



# Communication, Media and Popular Culture in Northern Nigeria



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# Table of Contents

S/N	Content	Contributors	Page
1.	Communique of the First International Conference on Communication, Media and Popular Culture in Northern Nigeria, July 12 – 13, 2006 organized by the Department of Mass Communication, Bayero University, Kano, at Mambayya House, Kano.		1 - 3
2.	Communication, Media and Popular Culture in Northern Nigeria: A Revolution or Some Changes?: An Address by Gausu Ahmad, Head, Department of Mass Communication.	Gausu Ahmad	1 - 5
3.	Global Influences, National Flows—The Influence of Hindi Film Music on Hausa Traditional Music and Video Film	Abdalla Uba Adamu	6-35
4.	Media Nationalism and the Politics of Mass Communication in Nigeria	Professor Mike Egbon	36 – 45
5.	Northern Nigeria's Press and the Campaign Against Tenure Elongation: Siding with the People or A Section of the Ruling Elite?	Mustapha N. Malam,	46 – 52
6.	Majigi and The Political Origins of Cinema in Nigeria	Brian Larkin	53 - 59
7.	Media, Ideology and the Nation: An Assessment of the Northern and Southern Newspapers Reports of 'Denmark Cartoon' Crisis of February 2006.	Prof.Chinyere Stella Okunna and Dr Kate Azuka Omenugha	60– 73
8.	Community Mobilization In Traditional Societies: Appraisal Of The Role of Oramedia In The Usman Danfodio Jihad Movement	Umar Faruk Jibril	74 – 90
9.	Globalization Northern Media and the Changing Landscape in Nigeria	Balarabe Maikaba	90 - 97
10.	The Political Economy of the Media in Northern Nigeria	Mohammed Haruna	98 -106
11.	Northern Perspective on the Review/Amendment of the 1999 Constitutional Proceedings in Southern Press	Bisi Olawuyi	107 - 123
12.	Framing Issues of Democratization on Northern Nigeria in New Nigerian Editorials	Ciboh Rodney	124 – 137
13.	State Creation and the Public Press in North-Eastern Nigeria	Danjuma I. Gambo	138 – 146
14.	The New Nigerian Newspaper: Negotiating A Regional Identity within A Multi-Cultural Context	Gausu Ahmad	147– 156
15.	The Survival And Future of Hausa Language Newspapers In The Era Of Popular Culture	Suleiman Salau	157 – 166
16.	The Challenge of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Development in Northern Nigeria	Eze Cosmos	167 – 174
17.	Verses of the Tabloid: Poetry in Northern Nigerian Newspapers	Ismail B Garba and Ali L. Abubakar	175 -189

# Global Influences, National Flows—The Influence of Hindi Film Music on Hausa Traditional Music and Video Film

*Abdalla Uba Adamu*

## **Introduction**

An essential tension exists between Muslim Hausa public culture and popular culture. Public culture reflects the quintessential Hausa social makeup with its agreed boundaries defined by cultural specificity such as dress code, language and rules of social discourse. Popular culture, on the other hand, is seen as the realm of the un-sophisticated working class. Music, in all its forms, belongs to this class.

Hausa society, being structured on specific occupational hierarchies often considers music a low art form. Musical appreciation can however be both low and high. For instance, the existence of complete orchestras in palaces of Hausa emirs from Zaria to Damagaram indicates the acceptance of music as an entertainment genre within the conventional establishment. However, it is not acceptable for the ruling class to engage in the same music—thus a prince cannot be a musician.

But perhaps the biggest ripple in Hausa concept of highbrow musical genre was the media intrusion of Hindi film soundtracks from popular Hindi films. These soundtracks, introduced via radio and cinema houses from 1960 when Nigeria became independent from Britain, leapt from the screen to the street, first via children's playground songs patterned on the most popular Hindi film music tracks. This was almost immediately taken up by "lowbrow" bar and club circuit musicians such as Abdu Yaron Goge who picked up *Raati Suhani* from the film, *Rani Rupmati* (1957), and Ali Makaho with his rendition of *Kahbie Khabie* from *Khabie* (1975) and popularized not just the soundtracks, but also the adaptive process they introduced.

However the most perverse influence of Hindi film soundtrack on Hausa musical genre was the emergence of Hausa home videos from 1990. These are video dramas shot with a VHS camera (although they are now increasingly using digital camcorders) to record a 3 hour drama (often split into two parts). It is an invariable article of faith of the Hausa video dramatists to include a series of song and dance routines in their video dramas. As much 80% of the Hausa home video dramas are directly ripped-off Hindi films in one form or another, including the music soundtrack, which is Hausanized.

This paper analyses the transformation of Hausa music as a traditional genre of popular culture. It specifically focuses attention on the catalytic influence of Hindi film music on the transformation of a traditional genre of music in an African society. It pays homage to the structural characteristics of Hausa traditional music in order to provide a template for understanding how radically different the Hindi film soundtrack is from Hausa entertainment mindset.

Blakely (2001) has argued that due to changes in technology and media infrastructure – which have implications for entertainment content, the academic community, which, hitherto had tended to shut out studies of popular culture, has started taking a keen interest in the relationship between the changes in social discourse and media entertainment technologies.

Additionally, as Curran (2000) argues in his introduction to *De-Westernizing Media Studies*,<sup>1</sup> two contrasting attitudes towards globalization can be found. The first is expressed by cultural theorists who welcome globalization as a means for the reinforcement of international dialogue. It enables minorities to gain attention beyond national borders. An opposing point of view stresses the threat that globalization poses to democracies and international politics aiming at limiting the influence of worldwide capitalism. Both these views at least concur a certain degree of weakness in recipient systems as a result of the transnational flow of influences. What needs to be determined is the extent to which the recipient systems – I do not accept Curran's term of "nation-state" such entities are too complex to be treated as single – are transformed.

Indeed Media and Cultural Studies' theories of globalization tended to focus attention on the role of mass media in the society (e.g. Beck and Rainer 2003, Appadurai 1996), how they are communicated and preserved in transnational context. Another focus is on how people appropriate media, and which identities they create with the new transformed media (see particularly Sreberny-Mohammadi 1996, Schiller 1976, and Boyd-Barrett 1977).

Thus as Patterson (1994) argues, industrialization and modernization both entailed the spread of common sets of behaviors and attitudes within the context of economic change. However, the globalization of culture also takes place independent of whatever economic changes are occurring in a particular region or society. Traditionally, the transmission of culture across societies was facilitated by two main media: migration and literacy. People learned about other cultures either through traveling themselves or from travelers, or by reading about other cultures and adopting or adapting what they learned. These traditional media could, under certain circumstances, be effective means for the transmission of cultures across the globe.

Additional source of learning is media bombardment, which in the case of northern Nigeria, created spaces for continuous broadcast of foreign media cultures, especially from India in the form of Hindi films. This bombardment often comes in the way of cross-border free flow of packaged media products that enable communities to absorb (but not export) media re-enactment of popular cultural forms of other societies. In this way, Hindi

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<sup>1</sup> Curran, J., and Park, M. (2000)(eds), *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. London/New York. Routledge.

film music culture found its way into Hausa popular musical culture and eventually supplanted it.

### **The Hausa System of Class and Popular Culture**

The Hausa are predominantly Muslim group in northern Nigeria and formed the largest ethnic group in the country. The Hausa language itself is widely spread from northern Nigeria to Niger Republic and all the way to other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, stretching to Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia and Senegal. Due to their contact with Islam as early as 12th century, the Hausa have acquired a considerable Arabic vocabulary in their language, such that at least 1/5 of Hausa words, from 1750-1960, are directly Arabic in origin.<sup>2</sup> Despite this linguistic affinity, however, Arab popular culture – in the form of music, whether classical or contemporary, theater and literature has had never had wide appeal among the Muslim Hausa. Consequently, Arab sources were not seen as a basis for inspirational adaptation for Hausa popular culture.

According to Smith (1959), the Hausa system of social status has

three or four 'classes'. Sometimes the higher officials and chiefs are regarded as constituting upper 'class' by themselves, sometimes they are grouped with the Mallams and wealthier merchants into a larger upper class. The lowest 'class' generally distinguished includes the musicians, butchers, house-servants and menial clients, potters, and the poorer farmers who mostly live in rural hamlets. The great majority of the farmers, traders and other craftsmen would, therefore, belong to the Hausa 'middle-class'<sup>3</sup>

This categorization, as imperfect as Smith himself identified it to be, nevertheless serves as a rough guide to the position of a musician in Hausa society. The main reason for including musicians in the lower level status is the client-focused nature of Hausa music. With its main pre-occupation of appeasing specific clients, it thus becomes a non-art form – art for art's sake – but tailored towards a specific paying-client. A song composed for one client, for instance, will not be performed to another client. What further entrenches the lower status of musicians also is the *maroki* (praise-singer) status of most Hausa traditional musicians – praising their clients for money or other material goods.<sup>4</sup> A mean client gets the short-end of the musician's stick, often with sarcastic barbs thrown in for good measure. This is illustrated, for instance, by a section in Dan Anace's epic song he composed for a Hausa traditional boxing champion, Ado Dan Kore, in which he berates an unnamed woman for not showering him with gifts, in contrast to his patron, Rakiyar Ganu:

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<sup>2</sup> Aliyu Abubakar, *Al-Thakafatul Arabiyyati Fi Nigeriya, 1750-1960* (Arabic Literature in Nigeria, 1750-1960). PhD Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, M.G. (1959) 'The Hausa System of Social Status', *Africa*, Vol 29, p. 249.

<sup>4</sup> For detailed study of Hausa maroka (praise-singers), see Smith, M.G. (1957), 'The Social Functions and Meanings of Hausa Praise-Singing' in *Africa*, Vol 27 (1957) pp 26-44.

Na gode Rakiyyar Ganu,  
 (Kyautar da ta yi min har na gode),  
 Rannan ga Dan Anace ya zo gaishe ta,  
 Waccan ga zane da riga ta bani,

Kunga waccan ga zane da riga ta bani,  
 Kunga ga zane dai an bani,  
 (Ke shegiya...  
 ...boye abinki ba a cin komai na ki)  
 Kaga shegiya...  
 (...boye abinki ba a cin komai na ki).

I am grateful to Rakiyyar Ganu,  
 (I thank her for her gifts to me),  
 One day, Dan Anace visited her,  
 (The other one) gave me a wrapper and a  
 blouse,

Also that one gave me a wrapper and a blouse  
 And another wrapper,  
 However, you bitch....  
 ...hide your stuff, no one benefits from you!  
 Oh yes, bitch....  
 ...hide your stuff, no one benefits from you.

