

## **An Ethnographic History of Kanywood – The Hausa Video Film Industry**

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### **Introduction**

More direct availability of media technologies in the 1970s in northern Nigeria created opportunities for the leap from Hausa written literature to film medium, via oral literature. The most commonly used among this equipment were the Panasonic M-Series camcorders (M-7, M-10, M-300, M-3500, & M-9500 SVHS, especially). The direct link between literature and film, however, was made only in 1976 when the late director Adamu Halilu filmed *Shehu Umar*—one of the five stories that were selected by the British colonial administration in a literary competition in 1933. *Shehu Umar* is a vast chronicle of the life and times of the eponymous turn of a figure at the turn of the 19th century whose life story he traces in this narrative about Islam in West Africa.

The success of *Shehu Umar*, the film, provided inspiration for consideration of film adaptations of other Hausa literary classics. Thus 1989 saw the appearance of the film version of *Ruwan Bagaja*—the first adapted novel by Abubakar Imam, which was again part of the famous “first five” novels written in 1933 under the auspices of the Translation Bureau. The didactic nature of these novels was emphasized by their being midwived by the colonial Directorate of Education, and were aimed directly at primary school pupils. In the subsequent film adaptation of *Ruwan Bagaja*, {asimu Yero played the role of Alhaji Imam while Haruna “Mutuwa Dole” Danjuma played Malam Zurke bn Muhamman. These two novels—*Ruwan Bagaja* and *Shehu Umar*—however remained the only ones to be translated into the film medium from the stable of the first five Hausa novels published in 1935.

Southern Nigerians, especially the Yoruba, have been very active in theater performances and film. Some of these films were shown in Sabon Gari, Kano in late 1970s and early 1980s where they were shown in cinemas and hotel bars. This attracted the attention of Hausa amateur TV soap opera stars and crew such as Bashir Mudi Yakasai (cinematographer), Aminu Hassan Yakasai (scriptwriter) and Tijjani Ibrahim (director). Surprisingly, despite the massive popularity of Hausa drama in the television houses, and despite government financial muscle, yet the idea of full-scale commercial production of the Hausa drama episodes by the television houses was never considered. Individuals wishing to own certain episodes simply go to the television station and pay the cost of the tape and a duplication fee and that was it. There was no attempt to commercialize the process on full-scale.

However, at the time of producing a highly popular operation on CTV Kano, *Bakan Gizo*, at Bagauda Lake Hotel 1983 to 1984, Aminu Hassan Yakasai, Ali “Kallamu” Muhammad Yakasai, and Bashir Mudi Yakasai started strategizing producing a drama for cinema settings, as done by southern Nigerian video filmmakers. The film title they were thinking about was to be called *Shigifa*—about four unemployed graduates who started thinking about setting up a company. A script idea was floated, and Aminu Hassan Yakasai was to be the script writer. However before the idea matured, the group started getting coverage of social events, etc, and

actually part of the coverage was also stored as footage, although the film was not eventually made.

The precise decision to commercialize the Hausa video film, and thus create an industry, was made by late Aminu Hassan Yakasai in 1986, with technical support of Bashir Mudi Yakasai, the leading cinematographer in Kano, and Tijjani Ibrahim, a producer with CTV 67.

Aminu Hassan Yakasai was a member of the Tumbin Giwa Drama Group. He was also a writer and a member of the Raina Kama Writers Association which spear-headed the development of the Contemporary Hausa Literature (CHP) in the 1980s. Thus the idea of putting Hausa drama—and extending the concept later—on video films and *selling* it was a revolutionary insight, simply because no one had thought of it in the northern part of Nigeria. The project was initiated in 1986 and by 1989, a film, *Turmin Danya*, was completed. Directed by Salisu Galadanci, it was released to the market in March 1990—giving birth to the Hausa video film industry. Salisu Galadanci was the producer and director, as well as the cinematographer, while Bashir Mudi Yakasai provided technical advice.

Aminu Hassan Yakasai, Salisu Galadanci and Bashir Mudi Yakasai who collectively brought up the idea of a commercial Hausa video film industry, received their inspirations from the regular showings of the then new medium of Yoruba video films just making in-roads into Kano, and shown at Paradise Hotel conference hall in Sabon Gari in mid 1980s. Further, amateur Hausa video film tapes were already being screened in the various video parlors by the likes of Sani Lamma and Hamisu Gurgu. Certainly the market for commercializing Hausa video films was there: the CTV television dramas were still very popular; viewers are now switched off going to cinemas because they are being entertained at home through more readily available video showings on television. Putting the dramas (or similar, for copyright reasons) on video tapes promises considerable popularity and sales.

The moderate acceptance of *Turmin Danya* in Kano encouraged the Tumbin Giwa drama group to release *Rikicin Duniya* in 1991, and *Gimbiya Fatima* in 1992 — all with resounding success. *Gimbiya Fatima*, featured Adamu Muhammad, a novelist (*Kwabon Masoyi*), and one of the most successful and innovative television drama actors from CTV soap operas.

By now it was becoming clear to the pioneers that there seems to be a viable Hausa video film market, and it was this viability that laid the foundation of the fragmented nature of the Hausa video film industry. For while organized groups formed to create drama and film production units, individual members of the groups decided to stake out their own personal territories and chart their own future. Thus Adamu Muhammad, the star of *Gimbiya Fatima* decided to produce his own video film, independent of Tumbin Giwa group in 1994. The video film was *Kwabon Masoyi*, based on his own novel of the same name, and outlined the road map for the future of the Hausa video film, and at the same time sounded the death knell of the drama groups. This was because Aminu Hassan Yakasai who created the very concept of marketing Hausa video films—and thus created an industry—broke away from Tumbin Giwa and formed Nagarta Motion Pictures. Others followed suit.

Other organized drama groups in Kano did not fare too well either. For instance Jigon Hausa which released a genre-forming *Munkar* in 1995 broke up, with the star of the video film, Bala Anas Babinlata forming an independent Mazari Film Mirage production company (*Salma Salma Duduf*). Similarly Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino broke away from Tauraruwa Drama and Modern Films Production (which produced *In Da So Da Kauna*) and formed

Gidan Dabino Video Production (*Cinnaka, Mukhtar, Kowa Da Ranarsa*). And while Garun Malam Video Club produced *Bakandamiyar Rikicin Duniya* written by Dan Azumi Baba, after the video film was released Baba left the group and established RK Studios (*Badakala*). From field studies and interview with the producers in Kano, most of these break-ups were not based on creative differences but financial disagreements or personality clashes within the groups. The number of officially registered “film production” companies that came up in Kano alone between 1995 to 2000 were more than 120. There were many others whose “studio heads” did not submit themselves to any form of registration and simply sprang into action whenever a contract to make a film was made available.

Interestingly, Adamu Muhammad of Kwabon Masoyi Productions also produced the first Hausa video film entirely in English. It was *House Boy*. Although *House Boy* was an innovative experiment by a Hausa video filmmaker to enter into the English language video genre, yet it was a commercial disaster. Hausa audience refused to buy it because it seemed too much like a “Nigerian film”, associating it with southern Nigerian video films. When the producer took it to Onitsha—the main marketing center for Nigerian films in south-east part of the country at the time—to sell to the Igbo marketers, he was rebuffed by marketers who were surprised that a Hausa video producer could command enough English to even produce a video film in the language. Further, the video had no known “Nigerian film” actors in it, and therefore was not acceptable to them.

