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New Trends in Recent Hausa Novels*

The novel as a literary genre has a relatively short history in Hausa literary tradition. Its origins are the result of the conscious policy of the colonial authorities which made many endeavours to promote Hausa writings. Among other arrangements the Literature Bureau (*Hukumar Talifi*) was established in Zaria in 1933. This Bureau at the very beginning of its existence launched a programme aimed at the creation of a Hausa literature of "modern type".¹ It was R. M. East who set himself the task of finding suitable authors. He visited the chief towns of Hausaland, and having assembled as many as possible of the intelligentsia, endeavoured to explain the scheme, and invite any who felt so inclined to try their hand at writing fiction. Later on he organized a sort of literary competition which attracted many Hausa by the promise of small prizes. The lack of an established prose-writing tradition influenced to a great extent the results of this literary contest. Although many novels were submitted to the jury of the Literature Bureau, only five of them gained awards and were subsequently published:

- *Shaihu Umar* (Sheikh Umar) by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa,²
 - *Gand'oki* by Bello Kagara,
 - *Jiki Magayi* (You will pay for the injustice you caused) by J. Tafida Wusasa,³
 - *Ruwan Bagaja* (The healing water) by Alhaji Abubakar Imam,⁴
 - *Idon Matambayi* (Through the eye of the enquirer) by Muhammadu Gwarzo.
- Almost all these novels have been strongly influenced by legendary traditions

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¹ On the activities of the Literature Bureau see R. East, *A First Essay in Imaginative African Literature*, "Africa", IX, 3, 1936, pp. 350–357; and Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya, *Takaitaccen tarihin rubuce-rubuce cikin Hausa*, Kano 1980, pp. 13–15.

² Translated into English by M. Hiskett, *Shaikh Umar*, London 1964.

³ Paraphrased by Cyprian Ekwensi in *An African Night's Entertainment*.

⁴ There exists also an English version.

and traditional stories. The authors merely made use of a device of stringing together related short stories by a continuous plot.

In later period, the legendary and adventure traditions continue to be quite popular and they are dominant in works like *Tauraruwar Hamada* (The Star of Sahara) by Ahmed Daura, *Iliya Dan Maikarfi* by Ahmad Ingawa, *Amadi na Malam Amah* (Amadi and Malam Amah) by Magaji A. Dambatta, *Da'u fataken dare* (Da'u and "night traders") by Tanko Zango, and others. At the same time, however, a realistic stream becomes more and more apparent. Some novels are strongly didactic in character and teach the principles of hygiene as in *Bala da Babiya* (Bala and Babiya) by Nuhu Bamali, or extol traditional Islamic values as is the case with *Nagari Na Kowa* (Good to everybody) by Jabiru Abdullahi.

The novel *Kitsen rogo* (Illusion) by Abdulkadir Dangambo seems to be exceptional, as it aims at showing problems deriving from a mass influx of villagers to the towns of Northern Nigeria. Those people are being attracted by urban entertainment and the hope for a more comfortable life. In truth, all their expectations turn out to be merely an illusion:

"The town you look at is like the fat on cassava (*kitsen rogo*). I have understood its secret. The people look at it with appetite. You should know, however, that the white cassava tends to trick the people: they think it is abundant in fat, but it is not so. In a similar way the people are being deceived by the town. They think it is brimful of joy, but when they come and enter it, they face the greatest difficulties there."⁵

The aim of this paper is to point to some new tendencies in the Hausa novel writing which have been evident since 1980. These novels mark a turning point in the development of the Hausa prose as they take into consideration some major shortcomings and vices of modern society and refer to political developments of recent times. It is true that some social evils have been also criticized by the Hausa dramatists, but still they tend to confine themselves to problems of family life and those referring to the rearing and education of children.

An important factor in the development of both socially and politically committed Hausa prose were the activities of the Department of Culture in the Federal Ministry of Social Welfare and Culture, headed by Dr. Garba Ashiwaju. In 1980 Federal Department of Culture organized a literary competition for creative writings in the three major Nigerian languages, i.e. in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba. This contest was in line with the Federal Government's endeavours to promote the development of Nigerian Culture in all its aspects. It was also aimed at encouraging writers, especially the young ones, to choose their mother tongues as literary media.

Seven Hausa literary works have been awarded prizes and published so far. They are:

— *Turmin danya* (The Strong Man), a novel by Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina (1st prize),

⁵ Cf. Abdulkadir Dangambo, *Kitsen rogo*, NNPC, Zaria 1984², p. 56.

