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### **Bridging the hiatus: Dramatic and poetic elements in Malalo's *kirari***

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## Bridging the hiatus: Dramatic and poetic elements in Malalo's *kirari*

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### Abstract:

The theme of this paper is *farautar jarumta* 'heroic hunting' in the north-western part of Nigeria. The paper pays particular attention to the *kirari* 'praise-epithets', also called *koda kai* 'adulation of the self', of the *mafarauta* 'hunters' as one of the cardinal features of this kind of hunting. It traces certain dramatic elements, such as stage/space, costume and props, dramatis personae, plot, impersonation, and the spectacle as well as the singing and drumming that are an important part of performance of *kirari*. It further examines poetic elements in Ummaru Usman Malalo's famous *kirari Saka-cira*; these elements are grouped into genealogy-based, action-based, and metaphorical *yabo* 'praise'. The paper shows that, although the delivery of *kirari* has, in some studies, been analysed as a song text, it requires performance along with the dramatic elements which belong in a performance. The analysis of *Saka-cira* – which has never previously been studied – shows that in their *kirari*, *mafarauta* utilise poetic devices to portray, embellish, and exaggerate events, comparing themselves with, or even declaring themselves to be an animal or a natural phenomenon. The analysis in the paper relies on the Hausa version of the *kirari*. It utilises a transcribed version of *Saka-cira*, interviews, observations, and secondary literature.

**Keywords:** Hausa, heroic hunting, *kirari*, performance, drama, poetry

## 1 Introduction

In Northern Nigeria, *mafarauta* 'hunters', *'yantauri* 'performers with knife blades' and *'yandambe* 'traditional boxers' perform their *kirari* 'praise-epithets' when practising their profession. The professions of hunting and boxing are male dominated occupations in Northern Nigeria, though the women perform important roles such as fortifying their husband's bodies through the use of charm, herbs and con-

coctions, therefore guarding their *asiri* 'spiritual or magical powers', and sometimes by reciting their *take* 'introductory praises'. As an art form, *kirari* is also used to praise spirits in the context of the spirit cult *boori* (King 1967). These artists use the *kirari* medium to glorify their lineages and their own successes; thus their *kirari* are a form of self-praise, and contrast with oral praise songs in which griots apostrophise the objects of their praise through *wakokin yabo* (Bello & Baum 2020).

The aim of this article is to expand our knowledge of hunting and *kirari* among Hausa people through an examination of the nature of heroic hunting in the north-western part of Nigeria. Central to this attempt is the analysis of the *kirari* of the hunter Ummaru Usman Malalo, with the title *Saka-cira* 'the one that causes an involuntary action'. *Saka-cira* is a verbal compound that comprises of two words (*saka* 'to cause' and *cira* 'involuntary action'). In verbal compounds, two or more words are used as single domain in conveying a larger idea e.g. *hana-salla* 'to prevent prayer' or *shiga-da-alwalla* 'enter with ablution' (McIntyre 2006: 171). This form of expression is common in Hausa language.

Verbal compounds of this nature are normally used in *wakokin yabo* and in *kirari* to elicit an action. Hunters and other participants react unpreparedly by moving, running, shivering or responding to taunts when they see the sturdily built hunter-performer, especially when the taunts are spiced with a hunter-performer's *tsawa* 'thunderous scream'. In the Hausa language, this is referred to as *harzukawa* 'instigation'. *Saka cira* is deliberately deployed here as *kambamar zulaki* 'hyperbole' to overstate Malalo's capacity to cause furore. *Kirarin farauta* 'hunting praise-epithets' are riddled with this form of *yabo* 'praises' (this will be discussed in section 8). It can be realised from the foregoing that *Saka-cira*, which doubles as both action-based *yabo* and a metaphor, is in fact pregnant with layers of meanings, depending on how it is used in a context.

The aim of this paper is to examine the use of these kinds of poetic elements in *Saka-cira*, as well as the dramatic nature of the delivery of hunting *kirari* among the Hausa people of north-western Nigeria. The Hausa people live in the Sahel region of West Africa, with a significant number in the northern region of Nigeria. They have a long history in West Africa and their language is spoken by as many as 50 million people (Sabi'u et al. 2018). Most Hausa people are Muslims;

their religion, Islam, sustaining their connection with the Arab world (Gandu 2016). Hausa society is a melting pot of civilisations and commerce, with trading, agriculture, and small-scale businesses as the mainstay of the people (Olugunwa 2014).

Ahmed (1983) groups the performance types of the Hausa people into *wasannin al'umma* 'community dramas', *wasannin yara* 'dramas for young people', *wasannin lokaci-lokaci* 'occasional dramas', and *wasannin sana'o'i* 'occupational dramas'. Hunting *kirari* can thus be classified under *wasannin sana'o'i* 'occupational dramas', since hunting is considered as an occupation among Hausa people. The main concern of this paper is *kirari*, in particular *kirari* performed in *farautar jarumta* 'heroic hunting'.

Heroic hunting differs from conventional hunting, in which hunters simply hunt for food or sport. In *farautar jarumta*, the concern is more with the display of strength and invulnerability than with actual hunting. It is characterised by the settling of scores between competing hunters and may well involve the shedding of blood. It is in such a context that *kirari* are performed; they are sung by the hunters themselves, singing their own praises, but may also be sung on other occasions. The hunters in *farautar jarumta* mostly target dangerous animals such as *bauna* 'buffalo', *karkanda* 'black rhino', *zaki* 'lion', *damusa* 'leopard', *kura* 'hyena', *siyaki* 'striped hyena', and *giwa* 'elephant' to prove their mettle. Only experienced hunters can hunt this type of dangerous animals. However, other animals such as *zomo* 'rabbit', *barewa* 'antelope', *gafiya* 'grasscutter', *yanyawa* 'pale fox', and *gauraka* 'crane' were also hunted. It is important to note that *farautar jarumta* was mostly practiced by poor people of lower caste in the Hausa society (see section 6.1). Hunting, as an occupation, is however still practiced.

