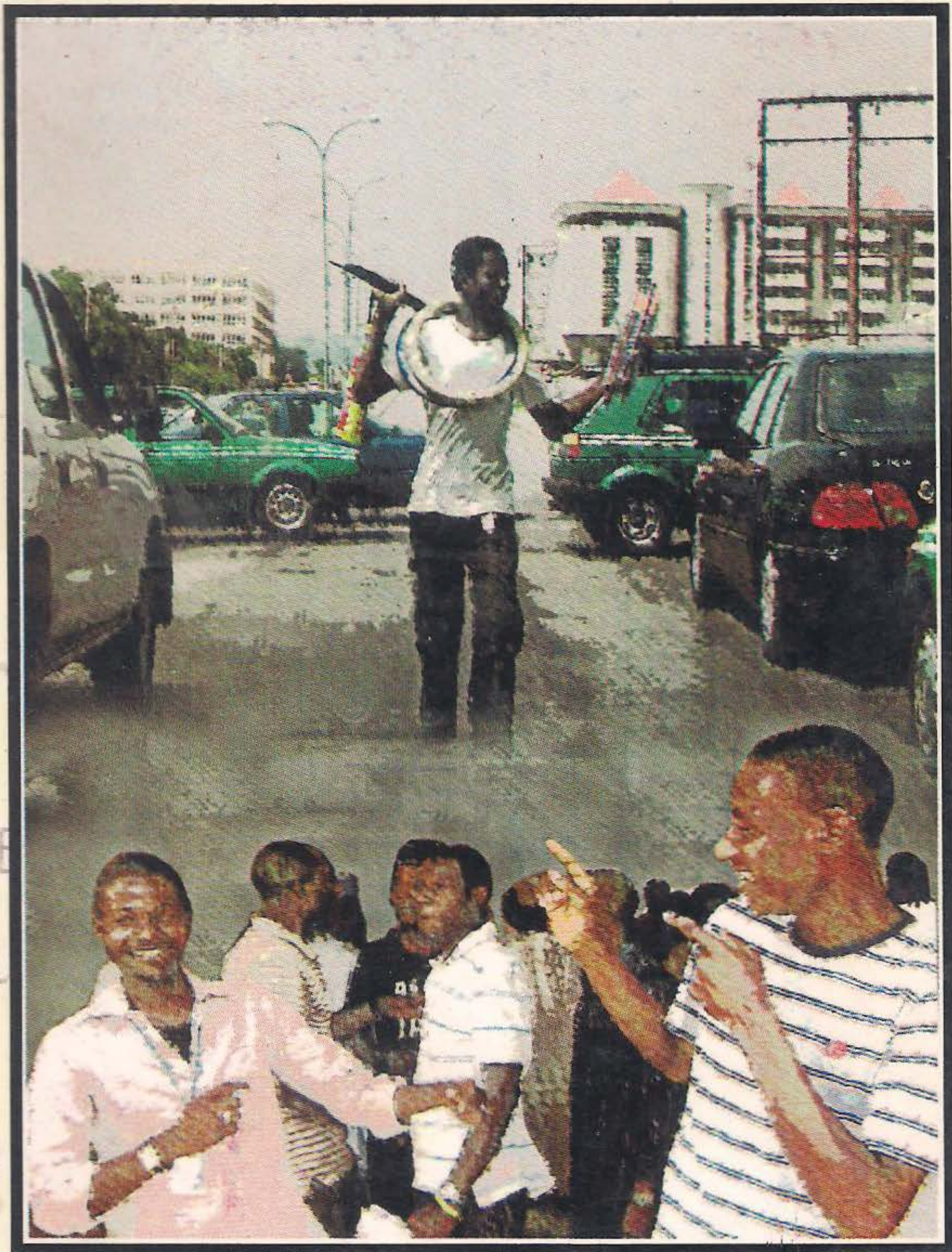


SOKOTO

# ISSUES IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

## A Multidisciplinary Perspective



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Yusuf M. Adamu & Kabiru I. Dandago**



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# Youth, Society and Visual Entertainment Media in Northern Nigeria

*Abdalla Uba Adamu*

### Introduction

The rapid and effective spread of global entertainment ethos and products, facilitated by the easy availability of satellite communication and television franchises has created a massive catalytic force in radically altering the entertainment process in many developing countries. This has in turn produced a focus of sustained study on the changing patterns of popular culture, especially among the youth.

Adapting from Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel's three-stage categorization of popular culture—folk culture, popular culture and mass culture—(Hall and Whannel 1964), Barber (1997) extrapolates that popular culture was the product of individual, and often professional culture purveyors—sharing specific values and sentiments to an appreciating audience. Performances in popular culture, therefore, are targeted to a specific niche audience, no matter how determined—not everyone patronizes the “airport art” Barber defines; and the presence of many genres of music ensures specific audience—even if gender or age defined—for each category.

Much more than with most objects of study, a leading question with popular culture have traditionally been whether it deserves serious consideration at all. But an extraordinary new interest in popular culture has emerged in the past two decades in the humanities and the social sciences.

This “extraordinary new interest” in popular culture is further galvanized by the increasing observation of the impact of global entertainment media on more traditional societies. It would appear that two major areas of the impact of media on entertainment and popular culture provide a focus of study. The first looks at the media and how they influence culture and life-world. The second focuses on the interaction of specific social actors that make use of the media. My main concern in this presentation is the second focus; specifically the appropriation of global media in local settings.

Media in all forms, transnational flows of representative identities and the globalization of essentially American entertainment ethos have combined to create a climate of mistrust for either globalization as a concept, or Americanization of entertainment ethos



as a process of entertainment in not only Muslim countries and communities, but also in traditional societies. Thus what is of further significance is the way the media is used to construct identities and share these constructs with communities sharing these identities. Obviously then, the usage of identity-construct kits from different communities may communicate different conceptions of the communities and consequently lead to misrepresentation of identities. And yet, the desire for globalized acceptance—even if the “globalized” is localized to acceptance beyond the immediate community—leads to experimentation of various forms of acceptance of representational identities beyond the immediate localized communities. This is the scenario that creates issues of the role of entertainment in such communities. This chapter looks at how these flows and counter flows affect a Muslim Hausa youth.

Islamic communities over the last few years have had quite a high global profile in all areas of human endeavor. The Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 created a massive seismic impact in most African Muslim communities leading to the emergence of more orthodox interpretations of Islam in those communities—an outcome variously interpreted as Islamism (Rosander 1997, Miles 2003, Laremont and Gregorian 2006, McCormick 2005, Kane 2006) or Reformism (Kane 1993, 2003; Loimeier 1997a, 1997b; Bunza 2002). As Nilüfer Göle (2003, p. 173) further distinguished,

In speaking of Islamism, we are differentiating between *Muslim*, which expresses religious identity, and *Islamist*, which refers to a social movement through which Muslim identity is collectively re-appropriated as a basis for an alternative social and political project. Thus Islamism implies a critique and even a discontinuity with the given categories of Muslim identity; it is an endeavor to rename and reconstruct Muslim identity by freeing it from traditional interpretations and by challenging assimilative forces of modernism.

