The Nigerian Youth

Political Participation and National Development

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Chapter Sixteen

Private Passion, Public Furor: Youth Entertainment, Sexuality and the Islamicate[1] Public Space in Northern Nigeria

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Introduction
In this chapter, I argue that availability of media technologies among the Muslim Hausa youth of northern Nigeria has led to the renegotiation of boundaries of public discourse from private sphere to public space, such that what was once a passionate private domain is now becoming part of public culture. I situate this public discourse within the context of the urban environment of the city and its public culture. This public culture, itself rooted in urban space determinism created clear areas of space territoriality that the media technologies transgressed in a traditional society. Thus renegotiation of urban gender space allocations inevitably led to boundary adjustments in terms of what could be discussed in public and what could not. To illustrate this boundary mediation, I analyze the incidence of a Hausa video film actress – engaged in a city profession of filmmaking – called Maryam Usman, who appeared in a privately shot cell phone porn and led to public reactions not only against Usman herself, but also against the entire Hausa video film industry which was seen by

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[1] I adopt Asma Afsaruddin's (1999) usage of Marshall Hodgson's term *Islamicate* (1974:1:58 59), for the subsequent "modern" period (roughly from the 19th century on) to describe societies which maintain and/or have consciously adopted at least the public symbols of adherence to traditional Islamic beliefs and practices.

the critical public sphere as being responsible for the cell phone porn.

In this incidence, media played a strong role in delineating the boundaries of gendered spaces in an Islamicate environment and demonstrate how private passions become part of public furor using media networks. What was more significant, however, was the public reaction to the incidence which revealed a transitional stage of acceptance of private misdemeanor made public. An analysis of the public reactions to these incidences reveal a Hausa youth society fixation with female public figures and justifications of their behaviors.

Negotiating the Concept of Youth

As Dan Laughey (2006) argued, taken at face value, the concept of 'youth' appears to be reasonably straightforward. Youth refers to people within a particular age band who are neither immature children nor fully fledged adults. This definition of youth offers a starting point but not much else. Wyn and White problematize this common sense of youth as it derives from an orthodox approach to thinking about age as an essentially biological process when they say: "Although each person's life span can be measured 'objectively' by the passing of time, cultural understandings about life stages give the process of growing up, and of ageing, its social meaning (1997:10)".

Understanding youth as a social and cultural rather than a biological concept is further reinforced by changing historical values, beliefs and attitudes to young members of society. The concept of 'youth' is actually a relatively recent one and is difficult to trace much further back than the early seventeenth century. In the Middle Ages the associated concept of childhood was only loosely acknowledged, given that children were expected to be independent from the age of seven (Aries 1962). Youth followed well behind childhood as a widely recognized phase in the life course and only became widely used in the 1950s when it was initially applied to a particular type of gendered (male) and class-specific (working-class) young people (Frith 1986). Despite the relatively late arrival of 'youth' as a social and cultural phenomenon, classic studies of young

people in terms of adolescence (e.g. Hall 1904) and delinquency (e.g. Robison 1936) had already inspired a large body of theory and research about young people during the first half of the twentieth century.

Ideas about adolescence and delinquency (now sometimes referred to as anti-social behavior) continue to occupy much research time and money but have been countered by other ways of thinking about youth from contemporary perspectives in sociology, social policy and cultural studies. Some of these perspectives have been influenced by the subcultures literature but others have cast doubt on an understanding of youth as a set of fixed, homologous and non-hierarchical experiences.

As such, ideas about the fluidity of youth lifestyles and consumption (Miles 2000; Roberts and Parsell 1994), youth governance in relation to criminalization (Muncie and Hughes 2002) and youth transitions through employment, education and leisure activities (Wallace and Cross 1990; Furlong and Cartmel 1997) have all offered fresh approaches to the concept of youth. The opening lines of Steven Miles's *Youth Lifestyles in a Changing World* speak volumes about the tired emphasis on delinquency and subcultures that has dogged so-called 'classic' sociologies of youth: 'For too long social scientists have portrayed young people as excluded risk-taking troublemakers motivated by nothing more than their own rebellious self-interest' (Miles 2000:1). More recent authors have better understood the complexities and flexibilities of youth transitions from one context to another; from one set of identities to a different set. Rather than conceive of youth during a static moment of rebellious leisure, new perspectives have tried to grasp the 'plethora of transitional transitions' (2000:11) experienced by young people in everyday life contexts. Miles's discussion of 'lifestyle' is particularly apt at approaching the dynamics of youth experiences by embracing the interplay between structure and agency, and expressing young people's social mobility both upwards and – where the emphasis has usually been placed by youth sociologists – downwards.

