Media Studies *In* Nigeria:

A Book of Readings

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Prof. Abdalla Uba Adamu*

Introduction

The literature in the 1960s on communication and media concentrated on social and development role of media. That of 1970s was more critical bringing in evaluation of the role of media. NWICO – New World Information and Communication Order; the term originally coined in 1973 Conference of Non-Aligned – countries brought about the concept of cultural-media imperialism. UNESCO led the debate of restructuring international information and communication systems by initiating studies on communication flows across the globe. By the 1990s several scholars of globalization had begun to address consumption and the formation of transnational consumption communities, as key issues and foci for study (Griffin, 2002).

Varied concepts like cultural dependency, cultural imperialism; media imperialism (Schiller 1976, Boyd-Barrett 1977; 1998, Lee 1980) communication imperialism, electronic colonialism etc. came into being. Cultural imperialism includes broader social, cultural, economic and political contexts while media imperialism refers mainly to transnational charcter of the media industries. All these concepts dealt mainly with the flow of transnational media contents, especially films and TV programmes, from West to the other parts of the world.

There are economic, social and political reasons why nations regulate to safeguard cultural industries. In addition to generating employment and revenue, cultural industries also contribute to a sense of national and community well-being. It has been argued that cultural products are different from other consumer goods because they reflect the intrinsic values and characteristics of the societies that create them. A symposium of experts on culture, the market

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and globalization organized by UNESCO agreed that cultural goods were different because they were 'vehicles of the imagination'.[1]

In Indonesia, for example, broadcasting is seen as a means of 'developing and preserving the nation's culture' and building national unity, with an important contribution to make 'to living as a society, a people and a nation'.[2] In Malaysia, television has been described as a tool of the government for 'inculcating a feeling of unity in a multi racial society'.[3]

The operation of international markets and the commercial strength of major producing countries can result in the displacement of local product and threaten the viability of a country's audiovisual services sector. Film and television producers typically recoup most, if not all their production costs in their home markets, with large rich markets supporting high value productions. However, the costs of reproduction are marginal and there is a strong incentive for international trade as an export sale is worthwhile at any price that covers the small cost of supplying a print. This means that large wealthy producer countries like the USA with almost one hundred million television households, can sell high budget programs in other countries (or secondary markets) at very low cost. With programs being sold internationally at a fraction of the actual cost of producing them in their home market and well below the cost of locally made programs, it is very difficult for local programs to compete.[4]

Cultural protection measures are based on an assumption that local industries foster local creativity and indigenous talent which may otherwise have no expression. Such expression enriches the cultural life of the nation as a whole reflecting and contributing to people's perceptions of their identity, character and culture. Audiovisual products are important mediums for cultural expression and have a powerful influence on the cultural and social life in many countries. Broadcast media generally, and television in particular, provide major outlets for audiovisual products. As such they are often the focus for cultural policies and safeguards.

Globalization, an opportunity or a threat?

Progress in communication and transport technology during the 20th century has enabled us to overcome geographical boundaries and revolutionize our way of living. The World is now linked to such an extent that a local happening cannot take place without

impacting on the international community and vice versa. Globalization is not just about increasing the worldwide circulation of information and ideas. Economically speaking, it entails an increase in capital flow, transnational investment and international trade, thereby integrating all countries into a single giant world market. In terms of politics, the social, economic or environmental orientation of States is being increasingly determined by regional and international structures. In terms of Culture, is Globalization an opportunity or a threat?

Globalization itself is neither positive nor negative: it may be either of them depending on our viewpoint. Nonetheless, Culture in general, and cultural diversity in particular, is facing three challenges:

a) Globalization, in its powerful extension of market principles, by highlighting the culture of economically powerful nations, has created new forms of inequality, thereby fostering cultural conflict rather than cultural pluralism.
b) States are increasingly unable to handle on their own the cross-border flow of ideas, images and resources that affect cultural development.
c) The growing divide in literacy (digital and conventional) have made the cultural debates and resources an increasingly elitist monopoly, divorced from the capabilities and interests of more than half the world's population who are now in danger of cultural and economical exclusion.

Globalization, however, makes demands on indigenous cultures and communities and creates a tension between transnational, global and local. Often the tension is not just reflected in economic sphere, but also in long term cultural impacts of absorption of global values at the local level. One areas that is of particular interest to researchers (see, for instance, Kearney 1995, Appadurai, 1996) is media globalization. The fear of the cultural impact of transnational flow of media influences from communities with different cultural patterns leads to attempts and strategies to limit such intrusion in traditional societies. The most effective mode of doing this is through the censorship mechanism.

Censorship and Social Responsibility

Censorship of the arts is nothing new, nor restricted to quaint "traditional" societies afraid of liberal challenge to enforced

traditional authority. The very icons of Western Civilization deemed it fit to regulate artistic expression to protect civil society from the excesses of creativity. For instance, Plato was one of the earliest recorded advocates of rigorous censorship. His imagined utopian state imposed strict censorship in order to promote virtue and good morals in the young (*The Republic*, III:401).[5] Although he focused his criticisms more on heretical poetry and music than on the visual arts, he also disapproved of painting (*The Republic*, X:603)[6] and sculpture (*Sophist*, 235-36)[7] and argued that they should be submitted to state censorship so that their moral content could be monitored and if necessary corrected.

