

Hausa Home Videos:

Technology, Economy and Society



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“Istanci”, “Imamanci” and “Bollywoodanci”: Media and Adaptation in Hausa Popular Culture

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Introduction

The view that the communication technologies we use have effects on how and what we communicate, when we communicate, the frequency of our communication and so on, rather than serving simply as a new medium for us to communicate pretty much the same old content in pretty much the same old style is often referred to as technological determinism or, more broadly, media determinism. The term “technological determinism” was coined long ago by the American sociologist and economist Thorstein Veblen. Nowadays, the term is used to refer to the common assumption that new technologies are the *primary cause* of:

- major social and historical changes at the *macrosocial* level of social structure and processes; and/or
- subtle but profound social and psychological influences at the *microsocial* level of the regular use of particular kinds of tools.

Whatever the specific technological “revolution” may be, technological determinists present it as a dramatic and “inevitable” driving force, the “impact” of which will “lead to” deep and “far-reaching” “effects” or “consequences.” This sort of language reflects an excited, prophetic tone which many people find inspiring and convincing but which alienates social scientists. Most famously, it pervades the writings of the Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan (d. 1980) argued that communication technologies such as television, radio, printing and writing profoundly transformed society and “the human psyche.” The technologies (or media) which he discussed in such books as *The Gutenberg Galaxy* and *Understanding Media* reflected his very broad use of the terms, making his famous claim that “the medium is the message” even more dramatic. Such broad claims are open to the criticism of “reification” (treating the referent as if it were a single, undifferentiated object).

Commentators on technology take four main standpoints (though there is, of course, terrain in between) toward technological determinism:

1. **Extreme** (also called “strong” or “hard”) technological determinists present “Technology” in general (or a particular technology) as either a “sufficient condition” (sole cause) determining widespread societal or behavioral changes, or at least as a “necessary condition” (requiring

additional preconditions). This is the stance of those who insist that information technology (or some other technology) will radically transform society and/or our ways of thinking (or has already done so). It is the stance that most enrages contemporary sociologists (who wear rather different spectacles from technologists).

2. In a more cautious variation of this stance, **weak** (or "soft") technological determinists present technology as a key factor (amongst others) which may *facilitate* such changes in society or behavior. This is the perspective which I propose to explore shortly (taking for granted the importance of socio-cultural factors).
3. **Socio-cultural determinists** present technologies and media as entirely subordinate to their development and use in particular socio-political, historical and culturally-specific contexts. This is the stance of most modern sociologists on the issue.
4. **Voluntarists** emphasize *individual* control over the tools which they see themselves as "choosing" to use.
5. No specific stand is taken in this paper with regards to these degrees of technological determinism. However, the theory is brought to bear on the analysis presented because of the strong relationship between aspects of media technology which dictated popular cultural entertainment choices among the Hausa of Northern Nigeria. Indeed the availability of media technologies helped to significantly alter cultural praxis of entertainment media in Hausa communities.

In this paper I argue that the dominant characteristics of the Hausa home videoits use of Hindi film motif has historically colonial antecedents that saw the British colonial administration openly encouraging and advocating for translation of the literature of the Other, rather than encouraging indigenous literary development in Hausa language. It is from this antecedent of adapting the media of the Other in literature that Hausa home video makers acquired the strategy of using the Hindi film as a template for their own filmmaking.

Hausa Language and Literary Development

Of the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Muslim Hausa have, arguably, the most extensive and well-established literary tradition. This was made possible by contact with Islam as far back at 1320s in the Hausaland which exposed the area to the literary polemics and activities of the Muslim world at large. Thus while most Nigerian communities glorified their literary antecedents through extensive collections of oral traditions and folktales, the Muslim Hausa, in addition to extensive collection of similar oral traditions, had the instruments to *write* down their literature through the medium of the Arabic language earlier than all the groups. And while classical Arabic remained the preserve of the clerics and courtiers in Muslim Hausa communities for centuries, subsequently even the Hausa language

became Arabicized in the form of a *ajami* that opened up literary expressions for millions of literate, but not scholastic, members of the community.

Islam and colonial rule had led to a total transformation of the traditional Hausa society. Before the arrival of the British in 1900 the traditional Hausa society had virtually transformed itself into an Islamic polity with centuries of Islamic scholarship, which was further entrenched by the reformist *jihad* of Shehu Usman (an Fodiyo in 1804). The Islamic polity thus established a cultural framework that provides inspiration for subsequent literary tradition in Hausaland and which has sustained itself for well over five hundred years. Therefore the scholastic tradition in Hausaland was essentially religious having been generated and sustained by the clerics.

Translation Bureau, Rupert East and "Istanci"

When the British colonized what later became northern Nigeria in 1903, they inherited a vast population of literate citizenry, with thousands of Qur'anic schools and equally thousands of Muslim intellectual scholars. Since it is clear that it would be against the grain of British colonial rule to encourage Islamic scholarship, a way has to be devised to slow down the progress of Islamic education. That way was simply the forceful intrusion of roman alphabets into a newly created education system in 1909.

However, it took to 1929 to set up a Translation Bureau initially in Kano, but later moved to Zaria in 1931. The first Director of the Bureau was Mr. Whiting, and his tenure saw the Hausanized versions of local histories in Arabic texts, notably *Tarikh Arbab Hadha al-balad al-Musamma Kano*, Anon, the oft quoted *Kano Chronicles* as translated by H. R. Palmer and published in the *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol 38 (1908) pp. 59-98 and republished in his *Sudanese Memoirs* (3 volumes: London, 1928), 3: 92-132. The Hausa translation was *Hausawa Da Makwabtansu*.

The main focus of the Translation Bureau was just that translation of non-Hausa language works using the sparkling brand new Hausanized Roman script. It was only when Dr. Rupert East took over in 1932 that it acquired its *Istanci* persona and became devoted to wholesale translation of works from far and near into Hausa in order to generate reading material, more essentially to enable colonial officers to polish their practice of Hausa language than to empower the "natives" with enriched literary heritage. It was this obsession with *translation* of carefully selected works, rather than encouraging local indigenous initiatives into literary explorations that earned this era of Hausa literary development the epithet of *Istanci* principally due to the forceful nature of the Rupert East, its main protagonist.

