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PDP Reloaded: Political Mobilization Through Urban Music in Kano – Abdallah Uba Adamu

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PDP Reloaded: Political Mobilization Through Urban Musics in Kano

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Abstract

The political climate of the Kano State partisan political administration from 2003-2011 reveal a state of constant clash between the Kano State government regulatory agencies and the indigenous entertainment industries. This resulted in banning, for instance, the Hausa video film industry for sometime, and the jailing of many entertainers on the pretext of contravention of one censorship law or other. The result of these government activities created an atmosphere of angst in the entertainment industry, leading to the virtual collapse of the entertainment industry as a result of the exodus of many entertainers from Kano. When the 2011 elections came up, the biggest group of youth mobilizers were those from the entertainment industry who through music and lyrics created a message tunnel to youth to vote against the then current government in power. Situated within the theoretical frame of voter mobilization, this article therefore analyses the feelings of angst and expression of anger towards the political class in 2011 Nigerian elections and politics by non-partisan Hausa urban electronic musicians in the northern Nigerian city of Kano.

KEYWORDS: *Poetic Barbs, Political Mobilization*

Introduction

Political messages in popular music clearly matter to the musicians who produce them and the audience that consumes them. Music and politics have always had some connection in many countries. There are different dimensions to this connection. The first is when music

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influences political movements, while the second focuses on how musicians promote the idea of a particular political ideology, even without the accouterments of election. My main focus is on the former dimension in which I look at how music becomes one of the factors influencing shifts in voter behavior in the northern Nigerian city of Kano during the 2011 general elections.

In the United States, the link between music and politics has usually involved a connection between progressive political movements such as labor or civil rights and folkloric musical forms generally associated with the Black Church, agricultural workers, and the urban proletariat (Garofalo 1992). Further, mass culture has been regarded, certainly until the late 1960s, as being fundamentally incompatible with a progressive political agenda. This perspective was challenged with the explosion of musical genres in the 1960s. Folk musicians such as Bob Dylan, Country Joe and the Fish; avant-garde artists such as Frank Zappa, Velvet Underground; RnB exponents such as MC5 and James Brown, all became associated with the political turbulence of the decade. It thus became increasingly difficult to dismiss mass music as aesthetically or politically bankrupt.

When Rap music emerged in the 1980s as music of predominantly urban young Blacks, it reveled in revolutionary lyrics and imagery. Every Rapper, regardless of their style, managed to incorporate a political message into their songs. As McKee (2004, p. 106) noted,

Many rap artists have a political intent in their songs. Not all rap music is political — gangsta rap is often accused of forgetting rap's political and social roots. But much of it, including the work of many of the most popular rappers, is explicitly so. The songs of groups like Public Enemy, Run DMC, NWA, and KRS-One are political both in the traditional sense of critiquing government policies, and in the expanded sense...of addressing power relations between white and Black Americans.

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In this context, Collins (1992) points out that there are many differing views held by social and developmental scientists on the role of popular culture, art, and music in relation to the expression and consolidation of social power, and that recent history of African popular culture highlight the anti-hegemonic side of popular culture. This article is contributing to this anti-hegemonic stand of popular culture within a deeply conservative and traditionally Muslim African society.

Politics and Revolutionary Poetics

The connection between music and politics, particularly political expression in music, has been seen in many cultures. Although music influences political movements and rituals, it is not clear how or even if, general audiences relate music on a political level. Time has shown how music can be used in anti-establishment or protest themes, including anti-war songs, although pro-establishment ideas are also used, for example in national anthems, patriotic songs, and political campaigns.

Thus throughout societies, protest songs have served as rallying points against what are seen as oppressive governance policies. What has never been made clear, however, is the extent to which change was brought about by these songs. In the United States, the protest song was one of the main symbols of the sixties youth culture and was aimed at awakening public awareness of social issues, particularly the Vietnam conflict. The songs provided the soundtrack to demonstrations against that War. Yet although the songs inspired creativity and raised consciousness, they did not stop the wars—because the theater of wars kept coming, from Vietnam down to Afghanistan.

In Algeria, the modern music form that developed as protest was Rai (from the Arabic, “ra’ayy”, or view). Rai evolved from native Orani-Algerian music with provocative lyrics sung at local cafes, bars, and bordellos to the most popular and controversial music in North Africa today. It was banned from the Algerian broadcast media because it was considered subversive by the Algerian government until the 1980s (Al-Deen, 2005). The music then became available only through Algerian-French community radio stations in southern France in the early 1980s. It was so popular in Algeria that

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the government was forced to lift some of the earlier restrictions placed on it. The music therefore came to be regarded as music of rebellion and the symbol of cynicism, emerging as an outlet for voicing the frustrations of youths and placing greater emphasis on freedom and liberty. Similarly, in Thailand, the rise of politicized popular musics is closely tied to the political turbulence of the early and mid-1970s (Lockard 1998). Yet oppression continues in these countries, with musicians being hounded.

On June 11, 1988, the first Mandela Tribute was staged at Wembley Stadium in London. The 11-hour extravaganza featured a remarkably diverse roster of first-rate talent – all aimed at drawing attention to the political plight of Nelson Mandela, then a political prisoner in the Apartheid South Africa. While Mandela eventually became free and ruled South Africa, the contribution of the hundreds of rock stars composing songs in defense of African political freedom rarely swayed the racist regime of South Africa. Change came because it had to, or as Bob Dylan wrote, “...how many years can some people exist/before they’re allowed to be free?” (Bob Dylan, 1963).

