

Commodification of Culture: The Political Economy of the Hausa Popular Cultural Industries

Prof. Abdalla Uba Adamu

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Commodification of Culture

The Political Economy of the Hausa Popular Cultural Industries

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Commodification of Culture: The Political Economy of the Hausa Popular Cultural Industries

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Introduction

Commodification of culture, an increasingly significant strand in critical studies of culture, focuses attention on what happens when culture is produced on a mass consumption scale, and distributed in direct competition with other locally produced cultural products (see, for instance, Enzensberger, 1974). While mainly used in critical studies of tourism industry and its cultural import (e.g. Ryan & Aicken, 2012; James, 2014), the term has come to be applied to media industries with profit, rather than cultural aesthetics or preservation as the primary motive. This is premised on the assumption that while high culture sells to exclusive discerning consumers, low, mass produced culture targeted at the non-cerebral aesthetics, sell more massively. Thus the commodification of culture, especially in media studies, feeds into the political economy of production.

Synthesizing from various perspectives, Vincent Mosco distills political economy to be “the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources” (Mosco 2009, p. 24). This makes the products of communication, particularly books, newspapers, films, videos and indeed, their audiences, primary resources for studies in political economy.

However, it is instructive to note that *critical political economy* is sometimes used as a descriptor to separate its use as a tool of media analysis from classical political economy theorists such as Adam Smith. Golding and Murdock (1996), for instance, provide this separation by arguing that political economy analyses of the media are holistic; and the economy is essentially an interconnected network which includes the society, culture, and politics.

Within this context, the Frankfurt School of critical theorists headed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer pioneered the critical and multidisciplinary approach to cultural critique that combined textual analysis, audiences and political economy of the media to understand the ideological and social impacts of mass culture and communications. Their construction of the concept of ‘culture industries’ paved the way for subsequent exploration of the properties and consequences of mass-produced culture for commercial purposes. .

The critical theorists of the Frankfurt School subsequently analyzed a broad range of mass-mediated cultural artefacts within the context of industrial production. They identified how cultural commodities such as music (see Adorno 1932, 1938), popular literature (see Lowenthal 1949) and radio soap operas (see Herzog 1941) displayed the features of other products of mass production; specifically standardization, commodification and massification (Goodwilliam 2014). Kellner (2005) stresses their significance as the first group of social theorists to identify the ways in which

mass culture industries were at the heart of leisure, affected socialization and mediated political reality.

Additionally, as Murdock & Golding (1973), Garnham (1994), and Wasko (2005) pointed out, analysis of the political economy of the media industries entails investigation of the power relations that determine participation in and ownership of cultural production. Such analysis, as noted earlier, was facilitated by the Frankfurt School in Germany. However, the more recent center for investigation of the impact of media on the cultural industries was pioneered by the Birmingham School in the UK from about 1964.

This essay analyzes the commodification of the Hausa cultural industries in three interconnected domains – video films, magazines and music. I situate my arguments within a historical matrix of the development of Hausa visual cultures and musical cultures. Theoretically I tend to favor the economic perspective given by Wasco's (1981) analysis of the political economy of American film production. Data for the essay was collected over a period of several years of embedded fieldwork in Kano, northern Nigeria and Niamey in Niger Republic. Analysis of dozens of video films and popular culture magazines, as well as hours of interaction with marketers, producers, studio session musicians, singers, writers and magazine editors provided a primary ethnographic insight into the political economy of the contemporary Hausa cultural industries, as well as its commodification.

The Hausa and Cultural Production

Cultural dynamics, particularly cultural representation in any form of media is a strong factor in the digestibility of messages encoded in the various forms of popular culture. Media represents, and more so visual media which depicts and reconstruct – as well as deconstructs – particular episodes in the lives of individuals.

The Hausa are predominantly found in northern Nigeria, but well spread out to Niger Republic where the speakers of the language constitute 55% of the indigenous population. The language has also spread across the West African sub-region from Chad, Cameroon to Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Sierra Leone. The Hausa in these West African countries are predominantly traders and form a core resistant group of immigrants who refused to give up their language even if living in a linguistically plural society.

Popular culture in the form of films, music and literature are referred to by the Hausa as “adab” (social mirror, but used usually to mean literature) arrived into the Hausa public space through Islam, which made its first inroads into Hausaland in about 1250. In 1380 the Hausa chief of Kano, Yaji, accepted Islam from a group of Malian Muslim clerics, and subsequently established it as the state religion. Effectively, therefore, Kano had been an Islamic state since then.

Like missionaries of all faiths, the Malian clerics introduced Arabic alphabet and subsequently reading and writing to the new converts. The “original” Hausa, i.e. those who refused to accept Islam eventually migrated out of Muslim areas, and became referred to as “Maguzawa” (those who run away). The Muslim Hausa continued ruling the Hausa kingdoms until 1804 when the Jihad of Usman dan Fodiyo supplanted Hausa rule with Fulani rule. The new rulers, however, could not speak the Fulfulde language – having been acclimatized as Hausa; subsequently the weird

linguistic hybrid of “Hausa-Fulani” emerged to characterize the main social fabric of northern Nigeria.

Having acquired literacy through Islam, the Muslim Hausa took it quite seriously and used their new found education to propagate Islam only. When the British colonial administration (the British conquered then northern territories in 1903) introduced a literary competition in 1933, they found it hard to get entrants. As Dr. Rupert East, the arch-Svengali of the Hausa classical literature, exasperatedly noted,

The first difficulty was to persuade these Malamai that the thing was worth doing. The influence of Islam, superimposed on the Hamitic strain in the blood of the Northern Nigerian, 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 (East, 1936:351-352).

This attachment between religion and literature is to form the core template of the cultural dynamics of the Muslim Hausa popular culture. Nowhere is it vividly illustrated than in the Hausa video film industry.

Foundations of the Hausa Video Film

Early Yoruba traveling theatre videos found their way to Kano’s bustling “visitor” (or more appropriately, “guest settlers”) communities of Sabon Gari in the 1980s where they were shown in cinemas and hotel bars. This attracted the attention of Hausa amateur TV soap opera stars and crew such as Bashir Mudi Yakasai (cinematographer), Aminu Hassan Yakasai (scriptwriter) and Tijjani Ibrahim (director). Surprisingly, despite the massive popularity of Hausa drama in the television houses, and despite government financial muscle, yet the idea of full-scale commercial production of the Hausa drama episodes by the television houses was never considered. Individuals wishing to own certain episodes simply go to the television station and pay the cost of the tape and a duplication fee and that was it. There was no attempt to commercialize the process on full-scale.

However, at the time of producing *Bakan Gizo* in Bagauda Lake Hotel 1983 to 1984, Aminu Hassan Yakasai, Ali Muhammad Yakasai, Bashir Mudi Yakasai started strategizing producing a drama for cinema settings, as done by southern Nigerian video filmmakers. The film title they were thinking about was to be called *Shigifa*, about four unemployed graduates who started thinking about setting up a company. A script idea was floated, and Aminu Hassan Yakasai was to be the script writer. However before the idea matured, the group started getting coverage of social events, and actually part of the coverage was also stored as footage, although the film was not eventually made.

The precise decision to commercialize the Hausa video film, and thus create an industry, was made by late Aminu Hassan Yakasai in 1986, with technical support of Bashir Mudi Yakasai, the leading cinematographer in Kano, and Tijjani Ibrahim, a producer with CTV 67. Aminu Hassan Yakasai was a member of the Tumbin Giwa Drama Group, one of the many drama groups that existed in Kano and who stage their performances in local playgrounds. He was also a writer and a member of the Raina Kama Writers Association which spear-headed the development of the Contemporary Hausa Literature (CHP) in the 1980s. Thus the idea of putting Hausa drama—and extending the

concept later—on video films and *selling* it was a revolutionary insight, simply because no one had thought of it in the northern part of Nigeria. The project was initiated in 1986 and by 1989, a film, *Turmin Danya*, was completed. It was released to the market in 1990—giving birth to the Hausa video film industry. Salisu Galadanci was the producer and director, as well as the cinematographer, while Bashir Mudi Yakasai provided technical advice.

Here, it is significant to note that if Nollywood can be said to start off with *Living in Bondage*, which was released in 1992, then the Hausa video film industry was the first with *Turmin Danya*, which was released in March 1990. The moderate acceptance of *Turmin Danya* in Kano encouraged the Tumbin Giwa drama group to release *Rikicin Duniya* in 1991, and *Gimbiya Fatima* in 1992 — all with resounding success. *Gimbiya Fatima*, featured Adamu Muhammad, a novelist (*Kwabon Masoyi*), and one of the most successful and innovative television drama actors from CTV Kano soap operas.

By now it was becoming clear to the pioneers that there seems to be a viable Hausa video film market, and it was this viability that laid the foundation of the fragmented nature of the Hausa video film industry. For while organized groups formed to create the drama and film production units, individual members of the groups decided to stake out their own individual territories and chart their own future. Thus Adamu Muhammad, the star of *Gimbiya Fatima* decided to produce his own video film, independent of Tumbin Giwa group in 1994. The video film was *Kwabon Masoyi*, based on his own novel of the same name, and outlined the road map for the future of the Hausa video film, and at the same time sounded the death knell of the drama groups. This was because Aminu Hassan Yakasai who created the very concept of marketing Hausa video films—and thus created an industry—broke away from Tumbin Giwa and formed Nagarta Motion Pictures. Others followed suit.

Other organized drama groups in Kano did not fare too well either. For instance Jigon Hausa which released a genre-forming *Munkar* in 1995 broke up, with the star of the video film, Bala Anas Babinlata forming an independent Mazari Film Mirage production company (*Salma Salma Duduf*). Similarly Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino broke away from Tauraruwa Drama and Modern Films Production (which produced *In Da So Da Kauna*) and formed Gidan Dabino Video Production (*Cinnaka, Mukhtar, Kowa Da Ranarsa*). And while Garun Malam Video Club produced *Bakandamiyar Rikicin Duniya* written by Dan Azumi Baba; after the video film was released Baba left the group and established RK Studios (*Badakala*).

From field studies and interview with the producers in Kano, most of these break-ups were not based on creative differences but financial disagreements or personality clashes within the groups. The number of officially registered “film production” companies that came up in Kano alone from 1995 to 2000 were more than 120. There were many others whose “studio heads” did not submit themselves to any form of registration and simply sprang into action whenever a contract to make a film was made available.

Interestingly, Adamu Muhammad of Kwabon Masoyi Productions also produced the first Hausa video film entirely in English. It was *House Boy*. Although *House Boy* was an innovative experiment by a Hausa video filmmaker to enter into the English language video genre, yet it was a commercial disaster. Hausa audience refused to buy it because it seemed too much like a

“Nigerian film”, associating it with southern Nigerian video films. When the producer took it to Onitsha—the main marketing center for Nigerian films in south-east part of the country—to sell to the Igbo marketers, he was rebuffed by marketers who were surprised that a Hausa video producer could command enough English to even produce a video film in the language. Further, the video had no known “Nigerian film” actors in it, and therefore was not acceptable to them.⁸ Thus Hausa audience rejected it because it looked too much like a “Nigerian film”, while non-Hausa rejected it because it used “unknown” Hausa actors, so it must be a *Hausa* film, even though the dialog was in English!

