Read to Reel: Transformation of Hausa Popular Literature from Orality to Visuality

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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 and practice that is not just artistic and cultural, but also intellectual and political. As 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 antecedent 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 Nigeria, 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 primary language is not Hausa. Indeed it even provides mutually non-legible non-Hausa to communicate to each other, thus often displacing English as a medium of communication. Ironically, it is this success of the language that is to be a bane of the problem of the Hausa video industry. This is because a language is inevitably tied down to cultural identity; when non-Hausa started entering the Hausa video film industry, their representation of a cosmopolitan lifestyles 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 would trace the development of Hausa visual literacy by first tracing Hausa popular culture from its antecedent oral roots, its transition to folkloric opera and indigenous drama before looking at the effect of media technologies that transform the oral-literary process to visual literature. I present this transition via the following diagram which shows how media technologies played a significant role in the reversal of visual literature to oral literate in contemporary Hausa popular culture.

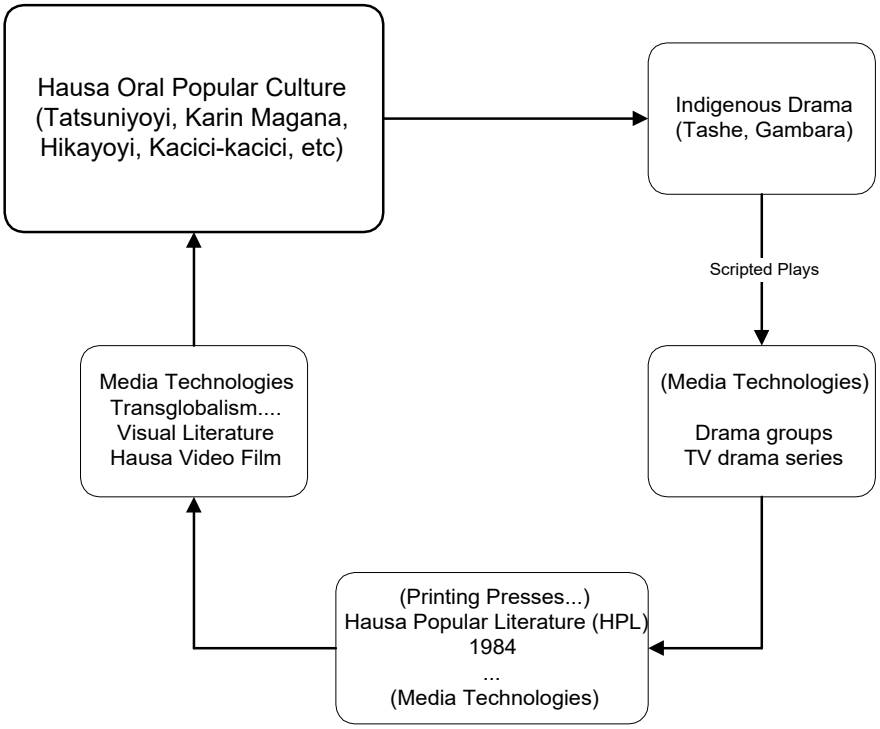

Fig. 1. Media technologies and transitions in Hausa popular culture

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

Oral Narratives and Mental Animated Graphics

The traditional *tatsuniya* folktale is the quintessential antecedent to Hausa popular culture.[1] As the fountainhead of Hausa oral literature it provides a filmic canvas on the life of a Bahaushe (ethnic Hausa) in a 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 moralist manner. It is necessarily a female space, for as argued by Ousseina Alidou (2002b, p.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 its 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

[1] My focus on orality is restricted to popular culture, rather than the whole gamut of oral literature which might encompass historical accounts, heroic epics, riddles and jokes, proverbs, e.t.c.

> 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 younger age of the audience), it connects a straight line between what is good and what is bad and the consequences of stepping out of the 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 unseen audiences. 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 p. 244), building up 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 metaphoric 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 of *The Gazelle has married a human*, 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 gazelle again, calls all her fellow animals and get seriously down with 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"[2] and non-ethnic Hausa, as well as "absorbed" Hausa such as Kanuri, Sakkwatawa, Tuareg, Nupe; and country folks (bumpkins, simpletons, peasants). This is significant because Alidou (2002b, p. 137), arguing from the perspective of a Nigeriène Hausa, in her definition of what constitutes Hausa, argued that

[2] It is interesting that acquisition of Islam has divided the Hausa community into two—"Maguzawa", i.e. Hausa who did not accept any revealed religion, and "Hausawa", i.e. Hausa who predominantly accept Islam (although there are many Hausa who are Christian, but not classified as Maguzawa).

> 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.[3]

Yet the persistence of Nigerian Hausa folktales often casting albeit muted, asperation on other ethnic groups that have been absorbed as Hausa "Banza Bakwai"[4] clearly indicates a subtle internal sub-categorization of 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 are also interspersed comedies revolving around tall stories or lies.

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 *intimisphäre*, but for the reinforcement of 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 video medium.

A study of the thematic classifications of the *tatsuniya* by Ahmad (2002) reveals plot elements that, interestingly, resonates 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 (2002) include unfair treatment of members of the family which sees various family conflicts focusing on favoritism (as for example in the *Kogin Bagaja* folktale), unfair or wicked treatment of children (*Labarin Janna da Jannalo),* and disobedience to parents (*The girl who refuses to marry any suitor with a scar*). This is supplemented by the second theme of the tales, which included reprehensible behavior of the ruling class or those in positions of authority. Sub-themes included forced marriage (*Labarin Tasalla da Zangina*), arrogance by members of the ruling elite (*The daughter of a snake and a prince*), oppression (*A leper and a wicked Waziri and a Malam*). Other themes deal with deceptiveness,

[3] Alidou's interpretation of what constitutes ethnic Hausa has a problem in that the examples she gave of Fulani, Kanuri and Nupe are people with distinct cultural, ethnic and even racial identities and 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.