And yet *Istanci* was a *selective* process, not aimed at education, its ostentatious cover, but at an anthropologically condescending service. If the purpose was to translate reading materials, then the vast archival library of Usman Danfodio alone would keep the Translation Bureau busy for quite awhile. Yet there was a studious effort to *ignore* the vast majority of indigenous Arabic and Islamic literary sources. This is hardly surprising considering that the local Arabic and Islamic

literary sources that could be translated into Hausa contained significant dosage of religious components; it would certainly look odd for the British to continue the process of translating Arabic religious or semi-religious treatises into Hausa, especially as the script for forceful Romanization of the Hausa language was written by the missionary, Dr. R. Miller.¹

Thus the clutch of translations done – *Hausawa da Makwabtansu*, *Labaran da Da Na Yanzu* and others – were fairly safe local histories, not scripts for a revolutionary Muslim revolt against infidel rule. To break the dryness of the historical texts, a more spicy and exotic fictional material was also translated. This was *Dare Dubu da Daya*. This was a translation of Arabic *Alf Laylah Wa Laylah*, a collection of Oriental stories of uncertain date and authorship whose tales of Aladdin, Ali Baba, and Sindbad the Sailor have almost become part of Western folklore, and translated into English by Sir Richard Burton as *The Thousand Nights and a Night*, 16 vol. (10 vol., 1885; 6 supplementary vol., 1886-88). Containing gory salacious details of sexual promiscuity, it nevertheless became accepted as an adult text in a prudish Hausa society of the 1930s when it was translated by Mamman Kano and Frank Edgar. In the 1980s it was even being read over the radio!

However, more general literature of a creative nature was required as reading material for the growing number of “literate” people in the area. As Dr. Rupert East exasperatedly noted,²

“...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).

Thus to encourage indigenous writing in Romanized Hausa script – and thus provide a cheap way for the British to delve deeper into indigenous mindset, useful for control later – a short story competition was organized in 1933, in Katsina, among the students and staff of the Training College. The best five – what I call the “famous five” – among the numerous submissions were published. These were *Ruwan Bagaja* (Abubakar Imam), *Shaihu Umar* (Abubakar Tafawa Balewa), *Gandoki* (Muhammad Bello Kagara), *Idon Matambayi* (Muhammadu Gwarzo). Later, Dr. East collaborated with John Tafida Umaru to produce *Jiki Magayi*.

¹ A.U Adamu (2003), *Sunset at Dawn: Colonial Policy and Muslim Hausa Education in Northern Nigeria, 1900 to 1910*, Paper presented at the International Conference on the Transformation of Northern Nigeria, 1903-2003, 27th – 29th March, 2003, Arewa House, Kaduna, Nigeria

² Rupert East., “A First Essay in Imaginative African Literature”, *Africa*, Vol 9, No. 3, 1936, pp. 350-357.

The most outstanding of the five Hausa novels, to Rupert East, was Abubakar Imam's *Ruwan Bagaja* (The Healing Waters). However, it was clear from the plot elements and general thematic structure of the novel that it was *not* a Hausa tale. East detected this in the first draft of the novel, and drew the attention of Abubakar Imam to it. As East, the Superintendent of Education in charge of the Translation Bureau and editor of the manuscripts, noted in a letter to Mr. Allen, then in charge of the Katsina Middle School where Abubakar Imam was then a student,

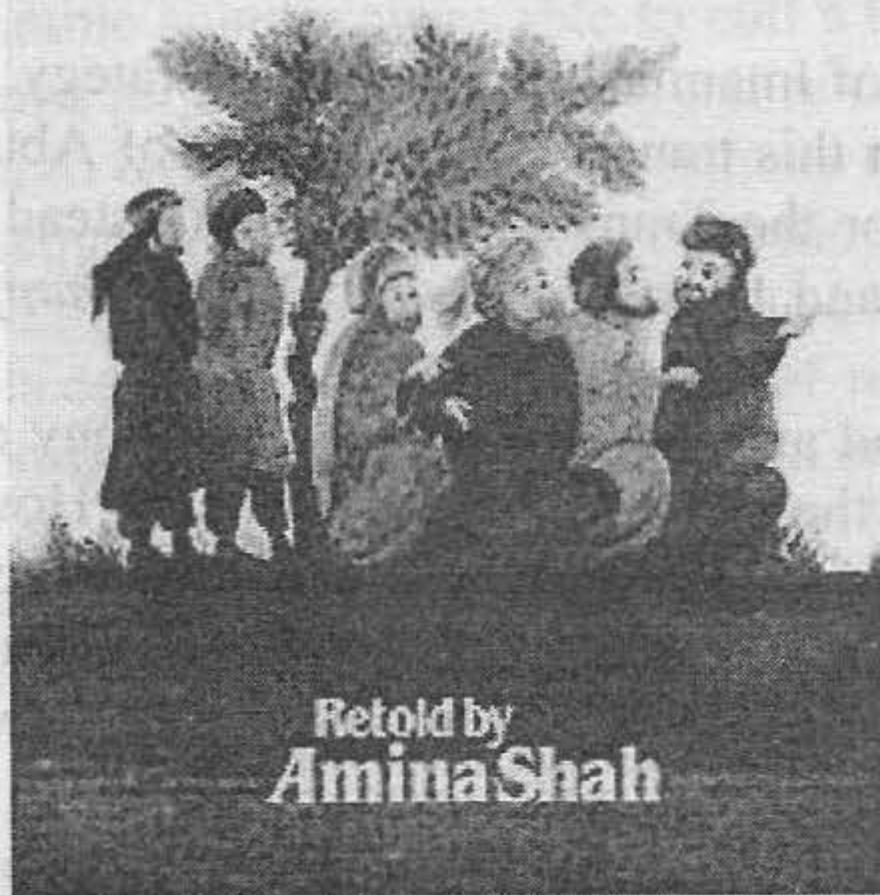
Many thanks for your note and for sending back Malam Abubakar's manuscript. I sympathise with the author, and quite understand if he feels a certain amount of resentment at having his book cut about so much. At the same time I don't see how we can publish it as it stands, as he has taken many of his stories almost word for word out of other books, and if we published these under his name, it would set a bad precedent. I made a special point of the work being original when I came around... Apart from this the book is well written, quite one of the best that have been sent in, and it would be a great pity if the trouble he has taken were wasted for the lack of the small extra labour required. Actually all that is needed is for him to write five or six short stories out his own head to replace those which have to be cut out, and adjust the connecting passages so that the narrative runs on continuously.