#### **Market Square Heroes—Opportunities and Stardom in Hausa Video Film**

No less a production characteristic than the typologies of Hausa video film was the marketing of the films which further illustrate its market-driven nature. When Tumbin Giwa Film Productions in Kano edited *Turmin Danya* in 1990 they faced the problem of marketing it. The production of the video film did not come with an embedded film marketing strategy that would be cost-effective to the drama group, considering in fact the financial hurdles they had to overcome to produce just one video film. Further, the cassette dealers in Kano, dominated by Nigérien Hausa immigrants had no interest in marketing a Hausa video film over the Hindi, American and Chinese films they were making a bustling trade out of through pirating. A Hausa video film was an anomaly because the main Television stations of NTA Kano and CTV Kano, as well as NTA Kaduna all had popular dramas that were easily available via unofficial channels. Further, it would not be as easily pirated as overseas films because the owners are local and can control the production and distribution. On the face of the popularity of TV dramas and their ready availability, it does not seem to make marketing sense to accept *Turmin Danya*. They therefore refused to market it. The Tumbin Giwa drama group also faced a second problem of getting enough blank tapes to make multiple copies of the video—and again the marketers who were the main distributors of the tapes, refused to co-operate as they do not wish to reveal their sources. Generally, they were not particularly keen on the development of the indigenous video film industry because it was a loose cannon in their lucrative pirating.

Most of the marketers lack modern education and sophistication to market a film within the conventional process of film marketing. This is more because creating and implementing advertising and promotional efforts designed to make a film stand out in a competitive market environment, film marketing typically uses the same methods other products do—and these require a corporate mindset the typical Hausa merchant simply does not have. The marketers did, however, accepted to distribute *Turmin Danya* if the producers would find enough tapes to duplicate it themselves and bring it to them “ready-made”. Thus the marketing system depended on the producer making multiple copies of a video film at his own expense,

sticking the photos of the film on the cover and finding a willing marketer ready to accept it on sales-or-return basis. In the beginning, no marketer was willing to either invest in the industry or even purchase the video films directly. They simply stacked them in their shops and gave the producer the sales, after taking their commission. If the video flopped, i.e. with low sales, the producer took the loss. Even if the marketer accepts the jackets, it could take up to six months for the full cost of the video film to be recouped—and even then in dribs and drabs of at most N2,000 at a go. This ties up the producer who has to wait until he finished assembling all the money to start a new production. If a newer, more popular video film comes along, the unsold jackets of his film were returned to him.

The tape was often distinguished by a set picture pasted on the cover the casing. In this uncertain way, the marketing of the Hausa video film industry started—with no actual marketing—especially advertising, promotion, reviewing, product endorsement, premiers—or effective distribution network. It was up to the producers to take copies of the tapes to various marketers in large northern cities of Kaduna, Sokoto, Jos, Zaria, Bauchi, Maiduguri and Gombe. The sheer finance needed for this logistics was simply too much for the early producers and therefore not feasible. It was in fact for this reason that the early-era Hausa video films were produced by associations—Jan Zaki, Jigon Hausa, Tumbin Giwa, etc, who used the umbrella of the organization to produce and distribute the video film. The producers therefore settled with a simple advertisement on the radio informing listeners where to get a certain release. The marketers, of course, were not interesting in any advertising for any video film—as doing that may draw attention to their illegal pirating activities.

However, when Tumbin Giwa released *Gimbiya Fatima* in 1992 it became a wake-up call to the viewers and the marketers. This video film opened viewers to the genre, and after a slow take-off period, the Hausa video film had arrived. *Gimbiya Fatima*, a period romantic drama in a traditional Hausa Muslim palace caught viewers' imagination and proved so successful that the producers introduced a new innovation in Hausa video filmmaking—making Parts 2 and 3. It was the first Hausa video film to benefit from a continuing story.

Change started in 1995 when Bala Anas Babinlata released *Tsuntsu Mai Wayo* and instead of a usual set picture of a scene from the video on the cover the cassette, it had as near a professional quality printed cover as possible at the time. It was the first Hausa video film with a “ready-made jacket”. The slipcase for the video tape was the “jacket”. This ensured that his video films would be more easily distinguishable. He still had to find his own blank tapes and duplicate the original master and distribute to the dealers—much the same way “Nigerian” video films were distributed to all dealers in Kano. A few months later, Khalid Musa changed all this with the release of *Munkar* when under Jigon Hausa Drama Club he came up with the idea of giving a master copy of the video film to a marketer, and then selling the number of “jackets” the marketer needed initially at N30 per jacket. This meant the marketer would take the responsibility of mass copying of the tapes, slotting them into the jackets and stocking them. The marketer would sell the tape for N180—but only the initial N30 cost per jacket goes to the producer. The marketer's share was higher because it is his responsibility to purchase blank tapes (at N120 per tape) and pay for the duplication. The same sales-or-return policy, however was retained.

By the time Gidan Dabino released *In Da So Da Kauna* to the marketers 1996, they had started showing slight interest in the marketing of the Hausa video films. This was more so because the video film was based on a best-selling novel of the same name and had caught the imagination of Hausa school girls across northern Nigeria. A way still needed to be

worked out on mass production of the tapes—which the producers could not afford to do. Gidan Dabino came up with another formula—selling the “copyright” (meaning the right to duplicate) the video film for either a year for N2,000 or “for life” for N5,000. This, however, was specific to a particular marketer. Thus as many as five different marketers could all come and lease—for that was actually what it entailed—the copy of the same video film, duplicate it themselves and distribute as they see fit. The creative copyright of the video film, however, remained that of Gidan Dabino. This system was not adopted by other producers and the original formula suggested by Jigon Hausa seemed acceptable to the marketers. In fact it was consolidated when RK Studios released *Badakala* in 1997 and sold the jacket to the marketers as per Jigon Hausa formula. Indeed only Ibrahimawa Studios in 2000 with *Akasi* followed the example of *Tsuntsu Mai Wayo* of releasing a ready-made video film to the marketers. But by then the marketers had cottoned-on the act—the future of Hausa video film marketing lies in the sale of jackets to the marketers. The filmmakers were now firmly in their grip.

### **Kano State Filmmakers Association and the Hausa Video Film Industry**

It was clear, however, that some form of organized action was needed to either negotiate the best deals or undercut a rival. It was thus that a group of senior producers, temporarily setting aside their many personal differences, decided to form the Kano State Filmmakers Association (KSFMA) in 1996 to provide a common platform for the Hausa video film industry, regulate entry into the system and most importantly provide some form of input into the marketing of the video films. However, right from its formation the KSFMA was doomed to failure because of the personality clashes among its members, and the utter contempt for the leadership of the association by emergent producers. As noted by one of the founding members,

The association took up very well and made great impact. Gradually, sanity in production and marketing began to creep in, and at the same time, the industry began to witness more and more influx of producers most of whom did so because it was the vogue and also because of apparent lucrative nature of the business. Unfortunately, many of the producers were not serious and unprepared. Soon selfish interests, domination phobia, conspiracy and jealousy started to show their ugly faces. The noble aims and objectives of the association were put into jeopardy. Unethical practices, lawlessness and dislike for control coupled with the blind desire to make money at all cost (because others have done so) became the order of the day (Sango 2003: 74).

Despite their large combined years of theater and TV production experience, there were no attempts by the KSFMA to professionalize the industry in terms of either training, focus of the industry, expanding the market beyond Hausa speaking areas or post-production processes. There were also no quality assurance mechanisms to regulate not only production ethics but also storylines, for as Jibril (2003: 77) noted,

Indeed most of the personnel that make a typical production crew (director, producer, camera operators, lighting technicians, soundmen, production designers etc), normally started off without any formal training in either their acclaimed areas of expertise or in the general principles and techniques of film and video production. The few people among them who have had formal education and training in television or film production were forced to compromise the essential professional production requirements and treatments in technical areas, (like directing, scripting, visual treatments, effects, lighting requirements, make-up, sound etc) in favor of the common practice of “doing it the way others do” and not necessarily how it ought to be done professionally. The relatively small size, (in terms of number) of these trained professionals in the industry is too “insignificant” that they can hardly make any meaningful inroads in changing the direction of events for the better in the industry. Thus the low quality of the Hausa home video is not only the result of the nature of the equipment used in producing

them or their apparent low budgets but also the reflection of the poverty of both the professional and technical knowledge that go into their production.