[4] The ethnicity of Nigerian Hausa—perhaps different from Nigeriène 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, North Central and North western states of Nigeria and the portion of Niger Republic. The second cluster, Banza 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, Kwararafa (Jukun), Nupe, Yauri and Zamfara. The division between Hausa Bakwai and Banza Bakwai, even though contemporarily trivial, confers on the "true Hausa" (Hausa Bakwai "citizens") a feeling of *asali*—true origins—to the Hausa mindset.

personal virtues and virtuous behavior. For further embellishment, some of tales in the *tatsuniya* repertoire contain elements of performance arts where the storylines 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 – Street *Tashe* Drama

The concept of drama is not a recent phenomenon in Hausa communities. Drama clubs and societies had had along history in Kano going back to traditional court entertainments during festivals. Indeed records from the histories of old Kano dating back to the founding of the city since 950 CE or so revealed a structured focus on drama, music and entertainment. Thus drama and theater had 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 the Ramadan. The often 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 p. 4) explains that *tashe*, derived from *tashi* (wake up) refers to the fact that children could not wake up in the middle of the night and engage in household chores—which makes nighttime a source of daytime activities while food is being prepared for *sahur* (night breakfast). They therefore amuse themselves with a series of over 30 games and theater, most focused on simulating the household activities of adults—partaking, early enough, 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 that deals with social responsibility or illumination. I will illustrate with a few of them.

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 which include stone grinding mill (*dutsen nika*) , circular mat for covering pots and vessels (*faifai*), sieve (*rariya*) and others. During the performance the character goes into the process of actually processing the foodstuff of the household the group enter, 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 admonishing the teacher on dancing, with him strenuously denying and indeed pointing out the symbols of scholarship as possible deterrent to him engaging in such folly. When they refuse to believe him, he decided to actually perform a jig to prove he can dance. The main point of the play is to draw the attention of the Muslim teacher class of 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 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 a powerful song and chorus fashion serves to illuminate the audience on indigenous medicine, with the song ending in a declaration of the absolute of powers of the Creator to heal – not the *shaman* (*boka, marabout*) or herbalist.

Neither was the *tashe* theater restricted to males only; girls equally participate in communicating to the community their understanding of their eventual social roles and responsibilities in a series of theater that included *Samodara*, *Ragadada*, *Mai Ciki*, and *A Sha Ruwa*. For instance, in *Ga Mairama Ga Daudu*, two girls dress as a "husband" and "wife" with an 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 relate and communicate with him to hold his attention. The entire script is sung by one of the choir girls, with the "newly weds" acting to the script.

Thus in the elements of these street performances we often see reflections of gender stratification—perhaps not unexpected in a strictly Islamic society, as indeed manifested itself in the original *tatsuniya* folktale. 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, emphasize female social responsibilities. However, with the increasing Islamication of northern Nigeria, the girls' portions of the tashe theaters gradually began to

disappear. By 2005 very few female *tashe* troupes were found in urban Kano; with their places replaced by boys who used to dress in female clothing.[5]

And while *tashe* is an organized activity with specific spatial configuration – performed in household or streets 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* festival settings. A vivid example of this is *Langa*. This is a strenuous physically demanding game engaged by male adolescents only. It is a competitive sport with two teams of anything from six and above 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, the Hausa theater had, of course, since then undergone significant transformations, starting first as a guild-related activity before crossing over to religious performances in the Hausa *bori* cult systems. As pointed out by Kofoworola (1987, p. 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 in about 1320 to Hausaland significantly reduced the religious tones of these performing arts, but nevertheless left a strong template for an effective popular culture. Indeed associated with a ruling class right from its inception, drama had developed into various forms in Emirs' courts throughout northern Nigeria. Thus *Wasan Gauta*, which metamorphosed into *Wasan Garma*; *Wasan 'Yan Kama* and *Wawan Sarki* were all sophisticated theater initially aimed at the entertainment of the palace, but eventually re-enacted for the ordinary citizens in the civil society. This further led to the development of similar groups in the form of, for instance, *'Yan Gambara* and *'Yan Galura* performing artistes who combined comedy, theater and music in public street performances.

Orality to Scripturality in Performing Arts

The logical development of the *tatsuniya* is the *Wasan Kwaikwayo* – written play. The written play, like the *tatsuniya*, is seen as a more serious narrative, thus in the transition to the written play, the *tashe*—considered essentially as a child-related activity—is by-passed completely by the newly Western-educated authors of the new literary genre. *Wasan Kwaikwayo* emerges in Hausa popular culture as a sophisticated

[5] This was observed during the shooting of a documentary I was filming on the 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 Hisba* (moral police in an Islamicate society) who attempted to disband them, with the boys staying their ground and insisting on continuing with their performance.

virtual literary *tatsuniya*, downloaded and made elegant by the *boko* script which distinguishes the "educated" play from the unlettered oral *tatsuniya* folktale in the Western sense. In Hausa oral literature, the *tatsuniya* is the country simpleton cousin of the *Wasan Kwaikwayo*.

Seeking a more intellectual sophistication, and fresh from reading set texts of Western literature, early educated Hausa public intellectuals adopted the *boko* script to create a more metallic *tatsuniya* that departs from the animals and monsters metaphors and addresses the central cerebral sphere of a more sophisticated urban, educated audience. Sliding on the scale from political metaphors to acerbic wit, it provides an intellectual legitimization of the 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, it seeks to formalize the community theater and further emphasize the transition from orality of Hausa literature which saw the transformation of tales to written form. As Pilaszewicz (1985 p. 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* in 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 run-up 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 "people's 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 theatre Aminu learnt how to express issues in a humorous, sometimes satirical and 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 p. 228).

Other plays included *Alhaji Kar ka Bata Hajin Ka* 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 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 one of them.

The years after Nigerian independence in 1960 saw a greater interest in the development of the drama script as a basis for social education. Thus a whole clutch of plays were published from 1967 to 1984 by what eventually became Gaskiya Corporation. These included *Uwar Gulma* (A.M. Sada), *Tabarmar Kunya* (Adamu Dangoggo and David Hofstad), *Bora da Mowa* (U.B. Ahmed), *Malam Muhamman* (B. Muhammad), *Matar Mutum Kabarinsa* (Bashir F. Roukba), *Shehu Umar* (U. Ladan and D. Lyndersy), *Kulba Na Barna* (U.D. Katsina), and *Zaman Duniya Iyawa Ne* (A.Y. Ladan)

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 the 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 *Danmasanin* Kano—a traditional title borrowed form 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 the Kaduna College (long after Aminu Kano had left as a teacher), he became the president of the College's Dramatic Society which had been formed much earlier by Aminu Kano.[6] 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 p. 41).

The first play staged under Maitama Sule's leadership of the Society of Middle School was *Sarkin Barayi Nomau* 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.

[6] Interview with Alhaji Maitama Sule, Danmasanin Kano, Thursday 21st July 2005, Kano, Nigeria.