Such Islamic militancy is seen in various African countries as having an overt agenda. In The Sudan, for instance, according to J. Millard Burr and Robert O Collins (2003, p. 181),

The “Islamic Civilization Project” of Hasan al-Turabi devoted to the spread of Islamist ideology to Africa accompanied by seminars and conferences for the “Islamisation of Africa south of the Sahara” caused widespread consternation. In Senegal a Sudanese NGO was closed down and its official deported on charges of attempting to destabilize the government. In East Africa Swahili Muslims, who cherished their Islamic heritage identified with the Sudanese Islamists proclamation of a return to Afro-Islamic authenticity.

This led David McCormack (2005, p.2) to provide an interpretation of Islamism as “a movement intent on bringing society and the state into conformity with radical



interpretations of the religion". Such interpretations were further facilitated by the re-introduction of the Shari'a in most states of northern Nigeria in 2000. With new forces of Islamic thinking in place, including state-instituted machineries for censorship and control, it would only be a matter of time before the globalizing, Westernized popular culture of Muslim Hausa youth comes in direct confrontation with Islam (for a full treatment of how this affects the Hausa video film in northern Nigeria, see Adamu 2004).

### **Cinematic Antecedents in Northern Nigeria**

The main cinematic interest of the Hausa before the advent of the Video films is the Hindi cinema which was brought to northern Nigeria by Lebanese distributors after independence from Britain in 1960. The main centers for the screening of the Hindi cinema were Kano, Jos, Kaduna, Bauchi, Yola, Sokoto, Zaria, and Gusau.

From the 1960s all the way to the 1990s Hindi cinema enjoyed significant exposure and patronage among Hausa youth. Thus films such as *Raaste Ka Patthar* (1972), *Waqt* (1965) *Rani Rupmati* (1957), *Dost* (1974) *Nagin* (1976), *Hercules* (1964), *Jaal* (1952), *Sangeeta* (1950), *Charas* (1976), *Kranti* (1979), *Dharmatama* (1975), *Loafer* (1974), *Amar Deep* (1958) *Dharam Karam* (1975) and countless others became the staple entertainment diet of Hausa urban youth, as well as provincial cinemas..

Although the first cinema in Kano, Rex, was opened in 1937, it was only after Nigerian independence in 1960 that Hindi commercial films started to feature in Northern Nigerian cinemas, and this spread to other urban clusters such as Kaduna and Jos. However, the biggest boom for Indian cinema in northern Nigeria was in the 1970s when state television houses were opened and became the outlet for readily available Hindi films on video tapes targeted at home viewers. For instance, the NTA TV station in Kano alone—based on its own records—had shown 1,176 Hindi films on its television network from 2nd October 1977 when the first Hindi film was shown (*Aan Bann*) to 6 June 2003. At the time of starting the Hindi film appearance on Hausa television houses, children aged 4-6, and their youngish mothers (who were in their 20s) became avid watchers of these films. By 2000 the children had grown up, became film makers and used their Indian cinema impressionistic conditioning as their defining template for artistic visual media in cultural interpretation.

Although the media outlets – both in the government owned television stations and popular markets – had large dosage of traditional entertainment content, nevertheless the barrage of Indian film on the television, and music through the radio (which played the Hindi film soundtracks almost every day) overshadowed the indigenous content. On television, for instance, indigenous theater was restricted to 30-minute drama sketches,



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while a full-blown Indian, American or Chinese film is lasts for over two hours, with Hindi films lasting well over three hours.

There was a considerable absence of indigenous traditional entertainment medium aimed at youth to counter these foreign media influences, and little effort on the part of the Governments in northern Nigeria to promote traditional theater and musical forms which were relegated to quaint bucolic festivals, or government functions. If anything, sponsorship of local television airtime by Lebanese merchants resident in northern Nigerian cities and selling anything from textiles to bed mattress, ensured a blocked time is acquired by their companies during which the Hindi films were shown – interspersed with advertisements about their products.

Other northern Nigerian urban clusters, particularly Jos with a matinee cinema orientation consolidated the gains of the Indian cinema through an all-day showing of Indian cinema in the 1970s, complemented by similar broadcasts from television houses.

Other films were also shown on northern Nigerian television networks. These included American television series like *Star Trek*, *Store Front Lawyers*, *Charlie's Angels*, *Canon*; and British series like *The Avengers*, *The Saint*, *The Persuaders*, *Jason King* etc. However, the Hindi film, shown as the last film on weekend television, and as an extra special treat on *Sallah* (religious 'Eid') days, predominated.

By 1980s when disco, rap and break-dance made spectacular entrance on the northern Nigerian urban scene, a new thread in the acculturative process was started by the new media. This led to profusion of many youth dance groups in Kano at least (with the most prominent being *Creative Dancers*) and inter-state competitions patterned around break-dance moves. These dance routines were eventually fused with Indian choreographic styles and some Hausa traditional music, particularly the acrobatic *Koroso* youth dance routines, to create the distinct Hausa dance patterns in their video films.

Subsequent African-American media influence on Hausa youth popular culture was predominantly through especially rap music of artistes such as Eric B and Rakim, Brand Nubian, Ice Cube, Public Enemy, LL Cool J, Dr. Dre, The Fugees, The Notorious B.I.G., Snoop Dogg, Destiny's Child, DMX, 2Pack Shakur, Biggie Smalls, Boyz II Men, Wu-Tan Clan, and the smooth pearly funk of Backstreet Boys (all available via pirated tapes, and later in the late 1990s, CDs).

Interestingly, African-American *cinema* was not a factor at all the in development of urban lifestyles and incorporation of such lifestyles in the Hausa visual media. Even dark studies of the realities of African-American youth ghetto dramas as portrayed in