Their main focus was on how each of them as an individual producer, not as a group, would gain fame and stardom. Even the studios that emerged from the fragmentation of the earlier drama groups and societies revolved around a single individual—as exemplified by Nagarta Motion Pictures (Aminu Hassan Yakasai), Kwabon Masoyi Productions (Adamu Muhammad), Gidan Dabino Video Films (Ado Ahmad), Mazari Film Mirage (Bala Anas Babinlata) and countless others who followed suit. Further, in each of the video films produced by the new independents, the studio head was almost always the starring lead, producer, scriptwriter and director, whether in the video films of the studio, or in contract video films. They established the central genre of Hausa video film industry—romantic stories either between married or unmarried couples, albeit cast in a mode traditional matrix of Hausa society—and subsequently encouraged Executive Producers to provide them with contracts to produce more video films along the same line.

The KSFMA was principally a marketing advocacy group that sought ways to ensure the video films of its members were effectively sold in the market. Its main innovation was the introduction of a queuing system (“layin sakin kaset”) for releasing new video films into the market almost from its formation. All Hausa video film producers, whether based in Kano or not, must subscribe to this system in a special deal negotiated between the KSFMA and the marketers. This became necessary because it was clear from the tide of Hausa video films being released into the market towards the end of the 1990s that some form of control had to be instituted into the system. This was more so because the success of the video films from 1996 to 1999 had attracted other, younger, producers intent to making their mark in the “industiri” as the industry was labeled. These younger elements had money for films, were star-stuck by the older producers and directors and were ready to invest. Soon enough the Bata market in Kano became flooded by about five to ten new video films per week from 1998 to 1999. The idea behind the queuing system of releasing Hausa video films was to ensure that customers were not overwhelmed over which video film to watch within a short period of time.

Further, most of the early Hausa video film Executive Producers were women with tales of the heart to tell and this fitted perfectly into the production values of the individual production units of KSFMA. For ironically where the KSFMA existed as an umbrella organization, it was made up of disparate and mutually distrusting individual film companies that continued their intense rivalry for production contracts, which only made the notion of organizational control merely nominal. This indeed was reflected in the fact that the queuing system collapsed almost from its inception. Addressing a press conference in September 1999, the then Chairman of the KSFMA, Alhaji Auwalu Isma’il Marshal announced the abolishing of the queuing system

“When we introduced the queuing system of releasing cassettes in the market some few months ago, some selfish and thoughtless people hated the system right away. They claimed it was introduced to suppress up-and-coming producers. No one questioned our logic in instituting the system—was it to suppress or to empower? The KSFMA ignored these comments and was happy that most of our members agreed with the system. Unfortunately it came to our notice that some of our unpatriotic members had gone behind our backs and negotiated special deals with cassette marketers to jump the queue and get their own films released. This is very disappointing to the KSFMA, and in order to work out a more efficient system for our members, from today the queuing system for releasing Hausa video films weekly into the market has been abolished. Let every producer release his film as he sees fit into

the market.” Press release on abolishing the queuing system of releasing Hausa video films into Kano markets, *Tauraruwa*, August 1999 p. 39.

To further illustrate the market-driven nature of the Hausa video film industry, similar fate awaited any subsequent attempt to form any filmmakers associations in other production centers of Jos, Kaduna (see reports in *Fim* July 2001 pp 41-43, *Fim* September 2001 pp 37-39), Bauchi and Sokoto (*Fim* September 2001 pp 44-45, *Fim* December 2001, p 40). In each of these cities filmmakers associations were formed, disbanded and often left in a limbo after bitter acrimony between the constituent production studios that decided to form a State-wide association. The reason for their lack of cohesion was the same as in Kano—personality clashes and desire by the head of each studio to be the leader of the pack either in getting contracts to produce video films, or in ensuring maximum success for own video film in an increasingly crowded market.

### **Arewa Film Producers Association of Nigeria**

Noting all this lack of cohesion (what the industry called “rashin hadin kai”) a meeting of all industry stakeholders throughout the north of Nigeria was convened by Alhaji Abdu Haro Mashi, CEO Damaga Motion Pictures, Katsina. It was instructive that the meeting did not specifically insist on Hausa video film stakeholders—since there are other non-Hausa filmmakers in other languages, e.g. Nupe, Kanuri and Igala. Yet the meeting was basically a convocation of Hausa video filmmakers from Kano, Kaduna, Jos, Bauchi, Sokoto and others. It was held in Katsina on 21st October, 2000 at the Katsina Motel. The main focus of the meeting was to create a common platform around which differences between all the producers would be sunk and to fashion out a new working relationship. There was a lot of urgings for all Hausa video film producers to be one (“tsintsiya maɗauki ɗaya”).

Perhaps not surprising for a group of theater practitioners, there was even a curse (“tsinuwa”) placed on any producer who subsequently deviated from this new atmosphere of cordiality and friendship created at the meeting. At the end of the meeting a communiqué was issued that heralded a pan-northern Nigerian Arewa Film Producers Association of Nigeria (AFPAN), and which also appointed Hamisu Lamido Iyan-Tama (*Badakala, Kilu Ta Ja Bau*) as an interim Chairman, pending a later meeting during which a substantive election will be held. A part of the communiqué included the following resolutions:

- That all associations formerly formed to represent the interest of film producers in the North are hereby merged to form Arewa Film Producers Association of Nigeria
- In the light of the above, we have resolved to sink our differences, forget and forgive ourselves and work committedly towards achieving our common goals
- We have resolved to improve the standard and quality of our production to match world standard through the application and use of modern facilities and techniques of film productions
- We have collectively resolved to take on the Federal Government on the issue of enforcement of local content on film/cinema exhibition
- We have resolved to form our ourselves code of practice aimed at improving professional relation between us, directors, artists and other stakeholders in the industry.
- We have resolved to look for ways and means of exhausting Arewa market and reaching out to other African markets and beyond. (Parts of the Communiqué, Arewa Film Producers Association, reproduced in *Fim*, November 2000 p. 34).

The meeting ended with the resolution of hold a follow-up meeting on 11th November 2000 in Katsina to flesh-out the Association and create a constitution for it. The focus of the Association was further refined after this second meeting in Katsina as indicated by parts of the second communiqué which read:

- That we all appreciated the gains and the unity achieved from establishing the association to date.
- That in view of the daily rising cost of production, we have resolved to increase the unit price of our films to be announced soon
- That the association is a professional body purely made up of producers only
- That we have resolved to dialogue with film exhibitors with a view to achieving a fifty-fifty percentage sharing formula. (Parts of the Communiqué, Arewa Film Producers Association, reproduced in *Fim*, December 2000 p. 47).

It was instructive that two main gains of the Association were noted at this meeting—first was to increase the cost of the jacket of the video films, and second was the restriction of the membership of AFPAN to producers only. The first gain merely confirmed the market-driven nature of the Association for it did not provide more effective means of marketing the video films—instead, maintaining the same formula introduced in Kano in 1995—that of selling the “jacket” to marketers. The second gain was more significant in that by restricting the Association’s membership to producers only; artistes, singers, directors and most importantly, marketers were excluded. Yet almost all the delegates who constituted the AFPAN were actors, singers, directors in addition to being producers.