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 regular. 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 as a part of a civil society orientation.

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 amongst 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, and who continued to be impressed by their repertoire. It came to an end, however, when after a particularly impressive play *Gudu Karin Haske*, the Emir was so impressed he sent gifts to the cast. This offended Ahmadu Tireda's sense of dignity and pride who felt that as an artiste he was performing an educative function, and not a beggar, and therefore rejected his share of the gifts and stopped participating in the radio drama series. It did however continued 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 dramatic society and formed a private theatrical organization. They named it after Maitama Sule by calling it Maitama Sule Film Unit.[7] When it was clear that funding for a full-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., and father of a famous female video film artiste (2000-2005 period), Saratu Gidado who specializes in "cruel mother" roles). Their early stage plays included *Kifi A Cikin Kabewa* and *Ladi Kyaun Wuya*, which were both comedies. Soon they started attracting the attention of not only members of the society, but also mentors and patrons in the form of local wealthy men who sponsored their plays. These patrons of the arts included Alhaji Nuhu Bamalli, 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.[8]

Soon enough the Maitama Sule Drama Group attracted an invitation from the Sardaunan Sakkwato, then the Premier of northern Nigeria, to participate in Festival of Arts and Culture held for the first time in 1963 in Kaduna. Their production, *Bako Raba, Dan Gari Kaba*, which was part of their repertoire, was based on the British

[7] Interview with Alhaji Maitama Sule, Danmasanin Kano, Thursday 21st July 2005, Kano, Nigeria.
[8] 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.

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 innovatively decided to launch a television drama series on Shari'a system, leading to one of the most successful religious programs in northern Nigeria in the form of *Kuliya Manta Sabo*. 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 its founding members; 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.[10] These clubs were not professional in the sense of academically-trained theater arts practitioners; but amateur affairs by enthusiasts who have full-time regular jobs, and take on stage acting as basically a hobby. With 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 the regional television stations via the promulgation of Decree 24 and created Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) with its base 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 Hausa northern Nigeria. 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 p. 35) pointed out,

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[9] Interview with Alhaji Daudu Galadanci, the character actor "Kuliya" of *Kuliya Manta Sabo*, *Fim*, July 1999 pp 42-43.

[10] Sango, Muhammad Balarabe II (2004), The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Development of Hausa Film Industry in Kano, in Adamu, A.U. et al (eds)(2004) *Hausa Home Videos: Technology, Economy and Society*. Kano, Center for Hausa Cultural Studies.

> 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 therefore appealed more to educated elites or cosmopolitan urbanites (especially reflected in dramas such as *Bassey & Co.* with its pidgin English dialogue) with all their messaging about national unity and cultural peculiarities of other ethnic groups in Nigeria, than mainstream Hausa audiences. What exacerbated 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 the national television. The programming schedule of the NTA Kano in its early years reflected its nationalist outlook this, as shown in Table 2.1.

In Kano, CTV was established as a television station in 1981 to provide "community television" to viewers in Kano and environs. It early focus was on drama series and according to Louise M Bourgault (1996, p. 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 were not considered as bases for the CTV dramas—or any, for that matter. In this regard, these products of Western-educated playwrights were shunned by the new media technology of television, and instead, a recourse to community stories—in effect reflecting antecedent preference for tatsuniya and indigenous storytelling—was a preferred mode for creating scintillating drama series on CTV. Indeed one of the most successful CTV dramas, *Bakan Gizo*, about a forced married, borrowed its antecedent storyline from *tatsuniya* folktales. CTV and other Hausa-based television stations around northern Nigeria therefore provided a viewing alternative to the NTA dramas—an alternative that is rooted in the cultural traditions of Muslim Hausa, with its strict gender space delineation, respect for authority, and an encouragement of the acquisition of morally upright behavior. It is this viewing template that is to provide a stumbling block to contemporary middle-aged Hausa male viewers to accept contemporary (2002-2005) Hausa video films. Thus the coming of television changed the entertainment pattern of predominantly urban Hausa audiences. The old grandma with the tall *tatsuniya* tales seems to have gone with the wind. The New Age generation of audience has arrived.

Passage to India – Hindi Film Motifs in Hausa Literature

Increasing exposure to media in various forms, from novels and tales written in Arabic, to subsequently radio and television programs with heavy dosage of foreign contents due to paucity of locally produced programs in the late 1950s and early

1960s provided more sources of *Imamanci* (Abubakar Imam's methodology of literary adaptation) for Hausa authors. The 1960s saw more media influx into the Hausa society and media in all forms – from the written word to visual formats – was used for political, social and educational purposes.

One of the earliest novels to incorporate these multimedia elements – combining prose fiction with visual media – and departing from the closeted simplicity of the earlier Hausa novels, was *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya* by Umar Dembo (1969). This novel reflects the first noticeable influence of Hindi cinema on Hausa writers who had, hitherto tended to rely on Arabic and other European literary sources for inspiration. Indeed, *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya* is a collage of various influences on the writer, most of which derived directly from the newsreels and television programming.[11]

It was written at the time of media coverage of American Apollo lunar landings as constant news items, and *Star Trek* television series as constant entertainment fodder on RTV Kaduna. The novel chronicles the adventures of an extremely energetic and adventurous teen, Kilba, with a fixation on stars and star travel, wishing perhaps to go "boldly where no man has gone before" (the tagline from *Star Trek* TV series). He is befriended by a space traveling alien, Kolin Koliyo, who promises to take him to the stars, only if the boy passes a series of tests. One of them involves magically teleporting the boy to a meadow outside the village. In the next instance, a massive wave of water approaches the boy, bearing an exquisitely beautiful smiling maiden, Bintun Sarauta, who takes his hand and sinks with him to an undersea city, Birnin Malala, to a lavish palace with Jacuzzi-style marbled bathrooms with equally beautiful serving maidens. After refreshing, he dresses in black jacket and white shirt (almost a dinner suit) and taken to a large hall to meet a large gathering of musicians (playing *siriki* or flutes) and dancers.

