THE IDEOLOGICAL PARADIGMS OF IBRAHIM TAHIR'S *THE LAST IMAM* AND ABUBAKAR GIMBA'S *SACRED APPLES*

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BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN LITERATURE

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DECLARATION

I, Ebijimi, Martina Olubamidele, do hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me and it is a record of my research. It has not been presented anywhere as far as I am concerned, in any previous application for higher degree. All quotations are indicated by indention or quotation marks and the sources of information are adequately acknowledged.

Signed: ---------- Dated:----------

Ebijimi, Martina Olubamidele

CERTIFICATION

This thesis titled '*THE IDEOLOGICAL PARADIGMS OF IBRAHIM TAHIR'S THE LAST IMAM AND ABUBAKAR GIMBA'S SACRED APPLES*' by Ebijimi Martina Olubamidele, meets the regulation governing the award of the degree of Master of Arts of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late father Mr. Theophilus Ayodele Ebijimi, my family; Mrs Chinyere (My Mum), Nma, Pauline and my little 'dot' Henry for their steadfastness in my hours of despair. And to Saidu who stood by me and gave me the courage to achieve my dream.

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ABSTRACT

This study applies socialist realism as an analytical tool to analyse the deployment of ideology in Ibrahim Tahir's *The Last Imam* and Abubakar Gimba's *Sacred Apples*. The study argues that the religion and cultures of the people presented in the novel provide the aesthetic framework on which the ideological paradigm of the novels are based. In the light of this, the study discusses the application of ideology with the aim of demonstrating a shift in paradigm in contemporary literatures of northern Nigeria from the sole adherence to religious dictates to an exploration of secular and social issues. This thesis therefore, applies the socialist realist theory to examine the social preoccupation of Tahir's and Gimba's writings. It argues that writing as socialist realists, these writers convey the picture of their society with historic correlations and then anchor their artistic expression on the theme of politics, child labour, religious bigotry, culture and family life, they strive to provoke an ideological reform and by educating the masses in the socialist spirit. This study further argues that as social realist works, the novels record the dreams and ideas, hopes, aspirations, failures and disappointments, motives and passions, and experiences of their society in an attempt to reveal the realities that surround the lives of the people.

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CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction

1.1 Background

Nigeria as a multi-ethnic, cultural and linguistic nation is unified by the fact that it shares basic national, economic, political and social problems that undoubtedly affect its nation in the same manner without consideration for geo-political zone. Northern Nigerian literature like the literature of any part of the country or world reflects its society and the life of its people. However, there exists practical, religio-cultural issues that one could consider as forming the basis for difference amongst these diverse ethnic groups within the nation of Nigeria.

This study examines how through time and generations of writings, writers in Northern Nigeria have employed their religious ideology as the underlying paradigm for discussing other ideologies, depicting Northern Nigeria as a region whose ideology is massively influenced by the Islamic religion (which is the predominant religion of the region). Although Ibrahim Tahir and Abubakar Gimba explore a variety of socio-cultural, political and economic issues that permeate discourse nationwide as indicative of their affinity with other parts of the country, yet the impact of Islam on cultural diversity ignored by novels from other regions, is fully highlighted in *The Last Imam* and *Sacred Apples*. This gives credence to Joseph Abel's (2006:240) assertion that'

> *The Northern Nigerian novelist in English contends with a complex historical experience in his imaginative reconstruction of his reality, especially in its relationship to the larger Nigerian context. In essence; the novelist in the north is preoccupied with signifying an identity through a narrative form circumscribed by two opposing*

Hegemonies! The Arab Muslim and the euro-Christian.

The Last Imam and *Sacred Apples* are concerned with a number of issues ranging from the woman question, politics, culture and tradition to family life, child labour and abuse, and religious hypocrisy and bigotry. In their exploration of these issues, both Tahir and Gimba challenge the dominant views in the society. As imaginative writers, they have significantly drawn from their social reality to highlight the contradictions inherent in the society as advocated for by Maxim Gory when he is quoted by Lavrin (1973:193) as saying:

> *I want literature to rise above reality and look down on reality from above because literature has a far greater purpose than merely to reflect reality. It is not enough to reflect already existing things – we must also bear in mind the things we desire and the things which are possible to change.*

In *The Last Imam* and *Sacred Apples*, Tahir and Gimba show how literature can participate in the discussion of ideology and its implications by proving that literature can depart from the predominant view of the very ideology which feeds it in this case, the believe that women, children and the less privileged of the society are second class citizens. In other words, an author can decide to critique the very ideology that informs it. This is what Tahir does when he indicts the character of Alhaji Usman in *The Last Imam* for religious bigotry and Gimba also does when he upholds Zarah as the female archetype in *Sacred Apples*. Similarly, Achebe re-echoes the same sentiment in Alkali (2007:60) when he opines that

> *Literature whether it is oral or written gives us a second handle on reality; enabling us to encounter in the safe manageable dimension of make belief the very same threats to integrity*

that may assail the psych in real life; and at the same time providing through self discovery which it imparts a veritable weapon for coping with threats, whether they are found within our problematic incoherent selves, or in the world around us.

The implication being that no writer writes out of context of his society or out of his intuition. Every writer writes from certain important influence. For the Northern Nigerian writer, the influence is his religion, in this case, the Islamic religion. The authors here speak for their religion and its presence in all that affects everyday life in the region, in doing so, they have also offered alternative views of the same ideologies that have been interpreted as allowing the subjugation of women, children and the working class who are the marginalised class of the society. Clearly, Tahir and Gimba provide a fresh and positive outlook to the problems of marriage, polygamy, the almajiri syndrome, class relations and sex relations as mediated by the history, culture and religion of their region.

In the texts selected for this study, Tahir and Gimba have chosen to offer their view on the negative ideological interpretation of the Islamic religion as it affects the social interaction of all classes of people. Tahir's and Gimba's intention is necessary and tallies with Harry Garuba's view in "The Poetics of Possibility; A Study of Femi Osofisan's *The Chattering and the Song* and *Morountodun*" (2008) when he describes the interpretation of religious ideology as " cultural ideological formations operating upon our consciousness thereby controlling the directions of our perceptions and analysis" (pg.205). Accordingly, Tahir and Gimba interrogate the status quo through the characters of Alhaji Usman in *The Last Imam* and Zarah in *Sacred Apples* respectfully. While Alhaji Usman is scorned and dethroned as the Imam of Bauchi for his high

handedness, religious hypocrisy and lack of consideration for the common needs of his subjects in his pretence to do God's bidding, Zarah is celebrated for questioning existing negative norms and practices in the society and succeeding both in her academics and professional life despite daunting circumstances in her marriage and home life.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Generally, the ideological bent of Northern Nigerian prose literature appears to be solely informed and influenced by Islam, the dominant religion of the region. There is no denying the fact that early prose writing from the first generation of writing in the north was mainly focused on the propagation of the ideological conviction of the people which is drawn from their cultural and religious beliefs. By reasons of its dual colonial experience of (Arab/Islamic) and (western/Christianity), cotemporary prose literature in the north has developed some peculiar political, traditional, religious and social characteristics. Thus, Contemporary Northern Nigerian prose is more focused on the development of literature viz-a-viz the socio-political experiences that have not only affected its ideology to provoke conflicts in belief, way of life, family, social and gender relation among other socio-cultural issues, but has also provoked a paradigm shift from strict adherence to Islamic religious dictate to encourage an exploration of alternative ideologies like Marxism, Pragmatism, Feminism among others by providing a socialist perspective to the discourse on secular issues. This study is therefore written under the premise that:

1. Early prose writing in Northern Nigeria used religion as its underlying ideological base thereby necessitating the supremacy of culture and religion. This study

provides that, while the dominant ideology of Northern Nigerian prose remains the same, social trends and challenges have provoked a paradigm shift from religious issues to encourage an exploration of alternative paradigms.

2. Having come a long way from the days when writing was done for religious instruction, the novels of Ibrahim Tahir and Abubakar Gimba demonstrate that contemporary Northern Nigerian prose deal with social issues of leadership, politics and injustice that affect daily existence.
3. Tahir's *The Last Imam* and Gimba's *Sacred Apples* have received wide critical attention but none of the critical works have closely examined the ideological paradigm the novels seek to proffer. In examining the social issues discussed by Ibrahim Tahir and Abubakar Gimba, this study thus highlights their opposition to the status quo and presents the authors' idea of an ideal paradigm.
4. This work studies the generations of literary endeavour in Northern Nigeria with the aim of highlighting the issues that characterise the literary endeavour of each generation and how writers in each of this generations present their work with the aim of creating an accurate picture of their society and presenting without sentiment, the needs and aspirations of the people.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This research is written to:

1. Demonstrate that the ideological paradigm of Northern Nigeria which is drawn from the religion and culture of the people provides the aesthetic framework on which the selected works of Tahir and Gimba rely.

2. Show that there is a shift in the ideology of literary productions and discourse in the north from sole adherence to religious dictates as seen in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's *Shehu Umar* to an exploration of secular and social issues as exemplified by Tahir and Gimba's alternative view of class relations and social order.

3. Illustrate that there is a corresponding relationship between social experiences and literary creativity to the point that literature highlights social issues within the perspective of positive change and the advancement of human condition.

1.4 Justification of the Study

This study appraises Tahir's *The Last Imam* and Gimba's *Sacred Apples* as an indictment on the negative application of Islamic religious ideology on Northern Nigerian literature. Although there are critical studies on these novels that have examined the ideological basis of the novels, this study will explore the same ideologies from the Socialist realist point of view with the aim of highlighting the socio-religious and cultural conflicts occasioned by a shift in the popular ideological paradigm of the region. A shift in paradigm manifests in Tahir's and Gimba's crusade against female subjugation, social class discrimination and child abuse.

This study is therefore necessitated by the need to fully understand the complexities which define the nature of the political and cultural experiences in Northern Nigeria and the ways by which both Tahir and Gimba provide a new consciousness. Therefore, it is to serve as a mirror reflecting the excesses of a society in need of total reorientation in its socio-human relations to the overall progress of the society and enrichment of scholarly discourse.

1.5 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study examines the ideological paradigm of Northern Nigerian prose literature with particular attention paid to Tahir's *The Last Imam* and Gimba's *Sacred Apples*. These two novels exhibit strong evidence of the northern writer's reliance on religion and culture as the underlying determinant of idea. The choice of these novels is premised on the fact that they reflect the effect of the northern ideology on societal and individual perception of what is right as regards the place of women, the importance of children and the position of the lower class of the society in the scheme of things.

Both novels are written by northern Muslim male authors who understand the dictates of the Islamic religion and the value it puts on all human beings irrespective of gender and class. These texts form the primary material for analysis. The study also examines the principal characters in each of the novels with the aim of analysing and interpreting their roles. The analytical perspective of this study is derived from the Marxist literary theory.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

Literature is defined differently by different individuals depending on its function to the individual in question. Based on this notion, Osofisan (1985:68) sees "Literature (as) the most endearing means by which a nation records its history," Unlike the blank straight forward black and white manner of history telling, " Literature tells its own story, obliquely and subjectively through images and symbols, tones colour and melody, through a logistics of beauty and sensuousness, but also entertaining". Osofisan

(1985:68). Achebe on the other hand, sees the function of literature beyond the pleasure of entertainment and the informative function of educating as quoted by Alkali (2007: 60) and highlighted earlier in this work, he believes that literature gives us a glimpse into the reality of our existence. In other words, literature presents real life issues, though often fictitious, it mirrors the daily struggles of man in his society.

As a serious endeavour, literature also caters for the day to day existence of man in his society. This, to Obafemi, is represented in the fact that literature is an important arm of culture. In an all-encompassing manner, literature represents both the innate, inanimate and social aspects of a people's existence. In reflecting the cultural beliefs of the people, literature captures their worldview, perceptions and attitudes thereby, totally capturing their culture, which encompasses all. This partly explains the presence of elements of tradition in Nigerian prose fiction for as Obiechinna (1975: 260) records, these "elements of old traditional culture exists side by side with those of the modern industrial culture, the oral tradition, with the literacy, and the traditional village with the modern town". This simply points to the fact that, Nigerian writers, seeking to show the worth of their traditional heritage, have never really relegated it but have continually tapped and relied on it for inspiration thereby creating a relationship between the two (culture and literature) such that while one relies on the other (literature on culture) for inspiration, the other relies on the one (culture on literature) for expression. As to the value of literature to the society, Alkali (2007: 60) quotes Ojaide as saying, "If Nigerians were literature lovers, they would have learnt from the failure of the first republic to run a more civilized second Republic" Cudjoe in Alkali(2007) believes that

No society can do without its writers, its thinkers and the imaginative re-presentation of our lives. Although we possess many resources, we remain poorer if we do not mobilize our single most important gift; the ways in which our citizens have engaged our society and show what made meaning out of the experiences they encountered over the past two hundred years.

Cudjoe here states the invaluable importance of writers and graphic representation of society and its workings. Going beyond the practice of art and entertainment, to education and information on the life and history of their society.

In general, Nigerian literature to which Northern Nigerian fiction is an integral part, has over the years displayed a certain degree of artistic accomplishment in the treatment of both national and international issues that affects her nationhood. This is manifest in the creative way they have captured the ideological and conceptual stance of Nigeria both socially and culturally. The deployment of such critical theories as structuralism, modernism, Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis and the like to explore the divers dimensions of Nigerian creative works are an attempt to enable readers understand and appreciate both the positive and negative all round heritage as proffered by the writer. Having an affinity with the oral traditions of the people, Nigerian writings contain social, cultural and ideological implications whose interpretations can only be made with a good understanding of the society and an appropriate analytical tool for appreciating the creative work. In essence, Nigerian writings are intended to convey a message as observed by Nkosi (1988) when he opined that African writings and Nigerian writings by extension is deeply circumscribed by the functional or utilitarian

value of Art on the basis of which the writer acts as a voice of the oppressed and the conscience of the nation. However, the deployment of these diverse critical approaches as proffered above does not in any way exhaust the thematic, conceptual or ideological possibilities or the various degrees of meaning contained in Nigerian creative works.