In the West African Sahara desert, political marginalization in the various nation-states exacerbated the problems of severe drought and economic hardship that have struck the Tuareg residents of the nations since the 1960s. This created a generation of young Tuareg exiles who came to be known as the *ishumar*, who fled Mali and Niger to pursue better opportunities in North African cities. During this time, some of the *ishumar* discovered the guitar and began to form bands where they sang songs about their experiences in exile, their memories of home and their political ambitions for better Tuareg rights (Kohl and Fischer 2010). The music of bands such as Tinariwen, Tartit, Terakaft and Toumast became the major tool for mobilizing rebels in the violent rebellion against Niger and Mali in the 1990s. In the end, little was achieved in uniting the various forces to create sustainable peace in the region.

Similarly, while it might be assumed that there is a link between desire for change and popular culture, it must be pointed out that, at least in African societies, popular culture purveyors might only provide a philosophical reflection of injustice, but not action scripts for social transformation through their lyrics. The late

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Nigerian Afro-beat musician, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as the most vocal critic of the Nigerian military authorities (Olaniyan 2004). In song after song, he urged revolt, not solely against military tyrants and exploiters ("Zombie", "Army Arrangement", "Coffin for Head of State") but against self-damaging prejudices and assimilationist alienation ("Yellow Fever", "Colonial Mentality", "Teacher, Don't Teach Me No Nonsense", "Gentleman", "Lady"). He chastised the West ("International Times Thief", "Underground System") and the local elites that fronted for multinationals ("Beasts of No Nation", "Government of Crooks"). Each of these songs, performed decades ago, contains lyrical social scripts that are relevant today. Yet, nothing has changed in all these years, despite bouts of democratic elections; if anything, the Nigerian State in 2012 remained more corrupt than ever, according to every international index.

We, therefore, understand protest music as capturing a particular social climate and condition; and while it arouses the rebellious streak, the oppressive state machinery rarely comes down because of music—even if music is playing in the background while it is crumbling. This was the case of Kano, northern Nigeria just before the 2011 general elections.

Hausa Intellectuals and Political Poetics

Political meaning is hard to pin down in a song, even when focusing on lyrics. People react as much or more to the "feel" of a given song as to the manifest meanings of the words, thus giving the musical composition an equal significance to the lyrics. However, in Hausa societies, whose musical structures are based on oral theater, the lyrics of the song are more important than the musical form. Thus, while Western protest songs rely on the script of both the lyrics and music notations to communicate the message, Hausa musicians use metaphors, sarcasm and satire (or "zambo") to communicate a message to their publics. As Furniss & Gunner (1995, p. 136) point out,

Figurative language may cloud the meaning such that the characterisation of the topic allows a variety of interpretations, but in Hausa poetry rarely does.

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irony muddy the waters as to the evaluative intent of the writer, certainly where the poetry taps into the long tradition of didactic or laudatory writing.

The Islamic Jihad of 1804 in northern Nigeria perhaps provided an articulated use of poetics in political protest among the Hausa. This is because one characteristic of the Jihad had been the extensive use of poetry to convey the messages of the reformers. The rise of the reformed Sufi brotherhoods in Kano during the 1950s was also accompanied by an increase in the use of written pamphlets, including poetry. Such poetry was sung on the streets on special occasions and was an extremely popular medium of expression. Some of the leading political reform figures in the Kano area were outstanding Hausa poets: Mudi Sipikin, Akilu Aliyu, Abba Maikwaru and Aminu Kano.

Mudi Sipikin, for instance, used his poetry to attack the system of colonial rule. Akilu Aliyu wrote poems directly attacking the Northern People's Congress, the conservative northern Nigerian political party. Abba Maikwaru wrote a 10-line Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) party poem for which he and Aminu Kano were arrested in the mid-1950s.

However, while the mainstay of these radical—i.e. challenging the traditional and conservative orthodoxy—poetics tended to be written poetry with an intellectual bent, my discourse looks at the relationship between mass-mediated popular music—that is, music which share an intimate relationship with mass communication technologies—and youth voter mobilization in the Islamicate city of Kano, northern Nigeria. The term "Islamicate" I borrowed from Hodgson (1974, p. 1:58-59) who coined the expression to refer to societies which maintain and/or have consciously adopted at least the public symbols of adherence to traditional Islamic beliefs and practices. Thus, the implementation of the Shari'a in Kano in June 2000 made it an "Islamicate", rather than "Islamic", precisely because despite the Shari'a, the State still follows the secular Nigerian constitution in its governance.

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Poetic Barbs – Protest Music and Voter De/Mobilization

In July 1998, Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar of Nigeria succeeded Gen. Sani Abacha and announced that democratic elections would be held during the first quarter of 1999. This opened the doors for the emergence of a slew of 26 political parties, which all applied to be registered under a newly-formed Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). After the verification of claims, nine were granted provisional approval on 19 October, 1998. These included the All People's Party (APP), which later became the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), among others. It was the PDP that won the Governorship elections in Kano State and on 29th May, 1999 Engineer Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso was sworn as the Kano State Governor, serving a four-year term to 2003. He sought re-election and lost to Ibrahim Shekarau of the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) who became the Governor of Kano from 2003 to 2011. The PDP spectacularly bounced back to power in Kano in 2011 under the leadership of Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso.