Market Square Heroes—Commodification of Culture in the Hausa Video Film

When Tumbin Giwa Film Productions in Kano finished editing *Turmin Danya* in 1990 they faced the problem of marketing it. The production of the video film did not come with an embedded film marketing strategy that would be cost-effective to the drama group, considering in fact the financial hurdles they had to overcome to produce just one video film. Further, cassette dealers in Kano, dominated by Nigérien Hausa immigrants had no interest in marketing a Hausa video film over the Hindi, American and Chinese films they were making a bustling trade out pirating. A Hausa video film was an anomaly because the main Television stations of NTA Kano and CTV Kano, as well as NTA Kaduna all had popular dramas that were easily available. Further, it would not be as easily pirated as overseas films because the owners are local and can control the production and distribution. On the face of the popularity of TV dramas and their ready availability, it does not seem to make marketing sense to accept *Turmin Danya*. They therefore refused to market it.

The Tumbin Giwa drama group also faced a second problem of getting enough blank tapes to make multiple copies of the video—and again the marketers who were the main distributors of the tapes, refused to co-operate as they do not wish to reveal their sources. Generally, they were not particularly keen on the development of the indigenous video film industry because it was a loose cannon in their lucrative pirating.

Most of the marketers lack modern education and sophistication to market a film within the conventional process of film marketing. This is more because creating and implementing advertising and promotional efforts designed to make a film stand out in a competitive market environment, film marketing typically uses the same methods other products do—and these require a corporate mindset the typical Hausa merchant simply does not have. The marketers did, however, accepted to distribute *Turmin Danya* if the producers would find enough tapes to duplicate it themselves and bring it to them “ready-made”. Thus the marketing system depended on the producer making multiple copies of a video film at his own expense, sticking the photos of the film on the cover and finding a willing marketer ready to accept it on sales-or-return basis. No marketer was willing to either invest in the industry or even purchase the video films directly. They simply stacked them in their shops and gave the producer the sales, after taking their commission. If the video flopped, i.e. with low sales, the producer took the loss. Even if the marketer accepts the jackets, it could take up to six months for the full cost of the video film to be recouped—and even then in dribs and drabs of at most N2,000 at a go. This ties up the producer who has to wait until assembling all the money to start a new production. If a newer, more popular video film comes along, the unsold jackets of his film were returned to him.

The tape was often distinguished by a set picture pasted on the cover the casing. In this uncertain way, the marketing of the Hausa video film industry started—with no actual marketing—especially advertising, promotion, reviewing, product endorsement—or effective distribution network. It was up to the producers to take copies of the tapes to various marketers in large northern cities of Kaduna, Sokoto, Jos, Zaria, Bauchi, Maiduguri and Gombe. The sheer finance needed for this logistics was simply too much for the early producers and therefore not feasible. It was in fact for this reason that the early-era Hausa video films were produced by associations—Jan Zaki, Jigon Hausa, Tumbin Giwa, etc., who used the umbrella of the organization to produce and distribute the video film. The producers therefore settled with a simple advertisement on the radio informing listeners where to get a certain release. The marketers, of course, were not interested in any advertising for any video film—as doing that may draw attention to their illegal pirating activities.

However when Tumbin Giwa released *Gimbiya Fatima* in 1992 it became a wake-up call to the viewers and the marketers. This video film opened viewers to the genre, and after a slow take-off period, the Hausa video film had arrived. *Gimbiya Fatima*, a period romantic drama in a traditional Hausa Muslim palace caught viewers' imagination and proved so successful that the producers introduced a new innovation in Hausa video filmmaking—making Parts 2 and 3. It was the first Hausa video film to benefit from a continuing story.

For the producers, the only way to get their master copies mass duplicated was to enter a deal with the marketers. The release of *Tsuntsu Mai Wayo* in 1995 by Bala Anas Babinlata created a pathway for this collaboration. Instead of a usual set picture of a scene from the video on the cover the cassette, it had as near a professional quality color printed cover as possible at the time. It was the first Hausa video film with a “ready-made jacket”: the slipcase container for the video tape was the “jacket”. This ensured that his video films would be more easily distinguishable. He still had to find his own blank tapes and duplicate the original master and distribute to the dealers—much the same way “Nigerian” video films were distributed to all dealers in Kano. A few months later, his colleague, Khalid Musa changed all this with the release of *Munkar* when under Jigon Hausa Drama Club he came up with the idea of giving a master copy of the video film to a marketer, and then selling the number of “jackets” the marketer needed initially at N30, later raised to N50 per jacket. The cassette dealer then takes the responsibility of duplicating copies of the master tape—on the tapes he refused to sell to the producers, and which had massive supply of—placing them in the jackets and selling them to individual buyers at N250, or re-sellers at N180. The N50 cost of the jackets was all the producer got out of this deal; even then, the producer was paid *after* the dealer had sold the tapes. The jackets of tapes not sold were returned to the producer, and the cassette dealer simply erased the tape and records *another* video on it. The actors also do not receive any subsequent royalties on the sales of the video – having been paid a lump sum by the producer before shooting begins.

By the time Gidan Dabino released *In Da So Da Kauna* to the marketers 1996, the marketers had started showing slight interest in the marketing of the Hausa video films. This was more so because the video film was based on a best-selling novel of the same name and had caught the imagination of Hausa school girls across northern Nigeria. A way still needed to be worked out on mass production of the tapes—which the producers could not afford to do. Gidan Dabino came up with another formula—selling the “copyright” (meaning the right to duplicate) the video film for either

a year for N2,000 or “for life” for N5,000. This, however, was specific to a particular marketer. Thus as many as five different marketers could all come and lease—for that was actually what it entailed—the copy of the same video film, duplicate it themselves and distribute as they see fit. The creative copyright of the video film, however, remained that of Gidan Dabino. This system was not adopted by other producers and the original formula suggested by Jigon Hausa seemed acceptable to the marketers. In fact it was consolidated when RK Studios released *Badakala* in 1997 and sold the jacket to the marketers as per Jigon Hausa formula. Indeed only Ibrahimawa Studios in 2000 with *Akasi* followed the example of *Tsuntsu Mai Wayo* of releasing a ready-made video film to the marketers. But by then the marketers had cottoned-on the act—the future of Hausa video film marketing lies in the sale of jackets to the marketers. The filmmakers were now firmly in their grip.

The early (1990 to 1996) Hausa video films had a distinct characteristic: they were written mainly by novelists and/produced by structured drama groups and clubs. They were thus artistic in the sense that they were genuine attempts at interpreting the society using a new media technology which was just getting available to young urban Hausa. For instance, *Turmin Danya* was a period drama that studies the intrigues of a Hausa traditional ruler’s palace. *Munkar* was written by a novelist (Bala Anas Babinlata) and a screenplay writer (Khalid Musa), who approached the screenplay with professionalism associated with Babinlata’s widely successful novels. It was also a product of a drama group, thus having to undergo through various committees of Jigon Hausa Drama Group before the script was approved for screening. Finally, it had a strong social message—trying to stamp out prostitution among young Hausa girls. *In Da So Da Kauna* explores the essential tension between tradition and choice in marriage by tracing the roots of forced marriage phenomena in one family. *Ki Yarda Da Ni* is a study of *kishiya*—co-wife—micro-culture in Hausa marriages. It was adapted from a book by a best-selling author, Bilkisu Ahmed Funtuwa. It thus became the *first* novel by a Hausa female author to be adapted for video film. It also inspired adaptation of a similar novel that explores the same theme, *Kara Da Kiyashi*, by Zuwaira Isa, and signaled the entrance of women into Hausa video film phenomena.

Subsequent producers, however, were not novelists, but experienced stage and drama artistes who maintained the tradition of producing their video dramas on tapes and marketing them to an audience that was beginning to become aware of the new popular culture. Within a relatively short period of time, particularly from 1995 to 1999 more producers emerged. The initial route into the industry was for a newbie producer to give a “contract” to an established producer to make a film for him—or quite often, her—and become involved in every aspect of production. Once the newbie producer had learnt the ropes, he also became a producer, and often a director; not so much for budgetary control of the production, but also to be part of the industry. Further, in the early stages those individuals who had the capital to form some sort of production companies became easily the market leaders. The search for fame and contracts as producers led to the breaking up of these production companies and the Hausa video film industry became an all-comers affair. For instance in about 1995 Alhaji Musa Na Sale, an audio cassette recordist (recording traditional Hausa musicians such as Sani Sabulu, Ali Makaho, and Garba Supa) came across Hamdala Drama Group in Wudil, a town some 50 kilometers from Kano during their stage performance. The group featured a comedian, Rabilu Musa Danlasan with the stage name of Ibro. In a genre-defining business deal, Musa Na Sale paid for the video production of a comedy by the group featuring Ibro in his first film. The film was *Kowa Ya Debo Da Zafi* and established history in Hausa popular

culture in two respects. First it was the first commercial Hausa video film by a marketer. Second, it established the *Chamama* category of Hausa video films—cheaply produced films, and this served as an attraction to other marketers. Thus from 1995 some marketers also became producers.

Kano State Filmmakers Association and the Hausa Video Film Industry

It was clear, however, that some form of organized behavior was needed to either negotiate the best deals or undercut a rival. It was thus that a group of senior producers, temporarily setting aside their differences, decided to form the Kano State Filmmakers Association (KSFMA) in 1996 to provide a common platform for the video film industry, regulate entry into the system and most importantly provide some form of input into the marketing of the video films. However, right from its formation the KSFMA was doomed to failure because of the personality clashes among its members, and the utter contempt for the leadership of the association by emergent producers. As noted by one of the founding members,

The Association took up very well and made great impact. Gradually, sanity in production and marketing began to creep in, and at the same time, the industry began to witness more and more influx of producers most of whom did so because it was the vogue and also because of apparent lucrative nature of the business. Unfortunately, many of the producers were not serious and unprepared. Soon selfish interests, domination phobia, conspiracy and jealousy started to show their ugly faces. The noble aims and objectives of the association were put into jeopardy. Unethical practices, lawlessness and dislike for control coupled with the blind desire to make money at all cost (because others have done so) became the order of the day (Sango 2004: 74).

Despite their large combined years of theater and TV production experience, there were no attempts by the KSFMA to professionalize the industry in terms of either training, focus of the industry, expanding the market beyond Hausa speaking areas or post-production processes. There were also no quality assurance mechanisms to regulate not only production ethics but also storylines, for as Jibril (2004: 77) noted,

Indeed most of the personnel that make a typical production crew (director, producer, camera operators, lighting technicians, soundmen, production designers etc.), normally started off without any formal training in either their acclaimed areas of expertise or in the general principles and techniques of film and video production. The few people among them who have had formal education and training in television or film production were forced to compromise the essential professional production requirements and treatments in technical areas, (like directing, scripting, visual treatments, effects, lighting requirements, make-up, sound etc) in favor of the common practice of “doing it the way others do” and not necessarily how it ought to be done professionally. The relatively small size, (in terms of number) of these trained professionals in the industry is too “insignificant” that they can hardly make any meaningful inroads in changing the direction of events for the better in the industry. Thus the low quality of the Hausa home video is not only the result of the nature of the equipment used in producing them or their apparent low budgets but also the reflection of the poverty of both the professional and technical knowledge that go into their production.

The main focus of the members of the KSFMA was on how each of them as an individual producer, not as a group, would gain fame and stardom. Even the studios that emerged from the fragmentation of the earlier drama groups and societies revolved around a single individual—as exemplified by Nagarta Motion Pictures (Aminu Hassan Yakasai), Kwabon Masoyi Productions (Adamu Muhammad), Gidan Dabino Video Films (Ado Ahmad), Mazari Film Mirage (Bala Anas Babinlata) and countless others who followed suit. Further, in each of the video films produced by the new independents, the studio head was almost always the starring lead, producer, scriptwriter and director, whether in the video films of the studio, or in contract video films. They established

the central genre of Hausa video film industry—romantic stories either between married or unmarried couples, albeit cast in a mode traditional matrix of Hausa society—and subsequently encouraged Executive Producers to provide them with contracts to produce more video films along the same line.