## 2 Data

The data on hunting and the culture of *kirari* was obtained through two years of fieldwork that included interviews, participant-observation as well as documentation and description. Four interviews with Malalo and three with the hunter Ahmadu Kwabre were held in 2012, and provided much insight into the practice of heroic hunting and the delivery of *kirari* in north-western Nigeria. From the 1960s to the 1990s these hunters were revered by other such hunters as well as by

praise singers; the information given by the latter confirm the interviews with Malalo and Kwabre. The *kirari* examined in this paper – *Saka-cira* – was sourced from one of the interviews with Malalo; the nature of its delivery was also observed. All such information is documented and described in this analysis. Some secondary literature also provides information on *kirari* and the hunting culture in this region.

### 3 Methodology

The paper offers a literary, text-based, and descriptive analysis of the dramatic and poetic elements of *kirari*. The procedural information on the practice of heroic hunting was sourced from the interviews with Malalo. The analysis of the nature of the performance of *kirari* was equally derived from the hunter's narration and performance at intervals thereby helping in bridging the gap between narration and performance. The interviews with the hunters provided information on what heroic hunting is, on the nature of a hunting party, on the roles of hunters and praise singers and their troupes, on the actual hunt and forest spaces in which it takes place, and on the blood-letting, which occurs due to either disputes over the game or the settling of scores. The knowledge gleaned in the interviews provides a background to the hunting tradition, showing how it is moulded by factors such as culture, geography, politics and history instead of objective reality (Lakoff 1987).

Aware that no individual is an ultimate repository of cultural values and that no single account makes up an oral tradition the interviews referred to above were supplemented with participant-observation between 2012 and 2014. On 16th June 2012, I witnessed a hunting expedition during which *kirari* were performed; however, it was not the type of hunting expedition described here because there was no evident bloodletting. There were also less deadly animals, compared to when these actual heroic hunts took place. On the eve of the Eid-ul-Kabir<sup>1</sup> festival in Katsina in 2013, I was able to witness the *kirari* of Malalo and Kwabre; in 2014 Malalo delivered the same *kirari* that is analysed here but with some variation. For its

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1 Eid-ul-Kabir is an annual Muslim day of sacrifice in commemoration of Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son, Prophet Ismail, when he was commanded by Allah. During this ritual, animals such as *rago* 'ram,' *'saniya* 'cattle,' and *rakumi* 'camel' are sacrificed in honour of his obedience.

poetic analysis, this paper relies on the *kirari* he delivered during one of the interviews in 2012. The interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed by the research assistant Abdullatif Yusuf under the supervision of the researcher.

The citations of *kirari* made during the hunting and the festivals were recorded using a video camera and have been analysed by the researcher. The recording provided the data needed to appreciate and understand the effect of the performances. In order to augment the data, the researcher observed the *kirari* of 'yandambe' 'boxers' on 2nd and 10th February 2013 and of 'yantauri' 'hard men with knife blades' on 10th and 11th July 2013 during the annual Eid-ul-Kabir celebration. These performances – of 'yantauri' and 'yandambe' – were analysed in relation to *kirarin mafarauta* because these forms are not significantly different. Secondary sources on *kirari* and hunting in the northern region in particular, and their practice across different cultures were also examined (see section 5).

#### 4 Ummaru Usman Malalo

Ummaru Usman Malalo (\* 1931/2; † 2016) is a Hausa hunter-performer from the city of Katsina in Katsina State. He had two wives and eighteen children. Malalo hunted alongside renowned hunters like Kwabre, and was regarded as a great warrior during his hunting years. Malalo hailed from a very religious home where his father was an Islamic teacher. Nevertheless, he chose *farautar jarumta* 'heroic hunting' despite his family background. In our interview, he narrated how he was labelled the black sheep of the family. Furthermore, although Islam prohibits seeking protection from any other being or force apart from Allah, Malalo resorted to the use of charms as a means of protection against enemies or wild animals. He started hunting small animals at the age of sixteen under the guidance of his uncle, who was also a hunter. He recounts that at the age of 26, he ventured into the world of the supernatural equipped with the basic protection expected of hunters and in a few years carved a niche for himself as a fierce, daring, and bold hunter.

## 5 Related literature on *kirari*

Before proceeding to the analysis of Malalo's personal *kirari Saka-cira* some studies on Hausa praise poetry and *kirari* are reviewed here. These studies show that *kirari* is an oral art form found in various contexts. In a study on the *boori* cult possession practice in Katsina State, for example, King (1967) describes the use of *kirari* to praise the spirits as part of the cult ritual. The focus of the present article, however, is to show *kirari* as a poetic form that can only be fully realised through a dramatic display. This concern with poetics and performance can be seen in the works of Finnegan (1970) and Furniss (1997). While Finnegan (1970) sees *kirari* as a kind of praise poetry, Furniss (1997) views it as oral poetry that is not exclusively used as praise. Both scholars, however, argue that *kirari* exploits poetic and dramatic elements.

