THE NOVEL TRADITION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 4TH CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Edited By:
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EAST IS EAST: CULTURAL PROXIMITY AND EASTERN FOCUS IN THE HAUSA NOVEL

BY

ABDALLA UBA ADAMU

INTRODUCTION

For reasons that were not entirely too clear, when the literary roots of the Hausa novel were being planted in early 1930s, the antecedent seedlings were imported from the Middle Eastern folklore. Northern Nigeria and the Middle East then, as now, shared remarkable cultural spaces in religious, word-borrowings, social mores and cultural mindsets rooted in Islam. Perhaps what informed the decision to use the Middle East as a template in providing adaptations and translations of hundreds of stories by Abubakar Imam that eventually ended up as *Magana Jari Ce*, was the perception of colonial officers, especially Rupert East, the second Director of the Translation Bureau set up for the purpose in 1929, of a shared cultural space between northern Nigerian Muslim Hausa and Middle Eastern peoples. He observed, for instance, that the Muslim environment created a serious minded scholar not inclined to frivolities of novel writing. As he noted,

> The first difficulty was to persuade these Malamai that the thing was worth doing. The influence of Islam, superimposed on the Hermitic strain in the blood of the Northern Nigerian, produces an extremely serious-minded type of person. The art of writing, moreover, being intimately connected in his mind with his religion, is not to be treated lightly. Since the religious revival at the beginning of the last (19th) century, nearly all the original work produced by Northern Nigerian authors has been

> either purely religious or written with a strong religious motive (East 1936, pp351-352).

As the first port of modern educational call in the colonial education policy, the "Malamai" had to be the ones to be recruited to write any such novels. The main focus of the Translation Bureau was just that – translation of literary works using the sparkling brand new Hausanized Roman script. It was only when Dr. Rupert East took over in 1932 that it acquired the persona of what Nikolai Dobronravine (2003) refers to as *Istanci* and became devoted to wholesale translation of works from far and near (although the further, the better because nearer literary communities, both geographically and culturally such as The Sudan and Egypt were ignored) into Hausa in order to generate reading material, more essentially to enable colonial officers to polish their practice of Hausa language for communication, than to empower the "natives" with enriched literary heritage. As Yahaya (1989 p.80) apologetically argues,

> The decision to set up a translation Bureau was probably informed by the general belief that translating from other languages into a given language enriches the lexicon of the language, its literature and culture.

It was this obsession with *translation* of carefully selected works, rather than fully encouraging local indigenous initiatives into literary explorations that earned this era of Hausa literary development the epithet of *Istanci* – principally due to the forceful nature of Rupert East, its main protagonist. Subsequently, the thematic focus of the early Hausa novel, as Graham Furniss notes, was:

> not facing West; if they face anywhere they face East, to India, Ceylon, Egypt, the Red Sea, and the lands where famous warriors travel on elephants into battle. It is there that the popular imagination goes transported by these stories, not as allegories of nation, but as extensions of and challenges to the notion of community (Furniss 1998, p.100).

The increasing exposure to entertainment media in various forms, from novels and tales writing in Arabic, to subsequently radio and television programs with heavy dosage of foreign contents due to the paucity of locally produced programs in the late 1950s and early 1960s provided more sources of *Imamanci* (Imam's methodology of 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 were used for political, social and educational purposes.

Hausa literature went into a coma in the period from 1950 to 1984, when most of the efforts were either sponsored by the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Culture, in the form of literary competitions, or published by Gaskiya/NNPC/Norla as part of a set of reading materials for Hausa language and literature studies for Ordinary level examinations. Novel writing was still at a "literary" level. Such literary focus – with emphasis on correct interpretation of Hausa social (and often political) mindset in the discourses of novelist and playwrights such as S.I. Katsina (*Tura Ta Kai Bango,* 1983), I. Y. Muhammad *Duniya Tumbin Giwa*, 1973), A. Dangambo (*Kitsen Rogo*, 1979), Kamaruddin Imam (*Tsaka Mai Wuya, (*1983) among others. Indeed from the anthology of Hausa novels and plays within the period of 1954 to 1986, there are no less than 45 published books (see Yahay 1988).

Availability of cheap printing presses made possible by the ushering in of new political era in 1979 in Nigeria created possibilities for self-printing, leading to the emergence of new novel forms. There are no specific records to show which urban cluster in the north started the private publishing phenomena, but it would seem to have been kick-started by the appearance of Ms Talatu Wada Ahmed's *Rabin Raina* – a series of three similarly titled, but unrelated novels, privately printed in Zaria from 1984 to 1988. Table 1 shows the first group Hausa novelists of the recent dispensation from the north of Nigeria.

