

## **Hausa Literature as a Source for Studies in Cultural Boundaries**

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### **Abstract**

Literature is one of the most important and complex of cultural products. It reflects changes that are happening in the social order. Literature could also be used to protect culture from the changes that are coming from outside. This paper examines Hausa prose writings as veritable literary sources for reconstructing border studies. It conceptualises and articulates the field of border studies from the selected novels that describe Hausa society on the eve of the colonial transition. It argues that though written in African language and with the use of Latin alphabets, they suggest the depth of cultural intermingling and the changes that it brings. The paper submits that Hausa prose writings, especially the texts studied; essentially concentrate on borders both in their cultural and geographic contexts.

### **Introduction**

There are many ways of studying the idea of borders and borderlands just as there are many definitions and meanings of the border itself. It could be literary, as the dividing line on the map or as a place where the area of influence of one state ends and that of another begins. But the border can also be understood more flexibly, as an area of cultural influence. Viewed from this perspective, a border possesses dual existence as a kind of guarantee for the preservation of cultural values against foreign influences or a place for the exchange of such influences among inhabitants of the border. But state and cultural borders are usually not the same thing, especially in Africa where colonial partitioning has left many ethnic groups divided and enclosed within frontiers that do not match their historical territory. For people who inhabit new independent countries, border is a line of divide both for the states and the culture. There are many examples of this in Africa and other continents where war, conflicts and foreign domination have left many people displaced or subjected to alien or hostile governments. For instance, Polish citizens left behind the country's eastern frontier after World War II. There is also the case of the Hausa divided between borders across English speaking Nigeria and French speaking Niger.

The problem of ethnic diversity constantly accompanied by fear of "tribalism" leads to efforts at nation-building in which cultural values are sometimes sacrificed in favour of unity founded around official symbols such as the national flag or national anthem. In such instance, political borders become a wall with various parts of the same ethnic group developing separately as subjects of diverse processes of nation building. This was the case when during the colonial era the colonial administration nurtured a local elite in its own fashion that was to take over from it. Situations like this could constitute the basis for conflicts where pre-colonial entities or communities, degraded to so-called tribal groups, want to recreate their old administrative units

or create new states based on cultural and linguistic affinity. This could result in internal or external violence since the people who feel that they are discriminated against often decide to fight for their rights and create separate states within the borders of an existing state or country.

Thus, a border region could become a meeting point for the exchange of cultural achievements or a place of cultural divide where people are consigned to live and develop separately, thus making it a potential centre of avoidable conflict among diverse cultures in competition for influence. This is especially the case where border is defined mainly in terms of being a political frontier. A more nuanced and interesting approach is to focus on its cultural implications, as cultural as opposed to political values are more subtle and catalytic for societal changes. Globalisation has created more streams for such penetration and it is much more difficult to separate society from trans-cultural movements and tendencies. On the other hand it is easy to define cultural borders and mark out religious, social and cultural differences in the light of modern definitions of a nation and what constitutes nationhood and the dividing line between the inhabitants of one region and another.

Cultural boundary, in comparison to political boundary is much more flexible and abstract in nature, but it is an obvious thing that both aspects of the idea of border are hard to separate, and that political frontiers deeply affect cultural frontiers by creating field for discussion, conflict or peaceful exchange of values. Analysis of the changes that affect borderlands and are linked with any kind of transitions related with the problem of political and cultural borders require careful study and effective methods of research. Probably one of the most efficient approach is that of personal observation and field study. It creates possibility of participation in the processes that affect the land and the people. But some other tools could be used as supplement, when from various reasons, personal experience of the changes that are happening in the society is not possible. In this case the study on the literature could be considered as one of such add-ons. In the first part of my article, I will try to explain the role of literature as a source for border region research. In the second part, I will focus on representative Hausa novels and by analysing their contents and historiographical potentials.