Finnegan (1970) identifies *kirari* as poetic devices used to praise a particular subject, but argues that *kirari* can only be fully realised with the aid of performers, singing, drumming and an audience. Furniss (1997) also sees *kirari* as a poetic device, arguing that it requires some form of dramatisation; he also contrasts *kirari* with *take*, which is an introductory phrase in praise of subject-performers (hunter, traditional boxer, or a *boori* cult member) sung by another artist or a performer. It usually precedes a *kirari* and serves as a way of inciting the person it is intended for to deliver his *kirari* or, in the case of hunting and boxing, to demonstrate his paranormal powers. In another important work, Akporobaro (2006) considers a *kirari* as an incantatory poetry which – with its dramatic features – oils the wheels of hunting culture, fuels gallant displays and enables hunter-performers to take on a larger-than-life image. Although Finnegan (1970), Furniss (1997) and Akporobaro (2006) locate the poetic and dramatic features in *kirari*, they fail to examine these elements using practical examples. Nor are they solely concerned with the Hausa hunting *kirari*.

In his study on Hausa hunting *kirari*, the present author (Bello 2013) examines how hunters use the form to recount their gallant deeds and assert their dominance in hunting circles; the article attempts to locate the importance of hunting and *kirari* in Hausa society and to describe how the culture is gradually disappearing. However, despite its insights into the nature of *kirari* it does not

examine the dramatic and poetic features of *kirari*. In another work by Oumarou (2018), Hausa *kirari* are examined as autobiographical conduit used by hunters and renowned bards such as Dr. Mamman Shata Katsina; the paper focuses on Ahmadu Kwabre's *kirari* and Shata's *Bakandimiya* as examples of the way an individual's life may be expressed and preserved in Hausa praise poetry. It does not assess the dramatic and poetic elements associated with *kirari*, either.

In a study on hunting and related practices among the Kushi people of north-eastern Nigeria, Batic (2019) describes the procedural stages in hunting and how the hunter performs as narrator, using storytelling to preserve hunting practices. Bello & Baum (2020) deal with Hausa hunting, particularly from north-western Nigeria, by examining the deployment of eulogies in the *kirari* of Kwabre. They examine how hunter-performers re-stage conquests, glory, and history. In the present article, however, the concern is with some of the dramatic elements in Hausa hunting *kirari*, which have as yet not been adequately described. Specifically, Malalo's *kirari* have not been previously studied.

## 6 Elements of drama in *kirari*

This section locates and analyses some of the features of drama that can be found in *kirari* such as stage/space, dramatis personae, props and costumes, audience, imitation, and songs. The interplay of these key elements leads to a full realisation of the *kirari*, with the hunter brandishing and using dangerous weapons (e.g. knife, axe and horn) on himself in an attempt to prove his mettle. In his *kirari* the hunter dramatises his conquests of animals and men in hunting and war in such a way that even hunters who were not present at the event can visualise his deeds for themselves. The staging includes the delivery of *kirari* and a display of supernatural powers (Akporobaro 2006; Bello 2013). As will be shown in the analysis of Malalo's *kirari* these subject-performers eulogise their feats in words and action. Furniss (1997: 73) calls this form 'combat literature', and recounts that it is practiced by hunters in Northern Nigeria and boxing and wrestling combatants across different cultures.



## 6.1 Stage/space

In Northern Nigeria, hunting *kirari* were normally staged in forests, unless they were performed on request on occasions such as the Eid-ul-Fitr,<sup>2</sup> Eid-ul-Kabir and turbaning<sup>3</sup> ceremonies. In the past, hunters staged the *kirari* in the region's dangerous forests, such as *kukar sani mege*, *mazakai*, *gemawa*, and *'yar-tsamiya*. These forests were home to different species of animals such as *kura* 'hyena', *zaki* 'lion', and various species of snakes such as *kububuwa* 'the puff adder'. Sadly, however, most of these wild animals are facing serious threats of extinction because of deforestation for agricultural purposes and as a consequence of the growth of towns and cities; thus many of them are only found in game reserves today.

The practice of *farautar jarumta* also faces serious setback due to the loss of forest spaces, extinction of game, and low demand for the meat. Bello (2013) reports that, the hunters have resorted to serving as night-watchmen at farms and in the towns. In the past, they were used to defend towns against external aggression; keeping watch in a town or in wealthy homes at night is therefore, to a certain extent, continuity. This community policing has become more prevalent in the past few years since the conventional policing system in the region has gradually become less effective, leading to a high rate of crime and banditry.

Although *farautar jarumta* is no longer practiced today due to the above factors, the art of *kirari* has survived. As mentioned above, *kirari* is still delivered on request on special occasions. Bello & Baum (2020) reveal that hunting *kirari* was common in the region during the pre-colonial inter-tribal and religious wars. Many heroic hunters fought in the unending conflicts, and given their importance as warriors, they were allowed to operate in the forests undisturbed. In the interviews, Malalo (2012) and Kwabre (2012) reveal that *farautar jarumta* lasted into the 1990s. Malalo recounts that courageous hunters received kola nuts when invited to the hunts in the forests listed above and that only gallant hunters participated in the expe-

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2 Eid-ul-Fitr is an annual Muslim festival of breaking fast. It marks the end of the Ramadan fasting period.

3 Also known as coronation, the word turbaning was derived from the root word 'turban'. It is a ceremony in Hausa-Fulani culture for the installation of someone in a position of traditional power (e.g. district head or emir).

ditions. Among the Hausa people, kola nuts is used as a token of invitation to ceremonies or is distributed as *shaida* 'witness' during weddings or naming ceremonies. Among the Fulani, a people closely connected with the Hausa, kola nuts is used as a way of promising support in order to cement new relationships. Among the Igbo people, it serves similar cultural functions, such as acceptance, solidarity, or cooperation (Unya 2021).

Hunters who accepted the invitation had to prove their mettle during these expeditions. The weak or unlucky ended up dead or injured by the animals or by other hunters. This hunting expedition opened with the recitation of the *take* of the participant-hunters and is followed by the *kirari* of hunter-performers, expressions of rivalry, and the actual hunt. During *farautar jarumta*, the hunter could only keep what he killed if he withstood the blows or challenges of other ferocious hunters (Kwabre 2012).

