

# The Role of the Media in Promoting Hausa Language and Culture

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## Introduction

I doubt if there is any language cluster or group that generates as much controversy as the Hausa language. There are two distinct domains of this controversy.

The first deals with the fallacy of ‘origin’ which ascribes a fabled historical figure, Abu Yazid (aka Bayajidda) as being the founder of Hausa States, through his progeny. Without any genetic evidence to prove the presumably Arabic origins of the subsequent rulers of the Hausa States, it becomes difficult to accept this ‘foreign invader theory’. Further, such a massive journey from Baghdad of around 9th century was likely to be recorded by historians along his route. Yet, unlike the journey Musa Keita, the 10th *Mansa* of Mali (Emir) undertook from Mali to Makka in 1324 (albeit a bit more elaborate than Abu Yazid’s) which was recorded by Arab historians, there does not seem to be any other record of Abu Yazid’s journey from Baghdad to first, Bornu, and then to Daura. The common thread of this fable is that Abu Yazid’s sons eventually became rulers of seven kingdoms, referred to as Hausa Bakwai (the authentic seven – Daura, Katsina, Gobir, Biram, Kano, Rano, and Zaria), not their sources of origin – since when each of them arrived at the new Hausa State to rule it, there were people to rule in the first place. The sons themselves thus became what I call ‘secondary foreign invaders’ for historical accounts of their arrival and lordship over the people of the seven Hausa States clearly painted a picture of individuals with different mindsets from those they lorded over.

The second controversy about Hausa was initiated and sustained by British colonial linguists and anthropologists who tend to focus attention on whether Hausa is indeed merely a language, or a distinct ethnic group. The notion of Hausa being just a language, rather than a people, was promoted as early as 1908 by Charles Orr, a British colonial officer in Nigeria who argued that

The first thing to note is that the word “Hausa” merely denotes “language.” A pagan talking his unknown tongue in the Kano market will be met with “Ban ji *hausanka* ba” – I don’t understand your language.” In other words, a native will claim to be a Hausa merely because he speaks “the language,” and it is not uncommon for pagans and even Fulanis to describe themselves as “Hausawa”, merely because they speak that language. In Hausa-land proper, the real Hausa, as distinguished from Fulanis, Pagans, Bornuese, etc., is, as is well known, called a “Habe”; and this is unquestionably the correct title for the race. In enquiring about ancient rights and customs one refers always to the “old Habe kingdoms,” to distinguish what are more loosely called Hausa States. (p. 278).

Orr’s confused interpretation of the meaning of the word *Habe* and his adopting it as a referent for Hausa ignored the fact that *Habe* is a Fulani word meaning simply conquered people – a term they could apply to anyone, even if White. This was further clarified by Palmer (1908, p. 62) in his introduction the *Kano Chronicle*:

...the Fulani called any conquered negro people "Haɓe." For this reason it seems better to keep the word Hausa to express the post- A.D. 1000 and pre-A.D. 1807 inhabitants of Hausaland, provided that it is not used indiscriminately of any peoples who speak the "Hausa" language. In fact, Haɓe is a far wider word than Hausawa, and practically means any negro race...The name in itself (Haɓe) proves nothing. (p. 62).

In the same vein, Charles Lindsay Temple, writing on northern Nigeria, noted

I would now turn to the race commonly known as "Hausa." The term "Hausa," I am quite convinced, should be used only with reference to the language known by that name. For many tribes, with markedly different characteristics, speak this language. For instance, the natives of Argungu, the Kebbawa, now speak the Hausa, and have never spoken any other language. The same may be said of the native of Katsena, known as the Batsenawa. Yet these are very distinct tribes. A native describing himself as a Hausa will always, when pressed or questioned, define himself also by name of a tribe. Hausa is, therefore, today, the name of a language, and not of a tribe. (p. 155).

Anthony Kirk-Greene, (1973, p 3) another British colonial officer and later a tutor at the Institute of Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, added more confusion to the mix when in his introduction to ...

Hausa historically is primarily the name of a language rather than of a people. By extension, it has come to be used to describe the majority group of northern Nigerians, linked by a sense of unity based on a common language, history and customs. Ethnically, however, there exists some heterogeneity within this group, and religion-wise there are a few Christian and animist Hausa as well as Muslim Hausa; all running away from a single entity: the Hausa.

