be from other obedience, Dan Maraya offers examples from day-to-day life.

Social Proofs of Humans' Equality in Wakar Mai Akwai

As stated above, Dan Maraya uses an original approach through which he presents his arguments to the listener. He provides two types of evidences to support his contention: (1) religious ones, and (2) social ones, that is, simple everyday examples which anyone easily acknowledges. The foregoing sections briefly surveyed the religious types of argument; the coming sections present some social elements that establish the equality between the rich and the poor.

Our oral artist shows us the extent to which these stereotypes held against the poor should be dropped altogether. He tries to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor by reminding them of their common humanity: indeed, the rich and the poor have more in common than they think; they are more similar than dissimilar, by virtue of their humanness. He first does so through the comparison of the dwellings and the accommodations of the rich and the poor.

Accommodation: shelter for rest

0014	Kai mai akwai ka gane	You, the [haughty] wealthy, understand that
0015	Idan ka yi gida talatin	If you build thirty houses
0016	Cikin guda za ka je ka kwana	You will but go to sleep in only one
0017	A ɗaki guda ka kan kwon	You will but sleep in only one room
0018	A kayan gado guda ɗaya	On a single set of bed and linen
0019	Haka nan wanda bai da komai	Likewise, the one who has nothing
0020	Gida guda za i je i kwana	He will but go to sleep in only one house

0021	A ɗaki guda ya kan kwon	He will but sleep in only one room
0022	A gefe guda ya kan kwon	He will but sleep only on one side [at a time]
0023	A kayan karaunu falle	On only one set of linen
0024	To in gari ya waye	Hence, when day breaks
0025	Ta nan duka dangantakarku dai	From this vantage point, you are all equal

Regarding accommodation, he convincingly explains that even though a wealthy person may hold in contempt a poor person, by virtue of his material possessions, such a haughty wealthy must remind himself that, in spite of his numerous houses, he will only sleep in one, at a time. The reader may argue, however, that, such a wealthy person may spend each night in a different house and that, from this vantage point, he is superior to the poor person.

First, Dan Maraya is not arguing that rich people and poor people are equal in all respects. It is known that people are different in terms of physical aptitudes, moral dispositions, and obviously material possessions (wealth and riches). What our oral artist tries to do is to help the wealthy people get rid of any feelings of superiority, and any contempt they may have regarding those who are not as rich and fortunate as they are. Even though our oral artist never attended Western schools, his wisdom allowed him to encompass such truths that scholars only came to grasp after endless research endeavors. Maraya never advocates economic equality in this song; rather, he insists on the human dimension, on the humanness that we all share.

Second, arguing that spending each night in a different house is a privilege of sorts is ludicrous. Any wealthy person who tries to implement that and tries to spend each night in a different house will be exhausted and disgusted. Even if he is wealthy enough to provide all these houses with everything he needs, there are things he will inevitably take from place to place; this will utterly exhaust him. And what about his family? Will his wives and children follow him along this course of action? Suppose they do, will they enjoy themselves? We doubt that as this would prevent them from spending sufficient time in each

of these houses so as to be able to enjoy all the furniture brought therein. Thus, as stated by Dan Maraya, from this vantage point, the rich and the poor are all equal (0025). The rich will spend his night in one house at a time; so, will do the poor. Having dealt with the question of housing, Dan Maraya then moves to clothing, which is also a domain in which the wealthy tend to show off, and to consider themselves superior to others.

Clothing: garments to cover and protect oneself

As regards clothing, the first item, which the oral artist deals with, is the *hat*.

