

Hausa Video Films – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Intellectualizing Hausa Video Films in Retrospect

Abdalla Uba Adamu
Department of Mass Communications
Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria

Discussion/lead paper presented at the International Workshop on Hausa Home Video Films with the theme of *Controversies, Sanity and Solutions in the Hausa Home Video Industry*, held at Kongo Conference Center, Institute of Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, from 13th to 15th August, 2009.

Introduction

It is a great pleasure to be here to share with you my thoughts about the retrospective perspectives of the attempts to “intellectualize Hausa video films” – an expression first coined by Mal. Gausu Ahmad in a newspaper article (*The Triumph*, Kano, June 3, 2003, back page) in which he reviewed the preparations for hosting the International Conference on Hausa Video films held in August 2003.

That we are in another throes of soul-searching and “intellectualization” reveals a yawning gap in our practice of the Hausa video film industry since its humble beginnings in March 1990 with the release of *Turmin Danya* (dir. Salisu Galadanci) by Tumbin Giwa Film Productions in Kano.

This is not the first attempt at intellectualizing the Hausa popular culture. But it would certainly be true to say that of all the Hausa popular culture industries, the video film would seem to attract the most attention. As far as I know, there are no attempts to hold international conferences/workshops or symposia about Hausa indigenous literature (beside being given “slots” at ANA conventions) or Hausa traditional or even modern music. Why is this so? The answer is certainly tied down to the visual nature of the Hausa video film and its mass appeal to larger audiences than either literature or music. Certainly music and video film share the same mass-audience appeal, but the visual nature of the video film makes its more compelling. At the same time, this visual nature means filmmakers cross boundaries often of public sensibilities, leading to the specter of either state censorship, or regulation from public commentators. Additionally, the transnational nature of the video film medium guarantees greater focus on its development, sustainability and consumption.

Attempts to see the video film as an “intellectual” process discussed by researchers, public intellectuals and academicians often comes as a surprise to the practitioners themselves, who by and large see their occupation (not profession) as a simple marketing process – and subjected fluctuating marketing forces. It is these same very market forces that makes the filmmakers sacrifice art for commerce (profession for occupation) to create mass-appeal films that guarantee quick financial return. Critical audiences – both academic and from the public sphere – always use Hollywood as a template for determining quality and competence in filmmaking. They also use the very concept of representation as a basis for judging storylines. When filmmakers sacrifice art for commerce, these two templates were likely to clash – leading to public outcry. It is this public outcry, strident since the commercialization of the Hausa film industry that leads to soul-searching as the current one.

Early Efforts – Magazines and Newspapers

The first effort to seriously intellectualize the Hausa video film industry started with the variety and range of magazines that accompanied the popularity of the industry from 1997 to 2003. These magazine provided not only historical archival data, but also document how the industry developed from multiple perspectives – those of the stars, the production facilities, and government regulation. Most significantly, they provided platform for critical discourse on the nature of the Hausa video film industry and its direction from the public sphere.

Thus within this period, magazines sprung up to provide news, information and gossip about the industry. The first Hausa video film magazine, *Tauraruwa* (“*Star*” and inspired by the Hindi film magazine, *Stardust*, which was extremely popular among the urban Hausa in northern Nigeria) was introduced in 1998 to capture the scenes of the emergent industry. In 1999 the magazine in its 3rd edition (August 1998, page 20) created a column labeled ‘Kanywood’ which discusses the goings on in the Kano film industry – thus creating a label for an African film industry three years before Norimitsu Onishi created the term ‘Nollywood’ for the southern Nigerian film industry in the heading of an article published in *The New York Times* of 16th September, 2002. The term *Kanywood* came to be because the Hausa film industry was concentrated in Kano which had the studios, production and editing facilities for small technologies. In particular, music production facilities became established in Kano to cater for the new industry, more than in any other northern Nigerian city.