By now the marketers had realized that the Hausa video film industry was lucrative business. They had the capital and the distribution network needed to literally take over the industry. Thus by 2001 the marketers—who had initially shunned the entire business in 1990—had realized its money-making potentials and the penury of the producers and filmmakers. They moved in full force such that Idris Dan Zariya, a noted marketer (and an actor in the films he sponsored as a ‘producer’) attempted entry into Kano State Filmmakers Association with the alleged intention of taking over the leadership of the organization. While this failed, nevertheless it created acrimony between not just Dan Zariya, but also other marketers and filmmakers, and a battle line was drawn—and this reflected itself in the decision of the AFPAN to restrict the membership only to producers. This singular act was catalytic in further entrenching the market-driven nature of the Hausa video film industry. It was thus ironic that while the delegates at the 2nd Arewa Filmmakers Association were willing clients of marketers—or indeed anyone with money to make a film—they were not willing to sit at the same table with them.

The producers I talked to in Kano in the period pointed out that while the marketers can produce films and can therefore consider themselves filmmakers, the producers are not marketers and cannot participate in any activity or decision of the marketers. Allowing marketers into the filmmakers associations was akin to bolting the door with a thief in—they will know the secrets of the filmmakers, but the filmmakers will never know their secrets. And in Kanywood, secrets are more precious than gold.

A third—and final—meeting of the Association was held on 5th May 2001 in Kaduna. At this meeting it was indicated only delegates from the various states were invited. Subsequently non-delegates, i.e. participants who attended either on verbal invitation or other means, were asked to leave the hall before the start of the business sessions. These included producers such as Ahmad Salihu Al-Kanawy (*Fallasa, Aisha, Gashin Kuma*), Sani Ayagi (*An Ci Moriyar Ganga*), Zainab Kanye (*Uwa Ta*), and Alhassan Kwale (*Mujaza, Habiullah*); and artistes such as Tahir Fage, and the Chairman of El-Duniya Cassettes, Alhaji Idris Dan Zariya who was a marketer as well as a producer, and representing Kano State Cassette Dealers Association. Equally thrown out of this meeting of the Association was Shehu Hassan Kano, the Chairman of the Artistes’ Guild on the grounds of not being a delegate—

even though he was representing Kano State Guild of Artistes—and also as an artiste, not producer—and even though he had formal invitation.

By excluding artistes from the meeting, the Arewa Filmmakers Association merely increased the divide between all the stakeholders in the industry. This was because most of the producers were artistes and thus members of artiste organizations. This exclusion meant that the producers had a double leverage on the artistes because they can sit on artistes' meetings (as actors), but the artistes cannot sit on theirs (unless the actors became producers, which many of them opted to become to participate in all aspects of the "industiri"). Yet the producers rely on the artistes for their production. As a result of this exclusion of Dan Zariya—ostensibly to prevent him from reporting the expected increase in the cost of the jackets to the marketers—the marketers in Kano decided to boycott all the video films by Hamisu Lamido Iyan-Tama because of his being the Chairman of the Arewa Filmmakers Association—on the belief that he sanctioned the decision to exclude Dan Zariya who was their representative. Although no communiqué was issued after this meeting, the main decision taken was that producers will increase the cost of Hausa video film jacket from N40 to N50 almost immediately due to rising costs of production, and the observation that the marketers themselves had increased the retail cost of video tapes from N180 to N220.

The tension between the filmmakers and marketers was brought to the fore on 19th May 2001 when members of the comatose KSFMA in Kano, acting independent of the AFPAN (but with its approval, since most of KSFMA are also members of AFPAN) marched to the marketers' shops in Kano and forced an increase of N10 (from N40 to N50) on the cost of each video film jacket. The marketers unsuccessfully resisted this on the grounds that they had not been formally informed of the decision to increase the cost of the jackets, and that they also needed to meet at an organizational level to negotiate the new price regime. However two producers, Maryam "Mashahama" Danfulani (*Ajali*) and Salisu Yomen (*Annashuwa*) defied this decision and released their films to the marketers at the old price of N40. This led to their suspension from the KSFMA. Interestingly, such suspension also included banning them from appearing as artistes in any Hausa video film—a stand which the Artistes' Council took an exception to as it affected Danfulani because as far as they were concerned her being a producer (as well as an actor, and a singer)—and the attendant problems she faced with producers—does not affect her as an actor! This merely serves to reveal the contradictions in the organized attempt to sustain Hausa video film industry.

The actions of the AFPAN in enforcing an upward increase in the cost of the jacket—through KSFMA—elicited a very angry response from one of the marketers who vented his anger in a press release, and whose wordings revealed that a professional, exportable Hausa video film industry is still a long way. As the release revealed,

"So they want to remove their jackets from our store. I want them to know that before they even started the video film business, we (the marketers) have been existing. Right now we have over one million jackets—so it is their loss. I want the public to know this. We have helped these producers one by one with advices, money and in other ways. What they have done is sheer ingratitude, and they are doing this because they think they are strong. They are not! We do not consider them enemies at all. However we will not tolerate arrogance, for whatever they can do, we can also do...Further, the older producers don't do anything for themselves, and the younger ones are too blind to notice that the older ones don't care about them. The older producers decided to wait until they don't have any film in the market before embarking on this action. Let the younger producers become aware that they are being suppressed, not protected. Let me ask this what the heck have the older producers done for the younger ones?" Ibrahim Hassan Adamu, on behalf of Alhaji Hassan Adamu and Sons, Press Release, *Fim* July 2001 p. 40.

The price increase was eventually enforced. In any event, the AFPAN withered away and became buried by its own inefficiency and the focus of its members over their own individual filmmaking activities rather than sustaining a group policy to ensure the survival and sustainability of the Hausa video film industry. For instance, it was declared during one of the Association's meetings that the convener of the meeting, Alhaji Abdu Haro Mashi, had set aside one million naira for a film to be made by the Association. The proposed video film was to be a pace-setter and draw upon the production skills of the members of AFPAN and hopefully pave the way to the future of the Hausa video film. However, the AFPAN sub-committees assigned to look after the project were unable to come up with even a script and eventually the offer lapsed.

Further, up to 2005 the Association had no registration with any government agency, nor does it even have an office. In fact, to underscore its ineffectiveness, by the time Kanywood emerged in 2001, more associations, many actually hacked out of the Filmmakers Association had emerged, essentially because it was felt that the parent association does not cover the interests of non-producers. Thus Kano saw the emergence of Guild of Directors, Guild of Artistes, Guild of Cinematographers, Guild of Lyricists and Song Writers, Guild of Editors, Motion Picture Editors Guild (MPEG) and Scriptwriters Forum. These associations were not exclusive, and it was quite common for a producer to be a member of all the guilds since in most cases producers can also become directors, screenplay writers, cinematographers, editors and singers.

#### **“Harka ta Koma Hannun Yara”—New Elements, New Attitudes**

By 1999 the Hausa video film, despite being in existence for almost a decade, was still in its commercial infancy. The direct cause of this was that the entire system lacked organized professionalism right from its inception, nor were the practitioners—unlike the non-professional video film moguls from southern Nigeria—ready to consult with the professionals on the development of the industry.

The general feeling among the early Hausa theater practitioners and novelists who established the industry was that “practice makes perfect”. Having been involved in the process for years was deemed sufficient enough bases for expertise. Further, the Hausa approached the video film industry as an informal market business (*kasuwanci*), rather than a profession (*sana'a*) where it is one's capital, rather than creative inspiration, that determines entry points. As stated by Mansur Ibrahim of Ibrahimawa Productions (*Akasi, Mugun Nufi, Uzuri, Yakanah*),

“To be frank, to us filmmaking is just another business ('kasuwanci'). It is not therefore surprising for us to change our focus and invest our money elsewhere when something better comes along...We temporarily stopped filmmaking because the market situation is bad. We make films with our money—we are not contracted to make the films.” Alhaji Mansoor A. Shariff, of Ibrahimawa Productions, Kano, Interview, *Tauraruwa*, Ta 1, Fitowa ta 3, 2003 p. 11.

