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USMANU DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY, SOKOTO

The 36th Inaugural Lecture

**HAUSA POLITICAL VERSE AS A CATALYST TO
POLITICKING IN HAUSAPHONE NIGERIA**

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PREAMBLE

Although I was not old enough to remember the poems composed during the beginning of *Zamanin Siyasa I* (circa 1946 to January 1966); in fact I was not born towards the beginning of the epoch, I have all along thereafter been interested in their compositions in praise of their parties and their patrons as well as lampooning other rival political parties.

The second *Zamanin Siyasa* (September 1978 – 31st December 1983) which started while I was a corps member almost followed a similar pattern of praising the poets' parties and lampooning rival parties.

The Hausaphone society covering most parts of Northern Nigeria where Hausa is the main medium of communication seems to appreciate such compositions, hence the popularity of such performances there. In fact, oral performance in form of songs accompanied by drumming and chorusing

has been an old accepted tradition from time immemorial amongst our traditional rulers, during ceremonies such as marital and other communal gatherings, e.g. during farming, building houses etc. It is based on the above that I become encouraged to write this paper.

LITERARY ANTECEDENTS OF HAUSA

POLITICAL VERSE

As I pointed elsewhere (Birniwa, 1987), Hausa political verse did not arise as a wholly new phenomenon. Like the politics that inspired it, it is a product of a long history. It is indeed characterized by the flattering language of *yàbóo* (NOT Yáabó town!) resembling that of oral Hausa court praise songs, as well as the violent language and style associated with *zàmbó* “invective”.

Examples of *yàbóo* (praise singing) exhibited by some court singers the samples of which were applied to some political leaders are as follows:

The late court singer, Ibrahim Narambada (1894 - 1960) popularly and affectionately referred to as *Malamin Kidí*, “Master of Music”, praised his patron Sarkin Gobir Ahmadu in the following stanza:

*Luri arna sun san halin Nagwamatse, dodon
Gwari
Ahmadu kakanka na maizaizan gaba an nan,*

*Arna sun san halin Alu Maisaje na Isa,
Ahmadu kakanka na mazaizan gaba an an nan,
Arna sun sani akwai Zartu dan Shawara,
Ahmadu kakanka na mazaizan gaba an nan,
Arna sun san halin Mu'Allahyidi na Birnin
Kaya,
Sun san Bello yac ci Gawon Gazau,
Da yac ci Alkalawa Atiku yad darzaza Bauci,
Iro na Kwantagora yac ci mutanen Gwari,
To du martabarsu na nan gun
hannunai...*

Look, the infidels know the character of
Nagwamatse,
the goblin of the Gwari people,
Ahmadu, your ancestor was a brave man.
The infidels know the character of Alu of
Isa,
The one with side whiskers,
Ahmadu, your ancestor was a brave man,
The infidels know that there was Zartu son
of Shawara,
Ahmadu, your ancestor was a brave man,
The infidels know the character of
Mu'Allahyidi of the Kaya Town,
Ahmadu, your ancestor was a brave man,
They know that Bello defeated Gawon
Gazau,
He defeated Alqalawa; then Atiku
proceeded to Bauchi,
Iro of Kontagora defeated the Gwari;

All their nobility is there in his hands.

We shall see Hausa political poets composed their verses modelled on such praise singing, especially among NPC poets vis-à-vis their political leader, the late Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the hitherto Premier of the defunct Northern Region (now comprising 19 Northern States, including the “Middle Belt” states).

A good number of other court singers praise their patrons on this pattern, the style of which was later copied by political poets.

THE FIRST ZAMANIN SIYASA (Z S I) CA 1946
– 15th JANUARY 1966

Prior to mid-1940s there were no political activities in colonial Nigeria. There were however, “pre-siyasa cultural associations” (Kirk-Greene, 1987). These included the Kaduna Old Boys Association founded in 1939; Northern Provinces General Improvement Union founded by Sa’adu Zungur in 1940; the Zaria Zumunta, the Bauchi Discussion Circle and Social Youth Circle of Sokoto that included among its names those of Shehu Shagari, Ibrahim Gusau and others. Ahmadu Bello was also associated with the Circle, albeit not a full member initially.

Such apolitical cultural associations later provided centres and opportunities for political discussions. From such cultural associations emerged the two main Hausaphone political parties of Northern Nigeria: the pro-establishment and aristocratic

Northern Peoples' Congress, NPC and a leftist Northern Elements Progressive Union, NEPU.

NPC

The Northern Peoples' Congress sprang from a cultural organization, *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa* which was initially dedicated to the fight against ignorance, idleness and injustice (*jahilci, lalaci da zalunci*).

Among its early supporters were many young civil servants, **Native Authority** (N.A) officials and teachers, including Sa'adu Zungur, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Aliyu Makama Bida and Aminu Kano.

By 1951, *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa* became overtly political and pro-establishment. The party was proud of its being pro-establishment as all Emirs and Chiefs as well as judges were registered and active members of the party as evidenced by this anonymous verse which was oft chanted then:

*Sarki da Alkali duk namu ne,
Kowa ya zage mu bulaliya.*

The Emir and the Muslim magistrate all
belong to us,

Whoever abuses us will get a flogging!