In 1999 a rival magazine, *Fim*, was created in Kano, later moving to Kaduna and rapidly became the leading Hausa video film magazine in Nigeria and beyond. The magazine prefers to use the term *Kaliwud* (in its edition of December 1999 p. 29) instead of *Kanywood* for the industry. ‘Kaliwud’ (sub-titled “Hollywood din Kano – Kano Hollywood) as an exercise in word-creation to label an industry, was created by the publisher of *Fim*, Ibrahim Sheme, to rival Kanywood and to shift the emphasis from Kano (in Kanywood) to focus on the mainstream ‘K’ states of Kano, Katsina and Kaduna by taking the first two letters of the three States and adding Hollywood variant – thus *Kaliwud*. This term, however, did not find favor with users, and even *Fim* eventually stopped using it, and adopted the more common Kanywood.

Other film magazines that joined in the fray included *Mumtaz*, *Bidiyo*, *Mujallar Sharhi*, *Majigi*, *Annashuwa*, *NishaJi*, *Duniyar Fim*, *Marubuciya*, *Garkuwa Suda* and *Madubi*. *Fim*, however, remained the most consistent of them all, becoming the first Hausa home video magazine to own a website while others, such as *Mumtaz* and *Garkuwa* ceased production after just one to three years. The internet provided new press moguls with an opportunity to shout it. Examples, besides *Fim*, included *Mudubi* (established 2003) and *Gidauniya* (established 2004). The covers of some of them are shown in Fig. 1.



Fig.1. Kanywood Variety

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

Increasing availability of printing presses created more varieties of covering the entertainment industry among the Hausa. Thus *Nishadin Mako* became the first (18th to 25th September, 2003) initially fortnightly newspaper to cover the industry, although coming at it did, at a time when the industry was comatose. By 2006 most of them had become erratic in their appearance, and 2008 saw only one remaining – *Fim*, which celebrated 10 years of continuous production in March 2009. However, in 2009 another magazine, *Gambiza*, entering into the arena – revealing clearly the cyclic nature of popular culture.

Internet Presence, Conferences and Capacity Building

Internet Presence

Noting increasing critical interest in the Hausa video film especially as recorded in the popular culture magazines, I decided to create an internet discussion group on Yahoo! Groups listserve that would provide a wider consultation and discussion on the Hausa video film industry. Thus on 31st August 2001, the *Finafinan Hausa Yahoo! Groups* was created on the internet.



It provided a forum for lively and critical discussions and debates about the Hausa video film industry, and also accorded many diasporic Hausa the opportunity to participate in the discussions. Of course the main limitation of the group was that it

was internet-based – and in 2001 the Internet was still a very tiny baby in Nigeria, available to extremely few who mainly work in either universities or government organizations; although there were few Internet cafes dotted in the more metropolitan cities of Kano, Kaduna and Jos.

The proceedings of the Finafinan Hausa group started to be published in *Fim* magazine, and this attracted other readers who rapidly helped the community to grow and become a leading voice in intellectual discussions about the Hausa video film industry world-wide. The group also attracted Hausaist researchers who became interested in the way the new media technologies interfaced with public culture of the Hausa. Brian Larkin (Columbia University, New York), Graham Furniss (University of London, UK), Heike Behrend (University of Cologne, Germany) and Matthias Krings (University of Mainz, Germany) all became interested in the debates – thus not only further intellectualizing the Hausa video film, but also internationalizing discourses about the industry. Table 1 shows how active the group has been in the last eight years