This phase of the expedition is known as a *kazar karfi* 'dispute over the game', whereby the captured or dead animal serves as a trophy that must be earned during the exercise. In the Hausa society even a maiden that suitors haggle over can be regarded as *kazar karfi* that only the lucky man can get. The worth of a hunter was determined at this stage. It also marred ill-prepared hunters. The second phase of the *kirari* took place at this point. It was the climax of the event, whereby only the brave could stand tall; scores were normally settled during the conflict and even fiercest hunters were challenged to a duel.

As stated above, hunters who managed to catch a wild animal had to declare this before their rivals. According to Malalo (2012) this is the deadliest part of the hunt because it required a hunter to stand with the dead animal amidst the other hunters, to recite his *kirari*, and ultimately counter the vicious strikes and blows of the rivals. This defining moment determined the worth and status of the hunter in the group. Hunters such as Malalo and Kwabre hunted and delivered their *kirari* under such harsh condition. In these notorious forest spaces many a hunter's reputation was made or marred.

The defining modes of the *kirari* performance, both simulative and dramatic, transformed the forest into an arena for display and narration. These spaces were graced by great hunters, along with popular musicians and drummers. The displays that accompanied the delivery of *kirari* on this stage were dramatic manifestations of under-

lying potential; they were untamed, and yet allowed the performance to assume the character of a ritual – with a carnivalesque quality. As mentioned earlier, hunter-performers mostly used the forests for their *kirari*. There was enough space for other hunters to participate, leaving room for improvisation: they could join the fray, old grudges could be rekindled or new conflicts initiated. Despite the enormous vastness of the forests, however, the hunter-performers staged their *kirari* in compact spaces, therefore promoting the participation of actors and spectators – presence and participation being the essence of live performance.

## 6.2 Costumes and props

Costumes are among the most noticeable features of performance of *kirari*. They attract attention not because of their ornamental nature – such as those used during *durbar* festivals – but because they are made from the skins of wild animals such as *zaki* ‘lion’ and *kura* ‘hyena’. They are trophies, representing the hunter’s prowess in hunting. Hunters also use costumes and props of men they defeated, brandishing their weapons in order to instil fear. Some of the clothes used are in tatters, a sign of a hunter’s supernatural powers. Hunters normally fortify their bodies through spiritual means; this involves the use of herbs or concoctions. This fortification makes it difficult to injure the hunter during displays or actual conflict.

As a result, but often unintentionally, anything the hunter touches, such as *makami* ‘weapon’, *karfe* ‘iron’ or *kaya* ‘clothes’ get worn out more easily. Thus, the more shabby and damaged the clothes, the more fortified the body of the hunter is seen to be. Unlike in a *durbar*, where members of the corps unit wear *sulke* ‘chain mail’ and *lifidi* ‘padded armour’, hunters tend to use animal skins. Since the latter can be pierced by a sword these skins are – paradoxically – a mark of their invulnerability: the hunter’s protection lies in his use of charms and concoctions that harden the skin, such that it cannot be injured. They also move more easily when they use clothes made from skins.

Charms are tied and hung around the waist, hands and/or leg. They protect the hunter against injury or other hazards associated with hunting and war. They also enable him to perform mysterious acts, including vanishing into thin air and withstanding the fierce blows and strikes of his enemies. The charms also protect against wild beasts. Charms are mostly prepared by men, but women also

prepare concoctions at home, sometimes under the guidance of men. Other props that are used by the hunters include weapons like *sayi* 'black iron', *sakandimi* 'heavy metal axe', *mashi* 'spear' and *takobi* 'sword'. Without such weapons, they are vulnerable and prone to attack. Furthermore, they require the props and costumes in order to perform; *farautar jarumta* and the associated *kirari* are not complete without them.

### 6.3 Dramatis personae

*Kirari* requires a performance. As identified in section 1, only men participated in the hunt and the performance of *kirari*. In the Hausa society, heroism, as well as praise singing and drumming, were seen to be the preserve of men. During a delivery of *kirari*, the necessary dramatis personae are hunters as subject-performers and hunters as participants-cum-audiences. The latter watch as subject-performers demonstrate and recount their feats of valour. At the *kazar karfi* stage, where the hunter defends his prey, as identified earlier, other hunters join the fray, chanting and staging their *kirari* in response to that of the principal subject-performer.

The other hunters often respond by brandishing their own weapons and making to cut or stab themselves in order to demonstrate their invulnerability; finally, they strike the subject-performer, leading to a heated verbal exchange in a high-pitched tone. It was at this stage in the proceedings that, on occasion, some hunters lost their lives or sustained injuries; the culprits usually went unpunished. Kwabre in an interview narrated that he was once reprimanded by the Sultan of Sokoto for killing a fellow hunter during hunting in one of the forests of Sokoto state; he was eventually sent into exile, but finally relocated to Katsina (Kwabre 2012). As stated earlier, these hunters were allowed to operate in forests unchecked due to their enormous contributions to general security in the region and during warfare.

As mentioned in section 6.1, the performance of *kirari* is typified by the participation of the principal actor and spectators. This level of engagement lends vigour to hunting *kirari*. This sort of participation can equally be seen in the *kirari* of 'yandambe' 'traditional boxers' in Northern Nigeria. In *kirarin mafarauta*, participation is organised in heroic-hierarchical mode, a structure involving rules of precedence and seniority. The participants are aware that only hunters at par with the principal subject-performer can pick up the challenge

by responding to his taunts and disputing the claims in his *kirari*. As the subject-performer recounts, re-enacts and simulates, the hunters participate in the combat and in enacted event; bloodshed ultimately proves the heroism of the hunter-participants.