The KSFMA was principally a marketing advocacy group that sought ways to ensure the video films of its members were effectively sold in the market. Its main innovation was the introduction of a queuing system (“layin sakin kaset”) for releasing new video films into the market almost from its formation. All Hausa video film producers, whether based in Kano or not, must subscribe to this system in a special deal negotiated between the KSFMA and the marketers. This became necessary because it was clear from the tide of Hausa video films being released into the market towards the end of the 1990s that some form of control had to be instituted into the system. This was more so because the success of the video films from 1996 to 1999 had attracted other, younger, producers with the intent of making their mark in the “industiri” as the industry was labeled. These younger elements had money for films, were star-struck by the older producers and directors and were ready to invest. Soon enough the Bata market in Kano became flooded by about five to ten new video films per week from 1998 to 1999. The idea behind the queuing system of releasing Hausa video films was to ensure that customers were not confused over which video film to watch within a short period of time.

Bata, named after a shoe company located in the nexus of stalls selling video films on the edge of Sabon Gari market in Kano, became the most important Hausa video film distribution center in northern Nigeria in the period. The stalls were owned principally by Nigérien marketers who were making lucrative business in pirating foreign – mainly Chinese and Indian – films, as well as importing pirated music tapes from all over the world.

Further, most of the early Hausa video film Executive Producers were women with tales of the heart to tell and this fitted perfectly into the production values of the individual production units of KSFMA. For ironically where the KSFMA existed as an umbrella organization, it was made up of disparate and mutually distrusting individual film companies that continued their intense rivalry for production contracts, which only made the notion of organizational control merely nominal. This indeed was reflected in the fact that the queuing system collapsed almost from its inception. Addressing a press conference in September 1999, the then Chairman of the KSFMA, Alhaji Auwalu Isma’il Marshal announced the abolishing of the queuing system

“When we introduced the queuing system of releasing cassettes in the market some few months ago, some selfish and thoughtless people hated the system right away. They claimed it was introduced to suppress up-and-coming producers. No one questioned our logic in instituting the system—was it to suppress or to empower? The KSFMA ignored these comments and was happy that most of our members agreed with the system. Unfortunately it came to our notice that some of our unpatriotic members had gone behind our backs and negotiated special deals with cassette marketers to jump the queue and get their own films released. This is very disappointing to the KSFMA, and in order to work out a more efficient system for our members, from today the queuing system for releasing Hausa video films weekly into the market has been abolished. Let every producer release his film as he sees fit into the market.” Press release on abolishing the queuing system of releasing Hausa video films into Kano markets, *Tauraruwa*, August 1999 p. 39.

To further illustrate the market-driven nature of the Hausa video film industry, similar fate awaited any subsequent attempt to form any filmmakers associations in other production centers of Jos,

Kaduna (see reports in *Fim* July 2001 pp 41-43, *Fim* September 2001 pp 37-39), Bauchi and Sokoto (*Fim* September 2001 pp 44-45, *Fim* December 2001, p 40). In each of these cities filmmakers associations were formed, disbanded and often left in a limbo after bitter acrimony between the constituent production studios that decided to form a State-wide association. The reason for their lack of cohesion was the same as in Kano—personality clashes and desire by the head of each studio to be the leader of the pack either in getting contracts to produce video films, or in ensuring maximum success for own video film in an increasingly crowded market.

The Takeover: Marketers and Revival of the Hausa Video Film Industry

By the end of 2003 independent marketers – not associated with any drama club or filmmakers association, simply took over the Hausa video film industry, successfully edging out many of the mainstream Hausa video filmmakers in Kanywood’s nerve center (e.g. Sarauniya, Ibrahimawa, Dukku). With video films from these newly established independents swamping the markets, it became difficult to recoup enough money from a film to make another one—especially for those who wish to maintain a semblance of creativity in their films. Noting a lull in the production, cassette marketers (referred to as ‘diloli’ or dealers) in Kano simply took over the Hausa video film production in 2004. This became inevitable because, as Jonathan Haynes (2007, p. 40) pointed out,

The basic structures of the video business are similar in Nigeria and Ghana. The marketer/distributors, based in Opera Square in Accra and in Idumota Market in Lagos, with other Nigerian centers in the Igbo cities of Onitsha and Aba and the Hausa city of Kano, have effective control of the market. They are the main source of capital, as banks and other formal sector institutions are wary of the film business. Most of the marketers were traders in electronics or other goods before getting into the film business; they are vigorously condemned by the filmmakers as semi-literates with no knowledge of cinema, throwing their weight around like the Hollywood moguls of old but without the far-sightedness or instinct for talent that built the American industry. They are resented for mandating storylines and casting and held responsible for the repetitious flogging of the same faces and plots, aiming only at quick returns on minimal investments by pandering to the lowest and most predictable tastes of their audiences.

Similar trends were noted in the “Nigerian”, i.e. Nollywood film industry. According to a report, by 2004 the “Awka Mafia”, a cabal of powerful marketers in Awka, Anambra State in South Eastern Nigeria controlled the Nigerian film industry:

...completely with the marketers not only dictating who should act in films but also which films should be released into the market and which ones should not. It was that same year that the marketers exercised the biggest power of all when they banned 10 top Nollywood stars alleging indiscipline, very high fees and other sundry matters...Initially, they started by choosing the kind of stories they wanted and cajoling the producers to use certain locations. In no space of time, they started dictating the actors and actresses they wanted on films. Before anybody could guess their next move, some of them even became directors and established their offices among the film makers themselves. “How marketers hijacked Nigeria’s movie industry” *The Tide* (Nigeria), Saturday, Jun 17, 2006, online edition at <http://www.thetidenews.com>.

Thus Hausa video film marketers, who rejected the industry in its infancy, and with neither background nor training in cinematic arts in any form—like their southern counterparts—adopted two strategies to take over the Hausa video film market from 2004.

Purchase of CD Rights

The first strategy was the introduction and of “sayen CD”—the purchase of CD rights of a film. The purchase of CD rights actually started with *Tawakkali* in 2001 at the time when southern Nigerian films were increasingly becoming available in the CD format manufactured by media production companies, such as Sontec in Singapore. This created a stampede of interest among Hausa video filmmakers to get their own films on CD—seen as the ultimate symbol of cinematic cool. This created a brisk business for Iyke Moore Enterprises—which was the main marketer of Nigerian language, especially Igbo films in Kano—to purchase the CD rights for many Hausa video films at N20,000 per film. However, Hausa marketers, who had not shown any interest in marketing the Hausa films on CDs—preferring to stick to the old formula of buying “jackets” from the producers—suddenly realized that more profits could be made from the CDs than the VHS tapes, and they moved in, effectively undercutting Iyke Moore and purchasing the Hausa video films at significantly higher prices from local producers—and at the same time using the ethnic factor to favor them. For instance, while Iyke Moore was an Igbo, the Nigérien Hausa marketers point out their ethnic affinity to the Hausa film producers and this as a negotiating base in effectively edging Iyke Moore completely out of the business. Since the producing costs were cheaper with CDs than with VHS tapes, the sales from the latter were left as sheer profit for the producers.

The purchasing appeal of a CD right of a film, especially from 2003 hinged on a trailer which focuses on a song and dance routine with catchy tunes and girls dressed in skimpy dresses (e.g. *Rukuni, Numfashi, and Guda*). These trailers are then shown to the merchants who purchase the CD rights of the film before it was even shot (and often before even the script was written). With CD rights purchased from N350,000 to N500,000 (depending on how flashy the film was, not its storyline, which was tertiary to first the song and dance in the film, and second to the stars that appear), the producers suddenly have enough cash to continue production of more titles—with cash backing from the CD rights as well as the profits from cinema ticket sales and VHS tapes of the film.

Financing of the Industry

In the second process of dealers taking over the industry, by 2004 they had become the major financiers of Hausa video films by sponsoring the kind of market-driven films that can be sold through their network, often at the expense of independent productions. Table 1 shows the trend of control of the Hausa video film market within seven sampled years, based on fieldwork data.

Table 1. Financing Control of Hausa Video Films, 1998-2004

Year	Total output	Dealer-owned	
		Number	Percentage
1998	33	10	30
1999	111	22	20
2000	171	51	30
2001	230	71	30
2002	212	63	30
2003	164	35	21
2004	293	136	46

In all the years, an estimated 32% of the Hausa video films were financed by cassette dealers. Indeed, so total was their stronghold on the industry that by 2005 they controlled the entire process from scripting to post-production through the sponsorship of the type of films guaranteed to garner maximum sales.

Alternative financing became inevitable because the major production studios lacked the capital to sustain themselves after the market crashed in 2003 due to stricter implementation of censorship regulations from 2001 that followed the re-launching of Shari'a in 2000. Seeing an opportunity to cash in, the marketers simply took over in 2004 and pumped cash backing to the studios—with the condition that the productions will be purely commercial. Studio heads with the capital to compete must ensure they produce the same type of films. Interestingly, this echoes the commercialization of other cinema in developing countries. A typical example narrated was in the Egyptian film industry which Abu Sayf (1949:17) described thus:

Nobody who has written about the “crisis of the Egyptian cinema” has investigated the causes of the crisis. The first reason is that the number of cinema production companies increased in Egypt during World War II because of the entry of war profiteers into the field of cinema production. They were eager to exploit the money they made without any of them knowing the slightest thing about filmmaking. This led to chaos that helped destroy the Egyptian film, causing an increase in competition for artists, thereby raising their fees to unimaginable levels. It also increased the cost of studios, developing labs, and raw film, and led to a doubling in production costs.

Consequently, in Egyptian cinema, as in Hausa video films,

Tasteless producers catered to a low-class audience, which had also been enriched by the British war effort (Salih 1986, 196) Lebanese producers, who Salih and others say were interested only in quick profits, put another nail in the coffin of “quality” Egyptian cinema. Lazy directors, who adapted foreign films rather than pay writers to produce scripts, then combined with the marketability of dancers, slapstick comedy, and melodrama, in what some see as a powerful alchemy of tastelessness (Armbrust 2000: 317).

Since the Hausa video film marketers were not in the market for the sake of ‘art’, criticisms of the marketing strategies or even the films, especially from the participants of the first international conference on Hausa films in 2003, did not affect the fact of the films being disposable commodities in Hausa cultural trade.

Movie Stars as the Nouveau Rich

The massive popularity of the Hausa video film as well as the emergent stars created the Kanywood appeal that further attracted more young independent producers. Thus the period of about 1999 to 2003 can be considered the golden age of Hausa popular visual culture. For the vast majority of these new video moguls, it was a full-blown business—complete with investment risks and “stock” options. It has to be; with no steady jobs or educational career, this became their own mainstay. And since the industry was not professionalized, it had no specific standards as applied to the standard norms of the film industry the world over. It became a cut-throat world, with every producer keeping their stories (or the film they are about to rip-off) close to their chests for fear of being beaten to production (a process called *Sheraton*—borrowing the name of the world-famous hotel chain in linguistic similarity to the Hausa word, *sharewa*, which means to sweep away (one’s ideas), and thus beat one to the market. Rivalry and intense competition in a restricted market became the norm, with studio heads often at loggerheads with each other due to conflicts of interest

(in either stars, storylines or marketing) or personality clashes, with each claiming superiority in his own turf, like a gangland war. A new commercial expression became coined by the up-and-coming producers in the middle of 2001. This was “*mu hadu a Bata*” (“let us meet at Bata”). The old Bata building, facing the bustling Sabon Gari market in Kano was the initial marketing center for the video films and the hub where all Hausa video film marketers were networked. Success at Bata means one’s video has been accepted (“*ya samu karbuwa*”), and this was guaranteed success for subsequent projects. Thus producers-cum-directors-actors whose videos were bankable became sought after by financiers.