Table 1: A Selection of Pioneer Hausa Prose Fiction[1]

S/N	Title	Author	Year
1.	*So Aljannar Duniya*	Hasfat AbdulWaheed	1981
2.	*Wasiyar Baba Kore*	Ibrahim Saleh Gumel	1983
3.	*Inda Rai Da Rabo*	Idris A. Imam	1984
4.	*Rabin Raina I*	*Talatu Wada Ahmad	1984
5.	*Soyayya Gamon Jini*	Ibrahim H. Abdullahi Bichi	1986
6.	*Budurwar Zuciya*	*Balaraba Ramat Yakubu	1986
7.	*Rabin Raina Ii*	*Talatu Wada Ahmad	1987
8.	*Wa Zai Auri Jahila?*	*Balaraba Ramat Yakubu	1987
9.	*Kogin Soyayya*	A. M. Zaharaddeen Yakasai	1988
10.	*Alhaki Kwikwiyo*	*Balaraba Ramat Yakubu	1988
11.	*Rabin Raina III*	*Talatu Wada Ahmad	1988
12.	*Mata Masu Duniya*	*Kulu MB. Tambuwal	1988
13.	*Kaikayi*	Abubakar Bala Gyadi-Gyadi	1989
14.	*Kashe Makashinka*	Alhaji Y. Abubakar Mohammed	1989
15.	*Rabon Kwado*	*Sadiya T. Umar Daneji	1989
16.	*Garin Masoyi*	A.M. Zahraddeen Yakasai	1989
17.	*Idan So Cuta Ne*	Yusuf M. Adamu	1989
18.	*In Da So da Kauna*	Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino	1980

**Women authors*

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[1] A fairly comprehensive database of the fourth generation Muslim Hausa prose fiction writers is maintained online at http://hausa.soas.ac.uk/perl/Project/index.pl?project=hausa by Graham Furniss and Malami Buba of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Having had the new trend kick-started, the process, what followed was a virtual avalanche of young male and female writers who approached the publishing and writing phenomena with greater gusto than their predecessors who had the backing of the State machinery in publishing their novels. Aimed at public space, they focused on sending a youthful message to an equally youthful readership. The most readily digestible template available to the young writers of what later came to be contemptuously labeled Kano Market Literature by critics (specifically Malumfashi, 1994), was the Hindi cinema. The most popular films shown in major urban centers in northern Nigeria were Hindi films, imported by the Lebanese, up to the end of the 1980s, before indigenous businessmen took over the import of these films from Dubai. These remained the main template for growing young urbanized male Hausa who in the absence of locally-flavored cinema, saw these Hindi films closely approximating their own social space. The effect was even more electrifying on house-bound young housewives who had no opportunity to go to cinema and therefore rely solely on the television programming. The elaborate song and dance routines characteristic of commercial Hindi cinema available in northern Nigeria captivated urbanized Hausa so deeply that many of them can recite the Hindi-language songs word for word, from the beginning to the end. The outcome of these "Hindunese" cinema language is obsession with Hindi cinema motif.

Further, the flowing saris of the actresses, and the macho posturing of the actors, coupled with an obsession with love triangles made Hindi films immediately acceptable, and rapidly enough, Northern Nigeria became the biggest market for Hindi films in Nigeria. Hausa novelist soon enough started "domesticating" the themes of the Hindi cinema they watch – and what emerged was Hausa romantic fiction, generally – and again, contemptuously (see Sheriff 1991) – labeled "soyaya"

novel. The central motifs of Hindi cinema – love triangle, forced marriage – soon found parallel convergence with Hausa social culture especially as it affects youth. What followed then was an unconscious process of translating Hindi cinematic focus on love triangles and forced marriage into Hausa novel. Yet in a groundbreaking primary research on the issue, many of the writers interviewed by Brian Larkin (1997) claimed to base their stories on real-life encounters – which just seems to be similar to a Hindi film motif!

The new novels elicited a barrage of attention from critics for the most of the 1990s, before the criticisms tapered off in the mid 2000s. After the turbulent years of the 1990s (see Adamu, 2000, 2006 and Malumfashi 2005 for this turbulence), the 2000s brought with them newer Eastern focus to Hausa youth literature in two ways.

First, the Hausa video film which had its most commercial appeal from 1995 to 2005 became increasingly reliant on using the Hindi film motif to sell. Subsequently, some of the Hausa novelist who had hitherto used only general matrix of Hindi films rather than the film's storylines directly, started appropriating specific Hindi films as the storylines of their novels. Table 2 shows some of the Hausa novels and their transglobal sources.