Freedom of speech in ancient Rome depended on one's social rank, and in the republican era many poets were exiled for their writings. The Romans established the office of Censor as early as 443 B.C.[8] Initially, the office was only to make a census of citizens and assess their wealth and taxes. However, the censors eventually acquired the power of *regimen morum,* or general control over the morals of citizens to determine their fitness for office. For the Romans, art was occasionally associated with decadence and corruption of morals. The Roman general Sulla was accused of corrupting his soldiers in foreign lands through art: "for there it was that the army of the Roman people first learned to indulge in women and drink, to admire statues, paintings and chased vases" (Chambers 1928, 55).

The early Christian world merely sustained the Platonian ideals of protecting the believers from any act of the civil polity that offended public and religious morality (Clapp 1972, Carmilly-Weinberger 1986, Jones 2001, Mango 1977, Gimpel 1969, Alexander 1958). For instance, after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, musical instruments were banned in worship (Kaplan 1997). Saint Augustine of Hippo explained this ban as distancing Christianity from the "sensual heathen cults...and shameless performances of the degenerate theatre and circus (Kaplan 1997)." The ban persisted until 670, when the organ was permitted to be played at the Eucharist. But in the Eastern Orthodox church the ban persists to this day (Jones 2001).

Islam is far more regulative than Judaism and Christianity in relation to artistic freedom. In addition to the prohibition of idolatry, Islam prohibits the representation of the human figure; it is

regarded as the creation of Allah, depiction of it as therefore a divine prerogative. Given such strict prohibitions, portrait and other painting in Islamic societies were and remained rare. Islamic artists focused their creative energies on calligraphy and ornamentation, where they faced few constraints (Papadopoulos 1979, 602-07). Arabesque ornamentation, where human and animal figures are blended into the designs, was generally acceptable to religious authorities.

Even in contemporary climes, liberalism always gave birth to censorship. By the outbreak of war in 1914 most nations had established film censorship regimes that embraced film production, distribution and exhibition. Feature film production and promotion by that time had moved from a cottage industry to a more corporate basis, involving substantial investment and increasingly involving an integration of studios, distribution networks and exhibition chains—offering regulators a number of places to put restraints, and encouraging caution by industry executives.

In the United States, a liberal atmosphere lead first to the development of the film industry through photography and its subsequent offspring – salacity. To forestall official censorship, the industry in 1909 formed the New York Board of Censors to evaluate films before public release. This became the National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures in 1915. Film regulation became a national issue in 1930, when concern over what was perceived to be increasing immorality in early American sound films led to the creation of the Motion Picture Production Code (popularly known as the Hays Code after its creator, Will H. Hays). Its guidelines, together with those laid down by the influential Catholic Legion of Decency, had a far-reaching effect on mainstream film production in the US.

By the mid-1960s, social changes rendered existing guidelines inadequate - the Legion of Decency was ridiculed for condemning distinguished films such as *La Dolce Vita* (1960) and *The Pawnbroker* (1964), and producers increasingly ignored the Hays Code's recommendations. When *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966), a film that blatantly breached the Code in several respects, got thirteen Oscar nominations (winning five), it was clear that the system had irretrievably broken down. The Motion Picture Association of America therefore introduced a ratings system that

sought to distinguish between films suitable for children and those clearly made for adults.

The history of British film censorship is as much social as cultural: the reasons films were banned in the 1920s (revolutionary politics) and 1950s (nudity) say as much about the society of the time as anything in the films (Mathews, 1994). It is also revealing that in an era of far greater equality the British Board of Film Classification, BBFC, is noticeably tougher on sexual violence today than it was thirty years ago, though correspondingly much more relaxed about most other issues (Robertson, 1985).

It is significant that in both Britain and the United States, censorship of the visual media was initiated by the industry. For instance, in Britain the BBFC is not a government organization. Just as the MPAA in the US is an industry initiative, so too in Britain were the BBFC's activities. In fact, in Britain the central government has no direct involvement in film censorship beyond passing legislation affecting the BBFC's activities. Local authorities have considerably more power, including the final say in whether or not certain films can be shown, though in the vast majority of cases they are happy to accept the BBFC's verdict. Indeed, this is why the BBFC was created by the film industry in the first place.

In the Arab world, the media have long played an important role in political discourse (Amin 2002). In the past few years, Arab journalism has begun to face forces of change; globalization processes have had a significant impact on Arab media by providing transnational Arabic and non-Arabic print and broadcast options for Arab audiences (Amin, 2000). Arab media institutions and personnel have begun to see the need to keep up with global information systems that now address and hold the attention of Arab masses and strengthen the forces of democracy (Alterman, 1998).