Writing in Northern Nigeria before the introduction of western education treated both secular and religious issues but mostly based on Islamic religious teachings. The writings taught etiquette and propagated Islam and its teachings. Earlier writings like Amadu Ingawa's *Iliya Dan Maikarfi* (1951) and Umar Dembo's *Dare Daya* (1973) among others, were adventurous, and had supernatural undertones. They were fantasies that added Islamic influence to gain acceptance and thereby, gaining prominence. Also important and influencing these writings, are the authors' persuasions and convictions regarding their identity. An identity further influenced by cultural practices that largely define Northern Nigerian literature. The transmission from the oral to the written clearly involved more than the preservation of oral features in a literary work. It further involved the transformation and relationship between the composer both to the audience and to tradition which affords him the opportunity to reach out to the audience with his convictions of his beliefs and motive in the hope of getting a positive response. According to Furniss (1996: 7):

> *This process is fundamentally political and ideological: the agency of or a handed - down text of supposedly communal origin-relates to what is being said with what purpose by whom to whom and why. To consider these questions is not simply to describe the physical circumstances of performance. It is to examine the relationship between the content of the text, the exigencies of its form, the agency of its aesthetic and expressive dimensions and the politics of the debate in which it is situated.*

This work focuses on the development of Northern Nigeria Literature viz-a-viz the ideological undertones that have informed and influenced such process. This perspective will allow an in-depth analysis of literature from Northern Nigeria to appreciate the underlying effects of history and socio-political experience on the writing. Thus working with the popular assumption that literature from Northern Nigeria is often informed and influenced by Islam, the dominant religion of the region can be limiting in several ways. There is no denying the presence and indeed the influence of Islam on this literature but to be circumscribed by that is to limit the boundaries of interpretation, analysis and criticism.

This work largely explores Northern Nigerian literature as being largely influenced by the environment and the circumstance of its history and more importantly, the religion of the people it presents. The writings here are aimed at providing insight geared towards providing the life and culture of the people. In other words, writers while being near uncritical and totally accepting at one point, can also decide critical scrutiny at another point. This fact gives credence to the assertion by Taiwo (1986: 28) that.

> *A writer is always searching for a definite method and style and stands the risk of being influenced by the styles Of antecedent writers as well as by the already developed and tried methods. We can therefore say that African writers are very much in this situation. For while there is the influence of foreign tradition, alongside it, there is also an indigenous tradition which continues to influence their writing.*

1.7 Literature in Northern Nigeria

In the north of Nigeria, creative writing in English started much later than it did in the southern Nigeria due to the historical circumstances of both the regions. In the south, literacy came with Christianity and colonialism. The Christians used the church and schools in the service of God and the British Empire. Creative writing in English started in 1952 with Amos Tutuola's *Palm Wine Drunkard* as the first novel written by a Nigerian in English followed by Cyprian Ekwensi's *People of the City* (1954) then Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958).These writings were characterized by elements of oral traditions like legends, riddles, proverbs and jokes, folktales and myths. In keeping with the spirit of the time, the early generation writers dwelt heavily on the disillusionment caused by colonialism and the need for a nationalist movement aimed at attaining self-rule. After the attainment of independence, disillusionment at the disappointment of self-rule took over as theme for the then Nigerian writers. Writers like Timothy M. Aluko wrote *Chief the Honourable Minister* and Chinua Achebe wrote *A Man of the People* (1965) in protest, with subject matters like corruption and inept leadership they highlighted the socio-political drift to a state of despair, and moral decadence to the near total collapse of the socio-economic and political system. Nigeria's main obsession at this point was the ardent desire to reconstruct a sound and dynamic Nigerian society. As the situation in the country warranted, writers wrote to sensitize, to promote, to protest and to provoke change in the people and the society at large. By this, we have feminist writers like Nwapa, Emecheta and Alkali, propagandist or popular writers like Iyayi, Osofisan and Okri and so many others today in Nigeria who write for one personal, social or other reason.

Northern Nigeria as earlier stated was introduced to Islam sometime between the 12th and 15th century. This is a pointer to the flourishing of Arabic scholarship in the Western Sudan long before the introduction of Western education. This contact initiated by Arab travellers was later strengthened by commercial and religious interest. The Fulani jihad in West Africa in the 19th century marked a period of Islamic renaissance attributed to Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio and his son Sultan Bello and brother, Abdullah, all of whom were accomplished Islamic scholars. 'Verse' was the favoured form of literature then, and it was politically inspired, with Mecca, the main source of religion and intellectual inspiration for the Jihadists. 'Ajami' - the use of Arabic letters to write in non-Arabic language - evolved and was used for literacy purposes. This singular act was aimed at indigenizing Arabic. Writing in the North at this time was largely based on the Islamic religion and its teachings. The writings concentrated on teaching morals and etiquette as prescribed by Islam serving to further propagate the religion.

In its efforts to encourage formal western education the colonial government set up a translation Bureau in the North with Rupert East, the then superintendent of Northern Nigerian Education Department, as its director. East organized a writing competition in Hausa so as to promote novels in Hausa. This first endeavour at encouraging writing in the North resulted in the publication of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's *Shaihu Umar*, Mauhammadu Gwarzo's *Idon Matambayi* amongst others in the many entries that were received. Further encouragements led to other subsequent issues such as Abubakar Imams three volumes of *Magana Jari ce* (1936) and *Karamin Sani Kunkumi* (1937) a hygienic and health education series in two volumes. The 1950s

and 1970s saw production of quiet a number of prose writing like Ahmadu Ingawa's *Iliya Dan Maikarfi* (1951) and Umar Dembo's *Dare Daya* (1973).

Literature in English emerged in the region towards the end of 1970s with Mohammed Sule's *Undesirable Element* (1977), Labo Yaro's *Climate of Change* (1978) etc flourishing side by side with the Hausa novels. The emergence of the novel in English in the region and the themes it incorporates indicates the community of Nigeria's predicament in addition to its socio-economic, cultural and political realities that permeate discourse nationwide. But the impact of Islam on cultural diversity ignored by novels from the other regions is fully highlighted in novels from the north because as Joseph (2006: 240) puts it

> *The Northern Nigerian novelist in English contends with a complex historical experience in his imaginative reconstruction of his reality, especially in its relationship to the larger Nigerian context. In essence, the novelist in the North is preoccupied with signifying an identity through a narrative form circumscribed by two opposing hegemonies: the Arab Muslim and the Euro-Christian*.

Joseph in other words supports Ojo-Ade's arguments when he quotes him as saying; "*Islam is not an African religion. It belongs to Arabs, no less colonialists than Christian Europeans. Both have used their religions as means of racist conquest dehumanization and exploitations*". Which in his summation means that the challenge is three fold for the Northern Nigerian writer; "the indigenous/traditional, the Arab Islamic, and Euro-Christian". Joseph (2006: 240).

Recently, however, more writers are emerging from the North whose works are written in English. These include Ibrahim Tahir, Labo Yari, Zaynab Alkali, Abubakar

Gimba and Helon Habila to mention a few. Their works and those of other contemporary writers from the north reflect tenacious and articulate efforts to fill the age long so called literacy vacuum that has characterized literature in English in Northern Nigeria.

A striking characteristic of this literature is its deviation from the rather over-flogged themes of anti-colonial sentiments and the clash between the western culture and traditional culture. The truth is, after four decades of independence these generation of writers cannot but direct their appetite to more contemporary realities. The newly emerging Northern Nigerian novels now focus on themes that promote social harmony, religious morality and tolerance, while also highlighting issues of cultural alienation and the depravity of modern city life in contrast with the virtue-laden trappings of traditional life. Cases of corruption, political instability, military dictatorship and others and their adverse effect on the life of the people and the society are also dealt with. These themes are elaborately or partially explored for instance in Ibrahim Tahir's *The Last Iman*, Zaynab Alkali's novels and Abubakar Gimba's novels amongst others.

In light of the obvious continuous evolution of literature in English in the north in terms of content and context, it is clear that a lot of progress has been made and focus shifted from the conservative total adherence to tradition and religious dictates as the guiding force behind all that is life, to a more liberal approach to dealing with issues of societal interest. The first literary works from Northern Nigeria via the writing competition produced Abubakar Imam's *Ruwan Bagaja* (1934), Bello Kagara's *Gandoki,* Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's *Shaibu Umar, Idon Matambayi* by Mohammed Gwarzo and *Jiki Magayi* by John Tafida and Rupert East. This literary works all subscribed to the

issues of their time, as did the ones after them to the present time. They will be considered as first generation Northern Nigerian literature in this study, preceding the second and third generations respectively.

1.7.1 The First Generation Writing Of Northern Nigeria

As earlier stated, the five books mentioned above form the first generation of Northern Nigerian writing. One basic feature inherent in all of these literary works is their religious undertone. Though they are basically adventurous stories, the hold of Islam is undoubtedly present. There is great emphasis on the supernatural even in the author biographical writings as seen in Balewa's *Shaihu Umar*.

Shaihu Umar's story is both an adventurous and tragic one. Captured by slave raiders he is consequently separated as a child from his mother. While in exile, he is briefly re-united with his mother who dies shortly after, causing a damp in his joy. The story is a narration of Shehu's travails as a child slave, and challenges as an adult man. Shehu's mother takes the quest pattern of the story when she sets out to find him. Her ill treatment in the hands of the slave dealers is portrayed as the obstacles she overcomes in her quest in search of her son. Clearly, Balewa in writing *Shehu Umar*, derives his inspiration from history and Islam. He takes his time to portray the Hausa culture, consequently, propagating their Islamic heritage. In assessing the text, Taiwo (1986: 49) opines that its real value lies in the light it throws on Hausa life and culture at the end of the last century, especially on the impact of the slave trade and Islam on the society.

As the storyteller, Shaihu Umar is portrayed in the light of an Islamic scholar and leader (Malam). He stands as a voice propagating the Islamic values and the condemnation of slavery. The story telling session takes place with Shaihu sitting in the midst of his students who eagerly assemble for instructions. In adoration, his students comment, certainly this is no mere man, he is a Saint (pg. 18). The novel regards Islam not only as a religion but also as a way of life. Balewa presents Islam with great tenderness and admiration as the religion, which has exercised a great influence on the evolution of the Hausa society. This fact seems to be the source of the hero's inner strength from which springs his determination to live down the cruelty of the days of slavery and establish himself as a Muslim scholar.

> *In this little town there was once a certain Malam, learned in the stars, in the Koran, and in the scriptures, and an upholder of the faith. This Malam was one of the men of this world to whom God has given the gift of knowledge (p.18).*

The hero represents an ideal of the exemplary Muslim; patient, good tempered, resilient, conscientious and morally upright. And in the author's note of the drama adaptation of the novel, Ladan and Lyndersay write. "The novel *Shaihu Umar,* by the late AIhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, contains the essence of Hausa and Islamic culture and is a beautifully, compact tale of Shaihu Umar's adventures as child and man."

1.7.2 The Second Generation Writing of Northern Nigeria

The second generation of writers continued with the same style of writing (author biographic, fantasies and adventures) with Abubakar lmam's *Magana Jarice* (1938) and 1939) which in many ways appeared as a form of continuation of his first endeavour *Ruwan Bagaja* (1934). By the 1950s a number of prose works were produced. Example are *Iliya Dan Maikarfi* (1951) by Ahmadu Ingawa and *Tauraruwar Hamada* (1959).

Iliya Dan Maikarfi (1951) is the story of a weak disabled boy who was visited by angels and turned into a strong child. The story tells of llliya's exploits and challenges as he travelled around the world fighting wars, helping the helpless and acquiring wealth in the process. The sick child has turned into an indestructible warrior. *Tauraruwar Hamada* like *Iliya Dan Maikarfi* have no strong points of departure from the focus of earlier writings. They are adventurous stories of people who magically accomplished wondrous feats. While they are fantasies, the conservative influence of religion (Islam) and tradition never seems to be absent. By the 1970s, literary writings began to gradually depart from the usual adventurous fantasies to more human issues. This group of writing represents the core second generation writings of Northern Nigeria. Examples are *Kitsen Rogo* (1978) by Abdulkadir Dangambo, *Gogan Naka (1981)* by Garba Funtuwa and Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina's *Malakin Zuciyata* (1986).

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Kitsen Rogo (1978) as representing these generation of writers has little of the previous tone of fantasy. The story takes a more contemporary social and political stance. The story highlights the life of a village boy who comes to the city in search of a better life. Changing his name to Musa, he gets involved with the wrong group of people

and begins to deal in stolen good, frequenting bars and hotels, while living in the city slum. The law catches up with him, he is arrested and sentenced to prison for a period of time after which he is released into the hands of his father who takes him back to the village. In the village, he is a reformed man and lives a quiet but productive life. Sulaiman Ibrahim Katsina in *Malakin Zuciyata* (1986) treats the contemporary and social issue of love and commitment. Usman from a poor family meets Sakina and wants to marry her. Their love is threatened by a rich man, who also wants to marry her. Her mother being greedy accepts the rich man but her father prefers Usman. In the end, they succeed in getting married. This is the soft part of the story. The story also explores the theme of corrupt officials (the fertilizer trader who makes it difficult for Mallam Kalla to get fertilizer for his farm), the importance of education both for male and female children, the vice of the rich entrepreneur who pushes people around because of his wealth, the true face of monogamy and other silent but implied themes. All of which address the everyday life of the average human being and the challenges he has to face in the reality of his existence.

Though the writings and their themes have gone through a transformation in terms of content, the dominant ideology of conservatism both religiously (Islam) and socially, is very much in play. The works though different, have retained the firm hold of Islam's influence on the people, especially the Hausa speaking north. This generation of Northern writers may not have rejected infiltrating ideologies, but they seem to be careful of them.

1.7.3 The Third Generation Writing

The third generations of Northern Nigerian writers are those regarded as daring and open-minded. They are the writers who have dared to challenge the status quo both on religious dogma and social imperialism as practiced in the North. From the history of the North, we learn that there are levels of importance in the society. With the rulers (Sarki's) and Ulama's at the top, the common men and slaves at the bottom, what you get, where you go, and what you achieve is predominantly determined by your place in that society. Though the writers of this last generation have not made any apparent radical move to change the status quo, but they have asked questions and have also diplomatically protested this stratification of society.

In 1984, Ibrahim Tahir opened the flood gates of inquisition with his novel The Last Imam. The novel tells the story of Alhaji Usman the Imam of the Mosque in Bauchi town. Tahir writes about the Imam's controlling and overzealous attitudes towards the discharge of his leadership duties. The lmam is portrayed as a proud leader who seeing his position as God's divine call, is ready to move every obstacle even if it meant hurting the people in his life and his followers to attain what he termed 'God's will'. In his no questioning manner, he adheres to what he terms as the dictates of his religion through his personal interpretation of what he believed to be the truth about the content of the Koran. By reason of his over righteous nature, he is blinded to the changing times and the need of the people both socially and religiously. He imposes on them what he believed to be Allah's will and by his arrogant imposition, bring about a turmoil that leads to everyone scorning him and his being unturbanned as Imam of the town by the Emir. In his agitation, he questions the Emir's decision.