One policy outcome of Kwankwaso's administration from 1999-2003 was the creation of a Censorship Board in February 2001 to regulate the perceived excesses of the popular culture industries, especially the Hausa video film industry whose narrative and visual styles seemed to attract the ire of the Kano State conservative Muslim audiences, despite their popularity. The Hausa video film industry spawned off the Hausa modern urban music industry that relies principally on the Yamaha series of keyboard synthesizers for its generation, rather than acoustic African music instruments. The music industry impacts on the Hausa film industry through the provision of soundtracks and most especially through the inevitable music and songs that accompany the dance routines of almost all Hausa video films. This genre of music that emerged specifically for the Hausa video film industry became known as 'Nanaye', and is patterned on the Hindi style song and dance structure, which Hausa video filmmakers use as their creative inspiration and template.

In April 2007, Adam A. Zango, a Hausa video film musician, who also appeared in many Hausa video films as an actor, in his search for a new direction in Hausa soundtrack music, released an MTV-style music CD of six songs he composed and produced as an

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album, *Bahaushiya*. The VCD was mastered in Lagos and Adam A. Zango imported a few copies for sale in Kano in August 2007. One song, *Lelewa*, created an immediate public reaction and was labelled “obscene”. A particular scene in the dance routines showed the bellybutton of the female dancers, and with lots of vigorous body shakes, including the derrière. Indeed a line in the song urged the dancers to “twist your a**, twist your a**”, referring to the derrière, which they did with great gusto. He was invited to the Censorship Board and admonished on the VCD, and was advised to withdraw it from the market.

Despite warning from the Kano State Censorship Board to the musician, the VCD continued to be sold at traffic lights in Kano. It was at this moment in time that the Censorship Board was re-organized and a new Executive Secretary, Alhaji Abubakar Rabo Abdulkareem, formerly of Hisbah (the Islamic police) was appointed. Alhaji Rabo, as he was referred to, took his new position with what some called “Talibanistic” gusto. The first thing he did was to halt the entire Hausa video film industry from August 2007 to January 2008 in order to “sanitize” the industry (as he stated in an interview with *Leadership* newspaper of Wednesday 12th September 2007, p. 43).

His next act was to cause the arrest of Adam A Zango on 18th September 2007 and charge him to the magistrate court on two accounts: releasing a film without a Censorship Board certificate and the sale of a film during a period in which film production (including marketing) has been suspended. The Board also explained that “the type of dressing and dancing portrayed in one of the videos contravened the teachings of Islam and Hausa culture as well, adding that the dressing in the video portrayed nudity to a certain degree” (Ibrahim 2007). Based on this, Zango was jailed three months on each account, but the sentences were to run concurrently. In the event, Zango served for barely two months from 18th September to 15th November, 2007 (*Hausa Leadership*, 29th November 2007) and only after he made a radio announcement apologizing for releasing *Bahaushiya*. Banning the VCD and the attendant publicity on the song merely increased its demand, and before long the offending song was uploaded on YouTube—which, if anything, proves the

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futility of censorship; since it now has wider audience than it would have if it did not lead to the arrest of the musician.

After Zango was released from prison, he migrated back to his home state of Kaduna, after recording a farewell barb in the form of an invective song, *Kan Mai Uwa Da Wabi* ["On No Particular Target"], KMUDW, which criticized his jailing, as well as heaping abuses on un-named "government leader" – an euphemism for the ANPP Governor of Kano State, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau. In the first of a series of analyses of various verses from some of the songs, I will analyze how the songs use poetic barbs to draw the attention of the public of the singers to the plight they faced—and, subsequently, created a favorable atmosphere for voter mobilization towards a more liberal political dispensation. KMUDW is briefly analyzed in Case Study 1.

Case Study 1 – Kan Mai Uwa Da Wabi [On No Particular Target], Adam A. Zango, Bluetooth download, 2008; later, Oyoyo CD

Composed in three verses and contains only one male voice – that of Adam Zango. Unusually for Zango's usual Nanaye or "Makossa" style, this song was Technopop, containing single vocal element and a melody that is independent of the vocal structure. Lyric Sheet 1 presents an excerpt from the song.

Lyric Sheet 1 – Kan Mai Uwa Da Wabi [Hausa; On No Particular Target]

<i>Verse 1</i>	<i>Translation</i>
Bisimillah Allah, ni za na waƙe mugun bawan nan/ Jaki mai harbin nan, ya fake da cini addinin nan/ Ɗan magajiya jikan Abu, na fari ɗan Titi nan/ Barau ni ne yaron nan, ban mace ba ga ni da rayi na/ Sarka zancen banza, a kwan	In the name of Allah, I will sing a song about that horrible servant Jackass, who hides behind the façade of Islam Son of Madam, grandson of Abu, light-skinned bastard Barau, I am that kid, still alive, still kicking Chains are useless, eventually the

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a tashi yaro ango ne/
To Barau ka kama ni, kuma
ka je ka kulle ni/

