

From Oral Literature to Video The Case of Hausa

edited by

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Media Technologies and Literary Transformations in Hausa Oral Literature

Abdalla Uba Adamu

The broad theme of transporting oral cultures between media, cultures and languages is an exciting one and brings significant insights to the dynamics of contemporary global forces and to the role played by media technology in the transformation of African oral literature.

The contemporary globalizing world poses concrete challenges to indigenous communities with regard to their oral literary heritage. These challenges come from many directions and in many forms. I shall address these challenges and discuss ways forward. However before doing so, I would like to set the scene by looking at the present state of the synergy between media technologies and oral literature among the Hausa of northern Nigeria. In the process, I shall analyze the trajectory of the transformation from oral folktales to literature and finally to the film medium. I argue that the media appeal of literature and film have successfully supplanted the traditional base of oral literature in a society that sees media technologies as the main path to contemporary development.

Introduction

The transition from literature, or more specifically creative fiction to visual fiction in the form of films, and now video films, is a path rarely trodden in African literary societies. This comes about because of the strict division between literary pursuits and cinema. Literature is often seen as a more serious domain of popular culture, reflecting as it does, a poetic interpretation of life. Cinema, on the other hand, is often considered a pure entertainment medium. Yet filmmaking constitutes a form of discourse that is not just artistic and cultural, but also intellectual and political. As a product of the imagination, filmmaking constitutes at the same time a particular mode of intellectual and political practice. Thus,

in looking at filmmaking, in particular, and the other creative arts, in general, one is looking at particular insights into ways of thinking and acting on individual as well as collective realities, experiences, challenges and desires over time.

The video medium provides a very interesting opportunity for studying the transition of the transformation of the same spectrum of creative arts. This is illustrated by the transition in Hausa folktale from orality to drama to literature and eventually to the video film.

Although the Hausa video film industry covers all parts of northern Nigeria, including non-Hausa speaking areas, nevertheless its roots were in Kano, the largest commercial center in the north of Nigeria. The Hausa language also provided the industry with a unique opportunity for development, principally because of its vastly cosmopolitan nature. Its use extends from northern Nigeria all the way to Niger, Republic of Benin, Cameroon, Togo, Ghana, and Sierra Leone—further spread by itinerant Hausa traders. The end product was that the language became a lingua franca in northern Nigeria, absorbing other languages and becoming a medium of communication even among those whose first language is not Hausa. Indeed it allows non-Hausa people speaking different mother-tongues to communicate with each other, often displacing English as a medium of communication. Ironically, it is the very success of Hausa which has become the bane of the Hausa video industry. This is because a language is inevitably tied to a cultural identity; when non-Hausa started entering the Hausa video film industry, their representation of a cosmopolitan lifestyle clashed with the mainstream conservative Hausa mindset and created a critical tension between what the ethnic Hausa see as a pollution of their cultural values, and what video filmmakers see as a modernization of the language and lifestyle of the people.

In this paper I trace the development of Hausa oral literature with a specific focus on how media technologies have radically transformed the genre. I present this transition via the following diagram:

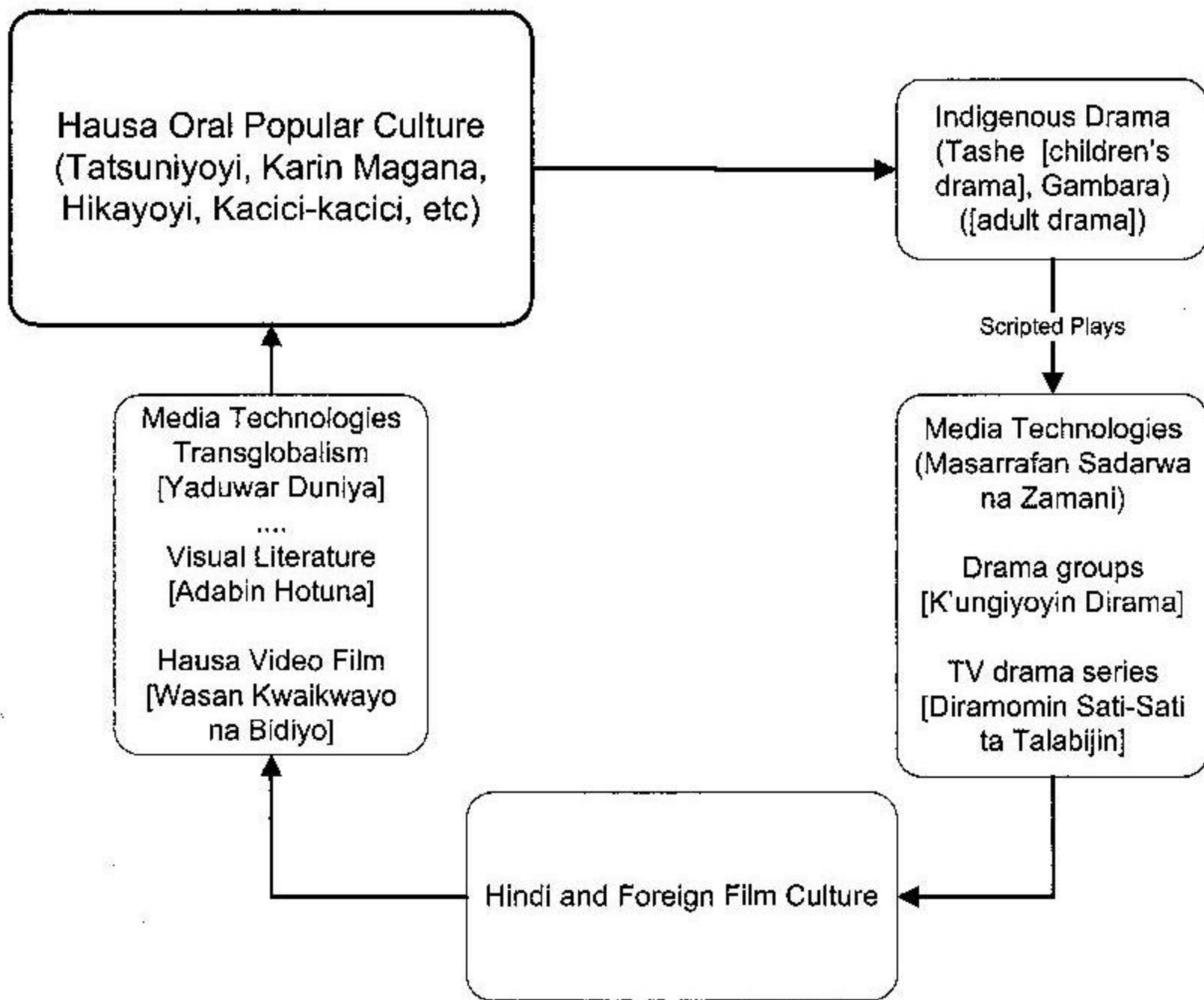


Fig. 1. Media technologies and transitions in Hausa popular culture

The figure traces the flow of creative pursuits in Hausa indigenous literature and the various inputs into the development of each genre by media technologies:

In my analysis I draw attention to the original Hausa oral literature genre—both prose and poetry—and subsequently argue that media technologies, riding on the global media bandwagon, provide two templates for the development of oral literature in indigenous communities. The first is preservation, where technology is used to preserve literature in its original form, maintaining the cultural heritage of the people. The second template is submersion, where oral literature in all its forms is radically transformed into a hybrid genre in which neither the cultural heritage of the community nor the character of the innovating culture are satisfactorily represented.

Oral Narratives and Mental Animated Graphics

The traditional *tatsuniya* folktale is the quintessential antecedent to contemporary Hausa popular culture.¹ As the fountainhead of Hausa oral literature it provides a filmic canvas on the life of a Ba-haushe (ethnic Hausa) in traditional society. Aimed mainly at children, the *tatsuniya* is an oral script aimed at drawing attention to the salient aspects of cultural life and how to live it in a moralistic manner. It is necessarily a female space, for as argued by Ousseina Alidou (2002b:139):

In Hausa tradition, the oldest woman of the household or neighborhood—the grandmother—is the “master” storyteller. Her advanced age is a symbol of a deep experiential understanding of life as it unfolds in its many facets across time and she is culturally regarded as an important source of knowledge production, preservation, and transmission. This matriarch becomes the mediator/transmitter of knowledge and information across generations... She uses her skills of storytelling to artistically convey information to younger generations about the culture and worldview, norms and values, morals and expectations. Her relationship with her younger audience of girls and boys...puts her in a position to educate, through her *tatsuniya*, about taboo topics such as sexuality, and shame and honor, that culturally prevent parents and children from addressing with one another.