0026	In ba ku ḍan misali	I shall give you a simple example
0027	Kai mai akwai ka gane	You, the [haughty] wealthy, understand that
0028	In ka na taḱamar akawine	If you brag about your wealth
0029	Ba ka sanya hula goma	You will not wear ten hats
0030	A kan ka kai ḍaya	On your single head at a time
0031	Ai da an gano ka	Lest, as you are seen,
0032	Sai a ce wane ya tabu	Should [the people] say, "So-and-so is crazy!"
0033	Sai dai ka sa guda ḍaya	You can but wear a single one
0034	Haka nan wanda bai da komai	Likewise, the one who has nothing
0035	Shi ma i sa guda ḍaya	He but also wears a single one
0036	Matuḱar in ya na da hali	As long as he has the wherewithal
0037	To malam idan ka duba ta nan duka dangantarku dai	Hence, sir, if you look from this vantage point, [you will realize that] you are all equal

It may be an amazing sight, indeed, to witness a wealthy person, who wants to show off so much so that he wears ten of his hats at the same time! The ludicrousness of such a thing is emphasized by Dan Maraya in his attempt to convince us that the wealthy and the poor are all equal; they are equal because each one will wear a single hat at a

time. Even those who tend to change hats 2 to 5 times per day, are but wasting their time, and are distracting themselves from the things that are more important in this life. As stated by James Jani in his YouTube documentary-style short video entitled *The Untold Truth About Money: How to Build Wealth from Nothing* (2020): “The most important lesson from this video was never about the nature of money; it was about the one valuable resource that we all have, ***the one resource we will never be able to reclaim: time!***” The next item of clothing, which our oral artist gives as an illustration, is the *watch*.

0038	In ba ku ɗan misali	I shall give you a simple example
0039	Da agogon jika talatin	The thirty thousand Naira watch
0040	Da agogon sule talatin	And the thirty cents watch
0041	In wannan i bada loko	If the first one shows the time [accurately]
0042	Wannan i bada loko dai	[And] the second one [also] shows the time accurately
0043	In za a dai cira su	Whenever they are mentioned
0044	Sai ka ji sunansu du agogo	They are all referred to as: <i>watch</i>

What is the true purpose of any watch? The answer is simple! Dan Maraya is not discouraging anyone from buying, treasuring, and wearing fancy watches. But watches that are used to show off and to disdain those who do not have the wherewithal to wear similar ones have gone beyond the purpose for which they were manufactured. We would do well to remind ourselves of the true natures and purposes of the things that we use daily... Our next items of clothing are *shoes*.

0049	Kai mai akwai ka gane	You, the [haughty] wealthy, understand that
0050	In ka na taƙamar akai ne	If you brag about your wealth
0051	Ba ka sanya takalmi goma a kanka kai ɗaya	You will not wear ten pairs of shoes on your single pair of feet
0052	Ai da an gano ka	Otherwise, as you are seen
0053	Sai a ce ga mahaukaci	It will be said, “Here is a fool!”

	nan	
0054	Sai dai ka sa guda ɗaya	You will but wear only one pair
0055	Haka nan wanda bai da komai	Likewise, the one who has nothing
0056	Shi ma i sa guda ɗai	He also will but wear a single pair
0057	Matuƙar in yana da hali	As far as he has the wherewithal
0058	Malam idan ka duba ta nan duka dangantakarku dai	Sir, if you look from this vantage point, you are all equal

We have all watched documentaries about wealthy people who have entire rooms dedicated to their shoes. They purchase ten pairs of each model, yet they never wear any of such pairs until they get old then they throw them in the garbage bin. How unwise! If this is the predicament in which the spendthrifts fall, what will befall those who are so fond of their shoes that they want to show the entire world how many pairs they have? Will they wear ten pairs at a time? Dan Maraya explains that whoever does so will be considered crazy. So, from this vantage point, the wealthy and the poor are all equal.

Besides, a poor person will enjoy each pair of shoes he purchases; at least he knows that his money is not wasted. Even in real-life, it has been proven that, sometimes, the poor help and use things better than the rich. Indeed, Chiang & Chen explain that modern research has shown that “*when inequality is high, the rich give less than the poor*” (2019, p. 3; emphasis added). Apart from the clothing domain, humans vie with one another in their search for the best food possible. The quest for exquisite meals is another characteristic of wealthy people and our oral artist talks about it.

Food and Beverage to survive

Again, there is nothing wrong in seeking out exotic foods. But when this becomes the criterion with which humans are judged, then this is utterly wrong.