The market-driven nature of the Hausa video film industry is reflected in the volume of the video produced between 1980 to 1997, where although a total of about 352 video films were produced, only one (*Shamsiyya*) was officially registered in 1996 with the NFVCB, Abuja. Almost without any exception these films—as do the ones that follow—had the same episodic structure, laden with dialogue, with little focus on cinematography. Very few of them were produced by formally trained directors, producers and cinematographers such as Tijjani Ibrahim, Salisu Galadanci, Abdullahi Ado Satatima, A.A. Kurawa, and Bashir Mudi Yakasai. Even then, these entered the video film through their involvement in Television

dramas and series. Thus these productions were, perhaps not surprisingly, at best, extended Television dramas, often using the same stars, and certainly a consistently similar storyline.

In 1999 Sarauniya Films released the catalytic video film that literally shaped the direction of the industry. It was *Sangaya*. It was, like most Hausa youth literature, mainly a love story. It was not the story that was significant about the film, however, but soundtrack of the video and its song and dance routine backed by a synthesized sound samples of traditional Hausa instruments such as *kalangu* (talking drum), *bandiri* (tambourine) and *sarewa* (flute). The effect was electric on a youth audience seeking alternative and globalized—essentially modern—means of being entertained than the traditional music genre which seemed aimed at either rural audience or older urbanites. It became an instant hit. Indeed the success *Sangaya* was as momentous in the history of the Hausa video film industry as *Living in Bondage* was for the southern Nigerian video films. According to the producer of *Sangaya*,

“Quite frankly, the song “Sangaya” was responsible for 80% of the acceptance of the video film *Sangaya*. Further, audience loved the song because of the (Hausa) traditional-sounding instruments used. The same with the dance routines that follow the song in the film.” Interview with the producer Sangaya, Auwalu Muhammad Sabo, *Fim*, July 2000 p. 21.

*Sangaya* signaled the “golden era” of the Hausa video film which lasted all of three years (2000 to 2003). As revealed rather too enthusiastically by the famous cassette seller in Kano, Alhaji Idris [an Zariya,

“In the whole of Nigeria, there has never been a film with the commercial success of *Sangaya*...and it was because of the song, nothing else...The commercially successful (Hausa) video is the one with songs. The most outstanding videos became so because of the songs. Today even if you are a rookie in the video industry, if you start a video with a good song, then you will certainly become successful.” Interview with Alhaji Idris [an Zariya, Chairman, Kano State Cassette Dealers Association, *Fim*, October 2000 p. 49.

The increasing economic depression in the country had created a massive pool of unemployed youth, and the success of *Sangaya*, both in financial terms and the popularity of the stars created a deluge of producers and directors overnight in Kano, which soon spread to other northern Nigerian cities. This new wave of producers, artistes and directors gate crashed the industry with production values different from those adopted by the early experimenters—theater actors made famous by television dramas, or novelists making a foray into visual prose fiction. Thus by 2000 Hausa video film evolved into an industry and a lucrative business. It became some all-comers’ affair and a bandwagon effect kick-started with studios, producers, directors and actors all emerging, particularly encouraged by the possibilities of fame, and with tales to tell through the video medium.

Young, brash, sassy and rebellious (with the street tag of ‘*Yan Kwalisa*, Young Turks), the new producers that emerged from 2000 were products of acculturative media confluence—a mishmash of cultural influences ranging from American disco, rap and “niggaz with attitude” culture to the New Age Bollywood ethos. Their video production values were not informed by rustic settings, Hausa cultural worldviews or moralizing sermons to appease the traditionalist establishment as reflected in Hausa popular television dramas such as for example *[an Magori* or *{uliya Manta Sabo*. They were focused at providing teen-themed entertainment aimed solely at children, youth and housewives, with total disregard for any adult viewing preferences. However, even though they used globalized template for their video filmmaking, they too remain didactic, with the actors and producers claiming in various

interviews that they enter the industry teach good morals—the main mechanism of Hausa folktales.

Consequently, as a result of the potential for fame and fortune as film stars (“yan fim”), portrait photographers and individuals offering commercial video-coverage of important functions (such as naming-ceremonies, women’s wedding parties, school activities, political party convention coverage), merchants, and high school graduates suddenly transformed themselves into video film moguls, gaining considerable confidence from their VHS cameras, financial muscle—and teen audience eager for a new video film every week. According to Aminu Shariff, one of the new emerging stars who made his debut in *Ukuba* (2000),

“Any film industry in the world has certain enforceable rules and regulations. Yet in our (Hausa video film) industry, this is not the case. Anyone with bags of cash can just come and choose any part of the industry they want and simply start! ... You don’t just cast any person to act any role. You cast a person who fits the role in the story. Yet we don’t do it like that. We cast any person no matter how unattractive in any role due to personal interests of the producer in the actor. This is what further attracts all and sundry into the industry (Aminu A. Shariff, aka “Momoh”, lamenting the origins of the Hausa video film industry Interview, *Fim*, October 2003 p. 9.

Even secondary school students were not left behind. For instance, on Sunday 7th October 2001, students of Government Secondary School, Unguwar Sarkin Musulumi, Kaduna, launched their own film, *Dabaibayi*. The only non-students in the entire production were the star, Hauwa Maina, and the director, Al-Amin Ciroma. Further, Mudassir Haladu of Kano, nicknamed “Young Producer”, earned his moniker when at the age of 19 and still in his high school sophomore year produced four video films by 1998. These were *Sakaci*, *Mahakurci*, *Badali* and *‘Ya’yan Zamani (Garkuwa*, October 2000 p. 30). Indeed Mudassir was credited with coining the expression, “harka ta koma hannun yara” (the industry is now controlled by the young, *Fim*, March 2003 p. 38)—a contemptuous wake-up call to the older members into the profession which prompted Baba Ali a veteran production designer (*Gimbiya Fatima*, *Gashin Kuma*, *Dandukununu*) and director (*Inuwar Giginya*, *Burin Zuciya*) to retort, about the filmmaking capabilities of the new producers:

“It is the same old story—romance. Also the same type of romance—boy-meets-girl; and when they sing, it is in garden full of flowers. Why can’t they change the style of their songs, or even the stories to make them more appealing to mature audience; or create other genres such as horror? Producers? No they are not! They are incompetent fools (‘shashashai’). There are over 500 claimed producers in Kano. Not more than 15 know that a producer is. The rest are incompetent fools...They don’t know anything.” Baba Ali, Interview, *Fim*, January 2003 p. 22).

This created counter comments from those affected (see *Fim*, March 2003 pp 36-39) who all defended their entry in the profession. While acknowledging that they had no formal filmmaking training—unlike the old industry members who benefited from State sponsorship while working for State television—the new filmmakers argue that they are intelligent, committed and have watched a lot of films—including those made by the same Hausa theater veterans—and therefore have learnt the tricks of the trade. This, to them, was sufficient enough to make the statements they want to make to their society. Indeed when an attempt was made by senior directors in Kano to ensure that any directing is done by only 15 refutable and therefore certified directors in the industry from 1st January 2003, they were labeled “gumakan industiri” (industry idols, untouchables). As a new director retorted,

“This (new rule) is unfair. How many of them read Directing at school? So why should they cripple others? If you take the video films of any one of them you will see it is full of mistakes, which young

ones like us will easily point out...They only know “cut”, “action”, slow motion, and tell the same story in the same scenes—office, street, living room...” (Shakka Babu Column, *Bidiyo*, “Gumakan Industry”, August 2002, p. 4).

