

Poetic Barbs: Angst, Voter Mobilization and Urban Musics in Kano State 2011 Elections

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Abstract

The political climate of the Kano State partisan political administration from 2003-2011 reveal a state of constant clash between the Kano State government regulatory agencies and the indigenous entertainment industries. This resulted in banning, for instance, the Hausa video film industry for sometime, and the jailing of many entertainers on the pretext of contravention of one censorship law or other. The result of these government activities created an atmosphere of angst in the entertainment industry, leading to the virtual collapse of the entertainment industry as a result of the exodus of many entertainers from Kano. When the 2011 elections came up, the biggest group of youth mobilizers were those from the entertainment industry who through music and lyrics created a message tunnel to youth to vote against the then current government in power. Situated within the theoretical frame of voter mobilization, this paper therefore analyses the feelings of angst and expression of anger towards the political class in 2011 Nigerian elections and politics by non-partisan Hausa urban electronic musicians in the northern Nigerian city of Kano.

Introduction

According to Weinstein (2006) protest songs can be classified on several dimensions. One, is the type of authority that is deemed unjust. Songs in this category tend to criticize authoritarian regimes and generally call for a rebellion or countermeasures. Another is the specificity of the injustice – whether it is power in general, some particular policy or a specific instance of abuse of power. The songs in the last category often concentrate their fury on a single act on injustice. A third dimension for classifying protest songs is their impact. There are two extremities in this. The first are songs that are protest, but not seen as such by the song's publics. The second are songs that inspire action from their publics. These latter songs are the ones often seen as subversive to the establishment, leading to arrests and prosecutions. An obvious category of songs that address this issue are war songs. This categorization provides a convenient framework around which the protest songs in Kano between 2007 to 2010 could be understood.

Political messages in popular music clearly matter to the musicians who produce them and the audience that consumes them. Music and politics have always had some connection in many countries. There are different dimensions to this connection. The first is when music influences political movements, while the second how musicians promote the idea of a particular political ideology, even without the accouterments of election. My main focus is on the former dimension in which I look at how music becomes one of the factors influencing shifts in voter behavior.

In the United States, the link link between music and politics has usually involved a connection between progressive political movements such as labor or civil rights and folkloric musical forms generally associated with the black church, agricultural workers, and the urban proletariat (Garofalo 1992). Further, mass culture has been regarded, certainly until the late 1960s, as being fundamentally incompatible with a progressive political agenda. This perspective was challenged

with the explosion of musical genres in the 1960s. Folk musicians such as Bob Dylan, Country Joe and the Fish; avant-garde artists such as Frank Zappa, Velvet Underground; RnB exponents such as MC5 and James Brown, all became associated with the political turbulence of the decade. It thus became increasingly difficult to dismiss mass music as aesthetically or politically bankrupt.

When hip-hop¹ emerged in the 1980s as music of predominantly urban young Blacks, it revealed in revolutionary lyrics and imagery. Every rapper, regardless of their style, managed to incorporate a political message into their songs. As McKee (2004: 106) noted,

Many rap artists have a political intent in their songs. Not all rap music is political — gangsta rap is often accused of forgetting rap's political and social roots. But much of it, including the work of many of the most popular rappers, is explicitly so. The songs of groups like Public Enemy, Run DMC, NWA, and KRS-One are political both in the traditional sense of critiquing government policies, and in the expanded sense...of addressing power relations between white and Black Americans.

In this context, Collins (1992) points out that there are many differing views held by social and developmental scientists on the role of popular culture, art, and music in relation to the expression and consolidation of social power, and that recent history of African popular culture highlight the anti-hegemonic side of popular culture. This paper is contributing to this anti-hegemonic stand of popular culture within a deeply conservative and traditionally Muslim African society.

Hausa Societies and Political Poetics

The connection between music and politics, particularly political expression in music, has been seen in many cultures. Although music influences political movements and rituals, it is not clear how or even if, general audiences relate music on a political level. Time has shown how music can be used in anti-establishment or protest themes, including anti-war songs, although pro-establishment ideas are also used, for example in national anthems, patriotic songs, and political campaigns.

Political meaning is hard to pin down in a song, even when focusing on lyrics. People react as much or more to the 'feel' of a given song as to the manifest meanings of the words; thus giving the musical composition an equal significance to the lyrics. However, in Hausa societies, whose musical structures are based on oral theater, the lyrics of the song are more important than the musical forms. Thus while Western protest songs rely on the script of both the lyrics and music notations to communicate the message, Hausa musicians use metaphors, sarcasm and satire (or 'zambo') to communicate a message to their publics. As Furniss (1998: 136) points out,

Figurative language may cloud the meaning such that the characterisation of the topic allows a variety of interpretations, but in Hausa poetry rarely does irony muddy the waters as to the evaluative intent of the writer, certainly where the poetry taps into the long tradition of didactic or laudatory writing.

¹. The words 'hip-hop' and 'rap' are often used interchangeably to refer to the same thing. They are different. Hip-hop refers to an urban youth lifestyle, while rap refers to the poetics of the musicians. Not all rappers are hip-hop, choosing to have a different lifestyle than the one portrayed by the hip-hop imagery of fashion and graffiti art.

The Jihad of 1804 in northern Nigeria perhaps provided an articulated use of poetics in political protest. This is because one characteristic of the Jihad had been the extensive use of poetry to convey the messages of the reformers. The rise of the reformed Sufi brotherhoods in Kano during the 1950s was also accompanied by an increase in the use of written pamphlets, including poetry. Such poetry was sung on the streets on special occasions and was an extremely popular medium of expression. Five of the leading political reform figures in the Kano area were outstanding Hausa poets: Sa'adu Zungur, Mudi Sipikin, Akilu Aliyu, Abba Maikwaru and Aminu Kano.

Mudi Sipikin for instance used his poetry to attack the system of colonial rule. Akilu Aliyu wrote poems directly attacking the NPC. Abba Maikwaru wrote a 10-line NEPU poem for which he and Aminu Kano were arrested in the mid 1950s. Zungur used his poetry originally to warn the emirs of the north of the necessity for reform, as illustrated in his central work, *Jumhuriya ko Mulukiya* [Republic or Monarchy]. In this work, he called for political and social problems to be solved on the basis of the existing Islamic institutions, rejecting alien political concepts (Pilaszewicz, 1985: 212). He later used his poetry to appeal directly to the common people.

In a similar vein, one of the earliest poems written for a northern political party was by Aminu Kano, and called 'Wakar 'Yancin NEPU-Sawaba' [Freedom poem for NEPU-Sawaba], and published in 1953 and put in the final form by Isa Wali. It was one of the earliest statements of Nigerian nationalism. As Paden (1973: 295) noted,

The manner in which these poems were circulated and sung is relevant to the social communications network that developed in the north among those who were trying to reform.

However, while the mainstay of these traditional poetics tended to be written poetry with intellectual bent, my discourse looks at the relationship between mass-mediated popular musics—that is, musics which share an intimate relationship with mass communication technologies—and youth voter mobilization in the Islamicate city of Kano, northern Nigeria. In using the term 'Islamicate' I borrow the term from Hodgson (1974:1:58-59) who coined the term to refer to societies which maintain and/or have consciously adopted at least the public symbols of adherence to traditional Islamic beliefs and practices. Thus the implementation of Shari'a in Kano in June 2000 made it an 'Islamicate', rather than 'Islamic', precisely because despite the Shari'a, the State still follows the secular Nigerian constitution in its governance.

Popular Culture, Censorship and Voters in Kano

In considering the role popular culture plays in voter mobilization in the Kano State 2003 and 2011 elections, I would base my arguments on the events and happenings as they affected the Hausa video film industry first. This is because while my content analysis is on music and its mobilizing power, nevertheless the Hausa urban electronic music industry is a direct derivative of the film industry – in fact it was established exclusively to serve the film industry.

In its edition of 29th April 2011 on page 32, the *Daily Trust* (Abuja, Nigeria) newspaper published a cartoon that summed up the raging battle between purveyors of popular culture and the political establishment in Kano, and how popular culture industries perhaps, but not exclusively, tipped the elections of that year towards a rival party.

The two parties in contention were All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) which had ruled Kano from 2003 to 2011, under Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, an almost ascetic Islamic scholar who shunned any title for himself beside 'Mallam' [teacher]. It had previously taken power away from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) which ruled Kano from 1999 to 2003 under Engineer Dr. Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso. In 2011 the PDP took over power again under the previously defeated Dr. Kwankwaso, with a narrow margin of some 47,000 or so votes – reflecting a keenly contested fight between the two parties. There were many factors responsible for this defeat of ANPP in 2011. Some deal with the internal implosion of the party which created camps, defections and 'anti-party' activities (in Nigerian political parlance). The most colorful, however, were the impact of the ANPP government's implementation of the Kano State Censorship Board laws under the leadership of Alhaji Abubakar Rabo Abdulkareem.

The *Daily Trust* cartoon depicted the newly re/elected governor of Kano under PDP, Engineer Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso waving goodbye to a coterie of departing, apparently loathed projects labeled, 'ex gov', which referred to the previous governor Mal. Shekarau, drawn with two facial tribal marks on his cheeks to reflect his 'Babur' ethnic status; 'Hisbah', the Shari'a moral police that worked in enforcing partnership with the Censorship Board, and 'Sahu' – referring to the social re-orientation program of A daidaita Sahu. Behind the drawn PDP governor was a crowd led by the a character labeled 'Ibro' referring to the slapstick video film comedian, Rabilu Musa Danlasan, whose stage name is Dan Ibro. Someone in the crowd is shown holding a placard labeled, 'Kannywood', which refers to the Hausa video film industry. It was clear that in the defeat of ANPP by PDP in 2011, popular culture played a significant role.

This is ironic, because the same argument was equally valid in the defeat of PDP by ANPP in 2003 when the PDP first introduced the Kano State Censorship Board Law in 2011. The Hausa video film industry based in Kano, northern Nigeria was established in March 1990 with the release of *Turmin Danya* (dir. Salisu Galadanci) in Kano. By 2000 the industry had become the biggest meeting point for the new mass-mediated creative industries of urban electronic popular culture facilitated by the availability of what Jibril (2003: 66) calls 'cheap, affordable, portable and highly accessible form of domestic home video technologies.'

At the same time, the transglobal media flows of popular culture to northern Nigeria especially from Indian film industry created what I refer to as 'creative intertextualities' that saw these global entertainment forms providing young urban Hausa with scripting ideas in both visual and musical spheres. Part of the baggage this intertextuality carried was the liberal interpretation of the visual imagery of the female body form, particularly in films. Hausa video films subsequently adopt a strong soft sell seductive messaging in their films and choreography of their musics through dressing female actors in skimpy tight Western clothing that served the function of titillating male youth audiences. This became instantly popular in a society in which the sexes are strictly segregated due to the influence of Islam that stretched to 1380 when Islam was first introduced in the city of Kano by Malian Wangara merchant-clerics.

The new entertainment form created new urban superstars and starlets. However, soon enough, the culturalist establishment started reacting to this with constant complaints in the media and inappropriateness of such mode of dressing of essentially Muslim female stars in the public domain of the video film. This had little effect on the volume sales of the Hausa video films

which, if anything, became even more popular, drawing hordes of young women who aspire to instant stardom.