Thus devoid of male space, the *tatsuniya* necessarily becomes a script on how to live a good life devoid of threatening corruptions. Strongly didactic and linear (without subtle sub-plot developments considering the relatively young age of the audience), it connects a straight line between what is good and what is bad and the consequences of stepping out of line. The central meter for measuring the “correctness” and morality of a *tatsuniya* is the extent to which it rewards the good and punishes the bad. Its linearity ensures the absence of conflict resolution scenes which present moral dilemmas for the audience. In cases where such moral conflicts exist—for instance theft situations—the narrator simply summarizes the scene. The reason for the linearity as well as the deletion, as it were, of conflict resolution scenes is attributed to Islam. As

Ousseina Alidou (2002a:244), building on the earlier works of Skinner (1980) and Starratt (1996) points out:

The impact of Islam on oral literary production in Hausa culture has been multifold. First, the inception of Islam in Hausa culture infused the themes, style, and language of Hausa oral literature with an Islamic ethos and aesthetics. Its mode of characterization also took a turn towards a more Islamic conception of personal conduct that defines a person as “good” or “evil”. Furthermore, many modern Hausa epics and folktales contain metaphorical allusions to spaces relevant to Islamic history and experiences.

The imaginative structure of the *tatsuniya* does not stop merely at narrative styles; it often builds complex plot elements using metaphorical characterizations. Animals thus feature prominently, with Gizo, the spider taking the role of the principal character, although alternating between being good and being bad. One would even imagine traditional *tatsuniya* tellers using computer animation for their stories—for the animations used in Hollywood cinematic offerings such as *Madagascar*, *Racing Stripes*, *Shark Tale*, *Shrek*, *Antz*, *Finding Nemo*—all aimed at metaphorically exploring the human psyche superimposed on the animal kingdom—could be seen as perfect renditions of the Hausa *tatsuniya* using the power of modern media technologies. A good example of this multiform structure is the story *Barewa ta auri Mutum* (The Gazelle who married a Human)², in which a gazelle transforms into a beautiful maiden and entices a young man to marry her and live with her parents. When she is sent to the vegetable garden to fetch a vegetable for soup, she transforms into a gazelle again, calls all her fellow animals and gets down to some serious song and dance routines—a bit like scenes from the Hollywood film, *The Lion King*.

Other plot elements explored within the tapestry of the *tatsuniya* include ethnic stereotyping of “Maguzawa” (Hausa who do not accept any revealed religion)³ and non-ethnic Hausa, as well as “absorbed” Hausa such as Kanuri, Sakkwatawa, Tuareg, Nupe; and country folk. This is significant because Alidou (2002b:137),

arguing from the perspective of a Nigerian Hausa, offers the following description of what constitutes Hausa:

The term Hausa is used to refer broadly to a putatively multi-ethnic and predominantly Muslim community of speakers of Hausa as a native language. Over the centuries the neighboring peoples from various ethnic backgrounds (e.g., some Fulani, Kanuri, and Nupe) have adopted Hausa identity simply by virtue of linguistic assimilation.⁴

Yet the persistence of Nigerian Hausa folktales often casting albeit muted aspersions on other ethnic groups that have been absorbed as Hausa “Banza Bakwai”, i.e. bogus Hausa,⁵ clearly indicates a subtle internal sub-categorization of the Hausa mindset based on historical factors. Moralization, however, constitutes the largest percentage of the core messaging of the *tatsuniya*, with most of the moralizing focusing on issues such as ingratitude, acts of God, poverty, etc. Within this framework comedies revolving around tall stories or lies are also interspersed.

The coming of Islam to Hausaland in about 1320 lent a more religious coloration to the folktales and further reinforced the moral aura of their themes. The reinforcement of separate spaces for the genders in Islam consequently reflect the gender-space specificity of the Hausa *tatsuniya*. The gender space is described and clearly delineated—and this further underscores the moral imperative of the *tatsuniya* narrator who often improvises on the stories. Thus within this framework, the *tatsuniya* scripts do not provide for the exploration of the female *intimsphäre*, but rather for the reinforcement of the gender stratification of a male dominated society. This antecedent gender space limitation of the Hausa folktale mindset would come under serious challenge from the visualization of the Hausa folktales when transition is made to the video medium.

A study of the thematic classifications of the *tatsuniya* by Ahmad (2004) reveals plot elements that, interestingly, resonate with commercial Hindi film plots and created creative convergence points for Hausa video filmmakers to use the *tatsuniya* plot elements, if not the direct stories, couched in a Hindi film *masala* frame. These

themes according to Ahmad (2000) include unfair treatment of members of the family which sees various family conflicts focusing on favoritism (as for example in the *Kogin Bagaja* [The Bagaja River] folktale), unfair or wicked treatment of children (*Labarin Janna da Jannalo* [The Story of Janna and Jannalo]), and disobedience to parents (*Yarinya da Dodanni* [The girl who refuses to marry any suitor with a scar]). This is supplemented by the second theme of the tales, which include reprehensible behavior of the ruling class or those in positions of authority. Subthemes include forced marriage (in *Labarin Tasalla da Zangina* [The story of Ta-Salla and Zangina]), arrogance by members of the ruling elite (*'Yar Macijiya da Dan Sarki* [The daughter of a snake and a prince]), oppression (*Labarin Kuturu, Mugun Waziri da Malam* [A leper and a wicked vizier and a Qur'anic teacher]). Other themes deal with deceptiveness, personal virtues and virtuous behavior. For further embellishment, some tales in the *tatsuniya* repertoire contain elements of performance arts where the storyline merges into a series of songs—often with a refrain—to further add drama to the story.

Thus the *tatsuniya* is an encyclopedia of scripts read night after night to millions of children all across Hausaland—no matter how geographically defined—as night entertainment—at least before the media intrusion of television first and digital satellite TV later.

The *Tatsuniya* as Opera and *Tashe* Street Drama

The concept of drama is not a recent phenomenon in Hausa communities. Drama clubs and societies had had a long history in Kano going back to traditional court entertainment during festivals. Indeed records from the histories of old Kano dating back to the founding of the city in about 950 CE revealed a structured focus on drama, music and entertainment. Thus drama and theater have always been a structural component of Hausa traditional entertainment and styles.

Consequently, with an effective performance arts matrix in place, the Hausa street drama therefore became the next evolutionary stage of *tatsuniya* when children started picking up elements of the moral storylines of the tales and began to mimic them, first around the home, and then later around community centers. What emerged was *tashe*—a series of street dramas normally performed from the 10th day of Ramadan. The night festival lasts for about 10 to 15 days and encompasses a series of mimesis and enactment, as well as musical forms. Considering the gender bias of the *tatsuniya* towards reproducing the Hausa female worldview, it is not surprising that a significant portion of the *tashe* drama centers on domestic responsibilities as main plot elements. Umar (1981:4) explains that *tashe*, derived from *tashi* (wake up), refers to the fact that, while children do not engage in household chores while food is being prepared for *sahur* (pre-dawn meal in Ramadan), they amuse themselves—and others—with any of some 30 theatrical games, most of which simulate the household activities of adults and embody concepts of domestic orientation and responsibility. Thus while *tatsuniya* is an adult script, *tashe* drama is an interpretation of the script using child (and often, but not always, adult) actors.

Although performed in various categories—ranging from comedy to serious drama—the plays and theater during *tashe* serve to focus the creative energies of youth and provide them with a vital opportunity to contribute to the social life of their individual societies. Virtually each of the *tashe* plays has a theme which elucidates social responsibility, as illustrated in the following:

Baran Baji is performed by a group of six or so children up to 14 years. The principal character in the drama often dresses in female clothing and carries the accouterments used by women in processing food, including the stone grinding mill (*dutsen nika*), circular mat for covering pots and vessels (*faifai*), sieve (*rariya*) and others. During the performance the chief character, Baji, actually starts processing the foodstuffs of the household; the group enters, with the chorus group egging “her” on with a song and chorus.