0045	In ba ku ɗan misali	I shall give you a simple example
0046	Da nonon sule talatin	The thirty cents milk
0047	Da nonon kobo talatin	The three Naira (thirty kobo) milk

<u>0048</u>	In za ka dai zuba ai sai ka ga duka dai farin su dai dai	Whenever you pour them, you will see that they have the same whiteness
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Dan Maraya Jos gives a single example in the food domain, which is milk. He compares the whiteness of cheap milk with that of expensive milk. We all know that there's no black, or blue, or green milk; there's only white milk. As long as it has not expired, milk is white; from this vantage point, the wealthy and the poor both drink white milk, so they are all equal. Possibly, what Dan Maraya is actually comparing here is quantity. The thirty cents milk is less in volume than the three Naira one, but both have the same whiteness.

Conceivably, the reason why Dan Maraya does not go to great lengths in providing us with examples in the food domain, is that people brag less about food than they do about other possessions. This is so because one cannot strut about, while carrying one's food, so that the whole world sees what one eats. It is easier to brag about the things that are gaudy.

It is true that our oral artist specifically elaborates at length on the similarities between the wealthy and the poor, but, apart from that, he also considers the question of equality as it relates to human races at large.

Equality on a Large Scale in *Wakar Mai Akwai* Human Races Were Created Equal

Dan Maraya enlightens that it is Allah that created the Arabs, the English, the Americans, the Indians, as well as the others. Hence, not only does he recommend respect, collaboration and assistance among members of same communities—even though some may be wealthy and others poor—but he also does so regarding the races.

<u>0117</u>	Allah huwa allazi ne	He, Allah, is the One who
<u>0118</u>	Allah huwa allazi ne	He, Allah, is the One who
<u>0119</u>	Ya yi larabawa	Created the Arabs
<u>0120</u>	Ya yi ingilishi	Created the English people
<u>0121</u>	Ya yo mutan	Created the American people

	Amerika	
<u>0122</u>	Ya yi Indiyawa	Created the Indians
<u>0123</u>	Allah huwa allazi ne ya yi haka domin mu gane juna	He, Allah, is the One who did this so we get to know and understand one another

Here, Dan Maraya's message is that since "He, Allah, is the One who [created different races] so we get to know and understand one another", then cooperation, respect, and assistance ought to be upheld among humans. More often than not, unfortunately, this is not the case. Not only do some races consider themselves superior to all others, but they also exploit those who are deemed inferior. Sometimes, some races, by virtue of the superior living conditions of their countries, consider themselves as the leaders of mankind, as the owners of the world's riches, who have the right to loot all other countries. Dan Maraya has a message also for those who are arrogant because of the superiority of their countries/nations.

Countries/Nations Are Also Equal

<u>0124</u>	In ba ku dan misali	I shall give you a simple example
<u>0125</u>	Shi Allah huwa allazi ne	He, Allah, is the One who
<u>0126</u>	Allahu ya yi Gana	Allah created Ghana
<u>0127</u>	Ya yi Etopia ai	Created Ethiopia
<u>0128</u>	Ya yi Najeriyarmu mu ma	And also created our Nigeria
<u>0129</u>	Ga shi duk bakaƙe	Which is full of black people
<u>0130</u>	Wani bai jin batun wadansu	Some do not understand the languages of others
<u>0131</u>	Allah huwa allazi ne ya yi haka domin mu gane juna	He, Allah, is the One who did this so we get to know and understand one another

The foregoing excerpt shows that even modern nation-states have come into being as the result of Allah's will. Hence, Allah also created Ghana, Ethiopia, Nigeria, "Which is full of black people | [and

where] Some do not understand the languages of others.” This is Dan Maraya’s message to arrogant people. The countries which are full of black people have also been created by Allah; these countries are not cursed. There are various ethnic groups therein, which do not understand one another’s languages, but this also is the result of Allah’s wisdom: He did this so that people get to know one another, and benefit from each other’s culture, knowledge, practices, wisdom, foods, clothing, and so on and so forth.