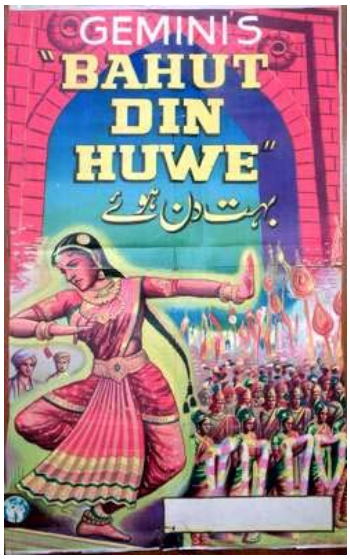
When the music begins—an integrative music that included drums, flutes, and other wind-instruments, as well as hand-claps; all entertainment features uncharacteristic of Hausa musical styles of the period—a singing duo, Muhammadul Waka (actually Kolin Koliyo, the space alien, in disguise) and Bintun Wake serenade his arrival in high-octave (*zakin murya*) voices, echoing singing duets of Hindi film playback singers, Lata Mangeskar and Muhammad Rafi—the Bintun Wake and Muhammadul Waka of *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya*. As fully narrated in the novel:

> The audience burst out in applause, and the band played on, with drums, flutes in full symphony, with drums beaten in low beats. Then the hall went silent, everyone waiting to see what happens next, waiting for the next movement from the musicians and the two singers. Then the drummers resumed their beat, old men started shaking their feet, priests started shaking their heads, young men were shaking their bodies—all swayed by the music. Everyone was waiting for the song to start. Suddenly the lead drummer skidded as if he was leaving the hall. He pulled up his drum and went into solo beat, making people wondrous of what was about to happen. Then an incredibly sweet voice of oratorical proportions burst out singing a beautiful song that cools the heart. Everyone looked towards the sound to it was see Bintun Waka (sic) who started her singing. Then she was joined by Muhammadul Waka, with

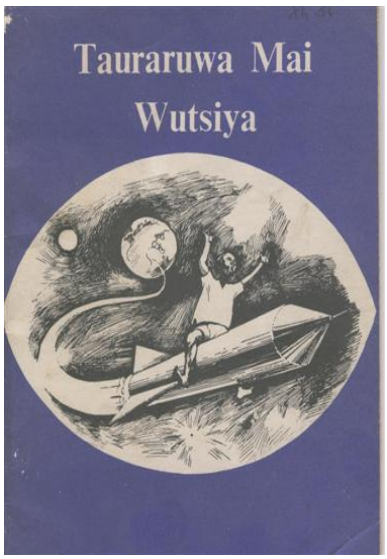
[11] A.G.D. Abdullahi, Tasirin Al'adu da Dabi'u iri-iri a cikin *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya*. *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Hausa Language and Literature*, held at Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria, July 7-10, 978. Kano, CSNL. Kano, Center for the Study of Nigerian Languages.

his own style of singing, swaying his body at the same time, while Bintun Wake joined him, also swaying her derriere and breasts.

This scene, unarguably the first translation of Hindi film motif into Hausa prose fiction, and which was to give birth to Hindinization of Hausa home videos, displays the author's penchant for Hindi films and describes Hindu temple rituals; in Hausa Muslim music structures, *limamai* (priests) do not attend dance-hall concerts and participate. In Hindu culture, however, they do, since the dances are part of Hindu rituals of worship. Plate 1 shows the poster a Hindi film inspiration, *Bahut Din Huwe* (1954) and the cover of the Hausa novel (1969).



Hindi film, *Bahut Din Huwe* (1954)…



…inspired many scenes in Hausa novel *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya* (Umar Dembo, 1969)

Plate 1— Early Hindi inspiration in Hausa novels

Other Hindi films that lend their creative inspiration in the novel's dancing scene included *Hatimahai* (1947) and *Hawwa Mahal* (1962) with their elaborate fairytale-ish stories of mythology and adventure.[12]

Reel to Read—Novelists as Filmmakers

More direct availability of media technologies in the 1970s created opportunities for the leap from written literature to film medium, via oral literature. The direct link between literature and film, however, was made only in 1976 when the late director Adamu Halilu filmed *Shehu Umar*—one of the five stories that were selected by the British colonial administration in a literary competition in 1933. *Shehu Umar* is a vast chronicle of the life and times of the eponymous turn of the century figure whose life story he traces in this narrative about Islam in West Africa.

The success of *Shehu Umar*, the film, provided inspiration for consideration of film adaptations of other Hausa literary classics. Thus 1987 saw the appearance of the film version of *Ruwan Bagaja*—the first adapted novel by Abubakar Imam, which was

[12] I acknowledge, with gratitude the help offered by Sani Lamma who identified the scene in *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya* and suggested that it seemed to be a collage from these three Hindi film. Kano, April 10, 2004.

again part of the famous "first five" novels written in 1933 under the auspices of the Translation Bureau. The didactic nature of these novels was emphasized by their being midwifed by the Directorate of Education, and were aimed directly at primary school pupils.

In the subsequent film adaptation of *Ruwan Bagaja*, Kasimu Yero played the role of Alhaji Imam while Haruna "Mutuwa Dole" Danjuma played Malam Zurke bn Muhamman. These two novels—*Ruwan Bagaja* and *Shehu Umar*—however remained the only ones to be translated into the film medium from the stable of the first five Hausa novels published in 1935.

By 1980, the Northern Nigerian Publishing Company, NNPC, the main media publishing house in Northern Nigeria, had virtually stopped publishing prose fiction works, restricting itself to recycling of the old classics as well as more educational materials. The process of publishing became a cash-and-carry affair with authors being charged for printing of their works (e.g. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu's *Wa Zai Auri Jahila?*). Most of the prospective new authors did not have the fund to get their works printed by the major publishing houses.

With media parenting in the form of increasing deluge of television and radio programs imported from Asia, it was only a matter of time before the template provided by *Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya* started providing a basis for writing stories with Hindi cinema themes of love and romance from early 1980s. Thus a new crop of Hausa indigenous authors then emerged from 1980 with the appearance of *So Aljannar Duniya* by Hafsat AbdulWahid, the first Hausa-speaking Fulani female novelist. This heralded the arrival of a new age generation. The modern classical Hausa writers (e.g. Suleiman I. Katsina, Bature Gagare) of the early 1980s seemed to have retired their pens, since most of them were one-hit wonders; producing a text that was well received and used as a textbook for West African School Certificate Hausa examinations. Just like the Hausa classical (e.g. Abubakar Imam, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa) and neoclassical (Abdulkadir Dangambo, Ahmadu Ingawa) writers before them, they enjoyed the patronage of the State or multinational corporate publishing houses, eager to cash on the burgeoning high school population, freshly spewed from the pools of the mass educational policy of Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme of 1976.