As the oldest and largest film industry in the Arab world, censorship has always plagued Egyptian intellectual life. Film has been considered more dangerous than literature since it can affect the larger masses in a country where most people do not read or write. Officially institutionalized by the Palace and the British Embassy in 1914, it is a part of the Ministry of the Interior. In 1914 the censorship bureau demanded from all filmmakers that they in no way, shape or form, criticize foreigners, civil servants and religion. It is forbidden to show the lifestyle of farmers, workers, or to

express any opinions on nationalistic or neutral political views favorable towards socialism. No one is to criticize the past or present monarchy.

Subsequently, artistic productions in Egypt, in particular films, are subjected to a rigid administrative system of censorship which was set up under the 1955 censorship law and has since then been further elaborated. The censorship machine starts to roll when scripts are presented for approval to the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry's censors file a report to the head of the Arts Censorship Authority (the art censor), who then approves or rejects the script. If the script contains elements that deal with religious or security matters, it is then forwarded to al-Azhar or the Ministry of Defence, whichever is appropriate, for their approval. Any scenes which do not pass this scrutiny must then be removed or amended. However, the art censor may reject the entire script if the principal message of the work is perceived to run counter to the provisions of the 1955 censorship law (Article 19, 1997).

Saudi Arabia, a much as model of officially unadulterated Islam—or Wahabism—as can be found, adopts a more comprehensive approach to media censorship. Moral policing is reposited with an agency called the *al-ri'asa al-'amma li-hay'at al-amr bi-al-ma'ruf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar* or the General Presidency for Committees of Ordering the Good and Forbidding the Evil, the members of which are also known by the traditional colloquial designation *mutawwa* (Cook, 1989). The activities of the committees included policing attendance at prayers, enforcing closure of shops at prayer time, assuring that women are properly veiled, preventing undue mixing of men and women, suppressing licentious acts like drinking or dancing, and banning public services of religions other than Islam. This particular brand of Islamic behavioral interpretation eventually found its way to northern Nigerian Muslim communities in the late 1980s[9] and created interesting interpretations for the use of visual medium in social discourse. Thus, as Tun-Jen and Posner (2003) argue,

> the common element in the censorship of art is offensiveness: when art challenges strongly held beliefs, usually of a political, ideological, moral, or religious character, there is pressure for censorship. We speak of "offensiveness" rather than "harm" because censorship of art is rarely based on a plausible theory causally linking the viewing of a work of art,

whether highbrow or popular, with actual antisocial behavior or consequences.[10]

Subsequently, the analytical and regulatory problem is that in a democratic, culturally and morally heterogeneous society such as that of the contemporary United States, there is little agreement on what is offensive, and efforts to suppress offensive work are therefore strongly resisted by those who derive a pleasure from it that is not overborne by a sense of its offensiveness and who consider it their right to pursue leisure activities that do not cause demonstrable harm to other people. It is this liberal humanism that other societies and cultures, often with contrasting mindsets, seek to inject in their societies to reject censorship.

Film Censorship in Nigeria

The first attempt of the Nigerian Government to regulate the film industry was in 1912, nine years after the first film was shown to the Nigerian public by Messrs Balboa of Barcelona, Spain, under the management of a Nigerian, Herbert Macaulay on Monday 12th August 1903. The proposed *Theatre and Public Performance Regulation Ordinance, 1912*, failed to reach the Legislative Council of Nigeria as a result of public opposition. However, in 1933 the first Cinematograph Ordinance No. 20 was passed by the Council. The law became effective 1st April 1934. The law, titled *An Ordinance for the Better Regulation and Control of Cinematograph and Similar Exhibitions, and Purposes Connected Therewith* applied to both Lagos Colony and the rest of Nigeria. It governed, as the law stated, the exhibition or showing of pictures or related optical effects produced by means of a cinematograph equipment and film designated for use with cinematograph equipment.

This law created a censorship board and a censorship committee (selected from the board of censors). It gave the then Governor-General of Nigeria the power to appoint 150 members to the censorship board, although not all the 150 sit at the same time to censor films; about five were selected at a time to serve for short periods of time, generally a week. Members of the censorship board included government officials and leading personalities from throughout the nation. Films considered for possible censorship included those dealing with sex, crime, religion and controversial

racial issues. Films were not classified for various audiences, and unacceptable films were simply denied a license for exhibition.[11]

The 1933 Cinematograph Ordinance No. 20 was amended in 1934, 1941, 1944, 1945 and 1963 when it became Cinematograph Act and Regulation, and dealt mainly with film censorship.[12] With increasing availability of new media technologies to facilitate entertainment and create greater diversity, however, it became clear that the Cinematography Ordinance was looking increasingly out of place in a rapidly globalizing Nigeria. Clearly new laws were needed.

Three consultative efforts contributed to the development of the new laws in the form of National Film and Video Censorship Law in Nigeria. The first was in 1987 when a workshop on the then new National Mass Communications Policy was held. This was followed in 1989 by a seminar that planned the strategies for the implementation of the Policy, and produced frame-works and additional inputs for a new Federal Board of Film Censors. A planned meeting at Otta, Ogun State in 1990 to consolidate the gains made so far towards packaging a new censorship law proved almost abortive due to low turn-out from the States.