In this chapter I look at how media technologies provide urban youth in an African Muslim society of northern Nigeria with opportunities to renegotiate the sacred divisions between private and public spheres with reference to sexuality and indeed often renegotiations of the very concept of sexuality in the communities by introducing alternative sexual styles and conceptions. I argue that such technologies, available only in the city, provide further opportunities for discourse about the interfaces between youth sexuality and city environments especially in traditional societies.

Gender and Urban Space Discourse

As Henning Beck (1998) argues, there are sociological and intellectual orientations towards the discourse on the city as a life space. The formal and abstract reasonings of tradition are found in Simmel (1957) and Writh (1964), and more recently, in Lofland (1973, 1989) and Hannerz (1980). Similarly, phenomenological perspective s are given in Kraucer (1964), Benjamin 1982), as well as Sennet (1977) and Berman (1982).

Inevitably, however, no matter the analytical approach taken, construction of the idea of life in the city invariably evokes an urban freedom that blurs many boundaries - or at best accepts negotiated boundaries. And as Dilworth and Trevenen pointed out, "...because cities are often seen as offering relative freedom to those who "deviate" from the norm, they are also frequently portrayed as a threat to those norms and traditions" (2004:183).

As a cosmopolitan center with little or no social control except as those initiated and maintained by its denizens, the city culture offers unlimited freedom of expression of a whole range of desires. The heterogeneous nature of the city therefore creates a series of independent spaces. The anonymity of the modern city has made it a space of illicit sexualities and nonconformist gender practices. At the same time, the structures and cultures of cities inscribe normative gender and sexuality.

In Hausaland, the Sabon Gari (Hau. new town) – residential areas for mainly non-indigenes – offers a space in which tradition is negotiated with modernity. This modernity is negotiated on the platform of availability of sex and alcohol, generally in bars and

hotels openly patronized by all shades of religious adherents. The Sabon Gari then became a city at the edge of a city. Created to delineate spaces between non-indigenes and indigenous Muslims in northern Nigeria, the Sabon Gari as a public space created its own rules and regulations governing hedonistic pleasures. The bars, hotels, liquor houses, and later cinemas were all located within its boundaries. This attracted predominantly young patrons, who were eager to run away from the moral climates of the traditional dwelling places. In particular, for residents in Kano and Zaria, with their walled Emirate administrative structure, the Sabon Gari settlements provide a ready escape to experience unmediated modernity.

Negotiations of modernity by youth using sex and alcohol and blurring gender public spatial spaces has been recorded as a trenchant modernist statement by youth in Islamic or Islamicate environments. For instance, in Egypt, Mona Abaza (2002) noted that "the conduct of youth, together with unbridled sexual behaviour in public spaces, has become an obsession" (p.102). The new public theater for expressing youth identity in a modernist mould in Egypt is the shopping mall, a point of convergence for Egyptian youth to socialize and mix in groups. Further, "young lovers in Cairo find that the veil is no hindrance to kissing and holding hands as they walk along the river banks" (ibid).

And working from ethnographic data in post-revolutionary Iran, Pardis Mahdavi (2007) discovered an urban Iranian youth population imbued with the ideas of sex, designer fashion, alcohol and rock and roll as being their markers of modernist identity through which they were "attacking the fabric of morality under which the regime seeks to govern its citizens" (p.455).

Designing and delimiting spaces for what youth see as modernist tendencies in blurring the gender divisions in Sabon Gari areas of Muslim northern Nigeria created scowls of official disappoval from the British colonial administration (1903-1960). As Simon Heap (1988:32) noted, this was expressed in 1912 by Lieutenant-Governor Harry Goldsmith who complained:

> The *peto* shops help to maintain the brothel, encourage Bori dancing, chacha and other degrading forms of amusement in our Townships and our Native

Chiefs look to the Government to protect their people attending the local markets with their children from becoming contaminated by these immoral indulgences (NAK, SNP 8/5/4/1918, Goldsmith to Lugard, 31 December 1917).

By the time the British granted Nigeria independence in 1960, the Sabon Gari has come to epitomize unbridled hedonistic pleasure and freedom. The early cinema theaters – Rex, Queens, and later El Dorado – were located within its precincts, and became attracting points for young and old patrons; with women patrons being considered prostitutes. As Brian Larkin (2008:149) points out,

> Going to the cinema in Kano is a visceral event, often charged with feelings of danger, illicitness, eroticism and excitement...Because it is such a densely symbolic domain, cinema articulates the eclecticism of contemporary Hausa life. It is stereotyped as frequented by 'yan daba (hooligans), who smoke hemp and whose presence at cinemas is key to the theaters' reputation as un-Islamic and full of iskanci (illicitness...For most Hausa, cinema is not serious, detracting youth from proper tarbiyya (religious training)...

