

BLOOMSBURY ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
POPULAR MUSIC
OF THE WORLD



VOLUME XII
GENRES: SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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EDITED BY DAVID HORN AND JOHN SHEPHERD

VOLUME XII
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EDITED BY
HEIDI CAROLYN FELDMAN,
DAVID HORN, JOHN SHEPHERD
AND GABRIELLE KIELICH

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List of Contributors

Abdalla Uba Adamu is a professor of Media and Cultural Communication at Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. His ethnomusicological focus is on Muslim Hausa performing arts and its transcultural influences.

Lara Allen is Executive Director of the Centre for Global Equality and Affiliated Lecturer of the Centre of Development Studies at the University of Cambridge, UK. She was previously Associate Professor in Ethnomusicology at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa.

Catherine M. Appert is Assistant Professor in the Department of Music at Cornell University, New York, USA.

Isabela de Aranzadi is Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology in the Department of Music at the Autónoma University of Madrid. She specializes in the music of ethnic groups in Equatorial Guinea and is the author of *Instrumentos musicales de las etnias de Guinea Ecuatorial* (Apadena, 2009).

Alice Aterianus-Owanga is an anthropologist and a documentary maker, currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Lausanne, supported by the Ambizione excellence program of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Christopher Ballantine is Professor of Music Emeritus, and University Fellow, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

Michele Banal studied ethnomusicology at SOAS-University of London and is currently an audio cataloguer at the British Library Sound Archive working on the project Unlocking Our Sounds Heritage.

Edward Banchs is a freelance writer, independent scholar and the author of *Heavy Metal Africa*. He lives in Pittsburgh, PA, USA.

Tharcisse Biraguma is a Rwandan citizen and master of traditional Rwandan music. He has held teaching positions at the University of Rwanda's Centre for Arts and Drama in Butare and at Green Hills Academy in Kigali and has also toured extensively throughout Africa and Europe with Ikobe Music Group. He currently lives in Kampala, Uganda, where he works as an architect.

Karen Boswall is an Anglo-Mozambican filmmaker, anthropologist, ethnomusicologist and musician based at the University of Sussex in the UK.

Sylvia R. Bruinders is Associate Professor and Head of Ethnomusicology and African Music at the South African College of Music, University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Anja Brunner is a postdoctoral researcher/lecturer in ethnomusicology at the Department of Musicology at the University of Bern (Switzerland).

Irene Brunotti is currently a lecturer of the Swahili Language and Swahili Studies at the Institute for African Studies, University of Leipzig, Germany.

Eric Charry is Professor in the Music Department at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT, USA.

Rui Cidra is a researcher at the Instituto de Etnomusicologia (INET-md; Lisbon) and professor

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STEPHANIE SHONEKAN

Hip-Hop in Nigeria (Hausa Rap)

The availability of new forms of musical reproduction from the mid-1990s (particularly the Yamaha PSR series of synthesizers with stored dumbbeat samples), coupled with the easy access to rap samples on the Internet and the massive popularity of US rap music meant it was only a matter of time before Hausa

musicians in northern Nigeria created their own version of rap. Hausa rap emerged as a counterpoint, in both the musical and urban sense of the word, to the increasing spread of southern Nigerian rap. Hausa rappers seek to reorient the musical landscape of at least northern Nigeria toward a more focused messaging in their lyrics, striking a balance between transnational rhythms and the Hausa philosophy in their lyrics. Not only do their songs appeal to their young audiences, but they are also considered acceptable to the more traditionalist Hausa establishment.

In 2004 Kano-born and Lagos-based Yoruba rapper Eedris Abdulkareem released the CD *Jaga-Jaga*. The title track, sung in the popular Nigerian Pidgin English, was a blistering attack on Nigeria's social and political conditions. The main attraction to the Hausa audience was a Hausa-language track, 'Segarin Kano' (in Hausa, 'Sai Garin Kano' [Going to Kano City]). This proved that Hausa language could be used in rap. Right across the border to the north in the Republic of Niger, Nigerien Hausa rap musicians such as Kaidan Gaskia, Lafiya Matassa, Nazari, Dan Kowa, Fa-Baako and Lakal Kaney were combining musical styles by copying the US hip-hop beat and delivery style of artists such as Run DMC, 50 Cent, Snoop Dogg, 2Pac and DMX, while using the Hausa language and thus confirming the credibility of Hausa-language hip-hop. When in 2005 ZM (Zara Moussa) from Zinder released 'Kirari' ('praise epithet' or 'battle-cry,' rereleased in her album *Ma Rage* in 2012) she shot to stardom as the first female Hausa Muslim rapper in Africa. This was remarkable because neither Nigerian nor Nigerien public spaces provide an opportunity for women to participate in mixed-gender public culture. Further, rap music, perhaps the world over, has long been associated with male macho posturing. ZM therefore broke many barriers – misogynistic, patriarchal, cultural and even religious – as a Muslim female rapper in Africa. Her lyrics, especially on 'Rappo' from the album *Kirari*, drew attention to the poverty and ignorance that bedeviled rural women.