The focus of the drama is to instill a sense of responsibility and at the same time educate children (especially girls) about household chores.

Ka Yi Rawa is also performed by a group of six to eight children with one of them dressing up like a Malam—Islamic teacher—complete with a white beard (made from cotton), a *carbi* (Islamic rosary), a mat, an *allo* (wooden Qur'anic writing slate for pupils), and an ink pot—the perfect Muslim teacher. The song and chorus of this play was to admonish the teacher about dancing, with him strenuously refusing, and indeed pointing out the symbols of scholarship as a deterrent to his engaging in such folly. When they refuse to believe him, he decides to actually perform a jig and prove he can dance. The main point of the play is to draw the attention of the Muslim teacher class to the fact that the eyes of the community are on them, and everyone looks up to them for proper decorum and behavior.

Macukule, performed by young men (as opposed to children) is a parody with a focus on ethnic deconstruction of various ethnic groups in Nigeria by mimicking their characteristics in a song and chorus fashion, with the lead singer reeling out the various behaviors of a specifically targeted group. The ethnic groups are not, perhaps tactfully, specifically identified and a generic ethnic label of Gwari is used. And, although *Gwari* does refer to a specific ethnic group in Kaduna basin, in this particular play the term is used to refer to non-ethnic Hausa (*bagware*). In this way, the *Macukule* performances serve to illuminate their audience about specific group traits and the behaviors of other ethnic groups.

Similarly, *Jatau Mai Magani*, performed by young men, focuses attention on the medicinal properties of various shrubs, trees, leaves and plants in the community, and, in an effective use of song and chorus, illuminates the audience on indigenous medicine, with the song ending in a declaration of the absolute powers of the Creator to heal—rather than those of the *shaman* (*boka, marabou*) or herbalist.

However, *tashe* theater is not restricted to males; girls equally participate in communicating to the community their understanding of their eventual social roles and responsibilities in a series of performances that include *Samodara*, *Ragadada*, *Mai Ciki*, and *A Sha Ruwa*. For instance, in *Ga Mairama Ga Daudu*, two girls dress as a “husband” and “wife” with a song and choir group trailing them. The group then enacts not only how a wife should dress to please her husband, but also how she can communicate with him and hold his attention. The entire script is sung by one of the choir girls, with the “newly weds” acting out the script.

Thus in the elements of these street performances we often see reflections of the gender stratification which was already present in the original *tatsuniya* folktale—perhaps not unexpected in a strictly Islamic society. The assumption of cross-gender roles in *Ga Mairama Ga Daudu*, for instance, is necessitated by the social and religious convention of gender segregation which makes it impractical to combine adolescent boys and girls in a simulated marriage situation. Consequently, right from the start, Hausa theater had a focus on gender segregation and, in a didactic style, emphasized female social responsibilities. However, with the increasing Islamization of northern Nigeria, the girls’ portions of *tashe* theater gradually began to disappear. By 2005 very few female *tashe* troupes were found in urban Kano, their place being taken by boys dressed in female clothing.⁶

And while *tashe* is an organized activity with a specific spatial configuration—performed in the home or the street, and where the artistes are given money for their performance—children also engage in a series of games and plays that reflect theater outside of the *tashe* festive setting. A vivid example of this is *Langa*. This is a strenuous physically demanding game performed by male adolescents only. It is a competitive sport with two teams of anything from six players, each team with a camp. It is played with the players standing on the right leg, with the left bent at the knee and held in place by the right arm. The idea is that the two teams represent two warring “nations”, and the players are the warriors,

who are “killed” by the simple act of being pushed down on the ground—an easy thing to do considering the players are hopping on one leg. However, the strategy is to avoid being “killed” by running as fast as possible to one’s “encampment”. The players whose “warriors” were brought down most often are considered losers, and must therefore pledge allegiance to the winners. The game/drama serves to emphasize territoriality and group cohesion.

With more imaginative embellishment, Hausa theater has, of course, undergone significant transformations, starting as a guild-related activity and crossing over to religious performances in the Hausa *bori* spirit cult. As pointed out by Kofoworola (1987:11),

Assessed on the basis of their magico-religious functions, the ritual forms of enactments in Hausa performing arts such as dance, mime, imitative movements, mimicry and acting could be regarded as a legacy of the past traditions.

The coming of Islam to Hausaland in about 1320 significantly restricted the religious content of these performing arts, but nevertheless left a strong template for an effective popular culture. Strongly associated with a ruling class, drama developed in various ways in the Emirs’ courts of northern Nigeria. Thus *wasan gauta* (pantomime game at Emir’s palace), which metamorphosed into *wasan garma* (the hoe-throwing game), *wasan ’yan kama* (comic entertainment) and *wawan sarki* (court jester) were all sophisticated theater initially aimed at entertainment in the palace, but eventually re-enacted for ordinary citizens. This further led to the development of similar groups in the form of, for instance, ‘*Yan Gambar*a and ‘*Yan Galura* performing artistes who combined comedy, theater and music in public street performances.

From Orality to Scripturality in Hausa Performing Arts

In the context of Western education the *tatsuniya* took a theatrical form and developed into *wasan kwaikwayo* (written play). Like the *tatsuniya*, the written play is seen as a more serious genre. It is significant that, in the transition to the written play, the *tashe*—

considered essentially as a child-related activity—is by-passed completely by the Western-educated authors of the new genre. *Wasan kwaikwayo* emerges in Hausa popular culture as a sophisticated literary *tatsuniya*, downloaded into the *boko* (roman) script and thus perceived as more elegant. In Hausa oral literature, the *tatsuniya* is the simpleton country cousin of the *wasan kwaikwayo*. Fresh from reading the set texts of Western literature, and seeking a more intellectual sophistication, early educated Hausa intellectuals adopted the *boko* script to create a more metallic *tatsuniya* that departs from the animal and monster metaphors and addresses the cerebral sphere of a more sophisticated urban, educated audience. On a continuum from political metaphor to acerbic wit, *Wasan Kwaikwayo* provides an intellectual legitimization of Hausa oral verse.

The written play took its more structured form with the publication of *Six Hausa Plays* in 1930 by Rupert East, the British colonial officer in charge of Hausa Literature. Targeted at primary school pupils, *wasan kwaikwayo* became yet another level on which Hausa orality was transformed into Hausa literature. As Pilaszewicz (1985:228) pointed out,

Hausa plays, as folk tales did, concern themselves with family situations, with problems connected with marriage and polygamy to the fore. They discuss the upbringing of young people and protest against moral decline, but also deal with some more general problems of social inequalities.

The introduction of *Six Hausa Plays* into the formal educational curriculum in 1930 provided a template around which other issues could be explored beside family dramas. The first to seize this opportunity of using drama as a platform for social education was Mohammed Aminu Yusuf, better known as Mallam Aminu Kano (1920-1983), a social critic, philosopher, radical activist and social reformer (or, as he preferred, redeemer, after establishing the People's Redemption Party, PRP in the runup to the 1979 elections in Nigeria). He was, as the name suggests, based in Kano, although with a wide circle of influence all over northern Nigeria.

His ideas eventually crystallized in party political manifestos aimed at "peoples' redemption" from what Aminu Kano interpreted as class oppression by traditional ruling hierarchies in the emirates of northern Nigeria. He also became the first to formally write drama between 1938-1939 while a teacher in Middle School, Kano. He subsequently taught at Kaduna College where he founded the Dramatic Society. Through drama and theater Aminu learnt how to express issues in a humorous, and sometimes satirical way. As a teacher in Kaduna College, he wrote many plays in which

he criticized the exploitation of the masses and challenged the system of emirates in northern Nigeria. In the play, *Kai wane ne a kasuwar Kano da ba za a cuce ka ba?* (Whoever you might be, you will be cheated at Kano market) he depicted the exploitation of country people by heartless merchants, while in *Karya Fure take ba ta 'ya'ya* (A lie blooms but yields no fruit) he raised the problem of excessive taxes levied upon the Hausa rural population. In the years 1939-1941 Aminu Kano wrote around twenty short plays for the use of schools in which he ridiculed some of the outdated local customs as well as the activities of the Native Authority in the system of indirect colonial administration (Pilaszewicz 1985:228).