Table 1 – Discussions of Finafinan Hausa Groups, 2001-2009

| Year | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Totals |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| 2009 | 111 | 119 | 76 | 120 | 119 | 105 | 203 | 52 | | | | | 905 |
| 2008 | 277 | 231 | 159 | 99 | 86 | 102 | 71 | 127 | 130 | 85 | 43 | 121 | 1531 |
| 2007 | 197 | 113 | 282 | 239 | 322 | 232 | 244 | 272 | 242 | 240 | 153 | 211 | 2747 |
| 2006 | 464 | 422 | 460 | 382 | 560 | 342 | 340 | 194 | 121 | 198 | 208 | 135 | 3826 |
| 2005 | 685 | 413 | 452 | 525 | 342 | 275 | 376 | 422 | 283 | 560 | 582 | 710 | 5625 |
| 2004 | 606 | 356 | 442 | 488 | 394 | 292 | 324 | 360 | 397 | 379 | 402 | 496 | 4936 |
| 2003 | 281 | 305 | 356 | 394 | 233 | 284 | 426 | 394 | 250 | 292 | 290 | 435 | 3940 |
| 2002 | 59 | 76 | 73 | 133 | 45 | 113 | 68 | 76 | 101 | 99 | 157 | 242 | 1242 |
| 2001 | | | | | | | | 6 | 50 | 79 | 26 | 55 | 216 |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | | | 24,968 |

As the table shows, the debates can often be heated, thus there was never a dull moment. The greatest number of posts was in January 2005 in which 685 posts were recorded. Generally, a total of 24,968 posts were made in the group up to August 2009 – which shows the remarkable popularity of the subject matter of the group. Compare this, for instance with the same group on Hausa writers in Table 2 which had a total of only 7,322 posts in the same period – and yet there are more writers and more Hausa novels than there are filmmakers or films!

Table 2 – Discussions of Majalisar Marubuta (Hausa Writers), 2001-2009

| Year | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| 2009 | 49 | 186 | 149 | 156 | 129 | 70 | 147 | 39 | | | | | 925 |
| 2008 | 323 | 321 | 225 | 182 | 126 | 48 | 94 | 152 | 74 | 79 | 113 | 80 | 1817 |
| 2007 | 185 | 225 | 199 | 102 | 131 | 45 | 63 | 77 | 123 | 133 | 122 | 210 | 1615 |
| 2006 | 83 | 184 | 103 | 46 | 76 | 110 | 32 | 80 | 47 | 212 | 216 | 152 | 1341 |
| 2005 | 71 | 74 | 73 | 66 | 41 | 31 | 38 | 40 | 22 | 22 | 46 | 57 | 581 |
| 2004 | 57 | 64 | 95 | 48 | 47 | 98 | 65 | 37 | 44 | 76 | 54 | 16 | 701 |
| 2003 | | 30 | 57 | 42 | 43 | 25 | 36 | 17 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 48 | 318 |
| 2002 | | | | | | | 1 | 3 | | | | | 4 |
| 2001 | | | | | | | | | 20 | | | | 20 |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | | | 7,322 |

In fact the Hausa writers forum had a difficulty in getting off to a good start, and for two years was fallow. It only started picking up in February 2003 when it was popularized after a workshop on Hausa writers organized by Hausa Writers Association of Nigeria (HAWAN). Unfortunately it became a battleground where the various groups of Hausa writers started bickering about one issue or the other.

In the Finafinan Hausa Group, interestingly, the main practitioners of the industry, most who reluctantly joined the group were unhappy with the group. By and large, the Hausa video film industry developed two sets of attitudes towards the intellectual debates about the industry online. The first set had wanted to hijack the online forums to advertise their own films as being “different” from the run-of-the-mill. When they realized that the online forums were made up of critical observers of the Hausa video film industry, they started getting aggressive and abusive towards not only the individual members of the group, but also the entire issue of critical debate itself.

The second group immediately detested the online community – labeling it as a community of “mahaddasa” (those who wish ill) to the industry. This reflected the classic and quintessential Hausa mindset of automatically disagreeing with anyone who provided a critical commentary on what they do. In fact, one of the more successful Hausa video film superstars challenged the online communities by angrily writing: “kowa ya raina tsaiwar wata, ya hau ya gyara” (if you think you can do better, be my guest).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the early posts in the group tended to focus on cultural representation – particularly how singing and dancing predominated Hausa video films and how transnational influences of urban cultures of Hollywood and Bollywood films serve as templates for Hausa filmmakers. Eventually, however, the group’s main focus on Hausa films dwindled principally because of two factors. The first was the radical change in public perception the industry went through after the Hiyana phone porn scandal in 2007. Less films after this particular incident meant less reviews and less things to discuss. Secondly, the increasing availability of social networking sites on the Web such as Flickr, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Hi5, all created a more visual and immediate, and certainly less cerebral focus of discussing Hausa video films than Finafinan Hausa group.