This is Dan Maraya’s message to the arrogant folks and the arrogant nations. One of these arrogant folks is David s. Landes. In his book, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Others So Poor* (1998), he shows the extent to which he holds his “outstanding” European continent in high esteem and the extent to which he holds the rest of the world in contempt. Unfortunately, this way of looking at the world is not something of the past. In the month of October 2022, Josep Borrell, the EU’s high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, affirmed that:

Europe is a garden; we created this garden. Everything works here: it is the best combination of political freedom, economic perspective and social cohesion. Most of the rest of the world is a jungle. And the jungle can invade the garden. Let’s stay in the garden, but be careful that the jungle can listen to us.⁴

Critiquing Landes’ book, Jack A. Goldstone (2000, p. 2-3) explains that Landes does not merely argue that Europe, in the nineteenth century, attained preeminence over the rest of the world; rather, he argues that it attained such preeminence because of its inherent superiority over all other continents, cultures, and peoples. For Goldstone, “*History, so far, has no “permanent” leaders. In certain centuries, Islam led, in others the Dutch confederation, in others the British monarchy, today the United States*” (2000, p. 8; emphasis added). If

⁴ Telegram Link: t.me/altnews_z

Goldstone rejects the myth of Europe's timeless superiority over all other nations, Chang, for his part, explains outrightly that poor countries are the victims of the unfair international order that steals their wealth from them while it destroys any of their efforts to achieve development (quoted in Wennström, 2008, p. 2). As explained by van Zanden, it was only in the period of the Industrial Revolution which started after 1780, that great economic disparities began to appear between countries and continents (2003, p. 1-2).

In the following lines, Dan Maraya invites us to reflect over matters of life and death, as well as over the appropriate conduct which wealthy persons ought to embody if they truly want to feel fulfilled.

The Wealthy and the Poor in the Sight of Allah

<u>0059</u>	Kai mai akwai ka gane	You, the [haughty] wealthy, understand that
<u>0060</u>	In ba ka ðan misali	I shall give you a simple example
<u>0061</u>	Shi Allah, huwa allazi ne	He, Allah, is the one who
<u>0062</u>	Bai aiki da duk gidanka	Does not care about all your houses
<u>0063</u>	Bai aiki da arzinkinka	Does not care about your wealth
<u>0064</u>	Sai dai da zuciya fa	But [He] cares about your heart
<u>0065</u>	Haka nan wanda bai da komai	Likewise, the one who does not have anything
<u>0066</u>	Allah, huwa allazi ne	He, Allah, is the One who
<u>0067</u>	Bai aiki da babu ðinsa	Does not care about his poverty
<u>0068</u>	Sai dai da zuciyatai	But [He] cares about his heart
<u>0069</u>	Shin malam idan ka duba ta nan duka dangantarku dai dai	Hence, sir, if you look from this vantage point, you are all equal

Dan Maraya informs us that Allah does not judge people according to their wealth or poverty. If in this life, the one who is wealthy is revered, obeyed, feared and his wealth is sought after by humans, Allah, the Almighty, does not treat that same person based on his possessions. Rather, He judges him, as well as the other people, according to the goodness that is in their hearts. The oral artist goes

even further, and underlines the responsibilities that wealthy people have to the poor ones.

<u>0091</u>	Kai mai akwai ka gane	You, the [haughty] wealthy, understand that
<u>0092</u>	In muddun ka na da shi ne	If you are truly wealthy
<u>0093</u>	In muddun ka na da shi ne	If you are truly wealthy
<u>0094</u>	Burin ka shiriya hairi	The objective which is sought [from wealthy ones] is to prepare for good deeds
<u>0095</u>	Ka yi taimoko ga kowa	You help people financially
<u>0096</u>	Ka taimaka wa kowa	If you helped people financially
<u>0097</u>	Ka agaza wa kowa	If you gave assistance to people
<u>0098</u>	Ka kyautata wa kowa	If you favored people
<u>0099</u>	Ran komuwa ga Allah	On the day of the return to Allah
<u>0100</u>	Wallahi ka ji daɗi	By Allah, you will be happy
<u>0101</u>	Bayanka sun ji daɗi	Your offspring will be happy