"How can you let base men push you into such a sinful act?" Alhaji Usman asked in agitated tones after the courtiers had left.

"*You once said that whatever you do, you do only because you believe that is what your duty commands you to do".*
"That is true". Alhaji Usman replied

"*That is all I have done, Alhaji,"* the Emir said. "*And as for the men you call base, you must not judge them too harshly. Indeed, it may be said that if you had not so short a memory as you have, you would find nothing strange in what they have done. But then you forget the times when you humiliated them in this very room, when you used your superior knowledge and overrode their wishes and ground their pride into dust. They are men of power... they are men of power and so are you* "

"That i am not" Alhaji Usman cried, *"I am a man of the Kingdom of God".*

"Just this once, Alhaji, say the Kingdom of man and maybe you will see things differently and save yourself endless self-inflicted pain." (pg. 242)

This exchange simply attests to the fact that being the Imam, Alhaji Usman believes that he has the answers to everything and as the 'representative' of God in the town. His words and decision should be considered as law and strictly adhered to. Whoever thought or even voiced anything contrary to his words, contradicts God and will surely be punished by God. The revolt apparently ended his reign of terror.

Today, the Northern Nigerian writer has embraced the theory of social realism. This is exemplified by the preoccupation of female writers like Zaynab Alkali who dwell on the quest of the contemporary female; the place of the woman in a patriarchal society like Nigeria through their feminist writings. While Northern male writers dwell on the contemporary social issues of politics and corruption. The mass infiltration of what is today termed as the 'Soyaya novels' (because of their preoccupation with love stories)

into the Northern literary scene has further opened up the North to a diversification of issues and themes highlighted by the Northern Nigerian writer. Not forgetting the adaptation of Indian song styles to the poetry and song of the contemporary northerner.

On a whole this development in Northern Nigerian literature can be seen side by side with the ideological permutations that shape the history of the region or time. In the earliest instance, for example, works of writers like Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Muhammedu Gwarzo, and early Abubakar Imam were steep in fantasy, drawing from oral traditions and the influence of Islam. This antidote continued to influence the literary works from this region for a very long time. The publication of Tahir's *The Last Imam* in 1984 marked an important land mark in the ideological shift of Northern Nigerian literature. By exploring the different dimension of power relations within the society, Tahir demonstrates the capacity of Northern Nigerian literature to be critical of prevailing social, political and religious institutions.

1.8 Ideology and Northern Nigerian Literature

Literature is seen by Fowler as a discourse, which is in varying degrees defined and controlled by the social institution within which it is embedded, on the other hand, ideology in its broad sense can be seen in different light. An ideology can be thought of as a comprehensive vision, as a way of looking at things. The main purpose behind any ideology is to offer change in society. As a system of abstract thought, ideology is mostly applied to public matters. In public discussions, certain ideas arise more commonly than others depending on the environment and the person discussing.

In analysing literature as an ideological discourse, one must first consider the vastness of the theory. The theoretical positions that have come to be known under the term discourse theory is associated with Michael Foucault, Hindess, Hirst, Althusser and others. Foucault's work however remains the most outstanding to the development of the theory. Foucault conceives discourse as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (1997 p. 249) In other words, a discourse does not exist of itself and by itself; it is a means, a tool, and by implication, a means by which the agent gets his message across. Potter (2004) sees discourse as key to understanding interaction and social life and paying particular attention to analytical practices and the role of audience in supporting claims. Discourse explores the condition of man in his changing society, and it is enacted by verbal or written means, (textual form of communication) aimed at aiding the understanding of human interaction and social experiences. And so,

> *…..Learning to talk is fundamental to learning a culture, and language provides a category and terms for understanding self and others. Our work places are imbued with talks and texts, whether they are part of the job itself or all of the ancillary features of living that surround it. And while we can watch television with the sound turned down, and flick through the daily newspaper, looking just at the pictures, our entertainments and cultural life is massively dependent on what the actors are saying or what the newspaper stories tell (potter 2004).*

Our perception is affected by what we see, read or hear. This further impacts on our psyche and ideology, shaping it in accordance to our reaction to what was heard, seen or read. The assertion by Guillory (1983: 173) that "it is difficult to deny that ideology

traverses even the higher regions of textual production" becomes apt here, in that, no artist or writer can entirely escape from ideology. The notion of individual creativity uninfluenced by social constraints is itself ideological. In other words, ideology, like discourse permeates and thus defines our relationship with the social or real world.

Foucault further proffers what he called the use of the text, which implies the written work. He argues that textual discourse is most often used to exploit, to expose, and ultimately for ideological indoctrination. He applied that the basic ideas that people normally take to be permanent truth about human nature and society change in the course of history. This is to say, literature here, finds its basis on the historical conditions of existence of anything (a people perhaps). In effect, literature is produced through the effect of one or more ideological contradictions precisely because these contradictions cannot be solved within the ideology. It would also be pointless because they exist before their realization in the literary text. Though they can only be formed in the material of the literary text, their solutions is largely by substituting the contradiction by the ideological practice of religion, politics, morality, aesthetic and psychology.

Similarly, Rice and Waugh (1992: 53) in their discuss of Althusser's position on ideology, quotes him as saying that "Ideology is not a matter of conscious beliefs, attitudes and values, nor is it a matter of 'false consciousness' sets of false ideas imposed on individuals to persuade them that there is no real contradiction between the interests of working class and ruling class. It is, rather, a matter of the representation of imaginary versions of the real social relations that people live". For ideology to spread, it has to be accessed through systems and structures which Althusser calls Ideological

State Apparatus (ISAS). Althusser's thesis summed up by Webster (1996) is fundamental to the thrust of this research. According to him,

> *Althusser's central thesis is that ideology turns people into subjects, that is, people are positional or interpelleted by forms of communication such as novels to see events in a certain way and to think of themselves as free agents in this process unified individuals apparently able to read and interpret as they want to but in fact manipulated and restricted by the codes and strategies of the text. (1996: 62).*

Althusser's thesis about ideology as taking the form of codes and strategies is further taken up by Macherey(1981) in a slight reversed form. He states that Codes and strategies are presumed as inescapable Silences and Absences that texts should contain. It is these 'Silences' and 'Absences,' for Macherey, which form the unconsciousness of the text. In other words, the 'Silence' in the text, the unconscious element or what the text does not say, can be subscribed to a particular ideology, which is imagined or applied by the reader. Clearly, Macherey's contribution contends that reality in the text as discursive practice provides a platform for the construction of consciousness.

With this knowledge of what ideology and discourse stand for and relating them to Fowler's definition of literature as being controlled by society, it is only natural to conclude that, all are inter woven and depend on each other to make an impact on the society. This fact is very true of Northern Nigerian literature where religious and cultural concerns are seen to have dominated the everyday existence of the average northerner. To further concretize this, is a look at the position of Meta-Ideology, which sees ideology as a coherent system of ideas, relying upon a few basic assumptions about reality that may or may not have any factual basis, but is subjective and serves as the seed around

which further thoughts grow. It appears to have an excessive need for certitude, which lurks on fundamentalist levels in politics, religion and elsewhere.

In a further attempt to explore the relationships between ideology and social systems, David W. Minar describes six different ways the word ideology has been used as follows:

- As a collection of certain ideas with certain kinds of content, usually normative.
- As the form of internal logical structure that ideas have within a set.
- By the role in which ideas play in human social interaction.
- By the role that ideas play in the structure of an organization
- As meaning, whose purpose is persuasion and
- As the focus of social interaction, possibly.

In his wake, Willard A. Mullins composed four basic characteristics of ideology.

- It must have power over cognitions
- It must be capable of guiding ones evaluation
- It must provide guidance towards action
- It must be logically coherent

Indeed, if literature is a medium for fixing or determining meaning, discourse remains the tool with which it can do so. Paradoxically, discourse performs the dual functions: it constructs as well as deconstructs meaning.

Meaning is the product of material and social constructions; it is not always given but determined and takes different shapes and coloration. Further, meanings are constructed under discursive constraint with discourse as characterized by a delimitation

of a field of objects. For Foucault, discourse structures our sense of reality and defines the extent to which we can think and act within certain parameters at each historical conjecture (1977: 199). With this knowledge, we may not be content only with the question of what is literature, but go further to determine what function or effect literature produces in relation to socio-political, socio-cultural, and socio-religious reality.

In contemporary theory, especially of the Post Structuralists, it is common to quiz the text, to interrogate the infinite possibilities of the text to produce and reproduce itself. It is therefore possible to over quiz the reflexes of the text and taking a cue from Macherey (1978: 154) interrogate what relation to that which is other than itself is (text) produced. Discourse enables or empowers the text to ride through the tidal waves of ideological waters, which constitute the otherness that is independent of the text itself. In other words, reading's ultimate purpose is to demonstrate the radical otherness which shapes the text's production.

Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" remains the most outstanding discourse about the importance of Ideology in textual production. The essay illustrates the interface of discourse and Ideology and inaugurates the notion of ideology not as "false consciousness" or "illusion" but as an active form of discursive practice. Today, the term ideology is used in so many ways that it becomes difficult to describe.

Waugh and Rice (1992:53) believe that literary works are scrutinized for the symptoms of the ideology that form the raw material of their production. In other words, for each literary work, there is an ideological position within theory usually covering the whole field of the ideological class struggle which could be social, religious, judicial or even political. With this consciousness, it becomes necessary to explore and

understand the relationship the literary text has with the society it exists in. What Rice and Waugh have established is the fact that, literature cannot be termed as just fiction. A fictive image of the real, yes, because it cannot define itself simply as a figuration but also as an appearance of reality (P. 60).

Rejecting the formalist art-for-art-sake literary orientation, the fundamental catalyst in the literary model in Nigeria is the vision that defines literature in terms of its relationship with the national question. The Nigerian novel has also taken ideological moulds such that, novels in this contemporary time, are written by ideologues who posit the socialist-cum-Marxist stance of bridging the yawning, socio-economic gap between the haves and have-nots. Usually, the novels in this category are essentially ideologically committed; the novels are imbued with a lot of revolutionary fervour. They mirror the circumstances of social inequality and/or exploitation, questioning the rationale that occasions it.

In terms of theory, divers theories like feminism, psychoanalysis structuralism and in recent time, post colonial discuss have being employed to analysing the thrust of the Northern Nigerian novel. For the female writer like Zaynab Alkali, the feminist theory is mostly applied by critics because, as Joseph (2006:245). Puts it,

> *Alkali demonstrates a unique capacity for the reconstructing and the negotiation of meaning especially as it concerns the northern Nigerian woman the female voice is firmly grounded her concern has been on a gender conscious literary approach to the representation of the woman and the exigencies of her experiences within a patriarchal society. Through these experiences, Alkali circulates the major constraints and challenges which confronts the woman in the society.*

While Abubakar Gimba has been labelled a feminist because of his presentation of the woman in his novels. This is not to say that he has not discussed other issues like politics in *Footprints* ( ) and the civil service and nationhood in *Sunset for a Mandarin* ( ) Ibrahim Tahir and Abubakar Gimba aside from being post colonial writers have shown through their novels a revolutionary side. Tahir's *The Last Imam* shows a complexity of conflicts in the representation of power and social class. Thus, shows a remarkable tendency of domination and exploitation of one class by another class in the society. Same ideology can be extended to Gimbas *Sacred Apples* where Power and position is abused by one group to exploit and humiliate another group within the same society.

Although, other theories may be employed in the discourse of the ideology of Northern Nigerian literature with emphasis on the chosen novels (*The Last Imam* and *Sacred Apples*), this study will be analysed from the Marxist theory of class structure to appreciate the social angle of the writer's work. The study considers the society a very strong influence on the writer and by this, an undoubted influence on the ideology of the writer and his works. Barry (1995) agrees with this line of thought. He believes that traditional Marxist critics in a generalized way, "talk about conflicts between social classes, and clashes of large historical forces" (p. 159). In keeping with the Marxist concept of ideology, Althusser, as quoted by Barry (1995:163) defines ideology as "a system of representations endowed with an existence and an historical role at the heart of a given society". Making culture a crucial vehicle of the values in any society. Amongst other angles the Marxists view a literary work, they, relate the context of a

work to the social class or status of the author, they explain the nature of a literary work in relation to the social period which produced it thereby making the novel speak for the social class it represents, they (Marxists) also relate the literary work to the social assumptions of the time in which it is read and, politicize literary forms, that is, attribute literary content to the political circumstances of the society (Barry 1995:167-168). It is under the above premise of Marxist theory that this study will be carried out.

Critical studies on Northern Nigeria literature has often leaned towards over emphasis on religion and culture either as an instrument of exploitation of women (as most critics view the works of Zaynab Alkali) or as an adaptation of Arabic classics to support the subjugation of the less privileged in the society. This narrow perception has tended to limit the scope of interpretation of literature from the region. To this end this work will explore the various angles through which other ideological paradigms can be seen as having shaped and influenced Northern Nigeria literature from its earliest inception to contemporary times.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Marxist literary theory is very vast and heterogeneous that divergent views are held about its application by different literary scholars. Barry (1995) believes that traditional Marxist critics generally talk about conflicts between social classes and clashes of large historical forces (p.150). The thought behind Marxist Criticism is that works of literature are products of history that can be analysed by looking at the social and material conditions under which they were constructed. This is why Marxists belief that a work of literature is a product of the ideology under which it was written and so, they view any work of literature as being shaped by the distortions of prevailing ideology under which they were conceived. It is important to note that all writers express unconscious influence of the ideology that shape their perception of life. This is manifest in the manner women are extolled in the works of feminist writers like Zaynab Alkali and Flora Nwapa and the way nature is celebrated in the poems of Romantics like William Wordsworth. For according to Barry (1995: 158),

> *Marxist literary criticism maintains that a writer's social class, and its prevailing ideology, have a major bearing on what is written by a member of that class. So instead of seeing authors as primarily autonomous inspired individuals whose genius and creative imagination enables them to bring forth original and timeless works of art, the Marxists sees them as constantly formed by their social contexts in ways which they themselves would usually not admit.*

Waugh and Rice (1992:53) believe that literary works are scrutinized for the symptoms of the ideology that forms the raw material of their production. In other

words, for each literary work, there is an ideological position within theory usually covering the whole field of the ideological class struggle which could be social, religious, judicial or even political. With this consciousness, it becomes necessary to explore and understand the relationship the literary text has with the society it exists in. The Nigerian novel today has taken ideological moulds such that novels in this contemporary time are written by ideologues who posit the socialist-cum-Marxist stance of bridging the yawning socio-economic gap between the haves and the have-nots. Usually, the novels in this category are essentially ideologically committed; the novels are imbued with a lot of revolutionary fervour. They mirror the circumstances of social inequality and/or exploitation, questioning the rationale that occasions them. The influence of ideology on the contemporary Nigerian writer is usually expressed in one of two ways: either the writer willingly reproduces the ideology, or else, like Tahir or Gimba, he attempts to subvert it. Marxists belief that literature itself is a social institution and has a specific ideological function, based on the background and ideology of the author. Consequently, Marxists tend to look for tensions and contradictions within literary works. This is appropriate because Marxism was originally formulated to analyze just such tensions and contradictions within society. This fact makes Marxist literary theory an ultimate part of a much larger effort to uncover the inner workings of society. Viewing literature as intimately linked to social power, Marxists thus believe that literary productions are linked to larger social questions that affect the existence of all classes of people in the society.