Only hunters who receive kola nuts are invited and have access to the event; the properly invited participants help determine the full actualisation of the *kirari*. Apart from celebrated hunters, other *dramatis personae* include famous drummers and praise-singers who also receive kola nuts as an invitation. Finnegan (1970) maintains that the appropriate participants help to intensify the excitement.

#### 6.4 Plot

When staging his *kirari*, the performer enacts a story using words and gestures. In the present case, the hunter narrates his exertions and expeditions and recounts the history of his family or of those he associates with. In *Saka-cira*, Malalo offers a chronicle of heroic hunting expeditions in the region through a nonlinear plotting style which defies any attempt at tracing a direct causality in the order of events. This kind of narrative technique can be found in the Indian epic *Mahabharata*, where the story within the story method was adopted (Thorat 2005). Despite Malalo's use of this nonlinear style, the following thematic emplotment can be realised in the *kirari*: the introduction of the hunter and his family background (line 1 to 13); delineation of his heroic attributes (line 15 to 19); the culture of violence associated with *farautar jarumta* (in lines 19, 20, 21, 22); the accounts of actual conflicts (line 30 to 34); and closure (line 39 to 42).<sup>4</sup>

*Saka-cira* opens, in the first part, with the introduction of the hunter as the subject of the *kirari* and performer, who gives a brief history of his family, tracing his roots through his ancestors. Malalo states at this point in the narration that although his father was an Islamic scholar he and his brother 'Yar-mada chose to be hunters, and thus sought protection through supernatural means. In the second part, he tries to paint his heroic features using some poetic devices in an attempt to create a larger-than-life image as well as to instil fear in the minds of other hunters and enemies. He views himself as *bakin*

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4 The line numbers refer to the lines in numbering the *kirari* text in the appendix.

*dawa* 'a deadly forest' with *bakin kwalli* 'a black silver-lead'<sup>5</sup> (in line 1), as an animal like the *kura* 'hyena' or the *kunama* 'scorpion' (in lines 13 and 32), an object such as a *likkafani* 'shroud' or a *garhanga* 'the witch's perfume' (in lines 7 and 8), and, metaphorically, as a *mahaukaci* 'mad man'. This part ends referring to the actual heroism of the subject, stressing his ability to cause chaos and dominate the hunting grounds.

The third part of this *kirari* offers a good insight into the violent culture of hunting in the north-western region. In this part, Malalo states how drumming, *take*, and *kirari* often precede deadly conflict in line 20: *kasa kidin mahaukaci kaga aiki* 'play the music of the mad man and see valour'. He recounts how the conflicts led to the deaths or serious injuries of participant-hunters in line 19 *ni ne inda gawar talaka da ta gada take* 'I stand tall around the dead body of the poor man and the antelope'. And in the fourth part of the *kirari*, he takes us back to the actual conflicts he has been involved in. He narrates how he spent seven days striking the enemy (*kwana bakwai nike ana sara ta*) in line 30 and another seven days enduring retaliatory blows (*kwana bakwai nike ina sara wa*) in line 31.<sup>6</sup> He claims to have been part of numerous hazardous hunting expeditions and major conflicts and to have survived the worst. In an interview, Malalo confessed that he nearly met his waterloo during one of the hunts. He recalled that he was once nearly killed by a more prepared hunter during a hunting expedition and on his part fatally injured many hunters.

The heroic track record of Malalo is now established in the *kirari*, a reality the audience (such as hunter-participants, praise singers and their troupes) are expected to appreciate. He douses the heightened tension in the *kirari* towards the end with an account of his survival against tremendous odds. And finally, in the fifth part, he brings the curtain down with the prayer: *Allah kai mu inda ba'a rabawa* 'may Allah take us to where nobody interferes in a conflict' (in line 39), adding that *raban hwada ka kawo raini* 'it is interference in a conflict that brings disrepute' (in line 40). Malalo in essence tries to warn against being invited to a hunting space where hunters will not be allowed to settle their gory scores.

5 Black silver-lead (also called *galena*) is an eye make-up that is equally used as a blood tonic.

6 Exaggeration is a common feature of *kirari*: there is an element of exaggeration in the actual days (14 days) that the conflict ensued.

## 6.5 Impersonation and spectacle

Impersonation – or an act of imitation – as a dramatic technique is indispensable for any theatrical delivery or display; it is at the heart of any performance. In a conventional theatre, it is thought to be secular; in a ritual, it is felt to be sacred. Furthermore, in the latter – and in the present case – the performance is typically associated with some form of imitative magic, whereby the hunters simulate animals and objects. In a *kirari*, the subject-performer impersonates himself, other hunters, and animals by re-staging his adventures, victories, and his worst fears. In this way, he re-enacts the terror he wreaked on wild animals and adversaries. He goes so far as to imitate the sounds and faint movements of his human and animal victims as they gasped their last breath.

The hunter's conquest of men/animals is chanted and demonstrated simultaneously in the performance. Here, the hunter becomes a performer. His dramatic presence is of the essence: his role as the hunter-protagonist is vital to the realisation of the re-enacted event. In the case of Malalo, such performances magnified his power, and, with his short and sturdy physique, sent fear down the spines of the other participants. The dramatisation and narration of his epic feats drove the performance, inviting challenges from other participants, who in their turn, re-enacted and narrated their own deeds (Malalo 2012).

In the performance of Malalo that this researcher observed in 2013, he responded to the taunts of other performers by praising himself and re-enacting the epic events he had been involved in. He further consolidated his heroic claims by using a knife to strike himself. He went even further, associating himself with dangerous weapons like a *gatari* 'axe'. This performance – and others – revealed that there is no major difference between a staged and a real event. Malalo's delivery of the *kirari Saka-cira* bridged the gap between a performer and protagonist and between claim and reality.