In 1999 Nigeria returned to civilian democracy after years of military rule. The Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, the main national party, won the elections which saw the emergence of Engineer Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso as the Executive Governor. In nearby Zamfara State, the elected governor under ANPP made the re-implementation of the Islamic Shari'a his biggest election mobilizer, leading to his implementation the Shari'a rule in the State in 1999 (Badamasiuy and Okene, 2011: 148). The government of PDP in Kano followed suit with the Governor signing into Law the Shari'a Penal Code Bill on the 28th of November, 2000. This provided the government with a legal mechanism to ensure that all aspects of the Kano State public sphere conforms to Islamic provisions.

It was at this point that the continuous calls for the regulation of the perceived excesses of the Hausa film industry became more strident. For instance, in a letter to the Kano State History and Culture Bureau (HCB), the Office of the Special Adviser to the Chieftaincy Affairs in Kano noted:

We have noted with concern the proliferation of the production of local Hausa films. This may be a welcome development, as it will help in the general development of indigenous film industry. However, we have received many complaints regarding some of this films (sic) and the way they are corrupting our religion, culture and good traditions and eating deep into our social fabric. The impact of these films unfortunately are more devastating on the vulnerable members of our society, children, youth and women.

The HCB was consequently requested to provide a report 'regarding this new phenomenon' that should focus on statistics on the number of these film producers, distribution outlets, number of films produced, cinema houses (official and unofficial) these films are shown for a fee; the nature of the regulatory environment and its effectiveness, and assessment of the social impact and behavior change among the vulnerable groups.²

Soon after the Shari'a announcement in June 2000, the Kano State Government set up a publicity committee to hold dialogues with producers of Hausa video films to discuss the modalities for regulating the contents of Hausa video films produced and distributed in Kano. On 29 June 2000 the committee held a roundtable meeting with film makers in Kano to discuss the issues. It was a heated meeting, with government team insisting on regulating the industry according to Islamic rules, and based on the constant complaints of parents and other community leaders about the contents of the storylines in the videos. At the end of the roundtable meeting, it was resolved that the film makers would submit a memo to the government showing their intentions on cleaning up their acts, as it were.

It was clear that even before the government team had time to study any submission from the Hausa video film producers, the Government was heading towards creating conditionalities that would lead to censorship in a Muslim polity. After the roundtable meeting with Kano government officials to regulate the industry on 6th July 2000, the Kano State Filmmakers

² Special memo from the Office of Special Adviser on Chieftaincy Affairs, Office of the Executive Governor, Kano State, to Executive Director, History and Culture Bureau, Kano, Ref SAC/ADM/4/1 of 19th January, 2000.

Association, together with Cassette Dealers met to discuss their ‘assignment’ of coming up with a proposal to ‘clean-up’ Hausa video film production in Kano and make it more ‘Shari’a-compliant’. It was decided that opinions of other members of the industry should be sought and three days were given for various opinions to be heard. This took place from 9th to 12th July 2000. At the end of this brainstorming exercise, a joint memorandum was produced and submitted to the office of the Special Adviser to the Governor on Religious Affairs on Thursday 13th July, 2000. It was not clear whether this memorandum had any significance, because without warning, on 13th December – about two weeks after the Shari’a law became official – 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. According to the Press Release:

Disturbed by the apparent incalculable damage and nuisance constituted by local films in our society, and in particular, its affront on the sacred teachings of the Sharia Legal System, the State Executive Council directed the immediate withdrawal of all the licenses of Film Producers, Distributors and Video Centres. By this decisions (sic), therefore, shooting, production, distribution and showing such films anywhere in the State is prohibited.

Meanwhile, the Council instructed the State Ministry of Information to articulate modalities for censorship of films in accordance with the socio-religious and cultural interest of the good people of Kano State, and further directed interested film Producers/Operators wishing to operate within the confines of new guidelines to apply and obtain new licenses.

Kano State Executive Council Secretariat Press Brief, signed by the Commissioner of Information Internal Affairs, youth, Sports and Culture, Alhaji Nura Muhammad Dankadai on the Outcome of the Meeting of Kano State Executive Council Held on Wednesday, 13 December, 2000. A full report of this was also published in *ThisDay* (Lagos), December 15, 2000.

It is instructive of course that the press release statement says that the government withdrew the license of *local* filmmakers. The overwhelming interpretation was that *Hausa video films* were affected, even though the press release *did not specifically* refer to Hausa videos, although the prohibition could also affect ‘Nigerian’ films produced in English and other non-Hausa languages. It was also not clear whether Hausa and other ‘Nigerian’ videos produced in neighboring states would be sold in Kano markets – the biggest Hausa-language home video market in West Africa.

Almost immediately after the announcement, police teams went around Kano metropolis confiscating heaps of *Hausa* video cassettes. It was not clear whether they were responding to specific directives from the government or were simply implementing their mandate of seizing contraband materials which the Hausa video films have now become.

These developments caused some consternation among the Hausa video film producers in Kano since it was clear the government would enforce these directives, and thus the consequences of non-compliance can be dire. At the forefront of pressurizing the government to lift this ban were Alhaji Auwalu Isma’il Marshall as the Chairman of the Kano State Filmmakers’ Association, and Alhaji AbdulKareem Mohammed, the Chairman of the then newly formed Motion Picture

Practitioners Association of Nigeria, MOPPAN,³ who kept shuttling between the producers and the government officials, specifically the Special Adviser on Religious Affairs. They pointed out that a joint committee of producers and cassette dealers had earlier submitted a report to the government on the Hausa video film industry in Kano, and that it was too soon for the government to issue a ban without properly studying the report of the joint committee.

Eventually the government agreed to listen to coordinated response of the members of the video industry on the ban. As a result, MOPPAN called for a meeting of all stakeholders on 23rd December, 2000 to discuss the issues. Virtually all the industry stakeholders attended, but nothing much was achieved. The meeting, however, gave the government representative, Salisu Galadanci, an official in the Ministry of Information (and the first cameraman, the director, and also producer in the first commercial Hausa video film, *Turmin Danya* in 1990) an opportunity to allay the fears of the stakeholders and hint that the State Government will soon issue definitive directives on the future of the Hausa video film in the State in the form of a Law.

In any event, when it was clear that the government itself was saber rattling (what some insiders called *barazana*) and had no real enforcement mechanism to ensure the ban of production and sale of Hausa video films in the state (beside the initial raids by the Police on some cassette dealers around the town), those affected simply continued with business as usual.

This was more so because suddenly different interpretations started appearing about the ban. The then Chairman of the Kano State Artistes Council, Shehu Hassan Kano, went to the government to seek further clarification, and in an interview with *Fim* the Chairman reiterated his understanding that the government had not *banned* the Hausa video film in Kano, just *revoked* all the licenses of producers (including theaters) until new Shari'a-friendly guidelines have been issued. So it was a *halt*, rather than *ban*. (See interview with Shehu Hassan Kano, *Fim*, January 2001, p. 23).

This was the same interpretation given by Hamisu Lamido Iyan-Tama, then the Chairman of the Arewa Film Producers Association in the same issue of *Fim* (p. 24) in which he added that if the Kano State Government did not revoke the ban, the producers will mobilize their supporters to vote for a rival political party at the next general elections in the State (due in 2003). Further, according to him,

‘...Frankly we were better off during military rule, because they looked after us well, and at least, gave us freedom to practice our vocation without hindrance. Surprisingly, now in an era of democracy, we see nothing but harassment and saber rattling. We know they want to improve the business (of Hausa video film production). But it is not proper for them to publicly announce in press releases that the industry has been banned. This makes the generality of people to look down on us as if we are armed robbers...’
(Hamisu Lamido Iyan-Tama, Interview with *Fim* magazine, January 2001, p. 24).

As a result of the government ban, some artistes decided to 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.

³ MOPPAN was created specifically to serve as an umbrella agency to represent the coalition of the various guilds of filmmakers in Kano. Thus it sought to mediate between government the filmmakers, a situation the government welcomes, rather than dealing with individual guilds or the filmmakers themselves.

However, MOPPAN stepped in quickly to prevent the planned peaceful march (allegedly organized by Hindatu Bashir, a leading actress of the period) and on 14th January 2001 the organization called for a sensitization meeting of the industry stakeholders to douse feelings and stop future planned peaceful demonstrations. During the meeting, the stakeholders advocated for media campaigns to get the ban on Hausa 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. Indeed this underscored Iyan-Tama's stand in the *Fim* interview in which he further stated that:

'The Kano State Governor (Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso) seemed to have forgotten that he was elected, and yet he is harassing us in our legitimate business. Do you think if Kwankwaso (the Governor) wants contest re-election at the next election Hausa video film producers will cast their vote for him? Unless he shows concern for us, we will support the rival parties...His Government does care about us. Do you think even if I, Iyan-Tama, cast my vote for him, other producers will do the same? (Hamisu Lamido Iyan-Tama, Interview with *Fim* magazine, January 2001, p. 24).

Iyan-Tama did make good his promise by joining a political party in 2006, New Democrats, and was elected by the party as its Kano State governorship candidate in 2011 elections. This was to prove his undoing subsequently.

Similarly, Ibrahim Mandawari, former Chairman of the Kano State Filmmakers Association also urged for the political solution to the issue of continuity in the production of Hausa video films where at the MOPPAN meeting, he stated that:

'There is no doubt that we will not again vote for any political party which is insensitive to our lawful means of earning income. Therefore those who are interested in any elected post should start preparing now, and we on our part will empower them in any way we can.' ('Yan Wasa da Masu Shirin Fim Za su Tsunduma a Siyasa? [Artistes and producers may enter deeply into politics], *Mumtaz*, February 2001, p. 15).

This particular interview with Iyan-Tama and Mandawari – both highly respected actors and producers – seemed to have sent some signals to the Kano State Government: the fact the government could lose the next election (in 2003) if the filmmakers mobilize support from the most significant portion of the voter population: the youth.

Since a volte-face on the ban was out of question, so a face-saving strategy was adopted in the non-strict enforcement on the ban, and at the same time, give the Government some time to tighten up the censorship laws then being passed through the State House of Assembly. The draft Law and the subsequent Regulations were written by a committee made up of officials from the History and Culture Bureau and the Ministry of Information Legal Drafting department. Indeed what the HCB proposed initially was to start off with a Censorship Committee before a full Board is established. According to an internal memo from the HCB:

In this regard and out of great concern to the quality of Hausa films in Kano and to protect the values and norms of our religion and culture, the State Bureau proposed the establishment of State Censorship Committee as part of its function according to the Cultural Policy of Nigeria Article 8, section 5, sub-section 2, 'promoting an effective film Censorship policy that reflects Nigerian values and national interest'. The proposal for a State Censorship Committee was an urgent measure before the steady establishment of the State Censorship Board, to pave way for the implementation of Shari'a in Kano State.

(The implementation of Nigerian Cultural Policy in Kano State – A memorandum by the Kano State History and Culture Bureau, March 2001).

By the time this particular memo was released, the Kano State government had already finished all the groundwork on a new censorship law. Thus the *Kano State Censorship Film Board Law 2001* was approved by the legislators in the State and issued with effect from 1st February 2001. The implementation agency of the Law was the newly-constituted Kano State Censorship Board in 2001, the first of its kind at a regional level in Nigeria. The Censorship Board was given the full mandate to censor films and ensure conformity with the Shari'a law. A magistrate court was also attached to the Board to prosecute any erring filmmaker with fines or jail sentences. This further created the divide between the PDP government and the filmmakers.