The increasing availability of the Internet made it possible for some of the Hausa video film industry publishers to experiment with online editions of their magazines,

especially on either existing websites that will give them a presence, or on one of the numerous free hosting services from 2004. As usual, *Fim* was the first to make Internet appearance by being hosted on KanoOnline servers. Eventually it obtained its own domain at a free hosting site, tvheaven.com, as shown in Fig. 2.



Fig. 2 – Fim, at tvheaven.com

Fim's example of its presence on the internet – perhaps the first Hausa popular culture magazine to do this – was followed by *Mudubi* at <http://www.mudubi.itgo.com/>, as shown in Fig. 3



Fig. 3. Mudubi film magazine on the Web.

Gidauniya, another Hausa video film magazine established in Kaduna lost no time in also making its presence felt on the Web through free host servers as shown in Fig. 4.



Fig 4. Gidauniya on the web

However, this web presence was not smoothly maintained (even though the static pages remain). *Mudubi* and *Gidauniya* had ceased publication by 2007 – leaving only *Fim* to maintain both printed and online presence. *Fim* eventually moved to another host server and re-created a more dynamic access to its contents, as shown in Fig. 5.



Fig 5 – The reigning queen – *Fim's* new website

Awards

Awards became one of the most significant points of intellectualizing the popular culture industries principally because it was always assumed that the judgments

leading to the awards are based on clear, objective and critical criteria. Thus a “Best Actor” happened to be so in the judgment of critical observation of his performance in a particular film. This performance was judged according to specific benchmarks of performance excellence to which such actor attained – at least in the judgment of the critics.

Realizing that no one is going to give kudos to the Hausa video film industry, the industry practitioners decided to organize it themselves. However, prior to this, the first awards to Hausa video filmmakers was in the Thema Awards (The Movie Awards) in 2001 in Lagos in which Haruna Aliyu and Hauwa Ali Dodo (“Biba Problem”) were given at least what would seem to be token awards for their excellent performances in Hausa films.

It was only in 2001 that the Hausa film industry came up with its own Arewa Awards. A (not-exhaustible) list of the more notable and major Hausa video film awards is show in Table 3.

Table 3 – Hausa Video Film Awards

| Award | City | For Films of |
|------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Arewa Awards | Kaduna | 2000 |
| Arewa Awards | Kaduna | 2001 |
| Yahoo! Awards | Kano | 2002 |
| Kaduna State Government | Kaduna | 2002 |
| Yahoo! Awards | Kaduna | 2003 |
| Kano State Censorship Awards | Kano | 2004 |
| Kaduna State Government | Kaduna | 2004 |
| MOPPAN Awards | Kaduna | 2004 |
| Yahoo! Awards | Kaduna | 2004 |
| MOPPAN Awards | Bauchi-Kaduna | 2005 |
| Kano State Censorship Awards | Kano | 2005 |
| Yahoo! Awards | Kaduna | 2005 |
| Kano State Censorship Awards | Kano | 2006 |



The 2005 MOPPAN Awards were initially slated to be held in Bauchi, but had to be shifted to Kaduna for security reasons when it became apparent that the film industry awards was on head-on collision with the Islamicate society.

The golden age of the Hausa video film awards was surely 2004 when Yahoo! Groups, the Kano State Censorship Board, Kaduna State Government and MOPPAN all held awards ceremonies for the Hausa video film industry – conferring on them a certain public acceptability. It should be added that the Yahoo! Groups awards for 2004 and 2005 were actually combined ceremonies, and held in 2006. The 2006 Awards by the Kano State Censorships Board became the last major public awards in the Hausa video film industry. By 2007, with the appearance of the Hiyana phone porn clip, “Things Fell Apart” and it became no longer feasible to even consider aggregating the Hausa video filmmakers in public gathering due to possibilities of public attacks.