### **Why Literature?**

Literature is a product of culture. But being a product, can literature become a basis for the analysis of the “producer”? Apart from being a creation of culture, or to be more precise, creation of people that were bred and raised in her shadow, literature is a looking-glass that reflects changes that are happening in diverse social and cultural contexts. It mirrors, sometimes in a wry manner, foreign influences and shows historical or political events that are woven into the plot of the story. Literature itself has a variety of forms which are more useful than others depending on a researcher’s area of interest. Fiction which could be fully a product of the imagination of the author could also become useful even where action is not realistic as in Sci-Fi or Fantasy. Abruption from the reality still keeps the author in the net of cultural and global influences, so “the product” still shows world tendencies and processes that are affecting the culture or, as an opposite, reveals the author’s struggle to remain creative and free from foreign interferences or obsessive defence of cultural values. Of course all the points between “copy” and “forced creationism” are possible. Even the question of writing a novel within a particular

genre or choice of subject are significant to the extent that they are indicators of certain processes operative in society as well as external influences.

The other thing of significance is the historical and political contexts of the plot. A supposedly fictive work is situated in a particular period of time against the background of historical events, and describes real people, their actions and interactions with others. Such a work is a useful source material not only for those interested in literature but also for historians and ethnologists among other scholars. This is especially the case where such work is central to research or one of a few sources that informed the research in the first place as evidenced in various European chronicles or Scandinavian sagas in which materials from foreign sources are woven into plots to buttress certain facts even when the “novel” or fiction itself remains the main basis for the research. Situation like this is made possible where the author was a witness to the events recounted or had contact with others with first-hand knowledge of what happened or had access to sources no longer available. Viewed from this perspective, literature becomes one of the most important sources for the study of the past. Here the definition of literature could be extended to oral stories especially for a study such as this that centres on the border. It is one thing to see literature as a source of historical research and quite another to see it as useful in the study of Africa that is often described as non-literate. In this case, oral stories could serve as useful equivalents to written texts with their function of describing historical events, famous heroes and rulers. In many instances, oral tradition about Africa had their sources in the oral accounts of visitors from societies with established history of literacy.

In addition, the introduction and spread of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa greatly inspired the creation of texts written in Arabic and other African languages in scripts borrowed alongside merchandise and religious preaching that came with the caravans (Hiskett, 1984). This followed the first wave of the spread and acquisition of literacy which in turn led to the production of many manuscripts following the rapid growth of Islam and Islamic education, leading to the rise of famous centres of knowledge as Timbuktu.

Another great wave of influence on African literature took place after the introduction of European rule over the continent. As was the case with the Arabic language, the languages spoken by the colonial masters left deep imprints on the reality of daily life among ordinary people. The colonial administration, organised around European languages, values and ways of life left members of the indigenous population who wanted to rise within the colonial setting no option but to be assimilated into European culture. This was, and still is, another case of transition between cultural borders and, a process leading to various reactions.

History shows that conquerors strong enough to defeat traditional rulers earned the respect of the people because such success was considered proof of their power, prosperity and God’s favour. The result of such reasoning is obvious in the ready acceptance of foreign cultural differences – religion, mode of behaviour, education and language. Introduction of literacy and translation of classic European texts into these languages have stimulated indigenous literature written in foreign languages or the use of Latin alphabet. This has further opened the door for the translation of African novels, plays and poetry into European languages, bringing international recognition to such black African writers as the Nigerian Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and their Caucasian counterparts like Nadine Gordimer and

John M. Coetze. The importance of African literature and growing interest in the literature is reflected in the number of awards and honorary titles that have been given to writers from Africa. Having in mind the evolution of African literature in local or European languages, it would be hard to underestimate the importance of this literature in the issue of border studies.

Literature, as one of the most important and complex of all cultural products, reflects changes in social order, religion and linguistics and, above all, it tells stories: tales about people, their actions and feelings. Storyline is usually situated within particular cultural and historical background. Thus, every literature is a valuable material for studying societal processes and history. Regarding the idea of border, literature can describe borderlines and events within the border. It reveals changes in the cultural substrate, manifested also in the choice of subject, genre or author's attitude to available facts and the text. Thus, the place of literature as source for border studies should be obvious.