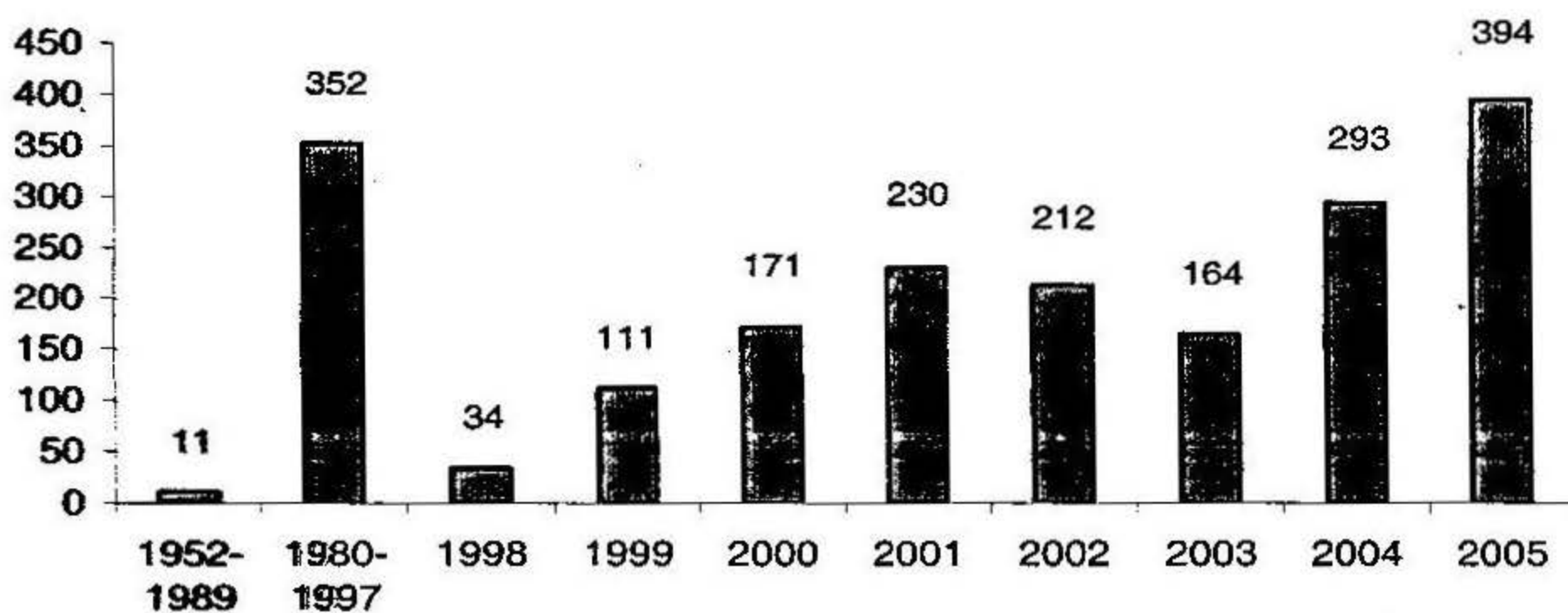


*Juice, Fresh, Menace II Society, Poetic Justice, South Central, Higher Learning, Bullet, Gridlock'd, Above The Rim, and BoyzNTheHood*, among others, had no impact on Hausa video film. Indeed most of the emergent Hausa video film producers do not seem to be aware of any genre of African-American cinema, except for high profile Hollywood A-list stars such as Morgan Freeman, Denzel Washington, Larry Fishburne, Wesley Snipes, Eddie Murphy and Will Smith.

African-American cinema and lifestyle occasionally adopted by Hausa youth are the mode of dressing – baggy jeans, casual t-shirts, as opposed to the long flowing caftans of predominantly older Hausa Muslim youth, and the “nigga” urban lexicon lifted from rap CDs. The African-American youth cinema is often seen by Muslim Hausa youth as too “American” in character and identity and as far away from their cultural and religious realities; as opposed to Hindi cinema from which they could identify some cultural motifs in modes of dressing and particularly the treatment of women as objects to be acquired, leading to turf wars between combatants, often enacted through elaborate song and dance routines.

### Revelation: “Bollywoodanci” and the New Wave of Hausa Video films

The first commercial Hausa video film was *Turmin Danya* released in 1990 by a drama group in Kano. From 1990 to 1997 about 53 video dramas were produced by both amateurs (with no focus on selling their production, rather showing them at video parlors or corner shops) and semi-professionals who had some organized system of marketing through drama clubs. From 1997 the Nigerian Film and Censorships Board started recording the volume of production of video films in Nigeria. Figure 1 shows the volume output of publicly available commercial Hausa video films from 1990 to 2003.



**Fig 1: Official volume of Hausa video film output, 1990-2003.**  
Compiled from Kano State Censorship Board records



Those brave (or foolhardy) enough to venture into the Hausa video film production from 1990 to 1999 rapidly established themselves as pioneering superstars — and earned significant fame and modest fortune from the sales of their videos, which by now are considered classics in Hausa video film. Even at this “primitive” stage of the industry, acculturative media influences on the video films tended to be tame. There was still the remnant of the disco and rap fever and this appears in some videos of this era (e.g. *Daskin Da Ridi*, a folktale modernized, and *Badakala*, the first to feature traditionally adapted disco dancing). The main themes of the videos were either comedy (*Tantiri*, *Gagare*, both patterned on Hollywood’s *Problem Child* and the antics of Macaulay Culkin in *Home Alone*), political dramas (*Tsuntsu Mai Wayo*, *Gaskiya Dokin Karfe*), historical epics (*Gimbiya Fatima*), forced marriage (*auren dole*) scenarios (*In Da So Da Kauna*), or family conflicts, especially among co-wives (*Ki Yarda Da Ni*, *Alhaki Kwikwiyo*). Thus there were clearly defined genres and producers strove to maintain these genres.

Their success, however, attracted a new wave of producers, artistes and directors with production values different from those adopted by the early experimenters — both theater actors made famous by television dramas, or novelists making a foray into visual prose fiction. The success also led to the emergence of “Kanywood”— term coined by the new video film press to refer to the video production values centered on Kano.

Young and sassy (with the street tag of ‘*Yan Kwalisa*, Young Turks), the new comers were the products of acculturative media confluence — a mishmash of cultural influences ranging from American disco, rap and “niggaz with attitude” culture to the new age Bollywood ethos. Significantly, they were predominantly non-ethnic Hausa. The most successful new comers were acculturated Hausanized Muslim and non-Muslim non-ethnic Hausa. They were mainly originally Yoruba, Epira, Beni, Nigeriène, Tuareg, Yemeni, Kanuri, and other “minor” northern Nigerian tribes whose parents settled in large urban Hausa centers. They were born among the Hausa and most can speak the language fluently with only a little trace of accent. They also attended all their schools among the Hausa and perhaps except for linguistic and often dress codes, would not be distinguished from the Hausa.

According to Hausa video film industry insiders, these elements constituted as much as 60% of the Hausa video film industry. As an investigation by *Mumtaz* magazine, Kano, reveals:

...whenever you mention Hausa video film it is assumed these are videos made by true ethnic Hausa. Surprisingly and annoyingly, in an investigation, we discovered this was not true, only few of those involved in production of Hausa video film are true ethnic Hausa. The ethnic tribes that overrun the Hausa video film industry include Kanuri, Igbos and most significant of all, the Yoruba. In a table we drew, about 42% of the



Hausa video film producers and artistes were of Yoruba extraction, 10% were Kanuri, 8% were Igbos. Thus only about 40% are true ethnic Hausa, and yet these videos are called *Hausa* videos. “Hausawa sun yi k’aranci a shirin fim” (There is a dearth of true ethnic Hausa in Hausa video films), *Mumtaz*, April 2001, p. 12.

Indeed it was argued by many of the insiders that most of the “experimental” and bold video films (especially the dance routines) had to be necessarily made by non-ethnic Hausa because they are not restricted by the Hausa cultural and religious mindset that often frowns at such displays of exuberance, particularly in alien format. These non-ethnic Hausa elements strive very hard to hide their actual ethnic identities and invariably accept roles of modernized Hausa urban youth in the video films, rather than appearing in traditional Hausa or religious character portrayals. Even their dialogs were restricted to urban Hausa lexicon, devoid of any references to classical Hausa vocabulary typical of rural dwellers that might cause problems in pronunciation.

The video production values of the new video moguls—a few of the Hausa and predominantly among Hausanized non-ethnic Hausa—were not informed by household dramas, rustic settings, or moralizing sermons to appease the traditionalist establishment. Their main creative mechanism is to appropriate Hindi masala films and remake them into Hausa copies, complete with storylines, songs and choreography. In this new age of Hausa video film, the genres of the founding fathers disappeared — and a spicy masala mixture of videos started appearing which combined several genres in one video and attempting to copy as many Hindi films as they could — thus I coined the term *Bollywoodanci* (Bollywood adaptation) to reflect the main mechanism of this cluster of young, and essentially urban, film makers.