In 1992 an ad-hoc committee of selected key operators in the film industry, legal minds and academics from both north and south of Nigeria was constituted and again invited to Otta to tackle the task of producing a new censorship law. The perception still was that the old law had outlived its usefulness. At this meeting therefore that the old Cinematograph Act and Regulations (1963) was dismantled, essentially because new film-related phenomenon had gradually overtaken the country which the old law neither recognized nor addressed, therefore full separate legal provisions must be made to cater for the new medium. In particular, thne increasing development of videos as alternative film media and its rapid spread in urban areas necessitated the creation of new laws which specifically address the new medium. This led to the committee recommendation that a full-fledged parastatal be established by the Federal Government to manage the multifarious activities, duties , assignments and operations of a newly agency – the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB).[13]

The establishment of the NFVCB necessitated the repeal of the old Cinematograph/Regulations Act of 1963 by Decree No 85. This decree was published in official gazette No. 25 (Vol. 80) of 1st

September, 1993. On 15th June 1994, the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), became a established scheduled agency of the Federal Government. Thus the main rationale for establishing the Board included:

a) video films had then existed in the country for more than fifteen years free from any regulatory legislation,
b) between 20,000 to 30,000 titles of foreign films alone have found their way illegally into the Nigerian market and homes,
c) the negative impact of certain foreign films (depicting criminal acts, bloody horror, cruel wars, alien culture, violence, pornography, etc) was already taking its toll on the behaviour of Nigerians, especially the youths through the proliferation of video screening halls and video clubs,
d) public outcries on the effects of the video films had literally reached the high heavens,
e) the Nigerian video film industry had started to develop and their products were already gaining popularity and widespread use,
f) the Nigerian producers and marketers/distributors of video films were already in very dangerous state of negative competition to undo each other.

(NFVCB, *6-Year Report*, 1994-2000, p. 11).

The policy thrust guiding the functions and activities of the NFVCB is the regulation and use of film and video works in Nigeria in order that:

> The society, and particularly the very young ones (youths) might be protected from the adverse, corruptive and negative influences of these communication channels; while at the same time ensuring the orderly development and growth of the entire film and video business and industry, for without a viable film industry the Board itself could become irrelevant. (NFVCB, *6-Year Report*, 1994-2000, p. 11.)

Based on these observations, the NFVCB was expected to enforce the censorship criteria in the decree establishing it, before making a decision on a film. The criteria, according to James (1996, p. 20), included the provisions that,

a) such a film has an educational or entertainment value, apart from promoting the Nigerian culture, unity and interest, and
b) that such a film is not likely

i. to undermine national security, or
ii. to induce or reinforce the corruption of private or public morality, or
iii. to encourage or glorify the use of violence, or
iv. to expose the people of African heritage to ridicule or contempt, or
v. to encourage illegal or criminal acts,
vi. to encourage racial, religious or ethnic discrimination or conflict, or
vii. by its contents to be blasphemous or obscene.

Thus the functions of the NFVCB as outlined in the decree were:

c) to license
   i. a person to exhibit films and video works
   ii. a premises for the purpose of exhibiting films and video works
d) to censor films and video works
e) to regulate and prescribe safety precautions to be observed in licensed premises
f) to regulate and control cinematographic exhibition
g) to keep a register of all firms and video works
   i. submitted for approval for exhibition throughout Nigeria
   ii. approved conditionally
   iii. refused approval subject o such conditions as the Board may impose
h) to keep a register of all
   i. licensed films and video exhibitions premises
   ii. film and video distribution companies
   iii. video shops, centres, clubs or associations
i) to keep a register of all film and video exhibitors
j) keep a record of all necessary information on a film and video producer whose works is to be distributed or exhibited in Nigeria
k) keep records of all changes in any register kept by the Board
   (NFVCB, *6-Year Report*, 1994-2000, p. 8)

In addition to all these criteria, the Board considers certain technical details that altogether make a film good or bad. Some of these details are lighting, sound/audio, storyline/development and dialogue, editing, videography, photography, music,

graphics/optical/effects, acting/continuity, direction, characterization, poster, trailers, cassette and package designs.

The function of the NFVCB do not include controlling materials screened on television. Films classified as 'Not to Be Broadcast' otherwise known as NTBB, are not to be screened on television. The only ones that can be screened are those classified as Suitable for Broadcast (SFB). These SFB and NTBB classifications are in addition to the statutory NFVCB classifications (General, '18', NC, C and RE). The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is the statutory body empowered to check materials shown on television by ensuring that only films approved as Suitable for Broadcast (SFB) are screened by television stations.

In 2000 an adjustment was made to the NFVCB decree. Titled *Proposed Amendments to the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) Act (No 85) of 1993*, it proposed a series of amendments to the "Principal Act" which included new functions of the Management Board, Membership of the Governing Council, among others, and a whole new section, S.16 of 2000 titled *Preview of Films and Video Works Regulations 2000*, with a commencement date of 2nd February, 2000. The additional regulations were published as Government Notice No. 25 – Extra-ordinary Gazette No 14, Vol. 87 of February 2000. The amendment created conditions under which films and video works are previewed. These included, for instance, the provisions that:

> 4 (2) Plots, storylines, musical compositions and inserts used in films and video works which are not original to the presenter or the producer shall be backed by copyright authorization from the original owners of the said plot, storylines, musical compositions and inserts.