### **Why Hausa?**

Hausa is one of the three major languages in modern day Nigeria. Either as a first or second language, it is spoken by an estimated 50 million people around the world (Pawlak, 1998:6). It has a rich history of writing both in Arabic and European alphabets and majority of Hausa speakers live in Nigeria whose 150 million inhabitants make it the most populous country in Africa. Nigeria, a former British colony, is a multi-ethnic country, with the three leading groups being the Hausa in the north, Igbo in the east and Yoruba in the west. Northern dominance of political leadership dates back to the colonial era. The preferential treatment from colonial times resulted in political domination after independence and later provided reason for various coup d'états and inter ethnic tensions. The dissatisfaction of marginalised ethnic groups was the trigger for the most tragic internal conflict in Nigerian history – the Biafran war (Ejenavwo, 2007:19-26) - and is still behind the current unrest in the Niger Delta. Aside inter ethnic tensions, growing fundamentalism in the Muslim North have resulted into riots and aggression aimed at non-Muslims and foreigners (Meunier, 2009: 34-35). Interestingly, Nigeria is a country of border lines. As is the case with many African countries, the link between socio-cultural, political and geographical boundaries in many Nigerian communities and the people that inhabit them can be very arbitrary, making Nigeria an interesting field for border research. Trans-border movement of people can be seen in migrations (both willing and unwilling). Historically and contemporaneously, Nigerians are renowned migrants and the country is ranked top in Africa as source country for global human trafficking (UN, 2008). A country with such an interesting history and complex social and cultural background is without doubt a good field for research on various subjects.

The choice of Hausa literature for the present study should not be of any surprise for reasons ranging from the importance of the group given the huge population of Hausa speakers, early Islamisation of the region and its established trade and cultural links with Arabs and eventual conquest and colonisation by the British, particularly in the period immediately before or after the inauguration of colonial rule when a Westernised culture met with an Islamised African culture. The purpose of this article is to present some of the novels concerning the period under review and to explore their suitability for border studies.

Representative works will include *Shaihu Umar*, written by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (Balewa, c1931), *Abdulkabi Tanimuddarin Tureta* an autobiography of the Muslim ruler (Tureta, 1936) and *Gandoki*, written by Alhaji Muhammadu Bello Kagara (Bello, 1978). The biographical character of the selected novels is a conscious choice. As earlier mentioned, every genre of literature can reveal interesting facts about society and people but biographies and chronicles are the most useful for studying history and inter-cultural or international relations. Another interesting thing about the selected works is that they were written with the support of European researchers. Written in Hausa with European alphabet (*boko*), the works are symbols of cultural transition. In addition, their role as sources for borderlands research is unquestionable.

### ***Shaihu Umar***

*Shaihu Umar* is one of the most famous Hausa novels. It attracts attention not only because of its undisputed literary value but also because of the tragic history of its author. The book was written by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa long before he sailed into the wild ocean of African politics and became first Prime Minister of independent Nigeria between 1960 and 1966. His assassination in the coup of January 15 1966 has been interpreted as was a clear manifestation of intra-state conflict around pre-colonial borderlines, the so called “borders within borders” (Ejenavwo, 2007:14).

In 1933, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa entered a literary contest organised by the Literature Bureau (*Hukumar Talifi*) in Zaria and emerged one of the winners. The Bureau, established by the colonial administration, had as one of the purposes for promoting the literary contest the need to inspire young Hausa novelists to write indigenous novels following European tradition. *Shaihu Umar* with its adventurous character meets this standard and is almost free from the fantastic elements that typify African fairy tales, heroic myths and traditional stories about life. The plot and construction of the novel demonstrate the superb literary skills of the then 21 year old Balewa. Although first published in the 1930s, the book has been reprinted many times and it is still possible to purchase a recent edition. So popular was it that it was converted to a play and later adopted for the cinema. Created by Umaru Ladan and Dexter Lyndersay, the play had its premiere in Kaduna, on 1st December 1972 with the then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, in attendance (Ladan and Lyndersay, 1975). The screen version directed by Alhaji Adamu Halilu was released a few years later (Pilaszewicz, 1988: 160).