Just before the conduct of the next round of elections in April 2003, the PDP government decided to solicit the support of all groups in its bid to get re-elected. The invitation was informally extended to the Hausa video film industry during which the PDP government sought support – from the same industry which felt it was prosecuted. In any event, the PDP lost to rival ANPP in the April 2003 elections. It was not exactly clear how the Hausa video film industry contributed to this failure, although a Mandawari Enterprises video, *Mahandama* [The Corrupt dir. Ibrahim Mandawari], a scathing attack on the alleged corrupt PDP government was produced and released to a wide acclaim, at least from purchasers. The new governor of Kano State in May 2003 was Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, an Islamic scholar who proceeded to implement the Shari'a with greater gusto.

Road to Nowhere – ANPP, Censorship Board and Popular Culture

The new Kano State government from 2003 created more uncertainties in the already unsettled minds of the film industry concerning the future of the popular culture industries in the State. However, it would appear that the ANPP government had more things on its agenda than the entertainment industry; as such while censoring of films was quietly going on, there does not seem to be much antagonism between the government and the industries. This, in fact, was what led to the general feelings that the law was more enforced in the breach, than the observed, and as result, the film industry broke out of the frozen state it entered prior to the 2003 elections and pretty soon, things reverted back to pre-Shari'a status—more soft sell sexuality in the mode of dressing of the female actresses and vigorous female-focused dance choreography. The strident calls for 'something' to be done on the film industry returned, with the feeling that the Censorship Board was not doing enough to clean up the system. This, however, was about to change drastically.

In July 2007 a cell phone video clip privately recorded on Nokia NSeries GSM mobile phone surfaced among the Hausa film industry practitioners in Kano transmitted via Bluetooth – a mechanism that came to reflect the ultimate urban cool among youth. It was titled 'Hiyana'. It lasts for 8 minutes 37 seconds. Its impact lasted for much longer. It shows a very popular Hausa video film actress, Maryam Usman, engaged in raw penetrative sex with her boyfriend, later identified as a 'currency dealer' (some kind of local bureau de change personnel) called Usman. The actual clip was recorded towards the end of 2005, and kept private within the handset of the owner. It was allegedly distributed when the owner took it for repairs. For almost a year after its public discovery, it remained restricted within a small group of voyeuristic fans of cell porn, predominantly the currency dealers in Lagos where the event took place and where Usman lived,

and later, Kano. A Hausa video film actress who apparently was at odds with Maryam Usman became aware of its existence and having obtained a copy, brought it to various members of the Hausa video film industry – from whence it became a viral public property.

What made its appearance so electric was that it came at a time when the Hausa film industry was accused by the Hausa public and critical space as getting increasingly Westernized and immoral. The Hiyana clip provided a perfect ground for reactions and backlash against not only Hausa filmmakers, but also the entire industry itself which, with its direct appeal to youth, is seen as a surefire way of getting into Hell-fire.

Focusing on, and accusing actresses as sexual conduits, however, was not an exclusively Islamicate knee-jerk reaction. Tracy Davis (1989:295) quoting a British Victorian era research on actresses and Victorian pornography, notes that in 188

The youth . . . becomes more or less enamoured of a ‘singing chambermaid or the ‘leading lady,’ both of whom display their personal attractions with more regard to them being fully comprehended than to any old-fashioned ideas of modesty; and when the latter appears in some thrilling scene clad in a white robe, her hair flowing loosely in extravagant luxuriance down her back, her white arms bared to the shoulder, her neck and bosom by no means jealously guarded from the vulgar gaze, he loses his head in the enchantment of her presence, and carries away a mental impression of her which can do him no good and may do him much harm.

Thus as in the case of Victorian era British pornography, the Hiyana case became a pointed display of how Hausa women in the typically urban public theater – film, in this case – are seen as baits. Further, the youth fascinating with the ‘singing chambermaid’ in prudish Victorian era Britain translates as the same youth fascination with the ‘singing Hausa video film actress’ in Shari’a state of Kano in 2007. The moral prudence of both societies merely seem to escalate the desire for the illicit, such that the stage fantasy of the actresses became ultimately their fundamental realities – as evidenced by the way the Hausa video film industry banned about 18 of its members from appearing in any film for some months because of their ‘immoral behaviors’ (*Fim Hausa magazine*, September 2007, Kaduna, Nigeria).

Indeed as Margaret Hauwa Kassam (1996:112) pointed out Hausa women had always dabbled in expressions of sexuality at the popular culture level as either as producers or performers. This is because

This expression of sexuality is observable in the content as per the language use as well as the performance of the art itself, especially in the songs composed by women, some of which can be regarded as ‘protest’ literature or performance art. I use the word ‘protest’ here, because contemporary popular culture from northern Nigeria shows a shift from the more conservative traditional form to one which incorporates some elements of radicalism especially in the content and performance or presentation. The innovation added to Nigerian popular culture by women from northern Nigeria indicates an aesthetic accomplishment on their own part.

This medial shift – from protest literature to the sexuality expressed in the Hausa video film medium – thus resulted in experimentations with other forms of what I call ‘media radicalism’ – especially in a traditional society.

The reaction to the Hiyana video clip – expressed mainly in the media in northern Nigeria – took two different dimensions. The first reaction was expected – from a civil society not used to hanging out its dirty laundry. Soon after the appearance of the clip, urban male youth in Kano took to threatening Hausa female video film stars – such that quite a few of them, already non-indigenes of Kano – run away to their own states. Maryam Usman herself disappeared from public view and went into hiding. The local newspapers and FM stations became awash with comments condemning not only the appearance of the porn clip, but also the entire film industry.

The second was a knee-jerk reaction from the government policy makers on popular culture as well as the film industry practitioners. The film industry's banning of filmmakers as well as the government of Kano's banning of Maryam Usman from any film (or to be precise, the government will not give license to any film in which she appeared for the next five years from the date of the public appearance of her phone porn clip) were moves aimed at showing public support – even before such support was measured – at moral cleansing of the Hausa video film of its urban-sexual imagery. The Kano State Censorship Board – responsible for censoring video films and other creative works to ensure compliance with the Shari'a legal code – was immediately re-organized with newer, tougher mandate and guidelines on Hausa video filmmaking at least within the borders of Kano aimed at strict compliance with what were perceived as cultural and religious values of media consumers in Kano State.

Urban Musics and the Public Sphere in Kano

The indigenization of modern African popular music can be linked to the geographical diffusion of Western ideas. Since the term 'Hausa music' is not exactly what is assumed, it is necessary to understand it. It is therefore important to understand the radical transformation of Hausa music which suddenly makes it attractive to Hausa youth. The urban beats common in the radiosphere in northern Nigerian cities are not generated by the more traditional acoustic Hausa musical instruments, but by sounds generated by Yamaha PSR series of synthesizers which are interfaced with PC music software predominantly Sonar series from Cakewalk by Roland, and fairly cheap mixing consoles to record and edit the final composition.

These portable keyboards have the perfect convenience of a large stored sample of genre music beats and sound effects with are then sequenced to produce the melodies sessions musicians wanted. That is not their point, though. They were designed to be used with other instruments to create more symphonic sounds from multiple sources, rather than the stored samples. However, lacking the ability to play other instruments due to the visible absence of accepted social musical culture, Hausa session musicians focus their energies on mastering the sequencing of these samples to create their melodies.

The ease with which the melodies are generated led to a massive boon in music industry such that hundreds of recording studios were established from 2007 to 2010 in Kano, manned by session instrumentalists who mastered the synthesizers. The singers usually come to the studio and voice out their songs, and the session musician then finds appropriate beat (which almost always was based on the vocal harmony of the song). When the session musicians realized that international genre music forms could be created from the stored samples, they started producing what they call R'n'B music forms. In this way, Hausa singers can overlay their lyrics on soul, jazz, funk or rap beats, producing what is really Technopop (or Synthpop), rather than creative

efforts are re-creating the antecedent genre music forms, since they rely almost exclusively on the samples to generate the beats, without introducing any additional instruments, whether electronic or acoustic. In fact, for the most part, the compositions are based on synthesized doodling on the synthesizer which creates a melodic template on which the session ‘musician’ then overlays the vocal tracks to create the song.

The sequencing of the music genre samples in the Yamaha PSR keyboard adopted by Hausa musicians and singers give them what they feel is ‘modern’ music form, even if retaining the traditional song structure of Hausa vocalists. Eventually, almost without any exception, the Hausa session musicians also transform into singers.

The 2007 crisis in the Hausa film industry created a massive vacuum for the playback singers and studio musicians who relied almost exclusively on the film industry for their own trade. The vacuum created two effects. The first was the ascendancy of Islamic Gospel groups who sing devotional songs on the praises of the Prophet Muhammad. These were urban electronic Sufi musicians who have principally abandoned the traditional *bandir* (frame drum) usually associated with Sufi performances. They remained untouched by the Censorship Board due to the religious nature of their lyrics—which the Islamicate governance and publics finds acceptable. The most prominent of these Islamic devotional singers included Rabi’u Usman Baba (*Babu Tantama*), Bashir Dan Musa (*Salli Ala*), Bashir Dandago (*Sannu Uwar Sharifai*), Kabiru Dandogarai (*Dandogarai*), Kabiru Maulana (*Kabiru Maulana*), Sharif Saleh Jos (*Sheikh Ibrahim Inyass*) and Naubatul Qadiriyya (*Sheikh Mustapha Nasir Kabara*).

The second impact of the 2007 film scandal in Kano was the emergence of independent lyricists who prefer to be called ‘mawaƙa’.⁴ These secular singers were of three different musical structures.

The first, and earliest is ‘Nanaye’. These evolved from the film industry (and which saw the emergence of playback singers like Misbahu Ahmad, Rabi Mustapha, Mudassir Kassim, Sani Yusuf Ayagi, Sammani Sani, Yakubu Mohammed), and followed the pattern of Hindi-film music, with romantic themes delivered through male and female vocal performances. It the presence of female voices, often enhanced to create a high-pitched soprano effect, coupled with rhyming chorus that gives this category of songs a ‘girlish’ feel—because it follows the pattern of songs used by traditional Hausa girls on community playgrounds. After the film industry went into a comatose stage in 2007, new, independent singers emerged, although using the same melodic pattern as the Nanaye video film playback singers (indeed, some of them also provide lyrics and music for Hausa video films). These new independent Nanaye singers included Binta Labaran (aka Fati Nijar), Abubakar Sani, AbdulRashid I. Aliyu, Umar M Sharif, Sunusi Anu, Mahmud Nagudu, Nazifi Asnanic and Nazeer Misbahu Ahmed.

The second structure of Hausa urban musics is ‘Technopop’ containing lesser amount of female accompaniment, and mainly focused on social issues, but with a strong dosage of romance. These include lyricists such as Kabiru Sharif ‘Shaba’, Abubakar Usman (Sadiq Zazzafi), Aminuddeen Ladan Abubakar, aka ALA or ‘Alan Waƙa’, and hosts of others. Both the Nanaye

⁴ Hausa ‘musicians’ are predominantly lyricists, since the prominent singer rarely composes the tune, relying on professional studio musicians to compose a tune which in most cases follows the vocal pattern of the song.

and Technopop singers often also sing for politicians and other ‘big’ people in the society for payment. The two categories are sufficiently self-sufficient enough to release their own ‘albums’ (as CDs are referred to in Nigeria). Quite a few Technopop Musicians, especially those without female vocal accompaniment and whose subject matter is mainly social issues or romantic, often see themselves as R’n’B artists, especially those who do not mix their vocal performances with female voices and follow more international structures in their musical composition. Examples include Billy-O, Funkiest Mallam and Soultan Abdul.