— *Tsumangiyar kan hanya* (Way side birch), a novel by Musa Mohammed Bello (2nd prize),

— *Karshen alewa kasa* (A field day comes to the sticky end), a novel by Bature Gagare (3rd prize),

— *Zabi naka* (Make your choice), a novel by Mohammed Katsina,

— *Soyayya ta fi kud'i* (Love is more valuable than money), a drama by Hadi Abdullahi Alkanci,

— *Dausayin soyayya* (Well-watered pasture of love), a collection of lyrics with a commentary by Bello Sa'id,

Wasa kwakwalwa (Dilemma stories) by Muhammad Yahuza Bello.

New tendencies in the modern Hausa novels will be discussed under three aspects: 1. Reminiscence of the Civil War in Nigeria, 2. Social involvement of Hausa novelists, and 3. Image of political life in Nigeria.

Reminiscence of the Civil War in Nigeria

Two of the novels promoted by the Federal Department of Culture take into consideration some issues of the tragic "Biafran" war. They are *Zabi naka* by Munir Mohammed Katsina⁶ and *Karshen alewa kasa* by Bature Gagare.⁷

Whereas the theme of the Nigerian Civil War was quite popular among the novelists writing in English, it did not for a long time find its way into the creative writing of Hausa authors. It is true that the most important events on the battle field were being commented in occasional Hausa poems published by *Gaskiya ta fi kwabo*. As far as we know, however, they were not dealt with in other Hausa literary genres.

The novel of Munir Mohammed Katsina was written in the form of a fictitious biography, i.e. its main character, a certain Na-Muduka himself tells the story both of his life and that of his friends and relatives.

He was born into a poor family. His father Hakurau was merely a messenger in an office, unable to feed them all. Therefore, he became heavily indebted and when he lost his job, he was evicted from the house he had been hiring. During the journey to visit their relatives, both Hakurau and Na-Muduka were seriously injured in a motor accident. Hakurau never did recover from the wounds he received and later died.

After the death of Hakurau, his wife Shiryayya returned to her native village and being humiliated by other women (and facing starvation) she was forced to become a prostitute. Her sudden death left Na-Muduka without any means of subsistence. Happily, after some time, a certain Malam Tausayi took interest in the poor boy and

⁶ Federal Department of Culture, Lagos 1982.

⁷ Federal Department of Culture, Lagos 1982.

adopted him. He wanted to educate him in the modern way, but the boy turned out to be already delinquent. He was neither successful at school, nor in the job Malam Tausayi had found for him. Soon he was imprisoned for debt and there continued his "education" in jail, some famous thieves being his teachers.

It is during his sojourn in prison that the war broke out "between the government of our country and the rebels who wanted to abandon the Federation."⁸ Namuduka saw his chance and without any hesitation volunteered for the army. The military discipline and the horrors of war made him change his habits. He became a good soldier, ready to sacrifice his life to preserve the unity of the country.

Unlike the Hausa authors of the occasional poems written in war-time, Munir Mohammed Katsina is very careful when touching upon the theme of the Biafran secession. In a spirit of reconciliation he avoids any straight accusations and rather condemns the foreign involvement behind the Nigerian tragedy: "This was not a little war, precisely because foreign countries had their hands in it."⁹

The action taken by the Federal government is being justified in a speech of a "great commander" when addressing the new recruited soldiers:

"I want to remind you that today you became soldiers. You know it well that a soldier's job is neither for a coward nor for a slacker. You have been recruited for this job just because there was a need to protect the honour of this country, to preserve it united and as a Federation. We have not recruited you just because we needed to destroy one of the country's peoples. Not at all. It is not so. We want to strengthen peace and friendship. We had to undertake those measures against our will because we were going to fight our brothers, not strangers."¹⁰

Munir Mohammed Katsina, in the same spirit of reconciliation, even avoids mentioning both the name of the secessionist Republic and that of the people involved in the secession. What preoccupies him most is the tragedy of that unnecessary war for both sides of the conflict and its evil influences on the future development of Nigerian society.

During the Civil War, the Nigerian army recruited a great many new soldiers who were fighting for unity and peace. When the war was over, many citizens believed that the existence of such a huge army constituted a heavy burden for the country. Therefore, they started to urge the government to reduce its size. In due time such a retrenchment took place. It was a sad experience for the people who suddenly lost their jobs:

"After the war was over, peace and friendship returned to our country as if there had been no war. But now the people started to gossip, pointing at us.

⁸ Cf. Munir Mohammed Katsina, *Zabi naka*, p. 29.

⁹ Op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁰ Op. cit. p. 30.