The popularity of this novel extended beyond the borders of Nigeria and an English translation was published in 1967 (Hiskett, 1967). This English version enjoyed the popularity of its predecessors and was republished in 1987 along with an introduction by Beverly Mack. Apart of the literary workshop of both the author and the translator, the novel attracts the attention of the audience because of the subject chosen and the time of action since all the events described in the book happened before the arrival of the Europeans.

*Shaihu Umar* is the fictional biography of an Hausa scholar (*malam*) named Umar who, asked by one of his students, decides to recount his adventurous life. He was born in Kagara in the family of a hard working man. Born after the death of his father, he goes to live with his grandmother. Vicissitudes of life will cause the young boy to move from his modest household into the intrigues of court life after the second marriage of his mother, and the death of his guardian. His mother (who in spite of being one of the main characters of the book was not even named by the

author), marries Makau, one of the trusted servants of the chief of Kagara. The groom is a man of virtue who becomes the victim of a plot conceived and hatched by other courtiers. Opportunity to make Makau lose favour with the chief comes during a slave raid ordered by the ruler. After a successful raid some of the warriors accuse Makau of hiding some of the booty. It was the practice to give the chief two of every three slaves captured. The accusations were untrue but Makau as a good Muslim accepts the decision of his sovereign and agrees to leave the city. He moves to an area of modern day Zaria and after many adventures and dangers he arrives in Makarfi where he eventually settles in. In the meantime, Umar's grandfather who lives in Fatika is accused of practising magic and the boy's mother decides to go to the village where she was born to give support to her family. She is yet making plans for the journey when the messenger of Makau arrives to Kagara with information about the whereabouts of the banished courtier. She, however, decides to visit her ancestral home before joining Makau in Makarfi. This, as it would turn out, would be one of the worst decisions of her life. Four-year old Umar is too young for the journey to Fatika and is left under the care of Amina, his mother's closest friend. It is from here that he is kidnapped.

Things get more interesting from here onwards. The kidnapper who later turns out to be some kind of a sorcerer armed with powerful charms is killed by an hyena during this journey to an unknown destination. Umar is found and adopted by a farmer and his childless wife. Soon afterwards, the new family of our protagonist is attacked by slave raiders and young Umar is once again kidnapped, this time by a court slave turned slave raider from Kano, Gumuzu. One of Gumuzu's friends and commercial partners is the Arab merchant, Abdulkarim, who also resides in Kano. Impressed by Umar's kindness and intellectual potentials, Abdulkarim adopts him and the young man begins life anew in the family of a wealthy merchant. It is here that he will receive his Koranic education, becoming a scholar eventually.

In the meantime, his distraught mother gathers money and goes in search of her son. She is on his trail when she herself falls victim of a kidnapping raid and becomes a slave. Deceived by a caravan leader in Kano and an *alkali* (Muslim judge) in Murzuk, she is forced to Tripoli where she becomes the slave of a prosperous trader called Ahmad. By some stroke of luck, she will meet her long lost son here but a combination of grief and weary resignation would cut her joy short as she dies, accompanied by her son, his stepfather and their caravan, on the return journey to her ancestral home after her release. Umar would be the sole survivor of a sandstorm that follows. He thereafter goes, as a wandering scholar, to Rauta where he settles and becomes famous, earning the respect of the people.