The party won Federal (Lagos) and Regional governments, with Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as Prime Minister and Ahmadu Bello as the Premier of Northern Region. The country was then following the Westminster system of government, just like its colonial master, Britain. Ministers of Northern Region were mostly drawn from the aristocracy. Five First Class Emirs were also Ministers without portfolio. They included the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Abubakar 111; Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero; Emir of Katsina Alhaji Usman Nagogo; Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Sulu Gambari and Atta of Igala, Alhaji Aliyu Obaje. Other ministers with portfolio included Alhaji Aliyu Makaman Bida, Minister of Finance, Alhaji Isa Kaita, Madawakin Katsina, Minister of

Education, Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gashash, Minister of Land and Survey, Alhaji Ahman Galadiman Pategi, Minister of Agriculture, Alhaji Mustafa Isma'ila, Zanna Dujima of Borno, Minister of Health, Mr Michael Audu Buba, Wazirin Shendam, Minister of Trade and Industry, Alhaji Shehu Usman, Sarkin Maska, Minister of Works, Alhaji Mu'azu Lamido, Minister of Animal and Forest Resources, Alhaji Muhammad Kabir, Ciroman Katagum, Internal Affairs and many others of royal blood.

A certain opposition poet lampooned the composition of the cabinet thus:

*A cikin Minista goma wanda ka tarkato,
Wa ye talakka cikinsu? Nai maku
tambaya.*

Among ten ministers who were collected
together from all over the place,
Who is it that is a common man among
them? I ask thee.

*Daga Wane sai ðan Wane su aka tarkato,
Kun san abin nan nasu babu na
gaskiya.*

It is So-and-So, or the son of So-and-So
who were so collected,
You know that there is no honesty in this
affair of theirs.

NEPU

The Northern Elements' Progressive Union, NEPU emerged a little before the emergence of NPC; the parent association of NEPU party was even launched earlier in 1947 with the name Northern Elements' Progressive Association, NEPA, but was forced to disband in 1949 due its radicalism in criticizing the colonial masters (*Turawan Ingila*, or, more succinctly put, *'yan mulkin mallaka*) and Emirs. NEPU emerged in 1950 with Malam Raji Abdallah from Bida as its first President. Malam Aminu Kano later joined the party and was made its life President in 1953.

NEPU felt that it would not get justice from the Emirs and the judges, so they said they only relied on

Allah and His Messenger; as a riposte to NPC's solo verse quoted above, they said:

*Allah da Manzonsa duk namu ne,
Kowa ya zage mu sai Hawiya!*

God and His Messenger belong to us,
Whoever abuses will go to Hellfire!

Now that we have seen how the two Northern parties were formed in the 1950's and flourished until January 1966 when the military struck for the first time and banned all political activities including praise poems of the dual parties, let us see how the poets carried along their followers with their compositions.

NPC POETRY

Although NEPU predated NPC in its formation, the NPC was the party that formed governments at both Federal and Regional levels. I shall therefore start by quoting verses in their praise.

The late Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the Saradauna of Sokoto was the leader of the party. His party won the election and as per the Westminster system of government then, he was supposed to be the Prime Minister and therefore move to the Centre (Lagos) but he preferred to stay in the North near the Seat of Caliphate (he being a serious a contender of the coveted throne of *SARKIN MUSULMI*) and asked his deputy Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa to take up the Prime Ministership seat in Lagos.

The Saradauna became synonymous with NPC and NPC with the Saradauna. All NPC poets praised him perhaps more than the party; he being a royal person, the encomiums he received (as number 1 citizen politically) were similar to those done by Narambada and others to Northern Emirs.

Consider the verses from Bello Gidadawa named *WAKAR SIYASA ZAMANIN SALAMA* (The Political Poem of Peace):

*Fa na roka ga Allah dan Habibi,
Muhammadu taimaka ga mutan Salama.*

I pray to God, for the sake of the beloved
one,
Muhammad, help the people of Peace.

*Ka sa nasara gare su ga wanga yaki,
Na zaɓe don mu sami zaman Salama.*

Bring them victory in this election
Struggle, that we may live in Peace.

*Ka taimaki shugabanmu Firimiyanmu,
Muna son ko da yausha shi sam Salama.*

Help our leader, our Premier,
We desire at all times that he should have
peace.

*Ahmad Bello jikan Bello haƙƙan,
Muna kaunar ka jikan mai karama*

Ahmadu Bello grandson of Bello, surely,
We love you, descendant of the noble one.

*Karamar Shehu tas sa kac ci girma,
Mutum mai hankali duk ya sakam ma.*

It is the nobility of the Shehu that made you
become great,
Every sensible man has given up (that you
should lead).

From the above verses, it would be seen that a political leader, albeit of royal origin is praised (politically) in a similar way as a royal king. Emirs and Kings were praised based on their royal lineages; the same was applied to the Sardauna in a political poem. The audience seemed to appreciate that: all political rallies must be preceded by chanting of such political poems in praise of the leaders first and then the party.

SALAMA: This word, derived from Arabic, which means Peace is the Hausa name or rather sobriquet of NPC. It is of a Qur'anic origin which appears in several places describing the pleasurable condition of dwellers of Paradise (ALJANNAH), such as in Qur'an 10/10:

Their prayer therein will be Glory be to Thee O God!
And their greeting therein will be Peace!

And also, Qur'an 14/23

And those who believed and did good
works are made to enter Gardens
(Paradise) underneath which rivers
flow, therein abiding by permission of
their Lord, their greeting therein:
Peace!