According to those gossips we, the soldiers, were supposed to have nothing to do. We were told to idle about and do nothing. It means that they had forgotten what work we had done for them which cost many thousands of lives. Some of us were missing, some went mad, some others became disabled. But you know what the nature of men is — they are forgetful. They went so far that they dared to say we should be driven away because we were thought to waste the people's money without any reason.

Although the war was over, still the people were not justified in saying that we should simply be driven away. After we had sacrificed our lives in order to protect the honour of the country and make its people safe. If there had been a need to reduce our number, they should have thought about training us for another occupation, so that we could have got a job after demobilization.

In the course of time, the government also agreed to reduce the size of the army. That is why many of us were dismissed and I was one of them. Some of us were lucky, because at the time of their dismissal they got jobs which the government had prepared for them. We had bad luck as we had just been thrown out of the army. Nothing was prepared for us except for the demobilization compensation. This dismissal made many of us extremely dissatisfied. As I told you earlier, many friends of mine were recruited into the army. It is sad that this retrenchment affected them also."¹¹

The young people released from the army were facing problems of survival. That is why some of them decided to group themselves into gangs and to engage in the highway robbery. They knew how to use arms and besides, in the post-war period, arms were easily accessible.

Munir Mohammed Katsina not only explains the reasons behind the armed robbery as practised by the ex-soldiers, but he tries to justify and even idealize their activities. The robbers in his novel are not common criminals: they attack exclusively unscrupulous people who deserve such treatment. Let us listen to the words of Na-Muduka, a head of gang, who explains matters to his boys:

"Although I encouraged you to give yourself up to the robbery, still we are not going to harm anyone, but those who deserve it. Our robbery will not damage the country, but rather will improve it. We are going to harm only those people who do not wish the citizens any good, who grab the money out of the country and make profit of its natural resources which are intended for everyone!"¹²

In a short time Na-Muduka becomes a rich man. He returns to his native town, builds a house and gets married. He did not forget about Malam Tausayi who once upon a time had adopted him. When he realized that both the inhabitants of the town and the local government did not take care of the poor and disabled, he himself built houses for them and provided them with means of subsistence. He opened special food shops in which essential goods were obtainable at low prices.

¹¹ Op. cit., pp. 39ff.

¹² Op. cit., p. 41.

However, according to a well-established tradition of Hausa stories, every crime must be shown up and punished. The same device has been taken over by our Hausa novelists. Although Na-Muduka was trying to wipe out his crime with good deeds, his secret was eventually discovered. At first he was condemned to death, but later on the judge took into consideration the request of the poor people and changed his sentence to ten years' imprisonment.

The novel *Karshen alewa kasa* is not homogeneous in character. Its first few chapters deal with the problems of day-to-day life in a Maguzawa village, Tsaunin Gwano. It is from that village that the main character comes, a certain Mailoma. After leaving his native village and having experienced numerous adventures, he aims at the creation of a terrorist organization. His efforts to put these plans into action change the character of the novel from true-to-life story (overloaded with ethnographic details) into a sensational story:

"It is I whom you can see here that will keep Nigeria under his fingernails. I will keep the whole of Africa in my fingers. In due time we shall carry the whole world on the palm of our hand. We shall prosper in the black world just like the mafia is prospering somewhere else. We shall govern ourselves in the same way as the Cosa Nostra does it. We shall proceed just like the CIA is proceeding. We shall act just like the KGB is acting. We shall become great armed robbers, chief smugglers of arms and modern war equipment. We shall sow Indian hemp and toxic plants which people will take and get intoxicated by their strength. If we do that, we shall be sure that nobody dares to cross our business unless he gets a bullet into his head. Finally, we shall see that all the whore-houses in the country are under our control."¹³

In further passages, Mailoma aims at stirring unrest in the country, killing politicians and overthrowing successive governments in order to get his own way.

Reminiscences of the Civil War are numerous and have various connotations. In chapter II we witness a recruitment scene into Nigerian army. *Sarkin arna* (Chief of pagans) from Tsaunin Gwano is asked to bring thirty young men. He is quick to do it just not because he is sensitive to a slogan *One Nigeria*, but rather because he discerns a good opportunity to get rid of the Christians who try to settle down in his "kingdom". The political awareness of the village people is nil: names of Sir Tafawa Balewa, Ahmadu Bello, Ironsi and Ojukwu have no significance for the *Sarkin arna* and for his subjects. The young boys are going to fight for something which is quite abstract for them:

"They were travelling in a lorry towards Zaria. Suddenly one of the young men who was bitterly weeping for being incorporated into the army, touched the hand of corporal Dano and asked: 'What is that Nigeria you were talking about?'"¹⁴

¹³ Cf. Bature G a g a r e, *Karshen alewa kasa*, Federal Department of Culture, Lagos 1982, p. 191.