This decision—like that of any film association—had no enforceable mechanism since it had no legal backing. In reality none of these guilds could claim any registered status at the time, and consequently the system reverted back to type, inviting anyone into any cadre of the film industry that takes his fancy. Indeed, in order to show that the market for video films belong the young blood, a shadowy association was formed in 2003. It was simply referred to as “Harka Ta Ko Ma Hannun Yara” (the business is now with young ones) which one of the founders, a then young director, (*Agaji, Raina, Adawo, Haka Kawai, Gayya, Sur’ah*) Iiyasu “Tantiri” AbdulMumin formed to fight the older established Kanywood directors. His main logic was that having started the video film in 1993 as an actor, he had been in the industry at various entry points and therefore had arrived as a director—same as any of the older ones. As he stated in an interview,

“No one can prevent me from being a director, producer, editor, actor, cameraman, scriptwriter, song writer, lyricist, I can do it all. I can even play the soundtrack music, or be the gaffer, or make-up man. I have been in the business for a long time, so I can do all of these.” Interview with Iiyasu “Tantiri” AbdulMumin, *Fim*, May 2003 p. 32).

Such feeling of creative control is not restricted to a newly emergent video industry in Africa, although reflective of a developing country, for as Ganti (2004: 55) explores about the Bombay film industry,

Films are often financed simply on the basis of a star-cast, the germ of a story idea, and a director's reputation. The lack of a well-defined division of labor among the principle players means that most people play multiple roles, so the industry is filled with people who are both producers and directors, writers and directors, editors and directors, actors and producers, actors and writers, or even a combination of actor-director-producer. Power resides in the stars, directors, and producers. The industry contains very few non-value-added people such as executives, lawyers, agents, professional managers, i.e., the “suits,” who do not contribute to the actual filmmaking process. There are also no intermediaries such as casting agents, talent scouts, or agencies like ICA and William Morris.

Thus the hostility between the older Hausa video filmmakers who from all appearances wanted to maintain standards, and the younger ones who perceived such moves as attempts to muzzle their creativity—and livelihood, since they rely totally on the industry—ensured that no specific enforceable standards were maintained or respected. This left the industry open to mergers and acquisitions by anyone with enough capital.

Thus the new producers and directors (from 2000 to 2004) adopted a do-it-yourself spirit of just learning the basics and then jumping up on a stage and making a point—as producers, cinematographers, editors, scriptwriters and directors. The entire system was operated on an old-boy network where personal contacts were more credible in getting a part (or a production) than formalized training qualifications in the craft. This, surprisingly reflects some professional ethics of the Bombay film industry the Hausa video filmmakers faithfully copy. As explained by Tejaswini Ganti (2004: 54),

“Studios” within the Indian context are merely shooting spaces and not production and distribution concerns. Though there has been a move toward integration and points of convergence - some stars have ventured into production and distribution, some audio companies into production, some producers into distribution, and some distributors into exhibition, these instances are not systemic and do not

preclude others from entering the business. Essentially, the “industry” is a very diffuse and chaotic place where anyone with large sums of money and the right contacts can make a film.

The new Hausa filmmakers, confident of their financial muscle, market share of the industry and appeal to the younger audience were openly contemptuous of the older filmmakers. As explained by a typical Hausa video film icon,

“It was our elders, those who lay claims to be being industry elders who contributed to the low esteem accorded to this industry...some will not honestly give you a good advice because they are jealous of your success. Some will even attempt to cripple your script to show it is worthless. Some of them are just dumb. See, a person who is about 40 to 60 up to 70, but he is still thinking of a previous era he lived in. Some have painted themselves such that they think only they can succeed or success can only come through them. How can these people give any honest advice?” Aminu A. Shariff, aka Momoh, speaking out to *Fim*, October 2003, pp 8-9.

Consequently the old and established television drama artistes—who were absorbed into Council of Elders (a system-wide “dattawan industiri” group to settle disputes) and who in most part do not have the financial wherewithal to create professional video film studio and services, became relegated to appearing in the spate of new video films to confer on the films a credibility—and keep them in continuous employment. Despite this uneasy working relationship, a hostile dividing line was created between the old and the new filmmakers which remained up to 2005. The elders themselves feel almost the same about the talents and creative directions of the new filmmakers. An example is given by Isa Bello Ja who often appears in patricianly roles in the video films and who started his acting career in TV series drama (*Zaman Duniya, Bakan Gizo, Sabon Bakan Gizo, Hadarin Kasa*, etc):

“This is a young man, coming to you with his money. He thinks he doesn’t need your advice. All he wants is to make a film. I remember during our TV drama days, a producer is a person who knows what the story of a film would be. If it involves doctors, weavers, dyers, teachers, he will case study them first. But these kids (producers of Hausa video films) do whatever they want. If you try to say something, they will claim you just want to confuse people; it is his money why should he listen to you? The fact that you can claim to know the art of filmmaking (to them) does not arise, he is proud of the fact that he has the finance to do the film the way he wants it. They have no room to listen to any advice (from us) because he has already been advised by his friends to make a film whether it will succeed or flop. This is how these kids think...” Isa Bello Ja, an “elder” in Hausa video film industry, interview, *Fim*, September 2003 p. 31.

This hostility—which runs through the Kano-Kaduna axis—remained the single factor that limited the internationalization of the Hausa video film as a serious process. Other more established filmmakers simply shun the video industry altogether. A vivid example was Sadiq Balewa who produced and directed—on 16 mm gauge—a highly acclaimed Hausa feature film, *Kasar Mu Ce* in 1991. As he stated in an interview:

“I have refused to direct home video because artistically, it is not my stuff, for it is limited in creativity, and it has become some all-comers’ affair. I have been approached a number of times to direct home video, but I have turned all the offers down. I cannot abandon the state-of-the-art format for mediocrity! I have, however, written four scripts for home movies for others.” (Interview in *Film and Video*, Vol 4 No 2, 1998, p. 29).

The most affected group by the Hausa video film industry fever were girls. When it became clear that stars like Fati Muhammad, Maijidda Ibrahim, Maryam “Mushaqqa” Aliyu, Abida Mohammed, Ruqayya “Dawayya” Umar Santa, Balaraba Muhammad and Wasila Ism’ail were plain ordinary girls transformed into video princesses, other girls, some fresh from high

school, and others running away from a forced marriage situation, started trooping to Kano to be cast as the next superstar. Indeed, it is this deluge of girls running away into the open arms of an industry always on the lookout for a fresh face that contributed to the critical reactions of the Hausa public sphere on the Hausa video film industry. The industry was seen as encouraging a rebellious attitude among girls and serving as a magnet for girls who want to become wayward. This understandably did not down well with either the Artistes Council of Kano or the Kano State Association of Filmmakers who tried to absolve themselves from the blame. As explained by Alhaji Auwal Marshal, then the Chairman of the Kano State Filmmakers' Association,

“Entry into the industry is cheap. Anyone can call themselves a producer—yet you can't be a producer just like that, you must fulfill certain conditions. One of them is that there should be a written agreement before a girl is cast in a film. Yet many producers flout this. We are determined to correct this situation...” Auwal Marshal, Interview, *Fim*, November 2001 p. 29.