As a reflection of life, Marxism advocates an art that makes the down trodden masses aware of their exploitation and helplessness and do not only represent such

conditions truthfully, but seek to improve them. In believing that society is a historical entity evolving out of contradictions and governed by basic hegemony, Marxists have created the impression that class struggle is the central element of social change. For as Rupert Woodfin (2004:124) puts it;

> *Culture is really an expression of ideology designed to protect and promote the interests of a particular Class. The function of hegemony is to transform Ideology into culture, into a world view that is seen as normal and natural by everyone from the controlling class to the subordinate classes.*

The writer's reality therefore must lay in his awareness of the conditions of his society. For according to George Lukacs, "in no other aesthetics does the truthful depiction of reality have so central a place as in Marxism" (1964:97-101). Barry (1995) sums up the goals of Marxist literary criticism as including an assessment of the political tendency of a literary work, determining whether its social content or literary form is progressive, which is why, Marxist literary theory tends to focus on the representation of class conflict as well as the reinforcement of class distinction through the medium of literature. In other words, Marxist critics do more than interpret the political and social motive and implication of a literary work; they situate it in the growth of the society it presents.

Since the initial formulation of the Marxist principle, Marxism has developed and evolved into divergent theories and viewpoints of life and society that several literary movements have consequently developed. As an offshoot of Marxist theory, we have the Marxist-Feminist, Cultural Materialists, and Realists among others. While there are

many theoretical and practical differences among the various forms of Marxism, most forms of Marxism share these principles;

- An attention of the material conditions of people's lives and social relations among people
- A belief that people's consciousness of the conditions of their lives reflects these material conditions and relations.
- An understanding of material conditions and social relations as historically malleable
- A view of history according to which class struggle, the evolving conflict between classes with opposing interest, structures each historical period and drives historical change
  .
- Sympathy for the working class or proletariat.
- And beliefs that the ultimate interest of workers best match those of humanity in general.

Similarly, Barry (1995:167-168) opines that Marxist critics have five methods of transmitting their ideology each with its own target as follows:

- They draw a distinction between the real meaning and implied meaning of a literary work then relate the implied meaning of the work to basic Marxist themes like, class struggle; Or
- They relate the content of the literary work to the social class status of the author; Or
- They explain the nature of the literary genre as relating to the social period which produced it; Or
- They relate the literary work to the social assumption of the time it is read; Or
- They view the literary work as influenced by the political circumstances surrounding its production.

In whatever method Marxists decide to present a literary work, the ultimate aim remains

to emphasize a classless society where everyone is treated the same irrespective of social class, gender, or position for, "*the new art cannot but place the struggle of the proletariat in the centre of its attention*" Siegel (1970:31). Consequently, this study adopts the Realist literary theory, specifically the socialist realist theory; a theoretical ground found in the Marxist theory of "basis and superstructure", to discuss the preoccupation of Tahir and Gimba in the texts under study here.

Realism in literature is an approach that attempts to describe life without idealization or romantic subjectivity. Although realism is not limited to any one century or group of writers, it is most often associated with the literary movement in 19th-century France, specifically with the French novelists Flaubert and Balzac. George Eliot introduced realism into England, and William Dean Howells introduced it into the United States. Realism has been chiefly concerned with the commonplaces of everyday life among the middle and lower classes, where character is a product of social factors and environment is the integral element in the dramatic complications. In past, realism has been an upheaval against classicism and romanticism – artistic movements characterized by works that idealize life. Classicism shows life as being more rational and orderly than it really is while Romanticism shows life as being more emotionally exciting and satisfying than it normally is. While it was an attempt through realism to present life as it is, this 'life as it is' is what realism is. In this literary approach of literature, the writer keeps in mind the basic reality while narrating a piece of art. Which is why Asoo (2006) notes that?

> *All writers of whatever persuasion, thrillers, romances, autobiographical, political or sociological, have always had a fondness for what can pass as the truth so as*

to carry their readers or maintain them. (pg. 17)

For,

However rich and sumptuous may be a man's life ... it is incomplete if it does not take upon itself the interests of the world external to itself, of society and humanity. Subjectivity must give way to wider less egotistical concern. (Harland: 1999)

However, in the process of selecting and presenting their material the realists cannot help being influenced by what they feel and think. As Harland (1999:81) puts it,

The Realism of the nineteenth-century novel is fuelled by a fascination with the sheer 'thusness' of life. Individual human characters, local regional settings, particular details of experience are all to be enjoyed for their own distinctive flavour.

Even the most through-going realism is the result of observation and personal judgment. There is no place for the writer's own belief and thought. Which means that, the writer without being prejudiced, must narrate what is. For according to Harland (1999:84) 'Writers of the new generation must actively mould society'. Because, Realism does not just mean "true to the hard facts." It is not possible to determine it quantitatively in the sense- of the- more facts in a text, in other words, What is true is not always probable which is why Schipper (2000) believes that "The realistic writer destroys certain norms of his time (and his social group) in writing more truthfully than his predecessors."

Realism in literature is a manner and method of picturing life as it really is,

untouched by idealism or romanticism. As a manner of writing, realism relies on the use of specific details to interpret life faithfully and objectively. It acknowledges the fact that a work of literature can rest neither on a lifeless average, as the naturalists suppose, nor on an individual principle which dissolves its own self into nothingness. The central category and criterion of realist literature is the type, a peculiar synthesis which organically binds together the general and the particular both in characters and situations. What makes a type a type is not its average quality, nor its mere individual being, however profoundly conceived; what makes it a type is that in it all the humanly and socially essential determinants are present on their highest level of development, in the ultimate unfolding of possibilities latent in them, in extreme presentation of their extremes rendering concrete the peaks and limits of men and age. True realism depicts man and society as complete entities instead of showing merely one or the other of their aspects.

Realism demands of artists only the study of their period; in this study of their period it asks them not to distort anything, but to keep everything in its exact proportions; the best way not to err in this study is to think always of the idea of representing the social side of man, which is the most visible, the most comprehensible and the most varied, and to think also of the idea of reproducing the things affecting the lives of the greatest number, which happen often in the realism of instincts, desires, and passions. Realism thereby attributes to the artist a philosophical, practical, useful aim, and not to amuse, and consequently raise him up. That, in demanding of the artist useful truth, it demands of him particularly the intelligent feeling and observation which

sees a lesson, an emotion in a spectacle at any level, low or high, according to convention, spectacle at any level, knowing how to represent it completely, and to embed it in its social cadre. A distinction drawn between Art and Reality and an antithesis established between generals does not lose sight of the fact that art is a representation of reality – a representation which must be limited by the nature of its medium; the canvas of the painter, the marble of the sculptor, the chords of the musician, and the language of the writer, each bring with them peculiar laws but in all laws, art always aims at the representation of what is true. Realism is thus the basis of all art.

Realism is three dimensional – an independent life, characters and human relationships. There is no place for emotions and intellectual. What it opposes is the destruction of the completeness of the human personality and of the objective typicality of men and situations through an excessive cult of the momentary mood. The struggle against such tendencies acquired a critical importance in the realist literature. Sometimes the destruction of norms in the realistic novel only shakes the literary system, but in many cases it also touches the social and political system. That is why Harland (1999:86) believes that "It is the writer's special gift to be aware of current social trends and bring to public consciousness developments which are only just starting to take shape". A concrete historical situation, a datable and locatable frame are conditions for the realisation of realism. For, "a work of literature must be in tune with the historical moment of its writing: and the more in tune, the better the work

The urge for liberty, which is often associated with the rise of a class or group,

and the "view from below" of society are realistic features as well. These constitute latent threat to the existing order and the ruling authority. Censorship, persecution, or imprisonments are there to prove that the writer's realism can be- effective, that this verbalised reality has been recognized (but not accepted) by the authorities. This is not a phenomenon of the past, from the numerous cases of dissident and imprisoned writers in the present time (throughout the world), who describe their contemporary reality so realistically, that the political authorities experience their writings as too recognizable and therefore threatening. Asoo (2006) records Becker's isolation of the types of realism as follows: 'Realism of subject matter, realism of technique, realism of philosophy, surrealism, Irrealism, critical and socialist realism and neo-realism'. For this study, the Socialist realism will be used for analysis.

When studying Socialist realism in literature, it is important to first clarify the difference between Socialist Realism and Social Realism as the terms are so close. According to Galsworthy, "the word 'realist' characterizes that artist whose temperamental preoccupation is with revelation of the actual spirit of life, character and thought with a view to enlighten him and others". The main difference between social realism and socialist realism is between 'is' and 'should be'. Social realism means the depiction in literature of social reality as it is while Socialist realism means the depiction of the social reality not as it is but as it should be: idealized. For the social realist, there should be a point one to one correspondence between the society depicted in literature and the real actual society. Giving credence to the assertion by Belinsky quoted by Harland (1999) that "For our time, a work of art is lifeless if it depicts only to depict it".

Social Realism, also known as Socio-Realism, is an artistic movement, expressed also in the visual and other realist arts which depict working class activities. Many artists who subscribed to Social Realism were painters with socialist political views. An illustration is seen in their reaction when the consequences of the Industrial Revolution became apparent; urban centres grew, slums proliferated on a new scale contrasting with the display of wealth of the upper classes. With a new sense of social consciousness, the Social Realists pledged to "fight the beautiful art", any style which appealed to the eye or emotions. They focused on the ugly realities of contemporary life and sympathized with working-class people, particularly the poor. They recorded what they saw ("as it existed") in a dispassionate manner.

Social Realism, however, is not an official art and so allows subjectivity. It was originally an artistic movement that depicts the daily struggles of the working class. Work, thoughts and actions of the people who are either trying to construct a socialist society or who are struggling for their rights. Social Realism is different from socialist realism because it is not an official art and allows subjectivity. But Socialist realism is considered to be an outgrowth of the Social Realism School of art. The international production of social realist fiction is characterized by a belief in the power of the word and in the writer's ability to portray in a satisfying documentary fashion the structure of social reality. Social realism is inspired in various ways by the Russian revolution, Soviet communism, international Marxism, and the need to respond critically and in a denunciatory fashion to the various mechanisms of repression and the frustration of personal and collective aspirations.

The theory of Socialist Realism however was adopted by the Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934. Approved by Joseph Stalin, Nickolai Bukharin, Maxim Gorky and Andrey Zhdanov. Socialist Realism demanded that all art must depict some aspect of man's struggle toward socialist progress for a better life. It stressed the need for the creative artist to serve the proletariat by being realistic, optimistic and heroic. Socialist realism was unique only in that it was the sole official method of the state. It was objective seeing that it was an official theory that demanded of the writer not just a real and faithful account of what is but also a conscious effort to right wrongs identified in the writings. Consequently,

> *The critic's (or writer's) notion of what is real must vary from one to the other depending, here again, on their training, persuasion, age, morality and general backgrounds. The central issue is what is true or real.* (Waugh and Rice: 1992)

Socialist realism was best characterized by the watch words accessibility, the spirit of the people, and the spirit of the party. It became the officially sanctioned theory and method of literary composition prevalent in the Soviet Union from 1932 to the mid-1980s. For that period of history Socialist Realism was the sole criterion for measuring literary works.

Socialist Realism follows the great tradition of 19th-century Russian realism in that it purports to be a faithful and objective mirror of life. It differs from earlier realism, however, in several important respects. The realism of Leo Tolstoy and Anton Chekhov inevitably conveyed a critical picture of the society it portrayed (hence the term critical realism). The primary theme of Socialist Realism is the building of socialism and a

classless society. In portraying this struggle, the writer could admit imperfections but was expected to take a positive and optimistic view of socialist society and to keep in mind its larger historical relevance. Socialist Realism was also the officially sponsored Marxist aesthetic in the visual arts, which fulfilled the same propagandistic and ideological functions as did literature.

After the Congress of 1934, the Soviet government laid down four rules for what became known as "Socialist Realism":

That the work be:

1. Proletarian: art relevant to the workers and understandable to them.
2. Typical: scenes of everyday life of the people.
3. Realistic: in the representational sense.
4. Partisan: supportive of the aims of the State and the Party.

Though these laid principles have evolved to accommodate peculiar difference of geographical location and culture of the critic (as the case maybe), the basic principles that gave rise to the ideology still remains and influences the totality of what is transmitted by the Socialist Realist critic. These basic ideological principles are shared through:

- An attention to the everyday material conditions of people's lives and social relations among people.
- An objective presentation of these conditions and relations with the aim of education and provoking positive social change.
- A belief that people's understanding of their material and social conditions will influence and control their social responses and disposition.

- Sympathy for the proletariat in belief that the basic interest of the proletariat represents that of humanity in general.

This means that, writers must describe reality accurately with historic correctness in its revolutionary development, and then, match their artistic expression with the themes of ideological reform and the education of the common man in the socialist spirit.

A realistic novel is more or less not for the sake of art but for the sake of life of an individual or a mass presented by a common character. We finish the reading of a realistic novel with a feeling that such things have been happening in the world for ages past without our being conscious of them for one reason or the other. More so, in a realistic novel we can easily transfer our own identity to some of the characters and derive `vicarious pleasure out of this identification. If the intrinsic artistic development of situations and characters he has created come into conflict with his most cherished prejudices or even his most sacred convictions, the writer will set aside his own prejudices and conviction and describe what he really sees, not what he prefers to see.