By 2006 a definite interest in creating Hausa rap had been established, particularly among urban youth. Repeated airplay of US rap music over local radio stations generated a lot of interest among young people, while evoking derision from adults who viewed US rap lyrics as antisocial. Soon, undeterred,

young people started picking up the microphone and imitating the rap rhythms they heard over the radio, using Hausa words to create onomatopoeic meters that approximate the original rap lyrics they were appropriating.

The music industry in Nigeria is informal, without structured labels and catalogs, so most songs recorded in studios are simply passed around via Bluetooth to friends and often uploaded to MySpace, Hausahiphop blogspot or other MP3 portals. Although they did not offer record deals, the abundance of music studios in Kano made it possible for young aspiring lyricists to have their compositions set to music for a fee of as little as NGN2,500 (US\$11 in 2015). The result was an avalanche of Hausa rappers including Northern Soldierz, K-Boys, X-Man Sarari, Kano Riders, J-Man, Ontos, Minor Mistake and Buzu 'Dan Pullo. These Hausa rappers came to public attention through the four FM radio stations then existing in Kano.

With no specific professional training in the use of musical instruments, these Hausa rap artists have relied heavily on a coterie of session musicians spread across the recording studios in Kano using music software such as Cubase, Cakewalk Pro, Sound Forge and FruityLoops (all available as pirated full-version copies – with cracks, serials or keygens – for less than US\$4 on mega-compilation CDs from Malaysia and Indonesia) accompanied by the increasing use of Yamaha PSR keyboards (or 'fiyano') and Behringer mixing consoles.

Kano Riders acquired high international status when they collaborated on their demo track 'Rayuwa Cikin Kunci' with a member of the most successful Nigerian rap group, Lakal Kaney, in 2005. On 30 July 2011, Radio Freedom, an FM station based in Kano, debuted the pilot of *Kano Music Express*, hosted by half of K-Boys crew, Hassan M. Sheriff. This program provided the only opportunity for Hausa Rappers to be heard and seemed to galvanize students from high school to college age, young civil servants and just about anybody who wanted to rap to do so – and be heard.

By 2015 more Hausa rap 'crews' had emerged in northern Nigeria. These included Mixter Bash, Mic Flammer, IQ, TEAxY, K-Arrowz, G-Fresh, Dr Pure, Daddy Fresh and Nomiis Gee – only about three of whom had released CDs. Nomiis Gee hosted a Satellite TV program, *Arewa24*, that showcased emerging Hausa Rap artists in both Nigeria and Niger.

Ziriums released a CD, *This Is Me*, on Amazon in 2010. However, due to nonrenewal of the distribution license with the portal, the CD was removed from Amazon. The artist, one of whose songs, 'Girgiza Kai' (Shake Your Head), was banned by the Kano State Government in 2008, relocated in 2011 to Florida in the United States, where there is more creative freedom for rappers and an absence of government-enforced censorship of music and lyrics.

Almost all Hausa rappers sing in the Hausa language, accompanied most often by hardcore rap tunes, much to the bemusement of the general audiences in Kano, who perceive such musical performances as merely an attempt to imitate US rappers. The tunes are either composed by a studio session musician or simply downloaded from sites providing free hardcore beat samples on the Internet over which the lyricists lay their songs. A few rappers, such as IQ and G-Fresh, prefer to rap in English. The Islamic nature of cities such as Kano make it difficult to create a true hip-hop culture, in the sense of an urban youth lifestyle, including personal appearance and clothing; the Hisbah Islamic police are always on the lookout for 'un-Islamic apparel' and admonish youth who wear such clothing. Rap crews must censor their lyrics, especially in the local Hausa language, to escape the wrath of the local Censorship Board. Thus Hausa rap lyrics tend to emphasize social sermonizing about good behavior and respect for all. There are exceptions, however. TEAXY's 'Allah Ya Isa' (God Is Our Adjudicator) was a blistering attack on the political culture of Nigeria in 2013. The pungency of the lyrics prevented radio play. IQ's 'Founding Fathers,' released in 2012, offers a similar, although muted, attack on the political leadership in Nigeria as having betrayed Nigeria's founding fathers. Sustained by enthusiasm rather than professionalism, Hausa rap provides urban Hausa young people with an opportunity to be part of a transnational music process by domesticating the genre as part of their social culture.

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ABDALLA UBA ADAMU

Hip-Hop in Senegal

Since the early 1980s Senegalese youth have embraced hip-hop as a global cultural import and as a local cultural practice, refashioning it to their own realities through musical production, sartorial practices, entrepreneurship, political movements, and education and health initiatives. Inspired by the