Karshe ma ka daure ni, ni na
ji dafin daurin nan/

Shi ba daurin Allah ba, ba
daurin Manzon Allah ba, ba
kuma daurin musulunci ba/

Barau in dai daurin ka ne, ka
sa alkali ya daure ni/

Ko alkali ya yanka ni, ko
alkali ya harbe ni, Karshe shi
ne sisi kwandem/

young lad becomes married
Well, Barau, you have arrested me,
and locked me up

In the end you jailed me , and I am
happy for it

This is not Allah or His Prophet's jail
sentence, nor is it ordained by Islam

Barau, if it is your jailing, well
command the judge to incarcerate me

Or slit my throat, or shoot me, or in
the end totally condemn me

The Magajiya here is usually the name given to the brothel Madam – insinuating that the target of the barb is illegitimate or born in a brothel. The line ends with other attacks on the target – light-skinned when the target is actually very dark-skinned. The Hausa personal name “Barau” (from Arabic, Bara’u - saved) is usually given to a child born after many of the mother’s children have died in infancy (thus “saved one”). However, in Kano, during the 1960s and 1970s there existed an extremely infamous social miscreant called Barau, whose notoriety in almost all areas of unconventional at times bordering on criminal behavior and social nuisance earned him the nickname of “ƙwallon shege” [bastard to the core]. Subsequently, the barb Barau is used to refer to a person who can be considered a real bastard – which Adam Zango used to refer allegedly to the then Governor of Kano, in this song. Before his arrest, Adam Zango, like all Hausa modern cultural industries practitioners, had become extremely wealthy – this line refer to his wealth, which enabled him to get married; a sign of financial stability.

This song was spread virally through mobile phones via Bluetooth technology and was only released formally as an audio CD album in April 2011, titled “Oyoyo” [non-Hausa, “welcome”] when

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the results of governorship elections in Kano showed that the candidate anointed by the outgoing ANPP governor had lost to Engineer Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) whom virtually the entire film and music industry supported. This was ironic because Kwankwaso was, of course, the same PDP governor who introduced the Censorship Board and banned filmmaking for some months in 2001, thus creating the first feeling of angst among popular culture practitioners in Kano. Thus, the *Oyoyo* CD was not censored for sale in Kano, but sold as "kokaine" [from "cocaine", thus illegal].

The halting of the film industry by the Kano State Censorship Board in 2007 created a vacuum for musicians and lyricists in Kano who hitherto had depended solely on creating soundtracks for the Hausa video film industry. The immediate reaction was the Bluetooth release of a barrage of songs, all aimed at attacking the ANPP government in Kano by young singers who see their livelihood threatened. The creative irony was that the singers were, so far, unable to create markets for their songs independent of the film industry; thus, whatever happens to the production and marketing of the films will also affects them.

Thus, by the end of May 2009, as many as 11 songs were in circulation in Kano criticizing the ANPP government in Kano in many ways. Since none of these songs were released via any official public channel and since the government was unable to determine the singers in most cases, it, therefore, had no one to arrest on charges of contravening any law. The Censorship Board, therefore, took a one-law-fits-all approach and issued a banning order on the songs through its magistrate. As stated in a news report in the Kano-based *Triumph* news Article of Thursday 4th June 2009,

The Kano State Film Censorship mobile court has banned the sales of some 11 Hausa songs it describe as obscene in the State. The court is going to prosecute anyone found selling the songs, playing it, downloading it by any means in accordance with section 97 of the state censorship board law 2001. cinematography and licensing. regulation of the same year.

The list of the banned songs, modified to include their meanings, possible singers and music styles, is shown in Table 1.

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Table 1: Banned Songs in Kano (2009)

S/N	Song List	Song Details	Music Style
1.	Kan Mai Uwa Da Wabi	"On No Particular Target" listed as "Oyoyo" – Adam A Zango	Nanaye
2.	Bama Yi	"We are not in it" listed as "Martani" – Bello "Billy O" Ibrahim	Rap
3.	Girgiza Kai	"Shake Your Head" – Naziru "Ziriums" Ahmad Hausawa	Rap
4.	Ibro Sauka a Babur	"Ibro Get Off the Bike" – no author, using the mimicked voice of Dan Ibro, a video film comedian	Nanaye
5.	Ibro SanKarau	"Cerebrospinal Meningitis" – "Dayyab Mai Da" (using the mimicked voice of Dan Ibro)	Nanaye
6.	Hasbunallahu	"Qur'anic – Allah is the disposer of my affair" – Aminuddeen Ladan Abubakar and four others	Technopop
7.	Walle-Walle	"Deception" – Aminuddeen Ladan Abubakar and Misbahu M Ahmed	Technopop
8.	Wayyo Kalcho	"Oh My", no author	Nanaye
9.	Gari Ya Yi Zafi	"This Town is too Hot" – no author, using the mimicked-voice of Dan Ibro	Nanaye
10.	Kowa Ya Ci	"F**k Y'all", MP3 file name is "Manta da Dre" – "Forget Dre", no author	Rap
11.	Auta	"Youngest Child", no author	Nanaye

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Using musical styles that cut across the three main genres of Hausa electronic urban musics, the songs range from Nanaye, Technopop, R'n'b to Rap – although the Rap song, “Manta da Dre” is a long skit, lasting 1.08 mins. It is also typical of gansta rap (for more of which see Keyes, 2002).