Naturally a very generous patron get the full-blown poetic powers of the musician. Garba Supa, the *kukuma* popular singer captured this in the praise of a generous client in an unnamed song:

Bara a babban gida dadi gare ta	Begging in a generous house is nice indeed
In wannan ya fito ya baka,	When this resident emerges and gives something...
Sai wani ma ya fito ya baka.	...another one will also emerge and give you
Ashe bara a babban gida dadi gare ta	Truly begging in a generous house is nice indeed
In wannan ya fito ya baka,	When this resident emerges and gives something...
Sai wani ma ya fito ya baka	...another one will also emerge and give you
Ban mance Alhaji Mustapha ba,	I will not forget Alhaji Mustapha
Alhaji Garba bai mance Alhaji Mustapha ba	I, Alhaji Garba, will not forget Alhaji Mustapha
Na Audu Mai Wake, mu gaisheka	The
Gaisheka baya zama asara...	Greeting you is never done in vain...
...saboda ku aka kera naira	...it is because of likes of you that the Naira was manufactured

This categorization of Hausa musicians, however, excludes the poet-musicians, who often recite their poetry without any accompanying instrumentation. And as Schuh points, out

Discussion of Hausa poetry has generally distinguished *oral* poetry, which finds its roots in ancient Hausa tradition, and *written* poetry, which dates from the 19th century and whose meters can be traced to Arabic Islamic verse. Though the large and continually evolving body of Hausa poetic literature derives from these separate origins, there has now been considerable cross-fertilization between the two traditions, both thematically and metrically. Moreover, the “oral” vs. “written”

distinction is misleading. Although poets working in the so-called “written” tradition generally codify their works in writing using regular stanzaic patterns, *all* Hausa poetry is composed for presentation in sung or chanted form—prose-like recitation, much less silent reading of poetic works is quite foreign to Hausa.<sup>5</sup>

Such poets are often seen as representing Hausa oral art form, and the cultural references of quintessential Hausa higher form of entertainment. Mainly highly educated (both in Western and Islamic traditions, and in contrast to traditional “low brow” musicians who often had only Islamic education), the thematic elements of these poets tended to be either political or religious. Aliyu Namangi’s nine-volume *Imfiraji*, for instance, is a Dantesque exposition of life, death, and what comes after death – all admonishing the Muslim to lead a pious life. Ahmadu Danmatawalle’s *Wakar Tsuntsaye* is a blistering critique of the ruling house of one of the emirates of northern Nigeria structured in the form of an Animal Farm landscape in which the characteristics of the various courtiers were juxtaposed with perceived personality traits of specific birds and animals in a jungle in their quest for a new ruler.

### **Categorization of Hausa Music**

Mainstream popular traditional Hausa music is divided into two distinct categories – the instrumental accompaniment, and the vocals. This division might seem trite; but it should be pointed out that vocals form the main component of the music. It is very common for Hausa musical groups to play on one type of instrument – predominantly a percussion instrument such as the *kalangu* or “African” drum, maintaining more or less the same beat throughout the song. The skills of the lead “musician” are essentially in the philosophy and poetry of his songs.

About three distinct structures typify Hausa music. In the first instance, even if it has no specific instruments, but relying on the voice, it is still called *music*. Secondly, it is predominantly a single-instrument process in which a single type of instrument, mainly a drum, is used in a variety of combinations, with the lyricist providing the focal point of the music – the words, which with some musicians such as Muhammad Dahiru Daura, a blind beggar minstrel poet, can be in the form of opera. Third is the gender dimension of Hausa music which sees a strict separation of the sexes – in effect a reflection of the Hausa traditional society which segregates the sexes. Thus Hausa traditional music, like most musical forms around the world, is based on a single gender voice – either male or female; but rarely a combination of the two in the same composition

The most distinctive characteristic of subject matter of mainstream traditional Hausa musicians is their client-focused nature. The subject matter of the songs could either be a

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<sup>5</sup> Schuh, R. G. (1994), ‘Text and Performance in Hausa Metrics’ Paper presented at 25th Annual Conference on African Linguistics, Rutgers University, March 25-27, 1994, p. 1.



courtier, an emir, a wealthy person, an infamous person, or simply iconic interpretations of the mutability of life. Thus Hausa “music” excels on its *vocal* qualities—with Hausa musicians producing songs of utter philosophical and poetic quality, reflecting Hausa proverbs—rather than instrumental virtuosity. This is illustrated, for instance, by Dan Anace, an occupational guilds singer, in a version of the epic he sung for the traditional boxer *Ado Dan Kore*:

Na riga na sani duniya makaranta ce	I am aware this world is a learning environment
Na kuma sani duniya makabarta ce	I am also aware this world is transient

Even in “orchestras” comprising of many backing musicians, the instruments tended to be of the same category—predominantly percussion.

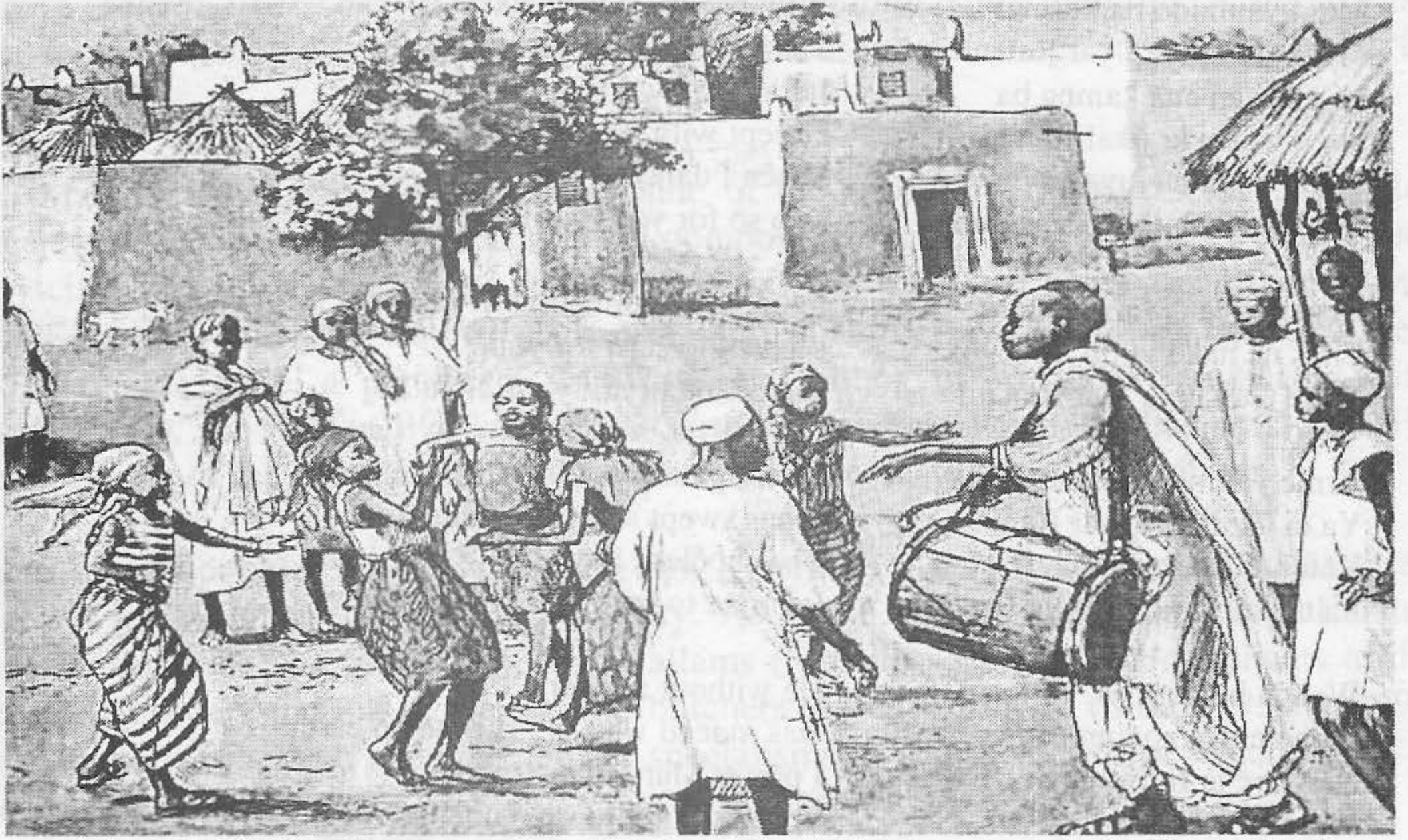
When Hausa societies became more cosmopolitan, and began to absorb influences from other cultures, limited mixed-mode instrumental “groups” started to appear, combining the percussion instruments with predominantly stringed instruments such as *goge*, *kukuma* (fiddles) leading the orchestra, or as in the case of *koroso* music, a combination of flute, drums and *lalaje* – calabash discs pierced in a stick to form a rattle. Rarely are there musical combos with string, percussion and wind instruments in the *same* band. Indeed wind instruments, such as *kakaki* (trumpet) are mainly royal palace instruments, while *sarewa* (flute) which is predominantly used in Fulani music genre, is often a solo instrument used on its own, or accompanied by voice.

Traditional Hausa music and musicians were often divided into specific categories, just like any music genre. In one of the most comprehensive studies of this categorization, Gusau (1996) in a biographical study of 33 Hausa classical to modernist musicians provided at least five categories.<sup>6</sup> The first was *Makadan, Yaki* (war musicians) and who flourished from mid 19<sup>th</sup> century up to 1920. Singing for palace armies of Sokoto territories such as Gobir, Kebbi, and Argungu, these included Wari Mai Zarin Gobir (d. 1800), Ata Mai Kurya (d. 1899), Kara Buzu Mai Kan Kuwa (d. 1920), etc. Their instruments included *zari* (any piece of equipment used to create a musical tone, e.g. a ring beaten with a metal rod), *kurya* (a variety of drum) and *molo* (a three-stringed “guitar” like a lute) each accompanied with a backing choir.

Extending the musical influences from 1900 were *Makadan Sarakuna* (Emir’s palace musicians) – centering their musical instrumentation around drum orchestras. Again found predominantly around Sokoto basin, these included Buda Dantanoma Argungu (1858-1933), Ibrahim Gurso Mafara (1867-1954), Salihu Jankidi Sakkwato (1852 to 1973), Aliyu Dandawo Argungu (1925 to 1966), Ibrahim Narambada Isa (1875-1960), and Muhammadu Sarkin Taushin Sarkin Katsina (1911-1990). Their main music styles was based on a variety of drumming accompanied by slow mournful and elegant vocals, as

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<sup>6</sup> Saidu Muhammad Gusau, *Makada Mawakan Hausa*. Fisbas Media Services, Kaduna, Nigeria, 1996.



*Plate 1: Getting Down on It at the local dandali (playground) in Hausaland*

These categories did not merge into each other historically, but rather even developed concurrently, with the last category, *Makadan Jama'a*, gaining predominance in recent years.

One of the earliest and most comprehensive documentations of this genre of Hausa popular singers was by a German anthropologist, Dr. Rudolph Prieze (1854-1933). In his detailed *Lieder des Haussawolks*, a compendium of Hausa songs published in 1927, he translated many written popular songs of the period in various categories. He had earlier published the songs—all written in *ajami*, the Hausanized Arabic script, which he translated into German—in various volumes for each category. He started with *Haussa-Sanger* (general Hausa musicians) and *Lieder Fahrender Haussachuler* (songs by Qur'anic school pupils) both published in 1916; followed by *Landwirschaftulische Haussa* (harvest songs) in 1917. Excerpts were translated into Hausa by Professor Umaru Balarabe Ahmed of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 2002 as *Jiya A Yau: Dadaddun Wakokin Hausa*.