Further, in the contravention of this provision,

> 5. The Board shall have power to withdraw an approval for registration of a film or video work if a case of piracy and plagiarization of plots, storylines, musical composition and inserts is discovered or proven against a producer or presenter of a film or video work while a report for appropriate action shall be filed with the Nigerian Copyright Commission.

A certificate from the NFVCB guarantees that a film can be shown in any part of the country. The NFVCB thus became the central

reference point for censoring films in Nigeria, and works within the secular status of the country. The introduction of Shari'a in some States of northern Nigeria did not necessarily clash with the NFVCB; but was expected to create a new mindset of values not incorporated in the NFVCB to take into consideration the various cultural diversities that exist in the country.

Cultural Polity and Film Censorship

Cultures with strong affinity for religious values – whether Islamic or Christian – are more protective of these values. In Islam, however, the religion is a complete way of life and therefore its code of conduct regulates every aspect of a Muslim's behavior. The mode of film production is strongly influenced by the Western Christian mindset of "good versus evil", with the re-enactment of this conflict in every narrative of popular culture. The degree with which this Christian ethos is camouflaged with an entertainment framework depends on the film's production values and techniques. This is, for instance, illustrated by Arnold Schwarzenegger's *Terminator*, a film that deals with the coming of a savior from the future whose name, John Connors, is initialled as JC – sharing the same initial as Jesus Christ, the Savior of Christian world. Couched within the filmic framework of super action, the film provides a clean entertainment, and at the same time sends a very strong message about the conflict between good and evil within the Christian cosmology.

Thus films with such overt ideological overtones pose challenges to culturally diverse populations and lead to further tensions between creativity and civil society. Thus in situations where there was distinctly religious overtone to censorship, there were often reasons given which deal with deeper core philosophical issues of religious interpretation and the visual media. For instance, in Malaysia, Jim Carrey's *Bruce Almighty* (2003) was criticized by a Minister over its theme of representing God in a human form. Yet the Malaysian censors passed the film, and insisted that it was just a comedy (*The Star* (Malaysia) Saturday 9 August 2003).

In the same Malaysia, in February 2001, the national Muslim cleric body - the Conference of Muftis - urged the government to limit the screening of the movies by local television stations to just once a week. TV stations used to screen Indian movies several times a week. The Conference of Muftis, claimed Bollywood

movies were detrimental to Muslims because of its "immoral values".

As a result of the concern for religious values, Malaysia has some of the toughest censorship laws in the world, with television and film strictly vetted by a Censorship Board, which is under the authority of the Home Ministry. Film censors in the country have little tolerance over nudity, sex, strong language, violence or sensitive religious themes in films. Films are rated to guide audiences on the nature of the content, or banned outright if the material is considered inappropriate. Scenes of kissing are often cut from films and TV shows, while swearing is usually erased altogether in an effort to protect family values among Malaysian citizens. "In order for us to instill good morals and values in our people, we have to stop importing films that are not appropriate for our country," Board chairman Shaari Mohamad Noor commented, "We imposed the ban after viewing thousands of titles over the last five months." He added that the move was in line with Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's call for Malaysians to "hold on to good values and preserve the family institution". The Ben Stiller comedy *Zoolander* earned itself a ban because of a plotline in which an assassination attempt is made on the Malaysian prime minister. Austin Powers was not swinging in the mainly Muslim country because the Censorship Board said *The Spy Who Shagged Me* contained too much sexual innuendo. *Saving Private Ryan* was allowed but with many violent scenes cut. Spielberg insisted the film be shown in full - and it still has not been seen in Malaysia. *Schindler's List* was banned for being sympathetic to Jews, though was later allowed through with several violent and nude scenes cut, to Spielberg's disgust. *The Prince of Egypt* film had been banned so as not to offend the country's majority Muslim population. Film Censorship Board chairman said: "We found it insensitive for religious and moral reasons. Because of the many races in Malaysia, religion is a very sensitive issue." A second run of the hit show *The Vagina Monologues* has been banned too. Authorities in the capital city Kuala Lumpur have ruled the show cannot return because of "complaints from a number of people. Other titles to be blacklisted included Ally McBeal episode *The Queen Bee*, and two editions of hit sitcom Friends - *The Video Tape* and *But I'm A Cheerleader*. (http://www.thefileroom.org/html/430.html).

In the domain of Indian popular culture in 1993, the film song 'Choli ke peeche kya hai' (What is behind the blouse?) in *Khalnayak* plunged the nation into a debate about morality. The lyrics of the song stood accused of transmitting improper sexual mores. Following common market practice, TIPS, an established music company primarily involved in the film-music industry, released the audio cassette for *Khalnayak* featuring the tantalizing song 'Choli ke peeche kya hai' while the film was still in production. In India, the success of a popular film is often connected to the popularity of its music. The audio cassettes and music-videos not only serve as advertisements for the film, but also generate profits for the music companies; these profits are often passed along to the film producers. In the last decade, the music industry has both expanded and flourished. As country-wide street sales of audio-cassettes have drawn close to Rs (Rupees) 5 billion annually, composers and music producers have been happily singing all the way to the bank. Approximately 150 Hindi music titles are released every year, with all-India sales estimated at 1 million cassettes a day -- inclusive of piracy. 'Choli ke peeche kya hai' could be heard on the radio and boom-boxes, and seen on the 'top-ten' shows in the form of music-videos created from publicity clips of *Khalnayak*.