The foregoing, which demonstrates *Shaihu Umah's* relevance to the present study, is a thumb sketch account of this action-packed forty nine-page book. What the account immediately reveals is the problem of slavery, its routes and operation. Such is the centrality of the slavery theme to this book that its American publisher had advertised it as a novel about slavery in Africa. And its description as a "Nigerian Bestseller" underlines its popularity. The suitability of this novel as source for historical reconstruction might be questioned as it could be argued that it is a work of fiction. But this would not be entirely correct as there were people who witnessed slavery firsthand and knew much about commerce in the pre-colonial era who were yet alive as at the time Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was born and wrote his book. What is more, Balewa was

himself a descendant of slaves as his father had been a court slave in Bauchi. Thus, the reality and operation of slavery were not entirely new to the author. In addition, slave raids and slavery as related in Balewa's novel were rife as at the time the book was written. As at 1936, the British colonial administration was battling matters associated with the kidnapping and trafficking in children (Afigbo, 2003: n14). There is, therefore, every reason to consider *Shaihu Umar* a useful source for studying slavery in pre-colonial Northern Nigeria. But how does this statement apply to border studies or studies in cultural boundaries?

The answer here would be positive as the book describes social stratification and the relations between members of particular groups, ranging from common people to courtiers and nobles. It also shows the flexibility in crossing "social borders" as understood in the European sense. This is the case with Gumuzu who, despite being a slave of the ruler of Kano, is also a merchant and warrior. Even more telling is the evidence that the conspiracy against Makau was the handiwork of royal slaves working hand in glove with jealous courtiers. One of the main opponents of Makau is Sarkin Zagi (Balewa, c1931:7). This is the title of a slave official and one of the military leaders in the Hausa-Fulani court (Smith, 1978: 275). In the stage version of the novel, Sarkin Zagi is accompanied by Shantali. The Shantali, usually a eunuch, was the highest in charge of the slave soldiers and a member of the chief's council. Social frontiers are also visible in the relations of Gumuzu and his co-partner Abdulkarim. This Arab merchant, highly esteemed, is treated as if he is of higher status than his Hausa associates. There are two possible explanations for this. Abdulkarim, as a man of means, probably has representatives in the places where he runs his business. He is prosperous as each successful journey through the Sahara could bring a lot of profit for traders able to risk the dangerous route from the Maghreb to Sudanic Africa. The other reason is that it was Arabs who stayed back as representatives and champions of Muslim culture and education after Islam was introduced to Hausaland between the 11th and 12th centuries. In spite of the fact that Islam was introduced into Hausaland from Bornu through the Wangara people, Arabs, such as Abdulkarim, were highly respected in Hausa society.

Aside its being a deep well of cultural information, the usefulness of this novel for border studies is the political and geographical character of the frontiers it portrays, their association with the cultural ones and relations between ethnic groups. This is seen mainly in the travels of the main characters. The slave raid ordered by the chief of Kagara brings a reader to Gwari, a country south of the city that is inhabited by pagans. This provides opportunity for the author to describe not only the organisation of the slave raid, but also the situation of the pagan farmers whose land is not fertile enough to give them crops for a whole year. Forced to cultivate the fields that are lying far from their settlements they risk being kidnapped by man hunters. Opportunities for borderlines arise when the travels of the main protagonists, Makau, Umar and his mother are explored. First, Makau is banished from Kagara. On his journey to the capital of this state, he meets pagans, gets to Zaria and then Makarfi, a town that lies northeast of the state capital. Makau's journey is nothing compared to that of his wife and her son. Umar, after many adventures, he reaches Ber Kufa in Egypt and then, many years later, on his travel back to Hausaland with Abdulkarim, he visits Alexandria while on a trip to Tripoli. His mother gets as far as Libya, moving from Murzuk to Tripoli with her master Ahmad. Umar and his mother started out from Kano through to the Sahara which points to the importance of Kano as a major centre of commerce in Hausaland.

These journeys provide opportunity for the author to describe some of the cities while concealing his personal opinions and prejudices behind the words of his characters. A typical example is the point at which Umar and Abdulkarim after leaving Kano get to an oasis inhabited by Buzu. Aside describing the people's custom- habits and sense of fashion, there are comments on their language of which "every conversation (...) sounds like an argument." While these descriptions may be useful for the details they provide, they are probably not based on factual accounts of life as lived within the period the book covers but rather on actual eye witness accounts. While the descriptions of Kano, Zaria and other Hausa cities may be graphic enough that of Alexandria and Tripoli is far from sufficient. There is, however, enough in this work to demonstrate recognition of cultural differences among people from diverse cultural frontiers.