Literature emerges out of life and records our dreams and ideas, hopes and aspirations, failures and disappointments, motives and passions, and experiences and observations. Over the years, literature has reflected the prevailing social issues in many eminent works of literature under the shadow of realism. In Realism, social reality is one aspect of the picture but it cannot be isolated as though it were an entity by itself.

A true Socialist Realist work should be an attempt to focus on reality with the concern to make it superior.

2.2 Literature Review

Supposedly in an attempt to create a cultural framework, for the enhancement of his material and spiritual survival, man invented a most complex problem which has defied all solutions – the problem of social class. Imaginative literature has constituted one of the varieties of ways by which the phenomenon is incessantly probed and analysed. Hence, the thrust of the literature of most people may be summed as ultimately to either critique or reinforce the idea and practice of social stratification. Perhaps, to lend credence to this Mao Tse-Tong reasoned that;

> *In the world today, all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is infact no such art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics* (1942).

Whatever role we ascribe to the literary text, it cannot be dissociated from the historical conditioning of the traditional novel as a literary form. The major preoccupation of the western novel has been with the consciousness of the individualists, the romantic hero at war with the social milieu and ethos which have produced that consciousness in the first place. This disposition has become the bulk of contemporary African Fictional works and appears to chart the social and cultural directions of the newly emerging African novel.

Northern Nigeria having experienced dual influence both in terms of its social cultural life (Arab/ Europe) and religious life (Islam/ Christianity) have being affected by the dual experience which have rubbed off on their everyday life and affected the theories and viewpoint of the people. Historically, a large portion of Northern Nigeria

was founded through Islamic religious conquest - except for the few other sections that resisted the hegemony of the Islamists. With religion (Islam) becoming the primary way of life, other forms of human endeavour became affected and religious sentiments became the predominant view point that characterized and shaped human activities. Education was anchored on strict Islamic codes and northern subjects think and behave religion which became an ideology of life and social conduct.

Northern Nigerian literature as a cognitive activity is a morally instructive mirror of man's life both on the part of the author and the audience and because of its historical interaction; it is a closed system of religious theories which regulates human conducts. This fact is attested to by the famous writer from the north Abubakar Gimba when he said in (2007) "Islamic religion is my culture and my way of life and I don't have any other life outside it." This is true not just of Gimba as an author, but of a lot of northern authors both male and female. Islam occupies the entire existence such that, it is forgivable to say that for the average northerner, ideology boils down to the teachings of Islam. This is why a writer of Zaynab Alkalis repute will reject out rightly that she is not a feminist despite appropriating all the feminist tendencies in most of her texts and in the female characters she presents; For example, Li, in her text *Stillborn.*

In defence of his ideological stance and the seemingly strong religious undertone of his works, Gimba writes in *New Nigeria Weekly* (1998:14). "I am not talking about the ritualistic religious observance; my concern is with adherence to principles and certain moral codes of conduct". For Gimba, there are set of moral codes of conduct. Everything has its place and everyone has his place in the society and should know and adhere strictly to it. This is the crux of this work.

The first generation of literary endeavour in the north (as highlighted in chapter one of this work) presented this idea of hegemony rooted in the cultural ideology of the people provoked by their religious believe. Life and existence is stratified and classified into components of existence. There is the supernatural world were spirit (both good and bad) reside and the world of the living, where slaves, freeborn, women, rulers, and religious scholars reside. This classification especially of the living, serves as a pointer to the fact of the place of each class in the hierarchy of things in the society.

In assessing Tafawa Balewa's *Shaihu Umar*, Taiwo (1986) rightly captures the essence of the work and in doing so, points out the essence of Northern Nigerian literature in terms of influence and purpose when he states that "Its real value lies in the light it throws on Hausa life and culture at the end of the last century, especially on the impact of slave trade and Islam on the society." (p.49) In writing this novel Balewa not only tells a story but also presents the firm influence of Islam on the culture, of his people. Mervyn Hiskett (1967 attests to this when he writes in the introduction of the English translation of the text that,

> *although the African background plays an important part in this story, Islamic values and Muslim attitudes mould the character of Umar and unify the plot. Indeed, Shaihu Umar is more than a story. It is a statement of the value and philosophy of orthodox Islam. The character of Umar is both an Islamic and a Hausa ideal (p. 3-4).*

Hiskett identifies the plot as turning on three important Hausa institutions; "The court, slavery, and the traditional Muslim system of education" while the author on one hand educates his audience on the undoubted influence of Islam on the Hausa society, he also indicts his society on its failures. He indicts the traditional rulers and their court,

social system, in presenting Makau's case, where trumped-up charges are brought against him (Macau) by the chief's courtiers. In reaction to the said charges, the chief, "Then and there, without making any inquiries at all, accepted what the courtiers told him". A classic case of a leader cut off from his community and his people.

On slavery, from the authors point and rendition, one could conclude, that, Islam permits slavery because it seems to legislate it, making it more human by enjoining the good treatment and monitoring of slaves as religiously commendable. According to Hiskett, "Basically, however, there is no doubt that it accepts slavery". (Introduction, p.6) Though permitting slavery, clearly Islam places conditions geared towards regulating and possibly, discouraging the practice and so, "it enjoins the good treatment and monitoring of slaves as religiously commendable". But the question still remains; does Islam permit slavery seeing that Balewa here indicts it and condemns its practice. The novel clearly advocates for an adherence to the ideology of culture and religion in the north.

In a similar endeavour, Ibrahim Tahir in *The Last Imam* indicts the same social institutions Belewa presents in *Shaihu Umar*. In *The Last Imam* (1984), Tahir overwhelmingly concerns himself with the cultural invasion of a people. The novel is an imaginative story, which reflects the attempt by a writer to create conditions necessary for the correction of moral and ethical anomalies, religious hypocrisy and bigotry, social and economic injustice and exploitation. Set in Bauchi Emirate - a society in transition from a pre-Islamic pagan to an Islamic society - the novel captures a society, where both religious and political leaders hide under the disguise of religion to perpetuate

political and social injustice over their subjects. On the criterion of the quality of a good novel, Arnold Kettle in Babajo, (2003:60) states that;

> *Every good novel, like every good work of art is a reflection of life and human experience. The novelist must communicate to us that the words on the page add up to a representation of a realistic world of people by realistic activity*.

In keeping with the above quotation, the novel reflects the reality of existence in Bauchi kingdom during those pre-Islamic days when the Emirs exploited their subjects. We see the same trend in contemporary Hausa speaking Northern Nigeria where some of its leaders, taking advantage of the people's religious devotion, exploit them. According to Oba Abdulraheem, (1990). In an essay titled "Ibrahim Tahir's *The Last Imam*" he opines that

> *… Tahir has sought to capture … an intimate and faithful reflection of the collective social consciousness and response of a Hausa Fulani society caught between the competing demands of religious orthodoxy and political expediency, to the transition from a pre-Islamic, pagan, to an Islamic social order (p. 31).*

The novel depicts the travails of a society through the abstracted, schizophrenic consciousness of Alhaji Usman, the protagonist, and Islamic scholar and later, the Imam of his society. A position he abuses for his personal selfish gains. There are instances of where the power and authority (his position as Imam - spiritual leader) could not protect him against the ceaseless revolts of his wives, his favourite son Kasim, and the rebellion by his disciples and the community represented by the Emir and his council. The Emir confirms the people's position when he tells him.

But I must warn you, this is also the kingdom of man. And the people you lead at prayer are not angels but ordinary men. For them, you are a need and when you cease to provide for that need, they will abandon you in the past they accepted the rigid discipline your insistence on doctrine imposed on the conduct of the affairs of the Emirate but their acceptance was based on the spirit of give and take between men (p.199).

Bamikunle Aderemi in a newspaper article titled "The Novels of Chinua Achebe and Ibrahim Tahir", identifies with this quotation. He adds that Tahir presents the protagonist as anti-people, who tries to selfishly impose religious doctrines on the people he leads without due considerations for the social practice upon which the history and culture of the society and emirate is built. These issues being that of 'gwauro', nuptial circle and bastard children (p.3) all which he does to promote his personal agenda. In spite of the high admiration and respect in which he is held by the people, these acts lead to his quick removal and replacement by his noble bastard, half-brother Mallam Shuaibu.

Similarly, Saidu Babura in Zainab Ismail (1998) like Aderemi attempts a comparison of Tahir's *The Last Imam* and Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*. Ismail see's the novel like the *Arrow of God* as a vivid depiction of the socio- political conflicts inherent in a Hausa Fulani setting of Northern Nigeria. Having the Islamic religion and God with the Imam as representative on one side and the society with its culture and the Emir as representative on the other hand, she quoted Babura as stating that the novel is a … conflict between Habe (Hausa) customs and Islamic ways on one hand, and on the other, between public and private morality in relation to particular holders of public office".(p.37) On his part, Aderemi analysis the role of the two heroes in the both

text especially in their portrayal of the themes of religion and political conflicts. He considers them (Alhaji Usman and Ezeulu) as exhibiting similar character traits when he writes,

> *"The central characters, each a priest in his own way, mediator between God/god and men on the different Nigerian communities give the impression that indeed, power is reposed in the hands of man"(p. 7).*

The truth in the quotation "power is reposed in the hands of man" is what Abubakar Gimba captures in the novel *Sunset for a Mandarin* in the character of the military Administrator Commander Abbud, and Waleefa. As to the social relevance of Abubakar Gimba's works, Wale Okediran, in Asabe Y. Mohammed (1998) opines that "The social relevance of Gimba's works is in his continued treatment of themes which are reflective of his immediate cultural milieu Northern Nigeria". (p. 26).

Abdullahi Ismail (1998:12) concurs, noting that Gimba's novels "periscope the social and religious situation in contemporary Nigerian society" Ismail even identifies some of Gimba's themes and characters as archetypes of the social realities that he perceives. On his part, reacting in particular to Gimba's *Footprints,* Tanimu Abubakar (1992:15) sees in the novel a coat of many colours, which laments the putrefaction of the Nigerian society and mourns her diversion from the path of progress by a combination of social and ideological factors. The simple truth is, that Gimba as a novelist in his works respond to the realities of the Nigerian milieu as they appeal to him and may not want to be strait jacketed into deterring from it. But also, he leaves the audience with no misconception of his personality and ideological convictions. "Islamic religion is my culture and my way of life and I don't have any other life outside it"

(2007). This assertion by Gimba bears fully on his works that Tanimu Abubakar (1992:106) in his assessment of Gimba's *Trail of Sacrifice* observes that;

> *The paradigm recognizes and indeed gives prominence to the centrality of a strong religious presence in the actions of man and in the ideological codification of man's perception of reality and social relationship*. (p. 106).

This paradigm embodies a world in which God's presence is felt. Abubakar concludes that the spiritual and moral ethos are in Gimba, sufficiently socialized to influence individual and social relationships but because of large scale of immorality, in the society the spiritual are affected leaving the individual in a state of crisis. And in doing this captures the essence of the message therein.

Not shaking off their Islamic religious ideology Gimba and Tahir, present a micro Islamic setting. While in *The Last Imam* Tahir's focus is on the Imam Alhaji Usman who hiding behind his position as a religious leader, exploits and persuades actions to the detriment of his society and his people. Gimba on the other hand, presents us with a society whose political leader, commander Abbud, uses his position as military administrator as shield to persecute a fellow human being on personal issues. In both cases, situations degenerate, leading to a protest that results in rebellion.

Another point of harmony in the works of Gimba and Tahir is their treatment of the social relevance of women and their place in the society. This debate is an ongoing argument that was also addressed by Uthman Dan Fodio in the nineteenth century in one of his ideological teachings (as previously highlighted) Falola (1988) quotes him as saying that

Most of our educated men leave their wives, daughters, and their captive morally abandoned, like beast---This is an abominable act.(pg:40)

Falola addresses the debate thus;

I saw that in our land in Biladina al-sudaniyya-people held opposing views on the subject of women going out of their houses. There are two-groups on this. A group of them went to the extreme of license holding that women are allowed to go out of their houses in pursuit of all their needs, the same like men, whether or not there was a legitimate shar'iyya necessity for that. This is categorically wrong. The first group is the predominant one. Another group of them went to the extreme of restriction, holding that women are not allowed at all to go out of their houses to accomplish any of their needs whether or not there was a legitimate necessity for that. This too, is also categorically wrong. This second group is small and is only known to a few people. I wanted to advise all by writing this book to explain to them the course of justice , the middle course between the two extreme.(pg:41)

In Gimba's *Sunset for a Mandarin,* Hamzah, in the face of persecution reasons that;

If God should touch you with affliction there is none that can relieve there from save him (p. 192).

This is typical of a religious ideologue. When his mind wonders and he seemed to question Gods reasoning in allowing the several afflictions on him, Hamzah immediately recoils from his thought.

Hamzah knew that though his near disintegration was a normal human reaction, he was only doing some violence to his faith. He recoiled within himself at his own near waywardness in belief, and asked God to forgive him. And then, he entrusted the matter to him

a firm basis for stoicism (p. 172).

Philosophically, he sums his misfortune thus;

But, that's life … its God's plan (p. 172).

Gimba, in *Sunset for a Mandarin*, explores the mindset of a contemporary devout Muslim who, faced with an up- hill task of living down the persecution of a superior, though still appearing respectful towards a hostile leader, he is seen to stand his ground as an individual who will not be bullied into debasing himself. Hamzah resists the over bearing attempts of his boss to frustrate, humiliate and embarrass him.

In his work, Balewa embraces and subscribes totally to the traditional ideology of the Islamic religion. While Tahir and Gimba, though re-enforcing the religious and cultural ideology of Northern Nigeria as conforming to Wole Omotosho's position in *Just Before Dawn* as 'Time past, present and future being lived in the shadow of all yesterdays', also introduce a mind-set to provoke change by questioning and challenging authority within reason. Their aim being to safeguard the sanctity of their religious ideology while promoting the right of man to grow within his society either away or towards those ideas.