From this description, it becomes unclear as to precisely what he refers to as 'Hausa' – Muslim Hausa, Christian Hausa, animist Hausa; for this trite division merely indicates different religious affiliations, rather than ethnic differentiation. As if that was not enough, in the very next paragraph of his narrative, he states:

The present-day *Hausa people* originate from the Hausa Bakwai, the seven historical states of Kano, Katsina, Daura, Zazzau (Zaria), Biram, Gobir and Rano, which form the nucleus of the Kano, North Central and North-Western states of Nigeria and of the contiguous portion of Niger Republic.

The Hausa are now being confined to particular cartographic locations and given distinct identities. This colonial confusion remained with us for a long time and sedimented itself in the narratives of latter-day Hausa historians and linguists (see, for instance, volume edited by Haour & Rossi, 2010). Yet other linguistic clusters, such as the Yoruba and even the Fulani themselves – are accepted as distinct anthropological entities with distinct interior languages. This was probably because of the rootedness of other groups and the more nomadic nature of Hausa language. In addition, the ability of the Hausa language users to absorb and adsorb not only vocabularies from other language speakers, but indeed even the language speakers themselves, gives the Hausa language an 'open source' illusion.

Standing apart from the common views expressed by researchers such as Haour and Rossi (2010), I stand firm on the arguments that a distinct ethnic cluster called 'Hausa' does exist. The cartography of such a group was clearly delineated by the group themselves in the Daura Girgam (king list) in which they outlined their history, origins and spread.

## **Hausa and its Spread**

Discussions about popular culture in northern Nigeria tend to focus almost exclusively on Hausa and Hausa-speakers because of the dominance of the Hausa language in the region. As Katzner (2002, p. 288) noted,

Hausa is the most widely spoken language of West Africa. In Nigeria it is the first language of about 25 million people, living mainly in the northern half of the country. Probably another 25 million Nigerians are able to converse in it. There are also about 5 million speakers in Niger to the north. The largest Hausa-speaking city in Nigeria is Kano.

This view was further strengthened by Jaggar (2006), who also noted that with upwards of over 30 million first-language speakers, Hausa is spoken "more than any other language in Africa south of the Sahara. The remaining languages, some of which are rapidly dying out (often due to pressure from Hausa), probably number little more than several million speakers in total, varying in size from fewer than half a million to just a handful of speakers" (Jaggar 2006, p. 206). Other linguistic groups in northern Nigeria, e.g. the Fulani, the Nupe, the Kanuri, etc. do not produce mass popular culture at the level the Hausa do. Neither do they produce the kind of international media attention Hausa language does.

## **Media Liberalization: From Propaganda to Market Forces**

With increasing convergence of various media types, it is becoming difficult to delineate what is meant by media. A wide-ranging perception of 'media' begins with the notion of inscription of messages. If that is acceptable, then the human body is a media, for it is used to inscribe messages that communicate clear information. This is reflected in tribal mark, for instance,

The control of the media by governments and agencies placed a certain amount of restriction on what could be written or said through that medium. Further, the elaborate and technical requirements needed to establish an independent media does not obviate government control, unless the media channel, e.g. Radio, would operate as a pirate broadcast. Additionally, the series of preparations that one has to go through to prepare media for mass consumption entails often technical and structured skills that go beyond those not specifically trained for that purpose.

The emergence of mass media in Nigeria was haloed by the sharp divisions in the Nigerian political culture, which sees fractured regional development that enables the individual regions to utilize the media to promote the interests of that region. This was often at the exclusion of other regions. It was in this atmosphere that the northern Region established its first newspaper, *Jaridar Nijeriya Ta Arewa*, (Northern Nigerian newspaper) in 1932. Published in three languages of Hausa, English and Arabic, it proved to be the first mass medium to provide Hausa a platform of expression. Owned and controlled by the Government, it only focused on the indoctrinaire information the Government wants the readers to know.

It soon became obvious to the British colonial authorities, though, that an exclusive Hausa-only newspaper would be more impactful than the trilingual approach adopted with *Jaridar Nijeriya Ta Arewa*. This was more so with the imminent outbreak of the Second World War, when rumors started spreading about an attack on Britain by Germany – implying that if Germany does succeed, Nigeria might become a German colony. To provide a government sugar-pill to these rumors, *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* (Truth is better than a penny) in 1939. Its greatest asset was being

edited by Alhaji Abubakar Imam, the northern Nigerian literary icon who set the standards of Hausa written expressions by literally creating new rules of narrative.