When stringent economic reforms ('austerity') hit, the publishing companies felt it, and they had no option but re-prioritize and withdraw their patronage of vernacular works. It took two competitions (1978 and 1980) to tease out more writers who fall neatly into the third generation, but still using the modern Hausa mode. Some, however, hark back at the classical Hausa formats (e.g. *Amadi Na Malam Amah* which can draw a parallel with *Ruwan Bagaja*).

The newcomers gate-crashed the Hausa literary scene with ballistic urbanism, divesting readers from the village simplicity of the earlier Hausa classics of heroes, demons, monsters and evil rulers. They were cultural cyborgs: an uneasy confluence between the two rivers of Hausa traditionalism and modern hybrid urban technological society. Strangely enough, they did not build on the thematic styles of their "modernist uncles" of the 1980s. Neither did they pay any homage to the *tatsuniya* stable of scripts, considering *tatsuniya* a "fiction" with no basis in reality.

Further the new generation of writers avoided giving too much attention to Marxist politics (as, for instance in the earlier *Tura Ta Kai Bango*), gun-toting dare-devils, drug cartels (e.g. as in *Karshen Alewa Kasa*), prostitution or alcohol consumption. Writing in uncompromising and unapologetic Modern Hausa (often interlaced with English words to reflect the new urban lexicon of *Ingausa*), they focused their attention on the most *emotional* concern of urban Hausa youth: love and marriage; thus falling neatly into the romanticist mold, or *soyayya*.

In this respect, they unwittingly borrow antecedents from the European *sentimental* novel. This is because, as was the case of the 18th century European genre, the new Hausa prose fiction *soyayya* writer exploits the reader's capacity for tenderness, compassion, or sympathy to a disproportionate degree by presenting a beclouded or unrealistic view of the subject. In Europe, the genre arose partly in reaction to the austerity and rationalism of the Neoclassical period. The sentimental novel exalted feeling above reason and raised the analysis of emotion to a fine art. This was perfectly reflected in the saccharine dialogs, often interlaced with bursts of long songs characteristic of the new Hausa romantic fiction.

The economic boom of the country had gone into nosedive by the time these literary "mercenaries" and stalwarts arrived. Thus they were not guaranteed schools to proceed after high schools; and no automatic scholarships wait for them. For many who were able to eke out living, in petty artisan occupations (e.g. cap-making, sewing clothes) or lowly clerical chores in government offices, their next attention was settling down and getting into a humdrum of a family life. For many it was a shock to learn that they cannot marry their loved ones due to their abject poverty, and that the girl of their dreams (literally) had been given away, often against her wish, to a rich pot-bellied *Alhaji* with tons of cash to sway everyone's minds. For many, these experiences were enough to convert them to neophyte literati, and the focus of their angst is clearly outpouring of imaginary romanticism. Thus the *soyayya* genre made its appearance. Consequently one of the most successful books of the emergent genre was the autobiographical *In Da so Da Kauna* by Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino, written in anger in 1990 and published in 1991. Other writers, especially the women, see life through the prism of a soap opera and therefore chronicle the day-to-day experiences of *kishi* (resentment amongst co-wives) and the issue of female empowerment through making it clear that girls have a choice in deciding the direction of their lives. No matter the medium of expression, the end message is clear: personal empowerment, and the right to choice. It is this message that drew the flak on the themes and subject matter of their writing.

Thus emerged the genre of Hausa Popular Literature, contemptuously labeled *Labaran Soyayya* and Kano Market Literature, [13] which by 2002 had produced more than 700 titles (Furniss 2004) – thanks to the increasing availability of cheap printing presses. Pioneers in the genre included Ibrahim Saleh Gumel's *Wasiyar Baba Kere*

[13] Malumfashi, Ibrahim., "Adabin Kasuwar Kano", *Nasiha* 3 & 29 July 1994. The first (?) vernacular article in which Ibrahim Malumfashi created the term *Adabin Kasuwar Kano* (Kano Market Literature), a contemptuous comparison between the booming vernacular prose fiction industry, based around Kano State (with *Center of Commerce* as its State apothegm) and the defunct Onitsha Market Literature which flourished around Onitsha market in Anambra State in the 1960s. In 2005 Graham Furniss, on the basis of various interactions with Abdalla Uba Adamu and Yusuf Adamu created the term *Hausa Popular Literature* (HPL) to describe the genre.

(1983); *Inda Rai Da Rabo* (1984) by Idris S. Imam, and *Rabin Raina I* (1984) by Talatu Wada Ahmad.

When in the early to mid 1990s the VHS camera became affordable, a whole new visual literature was created by this first crop of contemporary Hausa novelists. As Graham Furniss noted,

> One of the most remarkable cultural transitions in recent years has been this move from books into video film. Many of the stories in the books now known as Kano Market Literature or Hausa Popular Literature are built around dialogue and action, a characteristic that was also present in earlier prose writing of the 1940s and 1950s. Such a writing style made it relatively easy to work from a story to a TV drama, and a number of the Hausa TV drama series (*Magana Jari Ce*, for example) derived their story lines from texts. With the experience of staging comedies and social commentaries that had been accumulating in the TV stations and in the drama department of ABU, for example, it was not difficult conceptually to move into video film.[14]

Yusuf Adamu was able to link a number of the new wave of Hausa novels with their transition to the visual medium, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Hausa novels adapted into Home Videos

S/N	Author	Novel to Video
1.	Abba Bature	Auren Jari
2.	Abdul Aziz M/Gini	Idaniyar Ruwa
3.	Abubakar Ishaq	Da Kyar Na Sha
4.	Adamu Mohammed	Kwabon Masoyi
5.	Ado Ahmad G/Dabino	In Da So Da Kauna
6.	Aminu Aliyu Argungu	Haukar Mutum
7.	Auwalu Yusufu Hamza	Gidan Haya
8.	Bala Anas Babinlata	Tsuntsu Mai Wayo
9.	Balaraba Ramat	Alhaki Kwikwiyo
10.	Balaraba Ramat Yakubu	Ina Son Sa Haka
11.	Bashir Sanda Gusau	Auren Zamani
12.	Bashir Sanda Gusau	Babu Maraya
13.	Bilkisu Funtua	Ki Yarda Da Ni
14.	Bilkisu Funtua	Sa'adatu Sa'ar Mata
15.	Dan Azumi Baba	Na San A Rina
16.	Dan Azumi Baba	Idan Bera da Sata
17.	Dan Azumi Baba	(Bakandamiyar) Rikicin Duniya
18.	Dan Azumi Baba	Kyan Alkawari
19.	Halima B.H. Aliyu	Muguwar Kishiya
20.	Ibrahim M. K/Nassarawa	Soyayya Cikon Rayuwa
21.	Ibrahim Mu'azzam Indabawa	Boyayyiyar Gaskiya (Ja'iba)
22.	Ibrahim Birniwa	Maimunatu
23.	Kabiru Ibrahim Yakasai	Suda
24.	Kabiru Ibrahim Yakasai	Turmi Sha Daka
25.	Kabiru Kasim	Tudun Mahassada
26.	Kamil Tahir	Rabia[15]