On commercial terms the new stars were not really making a lot of money. Most appeared in the video films to gain popularity and fame, rather than fortune. And because they lacked an organized negotiating basis—there were no agents in the system—the stars were paid according to the whims of the producers. For instance, from 1994 to 1996 fees paid to artistes were at the discretion of the producer. Indeed in most of the early video film efforts, the artistes appeared free, adequately compensated by their rising profiles and popularity as video film stars (“*yan fim*”). The first Hausa video film that signed contracts with the artistes and paid them fees—and thus set the tune for the rest of the industry to follow—was RK Studio’s *Badakala* in 1996. The total cost of producing the video film was N250,000. The leading artistes in the video were paid between N7,000 to the highest N10,000—a considerable fortune at the time.

Towards the end of 1998 to early 1999 the average payment was about N500 per scene, by the end of 1998 it had started climbing to N2000 depending on the commercial appeal of the artiste. For instance in 1998 a female lead was paid N5,000 in *Karshen Makirci*. Yet the following year, in *Alhaki* the main female character was paid N20,000, reflecting the rising profiles of some of the stars. From 1999 the fees stabilized. Up to early 2002 leading role artistes with “megastar status” received between N20,000 to maximum N40,000 per film. These same “Superstar” list artistes were paid between one to two thousand naira per scene, depending on the relationship with the producer. After the market became unstable, sales could not be guaranteed. The fees also started coming down to N10,000 from N40,000 for “Superstar” video film star. The stars became at the mercy of the producers because the concept of negotiating a contract through an agent was never thought of as part of the process.

However, by 2017, the prices had gone up. A ‘superstar’ by then was commanding N500,000 for appearing in a film of two or more parts – in reality a single film, but split into multiple parts to recover as much of the costs as possible. Those not categorized as ‘superstars’ earn about N50,000 per ‘difficult’ film (which demands either a lot of physical exertion or extreme skillsets).

New Elements, New Attitudes

By 1999 the Hausa video film, despite being in existence for almost a decade, was still in its commercial infancy. The direct cause of this was that the entire system lacked organized professionalism right from its inception, nor were the practitioners—unlike the non-professional video film moguls from southern Nigeria—ready to consult with the professionals on the development of the industry.

The general feeling among the early Hausa theater practitioners and novelists who established the industry was that “practice makes perfect”. Having been involved in the process for years was

deemed sufficient enough bases for expertise. Further, the Hausa approached the video film industry as an informal market business (*kasuwanci*), rather than a profession (*sana'a*) where it is one's capital, rather than creative inspiration, that determines entry points. As stated by Mansur Ibrahim of Ibrahimawa Productions (*Akasi, Mugun Nufi, Uzuri, Yakanah*),

“To be frank, to us filmmaking is just another business ('kasuwanci'). It is not therefore surprising for us to change our focus and invest our money elsewhere when something better comes along...We temporarily stopped filmmaking because the market situation is bad. We make films with our money—we are not contracted to make the films.” Alhaji Mansoor A. Shariff, of Ibrahimawa Productions, Kano, Interview, *Tauraruwa*, Ta 1, Fitowa ta 3, 2003 p. 11.

The market-driven nature of the Hausa video film industry is reflected in the volume of the video produced between 1980 to 1997, where although a total of about 352 video films were produced, only one (*Shamsiyya*) was officially registered in 1996 with the NFVCB, Abuja. Almost without any exception these films—as do the ones that follow—had the same episodic structure, laden with dialogue, with little focus on cinematography. Very few of them were produced by formally trained directors, producers and cinematographers such as Tijjani Ibrahim, Salisu Galadanci, Abdullahi Ado Satatima, A.A. Kurawa, and Bashir Mudi Yakasai. Even then, these entered the video film through their involvement in Television dramas and series. Thus these productions were, perhaps not surprisingly, at best, extended Television dramas, often using the same stars, and certainly a consistently similar storyline.

In 1999 Sarauniya Films released the catalytic video film that literally shaped the direction of the industry. It was *Sangaya*. It was, like most Hausa youth literature, mainly a love story. It was not the story that was significant about the film, however, but soundtrack of the video and its song and dance routine backed by a synthesized sound samples of traditional Hausa instruments such as *kalangu* (talking drum), *bandiri* (tambourine) and *sarewa* (flute). The effect was electric on a youth audience seeking alternative and globalized—essentially modern—means of being entertained than the traditional music genre which seemed aimed at either rural audience or older urbanites. It became an instant hit. Indeed the success *Sangaya* was as momentous in the history of the Hausa video film industry as *Living in Bondage* was for Nollywood. According to the producer of *Sangaya*,

“Quite frankly, the song “Sangaya” was responsible for 80% of the acceptance of the video film *Sangaya*. Further, audience loved the song because of the (Hausa) traditional-sounding instruments used. The same with the dance routines that follow the song in the film.” Interview with the producer Sangaya, Auwalu Muhammad Sabo, *Fim*, July 2000 p. 21.

Sangaya signaled the “golden era” of the Hausa video film which lasted all of three years (2000 to 2003). As revealed rather too enthusiastically by the famous cassette seller in Kano, Alhaji Idris Dan Zariya,

“In the whole of Nigeria, there has never been a film with the commercial success of *Sangaya*...and it was because of the song, nothing else...The commercially successful (Hausa) video is the one with songs. The most outstanding videos became so because of the songs. Today even if you are a rookie in the video industry, if you start a video with a good song, then you will certainly become successful.” Interview with Alhaji Idris Dan Zariya, Chairman, Kano State Cassette Dealers Association, *Fim*, October 2000 p. 49.

The increasing economic depression in the country had created a massive pool of unemployed youth, and the success of *Sangaya*, both in financial terms and the popularity of the stars created a deluge of producers and directors overnight in Kano, which soon spread to other northern Nigerian cities. This new wave of producers, artistes and directors gate crashed the industry with production values different from those adopted by the early experimenters—theater actors made famous by television dramas, or novelists making a foray into visual prose fiction. Thus by 2000 Hausa video film evolved into an industry and a lucrative business. It became an all-comers' affair and a bandwagon effect kick-started with studios, producers, directors and actors all emerging, particularly encouraged by the possibilities of fame, and with tales to tell through the video medium.

Young, brash, sassy and rebellious (with the street tag of '*Yan Kwalisa*, Young Turks), the new producers that emerged from 2000 were products of acculturative media confluence. Their video production values were not informed by rustic settings, Hausa cultural worldviews or moralizing sermons to appease the traditionalist establishment as reflected in Hausa popular television dramas such as for example *Dan Magori* or *Kuliya Manta Sabo*. They were focused at providing teen-themed entertainment aimed solely at children, youth and housewives, with total disregard for any cultural sensitivities. However, even though they used globalized template—mainly Indian films—for their video filmmaking, they too remain didactic, with the actors and producers claiming in various interviews that they enter the industry teach good morals—the main mechanism of Hausa folktales.

Consequently, as a result of the potential for fame and fortune as film stars ("yan fim"), portrait photographers and individuals offering commercial video-coverage of important functions (such as naming-ceremonies, women's wedding parties, school activities, political party convention coverage), merchants, and high school graduates suddenly transformed themselves into video film moguls, gaining considerable confidence from their VHS cameras, financial muscle—and teen audience eager for a new video film every week. According to Aminu Shariff, one of the new emerging stars who made his debut in *Ukuba* (2000),

"Any film industry in the world has certain enforceable rules and regulations. Yet in our (Hausa video film) industry, this is not the case. Anyone with bags of cash can just come and choose any part of the industry they want and simply start! ... You don't just cast any person to act any role. You cast a person who fits the role in the story. Yet we don't do it like that. We cast any person no matter how unattractive in any role due to personal interests of the producer in the actor. This is what further attracts all and sundry into the industry (Aminu A. Shariff, aka "Momoh", lamenting the origins of the Hausa video film industry Interview, *Fim*, October 2003 p. 9.

Even secondary school students were not left behind. For instance, on Sunday 7th October 2001, students of Government Secondary School, Unguwar Sarkin Musulumi, Kaduna, launched their own film, *Dabaibayi*. The only non-students in the entire production were the star, Hauwa Maina, and the director, Al-Amin Ciroma. Further, Mudassir Haladu of Kano, nicknamed "Young Producer", earned his moniker when at the age of 19 and still in his sophomore year produced four video films by 1998. These were *Sakaci*, *Mahakurci*, *Badali* and '*Ya'yan Zamani* (*Garkuwa*, October 2000 p. 30). Indeed Mudassir was credited with coining the expression, "harka ta koma hannun yara" (the industry is now controlled by the young, *Fim*, March 2003 p. 38)—a contemptuous wake-up call to the older members into the profession which prompted Baba Ali a

veteran production designer (*Gimbiya Fatima, Gashin Kuma, Dandukununu*) and director (*Inuwar Giginya, Burin Zuciya*) to retort, about the filmmaking capabilities of the new producers:

“It is the same old story—romance. Also the same type of romance—boy-meets-girl; and when they sing, it is in garden full of flowers. Why can’t they change the style of their songs, or even the stories to make them more appealing to mature audience; or create other genres such as horror? Producers? No they are not! They are incompetent fools (‘shashashai’). There are over 500 claimed producers in Kano. Not more than 15 know that a producer is. The rest are incompetent fools...They don’t know anything.” Baba Ali, Interview, *Fim*, January 2003 p. 22).

This created counter comments from those affected (see *Fim*, March 2003 pp 36-39) who all defended their entry in the profession. While acknowledging that they had no formal filmmaking training—unlike the old industry members who benefited from State sponsorship while working for State television—the new filmmakers argue that they are intelligent, committed and have watched a lot of films—including those made by the same Hausa theater veterans—and therefore have learnt the tricks of the trade. This, to them, was sufficient enough to make the statements they want to make to their society. Indeed when an attempt was made by senior directors in Kano to ensure that any directing is done by only 15 refutable and therefore certified directors in the industry from 1st January 2003, they were labeled “gumakan industiri” (industry idols, untouchables). As a new director retorted,

“This (new rule) is unfair. How many of them read Directing at school? So why should they cripple others? If you take the video films of any one of them you will see it is full of mistakes, which young ones like us will easily point out...They only know “cut”, “action”, slow motion, and tell the same story in the same scenes—office, street, living room...” (Shakka Babu Column, *Bidiyo*, “Gumakan Industry”, August 2002, p. 4).