The SALAMA sobriquet has appeared in the above poem at least 47 times; the Sardauna /Ahmadu Bello / Premier has appeared 6 times while the official name of the party (in English) did not appear even once! That notwithstanding, the audience seemed to appreciate the poem.

Political opponents were lampooned much to the satisfaction and appreciation of NPC supporters. The main rivals to NPC then were Aminu Kano's NEPU and Awolowo's Action Group, AG, and Azikiwe's National Council of Nigerian Citizens, changed from an earlier name of National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, NCNC.

Other NPC poems seemed to praise the Sardauna to the extent that he dwarfed the party. There was a particular poet, Muhammadu Gidado from Kano, the home base of Aminu Kano's NEPU who used many hyperboles to describe the Sardauna, again, to the appreciation of the Hausa speaking audience. Consider the following verses:

*Mun zabi rana mun ga tai daidai da kai,
Don kai ka haske duniya Sardauna*

We have chosen the sun and seen that it fits
you,
For it is you who illumined the world,
Sardauna.

*Rana fa taurari kadan suka tattara,
Haskenka ya dushe nasu du Sardauna.*

If the sun and the stars gather together,
Then your light outshines them all,
Sardauna.

*In da ana canjin mutum tamkar sule,
Canjin matum miliyan dubu, Sardauna!*

If you were to obtain change for a man for
the value of one shilling,

Then Sardauna would be the equivalent of a
thousand million men!

The Sardauna himself and indeed the audience knew
that such verses were an extravagant exaggeration,
yet they seemed to appreciate and like them.

There was perhaps one more place where Sardauna
was placed above most other mortals.

*Allahu yai maka alkawar daga duniya,
Kai dan gidan Aljanna ne Sardauna!*

God has promised you right here in this
world,
That you will be an inmate of Paradise,
Sardauna.

*A cikin Liwa'ul Hamdi za ka ishishire
A gaban Rasulullahi ya Sardauna.*

It is in Liwa'ul Hamdi (in Paradise) that
you will sit, stretched out at ease,
In front of the Messenger of God,
Sardauna.

NEPU POETRY

NEPU was the dominant rival party in Northern
Nigeria having its base in Kano, with some pockets

of supporters in Zaria, Funtua, Kaura Namoda and so on.

Like NPC, NEPU too had many poets who popularised the party among the Hausa speaking people in the North and in diaspora. The leading NEPU poet was the late Gambo Hawaja originally from Kano but later settled at Jos, who, although composed only three poems in the NEPU interest, was considered the most vocal and intelligent; no major convention of NEPU would be held either in Jos, a NEPU stronghold or elsewhere in one of the major towns in the North without one of Gambo's poems being chanted to the audience, who applauded. At a certain time, one of Gambo's poems, *Wakar 'Yar Sawaba* was banned from being chanted in the North because of its vituperative use against the leaders of NPC. NEPU poets were generally using ferocious invective language.

It was Gambo, who composed the couplets seen earlier about the composition of the Northern cabinet who, according to him, comprised

Daga Wane sai dan Wane!

NEPU members, mostly the less privileged *talakawa* never understood, or failed to understand that those *Wane* and *dan Wane* were the ones qualified to be appointed Ministers. The *talakawa*, being the majority enjoyed the contents of the poems and in most cases chanted their chorus, such as *A Yau Ba Maki NEPU Sai Warwa* (the name and chorus of the poem). In the poem named above, composed in 1955 during the colonial era, Gambo tried to highlight the *talakawa* on the exploitative tendencies of the white masters in such verses:

*Da zinariya feturul namu ,
Da kwal har kalambaye mun samu,
Akwai gas a Jos ga shi mun samu,
Kanzir da zinki kasashenmu,
Tsaya kwa ji cutar Nasarawa.*

There is gold and our petrol,
There is gold and our petrol,
There is coal and also columbite, which
we found,
There is gas in Jos, behold, we have found
it,
There is kerosine and even zinc in our
land,
Hold on, you will hear the evils of the
white men.

To Gambo Hawaja, it was the white (British) colonial masters in connivance with the then ruling NPC who enjoyed the benefits of such natural resources at the expense of the *talakawa*, who supported him enthusiastically. Elsewhere, he said:

*Tutur mu ka noma a gonarmu,
Da kyashi da tsando su cije mu,
Kunu sai gwate ne abincinmu,
Da sauro da tsutsa makwancinmu,
Mu noma mu kawo wa Turawa.*

It is always we who farm on our farmlands,
Sand-flies and tsetse-flies bite us,
Our food is nothing but gruel and pumpkin
stew,
Mosquitoes and worms are in our sleeping
places,

We till (our farm) and bring the produce to
the white men.

Further, he decried the abject poverty in which the
talakawa live while “others” have things in
abundance:

*Tago dai zane dai ga matanmu,
Tufa ta fi maitan ga Turawa.*

Only one blouse and one wrapper has each
of our wives,
While there are more than two hundred
clothes with the white men.

His poems were so appealing to the *talakawa* due to
the way he enlightened them about current trend of
things then. Consider the following verse in which
he drew the attention of the *talakawa* to the low
pricing of their farm produce compared to the cocoa
of the Western Region who he considered as more
enlightened:

*Ku duba ga kokon makwabtannu,
Jaka har da dori suke samu,
A nan mu Ministanmu sai gemu,
Kamar bunsuru ba shi kaunar mu,
Bukatarsa shan ti da Turawa.*

Look at the cocoa of our neighbours,
They sell it at £100 plus (per tonne?)
As for us, our Minister only wears beards,
Similar to that of a he-goat,
He only needs to take tea together with the
white men.