One of the more colorful poems in his collection was *Begen Mariya* (Yearning for Maria) of uncertain date, but most likely written in the late 1880s by a singer/poet identified simply as Aikau. *Begen Mariya* tells the story of an apparently popular girl, Mare Gidauliya 'yar Ranau, and her sociable attributes that made her popular—and made the poet fall in love with her<sup>7</sup>, as indicated in the following excerpt from the song:

<sup>7</sup> See Umaru B. Ahmed, 2002, *Jiya A Yau—Dadaddun Wakokin Hausa*. Printed by Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

Mai kyaun ido na barewa  
Mare Gudaliya, 'yar Ranau!  
Ni ban san ana kamna ba  
Sai a wurin ki jikal Ranau  
In nai rawa na juya  
Dukka domin ki ne 'yar Ranau

With beautiful eyes like a gazelle  
Mare Gudaliya, 'yar Ranau!  
I don't know love  
Except with you, grand-daughter of Ranau  
When I dance and twirl  
I do so for you 'yar Ranau

....  
Begenki ya ci raina, Mare  
Tilas ne nake yi mi ki bege  
Mare Gudaliya 'yar Ranau!

...  
I am overwhelmed with yearning for you, Mare  
I have to yearn for you  
Mare Gudaliya, 'yar Ranau!

Arme yakinku ne 'yan mata  
Ya ci Gudaliya 'yar Ranau  
Kafal da bat takalmi  
Ita tsidau yake fudawa

Marriage is your forte, maidens  
It has swept away 'yar Ranau  
The shoeless foot  
Is prone to being pricked by thorn

Wanda ba masoyi,  
Shine na ya zo duniya don wofi  
Ni Mare ta fi uwata  
Mare ta fi ubana  
Don raina yana son Mare  
Mare Gudaliya 'yar Ranau

He without a lover  
Has indeed wasted his time on earth  
I prefer Mare to my mother  
I prefer Mare to my father  
Because my heart is full of your love Mare  
Mare Gudaliya, 'yar Ranau!

Since then, the love theme had always been part of Hausa popular culture, and explains why when Hindi cinema came along, Hausa youth readily identified with the saccharine love songs of the films.

Departing from the dominance of Sokoto musicians and the staid Emir's courts, Hausa popular folk musicians also adopted different instruments, rather than the predominantly percussion-based music of Emir's courts and occupational guild singers. Thus percussion instruments such as *duman girke*, *ganga*, *tauje*, *banga*, *taushi*, *kotso*, *turu*, *kalangu*, and *kwaira*; as well as wind instruments like *algaita*, *kakaki*, *kubumburuwa*; stringed instruments like *garaya*, *kuntigi*, *molo*, *kwamsa*, *goge*, *kukuma* all became the vogue among Hausa street and popular folk musicians up to 1990s.<sup>8</sup>

Mamman Shata, the most famous of all Hausa folk popular entertainers, for instance used the *kalangu* (an hour-glass shaped drum, or "African" drum) orchestra; Dan Maraya Jos used *kuntigi* (a small, one-stringed instrument, a kind of fiddle). Equally diverse was their subject matter. Shata was predominantly a praise singer (*maroki*) for Emirs (*Sarkin Daura Mamman Bashir*), gentry (*Garban Bichi Dan Shehu*), "peoples'" heroes (*Bawa Direba*),

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<sup>8</sup> A very good introduction to Hausa musical instruments and their functions can be found in Yusef Lateef (1987), *The Musicians, Music and Musical Instruments of Northwestern Nigeria*, which is a book two of a single volume in Ziky P. Kofoworola and Yusef Lateef (1987) *Hausa Performing Arts and Music*, Lagos, Nigeria Magazine

women (*Kilishi Jikar Dikko*), infamous (*Ammani Manajan Nija*), high life (*A Sha Ruwa*), civil servants (*Abba 33*), etc, having composed thousands of songs for all categories of people.<sup>9</sup>

Dan Maraya Jos operated on the other side of the spectrum. Despite being a popular singer, he refused to be client-focused and composed songs of poetic elegance that reflect the vicissitudes of life. Examples included *Wakar Sana'a* (virtues of gainful employment) *Dan Adam Mai Wuyar Gane Hali* (lamenting human nature), *Jawabin Aure* (married life), *Bob Guy* (the dude, a parody of drunkards and young urban dudes intoxicated with “modernity”), *Ina Ruwan Wani Da Wani* (virtue of minding your own business), etc. He remained one of the few Hausa popular artistes with international collaborations.<sup>10</sup>

Hausa female popular singers were very few – perhaps due to the low class status often afforded to musicians in the Hausa society. As Smith pointed out, Hausa social status classification tends to “place officials, Mallams (Muslim scholars) and merchants at the top, in that order, and put musicians and butchers at the bottom.”<sup>11</sup> (Smith 1959 p. 249). This categorization also excludes female specialisms in Hausa society of which music is one.

Generally music and popular entertainment are not seen as credible or acceptable career options for women in a traditionally closeted society. Nevertheless, the few women musicians exist to provide female-themed entertainment for especially married women in *purdah* (Islamic seclusion). The most notable of this category of Hausa musicians was Uwaliya Mai Amada, a female vocalist accompanied by an orchestra of women calabash musicians (led by her husband!) in a music genre referred to as *amada*. The early stage sets in her career were often a bawdy performances full of comedic innuendos of the sexuality of *marabouts* – Muslim religious scholars who claim to deal with supernatural forces on behalf of women, and who often, as suggested in her songs, use their position of spiritual trust to sexually abuse their women clients.

Singing predominantly for women and especially during women-themed ceremonies, she carved a respectful niche for herself as an energetic voice for women, bringing out their

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<sup>9</sup> So far the most comprehensive works on Shata are Dandatti Abdulkadir, 1975, *The Role of an Oral Singer in Hausa/Fulani Society: A Case Study of Mamman Shata*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University; Ibrahim Seme, Yusuf Tijjani Albasu, Aliyu Ibrahim Kankara, and Ali Malami, 2004, *Shata: Ikon Allah*. Kaduna, Informart Publishers (2006).

<sup>10</sup> The most recent being a collaborative project titled North Meets North, with Rod Patterson (Scotland) on acoustic guitar, and Dan Maraya Jos on kuntigi. This led to a series of concerts in Kano and Abuja in November 2003. See Muhammad Jameel Yusha'u. “Of Haucottish Music and Artistic Moralisation.” Online at <http://www.counterpoint-online.org/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=337>. Further details also at <http://www.thisdayonline.com/archive/2003/12/12/20031212rev03.html>.

<sup>11</sup> M.G. Smith (1959), “The Hausa System of Social Status”, *Africa*, Vol 29 (1959) pp 239-251.

fantasies and cocking a snook at the conservative establishment, as reflected in this excerpt from *Malam Ya Ga Wata!* (The teacher eyes another one!)

Allah ya yi Malam ya zo  
 (Chor) Malam ya ga wata  
 Wannan ba Malami ba ne  
 Ya yi katakata ya kasa tashi  
 Ya yi lumu sai ya kasa tashi  
 Dadin yaro sai ya ka da malam

Malam is here, at last,!  
 (Chor) He has eyed another one!  
 Oh no, this is certainly not a Malam  
 He (it) is staggering, could not get up!  
 He (it) is limp, could not get up  
 Malam is down with sheer ecstasy

The pronoun “He” is an euphemism for the more reproductive portion of the Mallam’s anatomy! Her mantle was sustained by a female contemporary *Amada* musician, as the calabash music was called, Barmani Coge who used similar styles (and often the same songs) as Uwaliya. Often sarcastic, Barmani used her sharp lyrics to cock a snook at the various intrigues and vicissitudes of married life. And because she reflected so many women’s innate moral struggle, she became an instant celebrity. Between the two of them, Uwaliya and Barmani provided entertainment fodder for well-heeled Hausa women during ceremonies.

Hausa folk musicians with youth focus such as Habibu Sakarci, Dankashi (*Safiya Kano*), Amadu Doka (*Garba Tabako*), Garba Supa (*Amarya Ango*), Hassan Wayam (*Sai Wayam*), Surajo Mai Asharalle, Ali Makaho (*Wakar Mandula*—a provocative street song on marijuana), Idi Na Kumbo, Sani Man Bango, Haruna Uje, and other others provided Hausa youth with a vibrant entertainment space that, in the main, remained traditional and reflected of the Hausa social space. Examples of traditional Hausa praise-singers are shown in action in Plate 2.



*Kalangu musicians*



*Kukuma musicians*

*Plate 2 – Hausa praise-singers (maroka) at wedding functions, Kano, Nigeria, 2004.*

In each of the photos in Fig. 1, the ensemble is made up of a drummer, a vocalist and an orator. Increasingly the ensembles also started going about with their own “technician” – a member of group who carries a large loudspeaker connected to a portable motorbike battery to provide amplification for the vocals.

It was not all music, however, there was considerable dancing. One of the most organized dance formations in Hausaland was the Koroso dance and music. The Koroso dance emerged from freelance street entertainers in Kano in 1977. The dance troupe was formed by Musa Lambu (playing *lalaje* also called *shekete*, a rattle made of stack of pierced calabash discs held together by a wooden rod), Hassan Na Talatu (on drums) and Sarkin Busa (flute). With their acrobatic and energetic dancing partners — colorfully dressed and with leg brass pieces and arm rattles that create a sound when they stomp their feet, which was often! — their main repertoire were the dance patterns of *Rawar Takai*, *Rawar Caccake*, *Rawar Mardo*, *Rawar Noma*, and *Rawar Nakiya da Garma*. Because of the centrality of these dance patterns and the music that accompanies them, Koroso became a principal icon of Hausa traditional entertainment. The music by Koroso troupe was often used as Hausa television drama music. This all changed with the appearance on the popular culture scene of Hausa home video films.

### **Hindi Film Factor in Hausa Popular Culture**

The main cinematic interest of the Muslim Hausa of northern Nigeria before the advent of the Home videos is the Hindi cinema which was brought to northern Nigeria by Lebanese distributors after independence from Britain in 1960.<sup>12</sup> From 1945, when the first cinema was opened in Kano, to 1960, film distribution was exclusively controlled by a cabal of Lebanese merchants who sought to entertain the few British colonials and other imported non-Muslim workers in northern Nigeria by showing principally American and British films.

Despite strict spatial segregation (from 1903 when the British conquered the territory to 1960), the British did acknowledge that the locals (i.e. Muslim Hausa) maybe interested in the new entertainment medium, and as such special days were kept aside for Hausa audience in the three theaters then available. The British, however, were not keen in seeing films from either the Arab world, particularly Egypt with its radical cinema, or any other Muslim country that might give the natives some revolutionary ideas. Indeed there was no attempt to either develop any local film industry, or even provide African-themed entertainment for the locals.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In Kano, the first “Indian” film screened was *Gheghis Khan*, shown in Palace cinema, Kano city in December 1960. It is interesting to note that the film was not “Indian”, but seen as so. Before independence, films shown in northern Nigerian cinemas were American cowboy, war and feature films.