This decision—like that of any film association—had no enforceable mechanism since it had no legal backing. In reality none of these guilds could claim any registered status at the time, and consequently the system reverted back to type, inviting anyone into any cadre of the film industry that takes his fancy. Indeed in order to show that the market for video films belong the young blood, a shadowy association was formed in 2000 to fight the older established Kanywood directors, particularly among the ‘harka ta koma wurin yara group. One of their more vocal members was Ilyasu “Tantiri” AbdulMumin, a then young director (*Agaji, Raina, Adawo, Haka Kawai, Gayya, Sur’ah*) formed. His main logic was that having started the video film in 1993 as an actor (in a Macaulay Caulkin’s 1990 film, *Home Alone* clone, *Tantiri*, thus his nickname), he had been in the industry at various entry points and therefore had arrived as a director—same as any of the older ones. As he stated in an interview,

“No one can prevent me from being a director, producer, editor, actor, cameraman, scriptwriter, song writer, lyricist, I can do it all. I can even play the soundtrack music, or be the gaffer, or make-up man. I have been in the business for a long time, so I can do all of these.” Interview with Ilyasu “Tantiri” AbdulMumin, *Fim*, May 2003 p. 32).

Such feeling of creative control is not restricted to a newly emergent video industry in Africa, although reflective of a developing country, for as Ganti (2004, p. 55) explores about the Bombay film industry,

Films are often financed simply on the basis of a star-cast, the germ of a story idea, and a director's reputation. The lack of a well-defined division of labor among the principle players means that most people play multiple roles, so the industry is filled with people who are both producers and directors, writers and directors, editors and directors, actors and producers, actors and writers, or even a combination of actor-director-producer. Power resides in the stars, directors, and producers. The industry contains very few non-value-added people such as executives, lawyers, agents, professional managers, i.e., the “suits,” who do not contribute to the actual filmmaking process. There are also no intermediaries such as casting agents, talent scouts, or agencies like ICA and William Morris.

Thus the hostility between the older Hausa video filmmakers who from all appearances wanted to maintain standards, and the younger ones who perceived such moves as attempts to muzzle their creativity—and livelihood, since they rely totally on the industry—ensured that no specific enforceable standards were maintained or respected. This left the industry open to mergers and acquisitions by anyone with enough capital.

Thus the new producers and directors (from 2000 to 2004) adopted a do-it-yourself spirit of just learning the basics and then jumping up on a stage and making a point—as producers, cinematographers, editors, scriptwriters and directors. The entire system was operated on an old-boy network where personal contacts were more credible in getting a part (or a production) than formalized training qualifications in the craft. This, surprisingly reflects some professional ethics of the Bombay film industry the Hausa video filmmakers faithfully copy. As explained by Tejaswini Ganti (2004 p. 54),

“Studios” within the Indian context are merely shooting spaces and not production and distribution concerns. Though there has been a move toward integration and points of convergence - some stars have ventured into production and distribution, some audio companies into production, some producers into distribution, and some distributors into exhibition, these instances are not systemic and do not preclude others from entering the business. Essentially, the “industry” is a very diffuse and chaotic place where anyone with large sums of money and the right contacts can make a film.

The new Hausa filmmakers, confident of their financial muscle, market share of the industry and appeal to the younger audience were openly contemptuous of the older filmmakers. As explained by a typical Hausa video film icon,

“It was our elders, those who lay claims to be being industry elders who contributed to the low esteem accorded to this industry...some will not honestly give you a good advice because they are jealous of your success. Some will even attempt to cripple your script to show it is worthless. Some of them are just dumb. See, a person who is about 40 to 60 up to 70, but he is still thinking of a previous era he lived in. Some have painted themselves such that they think only they can succeed or success can only come through them. How can these people give any honest advice?” Aminu A. Shariff, aka Momoh, speaking out to *Fim*, October 2003, pp 8-9.

Consequently the old and established television drama artistes—who were absorbed into Council of Elders (a system-wide “dattawan industiri” group to settle disputes) and who in most part do not have the financial wherewithal to create professional video film studio and services, became relegated to appearing in the spate of new video films to confer on the films a credibility—and keep them in continuous employment. Despite this uneasy working relationship, a hostile dividing line was created between the old and the new filmmakers which remained up to 2005. The elders themselves feel almost the same about the talents and creative directions of the new filmmakers. An example is given by Isa Bello Ja who often appears in patricianly roles in the video films and

who started his acting career in TV series drama (*Zaman Duniya, Bakan Gizo, Sabon Bakan Gizo, Hadarin Kasa*, etc.):

“This is a young man, coming to you with his money. He thinks he doesn’t need your advice. All he wants is to make a film. I remember during our TV drama days, a producer is a person who knows what the story of a film would be. If it involves doctors, weavers, dyers, teachers, he will case study them first. But these kids (producers of Hausa video films) do whatever they want. If you try to say something, they will claim you just want to confuse people; it is his money why should he listen to you? The fact that you can claim to know the art of filmmaking (to them) does not arise, he is proud of the fact that he has the finance to do the film the way he wants it. They have no room to listen to any advice (from us) because he has already been advised by his friends to make a film whether it will succeed or flop. This is how these kids think...” Isa Bello Ja, an “elder” in Hausa video film industry, interview, *Fim*, September 2003 p. 31.

This hostility—which runs through the Kano-Kaduna axis—remained the single factor that limited the internationalization of the Hausa video film as a serious process. Other more established filmmakers simply shun the video industry altogether. A vivid example was Sadiq Balewa who produced and directed—on 16 mm gauge—a highly acclaimed Hausa feature film, *Kasar Mu Ce* in 1991. As he stated in an interview:

“I have refused to direct home video because artistically, it is not my stuff, for it is limited in creativity, and it has become an all-comers’ affair. I have been approached a number of times to direct home video, but I have turned all the offers down. I cannot abandon the state-of-the-art format for mediocrity! I have, however, written four scripts for home movies for others.” (Interview in *Film and Video*, Vol 4 No 2, 1998, p. 29).

The most affected group by the Hausa video film industry fever were young ladies. When it became clear that stars like Fati Muhammad, Maijidda Ibrahim, Maryam “Mushaqqqa” Aliyu, Abida Mohammed, Ruqayya “Dawayya” Umar Santa, Balaraba Muhammad and Wasila Ism’ail were plain ordinary girls transformed into video princesses, other girls, some fresh from high school, and others running away from a forced marriage situation, started trooping to Kano to be cast as the next superstar. Indeed it is this deluge of young ladies running away into the open arms of an industry always on the lookout for a fresh face that contributed to the critical reactions of the Hausa public sphere on the Hausa video film industry. The industry was seen as encouraging a rebellious attitude among young women and serving as a magnet for those ladies who want to become wayward. This understandably did not down well with either the Artistes Council of Kano or the Kano State Association of Filmmakers who tried to absolve themselves from the blame. As explained by Alhaji Auwal Marshal, then the Chairman of the Kano State Filmmakers’ Association,

“Entry into the industry is cheap. Anyone can call themselves a producer—yet you can’t be a producer just like that, you must fulfill certain conditions. One of them is that there should be a written agreement before a girl is cast in a film. Yet many producers flout this. We are determined to correct this situation...” Auwal Marshal, Interview, *Fim*, November 2001 p. 29.

The process became more formalized in 2001 which created a system whereby any girl wishing to become an actress must show her parent’s consent. For instance, in an interview, a mother who wanted her daughter to become a video star rationalized:

“...I suddenly realized what is happening. We send our children to school where they learn a lot of things, including drama which we found acceptable in school settings, since they are often even given prizes for excelling in school drama shows, just like if they excel in regular subjects. So why should we condemn this

business when, after graduating from high school, they want to convert their skills into something productive? If we do that, we are not being fair to them. This is because our children have finished high school, they have no jobs, they have no husbands, they just loaf and roam about—and before you know it they end up doing all sorts of bad things, worse than we can accuse drama artistes. I am therefore bringing my daughter so that she can be employed in the video film industry...” A mother’s lament on girls in video films, in *Annashuwa*, April/May 2002, p. 44.

This was followed by a signed undertaking—which all producers require a parent or guardian to sign—granting full permission for the studio to cast the young women (rarely young men, who often join the industry without necessarily seeking parental consent, so long as they stay out of scandals—of the sex and drugs variety—and bring in some sustenance for the family). Despite these, the criticisms against using girls who more often than not are either smallish or young (the average age of Hausa video film female stars by 2001 was 17). As noted by a critic,

“I am writing to plead with film producers to, for the sake of Allah and His prophet, stop casting any girl or woman in their films. When you look carefully you will notice that the girls who appear in Hausa video films are very small—at an age they should not have left the caring tether of their parents. Some of the girls look like they have just stopped wearing diaphers! And yet they cast such girls in roles fit for more mature women, especially love.” Urwatu Bashir Sale, *Fim*, October 2005 p. 10, letters page.

This did little to deter the continuing attraction of the film industry to adolescent girls. The combination of such tender-aged girls and a strongly Islamic environment is a recipe for critical reaction.

Cost of Production and Volume of Hausa Video Films

The cost of production of Hausa video films follow the vagaries of the economy, as the case with all aspects of economic life. Dandago and Imam (2002) sampled about 13 studios in Kano and Kaduna States to determine the average cost of production of Hausa video film based on specific film genre. The results, juxtaposed against 2017 costs of production are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Average Cost of Hausa Video Film Production

S/N	Types of films	Average Cost (N)	
		2002	2017
1.	Comedy films	400,000	2,000,000
2.	Love story films	500, 000	2,500,000
3.	Religious Films	600, 000	1,500,000
4.	Children’s Films	600, 000	3,000,000
5.	Action films	700,000	4,000,000
6.	Horror films	1,000, 000	4,000,000
7.	Social films	1,200,000	3,000,000
8.	Family films	1,500, 000	1,000,000
9.	Traditional films	2,000,000	5,000,000

Source: Updated with recent (2017) fieldwork from Dandago and Imam (2004).

The fluctuating economy, as well as introduction of more costly filmmaking gear (from VHS camcorders to digital cameras) as well as higher costs of actor fees and post-production costs were responsible for the almost doubling of the fees in the 15 year period. Surprisingly, there seemed to be a drop in the costs of producing ‘family’ films. My informants suggested that by 2017, such

films had lost their appeal, with Hausa video film ‘superstars’ shunning them. Further, they are mostly shot in one location, thus reducing overhead costs.

No less voluminous than the acrimonious structure for the young industry was the output. Indeed the large volume—caused by a bandwagon-effect—was the core of the acrimonies. In Nigeria, the Hausa video films were second only to Yoruba video films in volume production. From 1952 to 1995 about 15 celluloid Hausa films were produced. These were *Baban Larai* (1952, a video film remake was produced in 1995 with the same title), *Mama Learnt A Lesson* (1960), *Back To Land* (1970), *Child Bride* (1970), *Kanta of Kebbi* (1976), *Shehu Umar* (1976), *Idon Matambayi* (1982), *Ga Fili Ga Doki* (1985), *Maitatsine* (1985), *Kulba Na Barna* (1993) and *Kasar Mu Ce* (1995). *Nur Al-Zaman* (1993) and recorded with Betacam was a biopic of the 19th century Hausaland Muslim reformer Shehu Usman Danfodiyo and was never released. Others, of uncertain dates, included *Ruwan Bagaja*, *An Kashe Maciji*, and *Musa Yazo Birni*.

Following the typical style of Hausa storytelling, these films were didactic, linear and steeped in either history (e.g. *Shehu Umar*), patriotism and nationhood (*Kasar Mu Ce*), biopics (*Kanta of Kebbi*, *Maitatsine* and *Nur al-Zaman*) social services (*Baban Larai*, *Child Bride*) or commercially produced by big firms to promote their products, as in *Musa Ya Zo Birni*, produced by Nigerian Tobacco Company to encourage the production of the tobacco plant. These films were produced either at the time of limited media globalization on Hausa filmmakers, or were studied attempt at cultural preservation through the mass medium. They were also clearly expensive to make and could not have been sustained at an individual filmmaker level. For instance, *Maitatsine*—a biopic about a Muslim preacher with a particularly violent approach to mass conversion in Kano in about 1983—was not officially released in any medium after its theater showings because the producer was worried about piracy (Interview with Alhaji Sule Umar, Producer and Director, *Maitatsine*, *Mumtaz* magazine, April 2001, p. 18). The total number of such Hausa feature films, so far recorded, was 11.