With the decline in cinema attendance due to availability of video films, the Hausa video film was born in 1990, and this made it possible for the illicit urban space of the cinemas to be avoided by youth. Thus Hausa video films became massively popular, especially among young Hausa housewives in purdah who could not partake in the public experience of attending cinemas.

The Hausa video film industry slumbered for almost ten years, in which it followed the storytelling format of popular TV dramas. When the industry became a full-fledged business concern from 2000, two battle lines were drawn between two groups of Hausa video filmmakers. The first group was the Sentimental, and the other was Chamama.

The Sentimental group (locally referred to as "'yan sentimental") specialize in romantic storylines with "modern" stage settings of big houses and flashy cars. However, their biggest

trademark were the elaborate song and dance routines that form the central focus of the video films, rather than the storylines. They also derive their central creative focus from appropriating as many Hindi films as they could, translating them into Hausa language. They consider themselves modern because their storylines are based on outlining the central characteristics of city life – male youth in American style hip-hop wear (baggy jeans, baseball shirts, shades) and style (swaggering testosterone fueled attitude). The youth depicted in Sentimental Hausa video films are the same transnational youth from cinema across the world where although America is loathed as a political entity, its social life and cultural mores are valued as reflecting ultimate cool.

A further central characteristic of the Sentimental style of Hausa video film making is its raw sexuality – expressed in the tight fitting dresses the female characters wear to emphasize their body shapes, and in numerous scenes that emphasize this sexuality. In the same way that Iranian youth rebel against what they see as the imposition of Islamic authority on their Western-oriented life-styles, Hausa Sentimental category of video filmmakers use the canvas of the film to play out sexual fantasies and simulated sexuality in the storylines, song and dance routines and clothing.

The other group of Hausa video filmmakers, the Chamama group of filmmakers specializes in producing slapstick comedies based on rustic or other simple settings and revolving essentially around a central charlatan character, Dan Ibro (played with gusto by Rabilu Musa Danlasan). Neither epic nor based on tragedies, they attempt, in episodic form, to capture life in a village, as it affects ordinary folks going about their business. To prove they can also roll with the times, however, they often include a swath of song and dance routines, often on the same "city gals and boyz" level as the Sentimental group. Thus the Hausa video film came to embody the conception of life as metropolitan and a den of pleasure as reflected in the struggle to "Westernize" the Hausa video film to create a more youth-oriented urban culture.

Global Lure, Local *Wahala* - Westernization and Hausa Female Film Star

The urbanization of the Hausa video film is especially in dress modes during song and dance sequences, and occasionally, the filmic setting. In Islam the female herself is a private sphere, since there are strict rules governing her dressing - which has a range depending on the cultural climate of the community. The most commercially successful Hausa video filmmakers see their success reflected in the Westernization of their craft; and use such device to attract youth to their films. Ali Nuhu, the Hausa-speaking actor (and later producer and director) who pioneered Hindi-to-Hausa appropriation technique justifies Westernization of Hausa video film on the basis of progress and modernity. In an interview granted in Niger Republic, he justifies appropriating American and Hindi films into Hausa by arguing that

> The political systems in Nigeria and Niger Republic are based on Western models. Why didn't these countries create their own unique political systems? The Western society is the most progressive in the world, and everyone is trying to copy them. Even Arabs, who are strongly attached to their religion and culture, are now aping Americans, in their mode of dress and other things. It is modernity, and you must go with the times, or you will be left behind (Interview with Ali Nuhu, *Ra'ayi*, Vol 1 No 1, February 2005, p. 7.)

To reflect this "Westernization is modernization" paradigm, Hausa video filmmakers rely on non-ethnic Hausa female stars to appear in erotically stimulating Western dresses of tight revealing jeans and blouses during song and dance routines. Thus even if the main storyline has what is referred to as "ma'ana" (meaningful) indicating that it might have a serious message, the filmmakers have to use sex to sell the film through dressing the female stars in revealing Western dresses.

The preferred Western mode of dressing the female stars in Hausa video films has led to criticisms from the Islamicate establishment. A typical example of a comment is shown in the following comment:

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

In 2001 the core Muslim States in northern Nigeria re-introduced the Islamic Shari'a as a legal code. The first contact of clash between the new public sphere of Shari'a and popular culture was in the video film industry. What triggered the concern was the increasing perceived violation of the sacredness of the female private sphere as visually depicted in the new crop of Hausa video films that started to emerge from 2000. In this, the civil society—as representatives of the public sphere—drew upon various core Islamic injunctions against such perceived trespass. The sources quoted to support the injunctions are the following Qur'anic verses and Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) from Sunan Abu Dawood collection:

Surat Al-Nur (24:31):

> And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free

of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards Allah, that ye may attain Bliss.