Rupert East to Mr. Allen on Abubakar Imam's entry, *Ruwan Bagaja* (The Healing Waters), April 30, 1934.¹

Abubakar Imam, in an interview with Nicholas Pwedden stated that he was "inspired to write *Ruwan Bagaja* after reading *Muqamat Al Hariri*. *The Maqamat*, translated in English by various authors as *The Assemblies of Al-Hariri: Fifty Encounters with the Shaykh Abu Zayd of Seruj Maqamat* was written by Abu Muhammad al-Qasim Hariri (1054-1121). Plate 1 shows the cover art work of the two tales:

¹ Mora, A (ed) (1989) *The Abubakar Imam Memoirs*. Zaria: NNPC, p. 23.

The Assemblies of Al-Hariri



Maqamat Al-Hariri: "Ruwan Bagaja" – Original



Ruwan Bagaja – Transmuted Hausa Version

Plate 1: Versions of Maqamat Al-Hariri

Literature Bureau, Abubakar Imam, and "Imamanci"

In giving his account of the birth of *Imamanci*, Abubakar Imam further told Pweden:

In that story (*Ruwan Bagaja*) there were two characters – Abu Zaidu and Harisu – with one trying to defeat the other through cunning. I also used two men, on the basis of that technique, but *I used the Hausa way of life* to show how one character (Abubakar) defeats the other (Malam Zurk'e)."¹ (emphasis mine).

Thus *Ruwan Bagaja* actually marked the transition from *Istanci* – direct translations of other works into Hausa – to its adaptive variety, *Imamanci* – the "transmutation" the literature of the Other, into Hausa mindset. As Imam further revealed, he was taught the art of literary transmutation by Rupert East who

...taught me many dos and don'ts. For example, he taught me never to allow a miscreant to triumph over a good character in any fictional story, such as a cheat or a fraud, even if he appears to be winning in the beginning and he is being highly respected and praised. That it is better to make him the loser at the end...On translation, he said if someone utters something nice, either in English or in Arabic,

¹ Pweden, N, The Abubakar Imam Interview, *Harsunan Nijeriya*, Vol XVII, 1995. CSNL, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria; reproduced in *New Nigerian Weekly*, Friday November 14, 1997. p 12 and 14.

or any other language, when translating it into Hausa you shouldn't be enslaved to the wordings of the statement, trying to act like you're translating the Koran or the Bible. What you're supposed to do, as long as you fully understand what the man said, *is to try and show genius in your own language just as he did in his*, i.e. yours should be as nice in Hausa as his was nice in English. That way Dr. East kept teaching me various techniques of writing until I understood them all.¹ (emphasis added).

Rupert East was thus the *originator* of Imamian transmutative strategy, while Abubakar Imam its script reader. It is from this transmuted strategy of Abubakar that we received the term *Ofishin Talifi*, for the Translation Bureau (instead of its original translation of *Ofishin Juye-juye*), and later, *Majalisar 'Dinkin Duniya* for United Nations.

Imamanci as a literary technique and an emergent media technology device worked brilliantly because of the skills of the adapter, Abubakar Imam. However, Imam was to acknowledge the Svengali in Rupert East, when the latter recruited him, albeit temporarily, to work on producing more reading materials long the mould of *Ruwan Bagaja* and using its adaptive literary technique for the newly re-named Literature Bureau. According to Imam,

From then on he (East) assembled for me many story-books in Arabic and English, especially Iranian texts. Fortunately I knew Arabic because I had learned it right from home. That's why I could understand the Arabic books unless if the language as too advanced. I read all of these books until I understood the techniques of established writers. When Dr. East realised that I had finished he told me what to do and I set out to write. The first book I wrote was *Magana Jari Ce* (Knowledge is an Asset).

It is this book, *Magana Jari Ce* that became the unalloyed classic of Hausa literature, despite the heavy dosage of foreign elements it contained from books as diverse as *Alfu Layla wa Laylatun*, *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, *Bahrul Adab*, *Hans Andersen Fairy Tales*, *Aesop Fables*, *The Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales*, *Tales from Shakespeare*, and *Raudhul Jinan*.² Indeed, further analysis of *Magana Jari Ce* revealed the following as its sources material:

- 11 stories from Thousand and One Nights
- 2 stories from the Indian collection *Panchatantra*
- 2 stories from a Persian version of the Indian collection *Sukasaptati*
- 1 story that is of Persian origin
- 14 fables from the Brothers Grimm
- 2 fables from Hans Andersen
- 7 short stories from *Decameron* by Boccaccio

¹ *ibid*

² Abraham Muhammad Malumfashi, "Abubakar Imam: Nazarin Tubali da Ginuwar Ayyukansa Na Adabi", PhD thesis, Department of Nigerian Languages, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria, October, 1998.

1 based on a Biblical story (from Old Testament)

1 based on a Greek myth about the king of Macedonia

1 based on a fable by W. Hauff

14 stories were either original or derived from unknown sources¹

The Imamian paradigm of adaptive translation soon enough found favor with subsequent Hausa prose fiction writers of the and 1950s, who due to their exposure to Arabic sources were able to cull a story here and there – thus media availability became an important factor – and re-cast it as a Hausa tale. Imam himself does not seem to have been happy to continue the trend of adaptive prose fiction because his subsequent works were more educational.