Another point of relevance for this study is the description of the trans-Saharan trade and its reliance on the political and social situation in the Sudan. Here information is provided on the organisation of expedition and the most popular trade routes. Right from the 15th century when the first inter-regional market was opened in Kano (Pilaszewicz, 1995: 79), this and other Hausa cities grew as important centres of commerce. After the conquest of Timbuktu by Moroccan soldiers in 1591, the trans-Saharan routes slowly moved east towards the Hausa states. In the 17th century cities such as Daura and Katsina were linked directly to the trading routes from Tripoli. The development of this region of Western Sudan, along with the institution of a central government following the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, made impact on the growing importance of the Hausa cities. In the 19th century, the route leading from the north through Ghadames, Air and on to Kano was one of the most popular and profitable of all trans-Saharan trails (Boahen, 1964: 108). There are other routes such as the "pilgrim's way," which goes eastwards from the Hausa State through Kanem-Bornu, Zaghawa and Sudan to Egypt.

There is also information on the effect of political instability on commerce. War could be a good time for business but this depends on the commodities up for sale, and even in this case, it is not a good time for everyone. As with Abdulkarim who, because of Umar's needs, plans another journey to the south in order to get to the Hausa States. As earlier mentioned, they take the road from Tripoli through Murzuk and probably Bilma and Kano. Abdulkarim is forced to make this choice for reasons of political instability in the Sudan caused by Mahdist uprising at the end of the 19th century (1881-1899). The revolt of Muhammad Ahmad resulted in a war that makes trade routes dangerous to ply if not completely unusable. It gets more interesting when Umar, as the lone survivor of the caravan destroyed by a sandstorm, reaches a town that lies on the African bank of the desert. There, in an area inhabited by Hausa speaking persons, he observes the siege of the city. On inquiring from fellow travellers, he discovers the presence of the soldiers that once pledged their oath to Rabih. This information suggests that after his fall as a ruler of Kanem-Borno and his death in 1900, remnants of his army moved westwards towards the Hausa States in search of their fortune. The foregoing illustrates aspects of border studies that could be found in this particular novel. There are inter-state travels, commerce, religious diversity and inter-ethnic relations. The narrative also focuses on the political situation and unrest in the Sudan as well as the other parts of western and central Sudan. Apparently, the book can serve as a basis for further studies.

***Abdulkali Tanimuddarin Tureta. Daga bakinsa shi kansa***

*Abdulkali Tanimuddarin Tureta. By His Own Mouth, About Himself* (Tureta, 1933) is the autobiography of Abdulkali, ruler of Tureta, a city 43 miles south of Sokoto. Born in 1879 to a noble family, it was foretold that he would become ruler of Tureta while still a child. This was not altogether surprising as his father, Dangaladima Almustafa, had been a ruler himself. This prediction would prove a catalyst in moving forward the plot of the novel. The prediction would stir the jealousy of young Abdulkali's uncle, Maigunya, who already nursed the idea of becoming the ruler of Tureta and had begun to see his young nephew as a threat that must be eliminated. Opportunity soon came his way for this. Rulers from the surrounding countries decide to join forces and pillage the city. Among the aggressors are soldiers from Zamfara, Gobir, Katsina and Maradi. After a few unsuccessful attempts to break behind the walls, Mijinyawa, ruler of Maradi, comes up with an idea to take the city. He and his soldiers make false overtures of friendship to the people of Tureta (called Burmi probably because of their Kanuri origin) only to betray them after a few days of feasting before inciting a fight within the walls of the city. Abdulkali is kidnapped in the ensuing melee (Tureta, 1933:6).