The process became more formalized in 2001 which created a system whereby any girl wishing to become an actress must show her parent's consent. For instance, in an interview, a mother who wanted her daughter to become a video star rationalized:

“...I suddenly realized what is happening. We send our children to school where they learn a lot of things, including drama which we found acceptable in school settings, since they are often even given prizes for excelling in school drama shows, just like if they excel in regular subjects. So why should we condemn this business when, after graduating from high school, they want to convert their skills into something productive? If we do that, we are not being fair to them. This is because our children have finished high school, they have no jobs, they have no husbands, they just loaf and roam about—and before you know it they end up doing all sorts of bad things, worse than we can accuse drama artistes. I am therefore bringing my daughter so that she can be employed in the video film industry...” A mother's lament on girls in video films, in *Annashuwa*, April/May 2002, p. 44.

This was followed by a signed undertaking—which all producers require a parent or guardian to sign—granting full permission for the studio to cast the girl (rarely a boy; since boys often join the industry without necessarily seeking parental consent, so long as they stay out of scandals—staying out of sex and drugs—and bring in some sustenance for the family). Despite these, the criticisms against using girls who more often than not are either smallish or young (the average age of Hausa video film female stars by 2001 was 17). As noted by a critic,

“I am writing to plead with film producers to, for the sake of Allah and His prophet, stop casting any girl or woman in their films. When you look carefully you will notice that the girls who appear in Hausa video films are very small—at an age they should not have left the caring tether of their parents. Some of the girls look like they have just stopped wearing diaphers! And yet they cast such girls in roles fit for more mature women, especially love.” Urwatu Bashir Sale, *Fim*, October 2005 p. 10, letters page.

This did little to deter the continuing attraction of the film industry to adolescent girls. The combination of such tender-aged girls and a strongly Islamic environment is a recipe for critical reaction.

### **Kanywood Variety—Popular Mass Media and Hausa Video Films**

It is a sign of the high value of literature among the Hausa that magazines to cover the new entertainment medium became rapidly established. Thus magazines sprung up to provide news, information and gossip about the Hausa video film industry soon after the industry started to crystallize. The first Hausa video film magazine, *Taskira* was established in 1996 in

Kano, but ceased publication after few issues. Its place was taken by a more successful *Tauraruwa* (“*Star*” and inspired by the Hindi film magazine, *Stardust*, which was extremely popular in urban Hausa northern Nigeria) which was introduced in 1998 to capture the burgeoning Hausa video film scene. In its August 1999 edition it coined the term *Kanywood* for the Hausa video film industry—creating an indigenous label for the industry three years before *The New York Times* created *Nollywood* for the Nigerian film industry in an article dated 16th September 2001. In that period, well over 80% of the production studios as they existed, were located in Sabon Titi, a wide street that bisected Kano city. *Tauraruwa* magazine pitched its single office in the area which rapidly became known as “Kanywood Boulevard”.

In 1999 *Fim* magazine debuted. Published in Kaduna, it remained the single most consistent source of information about the industry since its first issue in March 1999. Professionally produced, with an almost academic flair for balance and less sensationalism, it rapidly became the leading and authoritative Hausa video film magazine in Nigeria and beyond, complete with an independent web site (and prefers to use *Kallywood*, instead of *Kanywood* for the industry, although the industry itself prefers *Kanywood*). Other magazines that joined in the fray included *Annashuwa*, *Bidiyo*, *Duniyar Fim*, *Garkuwa*, *Gidauniya*, *Indiyana*, *Majigi*, *Marubuciya*, *Mudubi*, *Mujallar Sharhi*, *Mujallar Sho*, *Mumtaz*, *NishaJi*, *Sharhin Fim*, *Shirin Fim*, and *Tauraruwa*. By 2005 only two survived: *Fim* and *Mudubi*. But to indicate the industry is still covered, *Mujallar Sho* made its first appearance in September 2005.

Like the Hausa video film industry itself, competition to establish the magazines, with the exception of the sole survivor, *Fim*, was motivated by a do-it-yourself journalism ethos and desire to make money, rather than to document the process. This explains why out of about 16 titles established between 1998 to 2005, only three survived.<sup>10</sup> Indeed by 2003 most of these magazines had collapsed. A study of their lifespan indicated varying longevity from just one issue (*Mujallar Sharhi*), to two (*Annur*, *Sharhin Fim*, *Indiyana*) or four to six (*Annashuwa*, *Majigi*, *Marubuciya*). The rest survived few issues beyond number 10 up to 2004 before folding up. *Indiyana* became somewhat unique in that it provided news and information in Hausa about Hindi, rather than Hausa, film industry—which it culled from Hindi film magazines like *Fanfare* and *Stardust*, as well as Internet web sites. However, after only two issues, it folded up. *Marubuciya* started as a literary magazine, but started to focus on the burgeoning Hausa video film industry after three issues to get a share of the market. Increasing availability of printing presses created more varieties of covering the entertainment industry. Thus *NishaJin Mako* became the first (18th to 25th September, 2003) initially fortnightly newspaper to cover the industry. It ceased production after that one issue.

The magazines were almost exclusively devoted to video films, trying to keep pace with their rapid expansion, highlighting the appeal of particular films and expanding the number of stars and superstars in the process. And perhaps not surprisingly, regular contact and coverage of the industry provided the magazine publishers with video ideas; for they too entered the video film production business. Thus *Fim* magazine produced *Gagarabadau*, *Daren Farko* and *Artabu*, while *Majigi* (through Shalamar Video film studio in Abuja) produced *Honarabul*, *Illar Gaba* and *Nafisa-Ta*.

Beside the magazine as vehicles of a media process, new linguistic terms rapidly appeared which became the lexicon of the industry, essentially introduced by the younger spectrum of the business, and reflected their globalized adaptation of English words to “Engausa” – the “Ebonics of Hausa”. Thus some of the popular terms that emerged included *shutin* (shooting),

*lokashun* (location), *artisaye* (set rehearsals), *industiri* (industry), *kastin* (casting) *sina-sinai* (scenes), *selinface* (selling face, which in Kanywood's dialect of Tinseltown lexicon could also mean the producer's "casting couch"), *rol* (role), *chamama* (low budget, i.e. cheaply, produced videos), *Kan-ta-waye* (rookie, greenhorn, fresh Executive Producer, especially a woman with more money than sense, to produce a film). They reflect the new lexicon of Hausa urban film folk and sophisticates. Indeed, as shown by Yusuf Adamu (2003b), a whole new videospeak language, *bulungudu* was created principally by a seasoned actor, Hussaini {o}i in 1994. This new created language was first used in *Qarni*, a film by Hafizu Bello in collaboration with Abba Lawan in 2003. Thus by 2004 the Hausa video film had established itself as a perfect example of globalization of popular culture in a traditional African society.

While all these developments showed a vibrant industry and its development, on 13th December 2000 the Kano State Commissioner of Information addressed a press conference in which he stated that the Kano State Government has banned production, sale, public showing (including in cinema houses) of Hausa video films. This led to the establishment of Kano State Censorship Board, with the express task of regulating the entertainment industry in Kano (and by extension, Hausa northern Nigeria) to safeguard the religious and cultural sentiments of the Muslim Hausa.

As a result of the government ban, some artistes decided to meet and lead a peaceful demonstration to the Kano State Government House to protest the ban—thus giving wider publicity to their cause, and since they attract a legion of admirers wherever they go, it was anticipated to be a huge success. During the meeting, the stakeholders advocated for media campaigns to get the ban on home video films lifted. Some also suggested that their more prominent members should form a rival political party and contest for various positions – thus gaining political control to protect the industry. Before the protest could begin, however, some elders of the Hausa film industry stepped in to prevent a civil protest, and suggested the formation of a pressure group to act as a collective point of protest. This pressure group was instantly formed as Motion Picture Practitioners Association of Nigeria (MOPPAN) and became the subsequent contact point between the industry and Government in Kano, and later in other parts of northern Nigeria. Ironically, the creation of MOPPAN deliberately ignored the existence of the comatose Arewa Film Producers Association of Nigeria (AFPAN) which could have been revived to serve the same function as MOPPAN, which, however, absorbed the membership of AFPAN.