Other plays included *Alhaji Kar ka Bata Hajinka* which admonished people not to be taken in by the superficial life of modern Western ways. Through his plays Aminu ridiculed the old-fashioned ways of life, and even humorously satirized the British and their colonial attitudes. With a combination of all these, and learned in the Qur'an, fluent in Hausa and English languages, a good sense of humor and above all his ability to sustain the listening attention of his audience, Aminu Kano began a smooth transition to his future political life. Perhaps not surprisingly, none of these plays were published when he submitted them to the Hausa language newspaper, *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*. The traditional establishment was too entrenched to accept literary criticism, especially from a *talaka* (man-in-the-street).

The years after Nigerian independence in 1960 saw a greater interest in the development of drama as a basis for social education. Thus between 1976 and 1984 a whole clutch of plays were published by what eventually became Gaskiya Corporation. These included *Uwar Gulma* [Mother of mischievous tale-telling] by A. Mohammed Sada (1968), *Tabarmar Kunya* [Matter of shame] by Adamu Dangoggo & David Hofstad aka Dauda Kano (1969), *Bora da Mowa* [Two wives: one loved, one despised] by Umaru Balarabe Ahmed (1972), *Malam Muhamman* (Mister Muhamman) by B. Muhammad (n.d.), *Matar Mutum Kabarinsa* [A man's wife will be the death of him] by Bashir F. Roukba (1974), *Shehu Umar* [Shehu Umar] by Umaru Ladan & Dexter Lyndersy (1976), *Kulba Na Barna* [The skink-lizard is up to his tricks] by Umaru Danjuma Katsina (1979), and *Zaman Duniya Iyawa Ne* [Life is a matter of ability] by Alhaji Yusuf Ladan (1980).

From Scripturality to Visuality—TV Drama

One of Malam Aminu Kano's pupils in the Middle School Kano was Maitama Sule, who was to carry on the mantle of drama as an instrument of social messaging—although without the acerbic social criticism. Maitama Sule, a social philosopher, politician and international diplomat (becoming Nigeria's Ambassador to the United Nations) and an orator, was subsequently made the *Dan Masanin Kano*—a traditional title borrowed from Katsina and conferring on the owner the status of a public intellectual. Maitama Sule's interest in drama was intensified when he watched a stage drama of the *Bayajidda* legend performed by the pupils of Wudil Elementary School in 1937. He was influenced by Aminu Kano's use of drama as a form of education, and from 1943 to 1946 while a student at Kaduna College (long after Aminu Kano had left as a teacher), he became president of the College's Dramatic Society which had been founded by Aminu Kano.⁷ After graduation from the College, Maitama Sule was posted to his alma mater, the Kano Middle School in 1948 as a teacher. According to his biographer,

...his preoccupation with drama took a wider dimension of thematic spread and audience. In school he established the dramatic society, and was the master in charge of it. His dramatic activities went beyond the school. He established a city-wide troupe (Abubakar 2001:41).

The first play staged under Maitama Sule's leadership of the Society of Middle School was *Sarkin Barayi Nomau* [Nomau, chief of the thieves] in 1948, with Maitama Sule playing the principal character. The play was a focus on brigandage. The special guest of honor in the audience was the then Emir of Kano, Alhaji Abdullahi Bayero who was extremely impressed and amused by the performance. He subsequently became interested in the drama troupe and its activities and indeed even instructed the Treasury to set aside some funds for the troupe so that they might procure costumes and other materials for their plays. The troupe metamorphosed into Kano Drama Troupe and later, perhaps because of the official grants to them from the Treasury, became part of the Kano Native Authority Film Unit, all in 1948.

The Kano Film Unit became the sole representative of Kano in any subsequent cultural festivals across the country, but most especially at Kaduna where such festivals were regularly held. When the Institute of Administration was opened in April 1954, it was the Kano Film Unit that entertained the audience with a stage drama focusing on how to run a local government council (and how *not* to run it). Perhaps due to its non-aggressive themes, the Kano Film Unit was patronized by both the traditional establishment as well as the colonial administration which used the Film Unit in its efforts to inform and/or educate civil society.

A transition was made in 1947 from stage theater to radio drama when Maitama Sule was appointed a member of the Advisory Board for Radio Kano with, among others, Alhaji Ahmadu Tireda. The two of them decided to stage plays on the radio for wider audience—which included the Emir Alhaji Abdullahi Bayero, who continued to be impressed by their repertoire. It came to an end, however, when after a particularly impressive play *Gudu Karin Haske* [Running away illuminates], the Emir was so impressed he

sent gifts to the cast. This offended Ahmadu Tireda's sense of dignity and pride and his feeling that, as an artiste, he was performing an educative function, and was not a beggar. He therefore rejected his share of the gifts and stopped participating in the radio drama series. It did however continue up to 1959 when Maitama Sule became a Minister. Subsequently, some of the members of the Kano Film Unit decided to break away from this official drama society and formed a private theatrical organization. They named it after Maitama Sule by calling it Maitama Sule Film Unit.⁸ When it was clear that funding for a fully-fledged film would not be forthcoming, the group simply called itself Maitama Sule Drama Group.

When it was established in 1959, it contained what can, with a stretch of the term, be said to be the training ground for "classical" Hausa actors of the old brigade (by 2005 most were either dead, debilitated by old age, or gracefully ageing and appearing in video films as grandfathers). These included Muhammadu Maude, Daudu Ahmed Galadanci (aka Kuliya), Mustapha Muhammad (aka Dan Hakki), Umar Uba Gaya (aka Doron Mage), Muhammad Gidado (aka Mr. G., father of a famous female video film artiste in the 2000-2005 period, Saratu Gidado, who specializes in "cruel mother" roles). Their early stage plays included *Kifi A Cikin Kabe-wa* [A fish in a pumpkin] and *Ladi Kyaun Wuya* [Ladi, with the beautiful neck], which were both comedies. They soon attracted attention, not just of ordinary members of society, but also of mentors and patrons in the form of local wealthy men who sponsored their plays. These patrons of the arts included Alhaji Nuhu Bammali, Alhaji Inuwa Akwa and Alhaji Gwadabe Galadanci. The sponsorship enabled the group to stage plays about Islam and local historical figures in Islam, most especially the life of Shehu Dan Fodiyo and his religious reforms in northern Nigeria.

Soon enough the Maitama Sule Drama Group attracted an invitation from the Sardaunan Sakkwato, the then Premier of northern Nigeria, to participate in the Festival of Arts and Culture held for the first time in 1963 in Kaduna. Their production, *Bako Raba*,

Dan Gari Kaba [The stranger is merely a bird of passage] which was part of their repertoire, was based on the British colonial conquest of northern Nigeria and the subsequent political struggles for independence. It won the first prize at the festival. More than that, it also attracted the northern Nigerian regional television authorities who sent a representative (then Patrick Ityohegh) to convince the drama group to re-stage their drama in a studio for Radio Television Kaduna for broadcast all over northern Nigeria. They agreed, and this marked the first transition from stage drama to television drama. It was so successful that they decided to launch a television drama series on the Shari'a system, an innovation leading to one of the most successful religious programs in northern Nigeria in the form of *Kuliya Manta Sabo* [The impartial judge]. It was only transferred to Kano when CTV 67 television station was created in 1986.⁹

The success of the Maitama Sule Drama Group stimulated the creation of other "production" companies. These included Ruwan Dare Drama Group (1969) which included Bashir Nayaya as a founding member; Janzaki Motion Pictures (1973), containing perhaps the largest contingent of known Hausa video film stars; Yakasai Welfare Association (1976), Tumbin Giwa (1979), Gyaranya Drama Club (1981) and Jigon Hausa Drama Club (1984), among others (Sango 2004). These clubs were not professional in the sense of academically-trained theater arts practitioners; they were amateur affairs by enthusiasts who had full-time regular jobs, and who looked on stage acting as basically a hobby. Over time, they were able to perfect their act and establish themselves as professional TV drama and stage theater practitioners.