Capacity Training Sponsorships

By mid 2000s the Hausa video film emerged as a heavily commercial industry with exclusive focus on the fame and fortune to be made, rather than communication of art and finesse. It took the efforts of some of us to attempt to enforce a more academic focus on the industry. The main object of this focus is to ensure that the Hausa video film industry became professionalized, rather than commercialized. For it is only when it becomes professionalized that we can confidently export it as a cultural product. Our first break in this direction was the Connecting Futures program of the British Council in 2002.

Connecting Futures was aimed at build better understanding, learning and respect between young people from different cultural backgrounds both overseas and in the UK. It sought to provide networking opportunities for young people to connect, share experience, information and skills, and to encourage them in taking control of their futures; taking collective action, accessing their rights to justice, independence, education and health. One of its core focus areas was Reel Dialogues, an initiative targeted at filmmaking, with the professional co-operation of Scriptnet.

The starting point for this was on Saturday 17th May 2002 when a *Roundtable Forum Discussions with Hausa Film Makers* was held at the British Council, Kano. It was facilitated by Prof. Abdalla Uba Adamu and sponsored by the British Council. The main goal was to engage critical members of the Hausa video film industry in Kano, Kaduna and Jos to chart out ways of internationalizing the industry. The success of this roundtable forum lead to the eventual establishment of *Reel Dialogues* project of the British council in 2004 which provided funding opportunities for six competitively selected young Hausa filmmakers in Kano, Kaduna and Jos to produce six short films that would showcase not only their talent, but what can be done with limited funding. The premier was of the six films was done in May 2006. The project unfortunately ended with too much acrimonious fighting amongst the paired producers/directors, such that the British Council was relieved when the Connecting Futures project ended.

However where the British Council Reel Dialogues stopped, the UK Department for International Development, DFID, took over. Thus support was obtained for sustainable intellectual and international capacity training for the industry from DFID,

through its Security, Justice and Growth (SJG) program. This component of the British aid agency was a collaboration with Centre of Islamic and Legal Studies (CILS), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria on improving the condition of Muslim women in Northern Nigeria. The report of a research by CIL identified practices relating to abuse of women's rights under the pretext of Shari'a through miscarriage of justice or in the name of tradition and culture. SJG then provided funding to about five carefully and competitively selected Hausa filmmakers to draw attention the women's rights and access to justice in five films.

These efforts by the British Council and DFID, however, were preceded and subsequently supplemented by involvements of the Hausa video film industry by international organizations such as Society for Family Health (SFH) which sponsored *Jan Kunne*, a film aimed at increasing public awareness of HIV/AIDS scourge, and *Hafsar*; John Hopkins University (*Ku Saurara*), American Embassy (*Tsintsiya*), Family Health International (*Rabo*). All these films had social messaging embedded in them aimed at attempts to re-orient the focus of the Hausa video film industry. Unfortunately the Hausa film industry could only become issue-based when someone is paying bill – for despite these efforts (at costs more than triple what the typical Hausa film costs to make) the templates created by these international collaborations were not maintained by the industry. The mainstream films remained, by and large, poor photocopies of transnational filmmaking.

Capacity Training Workshops

While it would appear that the film industry lacks the logistic ability to organize in-house workshops and capacity training for its members, based on the experience of *Reel Dialogue*, the leadership of the industry was able to seek collaborative partnership with Alliance Francaise, the French Cultural Center, to hold a series of capacity training workshops for the industry. From 2004 to 2009 a total of six workshops were held. These were *Acting for the camera* (Kano, 2004), *Producers/Directors Workshop* (Kano, 2004), *Sound for film* (Jos, 2005), *Digital Film Editing* (Jos, 2005), *Sound Mixing* (2008, Jos) and *Cinematography and Lighting technique for Directors of photography (DOP's)*(Kano 2009).