He is taken to Cikaji, a settlement described in the novel as a town "in a French country" but is to be found in modern day Niger. He stays for two years there and when the information about his whereabouts reaches his family, his father at once decides to buy him his freedom but those he sends to do this do not have sufficient funds for it. He was later sold to the Tuaregs from Air. The Tuaregs decide to take young Abdulkali to Niger where he ends up the slave of a certain Bubakar who lives in Dadin Kowa, which literally means "Everyone's Happiness." Abdulkali would spend 26 years in slavery despite fruitless attempts to find him by his father. While being a slave of Bubakar he becomes a candidate for a test that the Tuaregs require of their slaves that is meant to reveal a slave's fortune and economic potential. Abdulkali receives a sheep from his master and it is said that that animal becomes his property. The sheep turns out to be pregnant and Abdulkali soon proves his mettle as a competent herds man as he becomes owner of a large herd of sheep, camels and donkeys. His wealth will stir the envy of his master who offers him his freedom in exchange for his animals.

He later gathers enough information along the way which enables him to continue his journey back home to Tureta. He finally arrives Tureta and discovers that his father has died few years earlier and even his uncle is no longer a ruler because he was dethroned by the people. To say more, no one recognises the one who, by the help of god, manages to come back. No one knows that he is a son of the deceased ruler. The situation changes when Abdulkali's mother, enticed by the rumours about the big herd that is passing through the city, comes to take a look at the animals. She then recognises her long lost son who later, just as predictions told, becomes a ruler of Tureta. In 1933 Abdulkali is invited to Sokoto and is turbaned Sarkin Tureta, the fifteenth on the throne. Abdulkali Tureta's narrative is in many ways similar to *Shaihu Umar* with the singular exception that *Abdulkali Tanimuddarin Tureta* is an autobiography. But what both books testify to is the insecurity of life especially with regards to children in pre-colonial Hausa society where battles among rival states and slavery were facts of everyday existence.

Typical for an African tale, the narrative is relatively short but has interesting information that compensates for its size. For one, the narrative provides a genealogical account of past rulers of Tureta. There is also the important detail on the names of the emirs and where the rulers of

Burmi resided (Tureta, 1933: 1-5). With such important details it is possible to trace the course of their migration from the east to the areas they inhabited at the time the book was published. Description of the siege of Tureta and enumeration of the diverse forces from various parts of Hausaland involved in the assault is another point of importance. The case of Maradi from whose king originated the idea that led to the fall of Tureta is of particular importance. Not forgetting the involvement of soldiers from Niger that had been active participants in wars that had taken place in this part of modern day Nigeria. This is one more illustration of the contemporary situation in Africa where ethnic groups that were once united found themselves separated behind arbitrary lines drawn by European colonialists. Even when the names of the towns and villages are not mentioned, the travels of Abdalbaki and his family through them are significant.

While the relationship between the slave boy from Hausaland and his master is not fully explored, there are interesting details worth mentioning especially the illustrations reflecting the cultural diversities across the different borders traversed by the protagonist. When Abdalbaki is stripped of his property by Bubakar, the matter is only resolved with the intervention of the European commandant. In this encounter, Bubakar represents the old order, ruling his household on an ethic derived from pre-colonial relations between slaves and their masters. Representing the new order is the French colonial officer and a local policeman. Although part of the old order, the local policeman supports the reforms initiated by outsiders. His hostile attitude to slavery and slave holders shows his acceptance of the new social order and is an indication of the fact that society has crossed a cultural border and has transited from an archaic social order to a new one. Both works under review describe the affairs and adventures of members of some indigenous communities. *Shaihu Umar* is a novel about slavery, Muslim virtues and the power of God. Europeans are marginal actors in this narrative and have no influence on the plot. This is not exactly the case with the autobiographical narrative in which European intervention proves crucial to the position of the protagonist. The difference is even more obvious in *Gandoki*.

### ***Gandoki***

*Gandoki* (Bello, 1978) was written by Muhammadu Bello Kagara, another laureate of the contest that resulted in the publication of Tafawa Balewa's *Shaihu Umar*. Like the two previous works, this eponymously titled book is a tale of adventure in which Gandoki, a famous warrior, settles in Katsina in his old age. Asked by one of the children in his household, he recounts the story of his life. He has a lot to tell because, in writing the book, Bello Kagara figuratively opened the borders of his imagination and incorporated elements of fantasy into his narrative.