When the video camera became easily affordable, hundreds of amateur filmmakers emerged such that about 352 Hausa video films were produced from about 1980 to 1997, increasing to a total of about 1,961 by 2005, as shown in Fig 1.

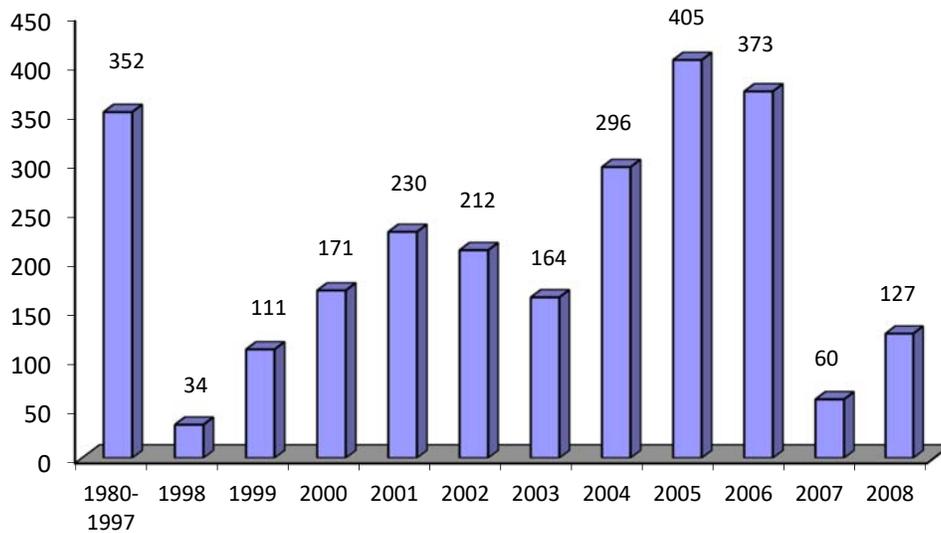


Fig. 1: Upsurge in Hausa Video Film Production
Source: Kano State Censorship Board

Thus a sudden upsurge of the production of the video films in 2005 was attributed not to the individual studios, but to the cassette dealer’s cartel that simply took over the industry. The decline from 2007 was caused by a scandal involving a high profile Hausa video film female star, Maryam ‘Hiyana’ Usman whose cellphone video clip of a sexual encounter with a boyfriend in 2007 led to a public crisis of confidence in the Hausa video films and caused a significant slump in the sales.

However, of the estimated 1,961 Hausa video films produced from 1980 to 2005, only about 1,609 were officially recorded by the National Film and Video Censorship Board (1998-2003 figures) which started censoring Hausa films submitted to it from 1996²⁸, as well as the Kano State Censorship Board (2004 and 2005 figures). Between 1980 to 1996 a total of 352 Hausa video films were allegedly produced, although many of them were not recorded anywhere except with the producers who announced their production in interviews in *Fim*, *Tauraruwa* and *Garkuwa* magazines. However, the popularity of the genre is reflected by the fact that in only 2005 a total of 394 video films were released—eclipsing the 352 produced in the 16 years from 1980 to 1996. And despite censorship, which imposed certain regulations, the two years from 2000 and 2001 saw a total of 20.4% of the Hausa video films. The biggest boom, however, was in 2005 when a total of 20% of the total number of Hausa video films were produced in that year alone.

Thus the success of *Sangaya* in 2000 led to an avalanche of filmmakers and Hausa video films as reflected in the 14.2% total share of the officially censored video films in 2001—a significant increase over the previous years. Further, according to the National Film and Video Censorship Board (2002) there were a total of 121 officially recognized Hausa film producers in Nigeria in 2001, and 23 directors (who, in Kano at least, constituted themselves into Directors’ Guild of Kano, Dgk). However, data from the Associations themselves in Kano show that there were 218 members of the Kano State Filmmakers Association in 2005. The Kano State Guild of Artistes also recorded a total of 505 members. From fieldwork studies in Kano and Kaduna—the largest

centers of production—most of these production companies do not even have an office; nor were there any specific studios. Filmmakers often rely on rented equipment to shoot a film and take the rushes to an editing studio—many of whom were converted computer business centers.³⁰

Kanywood Variety—Popular Mass Media and Hausa Video Films

It is a sign of the high value of literature among the Hausa that magazines to cover the new entertainment medium became rapidly established. Thus magazines sprung up to provide news, information and gossip about the Hausa video film industry soon after the industry started to crystallize. The first Hausa video film magazine, *Taskira* was established in 1996 in Kano, but ceased publication after few issues. Its place was taken by a more successful *Tauraruwa* (“*Star*” and inspired by the Hindi film magazine, *Stardust*, which was extremely popular in urban Hausa northern Nigeria) which was introduced in 1998 to capture the burgeoning Hausa video film scene. It quickly coined the term *Kanywood* for the Hausa video film industry—creating an indigenous label for the industry three years before *The New York Times* created *Nollywood* for the Nigerian film industry in 2001. In that period, well over 80% of the production studios as they existed, were located in Sabon Titi, a wide street that bisected Kano city. *Tauraruwa* magazine pitched its single office in the area which rapidly became known as “Kanywood Boulevard”.

In 1999 *Fim* magazine debuted. Published in Kaduna, it remained the single most consistent source of information about the industry since its first issue in March 1999. Professionally produced, with an almost academic flair for balance and less sensationalism, it rapidly became the leading and authoritative Hausa video film magazine in Nigeria and beyond, complete with an independent web site (and prefers to use *Kallywood*, instead of *Kanywood* for the industry, although the industry itself prefers *Kanywood*). Other magazines that joined in the fray included *Annashuwa*, *Bidiyo*, *Duniyar Fim*, *Garkuwa*, *Gidauniya*, *Indiyana*, *Majigi*, *Marubuciya*, *Mudubi*, *Mujallar Sharhi*, *Mujallar Sho*, *Mumtaz*, *Nishadi*, *Sharhin Fim*, *Shirin Fim*, and *Tauraruwa*. By 2017 only *Fim* survived.

Like the Hausa video film industry itself, competition to establish the magazines, with the exception of the sole survivor, *Fim*, was motivated by a do-it-yourself journalism ethos and desire to make money, rather than to document the process. This explains why out of about 16 titles established from 1998 to 2005, only three survived. Indeed by 2003 most of these magazines had collapsed. A study of their lifespan indicated varying longevity from just one issue (*Mujallar Sharhi*), to two (*Annur*, *Sharhin Fim*, *Indiyana*) or four to six (*Annashuwa*, *Majigi*, *Marubuciya*). The rest survived few issues beyond number 10 up to 2004 before folding up. *Indiyana* became somewhat unique in that it provided news and information in Hausa about Hindi, rather than Hausa, film industry—which it culled from Hindi film magazines like *Fanfare* and *Stardust*, as well as Internet web sites. However, after only two issues, it folded up. *Marubuciya* started as a literary magazine, but started to focus on the burgeoning Hausa video film industry after three issues to get a share of the market. Increasing availability of printing presses created more varieties of covering the entertainment industry. Thus *Nishadin Mako* became the first (18th to 25th September, 2003) initially fortnightly newspaper to cover the industry. It ceased production after that one issue.

The magazines were almost exclusively devoted to video films, trying to keep pace with their rapid expansion, highlighting the appeal of particular films and expanding the number of stars and

superstars in the process. And perhaps not surprisingly, regular contact and coverage of the industry provided the magazine publishers with video ideas; for they too entered the video film production business. Consequently *Fim* magazine produced *Gagarabadau*, *Daren Farko* and *Artabu*, while *Majigi* (through Shalamar Video film studio in Abuja) produced *Honarabul*, *Illar Gaba* and *Nafisa-Ta*.

The Crash: Marketers, Blouses and Chicken Noodles

By 2016 the Hausa film industry had literally crashed. The major marketers-cum-producers had all pulled out from the industry. Their shops in the major video markets in Kano were subsequently filled with clothing—particularly blouses and football jerseys; for these make more money than selling films. Others took to selling Smartphone accessories, while others returned to the farm and became serious farmers. The few Hausa megastar actors took to commercial advertising of noodles, milk and other household commodities – often moving from house to house with products’ marketers – relying on their faces and voices (making sure they introduce themselves in all the commercial jingles) to sell to increasingly hungry population caught in the vortex of economic depression. The frequency of releasing films drastically dropped because no one was buying. International Satellite channels like the Indian Zee World, especially their English-dubbed TV series caught Hausa urban attention more than recycled Hindi film clones that were the hallmarks of Hausa video films. There were many reasons for the crash.

Market congestion

The popular cultural industries in Kano were marketed into market hubs. The Bata market at the edge of Sabon Gari controlled the predominantly foreign films and music sales, as well as the main center of distribution to other parts of Nigeria and Africa, where a sizeable market existed in Niger, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo, Cameroon, Chad and Congos.

When the Hausa video film arrived in 1990, it found a ready template to attach itself. The other was Kasuwar Kofar Wambai, located at the edge of the walls of Kano city, and near a cluster of old colonial cinemas. The Wambai market focuses mainly on leather, textile and plastics. However, it was also the hub of audio tape sales – with marketers making brisk business pirating old EMI, Polydor and HMV tapes of traditional Hausa musicians recorded in the 1960s. Road construction work at Bata in about 2003 created unfavorable conditions for many of the stall owners, and some decided to shift to Wambai market. By 2005 the video film market had completely moved to Wambai which now became the new Bata.

The Wambai market, hitherto occupied by cassette dealers who ignored the Hausa film industry, suddenly became a virgin territory for film marketers and producers, with each opening a stall. In less than five years it had reached its ascendancy and crashed due to the massive congestion of producers and marketers – all selling the same thing. When I visited the market in May 2017, I counted less than 10 stalls selling either videos or audio; contrasted to some five years ago when it was bursting at the seams with these products. The stalls have now been taken over by stocks of cheap blouses, football jerseys and cloned Smartphone accessories.

Lack of new or captivating scripts

By 2005 the Hausa video film industry had become fully established with over 1,600 officially censored releases. With an extremely few exceptions of less than 0.5%, they all revolve around a

pastiche of Hindi films in one form or other aimed, as the video filmmakers themselves kept insisting, at urban Hausa children, youth and housewives. Since such youth commercial Hausa video film echoes its Hindi film antecedents, let us first look at the defining characteristics of commercial Hindi films. According to Ravi Vasudevan (2000, p. 101), the negative features of commercial Hindi cinema are:

a tendency to stasis at the level of narrative and character development; an emphasis on externality, whether of action or character representation, melodramatic (florid, excessive), sentimentality; crude or naive plot mechanisms such as coincidence, narrative dispersion through arbitrary performance sequences, and unrestrained and over-emotive acting styles.

Thus most Hindi films could be classified as musicals, especially due to their reliance on a strong dosage of song and dance sequences, blended with a melodramatic storyline, which employ formulaic ingredients such as star-crossed lovers and angry parents, love triangles, corrupt politicians, kidnappers, conniving villains, courtesans with hearts of gold, long-lost relatives and siblings separated by fate, dramatic reversals of fortune, and convenient coincidences.