At first it would appear odd that all these six workshops were held in either Kano or Jos. The reason for this was that it was these two cities that have the most convenient training facilities—in terms of manpower, clients and production studios. Yet despite five years of almost continuous training and capacity building, the products of the Hausa video film industry remained true to their bubble-gum effect stereotypes of being merely love stories in a Hindi film template accompanied by lots of singing and dancing – the main factor that prevented Hausa video films from being professional.

The Kano State Government, through the Kano State Censorship Board, had also organized workshops for members of the Hausa video film industry. Tagged, *Film and Film Appreciation*, it was held in 2009 and aimed at being the first in a series of capacity training workshops that cut a swath across the north of Nigeria. It was the first in a planned series of workshops. But even this faced problems of split in the industry – with quite a few refusing to participate in the workshop because of the then running-battle between the Kano State Censorship Board and Kano-based filmmakers.

Conferences

Increasingly critical observations about the relationship between media and cultural representation in indigenous film led to attempts to host the first conference on Hausa video films in Kaduna in January 2000. Tagged *National Conference on Socio-Moral Aspect of Indigenous Films*, the conference was aimed at analyzing the relationship between moral development and the new mass media, but with particular focus on Hausa Muslim culture. It was also intended to be a confluence where producers and consumers meet to discuss the issues. This proved more enthusiastic than real because it did not take place in the end due to lack of interest from the practitioners themselves.

However, from the 8th and 9th July 2002, Usmanu Danfodiyo University at Sokoto held *Workshop on Hausa Video Films and Novels from 1980-2000*. A total of eight papers were presented, mostly critical about video film and creative writing in Hausa language. Very few members of the industry attended – because by then a battle line had been drawn between the academic establishment and the film industry. Ibrahim Mandawari, one of the pioneer founders of the industry was one of the three or so who actually attended from the industry, and understandably, he was unhappy with the general tone of the discussions. In a private conversation, he noted that the Sokoto Workshop was geared towards painting the popular culture industries bad and having corrupting influences on Hausa youth. On returning to Kano he sought out Ahmad Salihu Alkanawy, another veteran filmmaker, to work out how they can hold a “counter-Sokoto” conference of their own in which they give what they consider a more balanced version of their craft and industry.

This eventually led to the convocation of about 23 individuals drawn from the film industry and academic community in Kano, Zaria and Sokoto who held a first meeting in August 2002 at Moving Image offices in Kano. While there was a lot of enthusiasm at the first meeting, it was clear that the filmmakers were more focused on a conference that would give them an opportunity to hit back at critical establishment, and to show the more desirable aspects of the film industry. The group, however, was geared towards providing a platform around which issues concerning the practices of the video film as well as its future would be discussed. The preliminary meetings of the group eventually created the Center for Hausa Cultural Studies which midwife the conference that took place from 4th to 7th August, 2003 at the Murtala Mohammed Library Complex, Kano State, Nigeria.

The conference saw the presentation of 54 academic papers from a wide range of national and international scholars (internationally, Brian Larkin from the United States, and Matthias Krings from Germany presented papers; in addition, there was a delegation of participants from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, as well as from Pakistan). The papers were all published in a book of proceedings titled *Hausa Home Videos: Technology, Economy and Society*, published by the Center for Hausa Cultural Studies. The book was presented to the public in June 2004 and became the first book on the development of the Hausa video film industry, one of the very few that document media and cultural representation in sub-Saharan Africa.

As far as I can tell, this gathering in Kongo Conference Hall, Zaria in August 2009 is the second attempt to internationalize the Hausa video film industry.

Public Reaction and Pre-cursors to Censorship

Now I come to the final stages of my paper – censorship. The inclusion of the word “sanity” in the theme of this conference is a clear indication of the perception of the organizers that there is some “insanity” in the process. Censorship was putatively meant to make the insane more sane. Let’s look at the core of the issues.