With power, come responsibilities, and with great power, come great responsibilities. Money is power, this is a fact of life—perhaps a sad one, but a fact nonetheless. Hence, the wealthy people ought to understand that the wealth they have should not be used for their sole selfish monstrous expenditures, but also for the betterment of the living conditions of the poor and destitute people that are around them. The one who believes in Allah has to understand that by showing mercy to Allah’s creatures, Allah will, in turn, show mercy to him. As for the one who does not believe in Allah, then he should understand that helping the poor and the needy helps one feel better. In the next section, Dan Maraya takes us into another domain—the domain of death and burial.

Death and Burial, paths both the poor and the wealthy go through undeniably

<u>0071</u>	Kai mai akwai ka gane	You, the [haughty] wealthy, understand
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		that
0072	In ba ku ɗan misali	I shall give you a simple example
0073	Ran komuwa ga Allah	The day of the return to Allah
0074	Kai mai akwai ka gane	You, the [haughty] wealthy, understand that
0075	In ba ka ɗan misali	I shall give you a simple example
0076	Ranar komuwa ga Allah	The day of the return to Allah

The message that *Dan Maraya* is about to give us is so important that he repeats the same lines twice in the above excerpt. According to Christiane Seydou, “The reiteration—triplication, in most cases—of an act by the same character is, in oral cultures, an ordinary narrative technique whose effect is to create [...] a dramatic progression which marks the primacy of the act”⁵ (1983, p. 46). *Dan Maraya* wants to make sure that he has all the attention of his listeners. He first invites the wealthy one to ponder over the greatness of the message, then he shocks him with the reminder of his death, which is inevitable.

0077	Yadi biyar fira ɗai	It is only in a five-yard cloth
0078	A ciki za a nannaɗe ka	That you will be wrapped
0079	Rame guda a kan tona	Only one grave will be dug
0080	Ka tuna ba a tona goma	Remember, ten graves will not be dug
0081	Dan wai kana da hali	Because you are wealthy
0082	In za a turbuɗa ka	When you are to be buried
0083	Haka nan wanda bai da komai	Likewise, the one who does not have anything
0084	Ran komuwa ga Allah	On the day of the return to Allah
0085	Yadi biyar fari ɗaya	It is only in a five-yard cloth
0086	A ciki za a nannaɗe shi	That he will be wrapped
0087	Rame guda akan tona	A single grave will be dug
0088	Ka tuna ba a tona goma	Remember, ten graves will not be dug

⁵ « La réitération—triplication, dans la majorité des cas—d’un acte par un même personnage est, dans les cultures orales, une technique narrative ordinaire dont l’effet est de créer [...] une progression dramatique qui marque la primauté de l’acte »

<u>0089</u>	Dan wai fa bai na komai	Because he is poor
<u>0090</u>	Malam idan ka duba ta nan duka dangantakarku dai	Sir, if you look from this vantage point, you are all equal

The prospects of one's death should be enough to push one into carrying out good deeds. Certainly, the one whose life comes to an end forgets all the fancy garments he had worn in his lifetime, and all the exotic meals he had consumed, and all the beautiful houses he had built. The fancy garments are either worn out, or left behind. The exotic foods turn into the filth that he evacuates in his restrooms. The magnificent houses are inherited by others. He does not even have the privilege of being buried in one of those houses. He is wrapped in a single piece of cloth (a shroud) and placed in a small hole dug in the ground.

According to the artist, death is the end of the worldly affair of the human being. And in this, there is no difference between the wealthy and the poor, they will all die sooner or later. As far as the Muslims are concerned, there will not be any difference between the actual burial of the wealthy and that of the poor. Muslims are forbidden from using coffins; they are not clothed before their burial. They are simply wrapped in a single white cloth. Nothing special should ornate their graves. From this vantage point, more than from all the others, the wealthy and the poor are truly equal. The artist projects the belief that after death, comes retribution for one's good deeds, or punishment for one's evil actions.