This is further seen in the literary endeavours of the crop of young writers from Northern Nigeria who are poised to challenge the status quo as it were, and question the apparent literary stagnation in terms of theoretical experimentation. Writers have emerged both from the Muslim and non-Muslim parts of the North whose literary works have crossed the boundary of religious and cultural ideology to focus on secular issues that affect the lives of the people. Bello Musa Dankano's *Petrol Station*, Adah Ugali's

Naked Hearts (1982), Olu Obafemi's *Wheels* (1997) and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* (2002)(a collection of short stories), all discuss the social concerns of the region and Nigeria in general. In Joseph's (2003) opinion, these crop of emergent writers offer new perspectives on the nature of cultural and political development in their society one of which is their signification of the status and role of traditional/cultural values in the emerging society. He adds that, through the inter play of their cognitive power affected by Euro Christian values, the contemporary Christian writers have managed to create a delicate balance between tradition and the encroaching secular modernity and globalization.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Religion and Social Order in Tahir's The Last Imam

In *The Last Imam* (1984), Tahir overwhelming concerns himself with the cultural invasion of a people. An invasion which has significant bearing upon real life and gives insight into a people's hopes and despairs. The novel is an imaginative story which reflects the attempt by the writer to create conditions necessary for the corrections of social, moral and ethical anomalies, religious hypocrisy and bigotry, mal-administration, rigidity social and economic injustice and exploitation. The story is set in Bauchi Emirate, a society in a transition from a pre-Islamic pagan to an Islamic society in the present northern Nigeria. The entire story revolves around the central character Alhaji Usman, the Imam of Bauchi Emirate. It also depicts the travails of a society through the consciousness of Alhaji Usman, the protagonist, a devotee of the Islamic revivalism, an Islamic Scholar who later became the Imam of his community.

Supposedly in an attempt to create a cultural framework for the enhancement of his material and spiritual survival, man invented a most complex problem which has defied all solutions – the problem of social class. Imaginative literature has constituted one of the ways by which the phenomenon is incessantly probed and analysed. Hence, the thrust of the literature of most people may be summed as ultimately to critique the idea and practice of social stratification. Perhaps, to lend credence to this Mao Tse-Tong reasoned that;

> *In the world today, all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is infact no such art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics* (1942).

This means that whatever role we may ascribe to the literary text, it cannot be dissociated from the social consciousness of the people it portrays. Tahir's *The Last Iman* goes beyond a tale of one man's misfortune and a struggle between two opposing powers for supremacy to discuss the everyday material conditions of people's lives and social relations, an objective presentation of these conditions and relations with the aim of educating the masses and provoking positive social change.

In many respects, *The Last Imam* draws attention to self and social awareness through its discuss of social order. The text conceptualizes the different classes of people within the society, their relationship with each other and how this relationship shapes and affects their social interaction. The analysis draws from the author's conceptualization of the feudal lords, the spiritual heads, the almajiri's and the place of the woman in the scheme of things within the Bauchi society. Therefore, the texts in this study are analysed on the premise that people's understanding of their material and social conditions influence and control their social responses and disposition.

In general, the cultural setting of *The Last Imam* is Islamic; therefore, the life of the people is controlled and directed according to Islamic customs. The story of conflict here borders mainly on class relations and the face-off between two powerful and yet contending institutions-religion and politics. The novel portrays the society at a time when society renounces religious idealism in favour of practical, political and social exigencies. In the text, the protagonist Alhaji Usman, who is the spiritual head of his people, maintains antagonistic attitudes of rebellion towards set norms. On various occasions, he is at logger head with forces of tradition and conformity, seeking a sense of self-hood without consideration for others. On one hand is the Emir and his nobles.

Having control of the social life of the people, they struggle for supremacy over the Imam. Therefore, while the Imam insists on the supremacy and total control of the Godhead, the Emir and his nobles believe that what should be given to God should be what is convenient for man to give. The vital question is who should have the superior loyalty of the spiritual leader – Imam – in a crisis where he has to choose between God and the people? The dilemma of the Imam-hero is the need to choose between God's service and people service. The crux of the conflict lies on the issue of control while the argument borders on the view that the kingdom of God and that of man do not always agree or go in the same direction. Consequently, the story revolves around conflict occasioned by the treatment of women, commoners and the Almajiris.

Since the primary aim of socialist Realism is the building of a classless society which most times inevitably results in conflict and a struggle by the oppressed to break free from their oppressors. The Socialist Realist literature is to portray this struggle and in doing so, is expected to take a positive and optimistic view of the society. Tahir, through the actions of Alhaji Usman, the Emir, the women, the Almajiri's and even Mallam Shuaibu who later became Imam of Bauchi, discusses the inherent social problems of the society and in doing so, advocates for an alternative view on the issues generating the conflicts.

The major character Alhaji Usman is central to the story in *The Last Imam*. He represents the ideals of his society, and it is through him that the social and political issues addressed in the novel are embodied. The central development of the novel lays in the gradual erosion and collapse of the ideal that he (Alhaji Usman) represents, an ideal that made him more important than the ordinary men in circumstances which

requires a flexibility that his idealism was not capable of accommodating. Religion is undoubtedly the organizing force of the culture, social norms and traditions of the people. But religion represented by Alhaji Usman turns out to be rigid and unrealistic in its demands on its followers, often ignoring changes in social and cultural circumstances. This consequently creates a rift between the political leaders represented by the emir, vizir and other council members and the spiritual leadership represented by Alhaji Usman.

Accordingly, Abodunrin in Obafemi (1988) Summarises that the focus of the conflict is contest for the soul of its hero, Alhaji Usman by forces of religion and politics recognizing that fate has destined the spiritual leadership of Bauchi Emirate on him. He is described by Abodunrin from childhood as:

> *…a marked man of Allah, everyone who had anything to do with his father… developed a new code of behaviour towards him. Whenever they came in the morning to wait for his father in the hall where he held his lesson they sent in messengers with their greetings not only to Usman's father and the women of the house, but to Usman as well. His education was intensified … (P.16)*

He is later made the Imam of Bauchi not only following in his father's footsteps, but also inheriting his position.

As Imam, he is tasked with charting, advising and directing the spiritual life of his community in addition to teaching them religion and Godhood. But because of his human weakness, he fails in his duty. He exists and lives in confusion facing an insurmountable dilemma of either bowing to the dictates of religion logically or bowing

to the dictates of his social responsibilities. His dilemma leads to a personal conflict boldly highlighted in his character and the war he fights within himself. When we are taken into the inner thoughts of the protagonist, we see him in a deep confusion between performing his duties and satisfying his personal desires. He becomes irrational and makes irrational decisions to the detriment of his family, community and his position as Imam. Considering that immense power conferred on him as Imam, he uses his office for self help, condemning set traditions that are not in conformity with his ideas and what he termed as the will of God.

Meanwhile, Alhaji Usman's relationship with God is characterized by his habitual mood swings. The situation worsens after he is persuaded to consummate his marriage four weeks after it was contracted. The passion for his lust of flesh became fiercer, than his passion for God "somewhere in his mind Allah and Muhammed lifted up their heads but the fame lashed them away (P.25). He lost his faith in God and only regained it after he bedded Hassana "In her he found Allah and in all he did from that night on he excelled himself" (P.37). In his new found faith, he preaches against the people's entire culture and way of life, calling it primitive and ungodly. The Emir, having warned him against such angle of preaching, pensively informs him that

> *…the choice between the word of Allah and the need of the world is for every man to make for himself alone…the disintegration of a kingdom over which the word of God might yet rule. It appears now that these same people whose fate now hangs in the balance no longer wish to be guided by what they believe has brought the wrath of Allah on their heads. Yet our people are now men and it is as men that we must deal with them (P.239 – 240).*

The address above can be considered not a threat against only Alhaji Usman but also against the religion he represents, and God. Although the Imam can be indicted for his inconsistency in the way he defends and presents the integrity of God's words, in that, his sermons supposedly meant against corruption was aimed at protecting himself from the people's anger. He bans the 'gwauro' tradition (P.111) to save himself from being declared one during the "gwauro catching tradition by the Sarkin gwauro'. Also, his declaration against "bastards" to protect his most loved son Kasim, who was born a "bastard". And thus, the crux of the conflict.

The novel also raises the issue of conflict in the relationship between the hero (Usman) and the God he serves. His marital injustice seen in his obsession with his slave mistress Husseina as opposed to his treatment of legal wife, his abolition of the 'Gwauro' practice because it affects his situation and ultimately, his sexual dilemma amongst others. All of which creates a delicate balance between belief and hypocrisy. There are instances where the immense powers conferred on Alhaji Usman by his office as the spiritual leader-Imam could not protect him against the ceaseless revolts of his wives, his favourite son-Kasim, and the rebellion by his disciples and the community, represented by the Emir and his council. The Emir confirms the position of the people to the Imam, when he warns him that;

> *…this is also the kingdom of men. And the people you lead at prayer are not angels but ordinary men. For them, you are a need and when you cease to provide for that need they will abandon you… in the past they accepted the rigid discipline your instance on doctrine imposed on the conduct of the affairs of the Emirate but their acceptance was based on the spirit of give and take between men who understand the affairs of the State and who know*

that they needed you and you needed them. Now they know that the people are not with you (P. 199).

Despite the high regard and admiration the people have for Alhaji Usman, he was quickly removed and replaced by his noble bastard" half-brother, Mallam Shuaibu. This replacement is not because Mallam Shuaibu is perceived to be more pious, on the contrary for he is seen as a "quack and inferior" by the people. His new position is occasioned by the simple fact of him being the lesser of two evils. Simply put, he is better placed and more willing to satisfy the social and political needs of his society. In un-turbaning Alhaji Usman as the Imam, the Emir emphasizes the purpose of religion as a guide to the people, not a tool meant to subjugate them.

The struggle for liberation is never violence for violence sake, but a physically and spiritually redeeming counter-violence against violent provocation which must be broadly conceived as meaning economic, political and ideological as well as military struggle between the damned, the concubines, slaves, peasants and the almajiri in *The Last Imam,* and the exploiters, the Imams, the Emir, his council members and Mallam Shuaibu. In liberating themselves from all kinds of alienating mental and physical violence imposed by their exploiters, the "damned" would also be struggling towards the de-alienation of their exploiters.

The fundamental image and social relevance ascribed the concubines, slaves, peasants and the almajiri in *The last Imam* is that of, producers of all social wealth and sexual slaves for their masters. In the Bauchi Emirate, the slaves and peasants are subjected to various kinds of demeaning and shameful treatments. While the women

are used as sex objects, the children occupy the position of wealth bringers (almajiri). The case of Aisha (Alhaji Usman's first wife) is a clear example. First, she is married off to a man she did not even know;

> *…And Aisha, how she had stopped crying the minute she learned from the woman's message that she was Usman's and not his father's wife (P.20)*

Of cause she is consoled by the fact that she is not to marry an old man but a younger one, much closer to her age (at fifteen). Then came the night Usman was 'talked' into consummating the marriage. As his father described it, that night "was ugly" (P.25).

> *He spoke not a word, just advanced towards her crouching with the stealth and bottled up fury of a fighting tiger… passion… setting his loins on fire… The enrapturing sound of jungle drums forcing him on till he sprang….*
>
> *'Wayyo Allah' and his hand was on her mouth, silencing her. She was under him, struggling, legs beating about, arms flailing,… Clothes torn into shreds and her naked body against his… she was young, raw and hard, but that one angry destructive push, a short sharp yelp of pain, and his vengeance and misdirected passion and fervour found their course…four times he went back to her in spite of her whines and her pain and the blood (P.25).*

The act described here is not only revolting, but inhuman. An onslaught on a living, breathing woman. The act is supposed to be a first mating between a husband and his young virgin wife. Ordinarily, one would assume that the act of love making between the man and woman in this circumstance for the first time will be gentle and loving considering that the woman in question is a virgin. But, it is carried out and described like a hunting expedition where a hunter corners his prey, the prey being helpless and too small to fight back, just struggles, crying and moaning under the

assault of its much stronger and bigger attacker. He stops his sexual attack on his wife after the fourth time, not because he felt any form of remorse or, is sorry for the pain he was inflicting on her but because he himself was pained.

> *Then a fifth and he was pained, a throbbing kind of pain that made his loins so tight he felt they would explode and he withdrew. (P.25).*

Aisha as a new wife is not only "dragged in by the hand" (P.20) to a marital home she knows nothing about, but is also assaulted by a husband who is supposed to love, protect and care for her. This simply proves that even in marriage and in love making, the woman is abused and debased. She gets the rough deal all around

Another implicit critique of patriarchal and sexiest tendency recorded in the text is the disposition of the Imam, the Emir and the council officers towards their female slaves. They are said to have the divine right to convert their female slaves into concubines for the satisfaction of their sexual needs. This notion is confirmed by Alhaji Usman's father (an Imam) in this statement.

> *Well look at me, I have four wives and four concubines and I am the Imam of Bauchi. I have nothing at all to complain about. Oh, women are no trouble at all. (P.18)*

Wives must not only accept the presence of other wives and share their husband but must also accept the presence and share their husband with slave women who are not married to their husband. They (women) are taken for granted and expected to internalize their pains and objection. Like a good owner to its dog.

> *Be a good provider, a good guide, a good brother, father, everything that any human being would want to have… to get*

them to obey you as a husband and give you full control over your household…(P.18).

Usman's father tells him. In a discussion with Alhaji Usman on the circumstances surrounding his birth and the fate of his slave mother, Mallam Shuaibu (Alhaji Usman's bastard brother) throws more light to their father's explanation on slave concubines and consequently, the fate of slave women.

My mother was a slave girl then in the Emir's court and our father's friend and confidant used her for this purpose. She was then also fifteen… The slave held her down while our father entered her. When it was over, they forbade her to tell anyone…Weeks after that it was discovered… that my mother was pregnant, that she was carrying me, our father's son… When it was found out… Do you know who was blamed?… She was… The head slave beat her and starved her; all for something she neither wanted nor caused. (P.160).

This is the fate of a slave concubine; she is used for sex but not expected to get pregnant no matter how long she is used. And if she does, she is blamed, punished and banished.

…they gave her away to an itinerant school
Mallam, a fakir, like me, as what? ….Alms, Usman;
alms, like a piece of worn out robe. She was to be
the man's concubine….(p:160).

This is the case with Alhaji Usman and his slave concubine Hassana whom he took at the age of fifteen. Like his father, his first encounter with her was a rape which resulted in the conception of his beloved son, Kasim. Though unlike his father, he loved Hassana till her death and beyond. A love which does not excuse him raping her or his neglect of his other wives for her.