Surat al-Ahzaab, (33:59):
O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Sunan Abu Dawood Hadith Collection, *Clothing (Kitab Al-Libas)*

Book 32, Number 4087:
Narrated Abu Hurayrah: The Apostle of Allah (peace_be_upon_him) cursed the man who dressed like a woman and the woman who dressed like a man.

Book 32, Number 4092:
Narrated Aisha, Ummul Mu'minin: Asma, daughter of AbuBakr, entered upon the Apostle of Allah (peace_be_upon_him) wearing thin clothes. The Apostle of Allah (peace_be_upon_him) turned his attention from her. He said: O Asma', when a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it does not suit her that she displays her parts of body except this and this, and he pointed to her face and hands.

It is clear therefore, more experimental filmmaking among Muslim Hausa would have to negotiate these core prohibitions about the sacredness of the private, and often, conjugal sphere. This was more so because by 2000, and under a global media snow storm, and encouraged by internal migration of essentially non-ethnic Hausa to major popular culture production centers in the north, especially Kano, a new media hybridity had started emerging. Alarm bells

started ringing about the possible influence of new media technologies and behavioral modification. This is reflected in a few comments made either in public or in popular culture magazines mn – in essence, the Habermasian salons – in northern Nigeria. A typical example was:

> 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.)

These views and perspectives clearly indicate the chasm that separates the private and public spheres in Hausa popular culture. The insistence on Islamization of video film by culturalist establishment merely reflects Qur'anic injunctions as consistently pointed out by the critical public authority. The Islamicate culturalist establishment was soon to have what it considered as evidence of the what they had suspected all along – that visual culture as reflected in films (whether cinematic or small-theater of video film) is a gateway to moral corruption of youth through media technologies. This was illustrated by the case of Maryam Hiyana, a popular Hausa video film actress who appeared in many films, but especially in song and dance routines.

Sex and the City Girl – Maryam "Hiyana" Usman Phone Porn
In July 2007 a cell phone video clip privately recorded on Nokia NSeries GSM mobile phone surfaced among the Hausa film industry practitioners in Kano, northern Nigeria, transmitted via Bluetooth. It was titled "Hiyana". It lasts for 8 minutes 37 seconds. Its impact lasted for much longer. It shows a very popular Hausa video film actress, Maryam Usman, engaged in raw penetrative sex with her boyfriend, later identified as a "currency dealer" (some kind of local bureau de change personnel) called Usman. The actual clip was recorded towards the end of 2005, and kept private within the handset of the owner. It was allegedly distributed when the owner took it for repairs. For almost a year after its public discovery, it remained restricted within a small group of voyeuristic fans of cell porn, predominantly the currency dealers in Lagos where the event took place and where Usman lived, and later, Kano. A Hausa video film actress who apparently was at odds with Maryam Usman became aware of its existence and having obtained a copy, brought it to various members of the Hausa video film industry – from whence it became a public property.

The phone porn clip – what became known as "Hiyana Scandal" – entered into Hausa media history as the first publicly available pornographic moving image involving "ethnic" Hausa and Fulani. In a bizarre Freudian instance of display of the Electra Complex, the boy in the sex clip shared the same name as the girl's father. In traditional Hausa societies, the mere fact of sharing the same name as one's father or mother creates a "shy relationship" between the two.

What made its appearance so electric was that it came at a time when the Hausa film industry was accused by the Hausa public and critical space as getting increasingly Westernized and immoral. The Hiyana clip provided a perfect ground for reactions and backlash against not only Hausa filmmakers, but also the entire industry itself which, with its direct appeal to youth, is seen as a surefire way of getting into Hellfire.

The massive reaction that followed the discovery of the Hiyana clip was neither surprising nor unexpected. A society getting increasingly nervous about how media is used to propagate pleasure

is bound to react in a forceful way towards incidences such as these. The outcome was the banning of Maryam Usman from appearing in any Hausa video film that will be censored by the Kano State Censorship Board for five years. Other measures were also taken by the various guilds and associations of the Hausa video film industry on various actors (and mainly actresses) who it seemed suddenly had been living less than the exemplary lifestyles they portray in their films.

Focusing on, and accusing actresses as sexual conduits, however, was not an exclusively Islamicate knee-jerk reaction. Tracy Davis (1989:295) quoting a British Victorian era research on actresses and Victorian pornography, notes that Ryan exclusively identifies actresses (not actors) as the sexually evocative components of performance and explicitly compares them to illustrated erotica. Women were the bait, and men the appointed victims, as argued in a series of articles on "Tempted London" in 1888:

> The youth.... becomes more or less enamoured of a "singing chambermaid or the "leading lady," both of whom display their personal attractions with more regard to them being fully comprehended than to any old-fashioned ideas of modesty; and when the latter appears in some thrilling scene clad in a white robe, her hair flowing loosely in extravagant luxuriance down her back, her white arms bared to the shoulder, her neck and bosom by no means jealously guarded from the vulgar gaze, he loses his head in the enchantment of her presence, and carries away a mental impression of her which can do him no good and may do him much harm.