The various changes that the Literature Bureau underwent subsequently, and the need to increase the number of reading materials for burgeoning primary and secondary school student population encouraged other authors to begin their writing. The works that emerged in the early 1950s included, *Ilya Dan Mai Karfi* (Ahmadu Ingawa, 1951), *Gogari Naka* (Garba Funtuwa, 1952) and *Sihirtaccen Gari* (Ahmadu Katsina, 1952).

For instance, *Ilya...* sustained the Imamian paradigm by adapting a Russian byliny (narrative poetry) transmitted orally. The oldest Russian byliny belong to a cycle dealing with the golden age of Kievan Rus in the 10th-12th century. They centre on the deeds at the 10th-century court of Saint Vladimir I of Kiev. Prince Vladimir I and his court. One of the favorite heroes is the independent Cossack *Ilya Muromets of Murom*, who defended Kievan Rus from the Mongols². Unlike the aristocratic heroes of most epics, Ilya was of peasant origin. He was an ordinary child who could not walk and who lived the life of a stay-at-home, sitting on top of the stove until he was more than 30 years old, when he discovered the use of his legs through the miraculous advice of some pilgrims. He was then given a splendid magic horse that became his inseparable companion (in the Hausa version, the horse is called *Kwalele*), and he left his parents' home for Vladimir's court. There he became the head of Vladimir's retainers and performed astonishing feats of strength. He killed the monster Nightingale the Robber and drove the Tatars out of the kingdom. His legend was the basis of the *Symphony No. 3* (1909-11; *Ilya Muromets*) by Reinhold Glière.

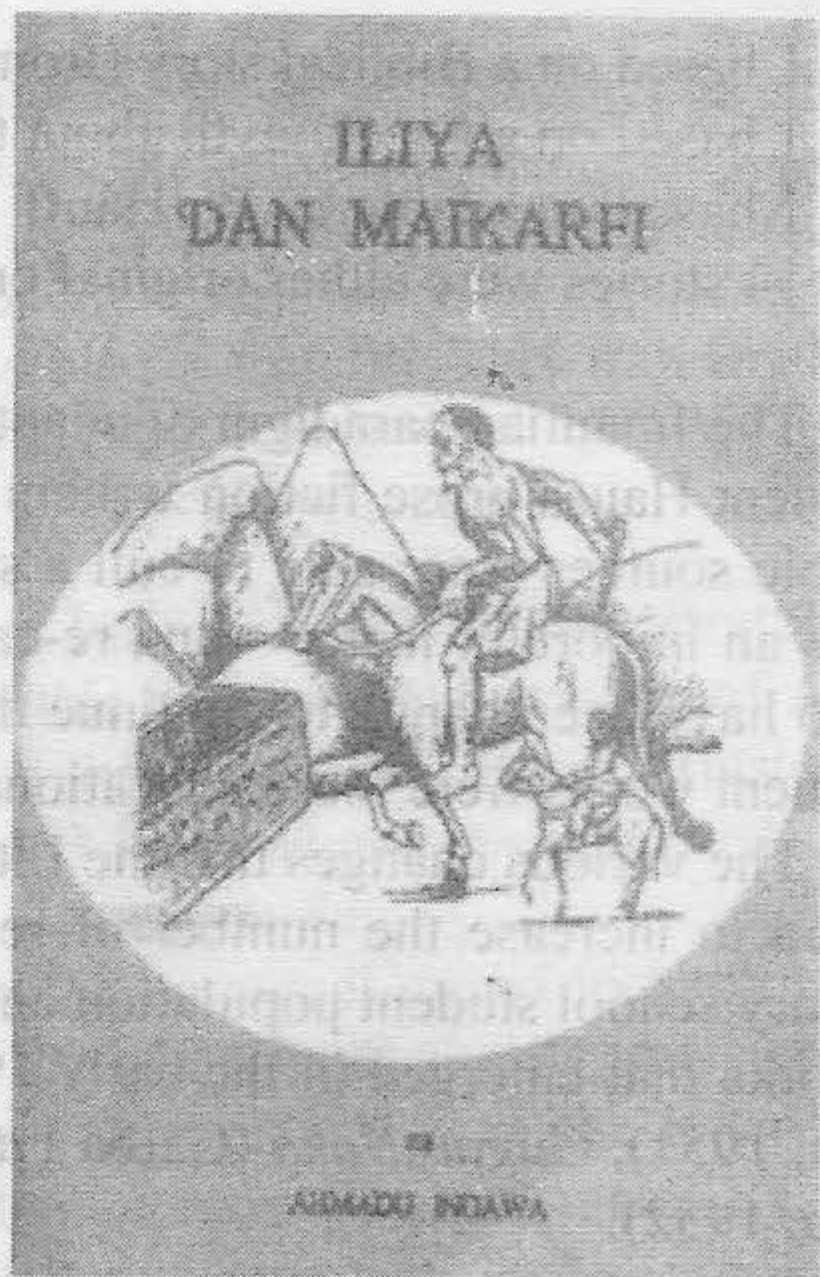
Plate 2 shows both the two versions of the novel, and how similar they were even in cover artwork:

¹ Graham Furniss, *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture in Hausa*. Edinburgh, International African Library, 1996, p. 273.

² A more direct link was made by Yu. K. Scegllov, "...who identified Waldima (in *Ilya Dan Maikarfi*) with Prince Vladimir, and the mysterious town of Kib with Kiev." See Stanislaw Pilaszewicz, "Literature in the Hausa Language" in B. W. Andrzejewski, S. Pilaszewicz, and W. Tyloch (eds.), *Literatures in African Language: Theoretical Issues and Sample Surveys*. Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 224.



Ilya Muromets of Muromets, Kiev, Russia



Ilya Dan Maikarfi, Hausaland

Plate 2: Galloping similarities: Ilya Dan Murom

And while it was not clear which literary work “inspired” *Gogan Naka*, it is clear that the tale also borrowed heavily from Eastern sources, since the hero Abdul Bakara, or Bokhara, India after gallivanting all over Asia, ended up as a king of Egypt.