Both Technopop and Nanaye Hausa singers usually adopt the verse-chorus-form structure of musical composition and performance. In a typical verse-chorus-form structure, the chorus often sharply contrasts the verse melodically, rhythmically, and harmonically, and assumes a higher level of dynamics and activity, often with added instrumentation. In Hausa music, the higher dynamics is reflected in the chorus which often gathers all the voices in the composition (or employs additional voices) to create a contrast with the verses. This therefore approximates call-and-response, rather than verse-chorus-form structure.

The third is Rap which is more recent and is predominantly based on American hardcore rap structure, and contains only male voices singing about mainly social issues. Examples include K-Boys, Kano Riders, K-Arrowz, Freezy Boy, IQ (the only one who sings exclusively in English), Lil’ T, etc.

It is these groups of singers who would provide a strong youth-base for mobilizing support against the ANPP government through their music and lyrics

Poetic Barbs – Protest Music and Voter De/Mobilization

During the period that the Hiyana porn scandal broke out, Adam A. Zango, a studio musician, who also appeared in many Hausa video films as an actor, in his search for a new direction in Hausa filmmaking, released an MTV-style music CD of six songs he composed and produced as an album, *Bahaushiya*. The VCD was mastered in Lagos, and Adam Zango imported a few copies for sale in August 2007. One song, *Lelewa*, created an immediate public reaction and was labelled ‘obscene’. A particular scene in the dance routines showed the bellybutton of the female dancers, and with lots of vigorous body shakes, including the derrière. Indeed a line in the song urged the dancers to ‘twist your a**, twist your a**’ referring to the derrière, which they did with great gusto. He was invited to the Censorship Board and admonished on the VCD, and was advised to withdraw it from the market.

Despite warning from the Censorship Board, the VCD continued to be sold at traffic lights in Kano. It was at this moment in time that the Censorship Board was re-organized, and a new Executive Secretary, Alhaji Abubakar Rabo Abdulkareem, formerly of Hisbah (the Islamic police). Alhaji Rabo, as he was referred to took his new position with what some called ‘Talibanistic’ gusto. The first thing he did was to halt the entire Hausa video film industry from August 2007 to January 2008 in order to ‘sanitize’ the industry (as he stated in an interview with *Leadership* newspaper of Wednesday 12th September 2007, p. 43).

His next act was to cause the arrest of Adam A Zango on 18th September 2007 and charge him to the magistrate court on two accounts: releasing a film without a Censorship Board certificate,

and the sale of a film during a period in which film production (including marketing) has been suspended. The Board also explained that ‘the type of dressing and dancing portrayed in one of the videos contravened the teachings of Islam and Hausa culture as well, adding that the dressing in the video portrayed nudity to a certain degree.’ (Ibrahim 2007). Based on this, Zango was jailed three months on each account, but the sentences were to run concurrently. In the event, Zango served for barely two months from 18th September to 15th November 2007 (*Hausa Leadership*, 29th November 2007) and only after he made a radio announcement apologizing for releasing *Bahaushiya*. Banning the VCD and the attendant publicity on the song merely increased its demand, and before long the offending song was uploaded on YouTube—which, if anything, proves the futility of censorship; since it now has wider audience than it would have if it did not lead to the arrest of the musician.

After Zango was released from prison, he migrated back to his home State of Kaduna, after recording a farewell barb in the form of an invective song, *Kan Mai Uwa Da Wabi* [‘On No Particular Target’] which criticized his jailing, as well as heaping abuses on un-named ‘government leader’ – an euphemism for the ANPP Governor of Kano State, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau (2003-2011). In the first of a series of analyses of various verses from some of the songs, I will analyze how the songs use poetic barbs to draw the attention of the publics of the singers to the plight they faced—and subsequently, created a favorable atmosphere for voter mobilization towards a more liberal political dispensation. *Kan Mai Uwa Da Wabi* [On No Particular Target], is briefly analyzed in Case Study 1.

Case Study 1 – Kan Mai Uwa Da Wabi [On No Particular Target], Adam A. Zango, Bluetooth download, 2008; later, Oyoyo CD

Composed in three verses, interlaced with a chorus, the entire song contained only one male voice – that of Adam Zango. Unusually for Zango’s usual Nanaye or ‘Makossa’ style, this song was Technopop, containing single vocal element and a melody that is independent of the vocal structure. Lyric Sheet 1 presents an excerpt from the song.

Lyric Sheet 1 – *Kan Mai Uwa Da Wabi* [Hausa; On No Particular Target]

Verse 1

Bisimillah Allah, ni za na wake mugun bawan nan/

Jaki mai harbin nan, ya fake da cin addinin nan/

Dan magajiya jikan Abu, na fari dan Titi nan/

Barau ni ne yaron nan, ban mace ba ga ni da rayi na/

Sarka zancen banza, a kwan a tashi yaro ango ne/

Translation

In the name of Allah, I will sing a song about that horrible servant

Jackass, who hides behind the façade of Islam

Son of Madam⁵, grandson of Abu, light-skinned bastard

Barau⁶, I am that kid, still alive, still kicking

Chains are useless, eventually the young lad

⁵ The Magajiya here is usually the name given to the brothel Madam – insinuating that the target of the barb is illegitimate or born in a brothel. The line ends with other attacks on the target – light-skinned when the target is actually very dark-skinned.

⁶ The Hausa personal name ‘Barau’ (from Arabic, Bara’u - saved) is usually given to a child born after many of the mother’s children have died in infancy (thus ‘saved one’). However, in Kano, during the 1960s and 1970s there existed an extremely infamous social miscreant called Barau, whose notoriety in almost all areas of criminal behavior and social nuisance earned him the nickname of ‘kwallon shege’ [bastard to the core]. Subsequently, the barb Barau is used to refer to a person who can be considered a real bastard – which Adam Zango used to refer to the governor of Kano, Ibrahim Shekarau in this song.

To Barau ka kama ni, kuma ka je ka kulle ni/	becomes married ⁷ Well, Barau, you have arrested me, and locked me up
Ƙarshe ma ka ɗaure ni, ni na ji dadin ɗaurin nan/ Shi ba ɗaurin Allah ba, ba ɗaurin Manzon Allah ba, ba kuma ɗaurin musulunci ba/ Barau in dai ɗaurin ka ne, ka sa alkali ya ɗaure ni/	In the end you jailed me , and I am happy for it This is not Allah or His Prophet’s jail sentence, nor is it ordained by Islam Barau, if it is your jailing, well command the judge to incarcerate me
Ko alkali ya yanka ni, ko alkali ya harbe ni, ƙarshe shi ne sisi kwandem/	Or slit my throat, or shoot me, or in the end totally condemn me
Verse 2	
Jama’ a duk ku saurara ku ji zancen Malam zangon nan, Musulmi har dubu ɗari, gwamnatin ka duk ta tsaida su,	People, listen up, and hear my story A hundred thousand Muslims, all stopped by your government
Wasu na ci da iyaye, wasu na makarantar bokon nan,	Some feed their parents, some pay their own school fees
Wasu na neman aure, wasu abinci za ci wa kansu, Allah ga kukan mu, ya Allah ba mu yafe ba	Some earn to get married, some feed themselves Oh, Allah, we beseech you, we will not forgive this (injustice)
Ya Allah ba mu ƙyale ba, kuma ya Allahu ka saka min,	Allah, we will not allow this, Allah punish my tormentors
Gwamnati ta kama ni, to ya Allahu ka kama ta,	The government has arrested me, Allah please arrest them
Gwamnati ta kulle ni, to ya Allahu ka kulle ta	The government has locked me up, Allah please lock them up
Gwamnati ta ɗaure ni, to ya Allahu ka ɗaure ta a ƙiyama, sannan ka saka min, Duniya kyakkyawa ce, budurwa ta nigga da bebi ce,	The government has jailed me, Allah please jail them in the Hereafter, and reward my patience The world is a beautiful maiden to Niggers ⁸ and Babes
Duniya in ka duba yanzu gaskiya ita ce ƙarshe, Wata motar mota ce, wata motar sai an tura ta, Wani daktan dakta ne, wani daktan ɗan yi aboshin ne,	In the world today, truth is the ultimate Some cars are classy, others are lemons Some doctors save lives, while others are abortion butchers
Wani telan telan ne, wani telan fidda tsiraici ne,	Some tailors sew for decency, while others sew only to show nakedness
Wani malam malam ne wani malam boka iska ne	Some Islamic teachers are pious, while others are just Shamans
Wani gemun gemun taure ne.	Some beards are honorable, ⁹ while others are just Billy goat’s beards

This song was spread virally through mobile phones via Bluetooth technology and was only released formally as an audio CD album in April 2011, titled ‘Oyoyo’ [non-Hausa, ‘welcome’] when the results of governorship elections in Kano showed that the candidate anointed by the outgoing ANPP governor had lost to Engineer Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso, of the People’s

⁷ Before his arrest, Adam Zango, like all Hausa modern cultural industries practitioners, had become extremely wealthy – this line refer to his wealth, which enabled him to get married; a sign of financial stability.

⁸ The n-word is very common among urban youth in northern Nigeria who describe themselves as ‘niggas’ to indicate their street credibility and ultimate cool.

⁹ The beard is seen as a symbol of piety among elder Islamic scholars. The Kano State Governor referred in the song has a beard typical of Muslim teachers of his age

Democratic Party (PDP) whom virtually the entire film and music industry supported. Rabi’u Kwankwaso was of course the same PDP governor who introduced the Censorship Board and banned filmmaking for some months created the Censorship Law in 2001, thus creating the first feeling of angst among popular culture practitioners in Kano. Thus *Oyoyo* CD was not censored for sale in Kano, but sold as ‘kokaine’ [from ‘cocaine’, thus illegal].

Case Study 2 – Matakin Tuba (Maryam A. Baba), Kano, Bluetooth download, 2008

The banning of film activities following the ‘Hiyana porn case’ and her subsequent banning from appearing in any film for five years, and the arrest of Adam Zango merely set the stage for the subsequent culture wars under ANPP in Kano. In January 2008, just about when the ban on the film industry was to be lifted, another viral song appeared in download centers in Kano. It was titled *Matakin Tuba* [Step to Repentance]. Written by Aminuddeen Ladan Abubakar, popularly referred to as ALA (from the initials of his name), it was performed by five prominent Hausa female singers, with a chorus refrain from the male voice of Sadi Sidi Sharifai, another popular singer. In Case Study Example 2, I present and analyze excerpts from the composition.

Matakin Tuba has a total of 13 verses interlaced with chorus. It was recorded at Hikima Multimedia Studios, Kano. The four main performers and the verses they sung in *Matakin Tuba* were Maryam ‘Sangandali’ Baba (7), Maryam ‘Fantimoti’ Sale (3), Murja Baba (1), Fati ‘Nijar’ Labaran (2). Sadi Sidi Sharifai, the lone male voice lent chorus support. The central arguments of the song are in verses 1, 3, and 13, as indicated in Lyric Sheet 2.

Lyric Sheet 2— Excerpted Verses from *Matakin Tuba*

Verse 1 – Maryam ‘Fantimoti’ Saleh

Rabo rabo rabon mara aibu
Ba rabo rabon wahala ba
Mu yi nazari da duban duba
Mu yi nazari da duban duba

...