Thus as in the case of Victorian era British pornography, the Hiyana case became a pointed display of how Hausa women in public theater – film, in this case – are seen as baits. Further, the youth fascinating with the "singing chambermaid" in prudish Victorian era Britain translates as the same youth fascination with the "singing Hausa video film actress" in Shari'a state of Kano in 2007. The moral prudence of both societies merely seem to escalate the desire for the illicit, such that the stage fantasy of the actresses

became ultimately their fundamental realities – as evidenced by the way the Hausa video film industry banned about 18 of its members from appearing in any film for some months because of their "immoral behaviors" (*Fim* Hausa magazine, September 2007, Kaduna, Nigeria).

Indeed as Margaret Hauwa Kassam (1996:112) pointed out Hausa women had always dabbled in expressions of sexuality at the popular culture level as either as producers or performers. This is because,

> This expression of sexuality is observable in the content as per the language use as well as the performance of the art itself, especially in the songs composed by women, some of which can be regarded as 'protest' literature or performance art. I use the word 'protest' here, because contemporary popular culture from northern Nigeria shows a shift from the more conservative traditional form to one which incorporates some elements of radicalism especially in the content and performance or presentation. The innovation added to Nigerian popular culture by women from northern Nigeria indicates an aesthetic accomplishment on their own part.

This medial shift – from protest literature to the sexuality expressed in the Hausa video film medium – thus resulted in experimentations with other forms of what I call media radicalism – especially in a traditional society. The public reaction, particularly on the Web was furious – and extended not only to Maryam Usman, but also to the entire film industry which was seen as the spider's web that ensnared her into committing such act.

At the same time, media technologies available to urban youth created a literary space on the Web for Hausa youth to open blogs to defend Maryam Usman. Within a few weeks of the appearance of the porn clip in July 2007, quite a few blogs appeared on the Web on the issue – most sympathizing with Maryam. One of the first was simply called "Maryam Hiyana" – and writter by an unidentified author who called himself Waliyyi" (Hau, the saint). The opening page of the blog is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Hiyana Blog by Waliyyi (the Saint)

MARYAM HIYANA

MONDAY, AUGUST 20, 2007

Baiwar Allah Maryam Hiyana an yaba maki

Kada ki damu da abin da ya fara dangane da wannan hoton video naki da ya shiga duniya. Duk daya ne da wadda ta aje shege cikin gida ko cikin unguwa, Maryam naki bai kai na wadda ta aje shege cikin gida.

POSTED BY WALIYI AT 11:28 AM

0 COMMENTS:

Post a Comment

Home

Subscribe to: Post Comments (Atom)

BLOG ARCHIVE

▼ 2007 (2)

   ▼ August (2)

   Baiwar Allah Maryam Hiyana an yaba maki

   Maryam Hiyana ki kyauta, muna tare da ke

ABOUT ME

WALIYI

VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE

Older Post

Source: http://waliyi.blogspot.com/2007/08/baiwar-allah-maryam-hiyana-yaba-maki.html.

In the Waliyyi Blog, the author's posting made it clear that he supported her and shows a surprising reaction contrary to the reaction in the civil society in Kano. A translation of the entry is says:

> *Baiwar Allah Maryam na yaba maki*
> Gentle lady Maryam, I praise you
> Don't worry about the reactions to this video porn you appeared in and which is all over the world. There are equally women with bastard children in their homes and living wards. Yours is not as terrible as that of a women with a bastard child in the home
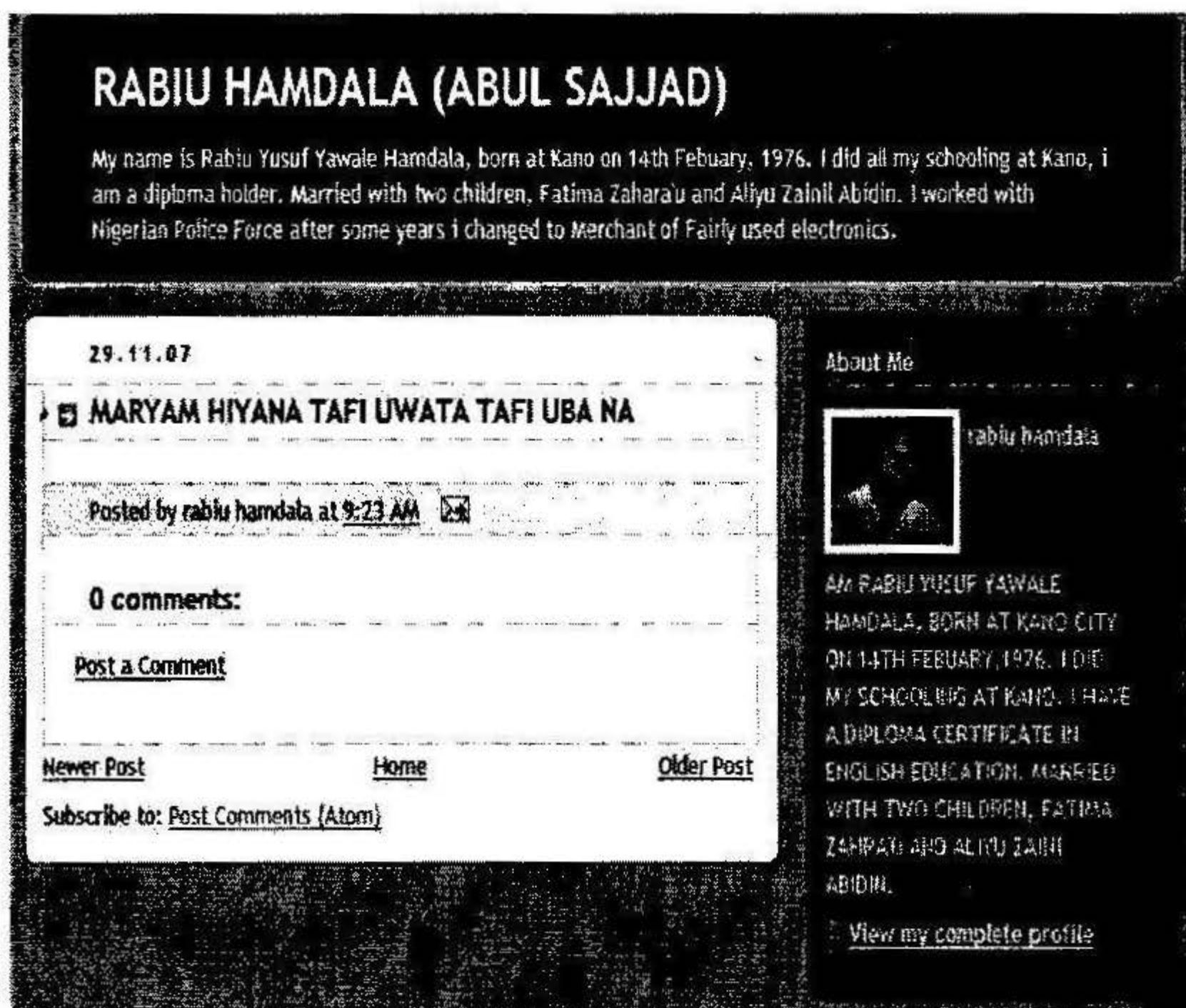
It is instructive that in Waliyyi's judgment appearing in the porn clip – ergo having an unmarried sex – is less offensive than a woman who enters a matrimonial space with an undeclared outside pregnancy ("shege" or bastard). Not only does this seem to show tolerance among the Hausa blog literati for Maryam's behavior, but also an intolerance to hypocrisy among some Hausa women who were sexually active before entering into matrimonial ecology.

Another Blogger, who identified himself as *Rabi'u Hamdala* went a step further with a headline to a posting titled "Maryam Hiyana Tafi Uwata Tafi Uba Na" (Maryam Hiyana is more valuable to me than both my parents). The opening page of the blog is shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Hamdala Blog – Hiyana "more valuable" than his Parents

RABIU HAMDALA (ABUL SAJJAD)

My name is Rabiu Yusuf Yawale Hamdala, born at Kano on 14th Febuary, 1976. I did all my schooling at Kano, i am a diploma holder. Married with two children, Fatima Zahara'u and Aliyu Zainil Abidin. I worked with Nigerian Police Force after some years i changed to Merchant of Fairly used electronics.

29.11.07

MARYAM HIYANA TAFI UWATA TAFI UBA NA

Posted by rabiu hamdala at 9:23 AM

0 comments:

Post a Comment

Newer Post   Home   Older Post

Subscribe to: Post Comments (Atom)

About Me

rabiu hamdala

AM RABIU YUSUF YAWALE HAMDALA, BORN AT KANO CITY ON 14TH FEBUARY, 1976. I DID MY SCHOOLING AT KANO. I HAVE A DIPLOMA CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH EDUCATION. MARRIED WITH TWO CHILDREN, FATIMA ZAHARA'U AND ALIYU ZAINI ABIDIN.