[14] Graham Furniss, *Hausa popular literature and video film: the rapid rise of cultural production in times of economic decline*. Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien, Department of Anthropology and African Studies, Arbeitspapiere / Working Papers Nr. 27. Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Forum 6, D-55099 Mainz, Germany.

[15] This was different from *Rabiat* by Aishatu Gidado Idris who abandoned the project of converting her novel into a home video.

S/N	Author	Novel to Video
27.	M.B. Zakari	Komai Nisan Dare
28.	Maje El-Hajeej	Sirrinsu
29.	Maje El-Hajeej	Al'ajab (Ruhi)
30.	Muhammad Usman	Zama Lafiya
31.	Nazir Adamu Salihu	Naira da Kwabo
32.	Nura Azara	Karshen Kiyayya
33.	Zilkifilu Mohammed	Su Ma 'Ya'ya Ne
34.	Zuwaira Isa	Kaddara Ta Riga Fata
35.	Zuwaira Isa	Kara Da Kiyashi

After Adamu (2003)[16], with additions

Literary adaptations to cinematic medium, of course, is as old as the media themselves. In world literature such adaptations included *Cry, The Beloved Country* (Alan Paton), *Schindler's List* (Thomas Keneally), *The Silence of the Lambs* (Thomas Harris), *A Room with a View* (E.M. Forster), *Jurassic Park* (Michael Crichton), *The Handmaid's Tale* (Margaret Atwood), *Sense and Sensibility* (Jane Austen), *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte Bronte), *The Hunt for Red October* (Tom Clancy), *The Prince of Tides* (Pat Conroy), *Contagion* (Robin Cook), *The Last of the Mohicans* (James Fenimore Cooper). Each of these produced a block-busting film that, in varying degree provided a creative footnote to the original written script.

When the new wave of Hausa writers started producing, in massive quantities, prose fiction interlaced with love stories and emotional themes, literary and textual critics started comparing their storylines with Hindi films, with accusations that they rip-off such films.[17] Thus the Hindi film *Romance* was claimed to be ripped-off as *Alkawarin Allah* by Aminu Adamu.[18] Similarly, it was argued by Ibrahim Malumfashi that the transition to Visuality was first through prose fiction of the more prominent writers with passing nods to Hindi cinema. Citing an example, he claimed that

> Bala Anas Babinlata's (novel) *Sara Da Sassaka* is an adaptation of the Indian film *Iqlik De Khaliya* (sic) while his *Rashin Sani* is another transmutation of another Indian film, *Dostana*, etc.[19]

And yet he contradicted his textuality when in 2002 he wrote:

> Complaints against the Kano Market Literature in its halcyon days focused on how mindsets alien to Hausa culture were reflected in the novels, most especially direct borrowing of ideas that included Indian, European and Arabic media sources. For instance, *Sara da Sassaka* by

[16] Yusuf Adamu, "Between the Word and the Screen: A Historical Perspective on Hausa Literary Movement & the Home Video Invasion." Adapted from a paper presented at the 20th Annual Convention of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Jos, 15-19th, November, 2000. The paper was also published as Yusuf M. Adamu "Between the word and the screen: a historical perspective on the Hausa Literary Movement and the home video invasion". *Journal of African Cultural Studies,* Volume 15, Number 2, December 2002, pp. 203-213.

[17] Halima Abbas, "New Trends in Hausa Fiction", *New Nigerian Literary Supplement — The Write Stuff*, 11, 18, July; 1 August, 1998. This was a post-graduate seminar presentation of the Department of Nigerian and African Languages, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria held on June 3, 1998 towards an M.A. degree.

[18] Muhammad Kabir Assada, "Ramin Karya Kurarre Ne", *Nasiha*, 16-22 September 1994, p. 4.

[19] Ibrahim Malumfashi, "Dancing Naked in the Market Place", *New Nigerian Weekly Literary Supplement — The Write Stuff*, July 10, 1999 p. 14-15. I confronted Bala Anas Babinlata with this observation after it was published, and like all Hausa authors, he strenuously objected to the insinuation that they adapted Hindu cinema for their novels. Interview, Kano, August, 1999.

> Bala Anas Babinlata is an adapted Indian film, *Dostana*; *In So Ya Yi So* by Badamasi Burji, was from *Iglik De Khaliya* (sic), while *Farar Tumfafiya* by Zuwaira Machika was *Kabhie Kabhie*.[20]

It is not clear here which of Bala Anas Babinlata's novels is adapted from an Hindi film: *Sara da Sassaka* (which Malumfashi claimed in 1999 to be *Dostana*) or *Rashin Sani* (claimed in 2002 to be *Dostana*). Indeed, in a surprising turn of polemics, Ibrahim Malumfashi, a writer and literary critic, was accused of adapting an Hindi film in his first novel, *Wankan Wuta* by A.S. Malumfashi, another writer, who argued:

> "…Since the demise of the legendary Alhaji Imam, many writers….have been trying to step into the shoes he bequeathed, but none of them has succeeded. Such contemporary writers are legion; the indefatigable Ibrahim Sheme, the writer of The *Malam's Potion*, *Kifin Rijiya*….Dr. Ibrahim Malumfashi, who intended to continue with Imam's famous *Magana Jari Ce* but ended up wasting his time writing the serialized *Wankan Wuta*: a book that questions the creativity of the writer as it appears to be a hopeless plagiarism of an Indian film, *Khudgarz*, and Jeffrey Archer's *Kane and Abel*. Though they have through their various works been preserving Hausa literature as well as promoting the reading habit among the Hausa people more than during the Imam era, unfortunately none of them has matched Imam's great genius and wisdom…" (A. S. Malumfashi, *New Nigerian Weekly*, May 22, 1999, p. 15).[21]

Brian Larkin also provides arguments that seem to link the plot structures of Hausa novels of the 1990s with Hindi commercial cinema themes, although he does not provide a specific textual analysis that links a specific novel with a specific Hindi film.[22] Larkin's analysis, however was within the framework of what he calls "parallel modernities" that see a reproduction of convergent cultural spaces between Hausa novelists and Hindi commercial cinema.