Another equally eloquent NEPU poet was the late Aḱilu Aliyu. Unlike Gambo Hawaja, he praised the party as well as their leader Malam Aminu Kano:

*Taro Sawaba Sawaba du gare mu duka,
Ya zuwa ga Shaihu Aminu da rundunarsa duka,
Da maza da mata da yara tarsashinmu duka,
'Yan kasuwa har manoma kai Arewa duka,
In muka sami Sawaba ba zaman kunci.*

O community of people, SAWABA to all of us,
And to Sheikh Aminu (Kano) and his team of followers, all of them,
Male, female and children, all of us,
Traders, farmers, nay the whole of the North,
If we get SAWABA there will be no more hard living.

NEPU, like its counterpart, the NPC has its sobriquet, which is SAWABA, also of Arabic origin

(Arabic Sawáb) and derived from the Qur'an; it means "righteousness". See Qur'an 78/38:

The Day whereon the souls and the angels will stand arrayed, they will not be able to speak, except whom the Compassionate gives leave and speaks **aright**.

The two rival parties, NPC and NEPU claimed uprightness in following the tenets of Islam, so each one of them quoted the Qur'an where they deemed fit so as to appeal to their Hausa Muslim audience.

There were hundreds of poems in the interest of the two rival political parties. The poems surely impressed the audience, hence the mammoth crowds that attended the political rallies where such poems were chanted. It is doubtful if this phenomenon existed amongst other ethnic nationalities in the country other than the Hausa.

As the *First Zamanin Siyasa* (ZS I) ended on 15/01/1966 with the first military coup that truncated

the Republic, active Hausa political verse activities were also terminated; what remains is a discussion of the past, just like this forum.

THE SECOND ZAMANIN SIYASA (ZS II)

With the lifting of the ban on political activities in September 1978, the second Zamanin Siyasa officially started. Many political associations were formed, amongst which five were registered as political parties. These were National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Nigerian People's Party (NPP), Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) and People's Redemption Party (PRP). Two of such political parties had their strong bases in the Hausaphone North, so it was not surprising that the tradition of composing poems in the interest of political parties resurfaced. Let us see some of them.

NATIONAL PARTY OF NIGERIA (NPN)

As the name shows this party had a broad base which had followership in many states (19 then) of the Federation. It claimed that it had people from various strata as its strong exporters. Hear what Shagari, the first executive president under NPN was quoted to have said:

The fact that we have a lot of wealthy people does not mean that we are dominated by wealth... Everybody wants to have these wealthy people in his party. I have not seen any of the other parties which said, 'we do not want these wealthy people, go away.' They even try to attract them to their own parties... The majority of the people of this country have joined the NPN and when you talk of the majority of the people of Nigeria, it means majority of farmers, majority of wealthy, majority of everything...

Malami Attahiru Yabo alluded to this cosmopolitan and all-inclusive nature of NPN in his political poem

A Zabi NPN:

*Manyan mallammai ne nata,
Doktoci sun haɗu domin ta,
Da Furofesoshi ma'abutanta,
Su ne suka d̄auki dawainunta,
Domin haɗa kanmu ne NPN.*

Great scholars belong to it,
Doctors have gathered together for its sake,
Professors are its supporters,
They are the ones who have accepted the
responsibility of forming it,
In order to bring us together in NPN.

Elsewhere he said.

*Mai noma ko mai son ilmu,
Makiyayi ko mai son samu,
Da sana'o'i na jhohinmu,
Mai fawa da mai sun kihinmu,
Lalla zarar kun zaɓe mu
Ku ci daular mulkin NPN.*

The farmer or him who desires knowledge,
A herdsman or him who wants to acquire
riches,
And all professions of our states,
The butcher and the fisherman,

Surely as soon as you vote for us,
You will benefit from the government of
NPN.

These two verses seemed to invite various categories of people to the fold of NPN. It was likely that such people to whom the campaign was directed voted for the party in the 1979 elections. The party vigorously campaigned using this poem aired from their campaign vehicles in various nooks and crannies of the then Sokoto State, now comprising Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States.

He continued thus:

*Sa lebura ko mai malanta,
Mai gyaran Honda ko mota,
Da masaki ko mai jan mota,
Mai kira ko jimar fata,
Sana'arku ta kome ba ta bata,
Muddin kuka yarda da NPN.*

Include the labourer and the teacher,
The mechanic who repairs the Honda motor
cycle or motor car,
The weaver or the driver,
The blacksmith or the tanner,

Whatever your occupation, it will not be in
vain,
Provided you accept NPN.

*Mai sassaƙa bota ko kanta,
Marini ko mai sukar fata,
Mai gini ko mai kafinta,
Ofis kake ko mai dalibta,
Hasali dai mai so ya wadata,
Na horai don ya yi NPN.*

The woodworker who makes a haft or a
shelf,
The dyer and the leather worker,
The builder and the carpenter,
Whether you work in an office or are a
student,
Indeed, anyone who wants to become
prosperous,
Then I exhort him to join NPN.