View my complete profile

Source: http://hamdala.blogspot.com/2007/11/maryam-hiyana-tafi-uwata-tafi-uba-na_29.html.

Hamdala's posting on the issue on his blog lacks further explanation for the stand he took in the matter. Other pages however, revealed that the author had earlier made a posting in which he explained that Hausa video film stars are superior to Islamic scholars. He then listed about seven categories of errant Islamic practices performed by some Islamic scholars and insisted that anyone distorting Islam the way they do has no right to condemn a porn video film star.

This again reveals a public discourse concerning the non-representative behavior of individuals within an Islamicate space, and the author wanted to use the argument to defend Maryam Usman; ergo if she's one bad apple, judge her only, not the film industry, because there are errant elements in the very fabric of the Islamic scholastic establishment – and who do not represent Islam. A third Blog, *Yau Da Gobe Sai Allah*, attempted to provide a balanced analysis of the event, although blaming society rather than Maryam Usman, whom he perceived as a victim of society. The opening page of this blog is shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Maryam Usman as a Victim of the Society

Source: http://hadejiawa.blogspot.com/2007/09/maryam-hiyana.html

The furor that greeted the public appearance of the clip − which eventually found its way into a blog where links are posted, as well as Rapidshare file download − eventually died. However, the association between youth sexuality and media technologies continued to be explored, and the Hausa film industry became comatose as a result of the Hiyana incidence. Nor are Muslim Hausa youth the only cluster of youth using media technologies to express illicit sexuality. Using cell phone to spread pornography seemed to have caught on among the youth in Saudi Arabia, despite the strict Islamic regime imposed on social behavior. The following is one of the many incidences of cell phone pornography reports from the archives of *Arab News*:

Cell Phone Porn Causes Proposal Rejection
Arab News
Thursday 6 July 2006 (09 Jumada al-Thani 1427)

MADINAH, 6 July 2006 − A Saudi youth was left in an extremely embarrassing situation when the girl he had proposed to rejected him because of what was on his mobile phone, reported the Okaz daily. The Saudi youth had come to the girl's home and was flashing around his cell phone when the girl sent her younger brother to secretly pinch the cell phone. As the girl went through the phone, she was shocked to find pictures and video clips of naked women involved in all types of lewd behavior. The girl rejected the youth's proposal saying a man's cell phone represents the mind of the owner (http://www.arabnews.com/?page=1&section=0&arti cle=84900&d=6&m=7&y=2006).

Maryam Usman eventually got married, and dropped out of the Hausa video film industry totally. But the echo of her video clip continued to reverberate throughout the Hausa video film industry leading to tougher censorship regime in Kano from July 2007 aimed at controlling the very conduct of filmmaking in the State.

Conclusion

The critical theory propounded by Jürgen Habermas in his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1961/89) provides a convenient framework for understanding the division between the private and public spaces, and most especially in Muslim communities where the distance imposed by space between genders in public is strongly enforced. The particular appeal of this critical theory is in providing an analytical base that offers an opportunity to determine the impact of extraneous variables – in my case study example, media technologies – in the delineation of space in traditional societies. At the same time, it provides an insight into the application of the critical theory in a traditional society negotiating a redefinition of its public spaces within the context of media globalization.

The "public sphere" to which Habermas refers encompasses the various venues where citizens communicate freely with each other through democratic forums (including newspapers and magazines, assemblies, salons, coffee houses, etc.), which emerged with the formation of a free society out of the nation-state in 18th century Europe. The public sphere in its original form functioned ideally as a mediator between the private sphere of the people (including family and work) and the national authority, which engaged in arbitrary politics, although in our application dealing specifically with the sub-national issue of Muslim laws of female identity in northern Nigeria.

The public sphere exists between the private sphere and the public authority. The participants are privatized individuals, who are independent from the public authority, enjoying cultural products and discussing about them. As the institutionalized places for discussion such as salon, coffee house and theater increased, the places for family became more privatized and the consciousness about privacy strengthened more.

> As soon as privatized individuals in their capacity as
> human beings ceased to communicate merely about
> their subjectivity but rather in their capacity as
> property-owners desired to influence public power in
> their common interest, the humanity of the literary

public sphere served to increase the effectiveness of the public sphere in the political realm (Habermas, 1989:56).

In cautioning the use of this theoretical framework in contemporary analysis of gender spaces particularly in Muslim world, Hanita Brand (2003:84-85) argued that the very dichotomy between the public and the private spheres needs some modification. This is because in between the public and the private are several layers of society that are more private than public but contain elements of both. These layers are especially pertinent with regard to women, as they may turn out to be the only extra-private, or semi-public, spheres that women occupy.