Sihirtaccen Gari, however, was different from the other two in the sense that it was not even an *Imamian* adaptation; it was a direct *translation* of an Arabic language collection of short stories, *Ikra* by Sayid Kutub, as revealed by the author in a brief introduction to the book.

It is an instructive coincidence that *Imamanci* was created in Katsina College in early 1930s, and the subsequent novelists who promoted it were indigenes of Katsina!

Other prose fiction outputs in both the 1950s and 1960s continued the *Imamian* adaptive strategy, often adapting a foreign tale to a Hausa mindset, or directly translating from foreign sources. It is almost an article of faith that any Hausa prose fiction produced in the period *must* be an adaptation of a foreign tale. Thus *Robin Hood*, *Twelfth Night*, *Animal Farm*, *Saiful Mulk*, *Tanimuddari* and *Baron Manchausen*, *Hajj Baba of Isfahan* were all directly translated from their original sources to Hausa with varying degrees of *Imamism*.

More significantly, the “famous five” 1930s Hausa novels provided templates for subsequent Hausa authors to recast the same stories in different formats! Almost all the five were thematically copied media rip-off by

subsequent authors by merely changing the names and settings, but retaining the central core of similarities with the earlier tales.

Thus *Nagari Na Kowa* (Jabiru Abdullahi, 1968) harked back at *Shaihu Umar*, while *Tauraruwar Hamada* (Sa'idu Ahmed, 1965) could be called *Ruwan Bagaja Part II* if it were a film, as would *Da'u Fataken Dare* (Tanko Zango, 1952) with its cloning of *Idon Matambayi* (the disowned tale written by Muhammadu Gwarzo, 1934) tale of brigandage, and *Dare 'Daya* (Umaru Dembo, 1973) with *Jiki Magayi*.

Passage to India – the roots of *Bollywoodanci*

Increasing exposure to media in various forms, from novels and tales written in Arabic, to subsequently radio and television programs with heavy dosage of foreign programs due to paucity of locally produced programs in the late 1950s and early 1960s provided more sources of *Imamanci* for Hausa authors. The 1960s saw more media influx into the Hausa society and media in all forms – from the written word to visual formats – was used for political, social and educational purposes.

One of the earliest novels to incorporate these multimedia elements – combining prose fiction with visual media – and departing from the closeted simplicity of the earlier novels, was *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya* by Umar Dembo (1969). Written at the time of media coverage of American Apollo lunar landings as constant news items, and Star Trek television series as constant entertainment fodder on RTV Kaduna, the novel tells the story of a boy befriended by a rocket-traveling alien who took him up in his rocket on a space journey to extra-terrestrial worlds. In one of the few early analyses of the novel, it was argued that it combined elements from many foreign sources. Of the sources of influence on the novel, the most visual was Indian cinema influence, in which A.G.D. Abdullahi analyzed that a scene in the novel was created in which a boy and a girl sung love songs to each other – Indian cinema style. This is the first noticeable influence of Indian cinema on Hausa writers who had, hitherto tended to rely on Arabic and other European literary sources for inspiration. Indeed, *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya* is a collage of various influences on the writer, most of which derived directly from the newsreels and television programming.¹

By 1980, the Northern Nigerian Publishing Company, NNPC, had virtually stopped publishing prose fiction works, restricting itself to recycling of the old classics as well as more educational materials. The process of publishing became a cash-and-carry affair with authors being charged for printing of their works (e.g. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu's *Wa Zai Auri Jahila?*). A new crop of authors then emerged, full of ballistic anger about job insecurity, lack of further education to proceed to and general malaise and insecurity. With media parenting in the form of increasing deluge of television and radio programs imported from Asia, mainly

¹ A.G.D. Abdullahi, *Tasirin Al'adu da Dabi'u iri-iri a cikin Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya. Proceedings of the First International Conference on Hausa Language and Literature*, held at Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria, July 7-10, 1978. Kano, CSNL, Kano, Center for the Study of Nigerian Languages.

Indian cinema, coupled with the popularity of cinema houses showing the same films, it was only a matter of time before the template provided by *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya* started providing a basis for writing stories with Indian cinema themes of love and romance. Thus emerged the genre of popular Hausa literature contemptuously labeled *Labaran Soyayya* and Kano Market Literature, which by 2000 had produced more than 700 titles – thanks to the increasing availability of cheap printing presses.¹

When in the early to mid 1990s the VHS camera became affordable, a whole new visual literature was created by the first crop of contemporary Hausa novelists. As Graham Furniss noted,

One of the most remarkable cultural transitions in recent years has been this move from books into video film. Many of the stories in the books now known as Kano Market Literature or Hausa Popular Literature are built around dialogue and action, a characteristic that was also present in earlier prose writing of the 1940s and 1950s. Such a writing style made it relatively easy to work from a story to a TV drama, and a number of the Hausa TV drama series (*'Magana Jari Ce'*, for example) derived their story lines from texts. With the experience of staging comedies and social commentaries that had been accumulating in the TV stations and in the drama department of ABU, for example, it was not difficult conceptually to move into video film.²

Yusuf Adamu was able to link a number of the new wave of Hausa novels with their transition to the visual medium, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Hausa novels adapted into Home Videos

S/N	Author	Novel to Video
1.	Abba Bature	Auren Jari
2.	Abdul Aziz M/Gini	Idaniyar Ruwa
3.	Abubakar Ishaq	Da Kyar Na Sha
4.	Adamu Mohammed	Kwabon Masoyi
5.	Ado Ahmad G/Dabino	In Da So Da Kauna
6.	Aminu Aliyu Argungu	Haukar Mutum
7.	Auwalu Yusufu Hamza	Gidan Haya
8.	Bala Anas Babinlata	Tsuntsu Mai Wayo
9.	Balaraba Ramat	Alhaki Kwikwiyo
10.	Balaraba Ramat Yakubu	Ina Sonsa Haka

¹ Malumfashi, Ibrahim., "Adabin Kasuwar Kano". *Nasiha* 3 & 29 July 1994. The first (?) vernacular article in which Ibrahim Malumfashi created the term *Adabin Kasuwar Kano* (Kano Market Literature), a contemptuous comparison between the booming vernacular prose fiction industry, based around Kano State (with *Center of Commerce* as its State apothegm) and the defunct Onitsha Market Literature which flourished around Onitsha market in Anambra State in the 1960s.