The poet might not be unaware of PRP's appeal (see below) to the down-trodden *talakawa* amongst the lower strata of the rural dwellers of Hausaland, hence his campaign to the above 15 categories of craftsmen. It might be safely said that his campaign was received positively at least in three of the above-mentioned

states as NPN had a landslide victory in local and national elections.

He concluded his campaign by asserting that NPN was indeed a national party as it had all the major ethnic groups in its fold:

*Jama'a na kasa duk ta kwashe,
Ibo Yarbawa duk ta kunshe,
Da Filani duk ta jawo Bahausha,
A kasar nan duk wani mai harshe,
Ya san NPN ta washe,
Ya Allah taimaki NPN.*

The whole community of the country it has gathered together,
Ibo and Yaruba, it comprises them all,
And Fulani too, and it has attracted Hausa,
In this country, anyone who speaks whatever language,
Knows that NPN is in a better position,
O God, help NPN.

The above verse was in sharp contrast with the politics of the First Republic (or loosely *Zamanin Siyasa I*) where parties campaigned based on regionalism and religious affinity.

Musa Madugu was another NPN poet who tried to advertise his party to the electorate while at the same time condemning other four rival parties.

*Duka jam 'iyyu huɗu ba ma son su,
Don mun gane irin manufarsu,
Su burinsu dai gina kansu,
Kana har zuwa 'ya'yansu,
Mun gane ba ma faɗa ba.*

All the four parties we do not like them,
For we have understood their aims,
As for them, their ambition is to establish
themselves,
And also, their offspring,
We have realised that, we will never fall
into their trap.

*Kalli GNPP mun manta ta,
UPN kuma tamfar ba ta,
NPP mun kange ta,
PRP kuna mun ɗaure ta,
Ba za ta daga ta je yawo ba.*

Look at GNPP, we have forgotten it,
As for UPN, it is as if it does not exist,
And NPP, we have blocked it,
And PRP also, we have tied it down,
It cannot get up and go for a stroll.

There is perhaps no better way in condemning rival political parties than the way Musa Madugu did in the above two pentastichs. It is a simple arithmetic: out of 5 oranges or eggs, you remove 4; only one will remain! He wanted to say (and he did say it!) that only one party remains in essence and it is his party the NPN!

NPN's sobriquet, like other parties during yester years which had Hausa names was AMINCI, translated roughly as trustworthiness; the poet had incorporated the name in his poem thus:

*Ya Allah Ka ba mu aminci
Ka tsare mu ga mai zalunci,
Allah Ka ba mu abinci,
Har dakin da za mu yi barci,
Ba kwana cikin bukka ba.*

O God, give trustworthiness,
Guard us against the tyrant,
O God, give us food,
And also, a house to sleep in,
Let us not sleep in a grass hut.

The poet had also brought to the fore the symbol or emblem of the party which was a house, depicting shelter and maize, depicting food, affectionately referred to by the supporters of the party as *gida da masara*.

In another verse, the poet made an allusive reference to the litigation in respect of the election of Alhaji Shehu Shagari as the President of Nigeria, as the election did not go unchallenged. Chief Obafemi Awolowo of UPN, the main rival questioned Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO)'s verdict of interpreting the electoral provision of $\frac{2}{3}$ of 19 states (there were 19 states in the country then) to mean $12\frac{2}{3}$ states in court. The provision mentioned that for a presidential candidate to be declared a winner, he must have won at least a quarter of votes cast in at least two – thirds of the states in the Federation. Alhaji Shehu Shagari won at least a quarter of votes cast in 12 states, but scored 19.94% in the 13th state,

Kano. This Awolowo maintained did not satisfy the electoral provision, since, according to him, $\frac{2}{3}$ of 19 states should be 13 states, not $12\frac{2}{3}$ because "a state is a legal person – a corporate body – with eyes, legs and head." He therefore prayed the court to nullify FEDECO's decision to declare Shagari the winner and call for a second ballot through an electoral college made up of national and state legislators.

FEDECO for its part argued that $12\frac{2}{3}$ of 19 states should mean scoring a quarter in 12 states and a quarter of two thirds in the 13th state and that Shagari thus satisfied the requirement of the ambiguous electoral decree Section 34 A sub-section (i)(c)(ii).

At the law court, Chief Richard Akinjide, NPN's legal advisor represented the President-elect, while Awo, a lawyer, argued his own case. After much legal

tussle, Shagari was declared winner and Awo's suit thrown out.

This interesting and intriguing case was summed up by the poet thus:

*To ga Shagari ya buge wassu,
Ciki wasu sun tsaya sun musu,
Sun kara a ba su hakinsu,
Kotun sai ta gane halinsu,
Karan sai ba sui nasara ba.*

Behold, Shagari defeated some,
And some among them persisted and argued,
They went to the court to be given their rights,
The court recognised their character,
In their litigation they were not successful.

*To da farko sun nufi su yi sharri,
In sun kasa yi su yi gori,
Allah sai Ya wo alheri,
Ya tara Ya ba Shagari,
Wai ba su yarda ya samu ba.*

Initially they intended to do evil,
If they failed then they would belittle (Shagari)
But God brought goodness,

And gave Shagari everything,
But they claim that he did not win.

*Kai dangi duk ku bar wani yawo,
Tun da na baya yau sun kawo,
Ga Sardauna din ya dawo,
An aza dambe ya buge Awo,
Fansa ko ba zai dauka ba.*

O kinsmen, stop going around looking for a
leader,
For the men of the past, today they have
returned,
Here is the Sardauna, he has come back,
A boxing match was staged and he knocked
down Awo,
And he will not be able to retaliate.