Gandoki is a brave and powerful warrior who fights in almost every battle from during Usman Dan Fodio's jihad until the arrival of the Europeans. He takes his battles, his son Garba Gagare on his side, even into the surreal world of ghosts and *Jinnis*. But the central concern of this work, especially as it relates to this study, is Gandoki's attitude to Europeans. As a warrior, he fights in defence of Bida in 1897 and Kontagora which fell in 1901. Beyond armed combat, he employs other stratagems in his battle against the British. Failing in his defence of Bida, he makes friendly overtures to the Europeans and their local allies only to behead the local judge in Wushishi for collaborating with the enemy. He, with his dependants, then relocates to Kontagora. It is 1901 and British forces are approaching the walls of the city defended by the famous Ibrahim Nagwamatse, the Sarkin or king of Sudan. Despite their heroic efforts

Kontagora falls to the forces of a new order. Gandoki, alongside other warriors, escapes from town, going as far as Sokoto to pray at the tomb of Shaikh Usman Dan Fodio only to retreat on hearing of the fall of the Caliphate's capital to the British. He decides to join Caliph Attahiru Ahmadu I on a hajj trip that is aborted by British ambush. After the tiring battle near Dutsen Bima, Gandoki and his son fall asleep in the bush and wake up in an enchanted land, somewhere in India. Here the quasi-historical narrative takes on the form of a fable.

In spite of this change in his material circumstance, surrounded by ghosts and daemons, Gandoki remains his old self, a devout Muslim and brave warrior. He is mindful of his obligations as a Muslim and does his best to spread the message of Islam among those he meets on his journeys, especially the *Jinnis*. After many more adventures, he leaves the comfort of his ex-wives in the enchanted world and returns to earth with the singular purpose of inciting the people of the Sokoto Caliphate against the Europeans (Bello, 1978: 45). But contrary to his expectation, he meets a people too contented to be stirred to rise against British rule. On realising this, he reconsiders his action, hangs up his sword and settles down to a life of contemplation and scholarship. *Gandoki*, an early example of heroic-fantasy in Hausa literature, presents interesting facts that are of relevance to our study. One is the description of famous battles such as the siege of Kontagora which is probably based on personal recollection of the author who was born in 1890. As is the case with Balewa's *Shaihu Umar*, some veterans of these battles were alive at the first publication of *Gandoki* in 1934. Another point of importance is the manner Gandoki relates with the Europeans and their supporters. It is an apt portrayal of the kind of political and cultural conflicts that arise in border regions. Certainly a patriot, Gandoki is nevertheless a warlike figure who thrives amid the chaos of battle. It is this character trait that will lead him to thoughts of inciting armed insurrection against European domination of his land only to have a complete change of mind and plans on returning home. A pragmatist, he not only approves of the transformation that has taken place in his absence but also signals his acceptance of the new order by sending his son to school in Katsina. This might all look surprising, but only if one fails to take cognisance of the social atmosphere and one possible reason the Literature Bureau published the book in the first instance which must have been to foster social harmony and acceptance of British rule. It would have been strange for Europeans to promote a literary contest in which one of the winning entries was openly antagonistic to their cause. Such reading becomes more plausible when *Gandoki* is seen as the author's alter ego. Bello Kagara made no secret of his feelings about British rule but he was pragmatic enough to see the good side of that rule and in what manner it could prove of personal use.

## **Conclusion**

The reviewed books are connected by their shared concerns with particular epochs in Nigeria's historical development and transition from a pre-colonial to a colonial state. These concerns make them an important source, one of several sources, of information for the period of Nigerian history that they cover. Their claims have to be checked against less manipulable and, perhaps, more reliable sources. These books, however, share the advantage of being eye witness accounts of people who had lived through the events they describe or had the events recounted to them by others who had experienced them firsthand. A book provides a reader the opportunity to enter the creative universe of an author, share in the author's experience and engage in intellectual transactions across cultural borders, making it veritable source and resource for border studies, especially as is the case with the books here examined.

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