In May 1977 the then military government took over all regional television stations via the promulgation of Decree 24 and created the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) based in Lagos. The Decree which took effect retrospectively from April 1976 brought all the ten existing television stations under the control of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Being a Federal television house, the main focus of NTA were on programs aimed at fostering national

unity, especially during the most turbulent years of Nigeria's history punctuated by military coups and countercoups. The most notable of these national programs included *Things Fall Apart*, *Checkmate*, *The Village Headmaster*, *Behind The Clouds*, *The New Masquerade*, *Mirror In The Sun*, *Cock Crow At Dawn*, *Jaguar*, *Aluwe*, *Basi & Co*, *Abiku*, *The Third Eye*, *The Evil Encounter*, *Fortunes*, *Fiery Force*, *Igodo*, *Wings Against My Soul*, *Adio Family* and *Ripples*, among others. Some of the stars of these drama series moved on to establish the Nigerian video film industry, Nollywood. They included Zeb Ejiro (*Ripples*), Zack Amata (*Cock Crow At Dawn*), Bob Ejike (*Basi & Co*), Justus Esiri (the Headmaster of *Village Headmaster*), Nobert Young (*Family Circle*), Liz Benson (*Fortunes*) and Lola Fani Kayode (*Mirror In The Sun*), among others.

These drama series, national as they were, nevertheless reflected the fundamental social space of southern Nigerians—a world culturally remote from the northern Nigerian Hausa. Further, although they shared antecedent origins in folktales with Hausa drama, nevertheless they were rooted in the cultural and linguistic norms and references of southern Nigeria. For as Adedeji (1986: 35) pointed out,

The theatre in Nigeria has its origin in the cultural settings of the past and the vicissitudes of the present. The remarkable folklore of the past with its rites and pastimes created a climate and a veritable foundation for a variety of theatrical activities. The theatre tradition is therefore a part of the social and ritual life of the people embracing the totality of their way of life, habits, attitudes and propensities. Although looked at as a form of entertainment in the first instance, yet a theatrical show is regarded as an informal way by which the quality of life of the people can be inculcated and enriched.

The NTA drama series, with all their messaging about national unity and cultural idiosyncrasies of other ethnic groups in Nigeria, appealed more to educated elites or cosmopolitan urbanites (especially reflected in dramas such as *Basi & Co*. with its pidgin English dialogue), than to mainstream Hausa audiences. What exacer-

bated the situation of course was the lack of specific Hausa drama that would have a wider national appeal. It was only in 1984 that a Kano-based English language drama, *The Magaji Family* was broadcast on national television. The programming schedule of NTA Kano in its early years reflected its nationalist outlook.

In Kano, CTV was established as a television station in 1981 to provide “community television” to viewers in Kano and its environs. Its early focus was on drama series and, according to Louise M. Bourgault (1996:5),

Storylines were created out of the stream of urban gossip pervading the city of Kano. Producers transposed these stories to suit their creative means and didactic purposes and to satisfy the demands of the television medium. Storylines were submitted by other employees at the station, and sometimes by outsiders who were welcomed by the station when submitting ideas for productions. Because of this free interchange of ideas, and because the shows were completed so close to air time, CTV was easily able to interact with its audience. Some producers were even known to frequent public viewing centers to “eavesdrop” on their audiences and to incorporate feedback into developing storylines or future episodes.

It is interesting that the *wasan kwaikwayo* repertoire of ready scripts and plays was not considered as a basis for the CTV dramas—or for any other, for that matter. In this regard, these products of Western-educated playwrights were shunned by the new technology of television. Instead, CTV producers had recourse to community stories—in effect reflecting their earlier preference for *tatsuniya* and indigenous storytelling. Indeed one of the most successful CTV dramas, *Bakan Gizo* (Rainbow), about a forced marriage, borrowed its storyline from *tatsuniya* folktales and this became the preferred mode for CTV drama series. Thus CTV and other Hausa-based television stations around northern Nigeria offered an alternative to the NTA dramas—an alternative rooted in the cultural traditions of the Muslim Hausa, with strict gender space delineation, respect for authority, and an unambiguous endorsement of morally upright behavior. However, it was this

very 'viewing template' that became a stumbling block for contemporary middle-aged Hausa male viewers, leaving them unable to accept the Hausa video films which became fashionable in 2002-2005.

Thus the coming of television changed the entertainment pattern of predominantly urban Hausa audiences and the grandma with her tall *tatsuniya* tales seemed to have gone with the wind. The New Age audience had arrived.

Hausa Music as Oral Literature

When the global media deluge started bombarding Hausa youth in the 1960s through the availability of Hindi cinema, the new Hindi tunes soon provided a ready template for the appropriation of transnational music genres into Hausa forms. The orality of Hausa music, with its griot tradition of reciting praise-songs (oft with a historical content) to noted individuals in the Hausa society, rapidly gave way to a transnational musical genre which pays homage to Hausa oral poetry only in the language domain of the lyrics, submerging the traditional instruments in favor of synthesizers—and creating a new genre: Hausa Technopop.

Such transformation can best be understood against the background of the status of oral poets in Hausa communities. 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'

This categorization, though imperfect (as Smith himself accepted), nevertheless serves as a rough guide to the position of the musician in Hausa society. The main reason for including musicians in

the lower level status is the client-focused nature of Hausa music (Smith 1957). Thus a song composed by the *maroki* (praise-singer) for one client will not be performed for another, and a mean client gets the short end of the musician's stick, with sarcastic barbs thrown in for good measure. As Ames (1973:266-267) points out,

Generally, the bigger the gift received or expected, the more extravagant the praise. Liberties are taken with the "truth." For example, if the person being praised in song has low-ranking kin on his father's side, the singer may mention only a prestigious titled official, even if but distantly related on the mother's side. Kin substitutes are invented when the singer or praiseshouter doesn't know the genealogy of his client, e.g., a Hausa clerk employed by a European firm may be praised as *ɗan Ingila* (literally, "the son of England").

Naturally a very generous patron merits the full-blown poetic powers of the musician. However, as Besmer (1971:22) also observes,

Court musicians...have a higher relative status than most other musicians and praise-singers with the possible exception of nationally famous Hausa musicians whose songs may be heard in nightclubs and over the radio. In social situations, a court musician holding a senior title responds to a nationally famous musician as an equal. This is in marked contrast to his behavior towards non-royal musicians whom he treats as social inferiors. There can be no question that musicians in Hausa society are a distinct and socially recognized occupational group whose status is generally ranked below the majority of non-musicians in the total social fabric.

This classification of Hausa musicians, however, excludes the poet-musicians, who often recite their poetry without any accompanying instrumentation. And as Schuh (1994:1) points, out

Discussion of Hausa poetry has generally distinguished oral poetry, which finds its roots in ancient Hausa tradition, and written poetry, which dates from the 19th century and whose meters can be traced to Arabic Islamic verse. Though the large and continually evolving body of Hausa poetic literature derives from these separate origins, there has now been considerable cross-fertilization between the two traditions,

both thematically and metrically. Moreover, the “oral” vs. “written” distinction is misleading. Although poets working in the so-called “written” tradition generally codify their works in writing using regular stanzaic patterns, all Hausa poetry is composed for presentation in sung or chanted form—prose-like recitation, much less silent reading of poetic works is quite foreign to Hausa.

Such poets are often seen as representing a Hausa oral art form, seen as a quintessential higher Hausa form of entertainment. It is the fact that it forces the listener to think about the lyrics, that it is considered an art form. Mainly highly educated (both in Western and Islamic traditions, and in contrast to traditional “low brow” musicians who often had only Islamic education), the thematic elements of these poets tended to be either political or religious. For instance, Aliyu Namangi’s nine-volume *Imfiraji*, an admonitory religious poem, is a Dantesque exposition of life, death, and what comes after death—admonishing the Muslim to lead a pious life. Ahmadu Danmatawalle’s *Wakar Tsuntsaye* [Song of the birds] is a blistering critique of the ruling house of one of the emirates of northern Nigeria structured in the form of *Animal Farm* (George Orwell) in which the characteristics of the various courtiers were juxtaposed with perceived personality traits of specific birds and wild animals in their quest for a new ruler.

When Hausa societies became more cosmopolitan, and began to absorb influences from other cultures, limited mixed-mode instrumental “groups” started to appear, combining the percussion instruments with predominantly stringed instruments such as *goge*, *kukuma* (fiddles) leading the orchestra, or as in the case of *koroso* music, a combination of flute, drums and *lalaje* (a rattle formed by calabash discs on a stick). Rarely are there musical combos with string, percussion and wind instruments in the *same* band. Indeed wind instruments, such as the *kakaki* (trumpet) are mainly royal palace instruments, while *sarewa* (flute) which is predominantly used in Fulani music and is often used as a solo instrument, or accompanied by voice.