The first Hausa films that started to draw the ire of the culturalist establishment were *Soyayya Kunar Zuci* in 1995, and *Alhaki Kwikwiyo* in 1998. Both were directed by late Mr. USA Galadima, a veteran non-ethnic Hausa director trained in the United States, and based in Jos. Both were shot with Betacam and not the VHS format that was to become standard for Hausa video films. However, although *Alhaki Kwikwiyo* was subsequently released on VHS, *Soyayya Kunar Zuci* was never released on video. Each of these films were accused of being too adult for the conservative Hausa audience.

However, in almost rapid succession three video films were released that all proved catalytic to the establishment of hitherto unheard of censorship mechanisms essentially to safeguard the female sanctity in Hausa video films. The specific video films to attract the wrath of the critical civil sphere were *Saliha?*, *Jahilci Ya Fi Hauka* and *Malam Kartata*. The first two were both released in 1999, while the third, produced, but never released in 2000, was a more serious adult-themed drama. The acceptability of these films – or, more precisely, their commercial success – emboldened other filmmakers to explore the central themes of these five video films – female sexuality. Thus Hausa video filmmakers focus on the female *intimisphäre* as a tapestry to painting what the filmmakers perceive to be the sexuality of essentially urban, transnational and globalized Hausa woman.

More video films continued on the trail blazed by the earlier five films I discussed above. *Sauran Kiris* was the first Hausa video film to attempt an onscreen kiss in a bedroom. *Jalli* uses many bedroom scenes, with a husband and wife characters taking their clothes off and lying down on the bed as the scene fades to black. In *Daren Farko* a bride complains to the husband about lack of sexual attention. *Kumbo* has a scene in which the male and female principal characters were shown putting their clothes back on clearly after having “slept” with each other. *Gidauniya* was as explicit as could be in showing an attempted rape-scene. *Bakar Inuwa* has a host of adulterous scenes, with the lead “adulterer” clearly relishing his role after each bout of sexual activity. *Nasaba* shows principal characters repeatedly entering a hut for sex.

As a result of these films and more, alarm bells started ringing about the possible influence of new media technologies, cultural representation and behavioral modification. This is reflected in a few comments made either in public or in popular culture magazines in northern Nigeria:

“We the fans of Hausa video films have come to realize that it is the producers and the directors that are responsible for the corruption of culture and religion in these films. You know very well that every section of a woman is private. For instance, they are fond of allowing actresses without head covering, and straightening their hair; also making them wear skimpy Western dresses which reveal their body shapes, etc. In our awareness and education, we know these behaviors are immensely contrary to Islam. Don’t such actresses ever think of

the Day of Judgment? Don't forget their claims that they educating or delivering vital social message. Is this how you educate – by corrupting Islamic injunctions? Please look into this and take remediate measures immediately.” Aisha D. Muhammad Gamawa, Bauchi, *Fim*, Letter Page, March 2004 p. 6.

“In Islam there is no provision for a woman to appear onstage as an actress, especially young maidens 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.

Consequently, the public started reacting against what they see as corruption of public morals in the Hausa video films, particularly after the re-introduction of the Shari'a penal code from 1999 in many northern Nigerian states. In Kano, these complaints were mainly addressed to the Emir of Kano, members of the Kano State House of Assembly, and other community leaders. The most fiery criticism came from a Kano State Government official, Dr. Muhammad Tahar Adamu (aka Baba Impossible) who was the Special Adviser to the Governor of Kano State (from 1999 to 2003) on Religious Affairs. During a press interview in 2000, he was quoted as stating:

...Film in its totality contravenes Islam. In Islam there is no allowance for “character-role” wife which facilitates amorous body contacts among an unmarried couple. Also their mode of dressing in the dramas is against Islam. Also in Islam you don't cure a disease with another disease; Islam says if you want to prevent a (bad) thing (such as sex) from happening, preach -- but not demonstrate how bad it is before revealing its cure (or consequences). “Za mu ruguza sana'ar finafinai idan har masu yinta basu yi hankali ba” (We will destroy the Hausa home video industry if the producers are not careful), Interview with Alhaji Muhammad Tahar Adamu, aka “Baba Impossible”, on Kano State Government's stand on Hausa home video under Shari'a law, *Fim*, August 2000, pp 14-17. (My translations of the Hausa originals).