Retribution on the Day of Judgement, fruit of one's deeds

Dan Maraya Jos had already enlightened us that the one who does good deeds with his wealth, on the day of the return to Allah, will be happy (lines 0099-0100). Next, he elaborates on the portion of the one who had done evil instead.

<u>0102</u>	I muddun ka na da shi ne	If you are truly wealthy
<u>0103</u>	Burinka dai a bata	If your sole objective is to waste

0104	Ba ka taimako ga kowa	You do not help anybody financially
0105	Burinka cin-mutunci	Your objective is to humiliate people
0106	Ko burin ka cin-amana	Or your objective is to betray people
0107	Malam a kon a tashi	Sir, as days go by
0108	Gidaje gami da mata	The houses, along with the spouses
0109	Sanna gami da mota	And also, the cars
0110	Ya'ya su zo su kare	The sons and daughters [also] come to an end
0111	Mata su zo su kare	The spouses come to an end
0112	Mota su zo su kare	The cars come to an end
0113	Ka ga ran komuwa ga Allah	You see, on the day of the return to Allah
0114	Kai ma ka zo ka kare	You also, you come to an end
0115	Ka ga ranar da kai da babu	You see, on that day, you[r existence on this earth] compared to [your hypothetical] non-existence
0116	Wallahi babu bambam	By Allah, there would be no difference!

From the above, Dan Maraya believes that the one who humiliates others, by virtue of his numerous possessions, wisdom requires that there be some sort of justice which he will face, either in this life, or in the next. The same goes for those who waste their wealth, instead of spending it wisely, and helping the needy⁶. The same holds true for those who use their wealth as a means through which they betray others without fearing anybody, and also for those who are stingy. When comes death, even those who have done good deeds in this life will feel a sort of loneliness, let alone those who, due to their wrongdoings, will be cursed by fellow humans, and whose deaths will be celebrated even by their own offspring. What a pity! When death comes, the veil is removed from the eyes of the dying person; he grasps things which he failed to grasp in his entire lifetime (Qur'an chapter 50,

⁶ **When accumulating wealth, maximizing profits and concentrating economic power in the hands of a few individuals and corporations becomes the global credo, the poor are bound to be vanquished** (Muzaffar, 2003, p. 3)

verses 16-22).

In addition, to the wealthy one who was haughty, who was treacherous, who humiliated people, who refused to help the needy, and who bragged so much about his wealth, Dan Maraya has this to say to him: “*You see, on that day, you[r existence on this earth] compared to [your hypothetical] non-existence | By Allah, there would be no difference!*” (0115-0116). To close the oral poem, Dan Maraya recites the same line with which he opened it. Thus, he begins the song by stating that Allah says that the wealthy and the poor are equal, and he concludes it by placing an extra emphasis on this statement.

0132	Amma mai akwai da babu	Hence, The wealthy and the poor
0133	Duka dangantakarku dai dai	Are all equal
0134	Allah i ke faɗar	Allah is saying
0135	Haka, ba ni nake faɗa ba	This, not me
0136	Da ni nake faɗar	Were I the one saying
0137	Haka, da sai ku karyata ni	This, then, you would belie me

Conclusion

In sum, Dan Maraya Jos composed the song *Wakar Mai Akwai* to tell any person who, because of his social conditions or positions, thinks he is better than others that he is wrong. Maraya accepts that Allah in His infinite wisdom privileges some of his creatures above others by giving them knowledge, power and wealth. But these privileges are by no means an indication that they are better than other persons who do not benefit from them. He supports his assumptions with religious and non-religious proofs. For him worldly wealth is just a means through which Allah tests his servants to see whether they will keep their humanism or not. For those who, in spite of their riches, knowledge and power, still treat others as equals, they win the test of this life. But for those who ill-treat their fellow humans, because of their social standing, they fail the test of this life. No matter the result of the test, in the eyes of Allah, humans are equal in terms of their humanness.

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