Verse 3 - Maryam ‘Sangandali’ Baba

Mai karfi da karfin mulki/
ba ka fi fa karfin Allah ba/
Mai karfi da karfin iko/
ba ka fi fa ikon Allah ba/
Mai karfi da karfin kaki/
bai wuce tasrifin Allah ba/
Mai karfi da karfin jama’a/
bai wuce rundunar Allah ba/
Allah kai mu ke wa kuka/
zalunci ba zai dore ba/

...

Verse 10 – Maryam ‘Fantimoti’ Saleh

Halin ‘Dan Adam da butulci
Halin ‘Dan Adam nukufurci
Halin ‘Dan Adam muzanci
Halin ‘Dan Adam ninanci
Ai laifi, ba zai yafe ba

Translation

Providence, Providence, not corrupted Providence
Not Providence of suffering
Let us analyze this closely
Let us analyze this closely

Those using the power of [should know]/
Allah’s power is higher than yours/
You have authority now/
but Allah’s authority is higher than yours/
You have dictatorial uniform now/
but Allah can transform you in any way He wants/
You have people behind you now/
but Allah’s army is stronger than yours/
Allah, it is you we beseech/
(this) tyranny will never last/

It’s human nature to be ungrateful
It’s human nature to be unforgiving
It’s human nature to look for faults
It’s human nature to be selfish
You commit a misdemeanor, and he refuses to forgive

The song was intended as part of track listings for a proposed album by one of the singers, Maryam ‘Sangandali’ Baba to be titled *Hikima Taguwar Mumini* [Creativity Clothes the Believer]. *Matakin Tuba* was pure Technopop, also unusually departing from the Nanaye structure the five singers are usually associated with. In a sheer poetic license, the song starts with ‘Rabo, Rabo’ – a Hausa word that means ‘providence’; and at the same time, is also used as a nickname, which happens to be the official nickname of Abubakar ‘Rabo’ AbdulKareem – the then Executive Secretary of the Censorship Board (later to become Director-General of the Board). The song therefore was a sly dig at him, but in an emotionally appealing way, to forgive the culture industries being human, since everyone makes mistakes. The song was actually composed in support of Maryam ‘Hiyana’ Usman¹⁰ and berates the Censorship Board of heavy-handedness.

This heavy-handedness, referred to in verse 3, draws the attention of those in power, especially uniformed power, of the superior power of the righteous which is with God. The reference to the uniform was another dig at the Executive Secretary’s former tenure as the Deputy Commander in the Kano State Hisbah (the Shari’a moral police) before being appointed to the Censorship Board to ‘sanitize’ the culture industries. The change in uniform, from a paramilitary to a civilian is what ‘tasrif’ (transform) means in the verse.

The next dimension in the war of words between the culture industries and Kano State Censorship Board was political. Of all the politicians in Kano, Sani Lawan K/Mata of the ANPP was the most colorful. Strongly rooted in youth welfare, he was able to convince financiers to establish a recording studio, Hikima Multimedia Studios in Kano. The Studio attracted the rising crop of singers, especially the then rising Aminuddeen Ladan Abubakar and instrumentalists. The goodwill Sani Lawan enjoyed among singers in Kano saw a variety of compositions subtly suggesting his political ascendancy and often enjoining his candidature as the next Kano State governor under ANPP. Thus popular singers such as Abubakar Sani, Yakubu Mohammed, Adam Kirfi, Maryam Sangandali and Fati Nijar all released songs—both viral and market—outwardly promoting the party, but really advocating for Sani Lawan. This did not go down well with the main ANPP party machinery that had other designs concerning the successor of Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, the then incumbent governor who was on his second and final term. It is important to realize that Sani Lawan was the main focus of these singers, rather than ANPP or its politics—and precisely because they saw him as their patron.

Singing for politicians in Hausa societies is as old as the struggles for colonial freedom in Nigeria. Furniss (1998) points out that many freelance singers in the successive political republics of Nigeria served one political party or other, whether it was the Nigerian People's Congress (NPC) or its successor, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), the People's Redemption Party (PRP), or the Greater Nigerian People's Party (GNPP). Further, ‘political song during such periods has tended to operate, as with praise-poetry, to laud the leadership of the one party and vilify the leadership of the other. Political poetry has played an important part in the political process in northern Nigeria.’ (Furniss 1998:131-132). However, my focus in this discourse is not on singers who sing for particular political parties or politicians; but on singers who subvert the process of censorship

¹⁰ Fieldwork data in an interview with the composer of the song, Aminuddeen Ladan Abubakar, Kano July 2011.

and sensitize their publics to take a more decisive action when election comes, using scripts that are couched in spirituality and use metaphoric language.

Being too early in the Censorship Board's Executive Secretary's tenure, *Matakin Tuba*, which included singers who support Sani Lawal, neither attracted nor warranted attention from the authorities, despite its caustic barbs. In any event, it was doubtful if the singers could have been prosecuted, since they were all women, highly popular, usually associated with good clean-singing; plus the song itself structurally made sense as a call to order for those in positions of power and authority not to abuse their privileged status. The Board however phoned Radio Freedom and instructed it to stop airing the song, which it did. But when the General Manager, Umar Sa'id T/Wada, who was away on secondment to VOA in Washington, US, returned in June 2009, he insisted that it should be aired since there was nothing wrong with its lyrical contents.¹¹

However, the main focus of the Board, so far, was on filmmakers, not singers. Subsequently, on 10th May 2008 the Censorship Board ordered the arrest of Hamisu Lamido Iyan-Tama and arraigned him before its mobile court. The charge sheet accused him of contravening the Censorship Board's laws in two places: first, releasing an uncensored film, *Tsintsiya* [The Broom/Togetherness], a Nigerian remake of *Westside Story* (dir. Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, 1961) sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Nigeria. Second, he was accused of operating an unregistered company. During the court case, Iyan-Tama's lawyers presented full registration details of the company which were ignored by the prosecution lawyers. The defense lawyers also argued that the film, *Tsintsiya* had a label on its cover jacket declaring that it was not for sale in Kano—thus Iyan-Tama had no distribution network for the film in Kano. Again this was rejected by the prosecution. Based on these charges, Iyan-Tama was jailed for three months and fined over NGN300,000 (US\$ 1,900) by the Kano State Government. The general public view was that Iyan-Tama was arrested for daring to contest against the then current ANPP governor. This was because in 2006, Iyan-Tama joined a new political party, New Democrats, and was elected as its Kano State governorship candidate in 2011 elections.

Iyan-Tama's arrest signaled the beginning of a long drawn-out battle between Iyan-Tama, the Kano State Government and the Censorship Board which took some two years to resolve in 2010—and only then because elections were around the corner in 2011. The high profile case, leading to human rights campaigns on the Internet on 'Free Iyan-Tama' at <http://freeiyantama.blogspot.com/> drew further attention to the culture clashes in Kano and caused further electoral damage to the ANPP government among youth. As stated in the blog by Iyan-Tama in an interview:

The whole issue of my arrest is political, designed to humiliate me. You know, I contested the election against Mallam Shekarau [ANPP governor] last year. Since then I have openly opposed some of his policies, which is in the interest of the good people of Kano State. And they know I still intend to contest the governorship election in 2011...But even though I disagree with them over the censorship laws, I refused to break any law. I shot the movie in Kaduna to prove that I am law-abiding. The US embassy premiered it in Abuja. And the film is not on sale anywhere in Kano. My production company was registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission. I decided not to renew my registration with the state

¹¹ Personal communication with Umar Sa'id Tudun Wada, December 2009, Kano.

copyright board because I have secured an office in Abuja, where I am planning to move. Interview with *Leadership* Newspapers, Nigeria, 11th May 2008.

It is significant, of course, that Iyan-Tama had earlier, in 2001, expressed that the Kano entertainment industry would support any rival party to the PDP since the latter imposed censorship regulations and started prosecuting specifically filmmakers through its mobile courts. Thus the expectation that the ANPP government would provide an antidote to the PDP's culturalist approaches to the popular culture were not realized—leading to Iyan-Tama seeking to contest on an independent party platform to wrest power from the same ANPP government the culture industries supported in 2003.

The next high profile arrest by the Censorship Board was that of Rabilu Musa Danlasan, a slapstick comedian who went by the stage name of 'Dan Ibro' and who was arrested together with an associate, Lawal Alhassan Kaura, on the orders of the Board in October 2008. They were charged and sentenced to two months imprisonment for allegedly operating an unregistered film production company and appearing in films that expose nudity and 'immoral acts' in contravention of the Kano State censorship laws. The films were *Ibro Aloko* and *Ibro Kauran Mata*. The specific portion of *Ibro Aloko* that was considered 'immoral' was a song-and-dance routine with a lot of derrière-shaking by women, crotch humping by men, with lyrical contents refraining 'Mamar, Mamar' – words that do not have any particular meaning. The two actors were released after serving their jail sentences—creating a bitter Rabilu Musa Danlasan, who, with the return of PDP to power in 2011, was made a member of the Kano State Censorship Board!

However, soon after the 'Dan Ibro' court case, viral songs started appearing in Kano using his vocal style and skewering the government over his jailing. Rabilu Musa Danlasan as a comedian, often distorts his voice to produce a high vocal range, even in his film scripts. Noting his popularity, some singers often mimic the same voice pattern to sing—giving the impression that it was Dan Ibro singing, which was not case because Dan Ibro himself has declared many times that he is not singer and could not sing. He is in fact happy that his voice range is used in comedic songs. The singer who usually mimics his voice was Sani Sidi Sharifai, an independent singer in his own right, and who was one of the earliest Nanaye singers for the Hausa video film industry in the 2000s.

With increasing prosecution of popular culture artistes in Kano in 2008—and Adam Zango's incarceration sent a strong signal to the music industry—musicians decided to take their cases to the court of public opinion. Thus on 30th April 2009, a motley crowd of some 50 musicians from Kano found their way to Kaduna, a neighboring State, and recorded a video song which they called *Hadakar Mawaka* [Musicians' Collective]. This collective is different from another collective, *Hadakar Mawaka Ta Sa'adu Zungur Entertainment Group* established in 2007 as a broad-based platform for musicians to interact with each other.

The video of *Hadakar Mawaka* was the first organized call for voter rebellion against the existing ANPP government in Kano. It sent ripples throughout the political sphere in Kano because of its advocacy for the governorship candidature of Sani Lawan K/Mata. The song was also sponsored by Hikima Multi-Media, a commercial music production studio for which Sani Lawan K/Mata was the ostensible Managing Director. This video song, containing as it does,

verses calling for a change in governorship in Kano unsettled the usually unperturbed ruling political class in Kano—comfortable in the acceptance of Shari’a rule among Muslims, and public governance by the guardians of the Shari’a. The video song was recorded to express the musicians’ collective appreciation of the efforts of Sani Lawan K/Mata in the sphere of youth empowerment, particularly as a patron of the music industry (Fim magazine, June 2009, p. 23).

Hadakar Mawaka video merely opened the floodgates. By the end of May 2009, as many as 11 songs were in circulation in Kano criticizing the ANPP government in Kano in many ways. Since none of these songs were released via any official public channel, and since the government was unable to determine the singers in most cases, it therefore had no one to arrest on charges of contravening any law. The Censorship Board therefore took a one-law-fits-all approach and issued a banning order on the songs through its magistrate. As stated in a news report in the Kano-based *Triumph* newspaper of Thursday 4th June 2009,

The Kano State Film Censorship mobile court has banned the sales of some 11 Hausa songs it describe as obscene in the State. The court is going to prosecute anyone found selling the songs, playing it, downloading it by any means in accordance with section 97 of the state censorship board law 2001 cinematography and licensing regulation of the same year.