It is within this griot tradition that Hindi films became regular features of northern Nigerian urban landscapes in the 1960s and 1970s. The films became popular simply because of what urbanized young Hausa saw as cultural similarities between Hausa social behavior and mores (e.g. coyness, forced marriage, gender stratification, obedience to parents and authority, etc.) and those depicted in Hindi films. Further, with heroes and heroines sharing almost the same dress code as Hausa (flowing saris, turbans, head covers, especially in the earlier historical Hindi films which were the ones predominantly shown in cinemas throughout northern Nigeria in the 1960s) young Hausa saw reflections of themselves and their lifestyles in Hindi films, far more than in American films. Added to this is the appeal of the soundtrack music, the song and dance routines which do not have ready equivalents in Hausa traditional entertainment ethos. Soon enough cinema-goers started to mimic the Hindi film songs they saw. Four of the most popular Hindi films in northern Nigeria in the 1960s, and which provided the meter for adaptation of the tunes and lyrics to Hausa street and popular music were *Rani Rupmati* (1957), *Chori Chori* (1956), *Amar Deep* (1958) and *Khabie Khabie* (1975), which were shown in the original Hindi, without sub-titles.

The first entertainment cultural leap, from screen to street, was made mainly by young boys who, incapable of understanding Hindi film language, but captivated by the songs in the films they saw, started to use the meter of the playback songs, and substituted the “gibberish” Hindi words with Hausa prose. A fairly typical example of street adaptation was from *Rani Rupmati* (1957), as shown below:

Itihaas Agar... (Rani Rupmati)

Itihaas agar likhana chaho,
 Itihaas agar likhana chaho
 Azaadi ke majmoon se
 (Chor) *Itihaas agar likhana chaho*
 Azaadi ke majmoon se
 To seen khoo upne Dharti ko
 Veroo tum upne khom se

Hausa playground version

Ina su cibayyo ina sarki
 Ina su waziri abin banza
 Mun je yaki mun dawo
 Mun samu sandan girma
 Ina su cibayyo in sarki
 Ina su wazirin abin banza

Itihaas Agar... (Rani Rupmati)

Har har har mahadev
Allaho Akubar
Har har har mahadev
Allahu Akbar...

Hausa playground version

Har har har Mahadi
Allaho Akubar
Har har har Mahadi
Allahu Akbar...

The Hausa translation—which is about returning successfully from a battle—actually captured the essence of the original song, if not the meaning—which the Hausa could not understand, which was sung in the original film in preparation for a battle. The fact that the lead singer in the film and in the song, a woman, was the leader of the troops made the film even more captivating to an audience used to seeing women in subservient roles, and definitely not in battles.

A further selling point for the song was the *Allahu Akbar* refrain, which is actually a translation, intended for Muslim audiences of the film, of *Har Har Mahadev*, a veneration of Lord Mahadev (Lord Shiva, God of Knowledge). Thus even if the Hausa audience did not understand the dialogues, they did identify with what sounded to them like *Mahdi*, and the *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest, and pronounced in the film exactly as the Hausa pronounce it, as *Allahu Akbar*) refrain—further entrenching a moral lineage with the film, and subsequently with “Indians”. This particular song, coming in a film that opened the minds of the Hausa audience to Hindi films became an entrenched anthem of Hausa popular culture, and by extension, provided even the traditional folk singers with meters to borrow.

Thus the second leap from screen to street was mediated by popular folk musicians in late 1960s and early 1970s led by Abdu Yaron Goge, a resident *goge* (fiddle) player in Jos. Yaron Goge was a youth oriented musician and drafted by the leftist-leaning Northern Elements People’s Union (NEPU) based in Kano, to spice up their campaigns during the run-up to party political campaigns in the late 1950s, preparatory to Nigerian independence in 1960.

A pure dance floor player with a troupe of 12 male (six) and female (six) dancers, Abdu Yaron Goge introduced many dance patterns

and moves in his shows in bars, hotels and clubs in Kano, Katsina, Kaduna and Jos—further consolidating the perception of his music as belonging to the moral “exclusion zone” of the typical Hausa social structure, and confirming the low-brow status of his music. The most famous set piece was the bar-dance, *Bansuwai*, with its suggestive motions—the *derrière* being vigorously shaken—especially in a combo mode with a male and a female dancer.

However, his greatest contribution to Hausa popular culture was in picking up Hindi film playback songs and reproducing them with his *goge*, vocals and *kalangu* (often made to sound like the Indian drum, *tabla*). A fairly typical example, again from *Rani Rupmati*, was his adaptation of the few lines of the song, *Raati Suhani*, from the film, as shown below:

Hindi lyrics

*Music interlude, with tabla,
flute, sitar*

Raati suhani
djoome javani
Dil hai deevana hai
Tereliye

Hausa adaptation (Abdu Yaron Goge)

*Music interlude, with tabla
simulation*

Mu gode Allah, taro
Mu gode Allah, taro

Duniya da dadi
Lahira da dadi
In da gaskiyarka,
Lahira da dadi
In babu gaskiyarka,
Lahira da zafi

The Hausa lyrics were a sermon to his listeners, essentially telling them they reap what they sow when they die and go to heaven (to wit, “if you are good, heaven is paradise, if you are bad, it is hell”). It became his anthem, and repeated radio plays ensured its pervasive presence in Muslim secluded households, creating a hunger for the original film song.

Another song, *Phool Bagiya*, from the same film was adapted by folk musicians, as exemplified by Ali Makaho in the lyrics below:

Phool Bagiya

Phool bagiya main bulbul bole
 Dal pe bole koyaliya
 Pyar karo
 Pyar karo rukhi pyar ki yaare
 Hann ruth kehiti he kalya
Hojiho, hojiho
Hojiho, hojiho
 Pyar to he salwa rukhi har rukhi
 Pyar ki mushkil he kaliya
 Pyar mera daaba bari bangaye
 Raat ke raat ke savaliya
Hojiho, hojiho, hojiho
Hojiho, hojiho, hojiho

**Hausa adaptation
(Ali Makaho)**

Za ni Kano, za ni Kaduna (to
 rhyme with *Pyar karo...*)
 Mu je Katsina lau za ni Ilori
 Na je Anacha
Hitoho hotiho
Hotiho hotiho
 Ni ban san kin zo ba
 Da na san kin zo ne
 Da na saya miki farfesu
 Ni ban san ka zo ba
 Da na san ka zo ne
 Da na saya maka funkaso
 Za ni Wudil,
 Za ni Makole
 Na zarce Gogel,
 Za ni Hadeja
 Na kwan a Gumel

Even cultured Hausa poets were not averse to borrowing a Hindi film meter to make Hausa songs more palatable to their audience. A further example is an adaptation of Panchi Banu from the Hindi film, *Chori Chori*, by a noted and well-respected Hausa political poet, Akilu Aliyu, as shown below.

Panchhi Banu (Chori Chori, 1956)**Hindi lyrics**

Panchhi banu udati phiruu
 mast gaagan mei
 Aaj mein azaad huun duniya
 kii chaman mein
 Panchhi banu udati phiruu
 mast gaagan mei
 Aaj mein azaad huun duniya
 kii chaman mein

**Hausa adaptation,
Akilu Aliyu (Poet)**

Sun yi shiri sun yi miting sun
 hada kwamba
 Wai za su kashe NEPU a binne
 su ci gumba
 Sun yi kadan basu da iko su
 kashe ta
 NEPU dashe ne wada Allah Ya
 kafata

Hindi lyrics

hillorii hillorii ...) o ... oho

hillorii hillorii ...) o ... oho

**Hausa adaptation,
Akilu Aliyu (Poet)**Masu kufurtu suyi noma su yi
hudaSai kaga an barsu wajen bare
takanda

The same soundtrack song was also adapted by Abdu Yaron Goge, the fiddler:

Hindi lyrics

Panchhi banu udati phiruu
mast gaagan mei
Aaj mein azaad huun duniya
kii chaman mein
Panchhi banu udati phiruu
mast gaagan mei
Aaj mein azaad huun duniya
kii chaman mein
hillorii hillorii ...) o ... oho

**Hausa adaptation
(Abdu Yaron Goge), *Fillori***

Mai tafiya za ka ina zani Ilori,

Zani sayan goro da taba da
turare
Mai tafiya za ka ina zani Ilori,

Zani sayan goro da taba da
turare
Ilori, lorri lorri, Ilori

In both adaptations of the lyrics, the Hausa prose has, of course, nothing to do with the actual Hindi wording. However the meter of the Hindi songs became instantly recognizable to Hausa audiences, such that those who had not seen the film went to see it. Since women have been prohibited since the 1970s from entering cinemas in most northern Nigerian cities, radio stations took to broadcasting popular Hindi songs. This had the powerful effects of bringing Hindi soundtrack music right into the bedrooms of Hausa Muslim housewives who, *sans* the visuals, were at least able to partake in this transnational flow of media. It is hardly surprising, therefore that Hausa housewives became the most avid watchers of the Hindi films when they became available on video cassettes in the late 1970s.