Over-riding this entire hodgepodge is the desire to be commercially successful in an economy that denied these Young Turks of the Hausa video film industry proper jobs, supported by an educational system incapable of enabling them to proceed with further education beyond high school; and thus left listless and jobless, with an NFA (No Future Ambition, a self-coined term of the group) mindset. Towards the end of the 1990s, the 1970s toddlers and teenage cultural rebels had grown up enough to acquire capitalistic values — and a VHS camera. They were products of media parenting officially sanctioned by radio and television houses that saw a continuous diet of Hindi (plus a sprinkle of American and Chinese) cinema and African-American musical influences. And an economy that gives them a license to survive by any legal means necessary—or illegal, since copyright issues were not a concern in what media to appropriate.

### **Basic Characteristics**

Faced with the looming issues of settling down to a married life in an unstable economy, the new wave of Hausa video film producers strove hard to give the Hausa



video film three distinct commercially defining formulaic characteristics. In this way they differ remarkably from southern Nigerian films with their focus on rituals, political corruption in the polity, social problems such as armed-robbery, and political issues such as resource control, sex, infidelity, fraud, intrigue, conflict and other such subjects which are designed to entertain, excite, provide escapism and appeal to the emotions. The bottom line is commercial appeal and profit (Owens-Ibie 1998).

The first motif in Hausa video film is *auren dole*, or forced marriage. In these scenarios—reflecting outdated customs in a contemporary society, but nevertheless providing a tapestry to provide a good story—a girl (or in a few of the films, a boy) is forced to marry a partner other than their choice. This is a practice that is fast disappearing in Hausa traditional societies, especially with increase in a more strict interpretation of Islam brought about by post-1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran which had deep echoes in Muslim Northern Nigeria, as well as the increase in trenchant Saudi Arabian flavored *Wahabism*. This had led to emergence of Islamic groups with a more orthodox, rather than traditional interpretation of Islam in modern societies (e.g. Kane 2003).

The *auren dole* theme however remained a consistent feature of social life in the Middle East, Asia, including India as well as among the Hindus in Diaspora, often leading to honor killings if family members suspect a daughter (rarely a son) has violated the family honor either by co-habiting with a person not of their race, religion or class. It is because honor killings remained a strong force in Hindu life that Hindi film makers consistently latched on the forced marriage scenarios in their films to draw attention to the phenomena. Hausa filmmakers use the *auren dole* motif to display youth rebellion against an unfair system that denies youth of either gender a choice. In displaying this denial, characters were made to pass through a series of conflict situations that evoke sympathy and anger against what is seen as unjust system, before finally being resolved, often via a song and dance. It is this element of bravado and “love conquering all” that creates a massive appeal for these films among Hausa youth.

The second characteristic of Hausa video films is the love triangle—with or without the forced marriage motif. It is inevitable that a narrative conflict indicating rivalry between two suitors (whether two boys after the same girl, or two girls after the same boy) be created in which antagonists will be given the opportunity to wax lyrical about their dying love for each other, and the extent they are willing to go to cross the Rubicon that separates their love.

This motif, although again borrowed from Hindi film styles, becomes an adaptation of *kishi* – co-wife rivalry – among Hausa wives. In traditional Muslim Hausa households, a husband can marry up to four wives as allowed by Islam. However, in most polygamous households, a husband and two wives formation is more common than



three or four wives. Co-existence in such polygamous situation is not without its tensions and dramas. Hausa filmmakers merely pick up the elements of those dramas and satirize the polygamous household in their films. This is not surprising considering that most of the Hausa video films are sponsored by women! It is precisely because of this fantasy play of two girls fighting for the love of a single person (in effect, two or more wives fighting for the affection of the same husband) that Hausa videos films are extremely popular with women, because they readily identify with the tensions portrayed in the storylines of the films. The youth factor is often addressed by the display of blatant sexuality in the films when showing a rivalry between two boys after the same turf—a girl, with each boy attempting to outdo the other in all respects (singing, dressing, macho posturing, “dude-nigga” behavior).

The third characteristic of the Hausa video film is the inevitable song and dance routines—again echoing Hindi cinema style. These are used to essentially embellish the story and provide what the filmmakers insist is “entertainment”. In fact in many of the videos, the songs themselves became sub-plots of the main story in which barbs were thrown at each other by the antagonists. A Hausa video film without song and dance routines is considered commercial suicide, or artistic bravado undertaken by the few artistes with enough capital to experiment and not bother too much with excessive profit. Indeed it is this song and dance motif that eventually took over the central core characteristic of Hausa video films – and led to critical reaction from the Islamic<sup>1</sup> environment of Muslim northern Nigeria. It defines youth sexual fantasies and provide Muslim Hausa youth with a visual outlet for imagining sexual engagement with female onscreen characters.

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

These basic characteristics of Hausa video film targeted at youth were couched in cinematic techniques that attempt, albeit crudely, to reproduce Western (specifically Hollywood and Bollywood) film techniques – often ignoring the fact that the audience is Islamic, conservative and fiercely traditional. The point of clash therefore between the video film industry and the mainstream Hausa traditionalist environment was in the increasing Westernization of the Hausa video film storylines, particularly the dance and song routines.

In 2001 the core Muslim States in northern Nigeria re-introduced the Islamic Shari’a as a legal code. The first contact of clash between the new public sphere of Shari’a and popular culture was in the video film industry. What triggered the concern was the increasing perceived violation of the sacredness of the female private sphere as visually depicted in the new crop of Hausa video films that started to emerge from 2000. In this, the civil society—as representatives of the public sphere—drew upon various core Islamic injunctions against such perceived trespass. The sources quoted to support the



injunctions are the following Qur'anic verses and Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad):

From the Qur'an *Surat Al-Nur (24:31)*:

“And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards Allah, that ye may attain Bliss.”

*Surat al-Ahzaab, (33:59)*:

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

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

*Book 32, Number 4087:*

Narrated Abu Hurayrah: The Apostle of Allah (SAW) cursed the man who dressed like a woman and the woman who dressed like a man.

*Book 32, Number 4092:*

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

It is clear therefore, more experimental filmmaking among Muslim Hausa would have to negotiate these core prohibitions about the sacredness of the private, and often, conjugal sphere, particularly the female form. This was more so because by 2000, and under a global media snow storm, Hausa filmmakers had started exploring various globalized configurations of behavior that have what was seen as direct diluting influences on core Muslim Hausa mindsets. Alarm bells started ringing about the possible influence of new media technologies and behavioral modification. This is reflected in a few comments made either in public or in popular culture magazines in northern Nigeria:



“We the fans of Hausa video films have come to realize that it is the producers and the directors that are responsible for the corruption of culture and religion in these films. You know very well that every section of a woman is private. For instance, they are fond of allowing actresses without head covering, and straightening their hair; also making them wear skimpy Western dresses which reveal their body shapes, etc. In our awareness and education, we know these behaviors are immensely contrary to Islam. Don’t such actresses ever think of the Day of Judgment? Don’t forget their claims that they educating or delivering vital social message. Is this how you educate – by corrupting Islamic injunctions? Please look into this and take remediate measures immediately.” Aisha D. Muhammad Gamawa, Bauchi, *Fim*, Letter Page, March 2004 p. 6.

“In Islam there is no provision for a woman to appear onstage as an actress, especially young maidens of marriageable age. The old Hausa TV dramas had women, but they are all mature. Thus filmmaking is not a profession for a Muslim girl. It is better for them to enter into caring professions.” Ustaz Umar Sani Fagge, during a special lecture on Hausa films, Sunday 6th August, 2000, Kano.