The subsequent region-within-region newspapers established from the Northern Regional Literature Agency (NORLA) in the various provinces and principally written in the Hausa language gave the language the largest spread of any language in Nigeria. The merits and demerits of this can be argued. While enriching the Hausa language through media and establishing the Hausa language as a mass medium in a multi-lingual geographical area, this was done at the expense of English language acquisition. However, an English version of the newspaper, *Nigerian Citizen*, was established in 1948, and it later became the *New Nigerian*. Its focus was on the educated elite, of which there were few, while the Hausa-language newspapers had the non-elite masses as their target audiences.

Thus the multiplicity of the provincial Hausa-language newspapers in the north was an effective development of Hausa language through the media, and poor development of English language in the media vacuum. In any event, only *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* survived the creation of regional self-government in March 1959, although trickles continued to be created here and there, principally by emergent newspaper entrepreneurs.

The catalytic effect of *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* and its subsequent provincial siblings created an insatiable thirst for Hausa literature and subsequently led to the massive development of Hausa prose fiction. Books, therefore, became the next mass medium of spreading the Hausa language. In any society, popular literature today is produced either to be read by a literate audience or to be enacted on television or in the cinema; it is produced by writers who are members, however lowly, of an elite corps of professional literates. This is more so because literature, like all other human activities, necessarily reflects current social and economic conditions, and human activities are widely accessible to all members of the society. However, class stratification was reflected in literature as soon as it had appeared in life. In the Hausa society, for instance, the chants of the *bori* cultists, differ from the secret, personal songs of the individual, and these likewise differ from the group songs of entertainment sung in community.

### **Generations of Hausa Writers**

The British colonial administration established Gaskiya Corporation in 1945 from the ashes of earlier Literature Bureau, and in 1953 the North Regional Literature Agency (NRLA, or more commonly, NORLA) was further created to supplement the activities of the Literature Bureau/Gaskiya Corporation. However, in 1959 NORLA was disbanded and replaced in 1960, the year of independence, with a publishing outfit, Gaskiya Corporation, which relied more on commercial outlets for sustenance, than government grants. In 1965, the Corporation entered into an agreement with Macmillan (UK) to establish a book publishing unit in order to revitalize the book publishing industry. Subsequently in October 1966 the Northern Nigerian Publishing Company (NNPC) was registered, with Gaskiya eventually owning 60% and Macmillan 40% of the shares of the company. Virtually all the 'early' novels published in northern Nigeria were by NNPC.

To understand the phenomena of contemporary Hausa fiction, we must go back in history to the generations of Hausa writers that were literally created by the British colonial machinery (Furniss, 1998).

The first generation (1933-1945) were writers of what I can call *classical Hausa literature*. There is no meter for making this Judgment, except for linguistic style. Umaru Ahmed and Bello Daura (1970) argue that the classical Hausa — the meter I use in this categorization — is “Hausa language and literary styles which have been greatly influenced by Arabic and Islamic tradition — as opposed to Modern Hausa, which connotes Hausa language and literary styles which have been influenced by Western Civilization and culture through the agency of the English Language.” (p. 7). I argue that the linguistic styles used in this category of books was the quintessentially “correct” and therefore classical Hausa. The strong links between literary acquisition and the Islamic erudition connotes an Islamic and cultural respectability to this mode of expression.

Further, the sentence structure in the early classical Hausa books no longer reflects contemporary common modes of speech. The language used in the books was the “accepted gentleman’s” mode of speech, free of vulgarities and virtually academic. It must be, considering that the books were State-sponsored, and that also they were essentially aimed at grade schools. The sponsorship by the State, in the form of colonial administration, itself under British Conservative Party influence, ensured books written in prose that the British would approve. Thus, books such as *Ruwan Bagaja*, *Magana Jari Ce*, *Shehu Umar*, *Gandoki* reflect these styles, and as earlier argued, represent classical Hausa literature (see, for example, Yahaya, 1993). Consequently, the strong links between these early Hausa classics and educational endeavors confer on them an elite status not afforded to other forms of Hausa fiction.