² Graham Furniss (2003), *Hausa popular literature and video film: the rapid rise of cultural production in times of economic decline*. Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien, Department of Anthropology and African Studies, Arbeitspapiere / Working Papers Nr. 27. Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Forum 6, D-55099 Mainz, Germany.

S/N	Author	Novel to Video
11.	Bashir Sanda Gusau	Auren Zamani
12.	Bashir Sanda Gusau	Babu Maraya
13.	Bilkisu Funtua	Ki Yarda Da Ni
14.	Bilkisu Funtua	Sa'adatu Sa'ar Mata
15.	Dan Azumi Baba	Na San A Rina
16.	Dan Azumi Baba	Idan Bera da Sata
17.	Dan Azumi Baba	(Bakandamiyar) Rikicin Duniya
18.	Dan Azumi Baba	Kyan Alkawari
19.	Halima B.H. Aliyu	Muguwar Kishiya
20.	Ibrahim M. K/Nassarawa	Soyayya Cikon Rayuwa
21.	Ibrahim Mu'azzam Indabawa	Boyayiyar Gaskiya (Ja'iba)
22.	Kabiru Ibrahim Yakasai	Suda
23.	Kabiru Ibrahim Yakasai	Turmi Sha Daka
24.	Kabiru Kasim	Tudun Mahassada
25.	Kamil Tahir	Rabia ¹
26.	M.B. Zakari	Komai Nisan Dare
27.	Maje El-Hajeej	Sirrinsu
28.	Maje El-Hajeej	Al'ajab (Ruhi)
29.	Muhammad Usman	Zama Lafiya
30.	Nazir Adamu Salihu	Naira da Kwabo
31.	Nura Azara	Karshen Kiyayya
32.	Zilkiilu Mohammed	Su Ma 'Ya'ya Ne
33.	Zuwaira Isa	Kaddara Ta Riga Fata
34.	Zuwaira Isa	Kara Da Kiyashi

After Adamu (2003)²

When the new wave of Hausa writers started producing, in massive quantities, prose fiction interlaced with love stories and emotional themes, not many researchers associated the phenomena with the more visual literature of Indian or more accurately, *Hindu* cinema.

Films from India were the most pervasive media influence on youth growing up in the 1960s through to the end of the millennium. The media deluge from the various state television stations throughout the north, created a media generation steeped in the lore and life styles, as well as mindsets of people from other cultures. It created the mental framework for *Bollywoodanci* – the direct translation of Hindu films into, first Hausa novels, and later when the VHS video medium became affordable, into home videos.

Leap of Imagination: Bollywoodanci and the New Wave of Hausa Home Videos

Those brave (or foolhardy) enough to venture into the Hausa home video production from 1990 to 1999 rapidly established themselves as pioneering superstars — and earned significant fame and modest fortune from the sales of their

¹ This was different from *Rabiat* by Aishatu Gid'ad'o Idris who abandoned the project of converting her novel into a home video.

² Yusuf Adamu, 2003. Extended from a on paper was presented at the 20th Annual Convention of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Jos. 15-19th, November, 2000.

videos, which by now are considered classics in Hausa home video. Even at this “primitive” stage of the industry, acculturative media influences on the home videos tended to be tame. There was the remnant of the disco and rap fever which swept Nigeria in the early 1970s and 1980s providing a sociological soundtrack to the authors of the new novels and producers of the new video dramas. This appears in some videos of this era (e.g. *Daskin Da Ridi*, a folktale modernized, and *Badakala*, the first to feature traditionally adapted disco dancing). The main themes of the videos were either comedy (*Tantiri*, *Gagare*, both patterned on Hollywood's *Problem Child* and the antics of Macaulay Culkin in *Home Alone*), political dramas (*Tsuntsu Mai Wayo*), historical epics (*Gimbiya Fatima*), boy-meets-girl situation dramas with parents opposing (*In Da So Da K'auna*), or family conflicts, especially among co-wives (*Ki Yarda Da Ni*, *Alhaki Kwikwiyo*). Thus there were clearly defined genres and producers strove to maintain these genres. Further, most the early experiments in the Hausa home video was by novelists, as noted in Table 1.