“Quite frankly, you have spoiled your films with copying Indians especially with regards to their songs and dances...In Sokoto viewers have started ignoring Kano (Hausa) films because they have become Indiyawan Kano (Kano Indians).” Halima Umar, Sokoto State, Letters page, *Tauraruwa*, Vol 4 No 6 September 2000 p. 7.

“How can a person, claiming to be Hausa, producing a film for Hausa people copy Indian and European cultural norms, and claims they are his culture? Film production (among Muslims) is good because it an easy medium for delivering social message, but the way they are doing it now is (a) mistake.” Yusuf Muhammad Shitu, Kaduna Polytechnic, Zaria, in *Annur*, August 2001, p. 24

Hausa video filmmakers focus on the female *intimisphäre* (sexualized body sections) as a tapestry to painting what the filmmakers perceive to be the sexuality of essentially urban, transnational and globalized Hausa woman. A series of video films led the way in this. *Sauran Kiris* was the first Hausa video film to attempt an onscreen kiss in a bedroom. *Jalli* uses many bedroom scenes, with a husband and wife characters taking their clothes off and lying down on the bed as the scene fades to black. In *Daren Farko* a bride complains to the husband about lack of sexual attention. *Kumbo* has a scene in which the male and female principal characters were shown putting their clothes back on clearly after having “slept” with each other. *Gidauniya* was as explicit as could be in showing an attempted rape-scene. *Bakar Inuwa* has a host of adulterous scenes, with the lead “adulterer” clearly relishing his role after each bout of sexual activity. *Nasaba* shows principal characters repeatedly entering a hut for sex.

In exploring the female private sphere, the sexual focus of these Hausa video films merely replicate the early Hindi film experiments with exploring human sexuality. Examples include the romantic scene between Rani Mukherjee and Bachchan in *Yuva*;



Priyanka Chopra kissing Akshay Kuma in *Andaaz*, and Karishma Kapoor kissing Aamir Khan in *Raja Hindustani*. As further observed by Saibal Chatterjee (2005 p.1) of these tendencies in Hindi cinema,

The expression of sexual desire has come out of the Bollywood closet. Over the past year, Hindi films have dealt with lesbian lovers, gay men, oversexed priests, cuckolded husbands, spouse-swappers, nymphomaniacs and other perceived deviants. And all this has happened in the comfort zone of the usually status quoist mainstream cinema.

And while the Hausa video film is still far from exploring alternative sexualities, the appearance of a video film poster in 2004 signaled the way. This was the shooting and editing, but not the release of *Dabdala* in 2004. *Dabdala* became significant in Hausa video film history because it was the first Hausa video film which allegedly focused on lesbian love theme.<sup>2</sup> Indeed the Hausa word *dabdala*, originally the name of a long tethering rope tied to the neck of a colt, was a Hausa street slang for lesbian love. However, within few days of the poster being pasted on walls in Kano, a magazine, *Mudubi* (March/April 2004 p. 2) focusing on Hausa video film, devoted half a page on the video which was yet to be released and revealed its alleged lesbian focus. This drew attention to the video which it would not have had since the producer and the director, as well as the leading characters were total unknowns. The Kano State Censorship Board moved in swiftly to request the producer to appear before its Magistrate Mobile Court. Both the producer and the director went into hiding, and issued statements that they will not release the video. However, when the heat died down, they suggested they may re-title the video either *Awarwaro* or *Taro*—indicating their intention to eventually release it.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed by 2001 the Hausa video film was merely a reproduction of a Hindi film, which itself is a mere reproduction of a Hollywood film. The core cultural values of Hausa societies, as reflected in old Hausa Television dramas completely disappeared, and a more Westernized mode of storytelling with emphasis on female sexuality became more common. A typical example of a comment is shown in the following observation:

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

The filmmakers defend their art by pointing out that they are merely reflecting society. Mansura Isah, a Yoruba girl living in Kano and the most visible of the erotic dancers,



suggested that such dances reflect changing times by arguing that it's modernization. They may not approve, but they still like it, you understand? It's modernity. We are only reflecting what is happening in the real world. You will see young girls and boys in real life going to a party and getting down; well we are only showing how they do it. And I can tell you the audience like the way we get down in the films. If not, they would not have bought them. If a film is to show all the girls in *hijab* (Islamic dressing) and no getting down, I swear the film will flop...But if you make a trailer of a film showing nubile girls dancing and getting down, the audience will whoop with approval; yet those who abuse us are those who will go the market and buy the films." Mansura Isah, defending her craft, *Mudubi*, July August 2005, No 11, p. 7).

Thus the Hausa filmmakers have noted that films that are traditional to Hausa societies simply do not sell as well as those with heavy doses of Westernization, no matter how defined (but most especially in song and dances which is an opportunity to show off cleavages in both spheres of the female body). Examples of such Westernization are shown in Plate 1.



Plate 1 – “Erotica” in Hausa video film – *Guda* (l) and *Rukuni* (r)

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

A typical retort to the criticisms by the Islamicate establishment is by Dan Azumi Baba, a novelist turned into filmmaker and the producer of *Badakala* who argued:



The Hausa viewing audience contribute significantly to encouraging us (filmmakers) to adopt Westernization in Hausa films. This they do through refusal to buy films that do not have these elements, because despite all their criticisms, they still rush out to buy these films. Dan Azumi Baba, columnist, *Fim*, June 2005 p. 3.

Dan Azumi then narrated how he spent almost one million naira on a religious film, *Judah*, and which flopped. Because of this, he vowed never to do such films again, and instead, focus on the films that will “bring home the bacon” (ibid). In a follow-up to this article, he continued in July 2005 by arguing that any attempt to make a Hausa video film about “real world” issues—such as corruption in the polity, ineptness of the Muslim scholar environment, prosecution of the poor, inefficiency of public services—would only led to a flop because not only will the filmmaker be subjected to prosecution by the injured party, audience will also not buy. It is for this reason that Hausa video filmmakers

“...decided to focus on romance and its related issues because you can communicate your message without any problem at all. Further we can enhance such stories with songs to entertain. That way no one is the wiser.” Dan Azumi Baba, *Fim*, July 2005, p. 3.

To demonstrate his new resolve, he produced *Lancika*, one of the most criticized Hausa video films in 2005 due to its alleged sleaze and salacity—and high curiosity factor—and further resolved to produce a film on any issue (emphasis being on *any*, to suggest including “no go areas” of sexuality) so long as he is paid adequately. Thus as the filmmakers themselves keep insisting, Hausa video film is not about messaging, but about entertainment. As Ali Nuhu, an extremely successful commercial non-ethnic Hausa filmmaker stated in an interview,

“I am a film maker because I want to entertain. You often hear viewers claiming they want a video that shows (Hausa) culture, and yet when you do such video they just leave you with it (and don’t buy it). This year a video was released that showed pure Hausa culture, but it was not commercially successful. In fact a viewer had the cheek to write to a magazine to complain about the video; would that be an encouragement for the producer?” *Ni Don Nishadantarwa Na Ke Yi* (“I am in it for entertainment only), Interview with Ali Nuhu, *Annashuwa*, December 2002, p. 31.

These views and perspectives clearly indicate the chasm that separates the private and public spheres in Hausa popular culture. The insistence on Islamization of video film by culturalist establishment merely reflects Qur’anic injunctions noted earlier.