¹⁴ Op. cit., p. 54.

The expected end of the war caused the soldiers to think about their future life. Some of them entered the army in order to avoid punishment for crimes they had committed earlier. This was the case with Mailoma, the main character of the novel. When organizing his gang, he used to convince his boys:

“As you see the war is almost over. Our soldiers have captured almost all important Ibo towns. In six months time Ojukwu will calm down. And then the soldiers will become useless. And what are you going to do after the war is over?

The civilian laughed, sipped the drink, then took out a small card and said: ‘Look at it, Gadu. It is evidence that I am a Nigerian soldier of the rank of second lieutenant. But I have deserted and taken a new occupation which will provide me with food.’”¹⁵

The core of the band was formed during the Civil War, and on the ethnic principle. Mailoma used to contact his fellow Maguzawa people and win them over for his own case. One of them was lieutenant Mati who retained his position after the war and was now stationed in Kano. Having access to the military store-house, he became the main arms supplier for the terrorist organization Mailoma decided to create.

Both novels point to some negative effects of the Nigerian Civil War for the further development of society. This war attracted into the army some dubious characters who had committed various crimes and were looking for a way out through military service. Some of them (e.g. Na-Muduka) changed their habits under the war experiences and became valuable and brave soldiers. Still they had, later on, to think about their future. It is their desperate situation that pushed them on the way of crime. Some others, Mailoma being an example, during war-time developed their criminal inclinations and became very dangerous for society. In both novels the authors are mainly preoccupied with the increase of armed robbery due to the harsh treatment of many ex-soldiers who had to abandon the army without any compensation.

Social Involvement of the Hausa Novelists

Shortcomings of Hausa society have been dealt with by outstanding Hausa poets for a long time past. Some of them like bribery, evils of married life or improper education of the children also found their way into the drama. It is pertinent to say that the novelists also tried their pens in the condemnation of social vices, but that their social commitment became clearly visible only in recent times. In this respect the name of Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina should be mentioned first.

We were able to get some information concerning the author. He was born in 1954 in Katsina. In 1970 he entered the Lagos Institute of Secretaries but left it after

¹⁵ Op. cit., pp. 85ff.

several months of study. Then he started to learn typing in the Staff Training Centre, Kaduna and in 1972 took a job with the government of the then North Central State. In 1977 he obtained the GCE (0 level) certificate and two years later became an executive officer in the Katsina Polytechnic.

For the first time he tried his pen in 1978 when he took part in a literary competition organized by the Northern Nigeria Publishing Company. His novel *Mallakin zuciyata* (Mistress of my heart) won the first prize and was published in 1980. His second novel *Turmin danya* (1982, The Strong Man) was also awarded the first prize, this time by the Federal Department of Culture. The novel *Tura ta kai bango* (The limit of patience has been reached) carries criticism of Nigerian political life from 1979 to 1983. Ibrahim Sulaiman Katsina has also written some historical novels like *Amina* and *Kafa inda babu kasa* as well as a novel describing religious disturbances *Maitatsine*. All of them are still awaiting publication.

The novel *Mallakin zuciyata* is didactic in character. It describes life in a peasant Hausa family and presents the most important events in the agricultural cycle. It brings also images of the rites of passage which accompany the various stages of human life.

Undoubtedly, one of the main purpose of the novel is to point to the significance of education in the passage of life. This topic is dealt with over many pages. Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina describes in detail some events of school life of his protagonists. The author seems to be of the opinion that a proper education should be composed of Koranic school teachings which help to preserve some desirable traditional values, and of secular school knowledge, which enables pupils to achieve a high status and to get a good job.

Sending children to schools of the modern type is still often questioned by representatives of the older generation who have their own arguments against it. It is mainly girls that suffer from such outdated attitudes:

“After those explanations by the father, the mother of the girls calmed down. They did not, however, convince the grandmother who persisted in her own opinion: ‘Is there any reason in sending a girl to a modern school? Let us wait. When God gives you a son, you will send him there. How could you allow a girl to attend modern school until her puberty without marrying her? And if she becomes pregnant, who will be ashamed of it? Certainly her parents. And I, her grandmother.’ ‘The school will bring her profits when she grows up. She will know how to turn about’ — Malam Kalla said. ‘You stupid, get out of my way! What has the ‘turning about’ in common with the married woman? Or may be you are going to forbid her to get married, are you?’”¹⁶

Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina pays special attention to the patriotic education of young people and tries to develop in them the attitudes of good citizens. Through the conversations between his main characters and through their behaviour he ex-

¹⁶ Cf. Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina, *Mallakin zuciyata*, NNPC, Zaria 1980, p. 20.

plains to the readers what is the fatherland and what is the native country. He urges them to have a high regard for Nigeria and to be dedicated to their occupations:

“Usman asked: ‘Father, where is our country?’ ‘Our country is where you were born and where we, your parents were born. Not only in this town, but also in Kubani, and Maisara, and Mori. All of them are our country. If you were working in one of those towns, you would be working for one country, for one nation. There is no difference between peoples of Giningwani and Maisara, those of Kubani and Mori.”¹⁷

When Usman (one of the main characters) is asked by an Alhaji to fill a tax form, he strongly opposes giving some false data:

“Oh Alhaji! People should always be telling the truth, even in the face of death. Even if the government does not require it, the citizen should help it with money in construction of schools, hospitals, roads and libraries. It is out of the tax income that the people doing that work get salaries. From this source our soldiers, border guards are being paid. It is the same with policemen and judges who make people safe.”¹⁸

Patriotic motives stand behind the choice by Usman of his future profession. He decides to be an agricultural engineer, as the Nigerian peoples are suffering from acute food shortage. Sakina, his girl-friend wishes to be a teacher, because she thinks in that profession she could fully use her capacities in the service of the country.

Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina not only tries to teach his readers the proper ways of conduct and show them examples to follow: he also condemns some social evils like drug-addiction and drunkenness among the young people, and speculation and bribery among the grown-ups. In his novel, all those involved in such crimes come to grief or are punished. An unscrupulous trader in fertilizers, for example, who used to deceive poor farmers mercilessly, was eventually unmasked and jailed.

The novel *Turmin danya* takes into consideration two main vices of modern Nigeria. These are the smuggling of goods and some evil practices of the contractors. There is no need to add that bribery and corruption are closely bound to them. All the place names have been changed in the novel. Even the names of the countries underwent some mutations: Jariniya instead of Hausa *Nijeriya* (= Nigeria) and Jarni instead of Hausa *Nijar* (= Niger).

The main character of the novel, a certain Alhaji Gabatari, is “director, manager, secretary and clerk” in one person of a multifunctional company involved in trade, transport and contract works. He lives in a town Karaini which is located near the border with Jarni (Niger). He is the main smuggler of the town, and without his knowledge no other contrabandist dare bring anything from abroad.

He has links with the customs officers, the police and the authorities of the power station. They all co-operate with the powerful Alhaji and help him in the ful-

¹⁷ Op. cit., pp. 52ff.

¹⁸ Op. cit., p. 102.

filment of his wishes. From time to time he meets them all in his house, bribes them and then discusses with them the details of his endeavours. When the goods are being smuggled, the customs officers disappear from their posts and the town is plunged into darkness, as the director of the power station orders to cut off the light whereas no policeman can be seen in the streets: the Commissioner calls them for a "special" meeting:

"As for the Commissioner of the Police, this is what he did: He ordered all the policemen to get together. He told them that he would come and instruct them on the task they were going to perform during night time. He ordered them to assemble at 10 p.m. They got together and were waiting for him but he did not come until Alhaji Gabatari let him know that the goods had passed the border, reached Karaini and had been sent on. It happened at about quarter past eleven in the night.

Alhaji Atiku, the Commissioner of Police, came into his office at about a quarter to twelve. Just at that time the light was switched on. Now he explained to them that they were assembled because the light had been cut off. He wanted them to patrol the town and keep it out of the thieves' reach. Since, however, the light has been switched on, there was no necessity to patrol the town for all of them. Only those who were on duty would be requested to do so. The rest of them were dismissed and allowed to go home."¹⁹

Alhaji Gabatari was not only chief smuggler in Karaini, but also became famous as a contractor. The grant of contracts is another example of the irregularities which wrought much damage to the country. Only some chosen people could obtain the contracts — even if they had no money to start the work. Later on they used to sell the contracts to other persons and make a profit without any effort.

Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina proves to have a good knowledge of the mechanisms governing the award of contracts, as well as that of the malpractices accompanying the exercise. Here is a scene in which Alhaji Gabatari tries to get one:

"As soon as he entered the office he passed on to Chairman's room, who was also a member of the Contract Committee. Chairman was also head of the institution which had made the tender. They greeted each other and then Alhaji said:

'Well, I heard you have made a tender, haven't you?'