Women novelists, particularly those with an ideological slant in their novels were quick to take on the opportunity provided by the new visual medium to illustrate their messages. These included Bilkisu Funtuwa, Zuwaira Isa, Aishatu Gidado Idris (*Rabiat*, abandoned production of a video with the same name due to "creative differences" with cast and crew) and Balaraba Ramat Yakubu, whose first video (interestingly not adapted from any of her novels) …*Sai A Lahira* set some sort of record in 2000 as the most expensive female-produced video in the industry at production cost of over one million naira then about $7,407).

Balaraba Ramat Yakubu, the most ideological of the female authors was the only female producer who set out to actively portray a feminist/womanist ideology in her videos. Most famously known as the author of best selling novels like *Wa Zai Auri*

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[20] Ibrahim A.M. Malumfashi, *Adabi Da Bidiyon Kasuwar Kano A Bisa Fai-fai: Takaitaccen Tsokaci*. Paper presented at a Seminar on New Methods of Hausa Literature, and organized by the Center for the Study of Hausa Languages, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, 8-9th July, 2002.

[21] See also Muhammad Qaseem, "*Wankan Wuta* ko Wankar Littafi?" *Nasiha*, Friday 11-17 November, 1994.

[22] Larkin, Brian., "Modern Lovers: Indian Films, Hausa Dramas and Love Novels Among Hausa Youth", *New Nigerian Literary Supplement — The Write Stuff*, February 21, 26 , 1997. This paper was initially presented at the African Studies Association Annual Meeting at Orlando, Florida, U.S., November 3-6 1995; Also published as "Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers: Media and the Creation of Parallel Modernities." *Africa*, Vol 67, No 3, 1997, pp. 406-439

Jahila?, *Budurwar Zuciya*, *Ina Sonsa Haka*, and *Alhaki Kwikwiyo*[23] two of her novels, *Ina Sonsa Haka*, *Alhaki Kwikwiyo* were converted into the video media. She wrote the original novel, *Alhaki Kwikwiyo* which was adapted for a screenplay and made into home video. However, Ms. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu, the subject of international critical study on her novels[24] disowns this particular video as her own in an interview with *Fim* magazine of December 1999 (p. 30). She stated that only about 40% of the story narrated in the novel, *Alhaki Kwikwiyo*, was incorporated into the video. Also she was not the one who developed the script for the video.[25]

Alhaki.. and *Ina Sonsa Haka*, reflect her womanist interpretation of the determination of a Hausa woman to be independent within the boundaries of a traditional society. The posters for the two videos are shown in Plate 2.

Alhaki Kwikwiyo Ina Son Sa Haka[26]

Plate 2 – Feminist/Womanist Ideology in Hausa Home video

Both the two videos deal with a womanist anthem that see a radical interpretation of a woman in a traditional society (as opposed to feminism which seek political, social

[23] For a full discussion of feminist/womanist discourse in Balaraba Ramat's fiction, see Abdalla Uba Adamu (2003), Parallel Worlds: Reflective Womanism in Balaraba Ramat Yakubu's Ina Son Sa Haka. *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*: Issue 4.

[24] Two significant works included: Novian Whitsitt, "The Literature of Balaraba Ramat Yakubu and the Emerging Genre of Littatafai na Soyayya: A Prognostic of Change for Women in Hausa Society." An Unpublished thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (African Languages and Literature) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1996; and "Excerpts from Balaraba Ramat Yakubu, Alhalo Kwikwiyo (sic)" Translated from Hausa by William Burgess, in Stephanie Newell(ed), *Readings in the African Popular Fiction*. Indiana University Press, 2002.

[25] The script was sold to FILAPS, Kano, who produced the video at the cost of N20,000 equivalent to about $154 in 1999. In a discussion with one of the producers, AbdulKareem Mohammed, he retorted that they were not obliged to follow the book since they wanted to make the video more visually appealing. Incidentally, Ms. Ramat was present when he made this remark.

[26] For a critical and literary analysis of *Ina Son Sa Haka*, the book from which the video was derived, and which explored Hausa Womanism, see Adamu, A.U. (2003), "Parallel Worlds"….

and economic equity in a male-dominated society) — initially abused and discarded, but bouncing back in full force and retaining the same traditional world view; but in a more detached and independent manner. *Alhaki* caused some furor due to its too many "adult" scenes (i.e. a hand casually draped over inter-gender actors!), making some critics to label it "batsa" (sexually dirty). As one viewer angrily wrote in the letters page of *Fim*,

> I want to talk about the video, *Alhaki Kwikwiyo*…It is clear this fim sets out deliberately to corrupt the upbringing of our children because of nudity and (soft) pornography in it…no right thinking person, especially if they know what it contains, would buy the fim for his family due to the bad scenes in it..Alhaki Kwikwiyo bai dace ba (Alhaki Kwikwiyo is not proper), Alhaji Rabi'u Uba, Unguwar Zango, Kano, *Fim*, Letters page, March 2000 p.9.

For a traditional society, the sight of a bare-chested man lifting his bride – a strategically clothed otherwise bare-chested woman, looking suggestively into her eyes, and putting her down a bed and laying down beside her does evoke feelings of outrage.[27] This revealed a chasm between filmmakers as literary adapters and writers; for while the writer was cautious in communicating "adult" messages to predominantly young readers, the director was more focused on creating a more visually appealing messaging.[28]

Ina Son Sa Haka, based on the best-selling Hausa novel of the same name, chronicles the true-life story of a woman who was forced by her father into marrying a husband she detests, how she ran away from the situation, met another person who was stuck by tragedy and stood by him despite strong opposition from her family. Interestingly, it was based on a true story.

Conclusions

In the path trodden by Hausa novelists in adapting their works to the video film media (the only one affordably available to them) they often chose to be the script writers, producers, directors, and often editors. This is not just to avoid "creative difference" (as happened between Hafizu Bello's adaptation of Maje El-Hajeej's novel *Al'ajab* as *Ruhi*[29]) but to ensure a control in the production process, which included the marketing.