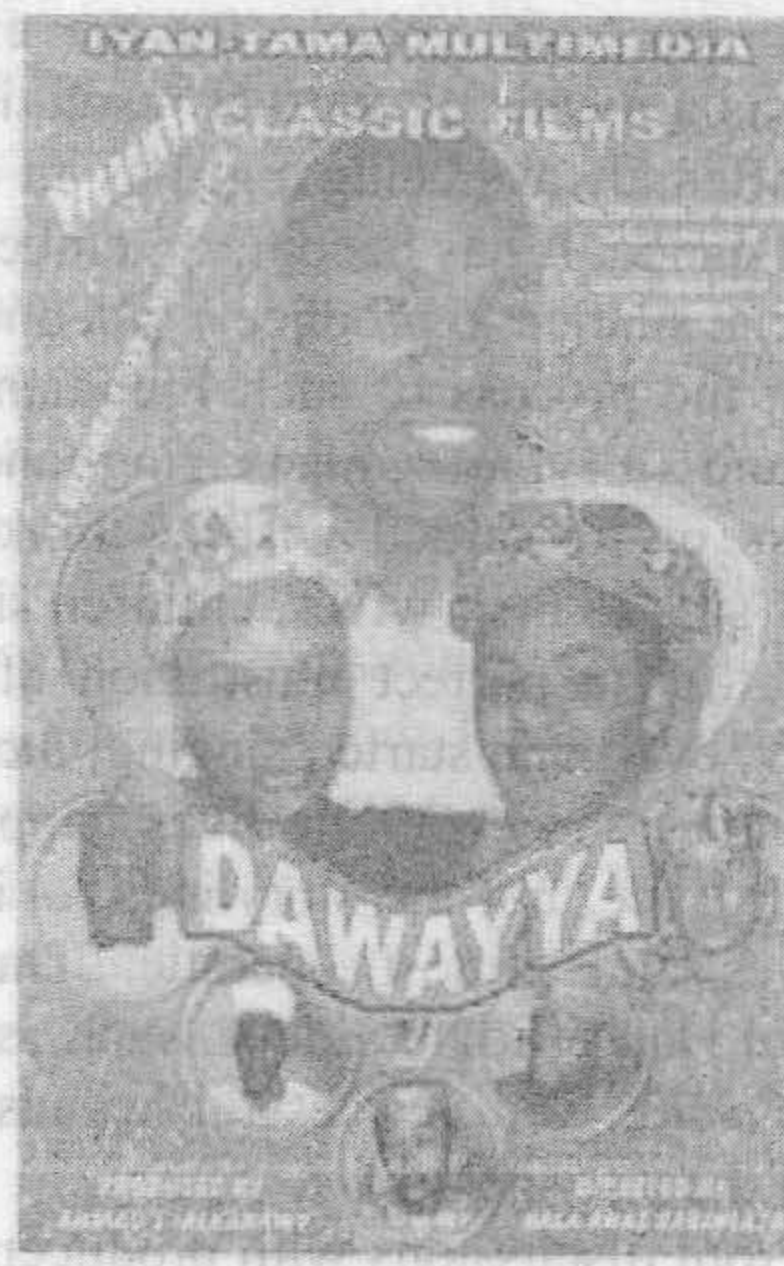
Their success, however, attracted a new wave of producers, artistes and directors with production values different from those adopted by the early experimenters. Young and sassy, they were the products of acculturative media confluence a mishmash of cultural influences ranging from American disco, rap and “niggaz with attitude” culture to the new age Indian Bollywood ethos. Their video production values were not informed by household dramas (since most were not married, they are incapable of accurately re-creating marital family situations) rustic settings, or moralizing sermons to appease the traditionalist establishment. Their main creative mechanism is to rip-off Indian masala films and remake them into Hausa copies, complete with storylines, songs and choreography. In this new age of Hausa home video, the genres of the founding fathers disappeared and a spicy masala mixture of videos started appearing which combined several genres in one video. copy as many Indian films as they could thus I coined the term *Bollywoodanci* to reflect the main mechanism of this cluster of film makers.

Over-riding this entire hodgepodge is the desire to be commercially successful in an economy that denied these Young Turks proper jobs, supported by an educational system incapable of enabling them to proceed with further education beyond high school; and thus left listless and jobless, with an NFA (No Future Ambition) mindset. Towards the end of the 1990s, the 1970s toddlers and teenage cultural rebels had grown up enough to acquire capitalistic values. They were products of an acculturation processes officially sanctioned by radio and television houses that saw a continuous diet of Indian (plus a sprinkle of American and Chinese) cinema and African-American movie and musical influences. And an economy that gives them a license to survive by any legal means necessary.

Faced with the looming issues of settling down to a married life in an unstable economy, the new wave of Hausa home video producers strove hard to give the Hausa home video its distinct commercially formulaic characteristic, which is inevitably, a love story, often a love triangle: either two girls after the same boy, or two boys after the same girl, with parents or guardians opposing. Plate 3 shows how the Hausa home video posters visually capture the conflict.



Kudiri



Dawayya

Plate 3: Freudian Conflicts and the Love Triangle in Hausa Home Video

These patterns, are of course, adopted from Hindi cinema, which is why Hausa home video makers latch on them due to what they perceive as cultural similarities.

Reflecting innate Freudian conflicts of repressed sexuality in a traditional society, they use the film medium to bring out their innate desires and communicate to elders their pre-occupation with marital concerns. They rapidly constituted themselves into a large pool of unmarried marriage guidance counselors through the exploration of pre-marital relationships in a traditional society. Rarely were the films of the *Bollywoodanci* cluster a reflection of life and its mysteries such as schooling, jobs, inner struggles, or moral dilemmas. The theme and message were exclusively on romance. They thus became visual *soyayya* novels – such that there were accusations in Kano, for instance, that even the *soyayya* novels were indeed patterned after Indian films, as argued by Ibrahim Malumfashi. Citing an example, he claimed that:

Bala Anas Babinlata's (novel) *Sara Da Sassaka* is an adaptation of the Indian film *Iqlik De Khaliya* (sic) while his *Rashin Sani* is another transmutation of another Indian film, *Dostana*, etc.¹

¹ Ibrahim Malumfashi, "Dancing Naked in the Market Place", *New Nigerian Weekly Literary Supplement – The Write Stuff*, July 10, 1999 p. 14-15. I confronted Bala Anas Babinlata with this observation after it was published, and like all Hausa authors, he strenuously objected to the insinuation that they adapted Hindi cinema for their novels. Interview, Kano, August, 1999.