Listening to the songs, it was clear that the Censorship Board decided to use the “big stick” in banning all of them, as many use metaphors as a critique of the ANPP government’s approach towards cultural censorship. Indeed only *Kowa Ya Ci* uses abusive language against unnamed “big” men in the society. Similarly, *Auta* was inspirational, in which the singer thanks God for giving him the gift of singing as a young (“auta”) singer, and has no verses that provide any social commentary. *Bama Yi* by the Rapper/R'n'b singer, Bello Ibrahim (Billy-O) did have social commentary; but the singer merely relates that youth have no jobs, nor any social welfare dole and how the youth leave everything to God. Banning the song would seem to be part of a larger agenda to muzzle public expression, regardless of whether it is a critique of governance or not.

Three of the banned songs use the mimicked voice of Dan Ibro – *Ibro Sauka a Babur*, *Ibro San Karau* and *Gari Ya Yi Zafi*. *Gari Ya Yi Zafi* was a direct attack on the government of Kano on previous Dan Ibro jailing. While the charge sheet accused Dan Ibro of running an unregistered entertainment company and performing obscenely during a song and dance routine in a film, *Ibro Aloko*, the main song in the video “Mamar” was used to refer to striped clothing material favored by the then Kano State Governor. The use of the word during a bawdy dance routine therefore was seen as a mockery of the clothing material, and of course the Governor. Urban legends in Kano relate that as a result of the song, striped clothing became shunned, leading to loss by fabric merchants in the State who imported it. In *Gari Ya Yi Zafi* the protagonist relates that the label, Mamar, was actually coined by the fabric merchants, not Dan Ibro, since other fabrics also have “merchant” names; for instance, varieties of brocade are labeled “tajalli”, “veken”, “saka”, etc., while ordinary fabrics have labels like “toyobo”, “kofilin”, “senator”, “chairman” etc. What was even more ironic was that according to Sadi Sidi Sharifai, well-

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known for mimicking Dan Ibro's voice, the voice on Mamar was created by Maidawayya, another Hausa video actor/singer, not any of those mimicking Dan Ibro's voice (Interview, *Fim* magazine, July 2011, p. 42). It was ironic, therefore that Rabily Musa Danlasan was jailed for an offense Dan Ibro, his alter ego, did not commit.

Ibro SanKarau relates further episodes of Dan Ibro's conviction and incarceration. It uses onomatopœic device in its title by altering the ANPP governor's name, Shekarau, to SanKarau, which is the Hausa word for *cerebrospinal meningitis*—the inflammation of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord, a debilitating condition that leads to stiff necks, and even death. The song therefore relates the rigidity of the Censorship Board regime in comedic skits. Two songs, however, were likely to draw the ire of the Censorship Board. These were *Walle-Walle* and *Hasbunallahu*, both with strong writing and vocal input from Aminuddeen Ladan Abubakar (ALA). I will now look closely at how the composition *Hasbunallahu* presents its case.

Case Study 2 – Hasbunallahu [Qur'anic, God is Sufficient for Us, Aminuddeen L. Abubakar and others], Kano, Bluetooth download, 2008, later on Tsangayar CD, 2009

Hasbunallahu was performed by a super-group of five well-known and well-respected male singers in Kano (Aminuddeen L. Abubakar, Misbahu M. Ahmed, Bashir Dandago, Rabi'u Taka, Lafiya and Adam M. Kirfi). The song invokes Allah's wrath on those who made life difficult, particularly for popular culture practitioners.

The song was composed in 24 verses distributed among the five musicians: Rabi'u Taka-Lafiya (5), Misbahu M. Ahmad (5), Aminuddeen ALA (6), Bashir Dandago (3), and Adamu M. Kirfi (5). It was recorded at Hikima Multimedia Studios where Aminuddeen ALA was the Administrative Manager at the time. The excerpts of the performance as reproduced in Lyric Sheet 2.

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Lyric Sheet 2 – Excerpted Verses from *Hasbunallahu*

Verse 3 – Aminuddeen ALA

Allah Ka na gani ma'kiya za su
kassara mu/

Ka jefe su da cuta Allahu duka
su sammu/

Ka kama kawunan su Ka
ruguza su Al-Karimu/

Allah Ka maida su bebaye da
sun gane mu/

Hafa su rigima Allah su da
Jibrilu/

Translation

God, our enemies are about to
destroy us/

Afflict them all with pestilence/

Create chaos among them/

God, make them mute when they
see us/

Let them face the wrath of [Angel]
Gabriel/

Verse 4 – Bashir Dandago

Mai kin mu ko'ina ya ke Allah
Ka jarrabe shi/

Da balbalin bala'i sa a cikin
jikin shi/

In ya yi addu'ar kubuta Rabbih
Ka shirye shi/

In ya ki yai nadama Allah Ka
murkushe shi/

Ka rusa tanadin sa na sharri Al-
Muzillu/

God, set he who hates us on
travails/

And pestilence in his body/

If he repents, God reform him/

If he is recalcitrant, God suppress
him/

Destroy his evil intentions [to us],
O Dishonorer/

Verse 9 – Misbahu M. Ahmad

Mun zama sai ka ce jemagu ga
iyalan mu/

Mun zama mujiya a cikin
jinsin yaren mu/

Su na ta cin amanar bayin Ka
cikin hannu/

Sun shiga inuwar al'adu,
addinin mu/

Allah don isar Ka da mu, Kai

We are like bats to our families/

We have become owls among our
people/

They are betraying your servants/

They have taken refuge in culture
and our religion/

God, our savior, our creator/

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Ka Kage mu/

Ka ba mu kariya don Kaunar Abu Batulu/ Protect us for the love the Prophet/

Verse 17 – Aminu ALA

Cutar gonorrhea har cholera gami da tension/ Diseases like *gonorrhea*, *cholera* and *tension/*