Dr. Tahar reiterated that if the Hausa home video producers did not conform their storylines to the new Islamic law, the entire industry will be banned in Kano. He was, however, less forthcoming about control of Hollywood and Hindi films sold in the market, as well as satellite reception of films with similar or worse content than those shown in Hausa home videos. He indicated that these were not a source of concern stating that

(foreign films) are not as bad as those in Hausa. The English and Igbo language medium films are not as bad as those in Hausa language medium, because Hausa people can follow the dialog in Hausa films. Although many people watch Indian films (for example), they don't know what the dialogs mean all the way to the end of the film. This is not as damaging as watching a film in which a viewer can understand the dialog word-to-word. All the same, we will also purify them one by one. We will establish a *bureau* to monitor the film industry (including foreign ones). We have the power to ban their sales!

We will ban their importation, we will keep an eye on them! *Fim*, August 2000, pp 14-17 (my translations of the Hausa originals).

It would appear that the decision to form a censorship organ of the government had already been taken by the government, and thus this was the first public announcement of the intention to establish what later became Kano State Censorship Board later in 2000.

Conclusion

Where are we going now? It would appear that the events of the last three years have lead to a stasis in the Hausa film industry, and this particular workshop is aimed at creating a more energetic direction. The fact that the broad theme of the conference is: “Controversies, Sanity and Solutions in the Hausa Video film industry” is an indication of a soul-searching mission from the practitioners of the industry. It is, to all intents and purposes, an acknowledgement of a betrayal of public confidence. This failure seems to be a recurrent feature in all the attempts (actual or realized) to hold an international event with a focus on Hausa video films.

I also ask myself: why is the international community so besotted with Nollywood, and yet ignores Kanywood? I have participated in two major international conferences that reflect this. The first was at University of Urban-Champaign, Illinois, United States during which an African Film Conference was held in November 2007. My paper was the only one of the about 34 that dealt principally with other African films including a dosage of Nollywood films. Not a single Hausa filmmaker was invited to the conference, even though about three notable Nollywood filmmakers were there.

Similarly a conference with the theme of Nollywood and Beyond was held at the Johannes Guttenberg University, Mainz, Germany in May 2009. Only two papers on Hausa video film were presented; mine and that of Carmen McCain (a Fulbright PhD student doing fieldwork in Kano, Nigeria). The rest of the papers were about the significance of Nollywood to the representation of re-branding of Africa (not Nigeria!).

It is because the Hausa film is rooted in its culture? Would that be the reason the international community keep away from focusing attention on it? Yet how come films of Ousmane Sembene (Senegal), Sulayman Cisse (Mali), Idrissa Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso), Mahamat-Saleh Haroun (Chad), Safi Faye (Senegal), Gaston Kabore (Burkina Faso) and others whose films reflect indigenous art theater and acclaimed world-wide? The answer has to be that the World is not looking for Hollywood in African films – but Africa in African films. Hausa video film industry is about showing Hollywood in Africa; not Africa in Africa – for to the practitioners, such filmmaking is equated with modernity.

What the Hausa industry practitioners do not seemed to have realized is that the Hausa society is didactic and acquired its intellectual base from Islamic religion. Any popular culture industry wishing to chart a progress for itself within increasingly Islamicate Hausa social fabric will have to operate within this didactic tradition. Thus the future lies not in any attempt at transnational hybridity in the name of modernity and progress, but in understanding what the society sees as its representative imagery and working within the system to reproduce that imagery. In so doing, the Hausa

video film industry would serve the purpose of cultural preservation in celluloid, even when the intangible heritages of Hausa culture are increasingly being hybridized. This workshop is another opportunity to fashion out a more effective roadmap for the Hausa video film industry; for clearly there is a need to change the destination.