This stylistic technique provides a vehicle for echoing a fundamental Hausa emotional tapestries in three main creative motifs: *auren dole* (forced marriage, the *love triangle*, and the obligatory *song and dance* sequences—with an average of about six songs in a two part video. With every producer trying to outwit everyone with more love triangles, song and dance routines, the market became saturated, and audiences got bored – and indicated this by refusing to buy the films.

Monopoly by Megastars

Those actors lucky enough to be accepted early enough in the film industry came to dominate the system. This was actually imposed by the marketers who insisted on a particular actor appearing in a film they will either sponsor or market because such actors were more bankable and were guaranteed quick sales of their films. With this economic force behind them, such few (perhaps less than five) came to dominate almost every ‘big’ budget Hausa film. By 2017 their stars had started fading; audiences became tired of seeing them in almost the same film with different names, and marketers dropped them. While still making films, they diversified their faces and voices to commercial advertising for major telephone service providers and essential commodities such as chicken noodles and milk and soup seasoning.

The fading of the fortunes of the megastars became evident with the ascendancy and popularity of relatively unknown stars of a TV series, *Dadin Kowa*, shown on Arewa24 satellite TV from 21st January, 2015. *Dadin Kowa* (pleasant to everyone) is an imaginary town that serves as a melting pot, housing Nigerians of various ethnicities and religions, and yet living peacefully. In 2016 it won Africa Magic Awards, over *Sarki Jatau*, an expensive lavish traditionally cultural Hausa period drama.

The coming of Arewa24, initially conceived and funded by the United States State Department’s Bureau of Counterterrorism to counteract insurgency in 2014 merely placed another nail in the coffin of the Hausa video film market. Transnational in its outlook, its TV series provide a level of script sophistication unheard of in Hausa film industry. Other Satellite TV stations, such as StarTimes, Hausa Channels on Africa Magic DSTv including GoTV became increasingly affordable. Showing a massive amount of Hausa films, they eclipsed the purchase of CD and

DVDs of Hausa films. Audiences prefer to watch free than to go through the hassle of purchasing DVDs that often do not work, and requiring DVD players, mostly Chinese knock-offs of international brands that often turn out dodgy.

New Media, New Poverty

The Internet provided the biggest blow to the decline of Hausa video films. With telecommunication companies competing for customers and subsequently undercutting each other in the provision of data plans, Hausa youth have more access to social media sites such as Instagram and YouTube. The latter, in particular, provided them with opportunities to upload hundreds of Hausa films for all to see. While this has increased the visibility of Hausa films worldwide, such popularity does not translate to return on investment, as most of the films were illegally uploaded to YouTube.

Another dimension of new media political economy was the proliferation of Download Centers in northern Nigeria, with the largest groups in Kano. Operators of these Centers rip the CD of DVDs of Hausa films and convert them into 3gp formats and make them available to customers at N50 per film—with discounts given for volume purchase. A 1GB microSD card can pack as many as 20 films. The 3gp format makes it possible for people to watch the films on their Smartphones, which readily and rapidly replaced DVD players which require a TV and electricity – something not always guaranteed in Nigeria. Often the Downloaders ‘lease’ the films from street vendors – children hawking the CDs and DVDs at traffic lights – for N100 per film, rip it off, and return back to hawker who simply puts it back into its pristine cellophane wrapper and eventually sells it – thus gaining double profit. Both the various Associations of Hausa filmmakers and the Kano State Government’s Censorship Board had tried to stamp out the Downloaders, but without success, as the latter had become so powerful and organized that they form various Associations. The punitive steps taken was usually to arrest them, fine them, and order them to delete the illegal ripped-off films from their computers. These measures proved so ineffective, that a deal was worked out in 2017 between the filmmakers and the Downloaders to ‘officially’ lease the films to the Downloaders for a fee in a form of ‘legal license’. These measures did not work because the Downloaders prefer to obtain their films cheaply, rather than being registered with the Government as licensing the films. The Kano State Censorship Board, on the other hand simply ask them to register their business and charge them fees, regardless of their downloading bootleg business.

Southern Indian Competition

A final factor in the decline the Hausa film industry by 2017 was the massive popularity of ‘Indiya-Hausa’ films. These were Telugu and other southern Indian films that have been dubbed into Hausa language by first, Algaita Studios in Kano. When the marketers at Wambai market noted the popularity of these dubs, they also moved in and commissioned their own dubbed translations.

The original Telugu films were brought to Kano by an Indian national with full license to translate into local African languages. The first film translated by Algaita Studios was the Bhojpuri film, *Hukumat Ki Jung* (dir. S.S. Rajamouli, 2008). It was translated as ‘Yaƙi da Rashin Adalci’ (Fighting Injustice). Others that followed included *Dabangg* (dir. Abhinav Kashyap, 2010), *Racha* (dir. Sampath Nandi, 2012) and *Nayak: The Real Hero* (dir. S. Shankar, 2001). In an interactive session in June 2016, Buzo Danfillo told me that the Algaita Studio had translated 93 films by 2016. They were paid N80,000 by the Indian licensee of the films.

The first few films that appeared from the Algaita Studio from 2012 were considered novelties, providing a relief from watching complete remakes of Hindi films by Hausa filmmaker, or even the originals themselves. What made them more attractive, however, was the translation of the titles of the films in a single powerfully expressed word, or couple of words, that seems to take a life of their own and communicate either adventure, danger or defiance. For instance, *Nayak: The Real Hero* (dir. S. Shankar, 2001) was translated as ‘*Namijin Duniya*’ (lit. Brave); *Indirajeet* (dir. K.V. Raju, 1991) as ‘*Fargaba*’ (Fear), and *Velayudham* (dir. Mohan Raja, 2011) as ‘*Mai Adda*’ (Machete). Referred to as ‘*India-Hausa*’ (Hausa versions of Indian films), they quickly became the new form of transcultural expression in the Hausa entertainment industry.

The Indiya-Hausa translations were massively successful and attracted audiences not attuned to Indian films in the first place. This can be deduced from the numerous comments on the Facebook pages of the Algaita Dub Studio (<https://www.facebook.com/algaitadub/>). Their success created a public debate mainly online in social networks about their cultural impact. In the first instance, there does not seem to be any attempt by the translators to mute some of the bawdier dialogues of the originals – translating the dialogue directly into Hausa. Kanywood filmmakers latch on to this as an indication of cultural impropriety of the translated films. Additionally, the often romantic scenes revealing inter-gender sexuality were not edited out by the translators, since their focus is not the visuals, but the voices. This, again, was pointed out by Hausa filmmakers as a direct attack on Hausa cultural sensibilities. Kanywood filmmakers do accept that they appropriate Hindi films; but they argue that they culturally adapt the stories to reflect Muslim Hausa sensibilities.

Audiences, however, do not accept these arguments against the translated Indian films. This was evidenced in a debate a Kano local FM radio station opened on its Facebook pages to discuss the merits or otherwise of India-Hausa translations on October 13, 2014. A total of 2,027 comments were posted reflecting various views about the translations. Out of these, about 1,326 were considered valid posts and were content analyzed and categorized into five. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Radio Freedom Facebook responses to India-Hausa translations

S/N	Comments	Number	%
1.	Translated Indian films corrupts Hausa audiences	179	13.5
2.	Translated Indian films do not corrupt Hausa audiences	509	38.4
3.	Kanywood films corrupt Hausa audiences	451	34
4.	Kanywood films do not corrupt Hausa audiences	31	2.3
5.	Indifferent/neutral	156	11.8
	Total comments	1326	100.0

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/freedomradionig/posts/10152810476008035>, retrieved December 3, 2015.

The comments focus on what is more corrupting on youth: Kanywood or the Indiya-Hausa translations. It should perhaps be pointed that ‘corruption’ (*gurbata tarbiya* in Hausa) is a general expression for any inter-gender relation in which the genders physically touch, obscenities, thuggish behavior and other socially undesirable traits. This variable came into play because of the constant accusations by the more puritanical Hausa critical views that suggests inter-gender mixing, particularly in Hausa video films, has the potential of corrupting the morality of vulnerable youth.

From Table 3, it is clear that a significant number of the posters does not accept that the translations have any corrupting influence on Hausa audiences. This went beyond any media effects theory since the responses were referring basically to sexuality and offensive language in the translated films. Those defending the Hausa films point to the fact that there had been a long public debate about the desirability of Hausa films appropriating Indian films and the skimpy attire the female actresses wear, especially during the song and dance sequences.

The Political Economy of Modern Hausa Musics

The indigenization of modern African popular music can be linked to the geographical diffusion of Western ideas. Since the term 'Hausa music' is not exactly what is assumed, it is necessary to understand it. It is therefore important to understand the radical transformation of Hausa music which suddenly makes it attractive to Hausa youth. In this, reference is to what youth themselves refer to as 'modern music' styles, predominantly based on an electric instrument. The traditional, often percussion-based Hausa music of griots such as Mamman Shata, Danmaraya Jos, Musa Dankwairo, Musa Dananace, all late, was not sustained by younger elements to make it part of the larger popular culture as the dinosaurs of Hausa traditional music did.

Thus the urban beats common in the radiosphere in northern Nigerian cities are not generated by the more traditional acoustic Hausa musical instruments, but by sounds generated by Yamaha PSR series of synthesizers, costing from about N50,000 and above, which are interfaced with PC music software predominantly Sonar series from Cakewalk by Roland, and fairly cheap mixing consoles to record and edit the final composition.

These portable keyboards have the perfect convenience of a large stored sample of genre music beats and sound effects with are then sequenced to produce the melodies session musicians wanted. That is not their point, though. They were designed to be used with other instruments to create more symphonic sounds from multiple sources, rather than the stored samples. However, lacking the ability to play other instruments due to the visible absence of accepted social musical culture, Hausa session musicians focus their energies on mastering the sequencing of these samples to create their melodies; and which are perfectly acceptable to both the singers and their audiences.

The ease with which the melodies are generated led to a massive boon in music industry such that hundreds of recording studios were established from 2007 in Kano. By 2017, there were over 300 'musical studios' as they were referred to in Kano, manned by session instrumentalists who mastered the synthesizers. The singers usually come to the studio and voice out their songs, and the session musician then finds appropriate beat (which almost always was based on the vocal harmony of the song). When the session musicians realized that international genre music forms could be created from the stored samples, they started producing what they call R'n'B music forms. In this way, Hausa singers can overlay their lyrics on soul, jazz, funk or rap beats, producing what is really Technopop (or Synthpop), rather than creative efforts at re-creating the antecedent genre music forms, since they rely almost exclusively on the samples to generate the beats, without introducing any additional instruments, whether electronic or acoustic. In fact, for the most part, the compositions are based on synthesized doodling on the synthesizer which creates a melodic template on which the session 'musician' then overlays the vocal tracks to create the song.

The sequencing of the music genre samples in the Yamaha PSR keyboard adopted by Hausa musicians and singers gave them what they feel is ‘modern’ music form, even if retaining the traditional song structure of Hausa vocalists. Eventually, almost without any exception, the Hausa session musicians also transform into singers.