Cutar hawan jini har typhoid in addition/ High blood pressure and typhoid, in addition/

Cuta ta kuturta da makanta a conclusion/ Leprosy, blindness in conclusion/

Cuta ta Kanjamau mai hana dan Adam emotion/ HIV/AIDS which prevents emotions/

Kowa sai ya amsa, 'Amin, Zul Jalalu'/ Everyone say, 'Amen to the Lord of Majesty'/

This song, containing as it does, a spiritual script further drove the thin edge of the wedge that separated the culture industries and their publics against the government. Performed by a super-groupings of singers, it was guaranteed to be a lightning rod which will attract the wrath of the Censorship Board. This it did, because on Sunday 6th June 2009, the offices of Hikima Multimedia Studios in Kano, where the song was composed, were raided by gun-wielding security agents with warrant to arrest the Administrative Manager, Aminuddeen L. Abubakar. Alerted to the possible arrest, he went into hiding, although he was eventually arrested on 4th July 2009 and taken to court, while Hikima Multimedia Studios was closed down by the government. Interestingly, Hikima Studios was owned by politician, Sani Lawan Kofar Mata, who had a falling out with his party, ANPP. The charge sheet against Aminuddeen L. Abubakar stated:

"That you, Aminu Ladan Abubakar, a.k.a. Ala, sometimes around the 1/3/2009 at Gandun Albasa by Zoo Road in Kano Municipal Local Government which is within the jurisdiction of this court, released your produced song titled "Hasbunallahu"

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for public exhibition from the state censorship board, contrary to section 16 of the Kano State Censorship Board Law 2001, and is punishable under section 16 (b) of the same Law.” (Reproduced in Fim (Kaduna, Nigeria) Magazine, August 2009, p. 19).

In the first instance the charge sheet wordings do not make sense, especially where it says, “for public exhibition from the state censorship board”. Secondly, it was not clear how the charge sheet came across a release date of 1st March 2009 for a song although recorded in late 2008, and yet never released officially in any commercial form. In any event, Aminuddeen ALA denied the charges on the simple ground that although he and others did record the song, it was never released commercially, and therefore was not subject to the Censorship Board which covers only creative works meant for public exhibition and available commercially. The case eventually fizzled away due to lack of any concrete evidence, even though Aminuddeen ALA was briefly jailed for periods from few hours to a day during the period the trial lasted.

Few weeks after this incident, a CD appeared in Kaduna markets titled *Tsangayar Kura* [Hyenas Den]. Some independent marketers imported few copies and sold them in Kano markets. The CD includes two banned songs from the list of 11 issued by the Censorship Board in June: *Hasbunallahu* and *Walle-Walle*. Thus the ALA court case merely drew attention to the songs which hitherto were restricted to memory cards of GSM phones. Their inclusion in *Tsangayar Kura* was intended to present them to the larger audience – to tremendous success. For instance, the title track, “*Tsangayar Kura*”, unusually (since commercial Hausa songs rarely last more than four minutes) lasts for almost 10 minutes in which four of the original five singers (excluding Rabi’u Taka-Lafiya) in *Hasbunallahu* extorted their “*tsangayar kura*”, a substitute for “*ramin kura*” [hyenas den]. “The full proverb from which this expression was taken was: “*ramin kura sai “ya”yanta*” – only the children of a hyena can enter its den. To wit, therefore, only intelligent people would enter into singing profession, therefore singers should not be prosecuted as they were being done by the ANPP government.” “*Tsangaya*” usually

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refers to a residential college in the Hausa Islamic learning system. The four singers therefore equated their profession to a college of learning, and warn all dogs to keep away; as the refrain states:

RaRumi ya bad da sahan giwa/ Yazo zai shanye ruwan kasko/ Gayawa kare ya bar sa ran kai talla a tsangayar kura/	The camel wants to camouflage itself It wants to drain the water from the trough Tell the dog to stop dreaming of getting a market in the college of learning
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In this chorus, the four singers clearly indicate that theirs is a structured, almost academic (collegiate) profession since it requires thought and diligence—therefore government “dogs” should keep away.

PDP Reloaded – The “Cult” of Kwankwaso and Popular Mobilization

By 2010 the culture industries in Kano had declared their general support for the opposing PDP party. As explained by Rabilu Musa Danlasan, aka Dan Ibro,

We have to go back to the PDP... True enough we have supported ANPP, but the suffering, ostracization, hatred for our profession we endured forces us to abandon ANPP and support PDP. (Interview in *Fim* magazine, March 2010, p. 22, translation mine).