A necessary vehicle for the expression of the love, conflict (and often violence as a means of conflict resolution or enforcement of turf territoriality, with the turf often always being a girl as an object of desire) in Hausa home video is the song and dance. It has become so embedded in the media that it is often considered commercial suicide to produce a video *without* at least a song and dance.¹

In the process of such Freudian rivalry and the intense struggle to gain an upper hand, all protagonists sing and dance, often in dreamscape surrealistic flashbacks or forwarded wishful thinking. Thus mothers sing to their daughters, husbands sing to their wives, children sing to their parents, and of course lovers sing to each other (a perfect illustration of this is in *Tubali* where during a wedding ceremony, everyone started singing, *including* the parents!). In the end one gives up for the other, and everyone lives happily ever after. Thus the central focus is the song and dance, not the storylines — indeed, the songs often become mini-scripts themselves and almost operatic. Thus by and large, the most commercially successful Hausa home videos, such as *Sangaya*, *Kansakali*, *Ki Yarda Da Ni*, *Ibro Awilo*, *Wasila*, were successful because of their song and dance routines, not the power of their script.²

From discussions with producers in Kano, no one actually sat down to copy any specific Indian film in the early stages of the home video industry in Kano (1990-1998). It is therefore instructive that the *first* full-blown Indianization of virtually an entire film from Indian to Hausa was from Jos,³ with the appearance of Mr. U.S.A. Galadima's *Soyayya Kunar Zuci*. It was a rip-off of a Hindi film, *Mujhe Insaaf Chahiye*. It was premiered to a select private audience in a video store in

¹ This is reflected by the snide comments made about *Ruhi*, a video by Hafizu Bello in 2002, which was the *first* commercial Hausa home video to be entered for the FESPACO competition (actually the first was *Soyayya K'unin Zuci*, 1995, but this was never released on video), and voted the Best Film of 2003 by an internet Yahoo! Groups discussion forum on Hausa Home Videos. The video has no song or dance routines, and industry insiders claim that lack of massive sales from a director with a golden touch (*Yanayi*, *Dijengala*, *Ukuba*, *Huznee*) was because of the absence of the song and dance routines.

² There are trend-buckers. Yakubu Lere's *Saliha?* was extremely successful precisely because it had a strong storyline and no song and dance sequences.

³ Jos has a long tradition of Indian cinema — indeed almost all the Indian video imports in the 2002 NFVCB *Directory* were by Plateau (Jos) Cinemas — and differs from Kano in one fundamental respect: it offered matinee shows due to its numerous in-door cinemas, whereas Kano cinemas screen films only at night. The constant barrage of Indian films in Jos metropolis thus created a new wave of video makers with Indian filming mindset. Ali Nuhu, the Hausa home video superstar, was in his secondary school days nick-named Ali *Salman Khan* Nuhu, and later media journalists kept referring to him as *Shah Ruh Khan*, due to his open rip-off of Indian films into Hausa home videos. He and brother, Ahmed S. Nuhu, another Indian clone superstar, grew up in Jos metropolis, and relocated to Kano after Ali Nuhu graduated from the University of Jos in 1997. When they got to Kano, they set up FGD studios, the main Indian-to-Hausa studio in Kano. Some elders I talked to in Jos were not happy with this Indianization. These included Alhaji Dan Maraya Jos (a notable singer of international repute) and Waziri Zayyanu, a producer (*'Yancin 'Dan Adam*, *Babban Gida*). Interview, Jos, Nigeria, April 22, 2003.

Kano in 1995, and the overwhelming audience response was that it was too Indian and too adult to be accepted in a Hausa culture as a home video; more so since it was also the first Hausa home video with body contacts between genders. This was probably what informed its non-release on home video since it was restricted to cinema showings only. Yet, surprisingly, despite its being an Indian rip-off, the video won Best Director (USA Galadima) and Best Actor (Ibrahim Mandawari) trophies at the first Arewa Film Awards in 2000. What made the situation even more ironic was that the video was sponsored by the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) Jos, a *government* agency with a mission of ensuring cultural empowerment through Nigerian films and videos.

The producers, directors and artistes who emerged overnight often had no script or any idea how to acquire one. They or their financiers, simply turn to Indian videos for storylines and ideas. They generally adopted three methods for this. The first, and most predominant is a direct rip-off, or *wanki* (washing off someone's ideas and substituting with your own). In this process an Indian film is re-created almost scene by scene. In the second method, *dauraya* (clean-up), remembered scenes from previously-watched Indian films were ripped-off and over layered with a Hausanized storyline. Finally, in *girgiza* (rinsing) Indian film posters alone were used for storylines and inspiration.

Conclusion

It is clear therefore that Hausa writers and video drama producers are adept at adapting other media sources, to their entertainment mindset, starting from 1934 with Abubakar Imam's *Ruwan Bagaja* before making a transition to the video medium via *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya* through the first Bollywood copied home video, *Soyayya Kunar Zuci* (Jos, 1995)

This opened the floodgates for the defining characteristics of the Hausa home video which is its acculturative inspiration by Indian masala popular cinema; the Hausa film *masala* is actually *kwado* a mixture of genres and styles in one medium. Indian popular cinema was a constant feature of Hausa entertainment since 1930s when the first cinemas were opened in Kano and other urban clusters such as Kaduna and Jos. However, the biggest boom for Indian cinema in Northern Nigeria was in the 1970s when state television houses were opened and became the outlet for readily available Indian films on video tapes targeted at home viewers. For instance, the NTA Kano alone has shown 1,176 Indian films on its television network from October 2nd, 1977 when the first Indian film was shown (*Ann Bann*) to 6th June 2003. At the time of starting the Indian film appearance on Hausa television houses, children aged 4-6, and their youngish mothers (who were in their 20s) became avid watchers of these films. By 2000 the children had grown up, became film makers and used their Indian cinema impressionistic conditioning as their defining template for artistic visual media in cultural interpretation. Often with the financial and moral support of their *mothers*. Although the media outlets both in the government owned television stations and popular markets had *some* dosage of traditional entertainment content,

Nevertheless the barrage of Indian music and film overshadowed the indigenous content. On television, for instance, indigenous theater was restricted to a 30-minute drama sketches, while a full-blown Indian, American or Chinese film is shown for over two hours.

There was a considerable absence of indigenous traditional entertainment medium aimed at youth to counter these foreign media influences, and little effort on the part of the Governments to promote traditional theater and musical forms which were relegated to quaint bucolic festivals, or government functions. It is for these reasons that the Hausa home video acquired its non-exportable characteristics. It needs to redefine itself as a mirror of Hausa society, rather the society of the Other, to attract Other's attention.