## 6.6 Singing and drumming

The hunting *kirari* is usually accompanied by *kidi* 'drumming', some form of fluting using *alghaita* 'a wooden oboe-like instrument' and is introduced by the *take* of the principal performers. Though hunters in the north-east either hunt in large groups or pairs, as can be seen

among the Kushi hunters (Batic 2019), they are not usually escorted by praise poets, drummers and flutists. In the north-west, which is the context of this study, this kind of hunting must involve these players and musical accompaniments. Some famous musicians and praise poets are invited in order to take part in the events, and the performances are spiced with a fast, heavy, and loud tone, amplified by *busa kaho* 'horn-blowing'.

Renowned praise-singers from the northern region like Abubakar Kassu Zurmi and Muhammadu Gambu, along with their troupes, participated in such hunting expeditions and amplified the events – and the rival clashes – with their invigorating tempo and rhythm. Kassu and Gambu sang mostly for the famous *mafarauta*, *'yantauri*, and *barayi* 'thieves'. The troupes form part of the overall performances, entertaining and singing the *take* of hunter-participants. Although a number of famous hunters participated in this dangerous hunting expedition, the troupes often paid most attention to the most legendary among them. Their *take* stimulate these hunters to perform their own *kirari*. These songs and sounds add to the drama, thus creating the necessary tension for the hunter-participants. No *kirari* can be fully realised without musical accompaniment; it is a vital element of a performance, heightening the rhythm of the poetic chants and provoking clashes between the rival hunters.

## 7 *Yabo* in Malalo's *Saka-cira*

Praise poetry generally eulogises the life, accomplishments and epic deeds of the persons praised. In the contexts of Hausa culture, the subject of praise, the *jarumi* 'hero', may be an important person like a religious, cultural, or political leader, or even an ordinary person whose endeavours have left an enduring mark in their chosen career or neighbourhood. There are also instances where women, and even children, are praised. In the present context, we find the *mafarauta* or *'yantauri*. Such praise is known as *yabo* and involves the praise of the character of a person or real event. While a *kirari* entails *yabo* – both involve praise and have a purposive nature – it differs from the latter since it implies *koda kai* 'adulation of the self' and necessitates the exaggeration of the person's physique or actions, or requires the metaphorical representation of the performer with other animate or inanimate objects.



In this paper, Malalo's *kirari* is considered as *koda kai* – also used by praise singers in their songs – in its most exaggerated form, using proverbial expressions, metaphors and simile. Self-praise is not, actually, peculiar to any one culture. *Ijala* poets (*Ijala* is a form of oral poetry among the Yoruba people) also use metaphor and simile, but extend it to include personification and hyperbole (Alabi 2007). The use of *yabo*, through these devices, in the *kirari* of Malalo will be examined in subsections 7.1–7.3. The first subsection treats the factual content of his life, his genealogy; the second treats the real feats of the hero, at times exaggerated; the third subsection treats how he portrays himself as an animal or as a dangerous person, place or thing.

### 7.1 Genealogy-based *yabo*

Genealogy-based *yabo* associates the *jarumi* 'hero' with people that are related to him such as *iyaye* 'parents', *'yan-uwa* 'relatives', *abokai* 'friends', and *iyali* 'spouses'. The hunter traces his genealogy using words like *dan* 'son of' and *jikan* 'grandson of'. Such terms are often intended to stress the greatness of his forebears. In genealogy-based *yabo*, words such as *na* '(person/thing) of', *uban/baban* 'father of', *kanen* 'a younger brother of', *mijin/angon* 'husband/bridegroom of', and *abokin* 'friend of' are used (Tsoho 2014). In *Saka-cira* the *jarumi*, Malalo, tries to establish his genealogy using genealogy-based *yabo* in three instances, two of which can be seen in examples (2) and (3).

(2) *Ni ne kanen 'Yar-mada*

I am 'Yar-mada's younger brother.

(3) *Ni dan malan wanda bai halin malan ba*

I am the cleric's son that does not follow in his footsteps.

Association with others is vital in heroic poetry. The above excerpts introduce us to Malalo's forebears. In line (2), he utilises genealogy-based *yabo* in *kanen* 'a younger brother of' to tease out the relevance of family bonding among the Hausa people. Family is important to the Hausa, allowing one to be considered as a community member on the – essential – basis of affiliation to a family. There is hardly a *kirari* or a *wakar yabo* 'praise song' without reference to the ancestry or family ties of the subject. The family is the 'microcosm' of society and protector of its values; parents are expected to guide children so that they fit into the society, and those who fail often have to hang their heads in shame.

Line (3) of the *kirari* implies one such parental failure in that Malalo did not sustain his family's old tradition: not only does he ignore his Islamic upbringing and his father's pursuit of Islamic scholarship, he chooses a career which turns him towards the supernatural, violating a core tenet of Islamic teaching. It looks like Malalo is not ashamed of his choice; he seems to believe that there is nothing wrong with dissent and with an individual choice of career. Indeed, he seems proud to see himself as the polar opposite of his family.

## 7.2 Action-based *yabo*

Action-based *yabo* paints the epic deeds of a protagonist. Given that the concern of heroic poetry is bravery and victory, words are used poetically to recount the hero's military feats and his pre-eminence, and the narration is normally accompanied by various displays that confirm his claims. Thus, the hero enables those who have not witnessed the hunting spectacles referred to in the *kirari* to imagine what transpired. The following excerpts from *Saka-cira* reveal this.

(6) *Saka-cira...*

The one that causes an involuntary action...

(16) *Da mu aka zuwa, da mu aka dawowa*

It is with us they go, it is with us they return.

(17) *Da mu aka zuwa wurin gumurzu*

It is with us they go to any fierce conflict.