And it is for this reason that the Kano State Censorship establishment was created in 2001 in addition to the one at the national level in Abuja – to safeguard the culture and mindset of Hausa viewers in Hausa video films (Kano State, 2001). It should be pointed



out that the censorship mechanism in Kano had never insisted that its values must be acceptable to other non-Hausa or non-Muslim parts of northern Nigeria. Its main focus and influence is in Kano. Thus a film produced outside Kano can be marketed and sold outside Kano without necessarily being subjected to the Kano State Censorship mechanism.

### **Theoretical Perspectives and Hausa Video Films**

The theory of cultural imperialism would seem attractive in explaining the influence of media parenting on the development of Hausa video films—from Hindi films in cinemas to American soap operas and series shown on northern Nigerian television. In the main, the theory of cultural imperialism was developed by Herbert Schiller (1976). At its most direct, the theory states that Western Civilization produces the majority of the media (film, news, comics, etc.) because they have the money to do so. The rest of the world purchases those productions because it is cheaper for them to do so rather than produce their own. Therefore, Third World countries are watching media filled with the Western world's way of living, believing, and thinking. The third world cultures then start to want and do the same things in their countries and destroy their own culture. This view was further reinforced by Tunstall (1977:57) who defined the cultural imperialism thesis as claiming that authentic, traditional and local culture in many parts of the world is being battered out of existence by indiscriminate dumping of large quantities of slick commercial and media products, mainly from the United States. Some writers did not just stop at United States, but extend the theory to other media-rich countries. For instance, Boyd-Barret (1977:119) defines media imperialism in action when

The country which originates an international media influence either exports this influence as a deliberate political strategy, or simply disseminates this influence unintentionally or without deliberation in a more general process of political, social or economic influence. The country which is affected by media influence either adopts this influence as a deliberate commercial or political strategy or simply absorbs this influence unreflectively as the result of the contract

However, as John Tomlinson (1991) has established, the cultural imperialism thesis is not actually one thesis but a complex and often contradictory set of views, which have been increasingly seen as both conceptually flawed and insufficiently supported by empirical evidence. Thus as Livingston White (2001) points out, critical theorists have coined various phrases in reference to notions of "cultural imperialism." Consequently an examination of the international communication literature will reveal several different terms such as "media imperialism" (Boyd-Barrett, 1977); "structural imperialism" (Galtung, 1979); "cultural dependency and domination" (Link, 1984; Mohammadi, 1995); "cultural synchronization" (Hamelink, 1983); "electronic



colonialism” (McPhail, 1987); “communication imperialism” (Lee, 1988); “ideological imperialism”, and “economic imperialism” (Mattleart, 1994)—all relating to some basic notion of cultural imperialism.

The nature of media (i.e., print, radio and television), at that time, promoted a one-way, top-down transmission system from dominant country to dominated country that theoretically gave rise to a passive audience and a powerful media (Sengupta and Frith, 1997). This indeed explained the economic flow of media products from Europe to Africa, and subsequent gray imports from India and Middle East. In Hausa communities, American TV series and Hollywood feature films dominated the entertainment structure of Hausa cinemas and TV prime time slots—all sponsored by multinational companies such as PZ, GBO, Lever Brothers, Procter and Gamble, etc. However this all changed in 1981 when as a result of Nigerian government indigenization policies which took over control of Nigerian companies, “the Motion Pictures Association of America (MPAA) suspended the distribution of Hollywood films to Nigeria” (Larkin 2004b p. 294). This was in response to the seizure of MPAA assets by the Nigerian government in an attempt to indigenize the control of Nigerian companies. This had two consequences for entertainment in Muslim northern Nigeria.

First it accelerated the development of a pirate industry—Hollywood films imported through non-official channels from the Middle East and Asia became more easily mass copied and sold in Nigerian markets. For the educated viewers who prefer these types of films, and despite what Larkin calls “degraded images” (2004b), it made little difference if the film is a good print in the theater or a tenth generation copy. Second, it further entrenched the importance of Hindi and Chinese films already popular in northern Nigeria—both among the elite educated, but predominantly traditional populations. In particular, Hindi films with their assumed “cultural similarities” to some Muslim Hausa social customs—forced marriage, co-wife rivalry (or the love triangle)—echoed the “emotional grammar” (*The Hindu*, Sunday, February 25, 2001, p.1 online version) of Hausa viewers more than Hollywood films.

Secondly, a new geopolitical configuration was created in which media influences shifted from the metropolitan countries to the Middle East and Asia, brokered by Lebanese resident merchants in northern Nigeria who control the cinemas and which predominantly screen Hindi films. This therefore saw the predominance of Hindi (and the occasional Chinese chop socky) films in cinemas and TVs in northern Nigeria—again sponsored by multinational companies selling essentially domestic products.

Yet interestingly the availability of ArabSat in northern Nigeria in early 2000s created a facility in which Hollywood films again are accessed through Arab language channels, particularly the Lebanese MBC 2 and MBC 5 (Action). Muslim Hausa youth thus patronized ArabSat not to partake in Arabic cultural programming—closer to their



“emotional grammar” being bound by predominantly Islamic contents—but to have more direct access to Hollywood films. For most of such urban youth, Arab cinema and theater, as did their parents in the 1970s left young Muslim Hausa cold—with the exception of Arab entertainment programs (e.g. Muzika channel) whose dance and song routines were patterned on MTV—and during the fasting month of Ramadan, Saudi channels to watch the prayers from Makkah (in an Focus Group Discussion with 10 Hausa male youth in Kano on Sunday 4th June 2006, as part of a larger study).

Thus the cultural imperialism argument that has been framed in terms of center nations with power over disempowered periphery nations must be reevaluated as the advanced media slowly penetrate into developing nations from various other sources. This is more so as advanced media, that are becoming widely available in the form of telecommunications, computers, and satellite technology, provide for greater interaction between sender and receiver than has ever before been possible. Such media also provides practitioners with the facility to re-enact the metropolitan messages into localized version. Indeed Hausa popular culture had always been on the wave of globalization. For instance, the British colonial administration (1903-1960) openly encouraged the translation and adaptation of Middle Eastern and Asian folktales into Hausa language, especially in the fictional works of Abubakar Imam (Adamu 2003).

Further, White (2001) was able to offer a broad taxonomy of mass media theories broadly cluster theories of mass media into three; first are microscopic theories that focus on the everyday life of average people who possess the ability to process information—for example, uses and gratifications, active audience theory, and reception studies; second are middle range theories that support the limited effects perspective of the media by explaining narrow domains of action—for example, information flow theory, diffusion theory, and mass entertainment theory; and finally, macroscopic theories that are more concerned with media’s social role and their impact on culture and society—for example, cultural studies theory, social construction of reality, and neomarxism. Cultural imperialism falls within the category of macroscopic theories in that it attempts to offer a systematic explanation of media’s role in the exchange of information between countries and their (i.e., the media) subsequent impact on the indigenous cultures of those countries. As each type of theory has a different focus, an effective comparison can be achieved by comparing cultural imperialism with those theories that have the same focus.