S/N	Novel (author)	Media (type)
		Hindi Films
1.	Soyayya Gamon Jini (Ibrahim Hamza Bichi)	Ek duje Le Leye
2.	Sarkakkiya Soyayya (Mairo Yusuf)	Yeba da Raha
3.	Rashin Sani (Bala Anas Babinlata)	Dostana
4.	Alkawarin Allah (Bilkisu Ado Bayero)	Romance
5.	Raina Fansa (Aminu Abdu Na'inna)	Jeet
6.	Wa Ya San Gobe (Bilkisu Ahmad Funtuwa)	Silsila
7.	Anisa (Abubakar Ishaq)	Dil
8.	Labarin So (Zuwaira Isa)	Gumrah
9.	Hamida (Maryam Kabir Mashi)	Dillage Liya Ke
10.	Kawaici (Sadiya Garba Yakasai)	Dharkan

		Southern Nigerian Films
11.	Biyu Babu (Abdullahi H. Yerima)	The Child
12.	Kallabi (Maje El-Hajeej)	Samodara
		American Film
13.	Mazan Fama (Shehu U. Muhamad)	Clash of the Titans
		James Hadley Chase
14.	Sharadi (Auwalu G. Danbarno)	1 Hold the Four Aces
15.	Idan Ran Ta Fito (Maimunatu Yaro)	A Lotus for Miss Blandish
16.	Kai Da Jini (Nazir Adam Salih)	The Fast Buck
17.	Bakar Alaka/Mugun Aboki (A.G. Danbarno)	Come Easy, Go Easy
18.	Aci Duniya Da Tsinke (Zuwaira Isa)	Death is Woemn
		Sidney Sheldon
19.	Wayyo Duniya (Hafsat C. Sodangi)	If Tomorrow Comes

Source: *Inuwar Marubuta* (Kano, Nigeria) NO. 2 February 2005, p.13.

Secondly, book covers – themselves a source of religious condemnation (see Danjuma Katsina 1993) – which in the early years (1985 to 1995) had more or less an idealized drawing of Hausa young women, started to show photos of either Hindi female film stars, or Chinese female models. This was actually stimulated by the open practice of appropriating Hindi films by Hausa video film industry – a process which Hausa novelists felt they could replicate on their book covers at least, if only to draw attention to the novels. Third, in the new wave of Hausa literary Eastern focus, stories started to appear from 2000 with "sword and heroics" templates. Indeed almost all the stories in this sub-genre were direct translations of Persian epic tales.

Subsequent global political tensions and the Middle East simmering conflict had the tendency to push Hausa authors

towards the East for literary inspiration; coupled with the belief in sharing similar spiritual, if not cultural, spaces with Eastern cultures and peoples, no matter how "East" is defined.

Thus the "eastern posture" alluded to by Graham Furniss (1998) as characteristics of early Hausa novels of the 1930s and 1940s remained consistent in the subsequent development of Hausa contemporary literature from 1980 when new Hausa writers emerged. With the vibrancy of revolutionary global popular culture in the 1960s and 1970s, it was only a matter of time before the wind of transglobal media forces – especially new Hausa literature, music and film – would be felt on Hausa popular culture, effectively revolutionizing entertainment in a traditional society.

The Hausa youth obsession with Hindi films was further illustrated by the appearance in 2003 of what was possibly the first Hausa-Hindi language primer in which a Hausa author, Nazeer Abdullah Magoga published *Fassarar Indiyanchi a Saukakke – Hindi Language Made Easy*. The cover of the books is shown in Plate 2.

The covers of the books show the picture of the author, with Hindi film stars – including Amitab Bachan and Dhramendra – all in a montage within the map of India in the background. In the preface, the author, Nazeer Abdullahi Magoga, of Kano, states his reason for writing the phrase book:

> After expressing my gratitude to Allah, the main objective of publishing this book, *Fassarar Indiyanchi A Saukakae* was because of how some Muslim brothers and sisters, both old and young, voice phrases and songs in Hindu language, not knowing some of the words were blasphemy and a mistake for a Muslim to voice out... Because of this,

> the author tries to remind and guide fellow Muslims, through research and consultations with experts in the Hindu language, in order to understand each word written in this book, so that people would be aware of the meanings of the words they voice out in Hausa language.

This book became all the more significant in that it is the first book in Hausa language that was the result of media parenting. It is thus through the book that the Hausa know the actual translation of some of the titles of 47 popular Hindi films such as *Sholay (Gobara,* fire outbreak), *Kabhi-Kabhie (wani sa'in,* sometimes), *Agni Sakshi (zazzafar shaida,* strong evidence), *Darr (*tsor, *fear),* Yaraana (abota, *friendship),* Dillagi (*zabin zuciya,* heart's choice), *Maine Pyar Kiya (na fada cikin soyayya,* I've fallen in love) and others. It also contains the complete transliteration of Hindi lyrics translated into Roman Hausa, from popular films such as *Maine Pyar Kiya and Kabhi-Khabie.*