'Yes, we have — replied Chairman. — Are you interested in doing that work?'

'Very much' — he answered.

'Even earlier we thought about people like you that would be able to do this job. We were waiting for your application. We are not interested in the small entrepreneurs who are merely the servants.'

Alhaji said: 'Well, we know that you are always ready to help us. Long life for you! If it were someone else, I would not even contact him!'

¹⁹ Cf. Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina, *Turmin danya*, Nigeria Magazine, Lagos 1982, pp. 71ff.

'Very well. You did apply, didn't you?'

'Not yet, but I am going to.'

'Okay, then prepare the application.'

'I will do it' — Alhaji said. Now he put hand into his pocket, brought out one thousand naira and gave it to the head.

'This is something to buy chocolate for the children' — he added."²⁰

Alhaji Gabatari even gets a copy of a contract estimate from the investor. Now he asks one of his boys (whom he intercepted from government service) to make their own estimate which would be close to that proposed by the Chairman's bureau.

Although Alhaji Gabatari was late, his application was accepted and put at the head of the list. Needless to add that the contract was awarded to him. All this happened in an atmosphere of seriousness and gravity, in the presence of an Imam and with prayers at the beginning and at the end of the Contract Committee meeting.

Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina makes use of different techniques to condemn such malpractices. One of them is a direct commentary:

"That is the way of the country. Corruption, bribery, oppression of common people and injustice have reached their highest stage."²¹

Another time he makes use of a dispute between the people, as is the case with the customs' officers. All of them but Muktari are corrupt throughout, and they make a fool of him. Muktari, however, tries to bring his own reasons:

"Muktari said: 'There is something which you are unable to understand. Whomever God destined to be successful, he would become successful without taking bribes. Therefore, there is no reason for taking bribes. If, however, God decreed a man to live in poverty, he would not change his fate even if he took bribes and humiliated others. You will see him taking bribes but still he will be suffering from heavy debts or he will not be in a position to enjoy the money [...].

But besides, there is something which is called patriotism. Every time a man takes money and allows the goods to cross the border, he cheats all the people of the country. What do you think: Will God pardon him if all of the people in the country do not forgive him?"²²

Alhaji Gabatari becomes a symbol of an unscrupulous tycoon, enjoying life with the prostitutes and having no respect for those who depended on him. He was being extolled in praise-epithets as follows:

"Alhaji Gabatari, the Strong Man.

Brave men cannot match you.

The wall of iron, difficult to knock over,

A rope that ties up the goods."²³

²⁰ Op. cit., p. 36.

²¹ Op. cit., p. 45.

²² Op. cit., p. 59.

²³ Op. cit., p. 74.

In novels by Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina, however, every evil must be unmasked and punished. The news about the malpractices on Jariniya (read: Nigeria) borders reached the President of the country, who immediately took the proper measures. Eventually Alhaji Gabatari fell into the hands of the newly appointed and genuine customs' officers. For his numerous crimes, and especially for the killing of a policeman, he was sentenced to death and executed.

Bribery and corruption are a common theme also in some other Hausa novels. In *Zabi naka*, for example, a mobile police patrol intercepted a driver who committed at least three crimes: he overloaded his vehicle by seven persons, he was driving a car with worn-out tyres and he had no driving licence. Despite all these faults, the driver was behaving insolently as his employer, a powerful Alhaji, was a friend of the Police Commissioner. The policemen were ordered to allow him to continue his journey. Unhappily, one of the tyres became flat and the vehicle swerved, fell down into a deep ditch and caught fire. All the passengers except for two men lost their lives in that accident.

Munir Mohammed Katsina points also to the ever-growing selfishness and mercilessness of the Hausa people. One of the main characters of *Zabi naka* is admitted to hospital and badly needs some food and blood, both unavailable in a provincial infirmary. Eventually it was decided that this case should be advertised in a newspaper. In twenty days' time not even a single kobo was sent in. Nobody offered him his blood to save the life of his fellow creature. Mercy and compassion preached by Islam have been completely ignored.

The majority of modern Hausa novelists are in favour of a monogamous family pattern. In their works, the monogamous family becomes a symbol of happiness and mutual understanding between wife and husband, a guarantee of the proper upbringing and education of children.

In *Mallakin zuciyata* Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina tells the story of the harmonious life of a Moslem, monogamous family. He is so preoccupied with that model of the family that he does not even mention another one — as if his protagonists were not coming from the islamised society in which polygamy had been existing since time immemorial, even before the arrival of Islam. Marriage of love (*auren so*) is considered by him as a pre-condition of future family happiness. The monogamous life of Malam Kallu, the main character of the novel, was continued by his children: all of them chose their life partners on the basis of love.