Interestingly enough, the novelist filmmakers combined a series of motifs to transform their written works into a visual fest. As noted earlier, forced marriage, co-wife rivalry (*kishi*), oppression by domestic authority (whether a constituted or familial) are some of the key elements in Hausa folktale. These same elements are reproduced in parallel way in Hindi commercial cinema to which these authors were 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.

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[27] To show the extent of the "conservatism" of Hausa video viewers, a similar outrage greeted a scene in *Sa'adatu* 2 in which a leading character appeared in a swimming trunk and entered a privately secluded swimming pool. The viewers' reaction was that he appeared "naked" and that art should not be placed above religion and culture (see the angry letters, and the actor's response in *Fim*, July 1999).

[28] Discussions with the producer of *Alhaki Kwikwiyo*, Alhaji AbdulKareem Mohammed, Kano, 18th January 2003.

[29] *Ruhi* went to become the first Hausa video film to be awarded the best actor in Hausa films by a British-based entertainment company, Afrohollywood, in October 2005.

Shunning the *tatsuniya* and its *tashe* variant as well as refusal to even adapt some of the plays to the visual medium conferred on the filmmakers a new independence and control over the medium which 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 story telling in modernized Hausa societies. This indeed even led to adaptations of two *tatsuniya* into the film medium. These were *Daskin Da Ridi* and *Kogin Bagaja* (which was based on the plot elements of *Ruwan Bagaja).* These, however, did not catch on, and from 2000 an entire Hausa video film industry emerged which based its scripts on ripping-off Hindi commercial cinema and converting them into Hausa. To date more than 130 of Hindi films have been converted into Hausa language, complete with song and dance routines.

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. Not so in Hausa tales where the plot development is transparent and linear. The persistent accusations that the more "adult" scenes in the pre-censorship Hausa video films (*Sauran Kiris*, *Jahilci Ya Fi Hauka*, *Alhaki Kwikwiyo*) were that "children" 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 a variable, and thus uniform judgments and restrictions are 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 would therefore a perpetually saccharine video film productions without any 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 routines.

Interestingly, the strongest proponents of the song and dance routines in Hausa home video films were acculturated non-ethnic Hausanized film makers who entered the video film industry with vastly different mindset from the mainstream. What made their entry easier was the fact of Hausa being a lingua franca in the vast tracts of northern Nigeria, even in communities that do not have Hausa settlers. It is clear, of course, that any Hausa medium entertainment must cater for both Muslim Hausa and non-Muslim Hausa speaking clients. It is this desire to reach wider audience that

brings the song and dance routines to the fore, at the expense of any storyline that would necessitate the audience to download Hausa core cultural values.[30]

This increasing participation by non-ethnic Hausa into the Hausa video production process was the trigger that fired off censorship, not because of their non-Hausa ethnicity, but because they approached the whole home video film industry with a different mindset from the Hausa. For while the mainstream ethnic Hausa are bound by traditions of *kunya*, *kawaici* (bashfulness), the newer elements were more focused on pure entertainment rather than cultural messaging in the film media.

These acculturated Hausanized Muslim and non-Muslim non-ethnic Hausa were originally Yoruba, Igbira, Beni, Nigeriène, Babur, Tuareg, Yemeni, Kanuri, and members of other "minor" northern Nigerian tribes whose parents settled in large urban Hausa centers.[31] They were born among the Hausa and most can speak the language fluently with only a little trace of accent. They also attended all their schools among the Hausa and perhaps except for linguistic and often dress codes, would not be distinguished from the Hausa. These non-ethnic Hausa elements strive very hard to mask their actual ethnic identities[32] and invariably accept roles of modernized Hausa urban youth in the home videos, rather than appearing in traditional Hausa or religious character portrayals. Even their dialogs were restricted to urban Hausa lexicon, devoid of any references to classical Hausa vocabulary typical of rural dwellers that might cause problems in pronunciation.

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

> Whenever you mention Hausa home video it is assumed these are videos made by true ethnic Hausa. Surprisingly and annoyingly, in an investigation, we discovered this was not true, only few of those involved in production of Hausa home video are true ethnic Hausa. The ethnic tribes that overrun the Hausa home video industry include Kanuri, Igbos and most significant of all, the Yoruba. In a table we drew, about 42% of the Hausa home video producers and artistes were of Yoruba extraction, 10% were Kanuri, 8% were Igbos. Thus only about 40% are true ethnic Hausa, and yet these videos are called *Hausa* videos." ("Hausawa sun yi k'aranci a shirin fim. (There is a dearth of true ethnic Hausa in Hausa video films), *Mumtaz*, April 2001, p. 12).

Indeed it was argued by many of the insiders that most of the "experimental" and bold home videos (especially the dance routines) had to be necessarily made by non-ethnic Hausa because they are not restricted by the Hausa conservative cultural and religious mindset that often frowns at such displays of exuberance, particularly in alien format.

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[30] Further, the persistent ethno-religious clashes between the Muslim Hausa and other nationalities in northern Nigeria has created a zone of mutual suspicion and further resentment about the overwhelming importance of the Hausa language as a lingua franca in the region.

[31] The Fulani, are of course excluded from any discussion of "non-Hausa" due to the media fusion of Hausa and Fulani ethnic nationalities into "Hausa-Fulani". However, most of the "Hausa" artistes are actually genetic Fulani, although only few of them could actually *speak* Fulfulde (according to my sources, only about three — and all female).

[32] In various interviews with Fim magazine, they often claim one of their parents being non-Hausa, in order to prove to audience that despite not being "pure" Hausa, they can still be considered Hausa.

Thus their preference for song and dance routines, which their cartel of about four production studios control in Kano was a way of avoiding too much dialogue in Hausa language

The videos produced by these mindset of values—pure Hindi cinema, with strong focus on song and dance routines—became best sellers, catapulting young Hausa artistes into the "megastar" status. This pattern was cloned by mainstream Hausa such that it became difficult to distinguish between the two production values. In this process, it is significant to note the catalytic influence of non-ethnic Hausa on the visual media. There is no attempt by the non-ethnic Hausa to engage in the literary process; nor to adapt the *tatsuniya* and *tashe* theaters into video films. However, using the universal appeal of the Hausa language, it became easy for them to adapt Hindi commercial cinema for a large audience. It is clear therefore that Hausa popular culture has to contend with globalization both within and without its cultural space.

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