To make things worse for the ruling ANPP, by March 2010 the party had entered into an internal crisis, leading to loss of confidence in the party machinery which sees mass cross-carpeting from the party to other parties, mainly the opposition PDP. “As part of the series of disenchantments Sani Lawan K/Mata, a stalwart of the party and patron of singers declared a year later in January 2011, that “ANPP is now a dead party which nobody with legitimate interest can afford to hang on to...as from today (Wednesday 12th

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January 2011), I, Sani Lawan Kofar Mata has (sic) withdrawn my membership from the ANPP, and will make my new party known very soon.” <http://www.thenigerianvoice.com/nvnews/43811/1/kano-deputy-governor-others-quit-anpp-for-acn.html>. Accessed 18th April 2012.” This gave the entertainment industry in Kano the perfect opportunity to pitch its camp. Perhaps not surprisingly, the overwhelming support was for PDP governorship candidature of Engineer Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso who was re-contesting again for the post in Kano in 2011 under his old party, PDP. The failure of ANPP in 2011, even though by a narrow margin, can be attributed to the lack of cohesion in the ruling party – too many political interests and internal “anti-party” activities gave the PDP a more unified front. The PDP itself, however also split into two, “In January 2013 another PDP splinter appeared in Kano which called itself “PDP-Jam”iyya” [PDP Party] formed by the old stalwarts of the original PDP as an attempt to cleanse the party of the cultish persona of “Kwankwasiyya-Amana” and refocus on core political philosophy of the Party.” “Garkuwa” (“shield” representing the traditional mainstream party) and “Kwankwasiyya” (coinage, “the cult of Kwankwaso”); however, despite these internal camps, the PDP party machinery remained virtually unified in electing PDP governments, whether in Kano or in neighboring Jigawa State.

The Kwankwasiyya faction of PDP became the new youth party. Adopting colorful vocabulary that alludes to urban gang-violence insouciant coinages such as “wuju-wuju” (scatter) and “dan-ujule” (bloody lip), they appeal to the new “boyz in the hood” mentality of urban youth equivalent to gangster rappers in the United States. Right in the middle of this vocal visibility, and just before the April 2011 elections in Kano, more musics of various categories appeared in support of one-party or other – although predominantly composed in favor of PDP. “During the fieldwork for this article, I was able to collect as many as 350 MP3 songs from Kano, Jigawa, Kaduna and Bauchi States all praising one politician or political party or another. The process of party politics therefore provides massive opportunities for modern Hausa singers to perform the same functions traditional acoustic musicians performed when singing for Nationalist politicians in the 1960s—only now becoming richer than their more literary antecedents; as politicians fall over themselves to

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get paid songs composed for them to boost their electoral chances.” The most popular and which became adopted as an urban anthem of the PDP was composed by Nazifi Abdulsalam Yusuf aka “Asnanic.” It was catchingly titled, *Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso Dawo Dawo* (Kwankwaso return, return). The excerpts of the performance is reproduced in Lyric Sheet 3.

Case Study 3 – Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso Dawo Dawo [Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso Come Back], Kano, Bluetooth download, 2011.

Sung in 13 verses by a single male voice, with accompanying refrain/chorus by female voices. The song disses the former ANPP government and portrays the incoming PDP government as saviors. The central messages of the song are included in Lyric Sheet 3.

Lyric Sheet 3 – Excerpted Verses from *Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso Dawo Dawo*

Verse 5

Mun Ryale zuma a yanzu mun
kama madaciya/

Mun saki tattabara mun raini
hawainiya/

Ga shi ta rikide a yau ta na yin
halin tsiya/

A Kano kuka muke mulki na
tsumagiya/

Kawo mana agaji, zo
Kwankwaso dawo/

Translation

We have become too careless,
forcing the sweet, to become
bitter/

We lost the speedy and cultivated
the slow/

It has now turned into something
bad/

We are crying in Kano because of
the harsh rule/

Come to our aid, come
Kwankwaso, return/

Verse 6

Abun mamaki “yan uwana ku
ji zan fada/

Zan tausa sa murya ta a yau
ba yin rafa/

Wani sirrin Boyen ne na ke so
na yi bankafa/

Don na gaji ne salo na mulkin

This is surprising, brother, so
listen/

I will openly say it, not whisper/

I will reveal a well-hidden secret/

I am tired of these superficial

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‘yan bar-bada/

Kullum sai yaudara ci baya
sun ka kawo/

rulers/

The keep deceiving us and usher
in no progress/

Verse 13

Kwarkwaso mai hanin sakewa
a cikin gida

Munyo shuka girbinta nai
mana gargada

Aike mun yiwa kunkuru mun
kyale gada

Mu mun sake agola ya zama
mulkin gida

Mai hana karya Kwankwaso
dawo dawo

Tiger-ant, that does not allow one
to relax in his home

We planted (him), yet we are
unable to harvest (him)

We sent someone slow, while it
should be one faster

We have become too relaxed, the
step-son has taken over the house

True one Kwanwaso, return,
return

Less philosophical than previous protest songs, *Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso Dawo Dawo* actually reproduces the lyrical structure of an earlier protest song by the same performer, and simply titled *Dawo, Dawo* in which the protagonist relates to how he suffers in Kano and wants to leave the State due to prosecution. The original *Dawo Dawo* was, on its own, extremely popular, although never banned by the Censorship Board, enabling it to acquire a cult-status. It was this that informed the commissioning of the new format, *Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso Dawo Dawo*, by Hajiya Baraka Sani who later became the Kano State Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, after April 2011.