Hassan Wurjanjan, the main character of *Tura ta kai bango* also married only one wife. Their marriage was contracted in accordance with their own wishes and resulted in mutual love and understanding. Hadiza not only proved to be a good wife, but she was also a truthful friend of her husband. She supported him in all his endeavours and even shared his political feelings.

Musa Mohammed Bello in his novel *Tsumangiyar kan hanya* seems also to be of opinion that the best pattern of the family is that of "one husband, one wife".

Sambo, the main character, was married to Hafsi, one of his relatives (*auren zumunta*). Their marriage lasted for 25 years and survived many critical moments.

Sambo did not learn any profession in his early years, and it was his father who took on the duty of feeding him. When he got married, he started to learn driving, at which time his wife Hafsi took over all the responsibilities for maintaining the family. After a few years Sambo managed to save a considerable sum of money and going in the wake of his colleagues he married another woman. Later on he went on pilgrimage to Mecca and obtained the honourable title of Alhaji.

In the majority of modern Hausa novels, Alhajis become an embodiment of every evil. Such was the case with Alhaji Sambo. After his return from Mecca, he became involved in market trading and soon amassed great wealth. At the same time he started to run after women (mainly prostitutes), marrying and divorcing them one by one. Still he was very generous towards them and used to buy cars, to build houses, to take them to Mecca or to European countries. Eventually all of them left him, after they had taken away his property. Only then he was able to appreciate fully the virtues of his first wife and realise that a peaceful life is possible only in monogamous family.

None of the modern Hausa novels directly supports the system of polygamy. Even in those works in which the main characters are the heads of polygamous families, their shortcomings rather than their blessings are being shown. Alhaji Gabatari from *Turmin danya*, for example, the husband of three beautiful wives, was always ready to engage in love affairs with any prostitute who was visiting the town. This is not a proof against polygamy, but rather an image of the degeneration of some big men. Still the relations between co-wives were very strained, as each of them vied for the special favours of Alhaji.

Alhajis, politicians and other big men are often accused of sexual licentiousness. This topic became very common in Hausa drama. It also found its way into the modern Hausa novel. In *Tura ta kai bango*, for example, a certain Ruge used to have love affairs with women of easy virtue. When, however, he was chosen as a member of parliament, he changed his habits for the worse. Now he started to chase after young girls and preferably — after school girls. Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina draws a terrifying picture of the treachery by which the innocent girls are led astray and depraved.

Image of political life in Nigeria

Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina is not only a careful observer of the social life and a ruthless critic of social evils. He may also become famous as a skillful commentator on the latest developments in Nigerian political life. His novel *Tura ta kai bango* described the election campaign in a town Koramu, when the military government was to be replaced by a civil one.

Political parties' names, place names and the names of the main characters are fictitious. All the same it is easy to refer them to the Nigerian realities. The plot of

the novel is based on the rivalry between two political parties: *Jam'iyyar Rikau* (Conservative Party) and *Jam'iyyar Sauyi* (Progressive Party).

The Conservative Party represents the interests of the rich people. In order to gain supporters it promises the people to provide them with running water, to improve the education system, to build new houses and to take special care of agriculture. The traditional kings, emirs and chiefs are to have a privileged position under its rule.

The election campaign of the Conservative Party is very noisy and surrounded with much splendour. The party leaders are protected by numerous guards (*'yan zanga*). Drumming and dancing accompany their election tours. All the attributes of the party point to its greatness and power:

"In Kabobi [capital of a fictitious state], on Garba Sauki street, were the headquarters of the Conservative Party. This street was one of the main streets in the town. Everything had to be great here, because the Party was aiming at the construction of offices which would attract the attention of the people."²⁴

On the contrary, one of the main objectives of the Progressive Party is not only to provide the common people with the essential goods, but also to protect them from oppression and injustice. Despite its meagre financial resources and the hostile activities of the rival party, the Progressive Party manages to establish its branch in Koramu and to attract many supporters. Nobody doubts that it will win the election. But the reality turns out to be quite different. The Conservative Party had done all its best to secure the victory. On the election day some people could not trace their names in the registers. In some places the ballot boxes had not been checked before election started, in some others aliens were brought in and allowed to vote. As a result of all those malpractices, the Conservative Party became the ultimate winner. The author comments upon this development as follows:

"People were voting for the Progressive Party, but it is the Conservative Party that won the elections."²⁵

The rule of the Conservative Party does not live up to the expectation of people. The representatives of the new power start their activities by prosecuting the activists of the rival party. They forget about their programme and do not fulfil the promises given to people during their election campaign:

"Formerly again and again it was being repeated that agriculture should be improved in this country. But now there is no agriculture at all. Only that constant uproar making people fed up. The great amount of money spent on the development of agriculture went into the pockets of some big men."²⁶

²⁴ Cf. Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina, *Tura ta kai bango*, NNPC, Zaria 1983.