The second generation (1950-1979) of writers are what I consider writers of *neo-classical Hausa literature*, who seemed to be awed by, and rooted to, the literary aesthetics of the classical Hausa generation. There was a studied attempt at humor and correct mode of speech, and behavior. The censoring hand of the State machinery was also very present in these books, especially as the task of publishing them was undertaken by the State-sponsored agencies. Further, the creation of more high schools in the era, meant more books needed to be used as set books for Hausa studies, and as such a large volume of these books were produced and the major examination body recommended them as textbooks. Consequently, novels such as *Gogan Naka*, *Kitsen Rogo*, *Iliya Dan Maikarfi*, *Sihirtaccen Gari*, and *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya* all became comparable with the classics, but with an admixture of fantasy, realism and even a dash of inter-stellar travel (*Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya*). Their focus also altered to reflect problems of urbanization and the greater complexities of an emergent semi-technological society.

The third generation (1980-1985) can be considered writers of *modern Hausa classical literature*, where the socially accepted linguistic modes were used in the narratives. However, it seemed that Hausa fiction was emerging from the era of fantasy into a firmer reality. The novelists in this category were still part of the State chaperonage. This was because in 1980 the Department of Culture of the then Federal Ministry of Social Welfare and Culture organized a literary competition for creative writings in the three major Nigerian languages, i.e. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. This was in line with the Federal Government’s focus on culture (spawning off *Nigeria Magazine* from the same Department). The winning Hausa novels were *Tsumangiyar*

*Kan Hanya, Zabi Naka, Karshen Alewa Kasa, and Turmin Danya*. The linguistic styles as well as the themes of these novels reflected attempts to retain a degree of relevancy in an increasingly changing world. But the stilted presentation of “correct” behavior could not capture the attention (or the money) of a new age generation of readers still in their adolescence. The writers did not continue much writing beyond these first attempts.

To create relevance for itself under dwindling patronage, NNPC decided to hold another literary competition in 1981, harking back at the one held in 1933 to boost sales. Although eight books were selected as the best, only three were published. These included *So Aljannar Duniya, Amadi Na Malam Amah*, and *Mallakin Zuciyata* (a play).

Each of the first three generations operated under more or less isolated and protected medium. The novels were published by large multi-national publishers, and they were keen to emphasize marketability and acceptability. Matters of style, language, format and presentation therefore were rigorously enforced if not by the authors, then by the copy editors of the companies.

The rapid political and economic upheavals in Nigeria in the decade of the 1970s and 1980s created unstable market forces that had adverse effects on book publishing and led to government indifference in book publishing (Emeyonu, 1993).

Consequently, the patronage that the three generations of Hausa prose fiction writers enjoyed from government-owned firms rapidly evaporated. Vernacular prose fiction came to a virtual stand-still, especially from 1985. Consequently, creative fiction started to take a back stand in Hausa literary efforts. Thus in his categorization of Hausa literature, Neil Skinner acknowledged that of the 118 titles in his *Bibliography of Creative Writing in Hausa* in 1980, only 18, many of which were no longer available, were fiction (Skinner, 1980).

The list seemed to barely increase even in Stanislaw Pilaszewicz’s long essay, *Literature in the Hausa Language*, published in 1985. By the time late Professor Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya published his encyclopedic *Hausa A Rubuce: Tarihin Rubuce Rubuce Cikin Hausa (History of the Hausa Writings, 1988)*, the prose fiction list had somewhat increased to more than fifty. *Hausa A Rubuce*, however, was written in Hausa, and as such less accessible to many researchers with interest in African, especially Hausa, literature and its development. Graham Furniss, in his *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture in Hausa* published in 1996 seemed to be more intensely focused on poetry and less on prose fiction, devoting only Chapter 2 to historical analysis of early Hausa novels (building up on the earlier analysis by Stanislaw Pilaszewicz), giving barely four pages to the new Hausa writers who started emerging from mid 1980s.

Thus, the most visible generation of Hausa fiction writers were those who came after 1980. They became the fourth generation of Hausa vernacular prose fiction writers (from 1984) and heralded the arrival of a New Age generation. The modern classical Hausa writers of the early 1970s seemed to have retired their pens, since most of them were one-hit wonders; producing a text that was well received and used as a textbook for West African School Certificate Hausa examinations (e.g. *Kitsen Rogo*), but no more. Just like the Hausa neoclassical and classical writers before them, they enjoyed the patronage of the State or multinational corporate

publishing houses, eager to cash on the burgeoning high school population, freshly spewed from the pools of the mass educational policy of Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme of 1976.