The new version uses compositional oratory common to Hausa traditional musicians, and departs from the other protest songs, in the sense of being a long praise song (“*wakar maroKa*”) and which is usually paid for. “However, in an interview with reporters of the Blueprint newsArticle (Abuja), the singer Nazifi Abdulsalam insisted that he did not make any money out of the song. See the full story at <http://blueprintng.com/2012/08/i-didnt-make-money-out-of-my-song-for-kwankwaso-says-nazifi-asnanic/>, retrieved 25th August 2012.” Inserted within the stanzas are barbs aimed at the ANPP government in Kano in the form of both personal and political critique. For

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instance, in verse 13, a line states that “Mu mun sake agola ya zama mulkin gida” (We have become too relaxed, the step-son has taken over the house) alludes to the “non-Kano” origin of the family of the former Governor. Verse 5 and 6 lyrics have double meaning – for both musicians and popular culture industries generally, as well as for the civil society in that the protagonist narrates the social condition in Kano in the eight years between 2003 to 2011. For the popular culture industries, it was “a Kano kuka mu ke mulki na tsumagiya (we are crying in Kano because of the harsh rule).

Although this song was subversive, carrying similar caustic lyrics to others banned two years earlier, especially *Walle-Walle*, yet it remained untouched, and Nazifi Asnanic was never arrested or harassed by the Censorship Board. The reason may not be unconnected to the sudden awareness by the government machinery, that a line had been crossed by the Censorship Board and which could cost popular support. This was more so as in addition to the internal implosion of the ANPP, filmmakers started to fight back against the Censorship Board outside Kano. For instance on 13th May 2010 the Executive Secretary of the Board was almost lynched in Kaduna after he participated in a discussion program on the film industry and which did not go down well with Kaduna-based filmmakers. It was indeed a turning point because from then onwards up to the elections in April 2011, the Censorship Board stopped prosecuting filmmakers and singers in Kano.

In any event, it all came to pass. On 21st April 2011, Engineer Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso of the People’s Democratic Party, PDP, was declared the winner of the governorship elections in Kano with 46% of the votes cast as against 43.5% of the ANPP candidate. The most visible demonstrations of support was from angst-driven popular culture industries, as captured by many bloggers through pictures of wild celebrations posted on many sites including Facebook. This brings to end, for the meantime, a long drawn-out battle between the popular culture industries in Kano and the political class. I emphasized “meantime”, because the law is the law. This was demonstrated by the arrest and jailing of Sani. Musa Danja—a filmmaker and musician, who was the most vociferous supporter of PDP politicians at both national and Kano State level. He was arrested on 12th November 2012—over a year and a-half after the

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PDP returned to power in Kano on a significant wave of support from filmmakers' fans—for releasing an uncensored film, the mantra the Censorship Board (and under a new leadership, too) always gives out in such situation in the previous political dispensation.

And in a twist of irony, in January 2013 an MP3 music track started making viral rounds in GSM handsets in Kano. It was titled, "Saura Kiris Ta Watse, Kwankwasiyya" [Kwankwasiyya will soon end, Anon]. Echoing sentiments that are directly opposite those in Nazifi Asnanic's Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso Dawo Dawo", "Saura Kiris" is an acerbic indictment of the "cult" of Kwankwasiyya and urging the "cult" members to quit before 'cult' self-destructs – using the same musical infrastructure used by PDP youths that mobilized youth voters against the ANPP.

Ironically, PDP itself eventually imploded due to wrangling between the legacy PDP which controls the Federal Government, and the PDP Kwankwasiyya faction which ruled in Kano. Matters came to a head on Thursday 19th December 2013, when the PDP Governor of Kano State, Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso cross-carpeted to All Progressives Congress (APC), an amalgam of legacy parties (comprising of Congress for Progressive Change, CNPP; All Nigeria Peoples Party, ANPP, and Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN), formed to fight PDP at the central government.

Conclusion

Protest songs *can* have the power to mobilize at least, but it is doubtful if by themselves *alone* they are capable of causing a system-wide change in the polity. Their mobilization power, more visible in African countries, is effective where the electorate has the liberal and democratic freedom to exercise constitutional rights to that might eventually lead to regime change. Thus, as Furniss & Gunner point out, "artistry and skill in Hausa poetry...lie in a variety of dimensions - in the consistency of metre/rhythm; sometimes in the deployment of arcane vocabulary, sometimes in clarity of expression; sometimes in the deployment of imagery and of proverbial reference; sometimes in the symmetries and patterning of parallelism and recursiveness" (Furniss & Gunner, 1995, p. 136).

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The protest singers in Kano employed all these strategies in voter sensitization about the need for change in the political leadership of Kano in 2011. Thus although the ANPP government in Kano failed to win the 2011 election for so many reasons, the lyrical power of musicians who were harassed, intimidated, ostracized, banished, marginalized, demonized, arrested and jailed provided a strong ingredient toward the mix that brought about change of government.

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