The list of the banned songs, modified to include their meanings possible singers and music styles is as follows:

S/N	Song List	Song Details	Music Style
1.	Kan Mai Uwa Da Wabi	‘On No Particular Target’ listed as ‘Oyoyo’ – Adam A Zango	Nanaye
2.	Bama Yi	‘We are not in it’ listed as ‘Martani’ – Bello ‘Bill-O’ Ibrahim	Rap
3.	Girgiza Kai	‘Shake Your Head’ – Naziru ‘Ziriums’ Ahmad Hausawa	Rap
4.	Ibro Sauka a Babur	‘Ibro Get Off the Bike’ – no author, using the mimicked voice of ‘Dan Ibro	Nanaye
5.	Ibro Sankarau	‘Cerebrospinal Meningitis’ – Dayyab Mai ‘Da’a (using the mimicked voice of ‘Dan Ibro	Nanaye
6.	Hasbunallahu	‘Qur’anic – Allah is the disposer of my affair’ – Aminuddeen Ladan Abubakar and four others	Technopop
7.	Walle-Walle	‘Deception’ – Aminuddeen Ladan Abubakar and Misbahu M Ahmed	Technopop
8.	Wayyo Kaicho	‘Oh My’, no author	Nanaye
9.	Gari Ya Yi Zafi	‘This Town is too Hot’ – no author, using the mimicked voice of ‘Dan Ibro	Nanaye
10.	Kowa Ya Ci	‘F**k Y’all’, MP3 file name is ‘Manta da Dre’ – ‘Forget Dre’, no author	Rap
11.	Auta	‘Youngest Child’, no author	Nanaye

Surprisingly, *Matakin Tuba*, the first of the protest songs, was not included in the banned list—but that could be because it was already banned by the Censorship Board from being played on the Radio. Using musical styles that cut across the three main genres of Hausa electronic urban musics, the songs range from Nanaye, Technopop, R’n’B to Rap – although the Rap song, ‘Manta da Dre’ is a long skit, lasting 1.08 mins.

Listening to the songs, it was clear that the Censorship Board decided to use the ‘big stick’ in banning all of them, as many use metaphors as a critique of the ANPP government’s approach towards cultural censorship. Indeed only *Kowa Ya Ci* uses abusive language against unnamed

‘big’ men in the society. Similarly, *Auta* was inspirational, in which the singer thanks God for giving him the gift of singing as a young (‘auta’) singer, and has no verses that provide any social commentary. *Bama Yi* by the Rapper/R’n’B singer, Bello Ibrahim (Billy-O) did have social commentary; but the singer merely relates that youth have no jobs, nor any social welfare dole and how the youth leave everything to God. Banning the song would seem to be part of a larger agenda to muzzle public expression, regardless of whether it is a critique of governance or not.

Three of the banned songs use the mimicked voice of Dan Ibro – *Ibro Sauka a Babur*, *Ibro Sankarau* and *Gari Ya Yi Zafi*. *Gari Ya Yi Zafi* was a direct attack on the government of Kano on Dan Ibro’s jailing. While the charge sheet accused Dan Ibro of running an unregistered entertainment company and performing obscenely during a song and dance routine in *Ibro Aloko*, the main song in the video ‘Mamar’ was used to refer to striped clothing material favored by the then Kano State Governor. The use of the word during a bawdy dance routine therefore was seen as a mockery of the clothing material, and of course the Governor. Urban legends in Kano relate that as a result of the song, stripped clothing became shunned, leading to loss by fabric merchants in the State who imported it. In *Gari Ya Yi Zafi* the protagonist relates that the label, Mamar, was actually coined by the fabric merchants, not Dan Ibro, since other fabrics also have ‘merchant’ names; for instance, varieties of brocade are labeled ‘tajalli’, ‘veken’, ‘saka’, etc., while ordinary fabrics have labels like ‘toyobo’, ‘kofilin’, ‘senator’, ‘chairman’ etc. What was even more ironic was that according to Sadi Sidi Sharifai, well-known for mimicking Dan Ibro’s voice, the voice on Mamar was created by Maidawayya, another Hausa video actor/singer, not any of those mimicking Dan Ibro’s voice (Interview, *Fim* magazine, July 2011, p. 42). It was ironic, therefore that Rabilu Musa Danlasan was jailed Dan Ibro was partly jailed for an offense Dan Ibro, his alter ego, did not commit.

Ibro Sankarau relates further episodes of Dan Ibro’s conviction and incarceration. It uses onomatopoeic device in its title by altering the ANPP governor’s name, Shekarau, to Sankarau, which is the Hausa word for *cerebrospinal meningitis*—the inflammation of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord, a debilitating condition that leads to stiff necks, and even death. The song therefore relates the rigidity of the Censorship Board regime in comedic skits. Two songs, however, were likely to draw the ire of the Censorship Board. These were *Walle-Walle* and *Hasbunallahu*, both with strong writing and vocal input from Aminuddeen Ladan Abubakar (ALA). *Walle-Walle* means ‘deception’ and it was composed in 17 verses by ALA and Misbahu M. Ahmed. The critical verses are shown in Lyric Sheet 3.

Case Study 3 – Walle-Walle [Deception, Aminuddeen L. Abubakar and Misbahu M. Ahmed], Kano, Bluetooth download, 2009, later, Tsangayar Kura CD, 2009

Lyric Sheet 3 – Excerpted Verses from *Walle-Walle*

Verse 4

Idan mu ne yau, mu gane gobe ba mu ne ba/
 Kenan mugunta, domin ba za ta kai mu ga ci ba/
 Dukkan mai mulki, idan ba zai yi adalci ba/
 Watan watarana, akwan a tashi ba shi ne ba/

Translation

If it is our time today, it not be our time tomorrow/
 Thus cruelty will not take us anywhere/
 If rulers are not fair and just/
 One day, they will fade away/

Verse 5

Idan ka lura, ai wa'adin ka zai kare fa/
Bai kare ba, ka tabbata akwai mutuwa fa/
In kai zalunci, a lahirar ka za ka gani fa/
Ka san walakiri, ba za ya kyale zalunci ba/

In case you don't know, your rule will finish/
Even if it doesn't, you will certainly die/
If you are unjust, you will see it on the day of judgement/
You know the Hell Enforcer, will not allow injustice/

Verse 6

Mutum mamugunci, bai yi kama da jagora ba/
Idan ya samu, ba za ya tausa al'umma ba/
Burin sa kawai shi, ya tara arziki don zamba/
Raba wadan su, da sana'ar su ba kishi ba/
...

A cruel person does not behave like a leader/
When gets it, he does not pity his people/
His desire is only to amass wealth deceptively/
Deny some people their vocation, without patriotism/

Verse 8

Idan burin ka, kai takamar ka shuka mugunta/
In ka shuka, ai dole ne ka je girbe ta/
Ai idan ba ka nan, 'ya'yanka za su je girbe ta/
Abin da ka girba, wannan ba za ya zarce guba ba/
...

If all you desire, is to plant booby-traps/
Remember, you will harvest what you sow/
If you don't personally harvest, your children will/
Whatever you show, would therefore be poisonous/

Verse 10

Shugaba mamugunci, wannan ba za ya san rahma ba/
Shugaba marar kirki, ba za ya samu alhairi ba/
Shugaba mai hila, ko fajiri ba zai yi daraja ba/
Shugaba mai karya, mai bin sa ma ba zai kima ba/
Kwarai, kwarai!!

Unjust leader will never receive God's blessing/
Unkind leader, will never receive kindness/
Deceptive, blasphemous leader will never have value/
Leaders who lie, will only have useless followers/
Yes, indeed!/
...

Walle-Walle therefore is a metaphor for how leaders deceive followers and how they end up ignominiously. However the song that drew the greatest ire of the Censorship Board was *Hasbunallahu* (shortened from 'Hasbunallahu Wa Ni'im al Wakil' or Allah (Alone) is Sufficient for us, and He is the Best Disposer of affairs (for us).'¹² [from Holy Qur'an, 'Ali-'Imran, 3:173]. A very powerful prayer used by Muslims in dire straits, it is invoked during period of extreme danger which further places the adherent's fate with God. It is an expression of total faith in God. The song was actually released early 2009, but it was only in July of the same year that the Censorship Board took a decisive action against the song's 'spiritual' attack.

The song sought to re-create the 'super-group' template of *Hadakar Mawaka* by gathering a group of super singers in Kano to take the case of their prosecution by the authorities to the higher authority of God.¹² By then the arrest and jailing of Iyan-Tama had converted the filmmaker into an icon of freedom—thus leading to a rallying of sorts by all the popular culture industries. Again this reflects the unintended outcome of the raging censorship wars by the ANPP government; for instead of dividing the industry, it make it coalesce into one—all aimed at fighting the government and sensitizing youth consumers of popular culture against government policies. I will now look closely at how the composition *Hasbunallahu* presents its case.

Case Study 4 – *Hasbunallahu [Qur'anic, God is Sufficient for Us, Aminuddeen L. Abubakar and others], Kano, Bluetooth download, 2008, later on Tsangayar CD, 2009*

Hasbunallahu was performed by a super-group of five well-known and well-respected male singers in Kano—and provided a perfect gender balance to the earlier *Matakin Tuba*, performed

¹² According to my informants, musicians tried to talk to Sani Lawan to mediate on their behalf with the ANPP government since he was part of the core party to stop the prosecutions, but despite all efforts, he was not successful.

by another super-group of four well-known and well-respected female singers in Kano. The two performances are spiritually linked—as well as physically, since both were recorded in the same Hikima Multimedia Studios in Kano—in that *Matakin Tuba* beseech rulers to forgive infractions (essentially to forgive Maryam Usman since she has repented), while *Hasbunallahu* invokes Allah’s wrath on those who made life difficult, particularly for popular culture practitioners.

The song was composed in 24 verses distributed among the five musicians: Rabi’u Taka-Lafiya (5), Misbahu M. Ahmad (5), Aminuddeen ALA (6), Bashir Dandago (3), and Adamu M. Kirfi (5). It was recorded at Hikima Multimedia Studios where Aminuddeen ALA was the Administrative Manager at the time. The excerpts of the performance as reproduced in Lyric Sheet 4.

Lyric Sheet 4 – Excerpted Verses from *Hasbunallahu*

Verse 3 – Aminuddeen ALA

Allah Ka na gani ma’kiya za su kassara mu/
Ka jefe su da cuta Allahu duka su samu/
Ka kama kawunan su Ka ruguza su Al-Karimu/
Allah Ka maida su bebaye da sun gane mu/
Hada su rigima Allah su da Jibrilu/
...

Translation

God, our enemies are about to destroy us/
Afflict them all with pestilence/
Create chaos among them/
God, make them mute when they see us/
Let them face the wrath of [Angel] Gabriel/
...

Verse 4 – Bashir Dandago

Mai kin mu ko’ina ya ke Allah Ka jarrabe shi/
Da balbalin bala’i sa a cikin jikin shi/
In ya yi addu’ar kubuta Rabbih Ka shirye shi/
In ya ki yai nadama Allah Ka murkushe shi/
Ka rusa tanadin sa na sharri Al-Muzillu/
...

God, set he who hates us on travails/
And pestilence in his body/
If he repents, God reform him/
If he is recalcitrant, God suppress him/
Destroy his evil intentions [to us], O Dishonorer/
...