The Indian state's concern with "socially relevant" cinema is connected to its very simplistic, top-down understanding of media effects and influence. From the state's point of view, cinema, and audio-visual media in general, can directly influence behavior and shape attitudes. Therefore, a film is judged "good" or "bad" according to the perceived positive or negative effects its main theme may cause in viewers, and thus in society. Hence, much of the discussion about film in India communicates that it is a very powerful tool that can either be used for the greater good, or can be very dangerous in the wrong hands. It then becomes the state's responsibility to ensure the production of films that engender "positive" effects in society, i.e., those in accordance with official ideologies. This perspective provides the continued justification for film censorship. Though filmmaking in India is a private enterprise, in order to have a theatrical release, films have to be cleared and rated by the Central Board of Film Censors - a practice initiated by the British where any allusion to self-governance, the Indian nationalist movement, or Indian independence was heavily censored by the colonial authorities. Anxiety about the impact of the medium

as well as distrust of filmmakers' intentions results in a continuous effort on the part of the Indian state to discipline and regulate films, filmmaking, and filmmakers.

Nigeria and Cultural Policy

The rights and various attempts of the people of Nigeria to develop their culture have been supported by both the civilian and military governments and have been given consideration in the Nigerian Constitution. Some of the clearly set directions of cultural policies are:

- analysis and understanding of the Nigerian cultural life, cultural values and cultural needs and expectations of people;
- affirmation of the authentic cultural values and cultural heritage;
- building up of a national cultural identity and parallel affirmation of cultural identities of different ethnic groups;
- development of cultural infrastructure and introduction of new technologies in cultural activities;
- establishment of links between culture and education, as well as between education and different cultural industries, particularly mass media.

National cultural policy is generally regarded as an instrument of promotion of national identity and Nigerian unity, as well as of communication and cooperation among different Nigerian or African cultures, while the federal states' cultural policies stand for the affirmation and development of particular (ethnic) cultures. Thus the development of the Kano State Censorship mechanism for literary works – both in print and video medium – is essentially a local interpretation of the National Cultural Policy.

Hausa Video Film Antecedents to Censorship

Hausa video film production started in 1990 with *Turmin Danya* in Kano. By 2000 when Sangaya was released in the same State, an industry had been formed with three main characteristics – love triangle (where two boys court the same girl; or two wives fight over the single husband), auren dole (where a girl or boy is forced to marry someone not of their choice), and song and dance (over 98% of Hausa video films must contain at least two to three song

and dance routines). All these elements were directly copied from Hindi cinema which the Hausa had been exposed to through Television stations in cosmopolitan cities of Kano, Kaduna and Jos, and also cinema theater releases of Hindi commercial cinema directly imported by Lebanese residents in northern Nigeria. By mid 1990s the Hindi cinema changed and departing from its cultural roots, adopted a more globalized blend of Hindu religion and Americanization. When Hausa filmmakers started full production from 2000, they tilted towards the same direction as Hindi filmmakers.

However, when Hausa filmmaking started exploring various globalized configurations of behavior that have what was seen as direct diluting influences on core Muslim Hausa mindsets, alarm bells started ringing about the possible influence of new media technologies and behavioral modification. This is reflected in a few comments made either in public or in popular culture magazines in northern Nigeria:

> Quite frankly, you have spoiled your films with copying Indians especially with regards to their songs and dances...In Sokoto viewers have started ignoring Kano (Hausa) films because they have become Indiyawan Kano (Kano Indians). Halima Umar, Sokoto State, Letters page, *Taurarurwa*, Vol 4 No 6 September 2000 p. 7.

> "In Islam there is no provision for a woman to appear onstage as an actress, especially young maidens are of marriageable age. The old Hausa TV dramas had women, but they are all mature. Thus filmmaking is not a profession for a Muslim girl. It is better for them to enter into caring professions." Ustaz Umar Sani Fagge, during a special lecture on Hausa films, Sunday 6th August, 2000, Kano.

> How can a person, claiming to be Hausa, producing a film for Hausa people copy Indian and European cultural norms, and claims they are his culture? Film production (among Muslims) is good because it an easy medium for delivering social message, but the way they are doing it now is mistake. Yusuf Muhammad Shitu, Kaduna Polytechnic, Zaria, in *Annur*, August 2001, p. 24

Thus by 2001 the Hausa video film was merely a reproduction of a Hindi film, which itself is a mere reproduction of a Hollywood film.