The newcomers gate-crashed the Hausa literary scene with ballistic urbanism and often raw sexuality, divesting readers from the village simplicity of the earlier Hausa classics. They were cultural cyborgs: an uneasy confluence between the two rivers of Hausa traditionalism and modern hybrid urban media-rich technological society.

As Ibrahim Sheme pointed out, by the 1980s “a lot of the traditional ways of life in Hausa land had drastically changed. The incursion of western lifestyle in our society was so great that when it captured young hearts, it was inextricably mirrored in our literature.” (Sheme, 2001). Products of cross-cutting media parenting with visual media bombardment from Hollywood and Bollywood cinema, the new Hausa novelists that emerged from the 1980s refused to build on the thematic styles of their “modernist uncles”. Thus, this new generation of writers avoided giving too much attention to Marxist politics (as, for instance in the earlier *Tura Ta Kai Bango*), gun-toting dare-devils, drug cartels (e.g. as in *Karshen Alewa Kasa*), prostitution or alcohol consumption. Writing in uncompromising and unapologetic Modern Hausa (often interlaced with English words to reflect the new urban lexicon of “Engausa”), they focused their attention on the most *emotional* concern of urban Hausa youth: love and marriage; thus, falling neatly into the romanticist mold, or *soyayya* (romance)—consequently borrowing inspiration and motifs from Hindi film cinema (Larkin, 1997).

### **Radio as Enabler of Language Spread**

The growth of radio in Nigeria has been a slow but interesting process. It was introduced in Nigeria in 1930 as a wired system called radio distribution or radio re-diffusion by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). In this process, wires were connected to loudspeakers installed in houses of subscribers. The wired broadcasting services were commissioned in Lagos on December 1, 1935, and two relay stations were located at Ikoyi and the Glover Memorial Hall, both in Lagos. The main duty of the relay was to *carry BBC programs*, with just one hour left for *local programs* featuring news, entertainment as well as local announcements. Other stations were later opened at *Ibadan in 1939, Kano 1944, and Kaduna, Enugu, Jos, Zaria, Abeokuta, Ijebu Ode, Port Harcourt and Calabar in the subsequent years.*

The colonial government then came up with a policy to carry out a survey on radio broadcasting in all the British colonies including Nigeria. The committee recommended a *wireless system of broadcasting* for the colony of Nigeria. An old building on 32 Marina, Lagos, close to the General Post Office, was renovated as *temporary headquarters*. In addition, the Kaduna and Enugu Radio Diffusion Services were restructured and converted to *regional* broadcasting houses. The Radio Diffusion Services (RDS) later became the *Nigerian Broadcasting Service* (NBS) and was basically concerned with satisfying the program needs of its audience, with the traditional role of *informing, educating and entertaining* the audience members. On 1st April 1956, the *Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation* was established to replace the NBS.

Subsequent development of Radio provides an effective medium for the Hausa to partake in both linguistic and cultural expressions. Thus, Radio stations can be divided roughly into four: state, private, community and international radio. However, there is much overlap. Private commercial

stations have bigger audiences than government radio in many countries, and, although dependable statistics for Africa as a whole are difficult to come by, it is clear that state radio is coming under increasing pressure from regional and local commercial radio throughout the continent, especially in urban areas. In Kano, for instance, this is evidenced by the government's preference for private commercial stations as the main outlet for government programs, despite government's own station.

The allure of the language itself as well as its widespread across the West African belt is seen in the way foreign Radio stations scramble to include Hausa language in their broadcasts. A further attraction to these foreign Radio stations is the way the Hausa language breaks linguistic, political and historical barriers that separate nations in West Africa. From Kano to Senegal, large pockets of people at either national or community level, speak the language – making it the most perfect vehicle in delivering messages across a vast swath of geographical entities.

Further, the Radio provides the Hausa with an effective international 'public sphere' where currents of events, information and news combine together to enable debates about the political economy of existence. Thus, from cobblers to roadside tea sellers, bus conductors and wheel barrow pushers, 'okada' taxi drivers, students in all levels of education, to public intellectuals, Hausa Radio broadcasts serve to bind the people to their language and culture. In Kano, the Radio provides an effective political platform through the formation of extremely orally visible 'sojojin baka' (vocal armies) who, on a paid basis, took it upon themselves to police the behaviors and contributions of elected public officers in the discharge of the responsibilities for which they were elected.