As noted earlier, the leap from screen to street was made predominantly by boys who often managed to sneak into the theaters

(which allowed an extremely flexible interpretation of “adults” only) and watch the films. Girls had to rely on radio stations playing the soundtracks, and soon enough predominantly girl pupils from Islamiyya Schools (modernized Qur’anic schools) also started adapting Hindi music. However, instead of using the meter to sing usual playground plaza songs, they decided, at the insistence of their teachers, to adapt the meters to singing the praises of the Prophet Muhammad in Hausa language. Some of the more notable adaptations are listed in Table 1:

Table 1: Islamic Hindinization of Hindi film soundtrack songs

S/N	Song from Hindi Film	Hausa Adapted Islamic Song
1.	Ilzaam (1954)	Manzon Allah Mustapha
2.	Rani Rupmati (1957)	Dahana Daha Rasulu
3.	Mother India (1957)	Mukhtaru Abin Biyayya
4.	Aradhana (1969)	Mai Yafi Ikhwana
5.	The Train (1970)	Lale Da Azumi
6.	Fakira (1976)	Manzona Mai Girma
7.	Yeh Wada Raha (1982)	Ar-Salu Macecina
8.	Commando (1988)	Sayyadil Bashari
9.	Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak (1988)	Sayyadil Akrami
10.	Yaraana (1995)	Mu Yi Yabonsa Babu Kwaba
11.	Dil To Pagal Hai (1997)	Watan Rajab

Thus Islamiyya Schools predominantly in Kano started using the meter of popular Hindi film soundtracks to religious songs.¹⁰ An irony, considering that a lot of the Hindi songs they were adapting were tied to Hindu religion, with its multiplicity of gods, as opposed to the monotheism of Islam. These adaptations, which were purely vocal, without any instrumental accompaniment, were heard principally in the 1980s during a particular religious resurgence in northern Nigeria, the post-1979 Iranian Islamic revolution providing a template for many Muslim clusters to re-orient their entire life towards Islam in Muslim northern Nigeria. Entertainment was thus adapted to the new Islamic ethos. Thus while

not banning watching Hindi films—despite the fire and brimstone sermonizing of many noted Muslim scholars—Islamiyya school teachers developed all-girl choirs that adapted the Islamic messaging, particularly love for the Prophet Muhammad, to Hindi film soundtrack meters. The basic idea was to wean away girls and boys from repeating Hindi film lyrics which they did not know, and which could contain references to a multiplicity of gods characteristic of the Hindu religion.

The more widespread adoption of western musical instruments also changed the oral nature of Hausa poetry and performance. The traditional instruments were jettisoned in favor of a multi-sample synthesizer (usually by Yamaha) sound that stores the sound samples and reproduces the Western musical format of multiple instruments (Adamu 2008). In this process of acceptance of new forms of reproduction, modern Hausa musicians have created new genres of Hausa music. Using a combination of music software and Yamaha keyboards, they have created three distinct forms of Hausa urban music: Hausa Video Film music (often referred to as *Nanaye* and composed specifically as video film soundtrack to be performed during song and dance routines in the films), Hausa Glocal music (which is based on appropriated sound from either United States rap musicians, or from Hindi films), and Hausa Technopop (based on excessive reliance on the sound effects of the synthesizers used), and Hausa rap and hip-hop (based on repeated drum-beats and loops) (Adamu 2007). Clearly, then for Hausa oral literature in all forms, submersion is the future, not preservation.

Conclusions

In analyzing the influence of musical transformations, Willard Rhodes (1977) quotes George Peter Murdock (1971) describing several processes of cultural change which are common in art and other areas of cultural expression. According to Murdock (1971) *innovation* is the simplest process in which individuals modify already existing patterns or practices. Eventually they become ac-

cepted as part of conventional practice. The second process of cultural change, *invention*, involves the synthesis of existing elements of cultural expression and shows creativity. The third process is *tentation*, a process which “represents a conscious attempt to create something new and ‘may give rise to elements that show little or no continuity with the past’ ” (Murdoch 1971 in Rhodes 1977:39). A final process is *cultural borrowing*, in which alien forms of music are adopted and integrated into an indigenous product.

Most of these steps seem to have been followed in the trajectory seen in the conversion of orality to Hausa literature and to its media-mediated versions. For instance, novelist filmmakers combined a series of motifs to transform their written works into a visual fest. Noted key elements in Hausa oral literature revolve around forced marriage, co-wife rivalry (*kishi*), and oppression by domestic authority (whether a constituted or a familial one). These same elements are reproduced in a parallel way in Hindi commercial cinema of which the storytellers—predominantly women—are avid fans. It is not surprising therefore that in putting down their creative experiences, they created a confluence of what they see as convergent cultures in both their written prose and visual depictions.

There is insufficient evidence to show that the Hausa oral tale transformed into the Hausa modern novel. Indeed it would appear that the only intermedial shift in the structure of the Hausa oral tale was from a verbal medium to a written medium—when folklorists such as the late Prof. Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya compiled and published a collection of Hausa folktales. The Hausa modern novel, as Brian Larkin (1997) shows, would seem to be inspired by media flows from Hindi cinema

Thus Hausa filmmakers, from TV dramas to video dramas shunned the oral genre of the *tatsuniya* and its *tashe* variant, and refused to even adapt some of the plays to the visual medium. This conferred on the filmmakers a new independence and control over the medium which they are familiar with—having learnt the tricks of the trade in the hard knocks of life.

Yet textual analysis of the early novel to film adaptations reveal plot structures based on traditional elements of storytelling in modernized Hausa societies. This even led to the adaptation of two *tatsuniya* into the film medium. These were *Daskin Da Ridi* [The bogeyman] and *Kogin Bagaja* (which was based on the plot elements of *Ruwan Bagaja*).

Thus when the home video replaced the novel as a more powerful—and subsequently more influential—mode of social interpretation, the morality of the messages became a central focus. A necessary problem faced by the home video film makers in Muslim northern Nigeria is the reconciliation of the radically different modes of storytelling they adopt for their societies. A typical film storyline carries with it elements of conflict and ways of resolving the conflict. For the message to come out clearly, “unpalatable” scenes must be created, and as the story unfolds, contradictions and conflicts are sorted out.

Such “unpalatable” scenes are not found in Hausa tales where plot development is transparent and linear. The more “adult” scenes in the pre-censorship Hausa video films (*Sauran Kiris* [It almost happened], *Jahilci Ya Fi Hauka* [Ignorance is preferable to madness], *Alhaki Kwikwiyo* [Evil recoils on the doer]) were persistently accused by their critics of being available to “children” who would see them and thus become exposed to their “corrupting” influence. A solution to this, of course, would have been classification—thus restricting access. Yet in all the clamor for censorship in the Islamic polity, classification was not considered an alternative, and thus uniform judgments and restrictions were imposed on “children” and adult alike. This curtails the freedom of adults to interact with a text that talks about their realities. The end-product was therefore a purely saccharine video film production, lacking universal appeal.

Although the *tatsuniya* often incorporate elements of singing, the media marriage between the *tatsuniya* mindset of entertainment and moralization created simulated melodramatic scripts that were

amplified by non-novelist Hausa home video filmmakers. The element of the melodrama that was amplified was the song and dance routine. It is clear therefore that Hausa popular culture has to contend with globalization both within and without its cultural space.