Yet still, it has been argued that the main shortcoming of the cultural imperialism theory is it attempts to cover a lot of the phenomenon related to transnational relationships; for according to Fred Fejes (1981), the theory is almost a “pseudo-concept, something which can be used to explain everything in general about media in developing countries and hence nothing in particular” (p. 282). This is further complicated by the fact that the theory lacks precisely defined constructs and



propositions which makes it highly challenging to test the theory. Thus as White (2001) points out, with these inadequacies related to precision and testability, one can infer that the theory does not have much utility either. At best, the theory is descriptive and does not have much explanatory or predictive power. This is more so when other evidences are considered. For instance, Elasmar and Hunter (1997) applied a meta-analytic approach to examine the effect of cross-border television. They found that the impact of foreign TV was extremely limited. Their results were contradictory to the advocates for cultural imperialism. They also thought that the audience's intention to seek and view foreign television programs may be influenced by other factors, which subsequently affect the impact on viewers.

Further, transglobal influences are not always one way, as depicted by cultural imperialism theory. Inter-regional influences can also prove extremely effective in transmitting media values from one country to another. This is illustrated, for instance, by the popularity of "Hallyu (Korean wave)" in China, Taiwan, and Japan, and which "has become a new trend since the late 1990's and its typical aspects seem to have reached the Philippines since 2003, especially through soap opera, so called "Koreanovela." (Dong Hwan Kwon (2006, p. 257). Kwon further explains that

The regional distribution of Korean cultural products was begun with trendy dramas, then, extended to popular songs, movies, with the growth of Korean media markets. The export of Korean popular media contents has continually expanded even to Singapore...Vietnam... and Mongolia, which is beyond East Asia to South East Asia. Now the term, "hallyu" seems to connote the influence of Korean social and cultural aspects such as clothes, fashion, and technological goods among the Asian countries (Kwon 2006, p. 258).

Nevertheless, despite the criticisms of the cultural imperialism theory, Schiller still maintains his stand on the theory as an economic cultural principle. For instance, he further argues that

Media-cultural imperialism is a sub-set of the *general* system of imperialism. It is not a free-standing: the media-cultural component in a developed, corporate economy supports the economic objectives of the decisive industrial-financial sectors...what is regarded as cultural output also is ideological and profit-serving to the system at large (Schiller 1991, p. 14, including emphasis).

Further, even within the developing countries themselves, there are media entertainers who see the perfection of their craft in terms of Westernization. For instance, Ali Nuhu, the Hausa-speaking actor who pioneered the Hindi-to-Hausa cloning technique justifies Westernization of Hausa video film on the basis of progress and modernity. In an interview granted in Niger Republic, he justifies cloning American and Hindi films by arguing that



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

This “Westernization is Modernization” paradigm of Hausa video filmmakers was not only individual filmmaker’ perceptions of media power from the West, but was also facilitated by lack of transnational media broadcasts from Africa. As Mytton, Teer-Tomaselli and Tudesq (2005 p. 100) noted,

...major characteristic of transnational television in Africa is that, at present, little of its content is specifically designed for or created in the continent, another reflection of Africa’s poverty. Aside from some South African productions that can be seen from services available from that country, there is at present not much else on offer that can be described as indigenous. Many of the present transnational television services received in Africa are actually produced for domestic channels in Europe or North America – for example for TFI or Canal Plus in France or for the BBC in the UK or NBC in the USA. Others are produced for international audiences in all parts of the world, such as much of the output of CFI, CNN and BBC World.

With media hardware becoming increasingly available, Hausa video filmmakers strive to create as “global” appeal in their productions as the Western media—via Bollywood—products they consume. Similar trends were noted in the Egyptian film industry where Walter Armbrust (2000), quoted the exasperated comments of Samir Farid, a prominent Egyptian film critic as:

Over the course of more than two thousand films produced in half a century, and then shown again on television and destined to continue being aired on the video, the image of the Egyptian prevalent in Egyptian films is Egyptian in his clothes, his accent and manner of speaking, his movements. But he is not Egyptian in his traditions and customs, behavior, thoughts, actions and reactions. The reason for this is the prevalence of the Western model in Egyptian filmmaking. The filmmakers are Egyptian, and the films are made in Egypt, but their content is Western (1986, p. 209).

Thus with the onslaught of media parenting all over developing countries, it was inevitable that filmmakers try to imitate metropolitan models of telling stories to their communities, often using the same templates to enhance what they consider the universal appeal of their craft.



Yet earlier quoted regional studies of media influences indicates that a cultural resonance is often created from a media-rich country to another country sharing *similar* norms and values. For instance, according to Jane O. Vinculado (2006 p. 234),

The phenomenal Taiwanese soap opera hit Meteor Garden in 2003 has transformed the face of Philippine programming. It paved the way for the influx of Asian dramas from Taiwan, Korea and very soon, Japan. Dubbed in Filipino (the local language), these chinovelas (a play of words from the words Chino meaning Chinese and telenovela, derived from the soap opera format of Latin American countries) is common fare on Philippine television, with about one or two of them occupying the primetime schedules of the top networks and some appearing in non-prime time slots like daytime and weekend timeslots. This “Asian media invasion” was welcomed by Vinculado’s respondents, for as she reported (p. 238),

In terms of cultural affinity, respondents feel that they can relate to the physical characteristics of the characters, being Asian and exposed to the physicality of the actors in their everyday lives. Since some Filipinos look like the characters, they are not alien to them compared to the Caucasian-looking characters in the Latin telenovelas. Respondents also feel a cultural connection to the settings used in the programs and not in the way we expect. Since they can strongly relate to the storylines in the Asian soaps, they can relate to the settings employed. Though they have not been to any of these places, they are familiar with the settings. The university and coffee shop may look different, but they are constantly exposed to similar settings.

However, “cultural affinity” soon translates into “cultural proximity” in explaining the inter-regional spread of Korean media products especially to China and Taiwan. Dong Hwan Kwon (2006) quotes studies that analyzed the contents of widely accepted Korean television dramas among East Asian countries for commonalities of acceptance. The analysis revealed that “Korean dramas that have been widely accepted in Asia contain the Confucian values that are close to Chinese culture” (p. 262). This was premised on common culture and value systems between Korean and Chinese.

Similar trends were noted with regards to the popularity of Japanese drama series in Taiwan. As Koichi Iwabuchi (2002 p. 147), reported,

I asked Taiwanese audiences comparative questions about Japanese dramas, Taiwanese dramas, and American dramas. Most of my interviewees in Taipei noted that emotionally they engaged more with Japanese dramas more than they did with Western or Taiwanese dramas. Of course in so far as Japanese dramas are broadcast in Japanese with Chinese subtitles, the Taiwanese cannot help but regard them as foreign; but for all that, they do not regard such dramas in quite the same way they do the American programs. This is because Taiwanese audiences tend to remark that, racially and



culturally, they have more in common with the Japanese than they do with the Americans. “Yeah, Japan is a foreign country and this (foreignness) makes Japanese programs look gorgeous and appealing. But the distance we feel to Japan is comfortable, Americans are complete strangers.” ... “The West is so far away from us, so I cannot relate to American dramas”

Further, his respondents explained that that the ways of expressing love in Japanese dramas which are delicate and elegant are much more culturally acceptable than those of American dramas, and human relations between family and lovers also look more culturally proximate to Taiwan. This proximity allows Taiwan audiences to relate to Japanese dramas more easily.