Between those who propose and those who oppose, these vocal armies provide a fascinating use of the Hausa language in creating debates on public accountability. Indeed, the Hausa radio provides an almost perfect encapsulation of the public sphere as analyzed by Jurgen Habermas, the German critical theorist, who perceives the public sphere as an area in social life where individuals can come together to freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence political action (Habermas, 1989). While empirical data is scanty – if not even impossible – on the impact of these vocal armies on general political class, nevertheless the awareness of the existence of a critical mass of people dealing directly with voters is often enough to galvanize politicians into action leading to betterment of lives in their constituencies.

Not only political in nature, the dialogues (or, if you like, diatribes) of the sojojin baka contribute to language development in the coinages of new words, or translocations of existing words 'Sutale' (forcefully remove) became a common expression and migrated from the Radio wave into public discourse as a way of getting rid of something. 'Taliyar karshe' (last macaroni, and which replaced 'kiranye' – call back) is used by the to refer to notification of non-re-election of non-performing politician; his performance of course measured by the materially satisfies a particular vocal critic. 'Kayan aiki' (normally, tools, or instruments) refers to the cash doled out by politicians to their supporters. It can be a source of unpleasant revelations where one 'sojan baka' accuses the others of collecting 'kayan aiki' and not informing anyone. 'Sanatoriya' refers to the Senatorial district which elects the politician.



The Radio also provided a literary medium which enables aspiring writers to share their prose fiction with listeners – thus further enhancing the language. Indeed, it is through the reading of various Hausa romantic novels in the late 1980s and early 1990s that attracted Hausa listeners to the existence of vibrant Hausa literary scene and contributed to the development of Hausa modern novel.

This, however, is not often without its challenges. A literary Radio program, ‘Rai Dangin Goro’ attracts both the admiration of listeners – perhaps due to the delivery mode adopted which includes mimicking the voices of the various characters in the dialogues – as well as the ire of the Islamicate authorities at least Kano, who took exception to public expression of romantic emotions over the air. Rai Dangin Goro and similar programs were seen as morally subversive in their open display of hitherto tethered emotions in the public sphere.

### **The Internet and the Dark Side of the Mind**

The liberalization of Internet as an information platform was the propulsive force that emphasized the power of the Hausa language. When Internet graduated from an esoteric technical platform, to a market commodity, as common as any household item in any supermarket, Hausa youth took a massive advantage of this huge uncensored medium. From young kids trying to find their way through high school grades, to elite intellectuals, Internet provided a platform for free expression – and in Hausa. The freedom with which Internet allowed expressions – good or bad – certainly contributed to the growth of Hausa language in a number of ways.

First, the most difficult process was access, and this was surmounted by the bloodthirsty competition between the four or five major telecommunication companies that kept bring down the cost of data to attract customers. By making data cheap, the Telcos have given millions – despite recently (March 2017) dwindling data patronage – opportunities to use the Internet for good or bad. This means that spreading Hausa language as done in the pre-Internet years would no longer require the complex capital intensive process of printing, distribution and marketing of books. For the Hausa, Internet signals the suffocation of the printed word.

Secondly, the absence of censorship on the Internet seems a welcome development, for it enables a free expression. Hausa youth took to this with gusto, creating blogs in the beginning (early 2000s) and forming online communities, particularly on Yahoo! Groups platforms. Ironically, even though the communities were virtual and online, yet many were tightly regulated by the moderators who insist on a fundamental decorum of behavior; indeed, errant members were often ‘expelled’ from their groups, leading to pleadings to be allowed back. The early Hausa virtual communities therefore promoted the spread of Hausa language, but also imposed Hausa moral codes and behavior as fundamental rules of engagement.

When Facebook became the new urban status symbol from 2009 in northern Nigeria, Hausa youth jumped on its bandwagon, creating accounts, online communities, fan clubs, associations etc. When many realized that they are truly in a ‘no-man’s land’ of literary expression, the testosterone kicked in, and pretty soon pages and faces started to appear with strong roots in sleaze and salacity. Thus a ‘Dark Facebook’ became a sphere where an exclusion principle was employed by Hausa youth to shut out non-Hausa speakers, and to partake in particularly

expressions of all shades of sexuality and subversion. For instance, Facebook is replete with Hausa alternative sexualities pages that are extremely explicit. Going through them, one gets the impression of gleeful independence in the ability to express these forbidden thoughts, with a mutual satisfaction at 'cheating the system' through anonymity.