The so-called boxing match was a metaphorical one, denoting the political battle between Shagari (not Sardauna!) and Awolowo. The poet likened Shagari to the late Sardauna who was much loved in the North. In other words, he was saying that Shagari was Sardauna re-incarnate. This was a deliberate ploy to win voters to his NPN side. It can also be read between the lines that NPN was the new NPC! He was of course appealing to his Hausa audience who

revered the late Sardauna. (Even now there are many legacies in the North left behind by the Sardauna more than 57 years after his demise).

Another poet, Muhammadu Sulaiman Dundaye (based in Kano) campaigned for NPN through his poems, particularly his powerful poem then (1980-83), '*Yan Santsi Kun Zama Kaya*'... 'Those who slipped away...', a poem in praise of NPN but at the same time lampooning the rival PRP, particularly the Rimi faction which broke away from the mainstream PRP under the late Aminu Kano. Dundaye himself was a former supporter of PRP and even composed several poems in the party's interest, but later defected to rival NPN when PRP broke into two factions and the Rimi faction making boisterous and vulgar talks. The main reason however was that he was sidelined without being given any appointment after Rimi came to power in October 1979. These are the poet's words in stanza:

*Kai na ga abin mamaki,
Aka je yaƙi da aboki,
Har an sare masa doki,
A rabo aka ba shi musaki,
Aka ce kuma kar ya yi mita.*

Kai! I have seen a most extraordinary thing,
You go to war with a companion,
And even his horse is slain,
And when it comes to distributing the booty
you give him a lame slave,
And tell him not to grumble!

Typical of our politicians, if a person fails to get something in his/her initial party, they jump to other parties; in his own case, from a Kano - based PRP to NPN, which was a minority party in Kano but with Federal might!

Here is how he composed stanzas in the interest of his new party

*Jama 'a yau gara ku gane,
NPN alhairi ne,
Don Alhaji Shehu mutum ne,
Kuma shi mai kyan asali ne,
Kuma NPN ba mita.*

O people, today you better realize,
That NPN means goodness,
For Alhaji Shehu is a gentleman,
Moreover, he is of noble origin,
And furthermore, there is no discontent in
NPN.

At least two things can be deduced from the above verse: NPN is good (*alhairi*) which everybody wants and the party is turmoil free (*ba mita*), an allusive reference to rival party PRP, which elsewhere he described as:

*Shashashu sun daidaice,
Sun watse sun balbalce,
Sun hauka sun susuce...*

The fools have deteriorated,
They have scattered, they have wasted away,
They have gone mad, they have come to
nought...

Elsewhere, he continued condemning the rival party, belittling the members of their House of Assembly as incapable of discharging their duties of making laws, etc.

*Majalisar wawaye ne,
Duka ‘yan amshin shata ne,
Manajojin sai da giya ne,
‘Yan daudu da sabis su ne,
Da kilakawa a cikin ta.*

The Legislature consists of fools,
All of them are simply ‘yes men’,
They are just managers of beer houses,
Pimps, servants in hotels,
And whores are members of it.

The Kano State Legislative comprising mainly PRP members (1979-83) was considered the least literate Assembly in the whole country then, with a good number of them being unable to write their names either in the Latin or Arabic characters; when there were occasions when their signatures were demanded, either when signing important documents or collecting their allowances, some of them just thumb-printed! There was no minimum qualification then for one to contest elections, so any Tom, Dick and Harry could contest!

He derogatorily referred to them as ‘*dán amshin Shata*’, loosely translated as ‘yes men’. Hausa people refer to somebody who doesn't have his/her own opinion but follows other people's views blindly as ‘*dán amshin Shata*’, one who chants the chorus of the famous Hausa musician, Mamman Shata Katsina: there is a mono line repeated by members of his band in all his songs, as opposed to the Zamfara based oral singers considered most eloquent then such as Narambada, Dankwairo, Sa'idu Faru and so on whose members of their bands added lines to their main compositions in addition to chanting the choruses. The late Musa Dankwairo made a derogatory allusive reference to Mamman Shata as a one-man show in songs. Hear him:

Dankwairo: *Ga makadi ya kulla wakatai,*
The band: *Sai a amshi mishi ba a kara mai,*
In nik kulla waka ba a kara min,
Mu hudu duk azanci gare mu...

Here is a singer who composes his songs,
The band only choruses him without adding any
lines;
As for me, when I compose a song, they add to it,
All four of us are intelligent...

There were other members in the Assembly who were of easy virtue; this was what Dundaye condemned and indirectly showed that they were **not** worthy of being state legislators. The poet then returned to praising his party the NPN as worthy of being voted for and he had not forgotten the Hausa sobriquet of the party, *Aminci*, trust:

*Mu dai manufarmu aminci,
Kuma mu ba ma ha'inci,
Mu ke hana ai cin hanci,
A wajen aiki mun yi naci,
PRP na karyarta.*

As for us, our objective is trust,
Moreover, we do not deceive,
It is we who prevent bribery,
When it comes to work, we do it zealously,
While PRP is there telling Lies.