Tahir successfully depicts the manner in which the feudal lords of Bauchi Emirate make abundant use of the apparatus of coercion against the peasants and children in their society. The spiritual leaders, Alhaji Usman and Mallam Shuaibu, make 'creative' use of religion to exploit their subjects. Both Alhaji Usman and Mallam Shuaibu are presented as divine rulers in their Islamic schools and so, using their position, they advocate and enforce slavery and begging (almajiri) as acts of soul purification. The almajiri concept explained by Fafunwa (1974) as the act of carrying young children from one town to another by their teacher(s) (Mallam) in search of Islamic knowledge, in an Islamic school called Makarantan Allo, is justified by Mallam Shuaibu when he tells Kasim that;

> *…An almajiri is not simply a student, but a humble servant of Allah". (P.129)*

In a more detailed explanation, he recounts the rules, behaviour and responsibilities an almajiri is expected to shoulder in an Islamic school and for his mallam.

> *… You and the other boys are almajiri following in the footsteps of the first 'Muhajirs' who fled with Mohammed from the pagans of Mecca to Medina. They had to beg for their food while in flight and they had to rely on the charity of people of Medina in order to survive while they carried on with Allah's work. All over the land all the boys in Itinerant schools begged for their food and you will all have to do the same… And from time to time you will be expected to run errands and to do some odd jobs for me and for my family… You will sell water in the market place and carry loads in order to collect some money. (P.128 – 129)*

The statement above perfectly depicts the manner in which religious leaders exploit their followers especially the children and force them into child labour. The child is expected by his religious teacher to perform duties for him and his family, sell water

(hawk) for money and carry loads for money which they in turn remit to the teacher and his family. But, the almajiri's do not get fed by their teacher(s). Instead, they are made to go out and beg for their meals while the Mallam and his family his children included benefit and feed off their labour. By way of child indoctrination.

> *…Kasim understood, for he had seen many almajiri's coming to his father's house at meal times. They would stand halfway through the house and call out… and the women would answer 'come in almajiri'. Their calabashes were then filled and they took them back… (P.129).*

It is not just that they are made to beg and perform menial labour for the Mallam while the Mallam's children lazy around, they are also subjected to certain unnecessary conditions of existence like walking around without cloths. This exchange between Mallam Shuaibu and Kasim (one of his almajiri's) throws more light on the matter.

> *'Take off your clothes,' Mallam Shuaibu said suddenly*
>
> *'Why, Mallam?' he asked, wide-eyed*
>
> *'I am your Mallam-do not ask impudent questions!'*
>
> *'But I will be naked then,' he answered.*
>
> *Mallam Shuaibu Chuckled… 'My son an almajiri is not simply a student, but a humble servant of Allah. Your robes do not belong to that state of humility. Look at the other boys and you will see that they wear only the bente and the goatskin. That is the uniform of the humble almajiri.*

Kasim though reluctantly, had to comply and remove his robe to walk half naked around town begging hawking and performing menial labour. For refusal to do so; "Your hide will teach you" (P.128) as Mallam Shuaib puts it – he will be whipped into compliance. This is the lot of the almajiri child.

However, Kani (1983) has a contrary view to this treatment of the Almajiris. He explains that the Almajiri system of education is designed to cater for the Islamic education in the Muslim child, by way of instilling the concept of justice, humbleness and righteousness as prescribed by the Islamic religion. Begging has no place in this teaching and learning process "…this type of education runs counter to the Islamic injunctions and has no roots whatsoever in the Islamic culture". He adds that;

> *Neither the Qur'an, the traditions of the prophet, nor the consensus of the Muslim jurists ever supported or commended such unhealthy activity. On the contrary, the prophet (PBUH) had emphatically condemned begging in more than one instance. He mentioned in one of his hadith (translations) that it is better for someone to take a rope and go to the forest to cut wood and sell it to people than to resort to asking people (for charity) no matter, whether they give him or not.* (P. 91)

contrary to this injunction, we see Mall Shuaibu, an Islamic scholar who is supposed to be a teacher of Islamic doctrines, selfishly contravening the teachings he has being called to uphold, albeit, to his advantage.

The masses – concubines, peasants, slaves and the almajiris - are presented as passive, dormant and complacent followers as victims. But we are given occasional glimpses of struggles and objections against feudal lords by the followership. In Tahir's presentation, the masses are seen as an amorphous mass belonging to a single social class in society. Consequently, he (Tahir) is justified in showing how this class is oppressed by their leaders, the Bauchi Emirate in alliance with the religious leaders. But Tahir echoes with a certain degree of rebellion against the tyranny of the ruling class both secular and religious. On this wise, Tahir gives us occasional glimpses of a brewing

rebellion. We are shown instances where the Imam's great authority fails to protect him against the revolt of his wives and son-Kasim. Twice, he faced acts of rebellion by his disciples during the conflict occasioned by the jeering gwauro-hunt at his home. Besides been previously hurled to the ground by his furiously unwilling horse, he comes dangerously close to public denunciation after an insensitive and contemptuous sermon at a Friday congregational prayer. On its own part, faced with a restless citizenry and the threat of a full blown rebellion, the nobility sacrifices its clerical alter ego to politics by dethroning one Imam who seems to be anti-people and turbaning another to appease his irate followers, avoid a blood bath and secure his position and respect as Emir.

By this thematic analysis, we see Tahir's line up of conflict generating events leading to the rebellion by the faithful's and culminating to the decision of the Emir and his nobles to remove Alhaji Usman as Imam of Bauchi. Through the life of Kasim, we are fully made aware of the true nature of child abuse occasioned by the negative application of the Almajiri practice and style of living especially as it affects children. We also realise the extreme patriarchal treatment of women by examining the life's of Alhaji Usman's wives and other slave women turned concubines in the text. By this narrative, Tahir brings home the reality of everyday life, the fact that it could be any one of us in any of the situations presented. The question then is, how would we react?

On the whole, Tahir presents the masses as a people whom if pushed too far, will respond in kind – push back. In keeping with the socialist Realist guiding principles, Tahir focuses on the social relationship between the characters in the text with

particular emphasis on the daily challenges faced by the masses. He portrayed them as a people constantly in the process of asserting their existence either gently or through struggle. While there are existential struggles between the ruling class and the masses, Tahir also shows us a struggle within the ruling class, both religious and political and between the two.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Marriage and the Feminist Appeal in *Sacred Apples*

As a contemporary writer, Abubakar Gimba points to a lot of disorder not only in his immediate society (the north) but also in the wider Nigerian society. As far as he is concerned, social disorder is a misnomer which he needs to correct through his writings. He addresses these misnomers and direct them at the Nigerian society. In the words of Ode *(1988:10):*

> *Gimba's literary words are directed at the leadership, the followership and every person that is receptive to ideas that can make a change in any way for a better society.*

Trailing Gimba's world view from the text, we can perceive the social milieu of *Sacred Apples* as one with several points of dislocation needing identification and repair. Like all Gimba's novels' *Sacred Apples* tells a Muslim story from an Islamic view point. Interestingly, it does not fall short of prejudice or bias against other ethnic or religious entity since Gimba rightly beliefs that;

> *….My businss as a writer is to try In my own little ways to remove the moles in the eyes of Nigerians so that they can see the so many possibilities that would make a nation grow. (WeekEnd Concord Dec.22, 1990; pg 7)*

Given that Socialist Realists pay strong attention to the everyday material conditions of people's lives and social relations, the text here will be analysed to explore the social relevance of the woman viz a viz all social practices that revolve around her. Through the discuss of marriage, divorce, polygamy and other family related issues, the author's

attempt to extensively point out social practices that have over time daunted the progress of the woman both as an individual and as part of a culture within the northern society will be discussed in this chapter.

Sacred Apples introduces the conflicts of values which bear the fruit of feminism, and Islamic values which stipulates the role of women as house-wives. Here, the female characters are armed with superior argument which overwhelms those of the few voices on the exigency of women's empowerment. Though the liberal feminists argue that an individual woman should be able to determine her social role with a great freedom as a man, the classical Marxists feminists on the other hand believe that the oppression of women results primarily from the traditional positions in the family. Thus, *Sacred Apples* is not just a tale of marriage and family life, but ultimately the story of a woman trying to change the negative role ascribed women in her society.

Umar (2004) beliefs that Islamic Marriage is an institution intended to be a haven, a source of contentment and happiness among the spouses through commitment to each other. She cites Abdal A.H (1982) as saying that;

> *The normal natural cause of behaviour for a muslim is to establish a conjugal family of procreation. This is the common practice of ordinary men, spiritual leaders and even prophets. To that effect, there are many passages in the Quran and the traditions of the prophet which goes as far as to say that "When a Muslim marries he thereby perfects half of his religion; so let him be God-minded with respects to the other half". (pg 54)*

The treatment of marriage and family life in *Sacred Apples* begins when Zarah's marriage collapsed after nine years. Zarah's marriage to Yazid was contracted in her

adolescence. So, with youthful innocence and zeal, she submits herself to him. Surrendering her personality and will as a dutiful wife. But Yazid inadvertently terminates the marriage, shattering Zarah's dreams. He pronounces the irrevocable divorce and thus sets in motion a parade of woes for himself and for Zarah. He marries the new woman in his life only to find out that she is no match to the dutiful Zarah for while Zarah is chaste and homely his new woman is treacherous and morally loose. Zarah could find any justification for Yazid's harsh treatment of her.

> *She felt that she had only lived her life for Yazid. A sheltered life defined for her by a partner she thought was an extension of herself (P.70)*

Herein lays the irony in most marriages. For while the woman is emotionally and psychologically dependant and committed to her husband, the man only wears a hypocritical garb. Provoked by this realization, Zarah is determined never to be caught under the illusion. She hardly deserves any blame for as Bilkisu Yusuf puts it;

> *If muslim men can comfortably jettison their Islamic responsibility of inhuman treatment of wives, then few of them deserve blind devotion, especially those who divorce wives for petty reasons (Yusuf (1997:12)*

After her divorce, Zarah goes back to her family with her children to observe the compulsory 'idah' period before the divorce becomes final. While Yazid prepares to remarry, Zarah is set against venturing into another marriage. Her decision is;

> *"The last thing I want to do is get married,*
> *The very word itself*
> *is… quite nauseating to me" (p. 54).*

She tells her brother. Though members of her family and her friends continue to encourage her to get married again, she refuses. But in a dream she recalls her grandmother's treatise on the virtues of marriage and the position of Islam and consequently, the position of the society on the matter. Her opposition to Zarah's life as a single parent is based on the fact that;

> *God created us man and woman… He permitted*
> *Marriages…marriage fulfils certain social and*
> *Biological needs without which, unless he will*
> *Otherwise, man could cease to exist… (p. 267)*

So when she receives a second marriage proposal from Nousah her boss after ignoring the first, she reconsiders, accepts his proposal and marries him. A few months later, however, Nousah marries another wife and recalls his estranged first wife. Consequently, despite her dislike for polygamy, Zarah becomes one of Nousah's three wives.

Nousah's marriage to three wives puts an end to Zarah's quest for a monogamous bliss. She is faced with the complications that go with polygamy. Complications she had witnessed first hand while growing up. She tries to make peace between herself and her co-wives and between her co-wives. Things seem to be working out at first but situations change when her co-wives join forces to frustrate her. They not only turn against her but through diabolical means, also turn their husband against her. Life in the house becomes unbearable for her and she is forced to move out of her matrimonial home. Her reasoning for that drastic step being that;

> *Those women having being mesmerized by the*
> *marabouts could be induced to physically harm*

me, by some form Of poisoning…(p.195)

She adds;

It's not that I'm against polygamy I believe
in its divine mercy…I don't mind Sharing,
but the shattering hassle… I want to save
myself the headaches. (p.138)

Eventually, as fate will have it, Nousah and Zarah are poisoned by a sacred Apple through the evil mechanization of the marabout, An-Najmu. Nousah dies from the poison but Zarah miraculously survives. Once again Zarah is without a husband.

In discussing the travails of Zarah and the challenges she faces both personal and social life, we discuss the plight of women in general within the northern society. Gimba presents in clear terms, the dilemma most women in northern Nigeria face in a bid to prove their worth and their right to co-exist alongside their male counterparts. The possible pictures and outcomes of marriage and family life are outlined. We are also given a glimpse of the effect polygamy and divorce has on marriage. Consequently, glimpses of social relationships within marriage. Though we are also made aware of the fact that everyone shares the patriarchal view on women. Through the proclamations of the characters, we have an insight to the position of each on the issues. While Zarah objects to polygamy, Zubayda, her grandmother scolds her and tells her that;

I only want you to know that no believer has a
Right to hold prejudices against what God has
Permitted within limits. (p.269)

The operative word here being 'within limits'. But as clearly seen in the text, these limits are ignored either deliberately or unconsciously. Which is why we hear Zarah accuse Muslim men of turning a "conditional privilege into an indulgence" (p.138). Gimba, in an

essay titled "Polygamy, Monogamy and Deception" agrees with Zahra's reasoning on the matter. He holds that

> *…if we (Muslim men) can practice the limited polygamy with all Its intent as enjoined in the Qur'an, re-orient our materialistic value system and stop deceiving Ourselves…most of our ills will disappear. (1999:174) (emphasis mine)*

Polygamy could wreck a home when not properly handled as evident in the "air of coldness" between Zarah's half-brothers and sisters indicative of the "cold war" between their mothers. A similar "cold war" is seen in Nousah's household. Salma and Aalimah are seen conspiring against Zarah as well as alienate her children (from her first marraige). While Nousah, the man of the house is in a dilemma as to where to pitch his tent. But Gimba's point of order to people like Zahra who have grown to hate polygamy, is given through Zubaydah when she says;

> *It's not piety to disdain that which God has allowed … (P.142)*

If according to Islam God has allowed polygamy, then it must have some "social relevance". Islamicaly, all wives are equal in a polygamy and so must not fight for unequal favours from their husband. The husband, on the other hand, is commanded by God to treat the wives equally. As echoed by Zahra to her mate Aalimah;

> *We are equal before our man, and God. We only owe ourselves mutual respect. And the best of us is the one that is best in conduct in our dealings (P. 140)*

Gimba presents the home as an integral part of the individual. The home is shown to have great hold on the individual a hold that can only be violated at great

cost. Yazid violates this hold. He mindlessly sends away his wife and kids for a girlfriend, and consequently creates a wound that is to remain unhealed. On her part, Zahra suffers severe emotional anguish as a result of the separation. Her second attempt at marriage is marked by turbulence and bereavement. This is the prize of divorce. Although marriage, says Gimba, "is a contract", there ought to be some decency in contract dissolution. We are told that "of all the permissible things, Allah hates divorce the most". Yet some men exercise this right "too soon… or too flimsily" (P.154).