In using the private/public theoretical construct, I draw inspiration from the application of the theory empirically in a study of women and spaces in Sudan as developed in the concept of Salma Nageeb's Neo-harem (Nageeb, 2002 and 2004), which explains the gender specific ways in which women experience the process of Islamization. Salma Nageeb developed this theoretical concept— essentially an extension of Habermasian private/public dichotomy— in studying how two, quite contrasting, groups of women restructure the use of female space in Sudan. While Salma Nageeb's study is rooted in re-mapping the use of physical gender space, in my study I focus on the virtual space segregation of the genders, which indeed in Muslim societies, translates into physical space delineations, and its consequences for the critical public sphere.

Consequently in Muslim Hausa societies, as in the Middle Eastern societies Brand referred to, the participation of women in public affairs is governed by two layers. The first layer refers to their biological bodies which in Islam is *al'aura* (*intimisphäre*), including their voices. When going abroad, such *intimisphäre* should be well covered, although with a varying degree of interpretations of the extent of the coverage of the body acre across the Muslim world. The second layer of female space is her virtual lair, or inner apartment (*hujrat*), which again is not a public space and is non-representational in any form, reflecting, as it does, the scenario created by Hanita Brand in her description of the physical dwellings of Middle-Eastern societies. The transgressions of these layers by

Hausa video filmmakers seemed to have created a tension between media globalization and tradition in Muslim popular culture.

This view has been roundly critiqued, mostly for narrowness as sexist, classist, Eurocentric, and illiberal by modern standards (see Calhoun, 1992). These critiques pertain more to how Habermas tied this conception of a public sphere so tightly and specifically to modernization, and that to rationality, than to the essential identification of the emergence of new public spheres around communications relatively freed from demands of ritual representation, particularly of mystical authority. Nevertheless, in broader comparative terms, Habermas draws attention to communication freed from status and its ritual representation; his key insight was that this is not limited to private spheres of conscience, the market, or intimacy but can take on a public life characteristic of a bourgeois public sphere (Anderson, 2003).

Further introduced by Papanek (1973) and Nelson (1974) to place a sociological ground under discussions of honor and shame in traditional settings, the public/private distinction opened up the private world of sentiment and expression, particularly women's, but to the relative neglect of the public sphere that new media make increasingly permeable to the circulation of messages from more restricted realms, diluting and in some cases challenging the authority to represent.

What demarcates the public from the private undoubtedly depends on a complex set of cultural, political, and economic factors, and as a result of the interaction between such factors the line of demarcation inevitably has had to shift. From among the cultural factors, religion stands out as one of the most decisive components in delimiting the two spheres. Religions distinctly recognize and sanction a sphere of private action for individuals. In Western religions - that is, the Abrahamic traditions - human identity and individuality are emphasized through the recognition and sanctioning of private life (Kadivar, 2003).

Thus it is significant that the categories of the public and private derived from Western discourse often mean different things. Discussing Islamic discourse in the Arab context, Nazih Ayubi (1995) has argued that public space or the public sphere is not

conventionally equivalent to the political civic realm of public debate, conscious collective action, and citizenship as understood in Western democratic theory. Rather, Islamic authorities have historically interpreted the public not in contrast to a "free" privatized realm of conscience and religion, but instead as the space for "symbolic display, of interaction rituals and personal ties, of physical proximity coexisting with social distance" in contrast to a private sphere that is in effect defined as a residual - what is left over after the public is defined. For Tajbakhsh (2003), the public sphere is above all a space for the "collective enforcement of public morals" rather than necessarily political.

Similarly, Anderson (2003) has argued that for well over a generation, the public sphere of Islam has been an arena of contest in which activists and militants brought forth challenges to traditional interpretative practices and authority to speak for Islam, especially to articulate its social interests and political agendas. Further, as Gaffney (1994) also noted in analyzing Islamic preaching in Egypt, opening the social field to new spokespeople - in our case, Hausa filmmakers - and new discursive practices not only challenges authority long since thought settled to interpret what religion requires, but also blurs boundaries between public and private discourse and fosters new habits of production.

, Media figure in this process in several crucial respects. First, they devolve access to consumption by more people on more occasions. Passage into media conveys previously "private" or highly situated discourses from interactive contexts to public display, where they are reattached to a public world and return as information conveyed through new media technologies with different habits of reception. Detached from traditional modes of production, they become messages in a world of messages (Anderson, 2003).

Islamic jurisprudence as noted earlier, fully acknowledges the sanctity of the private domain: there is ample admonition against prying into the affairs of others; preventive measures can be found that guarantee the privacy of personal information and positively support individual rights to property and promote freedom in determining one's course of life. Thus there can be no doubt that Islamic law can fully accommodate the notion of the private domain.

The challenge lies at enabling youth purveyors of entertainment industries and users of media technologies to delimit the private domain from what is regarded as public in Islamicate environments.

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