The core cultural values of Hausa societies, as reflected in old Hausa Television dramas completely disappeared. This is essentially because the control of the Hausa video film industry was in the hands of non-ethnic Hausa who entered the profession because they have the capital and were willing to experiment with cosmopolitan modes of behavior. By 2004, the distribution and marketing of the Hausa video film was controlled by non-Nigerian residents from Niger Republic who use their financial power to finance films that depart as far away from Hausa cultural universe as possible. The main method used by the non-ethnic Hausa in the films is to dress up the female stars in Western clothes. A typical example of a comment is shown in the following observation:

> The biggest problem of the films is the types of dresses worn by the stars...You will see a girl during a song wearing "dude" clothing typical of Westerners, with shirt and trousers. It is wrong for a pure Hausa girl, with her rich cultural heritage, to appear in non-Islamic clothing...We should not borrow mode of dressing from any other ethnic group because we have our own...Why can't we use ours? We should promote our culture in Hausa films. Suleiman Ishaq, Farmer, Katsina, in *Annur*, June/July 2002, p. 25

Even the "Islamization" songs—where the female stars wear what might be called Islamic clothing during the song and dance routines—was not without its criticisms because it was seen as disrespectful of the Islamic mode of dressing which encourages modesty, for a girl to be seen singing and dancing in the same clothes that were designed to foster piety. As noted by a correspondent in *Fim* letter's page

> See how (film producers) use cultures alien to Islam and Hausa in their films such as partying, without due regard to Islamic and Hausa cultural orientations...See how they dress up beautiful girls in tight-fitting that show off their nakedness clearly; are you bowing to the Jews or copying them?...I am appealing to our filmmakers to stop copying the culture of other people because those we copy do not copy us. Hashim Abdullahi Tanko Malam-Madori, letters page, Fim, January 2005 p. 9.

The filmmakers defend their art by pointing out that they are merely reflecting society. Mansura Isah, a Yoruba girl living in Kano and

the most visible of the erotic dancers, suggested that such dances reflect changing times by arguing that

> It's modernization. They may not approve, but they still like it, you understand? It's modernity. We are only reflecting what is happening in the real world. You will see young girls and boys in real life going to a party and getting down; well we are only showing how they do it. And I can tell you the audience like the way we get down in the films. If not, they would not have bought them. If a film is to show all the girls in *hijab* (Islamic dressing) and no getting down, I swear the film will flop...But if you make a trailer of a film showing nubile girls dancing and getting down, the audience will whoop with approval; yet those who abuse us are those who will go the market and buy the films. Mansura Isah, defending her craft, *Mudubi*, July August 2005, No 11, p. 7).

Thus the Hausa filmmakers have noted that films that are traditional to Hausa societies simply do not sell as well as those with heavy doses of Westernization, no matter how defined (but most especially in song and dances which is an opportunity to show off cleavages in both spheres of the female body). A typical retort to the criticisms by the Islamicate establishment is by Dan Azumi Baba, a novelist turned into filmmaker and the producer of *Badakala* who argued:

> The Hausa viewing audience contribute significantly to encouraging us (filmmakers) to adopt Westernization in Hausa films. This they do through refusal to buy films that do not have these elements, because despite all their criticisms, they still rush out to buy these films. Dan Azumi Baba, columnist, *Fim*, June 2005 p. 3.

As the film makers themselves keep insisting, Hausa home video is not about messaging, but about entertainment. As Ali Nuhu, an extremely successful commercial filmmaker producing films in Hausa language stated in an interview,

> I am a film maker because I want to entertain. You often hear viewers claiming they want a video that shows (Hausa) culture, and yet when you do such video they just leave you with it (and don't buy it). This year a video was released that showed pure Hausa culture, but it was not commercially successful. In fact a viewer had the cheek to write to a

magazine to complain about the video; would that be an encouragement for the producer?" Ni Don Nishadantarwa Na Ke Yi ("I am in it for entertainment only), Interview with Ali Nuhu, *Annashuwa*, December 2002, p. 31.

These views and perspectives clearly indicate the chasm that separates the private and public spheres in Hausa popular culture. The insistence on Islamization of video film by culturalist establishment merely reflects Islamic injunctions. And it is for this reason that the Kano State Censorship establishment was created in addition to the one at the national level in Abuja – to safeguard the culture and mindset of Hausa viewers. It should be pointed out that the Censorship mechanism in Kano had never insisted that its values must be acceptable to other non-Hausa or non-Muslim parts of northern Nigeria. Its main focus and influence is in Kano. Thus a film produced outside Kano can be marketed and sold outside Kano without necessarily being subjected to the Kano State Censorship mechanism.

What further contributes to the need for the demarcation of the public and private in Muslim northern Nigeria is the perception of the text in public affairs. For instance, Hausa tales are didactic, linear and sermonizing. Operating within the context of the Muslim Hausa mindset, it became a Herculean task to create a more "modern" concept of literary expression by the colonial administration in northern Nigeria. For instance, in requesting Muslims to write simplified indigenous language novellas for use in colonial-era primary schools in northern Nigeria in 1932, it was noted by Dr. Rupert East, the Svengali of northern Nigerian literature,

> ...the first difficulty was to persuade these Mallams that the thing was worth doing. The influence of Islam produces an extremely serious-minded type of person. The art of writing moreover, being intimately connected in his mind with his religion, is not to be treated lightly. Since the religious revival at the beginning of the last (19th) century, nearly all the original work produced by Northern Nigerian authors has been either purely religious or written with a strong religious motive. Most of it was written in Arabic, which, like Latin in Medieval Europe, was considered a more worthy medium of any work of importance than the mother tongue. (East, 1936 p. 350).