<sup>13</sup> Abdalla Uba Adamu (2004) *Space Oddities: Urban Space, Racism and Entertainment in Northern Nigeria, 1930-1968*. An unpublished seminar/discussion, Department of Education, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria.

After 1960s there were few attempts to show cinema from the Arab world, as well as Pakistan, due to what the distributors believe to be common religious culture between Middle East and Muslim northern Nigeria. However, these were not popular with the Hausa audience, since they were not religious dramas, but reflect a culture of the Arabs. And although the Hausa share quite a lot with the Arabs (especially in terms of dress, food and language)<sup>14</sup>, nevertheless they had different entertainment mindsets, and as such these Arab films did not go down well.

The experimental Hindi films shown from November 1960 proved massively popular, and the Lebanese thus found a perfect formula for entertaining Hausa audience. Subsequently, throughout urban clusters of northern Nigeria, from Kano, Jos, Kāḍuna, Bauchi, Azare, Maiduguri, and Sokoto, Lebanese film distribution of Hindi films in principally Lebanese controlled theaters ensured a massive parenting of Hindi film genre and storyline, and most especially the song and dance routines, on urban Hausa audience.

Thus from 1960s all the way to the 1990s Hindi cinema enjoyed significant exposure and patronage among Hausa youth. Thus films such as *Raaste Ka Patthar* (1972), *Waqt* (1965) *Rani Rupmati* (1957), *Dost* (1974) *Nagin* (1976), *Hercules* (1964), *Jaal* (1952), *Sangeeta* (1950), *Charas* (1976), *Kranti* (1979), *Dharmatama* (1975), *Loafer* (1974), *Amar Deep* (1958) *Dharam Karam* (1975) and countless others became the staple entertainment diet of Hausa urban youth, as well as provincial cinemas. It subsequently provided a template for future young filmmakers.

However, although the Hindi cinema was popular, the actual process of going to the cinema to watch it was still associated with a furtive activity. In the first instance, and for some reasons undefined, the Muslim Hausa conservative society considered cinema going a roguish activity that only the rowdy and troublesome ('*yan iska*, which include drug users, prostitutes, loiterers, and other underbelly of the society) go to.<sup>15</sup> Women were – and still are – definitely excluded—and if a woman did attend, then she was seen as a prostitute. Women and girls therefore had no entertainment except at home. This all changed, however, when in the mid-1976 a television station, the Nigerian Television Network Authority's NTA Kano, was established. The network was also established in other States of the Nigerian federation.

Subsequently, the biggest boom for Hindi cinema in Northern Nigeria was in the 1970s when state television houses were started operating and became the outlet for

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<sup>14</sup> For details of Arab influence on Hausa society, see Adamu, M. U., 'Some Notes on the Influence of North African Traders in Kano', *Kano Studies*, Vol. 1, No 4, 1968 pp. 43-49, and Adamu, M. U., *Further notes on the influence of North African traders in Kano*, being a paper presented at the International Conference on Cultural Interaction and Integration Between North and Sub-Saharan Africa, Bayero University Kano, 4th–6th March, 1998.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed study of the materiality of cinemas in Hausaland, see Larkin, B (2002), 'The Materiality of Cinema Theaters in Northern Nigeria', in Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod and Brian Larkin (eds). *Media Worlds: Anthropology on a New Terrain*. University of California Press.

readily available Hindi films on video tapes targeted at home viewers. For instance, the NTA Kano alone screened 1,176 Hindi films on its television network from 2nd October 1977 when the first Hindi film was shown (*Aan Bann*) to 6th June 2003.<sup>16</sup> At the time of starting the Hindi film appearance on Hausa television houses, young school boys and girls aged 7 or less became avid watchers of the films and gradually absorbed templates of behavior from screen heroes they thought share similar behavioral patterns. By early 1990s they had become novelists, moving to the home video arena towards the end of the decade.

The entire commercial Hausa home video film industry started in Kano, northern Nigeria, in 1990 with a video film titled *Turmin Danya*, a traditional boy-meets-girl drama.<sup>17</sup> By 2004 the industry had grown and spawned more than 1,500 video films,<sup>18</sup> with most production and distribution facilities in Kano, which became dubbed *Kanywood* by the industry insiders.

### **Screen to Street – Hausa Adaptations of Popular Hindi Film Music**

Hindi films became popular simply because of what urbanized young Hausa saw as cultural similarities between Hausa social behavior and mores (e.g. coyness, forced marriage, gender stratification, obedience to parents and authority, etc) and those depicted in Hindi films. Further, with heroes and heroines sharing almost the same dress code as Hausa (flowing saris, turbans, head covers, especially in the earlier historical Hindi films which were the ones predominantly shown in cinemas throughout northern Nigeria in the 1960s) young Hausa saw reflections of themselves and their lifestyles in Hindi films, far more than in American films. Added to this is the appeal of the soundtrack music, the song and dance routines which do not have ready equivalents in Hausa traditional entertainment ethos. Soon enough cinema-goers started to mimic the Hindi film songs they saw.

Four of the most popular Hindi films in northern Nigeria in the 1960s and which provided the meter for adaptation of the tunes and lyrics to Hausa street and popular music were *Rani Rupmati* (1957), *Chori Chori* (1956), *Amar Deep* (1958) and *Khabie Khabie* (1975), whose posters, as sold in markets across northern Nigeria in the 1970s and 1980s, are shown in Plate 3, with the stand-out songs from the films in italics.

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<sup>16</sup> Figures obtained from the daily program listings of NTA Kano library, June 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Prior to the commercialization of the Hausa video films, there were extremely popular television dramas. Indeed the home video film industry was initiated by the television soap opera stars. For a detailed analysis of the Hausa television dramas, Louise M. Bourgault (1996), *Television Drama in Hausaland: The Search for a New Aesthetic and a New Ethic*, *Critical Arts* 10 (1) and chapter 5 of *Mass Media in Sub-Saharan Africa* by Louise M. Bourgault (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995)

<sup>18</sup> See Adamu, A.U. (2005) *An Anthology of Hausa Home Video Films*. Kano, Center for Hausa Cultural Studies ([www.kanoonline.com/chcs](http://www.kanoonline.com/chcs)).

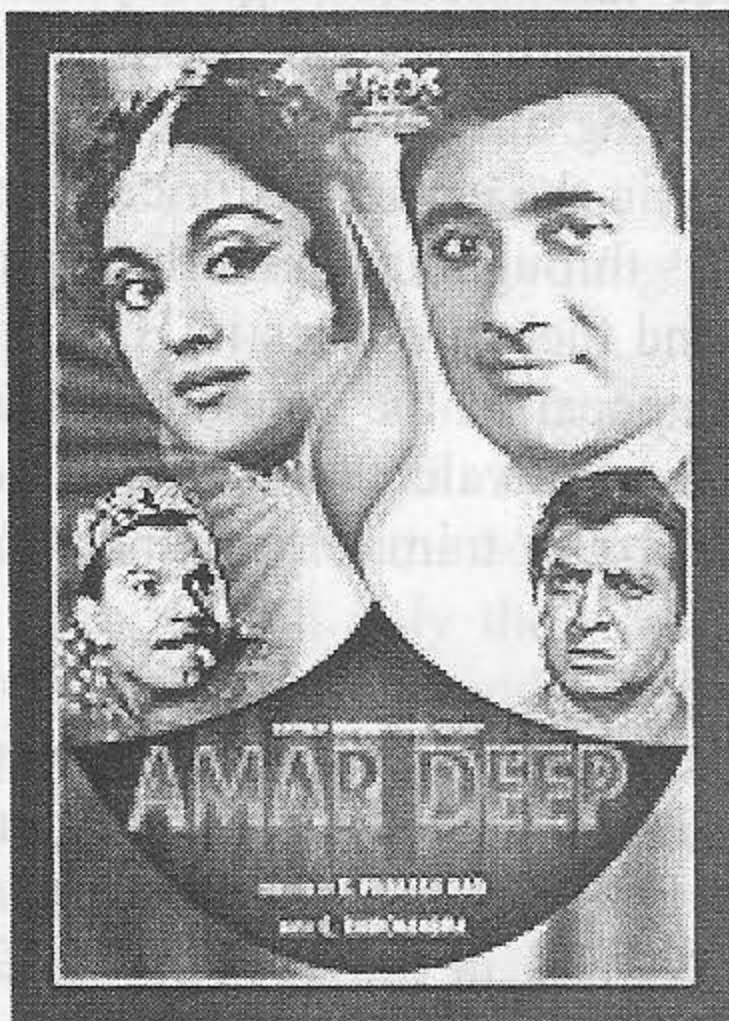




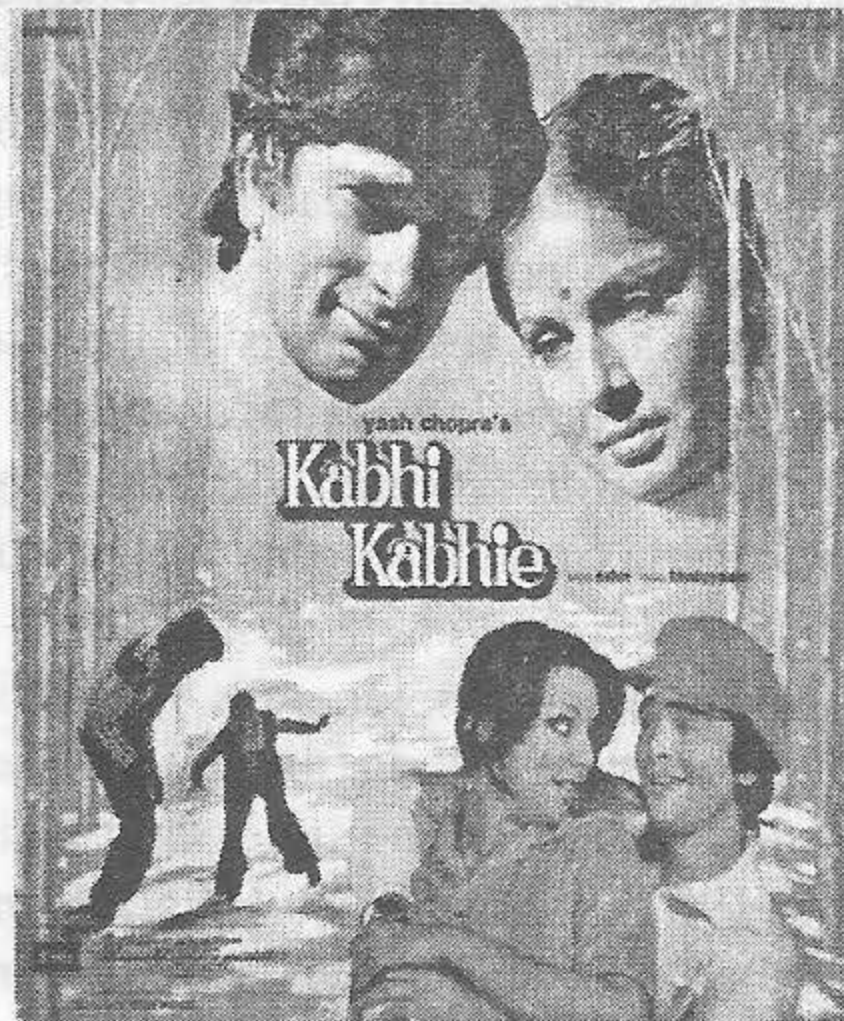
Rani Rupmati (1957)  
(Raati Suhani, Phool Baghiya)