South America is another regional cluster with considerable progress in television drama production and export. However, the GDP of the country determines the inter-regional exchange of programs, despite strongly binding linguistic and cultural norms. For instance, in analyzing South American Television Flows in the 1990s, Falkenheim (2000) noted that

Intraregional flows were for the most part unbalanced. Countries with lower GDPs (Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay) imported programming from within the region but did not export their own anywhere else. Wealthier countries (mainly Brazil and Argentina) imported very little regional programming and when they did their regional imports tended to be mostly from Mexico or Hispanic networks in the U.S. Venezuela and Colombia were the only pair of countries which had a reciprocal flow of programming between them. These two countries imported most of their regional programs either from Mexico or from each other. (p. 8 online edition)

Thus countries sharing common cultural proximity find it easier to provide “oppositional resistance” to media programming from non-proximity sources. This is further facilitated, as Joseph D. Straubhaar (1991) suggests, by the inclusion of linguistic commonalities even within linguistic clusters and groups. Interestingly enough, colonized countries often feel they share the same linguistic—and therefore cultural—spaces with the metropolitan countries, thus partaking in the latter’s transnational programs. This is illustrated, for instance, by African Francophone countries where, as Mytton, Teer-Tomaselli and Tudesq (2005 p. 101) noted,

The rapid and successful development of the more popular and successful francophone transnational television stations in Africa has resulted from France’s own political and cultural approach, which among other things seeks to extend and strengthen co-operation between countries that have the French language in common. In effect francophone African countries have joined with France, Canada, Switzerland and Belgium in an international ‘community’ held together by the French language.



Interestingly, bilingual Canada appears to be the most active of these countries outside France. The policy of co-operation with state-owned African television services, which France has maintained since independence was gained by its former colonies, has been implemented thanks to good relations with these African states. France has extended its policy of co-operation to include those states that were former Belgian colonies.

For Anglophone African countries, transnational television comes in the form of South Africa's cable services of MNet, MultiChoice and its subsidiary, DSTV. But with a subscription of USD60, these services are essentially limited to elites—or those with enough interest to break out of traditional home-based media fare. In effect, it is paying for the privilege of accessing American programs—the starting point! Further, the African contents (especially series dramas) of the stations in these services had no appeal northern Nigerian Muslim audience

This may possibly help to explain why southern Nigerian programs—both TV dramas and video films, which are characterized by a central engine of Christian ethos and ethnic peculiarities of the producers, are less palatable to northern Nigerian Muslim audiences. The years of inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts between northern and southern Nigeria (see Agi, 1998 for a comprehensive treatment of this) are clear testimonies to cultural hostilities that makes within-country media acceptability difficult (unless as done in Nigeria, enforced by a federal legislation—for although National Television Authority networks carry a dosage of programs from all the regions, in the north they are predominantly ignored increasingly in favor of ArabSat scheduling that broadcast a lot of American programs). And yet Hindi films from across the world would seem to be more acceptable in that despite religious and linguistic non-proximity, yet they carry enough cultural motifs that approximate the cultural spaces of Muslim northern Nigerians in the form of love triangles and forced marriage issues—in essence, sharing similar cultural mindsets. As indicated in an editorial in *The Hindu*:

Bollywood's distributors explain that the growing acceptability as also resistance against Indian cinema emanate from the same fact: the cultural revival of Afro-Asian societies after they overthrew European imperialism. The Indian Masala film is closer to the emotional grammar of the Asians and Africans than the Hollywood box office bonanzas. Hollywood's story of American divorcees does not touch the emotional chord of Afro-Asian families. Their emotional ambience is closer to something like *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun*. The interaction between the characters in a Hindi film family drama is recognisable, therefore it holds their attention. Besides, song and dance play a pivotal role in the social life of Afro-Asian societies. M. Shamim, "Bollywood films make waves around the world", *The Hindu*, Sunday, February 25, 2001.



Thus “cultural resonance” explains why young Hausa filmmakers, spoon-fed on Hindi film fare from birth openly embrace the Hindi film motif, even if aware that the cultural and religious realities of their society is totally different from that of India.

## Conclusion

A very critical issue to be addressed is the economic viability and sustainability of such enterprise, especially in the area of generating sustainable jobs for youth. There is no doubt that the Hausa video film industry provides massive employment for hundreds of young people; but its intermittent nature – subject to the whims of market forces – makes it difficult to quantify such input in absolute economic terms. The singular focus of the video filmmakers on romantic themes and their insistence on Westernization of the song and dance routines – which keeps them on perpetual clash with the culturalist establishment – are two factors that will question the long term viability of the Hausa video film industry. This is because sooner or later, the audience will get tired of the saccharine plots and repetitive song and dances. Increasing Islamization of the entertainment media will also mean curtailing what the filmmakers claim to be their biggest source of inspiration – erotica.

The Hausa Muslim conservative critical reaction to Hausa video films is certainly more to do with the singular obsession of the Hausa video film producers *female sexuality* than a reaction against entertainment in a traditional Muslim culture — just as the same establishment reacted against Hausa novelists who focused virtually exclusively on *soyayya* (love) themes from 1980 to 2000.

Old Hausa Television series drama such *Kuliya, Zaman Duniya, Mai Daki, Kwaryar Alawa, Taskira, Gajimarai, Hantsi, Sarauta Gado* and others, were revered as a truer reflection of Hausa traditional theater than the current crop of video films produced by young Hausa and Hausanized film makers. As it is, the vast majority of contemporary Hausa video film is simply *Hausa* because the dialogs are in Hausa language — but increasingly reflect urbanized Hausa worldview and mindset (e.g. *Guguwa, Gidauniya, Harshashi, Titanic:Masoyiyata, Kallabi* etc).

With the saturation of the Hausa video film market in 2003 when sales and production dropped drastically, squeezing many of the producers out of the market, the Hausa video film genre started looking for an alternative focus to love themes. Thus videos such as *Ruhi, Farar Aniya, Mahandama, Qarni, Kazar Sayen Baki, Kin Gaskiya, Ibtala'i, Judah* led the way towards transformation of the genre into a more mature visual canvas. All it requires is the professionalization of the producers to take advantage of the antecedent rich Hausa literary heritage to finally create *Hausa Cinema*.



## Notes

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

The poster, announcing the arrival of the video, was plastered all over video tape stores in Kano in February 2004. The furor against the poster—containing as it did, a clear lesbian tagline, with three women in a suggestive, at least to Hausa society, position—was so strong that it was reported to the Kano State Censorship Board, which ordered the producer to appear before it, which he refused. Producers who provided technical assistance during the editing of the video later claim that it was not actually a lesbian story as such; and that the producer used the poster artwork and a tantalizing lesbian theme to generate interest in the video and boost sales when released.

On Sunday 22nd April, 2007, however, a major furor was caused in Kano when it was alleged that a female socialite, Antin Maiduguri, "had married four girls" in what was allegedly the first public "lesbian" marriage in Kano. The public came to know of it via a two day gala (festival) event – tagged "Conjugal Bliss Forever" – held, and posters distributed during the event congratulating the celebrants for their "happy conjugal bliss". The woman and the affected girls denied being lesbians, or indeed were married – insisting that they only held a concert to raise money for one of the girls to get married. Some of the four girls were also alleged to be Hausa video film stars. See *Weekly Trust*, 28th April 2007, pp. 6-7. Critical commentary on the event was informed by the increasing willingness of Hausa video film female stars to accept any role that accentuate their sexuality. Thus, already labeled '*yan iska* (hooligans) due to their preference for erotic dance routines, an event such as this merely provides a basis for the culturalist establishment to enforce cultural values in the Hausa entertainment industry.



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