This Islamic influence retains its hold on the northern Nigeria Hausa Muslim polity such at all discourse—whether private or public—is subject to Islamic injunctions. When the home video replaced the novel as a more powerful—and subsequently more influential—mode of social interpretation, the morality of the messages became a central focus. A necessary problem faced by the home video filmmakers in Muslim northern Nigeria is the reconciliation of the radically different modes of storytelling they adopt for their societies. A typical film storyline carries with it elements of conflict and ways of resolving the conflict. For the message to come out clearly, "unpalatable" scenes must be created, and as the story unfolds, contradictions and conflicts are sorted out. Not so in Hausa tales where the plot development is transparent and linear. The persistent accusations that the more "adult" scenes in the pre-censorship Hausa video films (*Sauran Kiris*, *Jahilci Ya Fi Hauka*, *Alhaki Kwikwiyo*) were that children would see them and thus become exposed to their "corrupting" influence. A solution to this, of course, would have been classification—thus restricting access.

Conclusion

The censorship paradigm that sees clashes between State machinery, civil society and creative pursuits would seem to apply to any situation of creativity, except the Hausa home video. The Hausa filmmakers were caught between two forces. First was the increasing moral stand of the Kano State government on the role of Islam in public affairs. With the introduction of Shari'a in 2000, the new administration that took over in 2003 consolidated the Shari'a policy by strengthening Shari'a implementation mechanisms in the State. One of these was a new moral crusade introduced on 11th September 2004 termed *A Daidata Sahu* (literally, lets align our *feet* for prayers; figuratively, let's align our *souls*). The program was aimed to ensuring Shari'a probity in civil society, and Hausa home video producers were among the first to be invited by the program's co-ordinators to explore ways of "sanitizing" the Hausa home video industry and making it culture and Shari'a compliant.

The second force faced by the Home video producers in 2004 was the capitalist lucre. The market had opened up and there was a lot of sales. This created instant wealth for any producer lucky enough to get a hit. And the sure-fire way of getting a hit is to

include as many provocative *rawa da waka* as possible—with the producers outdoing each other to raise their stakes. It got to a stage where musicians and lyricists compose songs and a trailer is made based on chosen songs. It is this trailer that is used to attract investors (almost always cassette marketers) to buy the CD copyrights for a film that has not been shot![14]

With CD rights being purchased for up to 2003 high of N300,000 (US$ 2,143) and production budget of slightly more than that, the industry created an instant pool of relatively (to the general economy) wealthy producers. With no regular paying jobs and no other means of occupation,

Notes

1. UNESCO Press Release, 'Cultural Goods and Globalisation: Promoting Diversity', 16 June 1999, <http://www.unesco.org/opi/eng/unescopress/99-130e.htm>.
2. Draft Elucidation of Law of the Republic of Indonesia on Broadcasting, House of the People's Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, February 1997.
3. Samsudin A Rahim, Department of Communication National University of Malaysia, "Development of the Communication Industry in Malaysia: Accommodating Commercial and Social Priorities", Paper presented at Crossing Cultural Frontiers Conference, April 1997, p32. Malaysia has enacted the *Communication and Multimedia Act 1998.* While the new Act refers to the growth and development of content reflecting Malaysia's cultural diversity, the ABA has not been able to determine whether the year 2000 target has been adopted under the new framework.
4. This issue is dealt with in detail in Bruce M Owen and Steven S Wildman, *Video Economics*, Harvard University Press, London, 1992.
5. Plato. *Republic* (Vol. 1) (G. P. Goold, Ed., & Paul Shorey, Trans. 1978). Cambridge: Harvard.
6. Plato, *The Republic* (Vol. 2) (G.P. Goold, Ed. & Paul Shorey, Trans,1980). Cambridge: Harvard.
7. Plato, *Sophist* (Nicholas P. White, Trans,1993). Indianapolis: Hackett.
8. Gail Blasser Riley. (1998). *Censorship.* New York: Facts on File
9. See Kane 2003 for a detailed study of this.
10. Online reference, noted in references.
11. Federal Ministry of Information, *The Laws of Nigeria: No 20, 1933.* Abuja, Federal Ministry of Information.
12. Mgbejume, O (1989), *Film in Nigeria: Development, Problems.* Africa Media Monograph Series No 7. Nairobi, African Council on Communication Education.
13. James, C.A. (1996), The Aims, Objectives, Functions and Aspirations of the New National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), in NFVCB (1996), *The Challenges of Film and Video Censorship in Nigeria.* Lagos, NFVCB.
14. This often leads to problems. For instance, *Biki Budiri*, a 2004 video was heavily promoted via its trailer which contained catchy *rawa da waka* (song and dance). However, the particular attractive routines were deleted by the Censorship Board. When the film was released without the attractive routine, many customers complained to the producer with "Allah Ya isa" ("Allah is the disposer of my affairs", indicating an injustice).

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