Chori Chori (1956)  
(Hillorii)



Amar Deep (1958)  
(Chaliloo)



Kabhi Kabhie (1975)  
(Kabhi Kabie)

### Plate 3: Creative Inspirations for Hausa filmmakers

The first of this entertainment cultural leap from screen to street was made by predominantly young boys who, incapable of understanding Hindi film language, but captivated by the songs in the films they saw, started to use the meter of the playback songs, but substituting the “gibberish” Hindi words with Hausa prose. A fairly typical example of street adaptation was from *Rani Rupmati* (1957), as shown below:

*Itihaas Agar... (Rani Rupmati)*

Itinaas agar likhana chaho,  
Itihaas agar likhana chaho  
Azaadi ke majmoon se  
(Chor) *Itihaas agar likhana chaho*  
*Azaadi ke majmoon se*  
To seen khoo upne Dharti ko  
Veroo tum upne khom se  
*Har har har mahadev*  
*Allaho Akubar*  
*Har har har mahadev*  
*Allaho Akubar...*

*Hausa playground version*

Ina su cibayyo ina sarki  
Ina su waziri abin banza  
Mun je yaki mun dawo  
Mun samu sandan girma  
Ina su cibayyo in sarki  
Ina su wazirin abin banza  
  
*Har har har Mahadi*  
*Allahu Akbar*  
*Har har har Mahadi*  
*Allahu Akbar...*

The Hausa translation—which is about returning successfully from a battle—actually captured the essence of the original song, if not the meaning which the Hausa could not understand, which was sung in the original film in preparations for a battle. The fact that the lead singer in the film and the song, a woman, was the leader of the troops made the film even more captivating to an audience used to seeing women in subservient roles, and definitely not in battles.

A further selling point for the song was the *Allahu Akbar* refrain, which is actually a translation, intended for Muslim audiences of the film, of *Har Har Mahadev*, a veneration of Lord Mahadev (Lord Shiva, god of Knowledge). Thus even if the Hausa audience did not understand the dialogues, they did identify with what sounded to them like *Mahdi*, and *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest, and pronounced in the film exactly as the Hausa pronounce it, as *Allahu Akbar*) refrain—further entrenching a moral lineage with the film, and subsequently “Indians”. This particular song, coming in a film that opened the minds of Hausa audience to Hindi films became an entrenched anthem of Hausa popular culture, and by extension, provided even the traditional folk singers with meters to borrow.

Thus the second leap from screen to street was mediated by popular folk musicians in late 1960s and early 1970s led by Abdu Yaron Goge, a resident *goge* (fiddle) player in Jos. Yaron Goge was a youth oriented musician and drafted by the leftist-leaning Northern Elements People’s Union (NEPU) based in Kano, to spice up their campaigns during the run-up to the party political campaigns in the late 1950s preparatory to Nigerian independence in 1960.

A pure dance floor player with a troupe of 12 male (six) and female (six) dancers, Abdu Yaron Goge introduced many dance patterns and moves in his shows in bars, hotels and clubs in Kano, Katsina, Kaduna and Jos—further entrenching his music to the moral “exclusion zone” of the typical Hausa social structure, and confirming low brow status on his music. The most famous set piece was the bar-dance, *Bansuwai*, with its suggestive moves – with derriere shaken vigorously – especially in a combo mode with a male and a female dancer.

However, his greatest contribution to Hausa popular culture was in picking up Hindi film playback songs and reproducing them with his *goge*, vocals and *kalangu* (often made to sound like the Indian drum, *tabla*). A fairly typical example, again from *Rani Rupmati*, was his adaptation of the few lines of the song, *Raati Suhani*, from the film, as shown below:

### Hindi lyrics



Raati suhani  
djoome javani  
Dil hai deevana hai  
Tereliye

### Hausa adaptation (Abdu Yaron Goge)

Music interlude, with *tabla* simulation  
Mu gode Allah, taro  
Mu gode Allah, taro

Duniya da dadi  
Lahira da dadi  
In da gaskiyarka,  
Lahira da dadi  
In babu gaskiyarka,  
Lahira da zafi

The Hausa lyrics was a sermon to his listeners, essentially telling them they reap what they sow when they die and go to heaven (to wit, “if you are good, heaven is paradise, if you are bad, it is hell”). It became his anthem, and repeated radio plays ensured its pervasive presence in Muslim secluded households, creating a hunger for the original film song.

Another song, *Phool Bagiya*, from the same film was to be adapted by folk musicians, as exemplified by Ali Makaho in the lyrics below:

### *Phool Bagiya*

Phool bagiya main bulbul bole

Dal pe bole koyaliya

Pyar karo

Pyar karo rukhi pyar ki yaare

Hann ruth kehiti he kalya

*Hojiho, hojiho*

*Hojiho, hojiho*

Pyar to he salwa rukhi har rukhi

Pyar ki mushkil he kaliya

Pyar mera daaba bari bangaye

Raat ke raat ke savaliya

*Hojiho, hojiho, hojiho*

*Hojiho, hojiho, hojiho*

### Hausa adaptation (Ali Makaho)

Za ni Kano, za ni Kaduna (to rhyme with *Pyar karo...*)

Mu je Katsina lau za ni Ilori

Na je Anacha

*Hitoho hotiho*

*Hotiho hotiho*

Ni ban san kin zo ba

Da na san kin zo ne

Da na saya miki farfesu

Ni ban san ka zo ba

Da na san ka zo ne

Da na saya maka funkaso

Za ni Wudil,

Za ni Makole

Na zarce Gogel,

Za ni Hadeja

Na kwan a Gumel

Even cultured Hausa poets were not averse to borrowing a Hindi film meter to compose Hausa songs to make them more palatable to their audience. A further example is an adaptation of *Panchi Banu* from the Hindi film, *Chori Chori*, by a noted and well-respected Hausa political poet, Akilu Aliyu, as shown below.

*Panchhi Banu* (Chori Chori, 1956)

**Hindi lyrics**

Panchhi banu udati phiruu mast gaagan mei  
 Aaj mein azaad huun duniya kii chaman mein  
 Panchhi banu udati phiruu mast gaagan mei  
 Aaj mein azaad huun duniya kii chaman mein  
 hillorii hillorii ...) o ... oho  
 hillorii hillorii ...) o ... oho

**Hausa Adaptation, Akilu Aliyu (Poet)**

Sun yi shiri sun yi miting sun hada kwamba  
 Wai za su kashe NEPU a binne su ci gumba  
 Sun yi kadan basu da iko su kashe ta  
 NEPU dashe ne wada Allah Ya kafata  
 Masu kufurtu suyi noma su yi huda  
 Sai kaga an barsu wajen bare takanda

The same soundtrack song was also adapted by Abdu Yaron Goge, the fiddler:

**Hindi lyrics**

Panchhi banu udati phiruu mast gaagan mei  
 Aaj mein azaad huun duniya kii chaman mein  
 Panchhi banu udati phiruu mast gaagan mei  
 Aaj mein azaad huun duniya kii chaman mein  
 hillorii hillorii ...) o ... oho

**Hausa adaptation (Abdu Yaron Goge),  
*Fillori***

Mai tafiya za ka ina zani Ilori,  
 Zani sayan goro da taba da turare  
 Mai tafiya za ka ina zani Ilori,  
 Zani sayan goro da taba da turare  
 Ilori, lorri lorri, Ilori<sup>19</sup>

In both the adaptations of the lyrics, the Hausa prose has, of course, nothing to do with the actual Hindi wordings. However the meter of the Hindi songs became instantly recognizable to Hausa audience, such that those who had not seen the film went to see it. Since women were prohibited since 1970s from entering cinemas in most northern Nigerian cities, radio stations took to playing the records from the popular Hindi songs. This had the powerful effects of bringing Hindi soundtrack music right into the bedrooms of Hausa Muslim housewives who, sans the visuals, were at least able to partake in this transnational flow of media. It is hardly surprising, therefore that Hausa housewives became the most avid watchers of the Hindi films when they became available on video cassettes in the late 1970s.

**A Paradox: Islamic Hindinization of Soundtrack Music**

As noted earlier, the leap from screen to street was made predominantly by boys who often get to sneak into the theaters (which allowed an extremely flexible interpretation of “adults” only) and watch the films. Girls had to rely on radio stations playing the soundtracks, and soon enough predominantly girl pupils from Islamiyya Schools (modernized Qur’anic schools) also started adapting Hindi music. However, instead of using the meter to sing usual playground plaza songs, they decided, at the instances of

<sup>19</sup> Ilori, or Ilorin, is a large city in Kwara State, northern Nigeria.

their teachers, to adapt the meters to singing the praises of the Prophet Muhammad in Hausa language. Some of the more notable adaptations are listed in Table 1:

**Table 1: Islamic Hindinization of Hindi film soundtrack songs**

S/N	Song from Hindi Film	Hausa Adapted Islamic Song
1.	Ilzaam (1954)	Manzon Allah Mustapha
2.	Rani Rupmati (1957)	Dahana Daha Rasulu
3.	Mother India (1957)	Mukhtaru Abin Biyayya
4.	Aradhana (1969)	Mai Yafi Ikhwana
5.	The Train (1970)	Lale Da Azumi
6.	Fakira (1976)	Manzona Mai Girma
7.	Yeh Wada Raha (1982)	Ar-Salu Macecina
8.	Commando (1988)	Sayyadil Bashari
9.	Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak (1988)	Sayyadil Akrami
10.	Yaraana (1995)	Mu Yi Yabonsa Babu Kwaba
11.	Dil To Pagal Hai (1997)	Watan Rajab

Thus Islamiyya Schools predominantly in Kano started using the meter of popular Hindi film soundtracks to religious songs.<sup>20</sup> An irony, considering that a lot of the Hindi songs they were adapting were tied to Hindu religion, with its multiplicity of gods, as opposed to the monotheism of Islam. These adaptations, which were purely vocal, without any instrumental accompaniment, were principally in the 1980s during particularly religious resurgence in northern Nigeria post-1979 Iranian Islamic revolution which provided a template for many Muslim clusters to re-orient their entire life towards Islam in Muslim northern Nigeria. Entertainment was thus adapted to the new Islamic ethos. Thus while not banning watching Hindi films – despite the fire and brimstone sermonizing of many noted Muslim scholars – Islamiyya school teachers developed all-girl choirs that adapt the Islamic messaging, particularly love for the Prophet Muhammad, to Hindi film soundtrack meters. The basic idea was to wean away girls and boys from repeating Hindi film lyrics which they did not know, and which could contain references to multiplicity of gods characteristic Hindu religion.