Other sites provide the same 'dark freedom'. A Hausa blogger, for instance, delights in publishing full pornographic novels, complete with cover artwork in Hausa. Not content with BlogSpot, he also migrated his literary works to WordPress and Facebook, where his posts receive many 'likes' as well as phone numbers. Hausa women also form many such alternative sexualities groups and profiles, and identify each other by using 'Les' in their profile names.

While Facebook's bots regularly police accounts and attempt at cleaning up, this was not enough, nor does it deter users whose accounts were deleted – they merely change their usernames and open new accounts, and it is business as usual.

Facebook also provides Hausa youth with canvas to express subversive alternative political opinions, whether in English or in Hausa; although more in Hausa due to wider spread. On a few occasions, Facebookers have used the opportunity of being virtually anonymous and launch a tirade of insults or critical opinions about various important personalities in the north. For instance, in 2011, a young Facebook user posted a devastating 'curse' on the governor of Jigawa State. The governor was not amused and filed a complaint which led to the arrest of the poster. In 2013, a civil servant was dismissed from the Bauchi State civil service for criticizing the amount spent on the wedding ceremony of the son of the State governor in a Facebook post. Similarly, many posters have used Facebook to openly criticize the government in various forms; and to show their fearlessness – or naiveté – they do not use avatars or nicknames, but their full names, which made it easier to identify and prosecute them.

The media platform for the spread of the Hausa language received another boost in 2014 when Facebook bought WhatsApp free instant messaging application for Smartphones. Created in 2009, initially for the iPhone and BlackBerry, WhatsApp rapidly established as the most popular instant messaging cross-platform application available through the phone. Crashing data prices offered by main Telcos in Nigeria gave thousands of Hausa youth opportunities to sustain their narratives and conversations on the WhatsApp platform, in the absence of a computer. Soon enough, WhatsApp and Facebook dominated the world and subsequent attention of youth. Thousands of groups were formed on the two platforms, exchanging both conventional and subversive information. In Kano the moral police, Hisbah, arrested many WhatsApp group numbers, identified by their telephone numbers, for sharing what were deemed inappropriate pictures.

Such prosecutions, now gaining traction world-wide, pose a legal challenge in that it is difficult to affirm the identity of the person posting such messages, even if a specific phone number or even IP address could be attributed to their devices.

Widespread availability of Smartphone-based applications on both iTunes and Play Store such as Radio Hausa, Daawa Sunna Hausa Radio, Zumunta FM, Radio France International (Rfi), Radio Online Iran, BBC iPlayer Radio, Tunein, most with either fully dedicated online versions of the

landline Radio stations (e.g. Tunein), or stations with specific programming slots for Hausa language serve to enable the spread of the Hausa language through the New Media.

## Conclusion

Media liberalization has certainly turned out a curse or blessing to the spread of the Hausa language, depending on the perspective one wishes to take. The early engagement of the Hausa with inscriptive media were didactic, academic and sermonizing. Early literature was aimed at providing a Utopian view of the Hausa society. Media forms, whether books, posters, magazines, Radio shows were all used as indoctrinaire instruments to mainly educate and inform, and secondarily, entertain.

The break-out years of early 1980s saw rapid spread of Radio programs that start to focus more on the entertainment function of the media, rather than its staid educating and information functions. Early novels in Hausa language that came in the 1980s occupied two media streams – the written word, and the Radio narrative: all which contributed to the spread and enthronelement of the language beyond its sources of media production.

Internet changed everything. It gave everyone the freedom to be seen and heard, and caused anxiety among moralists and culturalists about future direction of moral education of the youth. Once thing that escaped the guardian of the society was that censorship is best served by the individual, rather than being forced on the individual. Thus, media allowed Hausa to achieve the following:

1. As is true with any other language, media, in all forms, provide an inscriptive substrate for the effective spread of the Hausa language
2. What remains unique, for the Hausa, is the effective use of the media to inscribe their narratives across a wide spectrum of literacies and geographical barriers
3. By embracing literary activities before literary sophistication, Hausa youth have demonstrated an effective capacity for narrative expression on a scale much deeper than their contemporaries in other Nigerian linguistic groups
4. Thus, perhaps again more than any other equivalent group, they remain the most literate ‘illiterate’ group of media engagers.
5. While economic forces tended to limit their continued capacity to use the literary medium to express themselves, succor came via the availability of Internet, which provides further bases for expression and development of language in all forms.

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