Challenges for the Future of Hausa Oral Literature

I have attempted to show here how the possession of new media technologies by Hausa youth in all generations enabled a re-negotiation of the efficacy of oral literature in social transformation. Production, distribution and consumption has been radically altered.

Interestingly, what emerges from the availability of new media technologies, is not the desire to preserve, but the greater, more compelling desire to *submerge*. In the process of preservation, the technology is used essentially to document and maintain the quintessential elegance of the original product—maintaining a material culture, and providing a heritable legacy. In submerging, the identity of the original is lost and becomes substituted with a more cosmopolitan model that practitioners believe gives them a more universal appeal.

According to AlSayyad (2008), the concern with heritage and tradition may be seen as a product of the unequal relationship between the so-called first and third worlds. To understand this, one must frame the heritage discourse within its proper historical context. He further argues that we can distinguish three relevant phases of attitudes towards heritage and tradition in the last two centuries.

First, a colonial period, where there was initial interest in local indigenous people and practices but a distant association with it. During the second phase, and following the success of independence struggles, invocations of nationalism caused nations to resort to heritage preservation as a form of resistance against the homogenizing forces of modernity. Finally in this third phase we call globalization, nations have had to compete in an ever-tightening global economy.

New media technologies play a very significant role in this process by providing a substratum for the submersion to take place. In Nigeria, the Voice of Nigeria radio station (Hausa Section) is toying with the idea of producing audio novels of various Hausa *soyayya* (love) stories on CDs—since apparently people would rather listen than read. Some academics in private circles when discussing this are not happy with the trend because they see it as the last nail on the coffin of reading culture; for if audio books become the new literary media, then the reading culture is clearly endangered.

Reading culture is significant in developing countries because of the opportunities it provides in the cross-transfer of skills from one learning domain to another. Yet the global economy now ensures that communities are saturated with iPods (both the original and Chinese imitations), MP3 and MP4 players—thus creating a massive *listening* culture among the target clients of the reading culture.

Closely linked to the threat to reading culture is the threat to oral heritage. If it is not appropriately conserved and preserved, oral heritage is in grave danger of extinction, disappearing from the hearts and memories of the people. Those who directly live, experience and perform oral traditions are mostly local folk who get familiar with it, take it for granted, and lack the perspective to collect and manage it in a scholarly fashion—i.e. in such a way that it can be widely accessed and linked to users' needs. Thus the community should be made aware of the threat to its oral heritage, and service organizations such as libraries and information centers should take appropriate measures to select, acquire, organize, and safeguard the oral heritage in a variety of formats to be shared with, and linked to, users of today and tomorrow.

Recommendations

It is critical that we be proactive and keep oral heritage and its information resources accessible for scholarly research. Priceless art and artifacts, oral literature, oral traditions, folk music and per-

formance, and many aspects of our cultural heritage are in danger of extinction if we do not take pride in them, collect, promote and safeguard them. It should be a challenge for information professionals and everyone to actively support the preservation of oral heritage and to promote deeper, wider studies on it for the benefit of students, and scholars all around the world.

Collecting information on oral tradition from people who live in the original context is essential for getting correct information. The unwritten cultural heritage that people valued in the past will still be available for study and learning if it is recorded and managed in a way that can be widely accessed in the future. The legal and ethical aspects of the utilization of oral heritage information and copyright law are important. Permission for the utilization and duplication of this intellectual property or heritage must be granted by its owner. State of the art information technologies should be integrated to facilitate the preservation and establishment of a national and international information network of oral heritage and culture. But records should be kept in such a way that they are not at the mercy of new technologies, which, while dynamic, may rapidly become obsolete.

Based on this, and further work by Finnegan (1992), the following might be some of the specific strategies we need to consider in order to face the challenges of preserving oral literature in indigenous communities:

1. The role of *comparison and generalization* as against investigating *uniqueness and specificity*. Complementing the long tradition of classification and generalization there is now a counter-trend towards exploring people's own views and artistry rather than analyzing through outsiders' categories, but the debate continues about how far researchers can or should look for underlying generalities, how far for culture-specific conventions or individual events/personalities. In this way, judgments are not made about how worthwhile a particular oral collection is, rather, a particular

oral collection is an intrinsically appreciated as a marker of a particular people's cultural heritage.

2. The *collection and analysis of texts* as against *intensive field-work* on social processes. In some circles there has been a marked shift towards the latter, but the former is still important, particularly in countries with large archive collections.

3. The *nature of the essential subject matter*: verbal texts? contexts? performance(s)? the dynamics of a particular occasion? There is also disagreement about how far one can isolate any one of these elements, and in particular about the nature and status of texts.

4. *Who researches and on whom?* These questions often turn on a contrast between researchers as outsiders and/or superiors as opposed to local scholars and native speakers. Similar questions also arise in 'own culture' research: this too is sometimes undertaken in a spirit of looking down on (sometimes romanticizing) certain groups or activities. There is also the question of whether a foreign culture or one's own should be the object of study. Those labeling themselves folklorists in the past mainly concentrated on the second, anthropologists on the first, but such distinctions are becoming more blurred.

Notes

¹ My focus on the *tatsuniya* ('folktale', pl. *tatsuniyoyi*) excludes historical accounts, heroic epics, riddles and jokes, proverbs, etc. which all belong under the label 'oral literature'.

² The story is found in Yahaya 1971-2, vol. 1, pp. 20-26.

³ It is interesting that the coming of Islam has divided the Hausa community into a) "Maguzawa", i.e. Hausa who do not accept any revealed religion, and b) "Hausawa", i.e. Hausa who accept Islam, although there are also Hausawa who are Christians.

⁴ Alidou's interpretation of what constitutes ethnic Hausa is problematic in that the examples she gave of Fulani, Kanuri and Nupe are people with distinct cultural, ethnic and even racial identities who have not accepted the tag of "Hausa" merely because they speak a

cosmopolitan language—much as Asians residing in Britain do not accept the tag of being, say, Welsh, simply because they live in Aberystwyth and speak Welsh.

- 5 The ethnicity of Nigerian Hausa—perhaps different from Nigerian Hausa—is divided into two broad clusters of historical origin. The first, the Hausa Bakwai (or the “original Hausa” where Hausa is the sole mother tongue) is made up of Hausa city-states of Biram (Garun Gabas), Daura, Gobir, Kano, Katsina, Rano and Zazzau (Zaria), which form the nucleus of Kano, and of the central and western states of Northern Nigeria as well as part of the Niger Republic. The second cluster, Bansa Bakwai (the “dud” seven) is made up of city-states where originally Hausa was spoken but not as a mother tongue and which included Gwari, Ilorin (Yoruba), Kebbi, Kwara (Jukun), Nupe, Yauri and Zamfara. The division between Hausa Bakwai and Bansa Bakwai, even though contemporarily trivial, confers on the “true Hausa” (Hausa Bakwai “citizens”) a feeling of *asali*—true origins—to the Hausa mindset.
- 6 This was observed during the shooting of a documentary I was filming on Hausa traditional theater during the Ramadan period of 2005 (beginning from 15th October 2005) which lasted for two weeks. The boys dressed in girls’ clothes attracted the wrath of the *dakarun Hisbah* (moral police in an Islamicate society) who attempted to disband them, with the boys standing their ground and insisting on continuing with their performance.
- 7 Interview with Alhaji Maitama Sule, Dan Masanin Kano, Thursday 21st July 2005, Kano, Nigeria.
- 8 Interview with Alhaji Maitama Sule, Dan Masanin, Thursday 21st July 2005, Kano, Nigeria.
- 9 Interview with Alhaji Daudu Galadanci, the character actor “Kuliya” of *Kuliya Manta Sabo*, published in *Fim*, July 1999, pp. 42-43.
- 10 Information based on a Hausa-language paper, *Nasarori da Matsalolin Wasan Kwaikwayo a Jihar Kano* (Gains and Problems of Drama in Kano), by Alhaji Faruk Usman, then Permanent Secretary/CEO CTV 67 Kano at the monthly lecture series of the Kano State History and Culture Bureau on Thursday 29th January 2004.