(30) *Kwana bakwai nike ana sara ta*

I endure enemy strikes for seven days.

(31) *Kwana bakwai nike ina sara wa*

I spend seven days returning enemy strikes.

(33) *Mu ka saran kato*

It is us that strike monstrous men.

(34) *Mu ka tsire hanjin kato*

It is us that pierce the huge man's innards.

In the above excerpts, the subject-performer uses poetic language to eulogise his epic successes in hunting expedition and other conflicts. In line (6) he uses a verb-based compound *saka-cira* 'one that causes an involuntary action', to show his capacity to initiate furore. Usage

of these kinds of verbal compounds is common in the self-praise of the Hausa people. Artists compose them using the verb plus its noun direct object, as in *ci-gari* 'conqueror of towns', *ki-gudu* 'fearless' and *gagara-gasa* 'undisputed' (Tsoho 2014). *Mafarauta* 'hunters' carefully utilise compounding involving metaphor (metaphor + direct object, metaphor + metonymy, metaphor + verb) in *kirari*, as in *daki-bari* 'a strong/reliable thing', *ja-in-ja* 'argument', and *sha-kundun* 'overall' (McIntyre 2006).

In lines (16) and (17), Malalo recounts his ability to survive fierce expeditions, which are later epitomised in lines (30) and (31) where he claims mysterious invulnerability, withstanding enemy strikes for seven days, and returning the blows for another seven days. He uses *kambamar zulaki* 'hyperbole' to exaggerate events. *Kambama* is used in Hausa poetry, especially in *kirari* and *wakar yabo*, to either stress a claim (*karfafa zance*) or to exaggerate.

The subject-performer's account of the strikes and retaliatory blows illustrates what normally ensued during heroic hunting expeditions. Hunters who manage to catch game must subject themselves to the blows of others, and survive them, in order to keep what they killed in the hunt. They also have the chance for *ramuwar gayya*, which is to appropriate 'a pound of flesh', when another hunter is subjected to the same ordeal. In 6.1 this was introduced as *kazar karfi* 'dispute over the game' stage. The height of this commotion is described in line (33) where the hunter wreaks havoc, and in line (34), where he conquers the unconquered.

### 7.3 Metaphorical *yabo*

*Tamka* 'metaphor' serves as associative reference. It is deployed in order to create a larger-than-life status. In the case of heroic praise poetry, *yabo* of associations and references are utilised to relate the subject with animate and inanimate objects like animals, plants, the natural world, as well as weapons. In Hausa *kirari*, hunters present themselves as animals, such as *kura* 'hyena', *zaki* 'lion', *kare* 'dog', *shaho* 'hawk', *giwa* 'elephant', or *kunama* 'scorpion'; as weapons like *kibiya* 'arrow', *gatari* 'axe', *kaho* 'horn', *karfe* 'metal', or *sakandimi* 'hefty metal axe'; as supernatural beings/things like *dodo* 'goblin'; or the natural world like *hadari* 'storm clouds', *fari* 'drought', and *tsawa* 'thunder'. Such metaphor helps them to impress and scare other hunters. In *Saka-cira*, Malalo deploys associative and descrip-

tive eulogies to emphasise his great strength and his unusual abilities, as can be seen below:

- (1) *Ni ne bakin dawa mai bakin kwalli*  
I am the dark forest with a black silver-lead.
- (7) *Garhanga nike, turaren maye*  
I am *garhanga*, the wizard's perfume.
- (8) *Likkafani nike wanda ba'a ciniki da farin rai*  
I am a shroud that never gets haggled over in a happy state.
- (42) *Giwa nike mai halin ba'a juya ba*  
I am the elephant that never turns back.

*Tamka* is used considerably in the excerpts above, as can be seen in line (1), where the hero equates himself with *bakin dawa* 'a dark forest'. Equally, in line (7) he portrays himself as *garhanga*, a type of perfume that is used only when death occurs to stress an association with death as an inevitable reality for any hunter that engages him in a duel. In line (8) he goes as far as to suggest that he is a *likkafani* 'shroud', implying that anyone who challenges him to a fight will have to buy a shroud for himself. In line (42) he regards himself as *giwa* 'an elephant', one that does not back down, in order to suggest that he does not turn his back on the enemy. The *kirarin mafarauta* transcend metaphor because during performances they usually back their claims in such a way that most of what they relate can be seen as being within the realm of possibility.

Apart from these hunters directly declaring that they are something other than human beings (place, object, or animal), they also deploy some metaphors to paint a predilection (including temperament) or a physical trait. Some related examples are *babbakun ruwa* 'deadly water' and *daki-bari* 'undefeatable' (Bello & Baum 2020). The following excerpts from the *kirari* reveal this:

- (13) *Ko kura tasan kada kwari yaka kwana*  
Even a hyena knows the crocodile sleeps in the valley.
- (32) *Kowar raina gajere bai taka kunama ba*  
Whoever disrespects a dwarf haven't stepped on a scorpion.

In attempting to depict his temperament, the hero, in line (13), uses zoomorphism, which is a type of metaphor in which a human being

takes on the attributes of an animal – in the present case, assigning the nature of the crocodile to himself. He also suggests by that, like the crocodile that only sleeps in the valley, he only participates in dangerous expeditions. In describing his short staunch physique, he compares himself to the scorpion when stepped upon, implying that only the right response proves one's manliness.