Verse 5 – Adamu M. Kirfi

To wanda duk ya ke kin sana’ar mu nannade shi/
In mi’akke ne shi Allah Ka rankwafe shi/
In mai gani da ji ne, Allah Ka kurumta shi/
Ka dauki wata cuta ka sa cikin jikin shi/
Ka hallaka shi don Ibrahimul Khalilu/
...

To whosoever hates our vocation, [God] twist him/
If he is straight, bend him down/
If he can hear and see, God, make him deaf/
Afflict him with a disease deep in his body/
Destroy him for the sake of [Prophet] Ibrahim
...

Verse 7 – Misbahu M. Ahmad

Allah Ka hallakar da dakikin da ya tsane mu/
In yai aniyar cutar mu sa shi kar ya gan mu/
Kifar da ma’kiyan mu don kar su hallaka mu/
Ya Al-Mughni, Ya Shafi ka taimake mu/
Don martabar Muhammadu mai suna Jamilu/
...

God destroy the dolt who hates us/
If he intends to hurt us, let him not find us/
Destroy our enemies before they destroy us/
God, The Enricher, The Healer help us/
For the sake of Muhammad also called Jamilu/
...

Verse 9 – Misbahu M. Ahmad

Mun zama sai ka ce jemagu ga iyalan mu/
Mun zama mujiya a cikin jinsin yaren mu/
Su na ta cin amanar bayin Ka cikin hammu/
Sun shiga inuwar al’adu, addinin mu/
Allah don isar Ka da mu, Kai Ka kage mu/
Ka ba mu kariya don kaunar Abu Batulu/
...

We are like bats to our families/
We have become owls among our people/
They are betraying your servants/
They have taken refuge in culture and our religion/
God, our savior, our creator/
Protect us for the love the Prophet/
...

Verse 15 – Bashir Dandago

Ka bar su da ran su amma lafiyar Ka kwace/
Su gan mu mu na yi, cuta Kai mu su tazarce/
...

Make them living dead, and unhealthy/
So that they can see us, active, and prolong their sickness/
...

Allah Ka samu hanyoyin arziki mu dace/
Su su na gadon asibibit can su na a kwance/
Su ji ayyukan mu na yawo, ya Zul-Jalalu/
...

God enrich us in the proper way/
While they are in hospitals, incapacitated/
To hear the spread our of creativity, Oh Lord of Majesty/
...

Verse 17 – Aminu ALA

Cutar *gonorrhoea* har *cholera* gami da *tension*/
Cutar hawan jini har *typhoid* in *addition*/
Cuta ta kuturta da makanta a conclusion/
Cuta ta kanjamau mai hana dan Adam *emotion*/
Kowa sai ya amsa, ‘Amin, Zul Jalalu’/

Diseases like *gonorrhoea*, *cholera* and *tension*/
High blood pressure and typhoid, in addition/
Leprosy, blindness in conclusion/
HIV/AIDS which prevents emotions/
Everyone say, ‘Amen to the Lord of Majesty’/

This performance, containing as it does, a spiritual script further drove the thin edge of the wedge that separated the culture industries and their publics against the government. Performed by super-groupings of singers, and from the same music stable as *Matakin Tuba*, it was guaranteed to be a lightning rod which will attract the wrath of the Censorship Board.

This it did, because on Sunday 6th June 2009, the offices of Hikima Multimedia Studios in Kano were raided by gun-wielding security agents with warrant to arrest the Administrative Manager, Aminuddeen ALA. While he went into hiding, he was eventually arrested on 4th July 2009 and taken to court, while Hikima Multimedia Studios was closed down by the government. The charge sheet against Aminuddeen ALA stated:

‘That you, Aminu Ladan Abubakar, a.k.a. Ala, sometimes around the 1/3/2009 at Gandun Albasa by Zoo Road in Kano Municipal Local Government which is within the jurisdiction of this court, released your produced song titled ‘Hasbunallahu’ for public exhibition from the state censorship board, contrary to section 16 of the Kano State Censorship Board Law 2001, and is punishable under section 16 (b) of the same Law.’ (Reproduced in Fim (Kaduna, Nigeria) Magazine, August 2009, p. 19).

In the first instance the charge sheet wordings do not make sense, especially where it says, ‘for public exhibition from the state censorship board’. Secondly, it was not clear how the charge sheet came across a release date of 1st March 2009 for a song although recorded in late 2008 and was never released officially in any public form. In any event, Aminuddeen ALA denied the charges on the simple ground that although he and other did record the song, it was never released commercially, and therefore was not subject to the Censorship Board which covers only creative works meant for public exhibition. The case eventually fizzled away due to lack of any concrete evidence, even though Aminuddeen ALA was briefly jailed for periods from few hours to a day during the period the trial lasted.

Few weeks after this incident, a CD appeared in Kaduna markets titled *Tsangayar Kura* [Hyena’s Den]. Some independent marketers imported a few copies and sold them in Kano markets. The CD includes two banned songs from the list of 11 issued by the Censorship Board in June: *Hasbunallahu* and *Walle-Walle*. Thus the ALA court case merely drew attention to the songs which hitherto were restricted to memory cards of GSM phones. Their inclusion in *Tsangayar Kura* was intended to present them to the larger audience – to tremendous success. For instance, the title track, ‘Tsanagayar Kura’, unusually lasts for almost 10 minutes in which the original four singers extorted their ‘tsangayar kura’, a substitute for ‘ramin kura’ [hyena’s

den].¹³ ‘Tsangaya’ usually refers to a residential college in the Hausa Islamic learning system. The four singers therefore equated their profession to a college of learning, and warn all dogs to keep away; as the refrain states:

Rakumi ya bad da sahun giwa/	The camel wants to camouflage itself
Yazo zai shanye ruwan kaso/	It wants to drain the water from the trough
Gayawa kare ya bar sa ran kai talla a tsangayar kura/	Tell the dog to stop dreaming of getting a market in the college of learning

In this, the four singers clearly indicate that theirs is a structured, almost academic (collegiate) profession since it requires thought and diligence—therefore government ‘dogs’ should keep away. The prosecution of the musicians

The appearance of the CD drew the attention of the Censorship Board to the CD, and this time, one of the original singers of *Hasbunallahu*, Bashir Dandago (who sung three verses), was arrested on 6th August 2009 and charged with releasing an uncensored musical work. Again it was difficult to determine how the prosecutors determined Dandago’s guilt since his name – or any other name – was not written anywhere on the cover of the CD.

Dandago denied the charges on the defense that the said album was not released for public in Kano, but in Kaduna, and therefore those who imported it to Kano markets did so illegally and should be prosecuted for distributing a contraband, not the singers – echoing the similar arguments by defense lawyers when Iyan-Tama was also arrested on the charges of releasing an uncensored film.

Arrested with Dandago was another singer, Kabiru Maulana, a post-modernist devotional singer for the Sufi Tijaniyyah order. It was only during the court case that it was revealed that Maulana was arrested because the Censors thought they heard his voice on the *Hasbunallahu* track. This was because his vocal range and style of lyrical composition was similar to that of Rabi’u Taka-Lafiya, one of the singers of *Hasbunallahu* (and who, together with the two other singers on the song, were never arrested). Maulana was therefore released, while Dandago was detained, although eventually released too when the case was dismissed for lack of evidence towards December 2009.

While the court cases against musicians dragged on, the Censorship Board took the war against musicians to a higher note on 29th October 2009 by ordering a raid on an office block in Kano along Zoo Road, often referred to as Rima House. This block houses as many as 30 music studios. The Board closed down the studios whose Administrative Managers could not produce certificates of registration of the business. This further serves to alienate the culture industries from the ANPP government. The feeling of angst among the various filmmakers, singers, lyricists and choreographers was extremely strong. This because in the absence of a viable film industry, and with too many session musicians and lyricists coming up everyday, the studios

¹³ The full proverb from which this expression was taken was: ‘ramin kura sai ‘ya’yanta’ – only the children of a hyena can enter its den. To wit, therefore, only intelligent people would enter into singing profession, therefore singers should not be prosecuted as they were being done by the ANPP government.

become ‘media consultants’ producing radio jingles advertising as diverse products as mosquito repellants and airline tickets.

The case of banning 11 songs which were seen as subversive to the political establishment by the ANPP government in Kano created an international interest on many fronts. In the first instance, it attracted two student filmmakers from the University of Florida’s Documentary Institute, Alex Johnson and Saman Piracha, to travel to Kano in 2010 and shoot a documentary about the banning which they called *Recording a Revolution*. It gave many musicians an opportunity to voice our their feelings about censorship and about government. The film’s anchor was Naziru Ahmed Hausawa, a Kano-based Hausa rapper, who uses the stage name ‘Ziriums’ and whose song, *Girgiza Kai* [Shake your head] was one of 11 banned songs.¹⁴ Similarly, the website, ‘Project Muse’ also carried the story, with the full listing of the songs—further emphasizing how musical freedom was muzzled in northern Nigeria during the ANPP regime in Kano.

PDP Reloaded – The Cult of Kwankwaso and Popular Mobilization

By 2010 the culture industries in Kano had declared their general support for the opposing PDP party. As explained by Rabilu Musa Danlasan, aka Dan Ibro,

We have to go back to the PDP... True enough we have supported ANPP, but the suffering, ostracization, hatred for our profession we endured forces us to abandon ANPP and support PDP. (Interview in *Fim* magazine, March 2010, p. 22, translation mine).

To make things worse for the ruling ANPP, by March 2010 the party had entered into an internal crisis, leading to loss of confidence in the party machinery which sees mass cross-carpeting from the party to other parties, mainly the rival PDP.¹⁵ This gave the entertainment industry in Kano the perfect opportunity to pitch its camp. Perhaps not surprisingly, the overwhelming support was for PDP governorship candidature of Engineer Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso who was re-contesting again for the post in Kano in 2011 under his old party, PDP. The failure of ANPP in 2011, even though by a narrow margin, can be attributed to the lack of cohesion in the opposition – too many political interests and internal ‘anti-party’ activities within the opposition gave the PDP a more unified front. The PDP itself, however also split into two,¹⁶ ‘Garkuwa’ (‘shield’ representing the traditional mainstream party) and ‘Kwankwasiyya’ (coinage, ‘the cult of Kwankwaso’); however, despite these internal camps, the PDP party machinery remained virtually unified in electing PDP governments, whether in Kano or in neighboring Jigawa State.

The Kwankwasiyya faction of PDP became the new youth party. Adopting colorful vocabulary that alludes to urban gang-violence insouciance such as ‘wuju-wuju’ (scatter) and ‘dan-ujule’

¹⁴ Ziriums relocated to New York in 2010 and pursued his rap career.

¹⁵ As part of the series of disenchantments Sani Lawan K/Mata, a stalwart of the party and patron of singers declared a year later in January 2011, that ‘ANPP is now a dead party which nobody with legitimate interest can afford to hang on to...as from today (Wednesday 12th January 2011), I, Sani Lawan Kofar Mata has (sic) withdrawn my membership from the ANPP, and will make my new party known very soon.’ <http://www.thenigerianvoice.com/nvnews/43811/1/kano-deputy-governor-others-quit-anpp-for-acn.html>. Accessed 18th April 2012.

¹⁶ In January 2013 another PDP splinter appeared in Kano which called itself ‘PDP-Jam’iyya’ [PDP Party] formed by the old stalwarts of the original PDP as an attempt to cleanse the party of the cultish persona of ‘Kwankwasiyya-Amana’ and refocus on core political philosophy of the Party.