> *When it comes to dealing with women or their wives,*
> *many men are guided more by their whims and*
> *passions than by principles or religion (P.29)*

Marriage is extensively explored in *Sacred Apples* not to discourage intending parties but to point out and correct some misconceptions. Misconception about the application of some Islamic tenets like polygamy. In Zubaydah's opinion, polygamy seeks to enhance social and biological fulfilment for man, with justice, fairness and equality (P.269). But Zahra sees it as a "conditional privilege given by Islam which men have "turned into an indulgence" (P.138).Despite Zahra's misgivings and obviously objections to polygamy, Gimba insists, through Zubaydah;

> *I only want you to know that no believer*
> *has a right to hold prejudices against*
> *what God has permitted, within limits (P.269*

Zahra's life in *Sacred Apples*, like Hussaina's in *Witnesses to Tears* (another of Gimba's Novels), points a pitiable picture of the mauled woman in a society where male chauvinism is yet to allow the woman a breathing space for self-actualization. Zahra is

symbolic of the modern educated Muslim woman who is caught in the web of two contending persuasions- the assertiveness that she imbibes from western education and the docility that the patriarchal tradition of her society imposes on her; the former tending towards liberty and independence, the latter tending towards engagement and dependence.

Hence the transformation of Zarah's character from the innocent and impressionable young woman who was content to be labelled 'a housewife, a mother and a woman on someone's terms' to a fully conscious, self-aware woman willing, ready and capable of taking her fate into her hands and achieving her dreams. Thus, she is transformed from illusion to disillusion, from innocence to awareness as she begins a new life. Her old docility gives way to assertiveness and she is ready to move on with her life.

> *Now… the bubble has gone burst. There was no need for self pity. Just to pick up the pieces, and start again. Define her life, be the person she wanted to be. A woman. (P.70)*

Zarah works towards being a woman on her own terms not on the terms of any man. Armed with a university education and a good job, she confronts the men's world. Her intelligence and hard work leads to her elevation at her work place. She has an office, a comfortable home and a car. Here, Gimba seems to be saying that most men constitute an obstacle to their wives' progress. And in the marriage institution under such a chauvinistic male world as the north, the hold is used to subjugate and sedate the women thereby hindering the tapping and realization of their God given talents.

Against this background, Zarah is a role model. She becomes the symbol of the emancipated woman. Having risen above the matrimonial constrains instituted by a chauvinist society albeit husband, she puts her womanhood to wider social relevance. Though from Gimba's, perspective a woman is fully realized only in marriage. Zarah is sceptical of marriage and distrustfully of men having being through all that without success. Her aversion is re-enforced by Medioka's (her immediate boss) slanderous gossips and intrigues. She is exposed and realizes the up-hill task a single woman faces in a society were mutual suspicion, envy, selfishness and above all, gender bias plays a major role in the light a person is perceived and related with. She (as a single lady) is further tasked with the responsibility of exercising moral restrain by which she is to check the lusty passes made at her by men. Her ability to adequately do this further raises her moral standing, integrity and dignity amongst her pairs and in the society.

To escape unnecessary scrutiny and criticism in her society, she allows herself to be persuaded into re-marrying albeit into a polygamous home. Polygamy takes its toll on her when her co-wives unleash their individual and collective brand of rivalry and jealousy towards her. Her new husband due to his fickle mindedness alienates her and further insists that she send her children back to their father (her Ex-husband). She is not only faced with the antics of jealous rivals, but also with the in-objectivity her husband displays by reason of his person in the society. In the midst of her battles, she is forced to relinquish part of her most cherished motherly roles to a nanny. But being resilient, she is determined to prove to all that she is well able to without regret or

masculine support, raise her children and cater for both their physical and psychological needs despite the physical and psychological stress involved.

As she tries to strike a balance in her marital, social (work) and home life, she loses her husband Nousah through the antics of evil men as Dan Easker and An-Najimu and also loses her pregnancy through a miscarriage. Thus her second attempt at marriage and happiness shatters. Bereaved, betrayed and unhappy with the lot fate had dealt her through the hands and dictates of a chauvinistic society, Zarah joins the women's liberation movement to propagate the feminist ideology.

However, the novel is not only about Zarah's sad family problems, but also about Rashad and Miriam's mixed but happy marriage. Rashad, a Muslim and Miriam a Catholic are Gimba's example of the ideal couple. They remain one and their home intact, their religious differences and childlessness notwithstanding. The force binding them is love. Following the dictates of his religion, Rashad is eligible and permitted to marry another wife, but why should he if Miriam meets his matrimonial needs, loves him and makes him happy? Many Muslim men would if only to satisfy their selfish needs and in this case, for procreation. Though Miriam is unable to have children, Rashad seems contented and happy with his wife having accepted the fact that only God can give children. The opposite would have probably created a loop-hole for disorder in the home. But Rashad is an epitome of hope and decency and Gimba's example for the typical northern husband as he is placed as an advocate against what ails the northern husband. Further, Rashad and Miriam's marriage is a ray of hope for the northern woman who would have being termed "a failure" and sent away for not bearing a child,

as is the case of Miriam. Otherwise, she is loved and cherished by her husband. Consequently giving us an idea of Gimba's perception of an ideal marriage. Where both parties wholly accept each other, faults and all.

Shareef's character is also an admirable one. He is a worthy gentle man, an advocate of religion and culture. He appears just in his acceptance and advocacy for religious and cultural adherence. In a society where men, by their hands, have dragged their integrity into the mud through all kinds of misbehaviour that make them incur the distrust and contempt of women, Shareef stands out as a gem. At home, a loving and caring husband, father and brother, and in his society, a man of virtue.

> *In Gimba's vision of order in a disorderly society, the foregoing characters of hope mirror the regeneration that is Gimba's heart throb. Our problems, complex as they seem, do not require complex solution. Just little hardwork and a reversion to moral values of our faiths will see us across the red sea into the promised land (Gimba 1998:14)*

The reality of the text lays in its advocacy for change as exemplified by Gimba's many references to the contrast within society. We see the marriages of Zahra as failed because of the social anomalies inherent in them, we are discourages. Then we are given a glimpse into the marriage of Miriam, we heave a sigh of relief as we are hopeful of a change in the social perception of the place of the woman. A positive change that will bring about a more appreciative treatment and inclusion of the woman in the scheme of things. Gimba is in no way advocating for a departure from the religious and cultural dictates and make-up of his society, rather, he makes a case for a better

application of the principles imbedded in both. Obviously, for him, culture and religion are a very important 'tool' for its ability to guide and instruct the person towards the right path. Yet, a faulty application of its principles could lead to undesirable consequences in the society.

Like other Northern Nigerian authors, Gimba produces works that bear strong affiliation to his immediate environment and religious belief. The aim here would be to achieve a connection with the people for whom the content is directed at. And so, this literature achieves uniqueness by departing from mainstream ideologies wholly embraced by writers from other regions to explore issues that are peculiar to their own region.

Zarah is Gimba's archetype of the ideal woman; educated, enlightened and hardworking. Her personality pulsating with resilience that can contain the convulsions and challenges of modern society and with the equanimity that in spite of all odds comports her within the matrix of religion and culture, the dictates of which are Gimba's blue print for a fully realized life for as Ode (1988:9) affirms.

> *If men were to go by what Islam says, women would be the movers and shakers of the society (Ode 1988:9)*

Zarah's survival of the pangs of disorder in a male dominated society is a victory for womanhood. In her survival instinct, she asserts her need for only plain support, not benevolent, patronizing concessions, not pity. She survives by personal strength of character and hard work unlike some other women who thrive merely as "moving shadows of their men…" The implication for our society "especially in the north" is that

any woman can attain success independent of men, rise from being objectified by men and relegated as part of a bunch, provided she has Zarah's kind of demeanour.

But it is also important to note that by projecting Zarah in this light, Gimba is not in any way saying that a woman should be alone or that if her marriage fails, the woman is licensed to abandon the marriage institution and have nothing to do with men. On the contrary, he believes that men and women vary in their physical features and mental capabilities and thus, their role in the family or larger society will as well vary and be complementary to each other to the mutual benefit of all. He likens the dual relationship between the two to a relationship between an engineer and a surgeon in the words of Miriam;

> *There is no brouhaha over the equality of an engineer and a surgeon… they are different, yet each respects the other in his own field, and are equal. The engineer need not rush to the theatre struggling for a scalpel to impress the surgeon… And in a situation of interdependence, you can't afford to depreciate one calling for another…" (P.92, 93).*

The message here is simple. Men and women are undoubtedly different, but this difference should not cause the man to look down on the abilities of the woman but should regard her as an equal partner for the contributions she brings into the relation. The women understand this fact, as Miriam tells Zarah in a conversation:

> *I agree with you… there are things men can do and women cannot and vice versa. By our constitution, men and women are different… (P.92)*

The men also need to accept and come to the same realization.

Apparently, Gimba writes with a peculiar understanding and realisation of the plight of womanhood in his male dominated society. He creates an accurate albeit, real picture of a society where men display a liberal misuse and misinterpretation of religious principles to dominate and oppress their women folk. He argues in an interview that:

> *A number of people under the guise of religion*
> *Have been treating women unfairly, contrary to*
> *What Islam, has stipulated. It is unfortunate that*
> *There is a great misunderstanding by both Muslims*
> *And non-Muslims on how women should be treated*
> *….if men were to go by what Islam say, women would*
> *Be the movers and shakers of the society. (Ode 1988:10)*

This is because there is no provision of Islam that justifies the maltreatment of women. Furthermore, Islam has played an important role in establishing the quality of men and women as human beings. This however, does not entail non-differentiation of their respective roles and functions. But again, he advises women not to abandon their original roles and responsibilities to compete with their male counterparts.

As earlier stated in chapter two of this work, Literature emerges out of life and records our dreams and ideas, hopes and aspirations, failures and disappointments, motives and passions, experiences and observations. In Realism, social reality is one aspect of the picture but it cannot be isolated as though it were an entity by itself. A true Socialist realist work focuses on reality with the concern to make it superior. By recounting the experiences of Zarah, the writer creates empathy in the reader for her plight. But through the life of Miriam, he gives hope. Through this recreation of the life's of everyday people, Gimba provides a basis for, not only self-examination, but also social realisation. With a view to making society better for the marginalised sex

(women) within it, the writer proffers alternative views on the same issues of patriarchy through the characters of Rashad and Shereef.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study examines the works of two Northern Nigerian writers- Ibrahim Tahir and Abubakar Gimba using the Socialist Realist theory. By studying and analysing the social perspective of their works, this work not only provides insight into the social set-up and world view of their immediate environment as it impacts on the entire northern society but also presents Ibrahim Tahir's *The Last Imam* and Abubakar Gimba's *Sacred Apples* as novels that describe their society with historic correctness in their revolutionary development. Matching their artistic expression with the themes of ideological reform and the education of the common man in the socialist spirit, they aim at provoking a positive change in the inherent social perception of people. The selection of *The Last Imam* and *Sacred Apples* for this study is predicated on these authors' exploration and interpretation of the northern ideology of religion and tradition and the significance of the various perspectives from which their writings present this ideology of change through protest and conflict alongside religion and tradition.

This study is therefore based on the premise that *The Last Imam* and *Sacred Apples* as realistic novels are more or less not for the sake of art but for the sake of life of an individual or a mass presented by a common character. By this, we can easily transfer our own identity to some of the characters and derive 'vicarious pleasure' out of this identification. Whereby, we finish the reading the novels with a feeling that such things have been happening in the world for ages without our being conscious of them for one reason or the other.

Apart from proving the applicability of Socialist Realism to Tahir's *The Last Imam* and Gimba's *Sacred Apples,* this study shows that, writers in Northern Nigerian implore their religious ideology as the underlying paradigm for discussing other ideologies as is evident in the texts under study. The emphatic nature of Socialist realist writings is then proven through the emotive identification of the audience with the characters in the texts. Given this, the study concludes that in keeping with the Marxists spirit of struggle for a better existence by the down trodden, socialist realists concentrate and pay attention not only to the material conditions of people's lives but also to the social relations among possibly, same people. then, a presentation of these conditions and relations with the aim of educating the under privileged as to their real conditions of existence with the conviction that people's consciousness of their social conditions will definitely impact on their negative or positive relationship with each other in their society. Simply put, peoples understanding of their material and social conditions could easily influence and control their social responses, perceptions and dispositions.

Over the years, literature has reflected the prevailing social issues in many works of literature under the shadow of realism. In Realism, social reality is one aspect of the picture but it cannot be isolated as though it were an entity by itself. Literature emerges out of life and records our dreams and ideas, hopes and aspirations, failures and disappointments, motives and passions, and experiences and observations. This is what Tahir and Gimba have done. More so, they have avoided a conflict between what may be their most cherished prejudices or even most sacred convictions, to create situations and characters that not only describe what is really seen but also help society

see the good and the bad of it.

In *The Last Imam,* Ibrahim Tahir falls back on his own social class of imaginative paradigm in the choice of his characters to produce a portrait of society that suffers from the inevitable plight of every society - **change** - occasioned by the rebellion of a people against what they term as exploitation. The dominant theme and underlying ideologies reflect upon real life of the society. Though imaginative, *The Last Imam* is an attempt by Tahir to create conditions that are necessary for the re-orientation of values and strengthening of the moral and ethical anomalies and ultimately check religious hypocrisy and bigotry, and social and economic injustice and exploitation

Similarly, Abubakar Gimba in *Sacred Apples* uses Zahra (the protagonist) from whose experiences the life of women from this region is viewed to discuss the travails of women in Northern Nigeria. The objective here is not to present men as evil but to place them in their daily role in the society and then present the woman's argument. An argument necessitated by the derogatory role she is ascribed by her society. The themes of marriage, family life and divorce are discussed around the feminist appeal for recognition and emancipation. *Sacred Apples* is not merely a work of art that captures the problem of family, social inequality and male domination but is also a story geared towards enhancing societal consciousness and development.

On the whole, the social issues highlighted by the novels studied, point to the role of the writer as a social commentator with the aim of educating and provoking positive change in his society. While Tahir mediates between the place of godliness and social responsibility, Gimba explores the social significance and place of the woman in

the scheme of things in a changing world. These novels of Tahir and Gimba have undoubtedly contributed immensely to the enhancement of social and intellectual conditioning of their immediate society, Northern Nigeria. The novels have consciously explored the predicaments of their society in their attempt to accommodate change and development.

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