## 8 Conclusion

This article discusses the nature of *farautar jarumai* in north-western Nigeria as a distinct form of hunting. It identifies *kirarin mafarauta* 'hunter's chants' as a manifest feature of this form of hunt, showing that heroic hunting cannot be complete without it, and that a *kirari* must be performed in order for it to be fully realised. Many of the dramatic elements of *kirari* described above (in section 8) are rooted in descriptions of Western drama, but as seen in the analysis they are not the preserve of Western drama. Such features include (a) use of a stage, which in this case is the hunting ground or forests where *kirari* is performed; (b) the props, like weapons and amulets, as well the use of costumes (the latter are not purely ornamental or showy, but are made of skins of the beasts the hunter has killed); (c) *dramatis personae*, which include the principal hunter as well as participant hunters who perform in a heroic-hierarchical style; (d) a plot that opens with the introduction of the hero and his ancestors, paints his heroic attributes, offers an account of the violent nature of hunting, recount actual conflicts in which the hero was engaged, and then brings down the curtain with his triumph against all odds; (e) impersonation, in the way the *jarumi* 'hero' impersonates either himself while hunting, or other hunters and animals in an attempt to recount what transpired; and (f) singing and drumming that aid in proclaiming the *kirari*.

The paper also examines the poetic nature of the *kirari* through the analysis of *Saka-cira*, revealing the hunters' penchant for *koda kai* 'adulation of the self' which leads them to embellish and exaggerate events and compare and declare themselves to be both animate and inanimate objects. Using Malalo's *kirari* the paper has examined the kind of *yabo* found in *kirari*, and has shown that *kirarin farauta* are based on lineage, conquests, and self-praise. It reveals that, in *Saka-cira* the hunter deploys genealogy-based *yabo*, allowing him to trace

his roots with pride and to stress family and communal associations; action-based *yabo*, which using *kambamar zulaki* 'hyperbole' enables him to embellish his accounts of events and epic breakthroughs in hunting expeditions; and metaphorical *yabo* or *tamka* 'metaphor' to describe, to personify and to embellish. In conclusion, delivery or performance of *kirari* can be seen to belong in the realm of drama or theatre with metaphor as an essential mark of its poetic potential.

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## Appendix

### ***Saka-cira* - The one that causes an involuntary action**

1. *Ni ne bakin dawa mai bakin kwalli*  
I am the dark forest with a black silver-lead.
2. *Ni ne kanen 'Yar-mada*  
I am 'Yar-mada's younger brother.
3. *Ni dan malan wanda bai halin malan ba*  
I am the cleric's son that does not follow in his footsteps.

4. *Yaro baya rantsuwa da abunai*  
the boy cannot be sure of his possessions.
5. *In bai ci ba ubanai ya ci*  
If he does not use it his father will.
6. *Saka-cira, sa-cira*  
the one that causes an involuntary action.
7. *Garhanga nike, turaren maye*  
I am *garhanga*, the wizard's perfume.
8. *Likkafani nike wanda ba'a ciniki da farin rai*  
I am the shroud that never gets haggled over in a happy state.
9. *Mai saye da bakin rai*  
the buyer in a bad mood.
10. *Mai saidawa da bakar zuciya*  
the seller with dark intent.
11. *Nine radda jar gada taffadi*  
I outlive the antelope.
12. *Kado nike baka abokin hira*  
I am *kado* that doesn't befriend others.
13. *Ko kura tasan kada kwari yaka kwana*  
even a hyena knows the crocodile sleeps in the valley.
14. *Saka-cira, sa-cira*  
the one that causes an involuntary action.
15. *Muka zuwa*  
we are always ready to go.
16. *Da mu aka zuwa, da mu aka dawowa*  
it is with us they go, it is with us they return.
17. *Da mu aka zuwa wurin gumurzu*  
it is with us they go to any fierce conflict.
18. *Da mu aka zuwa, da mu aka dawowa*  
it is with us they go, it is with us they return.
19. *Ni ne inda gawar talaka da ta gada take*  
I stand tall around the dead body of the poor man and the antelope.
20. *Sannan kasa kidin mahaukaci kaga aiki*  
play the music of the mad man and witness valour.



21. *Innai gudu kace man shege*  
if I back down declare me a bastard.
22. *Inna waiwaya ubana goma*  
if I hesitate I am not born by one man.
23. *Saka-cira, sa-cira*  
the one that causes an involuntary action.
24. *Arna ko da mai sayen garhanga*  
is there any hero with the audacity to buy a garhanga.
25. *Arna ba'a saka ka sai an mutuwa*  
which is only used when there is death.
26. *Arna karya suke manema suna*  
even heroes have failed to prove their mettle.
27. *Yaro karya yake*  
you are just a pretender boy.
28. *Karya yake, wa'ar yaro*  
you are just a pretender who can't stand conflicts.
29. *Mai mutuwa daya rana*  
you can't survive a day's furore.
30. *Kwana bakwai nike ana sara ta*  
I endure enemy strikes for seven days.
31. *Kwana bakwai nike ina sara wa*  
I spend seven days returning enemy strikes.
32. *Kowar raina gajere bai taka kunama ba*  
whoever disrespects a dwarf haven't stepped on a scorpion.
33. *Mu ka saran kato*  
it is us that strike monstrous men.
34. *Mu ka tsire hanjin kato*  
it is us that pierce the huge man's innards.
35. *Saka-cira, sa-cira*  
the one that causes an involuntary action.
36. *Arna ko da mai sayen garhanga*  
is there any hero with the audacity to buy a garhanga.
37. *Garhanga nike turaren maye*  
I am *garhanga*, the wizard's perfume.

38. *Arna ba'a saka ka sai an mutuwa*  
which is only used when there is death.
39. *Allah kai mu inda ba'a rabawa*  
may Allah take us to where nobody interferes in a conflict.
40. *Raban hwada ka kawo raini*  
it is interference in a conflict that brings disrepute.
41. *Kowa yasan inda ya baro zomon sa*  
we all know where we belong.
42. *Giwa nike mai hali ba'a juya ba*  
I am the elephant that never turns back.