Having perfected the system that gets children to sing something considered more meaningful than substitution of Hindi words from film soundtracks, structured music organizations started to appear from 1986, principally in Kano, devoted to singing the praises of the Prophet Muhammad. These groups – using the *bandiri* (tambourine) – were

<sup>20</sup> These were not accompanied by any musical instrument because the whole issue of music in Islam is a hot debate. Even these songs by the Islamiyya School groups were frowned up by the more orthodox Islamic establishment scholars who do not see any role of Music in Islam.

usually lead by poets and singers.<sup>21</sup> They are collectively referred to as *Kungiyoyin Yabon Annabi* (Groups for the Singing the Praises of Prophet Muhammad). The more notable of these in the Kano area included Usshaqul Nabiyyi (established in 1986), Fitiyanul Ahbabu (1988), Ahawul Nabiyyi (1989), Ahababu Rasulillah (1989), Mahabbatu Rasul (1989), Ashiratu Nabiyyi (1990) and Zumratul Madahun Nabiyyi (1990). All these were lead by mainstream Islamic poets and rely on conventional methods of composition for their works, often done in mosques or community plazas.<sup>22</sup> Most were vocal groups, although a few started to use the *bandiri* (tambourine) as an instrument during their performance. The *bandiri* itself has a special place in Hausa Muslim Sufi religious performances, a practice that often leads to controversies about the use of music in Islam, as well as the use of music in mosques during Sufi religious activities.

The one group, however, that stood out was *Kungiyar Ushaq'u Indiya* (Society for the Lovers of India). They are also devotional, focusing attention on singing the praises of the Prophet Muhammad, using the *bandiri* to accompany the singing. They differ from the rest in that they use the meter of songs from traditional popular Hausa established musicians, and substitute the lyrics with words indicating their almost ecstatic love for the Prophet Muhammad. Upon noticing that Islamiyya school pupils were making, as it were, a hit, with Hindi film soundtrack adaptations, they quickly changed track and re-invented themselves as *Ushaq'u Indiya* and focused their attention on adapting Hindi film soundtracks to Hausa lyrics, singing the praises of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>23</sup> Some members of these groups migrated into the home video production. They included Dan Azumi Baba, Mudassir Kassim, and Sani Garba S.K. They became midwives to the use of Hindi film soundtracks in Hausa home video

#### Screen to Screen – the Hausa Video Film Soundtrack

The Hausa video film industry started in 1990 with Turmin Danya from Tumbin Giwa drama group. The first Hausa home videos from 1990 to 1994 relied on traditional music ensembles to compose the soundtracks, with *koroso* music predominating. The soundtracks were just that – incidental background music to accompany the film, and not

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<sup>21</sup> The *bandiri* is an open, basin-shaped, hide vessel beaten with the hands by adherents of Qadiriyya sect whilst they chant the name Allah unceasingly. While not strictly a tambourine, it is the most approximate equivalent I can think of, and I use the word tambourine to refer to *bandiri* in this essay.

<sup>22</sup> For a textual analysis of the songs, see Aminu Isma'ila (1994), "Rubutattun Wakoki a Kasar Kano: Nazarin Wakokin Yabon Annabi (SAW)" (*Written Poetry in Kano: A Study of the Poems of the Praises of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)*). Unpublished B.A. (Hons)(Hausa) undergraduate dissertation, Department of Nigerian Languages, Bayero University, Kano.

<sup>23</sup> An extensive treatment of this particular group is given by in Brian Larkin (2002) *Bandiri Music, Globalization and Urban Experience in Nigeria*. In, *Cahiers D'Études africaines* 168 XLII-4 pp.739-762. *Musiques du monde*.

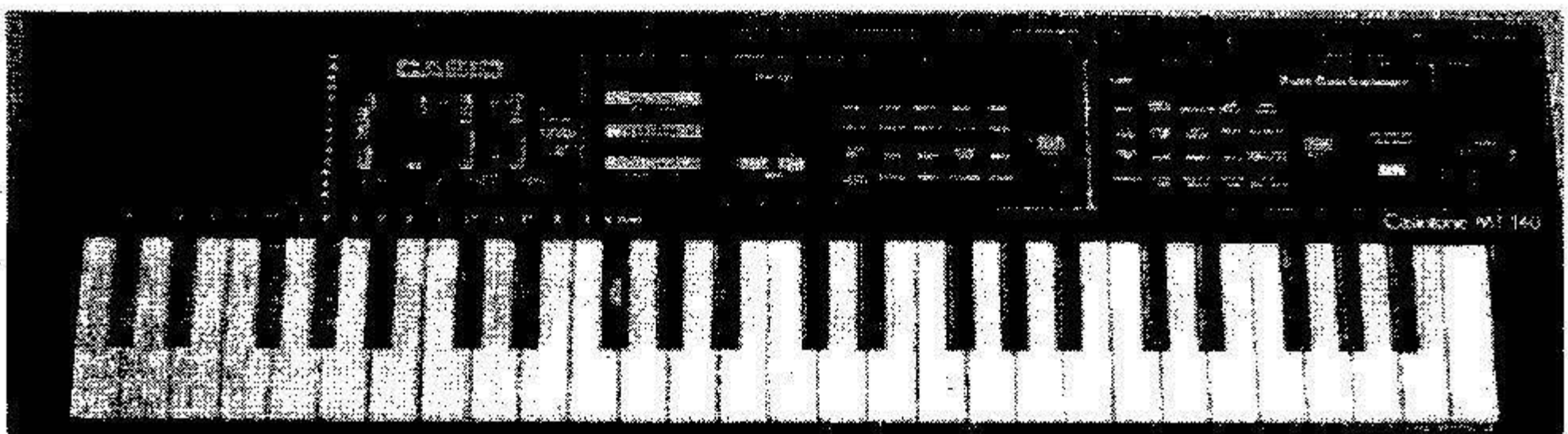
<http://etudesafricaines.revues.org/document164.html>

integral to the story. There was often singing, but it is itself embedded in the songs, for instance during ceremonies that seem to feature in every drama film. The Hausa home video film to pioneer a changeover to electronic music (in the sense of a Yamaha keyboard melodies) was *In Da So Da Kauna* in 1994. The video was an adaptation of the a bestselling Hausa novel of the same title.

The initial soundtrack for the video was composed with Hausa traditional musical instruments by the Koroso Entertainment ensemble housed at the Kano State History and Culture Bureau (HCB). It featured the Fulani *sarewa*, accompanied by drumming and a *lalaje* it was this music that featured in the film when it was shown throughout cinema houses in northern Nigeria, as was the practice then.

However, when the video was screened at the Dawud Cinema in Maiduguri, Borno State, it was pirated, and soon enough a bootleg of the tape was making rounds in various markets in northern Nigeria Ado Ahmed Gidan Dabino, the producer, was upset, but since there was little he could do, he decided to release his own official video of the home video in 1995, and also decided to include deleted scenes and other changes, as well as compose a different soundtrack, in order to make the second version as different from the bootleg version as possible. It was in the process of seeking a new sound for the home video that he came across Nasir Usman Ishaq Gwale, an artist with residency at the Kano State History and Culture Bureau (HCB).

Nasir had been given a toy, but fairly functional, Casio keyboard in 1985 — when he was still in senior high school — by his brother, Bello Usman Ishaq, a resident graphic artist with the HCB. In the same year an African-American researcher, Richard Donald Smith, a flutist and then a lecturer at the United Nations International School, New York, visited the HCB and was captivated by the enthusiasm with which Nasir used his Casio keyboard. The following year, in 1986, he brought a gift of Casiotone MT-140 to the bureau, shown, in a museum state, in Plate 4.<sup>24</sup>



*Plate 4: Welcome to the Future—Casiotone MT-140*

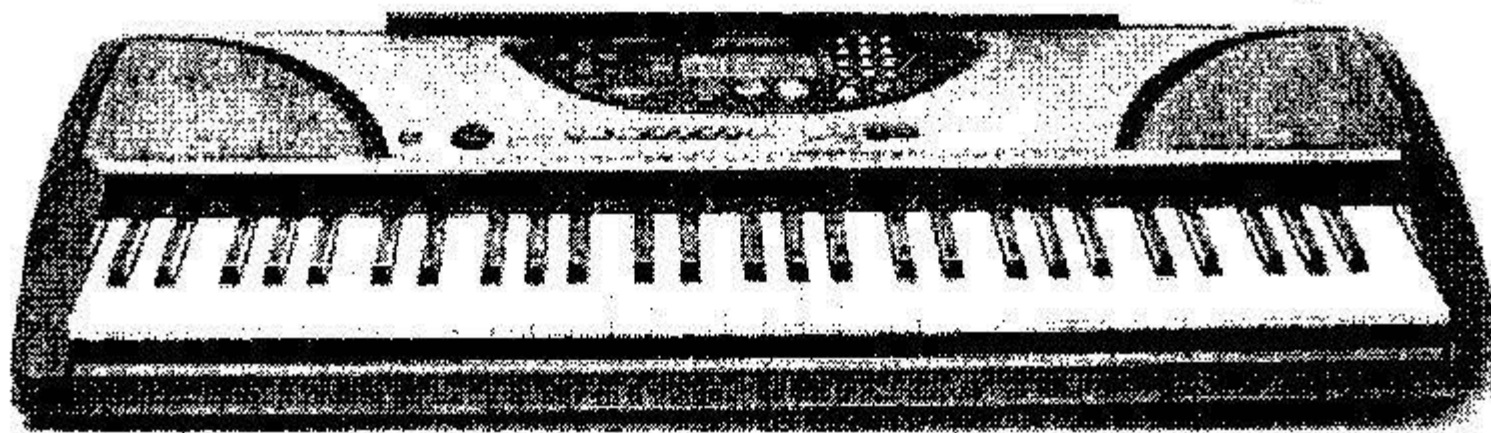
<sup>24</sup> Interviews with Sani Bature, Musa Ahmed Ishaq and Adamu Ibrahim Datti, Kano State History and Culture Bureau, January 2004.

Nasir immediately started playing around with it and soon enough perfected it to further enrich his informal musical repertoire. When Nasir finished high school in 1986, he honed his skills, as it were, in music by forming a smallish ensemble that revolved around the Casio organ, providing an alternative form of “modern” (as opposed to traditional) entertainment for youth in and around Kano metropolis, mainly at functions, ceremonies and other social events. In 1988 he was employed as a resident artist at the HCB’s Performing Arts division and became resident musician and artist for the HCB. He attracted other young members of the HCB, such as Alee Baba Yakasai, Shu’aibu Idris “Lilisco” (a former champion disco dancer) and Muktar Kwanzuma.

The HCB also plays host to other ensembles, particularly that formed by a school teacher who was trained in Sudan and also formed a band based on Sudanese music styles—with a strong emphasis on accordion. One of their greatest hits was *Halimatu Sadiya*—an ode to a girl of the same name—which in the late 1980s changed the pattern of popular entertainment in Kano and made it clear that the future lies with organs and synthesizers, rather than traditional Hausa instruments, especially among the youth. All these contributed to enrich Nasir’s musical set pieces. Under the tutelage of his teacher at the Bureau, Musa Ahmed, and with help from his friends Muktar Kwanzuma and Shu’aibu Idris “Lilisco”, also of the performing arts division, a more or less officially formed ensemble was formed by 1993.

When Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino was looking for a new sound to accompany the video release of *In Da So Da Kauna*, by then Nasir Usman Ishaq Gwale had become a well-sought after keyboardist and was commissioned to compose the soundtrack. It was this soundtrack that was used in the “official” video release of *In Da So Da Kauna* in 1995. It was, therefore, the first Hausa home video with a modern music soundtrack.

Clearly seeing the future in keyboard music, Hamisu Lamido Iyan-Tama, an entrepreneur who was to become an actor and producer decided to invest in a music studio, and in 1996 a music and video film studio, Iyan-Tama Multimedia, was formed in Kano. Its first purchase was the Yamaha soft synthesizer series, starting with PSR-220. The studio then employed Nasir as a consultant musician to residency in the studio. The Yamaha PSR-220 they used is shown in Plate 5.



*Plate 5: Yamaha PSR-220—Early Hausa Film Music Soundtrack Orchestra*



The Yamaha PSR-220 provided an instant appeal to a Hausa musician seeking ways to explore combination of sounds without being hampered by inability to play real traditional instruments. It also made it possible to do the impossible in Hausa music – produce a perfect blend of various instruments, thus breaking the monopoly of the single-instrument characteristic of traditional Hausa music. In so doing, it enables Hausa video film soundtrack artistes the opportunity to approximate the creative space of Hindi film music, which they avidly copy.

This was made possible because Yamaha took actual instruments and digitally recorded them, thus giving the keyboard everything from the standard piano, to a jazz organ, to a distorted guitar, and even a full orchestra voice section. In addition, it features 99 voices to choose from (plus a drum kit).

In the same year, 1996, Dan Azumi Baba, a novelist and also a *bandiri* musician and singer, wrote a love song he called *Badakala* for two girls. Dan Azumi Baba said he was inspired not by Hindi films (which he admitted to being an avid fan), but by Middle Eastern folklore of heroes such as Antar (which learned from the popular street preacher, Kalarawi) who, it seemed also sung love serenades. In an innovative move, he decided to create a soundtrack for the songs with handclaps, hands beating a wooden bench, and eventually empty plastic storage jars ('jerrycans'). When he heard Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino's modernized soundtrack for *In Da So Da Kauna*, he immediately got the musician, Nasir, to set music to the words of *Badakala*. The resultant audio tape was meant to be sold in the markets as an independent new music production, and was to signal the emergence of new youth Hausa pop music (as contrasted to the traditional "classical" music).

The tape, however, was rejected by marketers in Kano. The main reasons were two. First it contained "kidan fiyano" (or piano music)—an instrument associated with the Church in northern Nigeria, and therefore avoided by Muslims. Secondly, *Allah* was mentioned in the lyrics to the song. To the marketers, this was akin to blasphemy—to utter the name of Allah in a piano music! The specific section of the "offending" lyrics are:

Ni Zainabu ke ce a raina	Oh, Zainab, you are in my heart
Ke ce hasken zuciyata	You are the light of my heart
To <i>Bismillah</i> , za ni fara	I start in the name of <i>Allah</i>
Bani basira, ya <i>Tabara</i>	Grant me wisdom, Oh <i>Allah – the Holy One</i>
Zan wake gun masoyiyata	I am going to sing for my lover

The words, *Bismillah* (start in the name of Allah) and *Tabara* (the Holy), in a love song, accompanied by a "Christian" instrument, proved to the marketers a lack of respect for the Creator. Afraid of the possible backlash from the society, which could even lead to a full-scale religious riot, they rejected the tape. In Hausa society of northern Nigeria in the 1980s to 1990s, even the use of wide-spread *bandiri* in religious poetry by Sufi adherents, especially the Qadriyyah, was frowned up and often considered controversial, with

different opposing camps of Muslim scholars debating the issue on a constant basis. A “piano” sound in an almost religious context simply muddled the issue further.

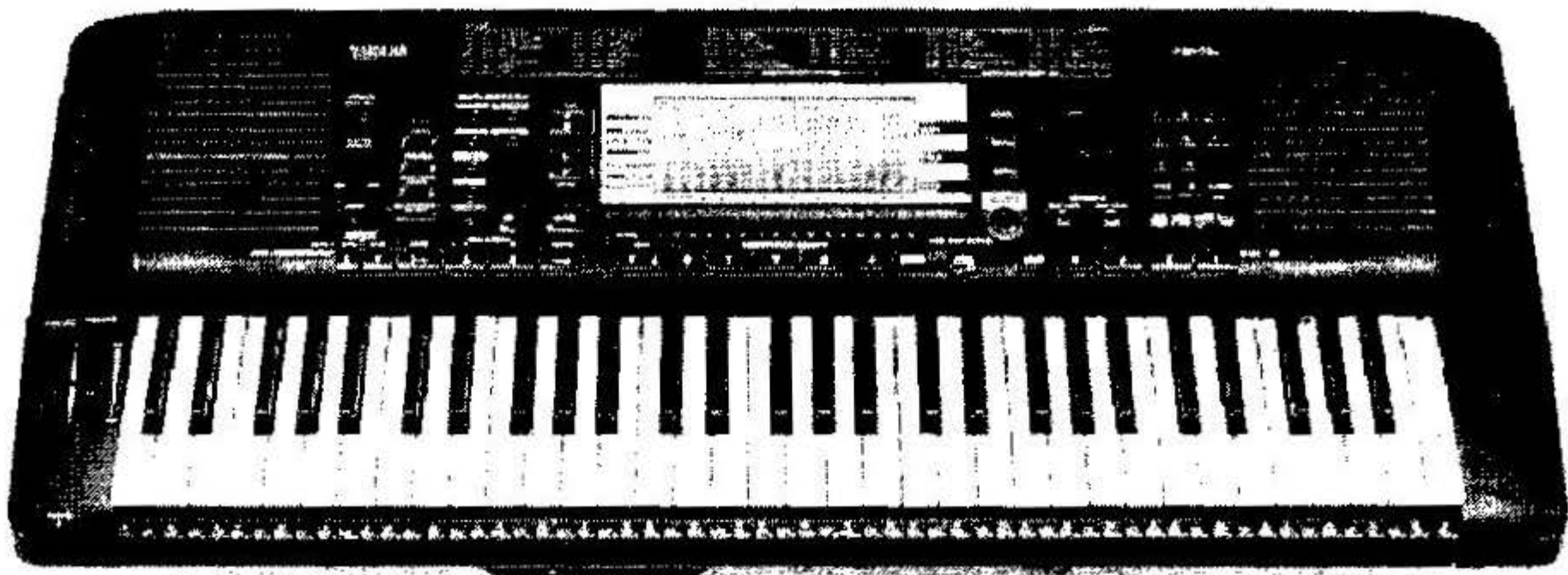
In order to cut his loss, the producer of *Badakala* took the further innovative and historic move of converting the song into a screenplay for a video film of the same name. It marked the first time a song formed the basis of a video film in the industry and was to become a common pattern by 2004.

It is in this historical narrative that a path emerged and another one eclipsed. *Badakala* was composed as a central element to the storyline of the video film of the same name. It was not meant to be a *soundtrack* in the original sense of lending an aural accompaniment to the story. It was sub-plot, and mini-opera on its on, pasted to the story, Hindi film style. It also has, for the first time, a boy and a girl singing to each other – introducing the mixed-gender element in Hausa popular music.

### **Improvisations for a Piano and Voice**

The flexibility given by PSR-220 thus enabled improvisations that would not have been possible with Hausa traditional orchestras. Significantly, it enabled a combination of sound samples whose outcomes clearly departed from the traditional definitions of Hausa sounds, even if retaining a digital sound-alike of Hausa instruments like *bandiri* (tambourine), flute (*sarewa*), *ganga* (drum), *goge* (fiddle) and others.

The turning point for Hausa home video film soundtrack was in 1999 when Iyan-Tama studios bought Yamaha PSR-730 keyboard, shown in Plate 6.

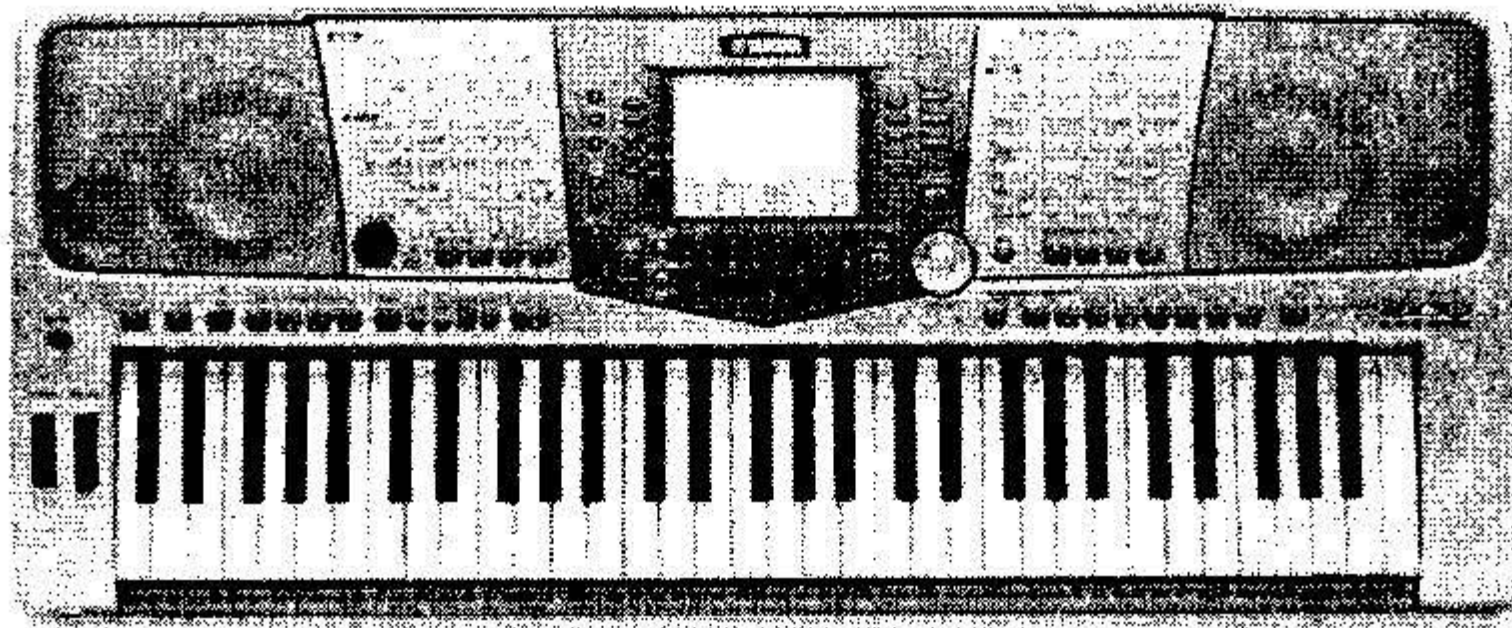


*Plate 6: “Wanna Take You Higher”—the Yamaha PSR-730 keyboard*

With a vast expanded range of Country, Jazz, Dance, Latin, Rock, Soul and Waltz, the PSR-730 opened up the doors to revolutionizing Hausa video film music. The first playback song to benefit from its superior range of sound samples was *Sangaya* from a video of the same title in 2000. Trailers of the home video, with the lead song, *Sangaya* being performed in the background—complete with choreography—immediately captured

the imagination of Hausa urban audience, helped along by the inclusion of a whole array of instrument sound samples such as flute, tambourine and African drums. The music, and most especially the choreography, from the soundtrack catapulted the video into the charts of “big league” Hausa video films, and one of the most successful Hausa films of all time.<sup>25</sup> Four years after its release, it still remained the definitive reference point for the emergence of Hausa home video film music.