²⁵ Op. cit., p. 75.

²⁶ Op. cit., p. 84.

All the novels by Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina come to an optimistic end. Four years passed and the new election took place. This time, both the supporters and the members of the Progressive Party were well aware of their needs and managed to prevent electoral malpractices. The Progressive Party won this time its battle all over the country and was given the chance to rule and to improve the existence of the common people. The author did not foresee another solution which has been found since the beginning of that year.

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In this paper special attention has been paid to the new problems being raised in the modern Hausa novel. Their authors proved to be men of great social and political commitment.

The social evils and shortcomings of Hausa society have always been pointed to and condemned by Hausa novelists. In the older novels, however, it was the evils penetrating traditional society which were shown up: corruption among emir's officials, injustice of Moslem judges, court intrigues, disrespect for Islamic tenets, and others. Modern novelists are preoccupied with those inadequacies which transcend the traditional way of life. They take into account crimes which bring damage to the country's economy and cause or deepen social injustice: smuggling of goods, corruption and bribery among businessmen and government officials, fake contracts and scandals accompanying the granting of them. Like their predecessors, the modern Hausa novelists take into account some family problems. Unlike them, however, they all seem to be champions of the monogamous model of the family, as the most appropriate in our times.

The political involvement is a new phenomenon in Hausa novel writing. These modern authors undertake the patriotic education of their fellow citizens. They contribute their little towards the unity of the country and towards the building of the nation. The events of the tragic Civil War were presented in the spirit of reconciliation. It is worth mentioning that only after 1980 these events have been described and commented upon in Hausa novels.

The rivalry between various political parties have a long tradition in Nigerian political life. Still, Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina was the first Hausa novelist who in 1983 presented a sharp and critical image of the electoral campaign of 1979 and that of political life between 1979 and 1983.

In short, the novels which have been written since 1980 break with the legendary world of Hausa stories and only incidentally refer to the traditional way of life. Instead, they are deeply involved in current matters and by the same they have a greater influence on public opinion. They preach new solutions, encouraging, for example, the monogamous family.

Modern novelists do not break with the didacticism of their predecessors but make it less obvious and more subtle. Their works are characterized by realism and are devoid of legendary elements which were so popular with the earlier authors.

In this paper only the content of the modern Hausa novels has been taken into account. They deserve also special attention from the pure literary point of view. Stylistic and artistic features require special research. In anticipation of that, we shall point to some ventures in this respect.

The realism of the novels is being strengthened by a careful choice of the characters. The authors deal with events and situations typical of the reality which is being described. In those descriptions an important role is being played by the language itself. The novelists not only try to make use of idiomatic expressions and colloquial sayings, but also often refer to different deformations of the Hausa language when used by the representatives of various ethnic groups. In some novels, one can observe the efforts of stylization to introduce an extra-literary message, like lengthy quotations of speeches delivered by the party leaders, or the proclamation of the terrorist organization programme by its head Mailoma.

Among the innovative features one can mention a rich description of natural phenomena, the colourful presentation of places and action, and minute descriptions of even small and apparently insignificant items. It is something quite new in the Hausa novel, in which the quick running plot, rich in motifs, used so far to dominate the plasticity of description.

In novels which have been published since 1980 one can find rich descriptions of the internal life of their main characters. These descriptions complete, on one hand, the characterization of a person. On the other hand, they express author's opinion on various issues.

All the authors, and especially Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina, make use of rich and idiomatic Hausa language which could be compared with the imaginative language of Alhaji Abubakar Imam or that used in the novel *Kitsen rogo* by Abdulkadir Dangambo. Many words and idioms are yet not attested in the existing Hausa dictionaries. Therefore, the novels under consideration may be used as a valuable source of research on the development of modern Hausa vocabulary.²⁷

²⁷ Cf. S. Piłaszewicz, New Vocabulary and Idioms in Modern Hausa Literature. In: *Studies in Hausa Language and Linguistics*, eds G. Furniss, P. J. Jaggar, pp. 202–217. London-New York 1988; Phraseologisms in Hausa: New Development or an Old Tradition? *Studies of the Department of African Languages and Cultures. Hausa Studies III*, 1990, pp. 5–21.