In any event, by October 2012, responding to various internal wrangling, MOPPAN had fragmented into two 'camps' – mainstream MOPPAN and a newly formed Hausa video film association, Arewa Filmmakers Association (AFA) which was formed as a 'resurrection' of the original Arewa Film Producers Association of Nigeria (AFPAN), which, technically speaking, has never been dissolved.

### **Challenges of the Hausa Video Film industry**

I have deliberately avoided the issue of the political economy of Kanywood, preferring to focus on historical excavation. From the historical account and subsequent development of the industry, there are a series of challenges facing the industry. These need to be addressed if the industry is to go beyond. I did not address them because I feel that is the task of the industry itself. I will outline some of them.

### ***Fragmented leadership***

The Hausa video film industry lacks a unified front to tackle its various problems. At the moment (2013), there are two main rival administrative groupings – Motion Picture Practitioners of Association of Nigeria (MOPPAN) and Arewa Filmmakers Association (AFMA). Lack of effective practical working relationship amongst such leadership has contributed in creating ‘camps’ within the Hausa video film industry – which leads to mistrust and stunted the growth of the industry.

### ***Ineffective Marketing Structure***

The Hausa video film marketers are not professional film marketers – they are general purpose merchants selling general goods, and video films happen to be merely one of them. They established their business on selling pirated foreign films and therefore had no conceptual map for marketing any film – whether pirated foreign or local. Further, the marketers, who initially shunned the Hausa video films, eventually moved in and took over and created a market-driven political economy of the Hausa film production—which seems an overarching emphasis on commercial storylines. The individual studios that release the video films lack the capital and organizational focus to market their films; and still rely on the marketers for distribution. The only solution out of this is for the leadership of the industry to take over the marketing – including the advertisement – of the films on an organized basis.

### ***Lack of Professional Approach***

For most Hausa video film practitioners, the industry is ‘kasuwanci’ (business) not ‘sana’a’ (profession). This means that efforts are put in the industry only when there are chances for profit. On the face of it, this sounds like a logical move. Realistically, however, this approach dispenses with the concept of aesthetics and art – the main motive behind filmmaking. Perception of the industry as a business means that there is a perception of the huge capital outlay needed to produce a ‘super hit’, without recourse to the artistic merits of the filmic technique. This is why there is no difference at all in the narrative structure between a film which was claimed to have had NGN10 million (\$62,000) spent or one which had only NGN100,000 (\$620) spent in its production. There is still a lack of understanding of why the cinema evolved.

### ***Poor Narrative Cinema***

Based on the fact that the Hausa society is predominantly an oral society, the Hausa video film follows the pattern of too much orality and less action. Ideally, fictional film or narrative film is a film that tells a fictional or fictionalized story, event or narrative. In this style of film, believable narratives and characters help convince the audience that the unfolding fiction is real. Lighting and camera movement, among other cinematic elements, have become increasingly important in these films. Yet the orality of Hausa societies created a more didactic approach towards the entire concept of entertainment by the indigenous Hausa. Because the Hausa entertainment mindset is to ‘educate’ (ilimintar), and ‘sermonize’ (fadakar) the narrative is laden with what I can ‘talking heads’ – too many close shots of actors (often the producers or actors specifically chosen by the financier to attract audiences) speaking too much, and often with as many as three characters all speaking at once. This type of narrative cinema cannot be understood by any person except Hausa – thus limiting the universal appeal of Hausa video films.

### ***Lack of International Appeal***

Hausa video films can only appeal to Hausa people – whether in Africa or in Diaspora, even with the subtitling. Although shown on Africa Magic subscription cable TV, nevertheless

they appeal only to Hausa-speaking diaspora because the central focus of their storyline is static and deals with issues only of concern to the Hausa – romantic relationships. The Nigerian film industry, Nollywood (which is ‘Nigerian’ by the virtue of using an official Nigerian language, English) has a wider Pan-African appeal because it deals with the broad political economy of contemporary post-colonial societies. Thus from South Africa all the way to Gambia, and in the Pacific and The Caribbean, Nollywood is seen to represent ‘African cinema’ because it communicates a universal African message in the same way post-colonial literature of African writers is seen to represent Africa. Hausa video films, with their targeted internal audiences do not have such appeal. Ironically, even in the Hausa communities of Africa – such as Ghana, Senegal, Togo, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo – Hausa video films are distributed via pirated networks, since the Hausa video film industry has not formal marketing, distribution and advertising networks in these areas.

### ***Transnational Express***

Finally, the Hausa video film is essentially a poor photocopy of the Indian film due to the historical attachment of Hindi cinema by the Hausa who see similarities between their two cultures, especially as they relate to interpersonal relationships. It lacks its own creative impulse and identity, preferring to either directly appropriate Indian films or base its narrative structure on Indian film storyline or filming technique. This restricts its audiences to essentially housewives and children – who were spoon-fed on Hindi cinema and therefore find ready resonance with Hausa films copying such techniques. African filmmakers dealing with distinctly African issues such as Ousmane Sembène, Djibril Diop Mambéty (Senegal); Idrissa Ouedraogo, Gaston Kaboré, (Burkina Faso); Souleymane Cissé, Manthia Diawara (Mali) and Mahamat Saleh Haroun (Chad) were not even known because their films – in French, although with English subtitles – were never part of the entertainment climate of northern Nigeria.

### **Strategies for Interventions**

There are many areas requiring intervention. The main important ones are two:

- Training and re-training in new film techniques and technologies
- Access to more effective production and post-production strategies and facilities

Funding is another area; but unless the industry can create truly marketable films that have more universal appeals, it is not likely for agencies to simply provide funding for films that have restricted markets.

The fundamental problem of offering interventions for the Hausa video film industry is that it relies on outside forces to rejuvenate or provide it with a distinct direction. Many efforts have been made in the past by international NGOs towards providing quality intervention to the industry. Regretfully, these interventions do not have a sustainable mechanism, both on the part of the NGOs as well as the industry itself.

The first intervention by an NGO to the Hausa video film industry was by British Council, Kano in 2004 when it established Reel Dialogue. The project aims to explore how Hausa and British media can work together to create a basis for further co-operation and understanding. It seeks “[t]o provide a training and production environment which encourages dialogue between filmmakers in Northern Nigeria and the UK, supports the development of the Hausa film industry, and produces films that express the Hausa culture accurately and creatively to a national and international audience.”

The project led to the training of young Hausa filmmakers – producers, writers and directors – and supervised the funding, production and public viewing of five short films. The project led to a series of workshops and funding for short films to be made by selected young scriptwriters and producers in the Hausa video film industry.

This seemed to have motivated MOPPAN to seek the assistance of the French Embassy in Nigeria to assist with a series of workshops. These included Acting for the camera (2004, Kano), Producers/ Directors Workshop (2004, Kano), Sound for film (2005, Jos), Digital Film Editing (2005, Jos), Sound Mixing Workshop (2008, Jos), and Cinematography and Lighting technique for Directors of photography (2009, Kano). Under this collaboration between MOPPAN and the French Embassy, more than one hundred Hausa Filmmakers benefited with high level training provided by experts mainly from France, as well as several local resource persons.

It is clear, therefore, that the area of capacity training is the most viable point of entry for any intervention into building up the Hausa video film industry.

I have attached a comprehensive report on the Hausa video film industry by Ian Master, a consultant for the British Council and which was used as a template for British Council's intervention. Although the report is old, yet all the issues raised and needs identified are still fresh.