The 2007 crisis in the Hausa film industry created a massive vacuum for the playback singers and studio musicians who relied almost exclusively on the film industry for their own trade. The vacuum created two effects. The first was the ascendancy of Islamic Gospel groups who sing devotional songs on the praises of the Prophet Muhammad as well as venerated Sufi (mystics of Islam) saints and teachers. These were urban electronic Sufi musicians who have principally abandoned the traditional *bandir* (frame drum) usually associated with Sufi performances. They remained untouched by the Censorship Board (a Kano State government agency that filters all creative works in the State) due to the religious nature of their lyrics—which the Islamicate governance and publics finds acceptable. The most prominent of these Islamic devotional singers included Rabi'u Usman Baba (*Babu Tantama*), Bashir Dan Musa (*Salli Ala*), Bashir Dandago (*Sannu Uwar Sharifai*), Kabiru Dandogarai (*Dandogarai*), Kabiru Maulana (*Kabiru Maulana*), Sharif Saleh Jos (*Sheikh Ibrahim Inyass*) and Naubatul Qadiriyya (*Sheikh Mustapha Nasir Kabara*).

The second impact of the 2007 film scandal in Kano was the emergence of independent lyricists who prefer to be called ‘mawaka’ (singers). Very few of the singers compose their own music, with the vast majority relying on professional studio musicians to create a tune which in most cases follows the vocal pattern of the song. These secular singers were of three different musical styles.

The first, and earliest is ‘Nanaye’. This style evolved from the Hausa film industry (and which saw the emergence of playback singers like Musbahu Ahmad, Rabi Mustapha, Mudassir Kassim, Sani Yusuf Ayagi, Sammani Sani, Yakubu Mohammed), and followed the pattern of Hindi-film music, with romantic themes. It the presence of female voices, often enhanced with Auto-Tune devices to create a high-pitched soprano effect, coupled with rhyming chorus that gives this category of songs a ‘girlish’ feel—because it follows the pattern of songs used by traditional Hausa girls on community playgrounds. After the film industry went into a comatose stage in 2007, new, independent singers emerged, although using the same melodic pattern as the Nanaye video film playback singers (indeed, some of them also provide lyrics and music for Hausa video films). These new independent Nanaye singers included Binta Labaran (aka Fati Nijar), Abubakar Sani, AbdulRashid I. Aliyu, Umar M Sharif, Sunusi Anu, Mahmud Nagudu, Nazifi Asnanic, Ali Jita and Nazeer Misbahu Ahmed.

The second style of Hausa urban musics is ‘Post-Nanaye’ containing lesser amount of female accompaniment, and mainly focused on social issues, but with a strong dosage of romance. Singers of this style include Kabiru Sharif ‘Shaba’, Abubakar Usman (Sadiq Zazzabi), Aminuddeen Ladan Abubakar (aka ALA or ‘Alan Waka’), and hosts of others. Both the Nanaye and Post-Nanaye singers often also sing for politicians and other ‘big’ people in the society, as well as perform at wedding parties and political party events for payment.

The singers in these two categories earn enough from their art to afford to release their own ‘albums’ (as CDs are referred to in Nigeria). Quite a few Post-Nanaye singers, especially those

without female vocal accompaniment and whose subject matter is mainly social issues or romantic, often see themselves as R&B artists, especially those who follow more international styles in their musical composition. A more appropriate term for their style would be Synthpop, rather than Post-Nanaye. Examples include Billy-O, Funkiest Mallam and Soultan Abdul.

Both Post-Nanaye, Synthpop and Nanaye Hausa singers usually adopt the verse-chorus-form structure of musical composition and performance. In a typical verse-chorus-form structure, the chorus often sharply contrasts the verse melodically, rhythmically, and harmonically, and assumes a higher level of dynamics and activity, often with added instrumentation. In Hausa music, the higher dynamics is reflected in the chorus which often gathers all the voices in the composition (or employs additional voices) to create a contrast with the verses. This therefore approximates call-and-response, rather than verse-chorus-form structure.

The third modern Hausa music style is Hip-Hop/Rap which emerged forcefully from 2011, although it had been bubbling in private studios much earlier. On 16th May 2011, Freedom Radio Kano aired a pilot of the first Rap program in northern Nigeria. Called ‘Kano Music Express’, it provided an avenue for the dozens of Hausa Rap artists who were often shunned by other Radio stations in the State, despite their social messages; but were considered to ape American musical styles too much (and indeed reflected in their Hip-Hop clothing of baggy trousers, twisted baseball caps, oversize Nike shoes, although without the chains). Hausa Rap artists had no connections to the Hausa video film industry. Indeed, they were often contemptuous of other styles of Hausa modern musics, preferring the macho ‘swagger’ posturing as seen in American hardcore Rap videos. They therefore rarely mix their songs with female voices. Due to their social exclusiveness, they rarely make enough to release their albums. By 2017 less than 10 out of more than 60 acts have actually released a CD. The main outlet for their efforts was the Web, where they created a few websites and encourage each other to upload their latest singles or EP CDs for free. Examples include K-Boys, Kano Riders, B-Meri, Dr. Pure, K-Arowz, Freezy Boy, IQ (the only one who sings exclusively in English), Lil’ T, etc. By 2016, few Hausa females Rappers had emerged. These included Mufida Adnan and Zainab Ishaq (aka Queen Zeeshaq).

Fieldwork in Kano in 2017 revealed that a total of about N1.7 million (\$5-6,000 depending on the exchange rate) was required to set up a complete musical studio. This included a variable rent, which depends on the area in the town where it is to be located; the choicest location was Zoo Road, which housed many of the studios and was more expensive than other parts of the State. Included in the estimated figure was also the studio infrastructural setup involving furniture and soundproofing. A typical list of equipment and their prices (again variable, depending on the source, with some being imported directly from Dubai in the UAE, and others purchased second-hand from Lagos markets which advertise ‘UK-Used’ musical equipment) is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Cost of setting up a ‘musical studio’ in Kano, 2017:

Equipment	Cost (2017)
Generic Core I3 Processor /4GB RAM /1TB /DVD24 inch monitor	250,000
Behringer Xenyx X2442USB - 24-Input USB Audio Mixer with Effects	170,000
M-audio BX8 D2 8-inch Active 2-way Studio Monitor Speakers	230,000
Behringer Ultragrain Pro Mic2200	80,000
Behringer HA-400 - Headphone Amplifier	25,000
M-Audio M-Track Eight High-Resolution USB Audio Interface	170,000
M-Audio Oxygen 49 USB Midi Keyboard Controller	75,000
Behringer B-2 PRO Microphone	116,000
3/8 Microphone Stand - ST 600	15,000
Professional Keyboard Stand - Iron Body	12,000
Various cables an connections	50,000
Total	1,118,075

The studio session musicians charge according to the type of song (not music). As noted earlier, there are four styles in the contemporary (often read as ‘modern’) Hausa music genre. Nanaye (for film soundtrack), Post-Nanaye, Synthpop (independent compositions not related to any film), Islamic Gospel (centered on the praises of either the Prophet Muhammad, or Sufi Sheikhs) and the more recent entry, Rap. All, except Hip-Hop cost N3,500 to N6,000 per track, rather than studio time, while it cost N4,000 to N7,000 to record a Hip-Hop track. It because of this high cost, and lack of ready paying audiences for Hip-Hop style of music that makes the tracks expensive – thus reducing the number of Rap artists who release their albums. The singers from other styles, however, have dozens of CDs released in the market due to the more ready audiences for those styles of Hausa music. It would appear, though, Hausa Rap singers were not motivated by profit, but fame. This is because this category of artists have the largest distribution of their music on the Web. Facilitated by many of the studio heads themselves, a series of websites exist to provide a free international platform to disseminate their music.

This mode of distribution became available to them because there are extremely few individuals ready to invest in the music industry. This is because of the low perception of both music and musicians in Hausa societies. For instance, according to Smith (1959, 249), the Hausa system of social status has

...three or four ‘classes’. Sometimes the higher officials and chiefs are regarded as constituting upper ‘class’ by themselves, sometimes they are grouped with the Mallams and wealthier merchants into a larger upper class. The lowest ‘class’ generally distinguished includes the *musicians*, butchers, house-servants and menial clients, potters, and the poorer farmers who mostly live in rural hamlets. The great majority of the farmers, traders and other craftsmen would, therefore, belong to the Hausa ‘middle-class’ (emphasis added).

This categorization, as imperfect as Smith himself identified it to be, nevertheless serves as a rough guide to the position of a musician in Hausa society. The main reason for including musicians in the lower .level status is the client-focused nature of Hausa music. With its main pre-occupation of appeasing specific clients, it thus becomes a non-art form - art for art's sake- but tailored towards a specific paying-client. A song composed for one client, for instance, will not be performed to another client. What further entrenches the lower status of musicians also is the maroki (praise-singer) status of most Hausa traditional musicians—praising their clients for money or other

material goods. Modern musicians using electronic instruments merely substitute the music for another – but the songs remain the same: mainly praising politicians or rich people.

Conclusion

Cultural commodities – whether tourism related or popular culture – are marketed with the assumptions of their impact on daily lives of their consumers. Marketing determines the success of especially media industries, often with a disregard of the contents. The commodification of the Hausa popular cultural industries was premised on profitability motive, not art or aesthetics. Financiers were ready to continue investing in the industries as long as they can make effective profits. It is this profit motive that commoditizes art and elegance to common supermarket product with a short shelf life.

Yet the commoditization of culture is not necessary a reflection of a failed economy as happened in the case of the Hausa popular cultural industries. Nor was it an uncouth lack of appreciation of ‘high’ culture, or obsession with capitalism. Not only was it universal, it was also necessary if it is to be free. True enough governments can support art and archiving of culture – but at a doctrinaire expense – choosing what to support and what to discard in line with its own ideology. This compromises art and denies artists freedom of preservation of cultural heritage, if they have to follow a particular state ideology to get funding for their art. Either way, the artist is caught between government ideology and capitalist marketers, both who care not about his art and its cultural import, but about the payload – in terms of ideological entrenchment or profit – to themselves. For instance, Wasko (1981, p. 135) points out that ‘in the early beginnings of the film industry in the United States, there was a strong relationship between bankers and the film industry, and subsequently, banks played a very powerful role in the development of the industry.

Such collaboration between banks and the film industry did not happen with regards to the Hausa cultural industries, nor even in the Nollywood film industry. As Haynes (2017, p. 48) noted, ‘the government’s interest in Nollywood led to the establishment in 2010 of a \$200 million loan fund to support the entertainment industry.’ However, the bureaucracy attached to the accessing the funds became too much such that many filmmakers did not bother to apply. Further, ‘banks make occasional personal loans to filmmakers who put up their houses as collateral, but no bank tried to establish a serious relationship with the film industry’. It was only in 2007 that EcoBank came up with a Project Nollywood, which failed. Even in Hollywood, the profit motive was strong in financing, for as Wasko (1981, p.136) further noted, ‘bankers and financiers have been attracted to the American film industry for reasons other than an interest in film or filmmaking per se. Film as a creative art form or communications medium has been less important to bankers than film as a commodity.’

And yet, as this essay demonstrated, both filmmakers, producers and marketers were motivated by the commodification of culture, rather than preservation of culture. Data from the larger fieldwork indicates the chagrin of Hausa filmmakers whenever references were made to the cultural dysfunctionality of their films. Their arguments had always been that film is a business, not art, which explains their opting out of the ‘business’ when it became no longer viable.

Yet art and artistry, as expressions of creativity and imagination first, and second as cultural practices, illuminate our inner lives and enrich our emotional world. They provide a map of our

ethnographic journey through life and keep fresh our ethnicities and identities. Commodification trivializes this significance and robs us of the opportunity to preserve our creativity for the future generation—something which Renaissance artists, innovators and creators had been able to do for us.

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