Then he reiterates the emblem of his party and once more mentions their Hausa names:

*Masara da gida ne namu,
Aminci ne takenmu,
Yunwa tai nesa gare mu,
Dan iska bai rabo mu,
Sai mai lura da fahimta.*

The maize plant and a house are our
(emblem),
Aminci! (Trust) is our slogan.
Hunger is far away from us,
No loafer comes near us,
But only a thoughtful and understanding
person.

He thus sold his party to his Hausa speaking electorate by his eloquent stanzas in which he praised the party and made damaging innuendo to his rival party, the PRP.

The next poet, also a PRP decampee who pitched his tent at NPN fold, Yakubu Labaran, advertised his new party the NPN and condemned in strongest terms, the PRP. He did not mince words in telling his Hausa audience that he initially picked PRP, not knowing, according to him, that it was not a good party, Hear him:

*Da PRP na kama,
Nai tsammanin salama,
Ashe na hau kunama,
PRP sai zalama,
Ga hadamar shugabanci.*

Formerly it was PRP I joined,
I thought it was (the party of) peace,
But Good Gracious! I stepped on a scorpion,
There is nothing to PRP except tyranny,
And greed for leadership.

He further said:

*Shi ya sa na guje ta,
Domin ni ba ni sata,
Na koma gun nagarta,
NPN na aminta,
Jam 'iyyar 'yan mutunci.*

That is why I shunned it,
For as for me, I do not steal,
I went back to uprightness,
It is NPN I trust.
The party of those who have respect for
others.

While he extolled his new party, the NPN, he was abusive towards PRP as the party, according to him, was like stepping on a scorpion; was a party of those

who steal, a party without uprightness and no respect for others.

It is typical of Nigerian politics that when one decamps from one political party to another, then one never sees anything good in his/her former party. One goes to any length to denigrate the former party, rather than concentrating on the 'qualities' of one's new party.

One poet, seen above, Dundaye whose stanzas were seen above even equated his joining PRP with ascribing a partner to Allah (*shirk*), the greatest sin in Islam, hence his repentance. This is what he said:

*Allah na tuba gare Ka,
Domin da na sabe Ka,
Da shiga PRP shirka,
Sai yau ka nufe ni na farka,
Daga bacci mai cuta ta.*

God, I repent before Thee,
For in the past I have sinned against You,
By joining PRP (which is like) ascribing a
partner to You,

Only today have You willed that I should
awaken,
From the sleep that deceived me.

In trying to convince people to join his NPN, he used vulgar language in denigrating his rival parties (in this case PRP and NPP since he was in Plateau State where the latter ways control and in good working relation with Rimi's PRP); a foul language reminiscent of his former party the PRP and its progenitor, the NEPU, but quite unlike his new party the NPN. Here are some verses :

*Ni zancena ya dace,
PPA shegiya ce,
Mummunar kungiya ce,
Ni Yakubu na ji an ce,
Ciki ba ðan mutunci.*

As for me, what I am saying is appropriate,
PPA is a bastard,
It is an evil association,
As for me Yakubu, I heard what was said:
In it, there are none who have respect for
others.

PPA stood for Progressive Parties Alliance, comprising PRP, NPP, UPN and GNPP who formed an alliance with a view to dislodging NPN; they were indeed a threat to NPN.

The Hausa people consider as offensive calling somebody *shege* (feminine, *shegiya*), meaning somebody being born out of wedlock. He referred the alliance as *shegiya* so as to discredit them amongst the voters. Another stanza:

*Laifinai za mu auna,
Jatau sarkin hiyana,
Kare maciyin amana,
Allah tsine wa gwamna,
Da ke yin fasikanci.*

It is his misdemeanours that we shall weigh
up,
Jatau, chief of deceit,
Dog, one who betrays trust,
May God curse the governor,
Who commits profligacy.

Here he used strong negative statements against a certain Governor among Hausaphone area who was

light skinned (Jatau) by calling him *kare* (dog), a despised animal among the Muslim Hausa; and also using the phrase ‘*Allah Ya tsine wa...*’ a very offensive statement amongst the Hausa commitment. Another offensive stanza:

*‘Yan sunna sun guje ta,
Ga Jatau ya shige ta,
Du shegu ne diyanta,
Dan sunna kar ya yi ta,
Don ba ‘yanci cikinta.*

Those who were born in the Sunna shunned (NPP),
But see, Jatau joined it!
All are bastards (born out of the Sunna) who belong to it,
You who were born in the Sunna, do not join it,
For there is no freedom in it.

This is also another stanza which the Hausaphone community would find offensive; the poet had once again composed it to discredit the rival alliance so that they should be shunned.

Most of the stanzas of the poet were against rival parties rather than praising his party, another device used by some people, poets inclusive.

PRP poets of *Zamanin Siyasa II* also followed the same format of praising their party and leaders as well as criticising their opponents with a view to drawing the Hausaphone electorates to their side. This is what Magaji Ciroma Sudawa said:

*Manufar PRP ne mu yi aiki,
Don jama'ar kasa ta yi kirki,
Yaƙo masu danne haƙƙi,
Wanda ake da sunan mulki,
Ba sa haffafa wa kowa.*

The aim of PRP is that we should work,
So that the people of the nation may become
honest,
Fighting those who suppress the people's
rights,
Which they did in the name of government,
They did not have consideration for
anybody.