The synthesizer business in Kano therefore blossomed. Iyan-Tama Multimedia studios purchased a higher Yamaha PSR 740 in 2001. By then other music studios had been established in Kano. These included Muazzat, Sulpher Studios, and in Jos, Lenscope Media. Sulpher Studios, in addition to Yamaha PSR-2100, illustrated in Plate 7, also use Cakewalk Pro (version 9) music software.



***Plate 7: “It’s More Fun to Compute” – Yamaha PSR-2100 in Sulpher Studios, Kano***

The availability of these modern studios opened up a whole new range of services for individuals interested in music—not just home video producers. Thus Islamiyya school pupils, who had hitherto remained vocal groups, joined in the act, and started using the Yamaha sound for their recordings, which are sold in the markets. In a fascinating cross fertilization of influences, the Islamiyya school ensembles stopped using meters from Hindi film songs and started using the meters of Hausa video film soundtracks. Thus soundtracks from popular Hausa films such as *Sangaya*, *Wasila*, *Nagari*, *Khusufi*, were all adapted by Islamiyya pupils, often with Arabic lyrics.

It is significant that in almost all Hausa video film soundtracks the songs are duets – a boy and a girl singing. Yet in the “Islamized” versions, it is only one voice – either a male or a female voice. The Islamic etiquette of not allowing mixed-gender formations effectively prevent a reproduction of the Hindi film soundtrack format in the Islamized versions, no matter how arrived.

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<sup>25</sup> The Hausa home video tape was sold for N250 (\$1.80). *Sangaya* then sold for about \$107,914 (at the rate of N139 to USD in 2000). The sales figures were revealed by Alhaji Auwal Mohammed Sabo, the producer of the video film, Kano, July 2003.

The success of *Sangaya* sent a strong commercial message that singing and dancing can sell massively, especially if done with what the practitioners call a “piano”. It was at this point that the Hindi cinema influence came to the fore in full force and a new crop of Hausa home video producers, quite intent on repeating the success of *Sangaya*, took over with Hindi film cinema storylines.

In their desire to replicate Hindi films as closely as possible in the Hausa ripped-off versions, Hausa video producers had to rely on the synthesizer to enable them to create the complex polyphony of sounds generated by the superior musical instruments of Hindi film music.

While a lot of the songs in the Hausa video films were original to the films, yet quite a sizeable are direct rip-offs of the Hindi film soundtracks – even if the Hausa main film is not based on a Hindi film. This, in effect means a Hausa video film can have two sources of Hindi film “creative inspiration” – a film for the storyline (and fight sequences), and songs from a different film. Table

Thus besides providing templates for storylines, Hindi films provide Hausa home video makers with similar templates for the songs they use in their videos. The technique often involves picking up the thematic elements of the main Hindi film song, and then substituting with Hausa lyrics. Consequently, anyone familiar with the Hindi film song element will easily discern the film from the Hausa home video equivalent. Although this process of adaptation is extremely success because the video film producers make more from films with song and dances than without, there are often dissenting voices about the intrusion of the new media technology into the film process, as reflected in this letter from a correspondent:

I want to advise northern Nigerian Hausa film producers that using European music in Hausa films is contrary to portrayal of Hausa culture in films (videos). I am appealing to them (producers) to change their style. It is annoying to see a Hausa film with a European music soundtrack. Don't the Hausa have their own (music)?...The Hausa have more musical instruments than any ethnic group in this country, so why can't films be produced using Hausa traditional music? Umar Faruk Asarani, Letters page, *Fim*, No 4, December 1999, p. 10.

Interestingly, other musical sources are often used as templates. Thus a Hindi film template can often have songs borrowed from a totally different source. *Ibro Dan Indiya*, for instance, with had an adaptation of a song from *Mohabbat*, contains an adaptation of a composition by Oumou Sangare, the Malian diva, *Ah Ndiya* which was ripped-off as *Malama Dumbaru* in the Hausa video film.

By 2006 the Hindi film music template had become so pervasive that it has been adopted by the marketing strategies of major companies in northern Nigeria selling various products. Thus radio jingles and advertisement slots came to be characterized by the “fiyano” sound, and in almost always a duet between a boy and a girl advertising a variety of goods and services from spaghetti to airline tickets. This revolution in marketing was facilitated by the emergence of new independent FM radio stations in major cities. For instance, Kano saw the arrival of Freedom Radio (which was more aggressive in promoting the Hausa film soundtrack sound in that it even has a commercial studio complete with “modern” instruments for sub-letting), Pyramid Radio and Radio Nagarta.

## Conclusions

The most significant effect of media flow of influences – whether from the West or the East – in the Hausa popular culture is radical transformation of Hausa music. A push and pull factor is at play in the process. The Hausa traditional music seemed to have outlived its client-focus in a depressed economy where the clients cannot afford the praise singing that keeps the traditional musicians in jobs. Further, quite a few of the musicians have declared in various interviews that they do not wish their progeny to succeed them in the business. A typical example is this response by Alhaji Sani Dan Indo, a *kuntigi* musician who responded to a question of whether he wants his children to succeed him.

“Unless it is absolutely necessary. I definitely don’t want my son to become a musician. I have seen enough as a musician to determine that my son will really suffer if he becomes a praise-singer. You only do praise-singing music to a level-headed client, and it is only those who know the value of praise-sing that will patronize you. Those times have passed. I certainly would not want my own son to inherit this business. I would prefer he goes to school and get good education, so that even after I die, he can sustain himself, but I don’t want him to follow my footsteps, because I really suffered in this business. Therefore I am praying to Allah to enable all my children to get education, because I don’t want them to become musicians like me.” Interview with Sani Dan Indo, a Hausa popular culture *kuntigi* musician, *Annur*, Vol 1, August 2001, p. 48

Similarly, Sani Aliyu Dandawo, a court musician in the Argungu basin expressed his doubts about whether his children will sustain the family’s musical tradition. As he stated,

“Among my children I don’t think there is any who might be interested in sustaining our family’s musical tradition since they are all in higher education, some are studying for degrees while others are studying for Higher National Diploma; some have completed and are working. Thus there is no way *dan boko* (educated person) will waste his time with singing (as a career)...Only among my backing musicians am I likely to

get someone to sustain my music, since at the moment one of them always stands in for me in my absence” Interview with Sani Aliyu Dandawo, *Fim*, October 2004, p. 50.

Thus with the reluctance of the traditional musicians to pass on their skills to their own children,<sup>26</sup> or even open music “schools” to train others, and with the legendary ones dying (e.g. Mamman Shata, Haruna Oje, Musa Dankwairo), the Hausa traditional musical genre therefore become wide open to influences that follow the path of least resistance. Hindi film culture provided this road-map, and the Yamaha soft synthesizer enabled younger Hausa “musicians” to follow the path to transnational flow of influences.

In so doing, they have radically altered the landscape of Hausa music and its status in the Hausa society; in addition to creating a specific unique Hausa video film soundtrack genre.

First, they have introduced the multi-instrumental mode to Hausa music. For besides just the film soundtrack, the new technique is now widely used in radio jingles to advertise products and services. It has therefore become legitimized in Hausa public sphere – a contrast to its position in 1996 when dealers refused to stock *Badakala* tape because it contained “kidan fiyano” (piano music). Even Hausa traditional musicians now often go to the studios (e.g. Sulpher Studios in Kano) and ask for drum synthesizers to be played for them until they get the closest approximation to their natural drum sounds, and they overlay the sample with their voice. A perfect example is Abdu Boda Mai Asharalle from Katsina, who plays *duma* and *tandu* drums for his *Asharalle* music form, and who has abandoned these traditional percussion instruments and has gone Yamaha. Incidentally, Abdu Boda also became a film maker (producing *Tauraron Bisa Hanya*, *Nasir* and *Sarauniya*) in which he composed his own soundtrack music, becoming the first traditional Hausa musician to cross-over to the film soundtrack medium using the new technology.

Perhaps surprisingly, is the almost total acceptance of the Yamaha synthesizer sound by the *bandiri* musicians who use the *bandiri* in Sufi religious poetry. Many, such as Rabi’u Usman Baba and Bashir Dandago, have abandoned the *bandiri* and have gone Yamaha. The best-selling Muslim pop hit of 2004 in northern Nigeria was a poem composed for Fatima, Prophet Muhammad’s daughter, titled *Fatima*. It was accompanied by the Yamaha sound in a religious community that has now accepted the instrument as a symbol of modernity – essentially to attract younger audience to religious poetry.

Secondly, the new technology and its purveyors have also created what I call “mixed-space” interfaces in Hausa music by providing templates for male and female interaction.

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<sup>26</sup> The son of the late *kukuma* player, Garba Supa, took picked up his father’s plectrum, as it were and sustained his musical repertoire.

Hausa music had evolved as a single-sex, single-voice process. The Hindi film cinema created a dialogic state which sees overlapping male and female spaces during which terms of endearment are intensified with background symphony of sounds. Religious groups who had accepted the new technology (e.g. *bandiri* musicians and Islamiyya school choirs) have retained the single-sex voice due to the strict separation of the sexes in a Muslim polity, especially on religious occasions. The realm of public culture, however, has accepted this new gender configuration and as such the playback singers and musicians have created a new avenue for advertisement music, which in almost every case, is a reflection of the Hausa video film soundtrack.

Thirdly and finally, the Hausa film soundtrack genre has led to a re-definition of a musician in at least youth culture of the Hausa society. The keyboardists and playback singers of the Hausa video film soundtrack genre have become megastars, attracting hordes of literally squealing girls and gawping young boys (including the odd-housewife or so). Thus by 2004 the image of the musician as a praise-singer, has been altered by a new social re-classification made possible by the popularity of using the new media to express music, even in a traditional form. Traditional Hausa music, which still appeals to the thirtysomethings and above, did not actually die – it just ceased to be relevant to the teen brigade, which is the main target audience for the Hausa video films. However, with the traditionalist migrating to the synthesizer, a new voice for Hausa traditional music is certainly in the offing.

Thus what eclipsed in this opportunistic transformation is the Hausa traditional music genre. Very few traditional musicians are willing to sustain the process of acquiring new traditional musical instruments, especially when all the sounds they generate are easily produced by the Yamaha synthesizer. Since the availability of the Yamaha synthesizer to the Hausa video film industry, only one Hausa film producer, Shu'aibu Idris Lilisco, has experimented with creating a video film soundtrack with traditional instruments, abandoning the synthesizer. This was done in his 2004 video film, *Gamji*, which used *sarewa*, *duman girke*, *kuntigi*, *lalaje* and *duma*. It seems therefore the battle lines for “globalization” of the Hausa video film soundtrack have been drawn.

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