(bloody lip), they appeal to the new ‘boyz in the hood’ mentality of urban youth. Right in the middle of this vocal visibility, and just before the April 2011 elections in Kano, more musics of various categories appear in support of one party or other – although predominantly composed in favor of PDP.¹⁷ The most popular and which became adopted as an urban anthem of the PDP was composed by Nazifi Abdulsalam Yusuf aka ‘Asnanic.’ It was catchingly titled, *Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso Dawo Dawo* (Kwankwaso return, return). The excerpts of the performance is reproduced in Lyric Sheet 5.

Lyric Sheet 5 – Excerpted Verses from *Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso Dawo Dawo*

Verse 5

Mun kyale zuma a yanzu mun kama maɗaciya/
Mun saki tattabara mun raini hawainiya/
Ga shi ta rikide a yau ta na yin halin tsiya/
A Kano kuka muke mulki na tsumagiya/
Kawo mana agaji, zo Kwankwaso dawo/

Translation

We ignored the sweet, and have embraced the bitter/
We lost the speedy and cultivated the slow/
It has now turned into something bad/
We are crying in Kano because of the harsh rule/
Come to our aid, come Kwankwaso, return/

Verse 6

Abun mamaki 'yan uwana ku ji zan faɗa/
Zan tausa sa murya ta a yau ba yin raɗa/
Wani sirrin boyen ne na ke so na yi bankada/
Don na gaji ne salo na mulkin 'yan bar-bada/
Kullum sai yaudara ci baya sun ka kawo/

This is surprsing, brother, so listen/
I will openly say it, not whisper/
I will reveal a well-hidden secret/
I am tired of these superficial rulers/
The keep deceiving us and usher in no progress/

Verse 13

Kwarkwasa mai hanin sakewa a cikin gida

Munyo shuka girbinta nai mana gargada
Aike mun yiwa kunkuru mun kyale gada
Mu mun sake agola ya zama mulkin gida

Mai hana karya Kwankwaso dawo dawo

Tiger-ant, that does not allow one to relax in his home
We planted (him), yet we are unable to harvest (him)
We sent somone slow, while it should be one faster
We have become too relaxed, the step-son has taken over the house
True one Kwanwaso, return, return

Less philosophical than previous protest songs, *Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso Dawo Dawo* actually reproduces the lyrical structure of an earlier protest song by the same performer, and simply titled *Dawo, Dawo* in which the protagonist relates to how he suffers as a singer in Kano and wants to leave the State due to prosecution. The original *Dawo Dawo* was, on its own, extremely popular, although never banned by the Censorship Board, enabling it to acquire a cult-status. It was this that informed the commissioning of the new format, *Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso Dawo Dawo*, by Hajiya Baraka Sani who later came the Kano State Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, after April 2011.

The new version uses compositional oratory common to Hausa traditional musicians, and departs from the other protest songs, in the sense of being a long praise song (‘wakar maroƙa’) and

¹⁷ During the fieldwork for this paper, I was able to collect as many as 350 MP3 songs from Kano, Jigawa, Kaduna and Bauchi States all praising one politician or political party or another. The process of party politics therefore provides massive opportunities for modern Hausa singers to perform the same functions traditional acoustic musicians performed when singing for Nationalist politicians in the 1960s.

which is usually paid for.¹⁸ Inserted within the stanzas are barbs aimed at the ANPP government in Kano in the form of both personal and political critique. For instance, in verse 13, a line states that ‘Mu mun sake agola ya zama mulkin gida’ (We have become too relaxed, the step-son has taken over the house) alludes to the ‘non-Kano’ origin of the family of the former Governor, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, who traced his roots to Biu, in Borno State. Verse 5 and 6 lyrics have double meaning – for both musicians and popular culture industries generally, as well as for the civil society in that the protagonist narrates the social condition in Kano in the eight years between 2003 to 2011. For the popular culture industries, it was ‘a Kano kuka mu ke mulki na tsumagiya’ (we are crying in Kano because of the harsh rule).

Although this song was subversive, carrying similar caustic lyrics to others banned two years earlier, especially Walle-Walle, yet it remained untouched, and Nazifi Asnanic was never arrested or harassed by the Censorship Board. The reason may not be unconnected to the sudden awareness by the government machinery that a line had been crossed by the Censorship Board and which could cost popular support. This was more so as in addition to the internal implosion of the ANPP, the filmmakers started to fight back against the Censorship Board outside Kano. For instance on 13th May 2010 the Executive Secretary of the Board was almost lynched in Kaduna after he participated in a discussion program on the film industry and which did not go down well with Kaduna-based filmmakers. It was indeed a turning point because from then onwards up to the elections in April 2011, the Censorship Board stopped prosecuting filmmakers and singers in Kano.

In any event, it all came to pass. On 21st April 2011, Engineer Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, was declared the winner of the governorship elections in Kano with 46% of the votes cast as against 43.5% of the ANPP candidate. The most visible demonstrations of support was from angst-driven popular culture industries, as captured by many bloggers through pictures of wild celebrations posted on many sites including Facebook. This brings to end, for the meantime, a long drawn-out battle between the popular culture industries in Kano and the political class. I emphasized ‘meantime’, because the law is the law. This was demonstrated by the arrest and jailing of Sani Musa Danja—a filmmaker and musician, who was the most vociferous supporter of PDP politicians at both national and Kano State level. He was arrested on 12th November 2012—over a year and a-half after the PDP returned to power in Kano on a significant wave of support from filmmakers’ fans—for releasing an uncensored film, the mantra the Censorship Board always gives out in such situation in the previous political dispensation.

And in a twist of irony, in January 2013 an MP3 music track started making viral rounds in GSM handsets in Kano. It was titled, ‘Saura Kiris Ta Watse, Kwankwasiyya’ [Kwankwasiyya will soon end, Anon]. Echoing sentiments that are directly opposite those in Nazifi Asnanic’s Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso Dawo Dawo’, ‘Saura Kiris’ is an acerbic indictment of the cult of Kwankwasiyya and urging the cult members to quit before cult self-destructs – using the same musical infrastructure used by PDP youths that mobilized youth voters against the ANPP.

¹⁸ However, in an interview with reporters of the Blueprint newspaper (Abuja), the singer Nazifi Abdulsalam insisted that he did not make any money out of the song. See the full story at <http://blueprintng.com/2012/08/i-didnt-make-money-out-of-my-song-for-kwankwaso-says-nazifi-asnanic/>, retrieved 25th August 2012.

Conclusion

Throughout societies, protest songs have served as rallying points against what are seen as oppressive governance policies. What has never been made clear, however, is the extent to which change was brought about by these songs. In the United States, the protest song was one of the main symbols of the sixties youth culture and was aimed at awakening public awareness of social issues, particularly the Vietnam conflict. The songs provided the soundtrack to demonstrations against that War. Yet although the songs inspired creativity and raised consciousness, they did not stop the wars—because the theater of wars kept coming, from Vietnam down to Afghanistan.

In Algeria, the modern music form that developed as protest was Rai (from the Arabic, ‘ra’ayy’, or view). Rai evolved from native Orani-Algerian music with provocative lyrics sung at local cafes, bars, and bordellos to the most popular and controversial music in North Africa today. It was banned from the Algerian broadcast media because it was considered subversive by the Algerian government until the 1980s (Al-Deen, 2005). The music then became available only through Algerian-French community radio stations in southern France in the early 1980s. It was so popular in Algeria that the government was forced to lift some of the earlier restrictions placed on it. The music therefore came to be regarded as music of rebellion and the symbol of cynicism, emerging as an outlet for voicing the frustrations of youths and placing greater emphasis on freedom and liberty. Similarly, in Thailand, the rise of politicized popular musics is closely tied to the political turbulence of the early and mid-1970s (Lockard 1998). Yet oppression continues in these countries, with musicians being hounded.

On June 11, 1988, the first Mandela Tribute was staged at Wembley Stadium in London. The 11-hour extravaganza featured a remarkably diverse roster of first-rate talent – all aimed at drawing attention to the political plight of Nelson Mandela, then a political prisoner in the Apartheid South Africa. While Mandela eventually became free and ruled South Africa, the contribution of the hundreds of rock stars composing songs in defense of African political freedom rarely swayed the racist regime of South Africa. Change came because it had to, or as Bob Dylan wrote, ‘...how many years can some people exist/before they're allowed to be free?/’ (Bob Dylan, 1963).

In the West African Sahara desert, political marginalization in the various nation-states exacerbated the problems of severe drought and economic hardship that have struck the Tuareg since the 1960s. This created a generation of young Tuareg exiles known as the *ishumar*, who fled Mali and Niger to pursue better opportunities in North African cities. During this time some of the *ishumar* discovered the guitar and began to form bands where they sang songs about their experiences in exile, their memories of home, and their political ambitions for better Tuareg rights (Kohl and Fischer 2010). The music of bands such as Tinariwen, Tartit, Terakaft and Toumast became the major tool for mobilizing rebels in violent rebellion against Niger and Mali in the 1990s. In the end little was achieved in uniting the various forces to create sustainable peace in the region.

Similarly, while it might be assumed that there is a link between desire for change and popular culture, it must be pointed out that at least in African societies, popular culture purveyors might only provide a philosophical reflection of unjust, but not action scripts for social transformation

through their lyrics. The late Nigerian Afro-beat musician, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as the most vocal critic of the Nigerian military authorities (Olaniya 2004). In song after song, he urged revolt, not solely against military tyrants and exploiters ('Zombie', 'Army Arrangement', 'Coffin for Head of State') but against self-damaging prejudices and assimilationist alienation ('Yellow Fever', 'Colonial Mentality', 'Teacher, Don't Teach Me No Nonsense', 'Gentleman', 'Lady'). He chastised the West ('International Thief Thief', 'Underground System') and the local elites that fronted for multinationals ('Beasts of No Nation', 'Government of Crooks'). Each of these songs, performed decades ago, contain lyrical social scripts that are relevant today. Yet nothing has changed in all these years, despite bouts of democratic elections; if anything, the Nigerian State in 2012 remained more corrupt than ever according to every international index.¹⁹

My final argument therefore is that protest songs *can* have the power to mobilize at least, but it is doubtful if by themselves *alone* they are capable of causing a system-wide change in the polity. Their mobilization power, more visible in African countries, is effective where the electorate has the liberal and democratic freedom to exercise constitutional rights to cause regime change. Thus, as Graham Furniss points out, 'artistry and skill in Hausa poetry...lie in a variety of dimensions - in the consistency of metre/rhythm; sometimes in the deployment of arcane vocabulary, sometimes in clarity of expression; sometimes in the deployment of imagery and of proverbial reference; sometimes in the symmetries and patterning of parallelism and recursiveness' (Furniss, 1998: 136). The protest singers in Kano employed all these strategies in voter sensitization about the need for change in the political leadership of Kano in 2011. Thus although the ANPP government in Kano failed to win the 2011 election for so many reasons, the lyrical power of musicians who were harassed, intimidated, ostracized, banished, marginalized, demonized, arrested and jailed provided a strong ingredient toward the mix that brought about change in the government structure.

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¹⁹ For instance, according to Transparency International's 2012 global corruption perception index released 5th December 2012, Nigeria has been ranked as the 35th most corrupt country in the world, moving to 139 from 143 in 2011 when it hit its highest standing in the index. Nigeria has been slipping with every passing year from 2008 when it was the 121th country on the list. In 2009 it climbed to 130, in 2010 to 134 and then to 143 in 2011 (Transparency International, 2012).

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