The poet tried to invite voters to his side and cautioned them against supporting NPN, which

others saw as having succeeded NPC which ruled the North, to the dissatisfaction of a good number of peasant dwellers, referred to as TALAKAWA. He further elucidated thus:

*Duk talakan kasar nan tamu,
Mun yi kira ya zo nan gun mu,
Domin ga irin manufarmu,
Son ceto hakinmu da kanmu,
Tare da kokarin jurewa.*

Any common man in this country of ours,
We call upon, let him come to us here,
For this is our intention,
The desire to redeem our rights for
ourselves,
Together with the ability to endure.

His appeal here was to the *talakawa* who are always in the majority in this country. In fact, another name for PRP then was *Jam'iyyar Talakawa*, sometimes despised by the affluent rich and aristocrats. When the PRP won Kano State gubernatorial election in 1983 after the demise of Malam Aminu Kano when people, especially those from the opposition thought

that PRP could not make it after their leader had gone, coupled with their limited resources and lack of Western education, this was what their main poet, Auwalu Isa Bungudu said:

*An soke mu jahilai ba ma Turanci,
An ce ba a son mu don kada mui kauyanci,
Jam'iyarmu babu kurɗi ba motoci,
Kuma babu keke babu babur amma ta ci,
An zaɓe ta an ki jam'iyyar Turawa*

We have been accused of being illiterates for
we do not speak English,
They say they do not like us for fear we
appear as bush people,
Our party has neither money nor motor
cars,
Likewise, we have no bicycles, no motor
cycles, yet (our party) won,
It was voted in and the party of the English
speakers was rejected!

The so-called party of the English speakers was the NPN whose members were more educated than the PRP followers.

Sudawa continued his poetic campaign thus:

*Mai ceto hakin talakawa,
PRP tana faɗakarwa,
Don manufarta ne sama wa,
Al'ummar kasa canjawa,
Mu taru mu taimaka talakawa.*

The redeemer of common men's rights,
PRP makes people aware,
For it is its objectives to create,
For the people of the nation, a change:
Let us gather together and help, O common
men.

The key word in PRP's aims and objectives is
REDEMPTION; the poet here tried to bring that
word to the fore.

Elsewhere in the poem, he said:

*Jam 'iyyarku jam 'iyyata,
Tun daga kan maza har mata,
Ba mai yin ta don ya yi cuta,
Sai domin sanin manufarta,
Son ceto hakin talakawa.*

It is your party, it is my party,
Men and women alike,
Nobody belongs to it in order to deceive,
But only because of acknowledging its
objective,
The desire to redeem common men's rights.

He then condemned in strong terms the rival party NPN and its progenitor, the NPC, by being wicked in their administration.

*Su aikinsu ne su yi cuta,
Ko taro na kulla mugunta,
Duk talakan da ya azurta,
Hanyoyinsa sa lalata,
Bai da wajen zaman hutawa.*

As for them, their work is to cheat,
Or to gather together to plan evil;
Any common man who acquires wealth,
They will disrupt his means of livelihood,
So that he will have no way to live in
comfort.

He was saying all these things so as to drive people away from supporting the rival party, and support them instead; what a good way of politicking.

*Da su ne sukai mulkin mu,
A bi mu gida ana dukan mu,
Su suka karkashe wansunmu,
Ba wani wanda zai cece mu,
Zamaninsu ba walawa.*

For it was they who (formerly) governed us,
They followed us home and beat us,
It was they who executed some us,
There was nobody to rescue us,

During their reign, there was no peace of mind.

Although there were crazy cases of NPC administration which PRP saw as that of NPN bordering on torture and imprisonment, Hiskett (1987) was of the opinion that NEPU and PRP supporters exhibited some form of paranoia in explaining what really happened!

Another vocal PRP poet who used his talent to campaign for his party poetically was Auwalu Isa Bungudu who composed many poems in the interest of the party. Hear him in his *PRP Maganin Zambia* (PRP the Remedy for Swindling)

*Ita PRP muradinta,
Ta ga ta hana dukkanin cuta,
Tai adalci a mulkinta,
Talakawa da su huhhuta,
Ba ta bar kowa zalama ba.*

As for PRP its intention is,
To see that it prevents all kinds of evil,
So that it does justice in its government,

So that all common men may live in
comfort,
And allows no one to be oppressed.

Further he said:

*Mu bi PRP mu bar wasa,
Kowa zai sami 'yancinsa,
A rife shi a ba shi hakkinsa,
Daga shi har ma iyalinsa,
Ba za su zaman talauci ba*

Let us follow PRP and stop fooling around,
Everybody will obtain his freedom,
He will be looked after and given his rights,
Both he and his family, all of them,
Will never live in poverty.

His other PRP poem, *Barawon Akwatu* (The Ballot
Box Thief) did not spare (NPC) NPN:

*Su dai su ci kayan marayu,
Ba sa so kowa ya shiryu,
Ba su yarda ba mu ma mu rayu,
A cikin jin dadi da wayau,
Sai mui musu wanki da shara.*

As for them, they devour the orphans'
property,
They do not want anybody else to enjoy
good guidance,
They do not even agree that we should live,

In comfort and as intelligent people,
But only that we should wash and sweep for
them.

CONCLUSION

From the above we can see that how the Hausa language was used affectively to campaign for various parties by use of literate poems in the First and Second Republics which also coincided with First *Zamanin Siyasa*.

Such tradition continues up to this moment, but that will be a study for another day.

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