In an interview, the author narrated how he became deeply interested in learning the Hindi language from watching thousand of Hindi films, and subsequently conceived of the idea of writing a series of phrase books on Hindi Language. He started working on the first volume, *Fassar Indiyanchi* in 1996, and when the Hausa video film boom started in 2000 he published the book. He has three others planned; a second volume of the books in which he takes the language acquisition to the next level – focusing on culture and customs of India (or more precisely, Hindu). The other two books, still in the making are "song books", *Fassarar Wakokin Indiya* (Translations of Hindi Film Songs) in two volumes. Despite the availability of easier access to Hindu language, Hausa video film practitioners were more interested in using motifs and thematic structures from Hindi films rather than learning what the Hindi words mean, so there

was little working relationship between Magoga's work and the Hausa video film industry.

The biggest and loudest public reaction to the transformations in Hausa popular culture was in the video films. While there were protests here and there about the storylines in the novels that emerged from 1980 to 2000 – and mainly from school teachers who complained that the novels were preventing school girls from concentrating on their studies (however, see Malumfashi 1992a, 1992b; Abubakar, 1999) only printers of the books and often the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) Kano branch actually took censoring steps towards curbing what were seen as either sexual excesses (e.g. the banning of *Matsayin Love* (Lover's Stand), a lesbian theme novel by Alkhamees Bature Makwarari by ANA), or cultural misplacement (e.g. the explicit ban on any European or Eastern pictures of males or female on covers of Hausa novels from 2005). The civil society, the religious establishment and the State machinery, for the most part ignored the writers.

The Phoenix: Abubakar Imam is Dead – Long Live Abubakar Imam!

The new Eastern Focus in Hausa novels, however, did not stop at just book covers and appropriated stories from Hindi Chinese cinema. From the mid-1990s, a new form of Imamism has emerged among few writers in the contemporary Hausa novel scene. This was the translation of Middle Eastern folkloric epics, with emphasis on Persian novels, into Hausa language. The Persian literature had particular appeal of the increasing profile of the Shi'a brand of Islam in northern Nigerian public affairs[2]. Thus writers such as Aliyu Abubakàr Sharfadi (*Malikussaif Ibn Ziyyazanun)*, Nasiru G. Ahmad 'Yan'Awaki Ra'asul Guuli), Alhaji

[2] See, for instance, Kane (2006) for further details.

Muhammadu Aliyu Jega *(Tanimuddari) popularized the epic tale of sword and sorcery.*

By 2003 The American "War on Terror" ignited by the events of September 11, 2001 in which al-Qaeda controlled hijacked planes plunged into specific targets in New York, Pentagon and Philadelphia, saw American revenge onslaught on Afghanistan and eventually Iraq. For some unexplained reason, this seemed to draw more attention to Iraq and its society than hitherto possible among young Muslim Hausa with a large Shiite Muslim population. One area of this attention was Iraq literature. Hausa authors with some skills in either understanding Farsi or Arabic translation of Iranian literature started the process of translation of Persian novels into Hausa language. Leading the group was Aliyu Abubakar Sharfadi, whose Hausa translation of Persian and Arabic novels as *Bahalawana, Saisaban, Aja'ibi, Ainul-Haya* (with Rabi'u A. Boss), *Fairuza* and *Fairuzasshha* were full of Eastern heroic epics of bravery, damsels in distress, lost kingdoms, sword and sorcery epic battles between humans and non-humans (specifically *aljannu* and other weird beings than imagination can drag out). Compared to the rather mild humorous take in Abubakar Imam's *Mqamat Hariri* trnasmutated as *Ruwan Bagaja*, Shardadi's treatment was a full-tilt dosage of bringing Middle Eastern global literature to the Hausa doorstep.

Sharfadi was not the only one reviving Abubakar Imam's legacy. Following similar footsteps was Abdullahi Mukhtar, aka Yaron Mallam who declared in an interview I held with him on 1st October 2006 of his wish to succeed Abubakar Imam, particularly his technique of reading various books from different sources and amalgamating them into a synthesized Hausa narrative. Novels such as *Sahhad, Tsuburin Bamuda, Akwatin Siddabaru,* and *Gumu* are a further affirmation of the male macho Conan the Barbarian type of Middle Eastern epics translated into Hausa language. Mere looking at the covers of

The novels seems to reveal a studied desire to produce narrative discourse that runs counter to the soft image of predominantly romantic novels of other Hausa novelists.

Picture here please!

Other novelists striking the Eastern path included AbudlAziz Sani Madaki Gini *Rinjaye, Babban Goro, Ruguntsumi)*, and Umar Lawan Abdul (*Jarmai Sha Yaki)*, Abubakar T. Iliyasu *(Bauta!!)*. All these appeared between 2003 and 2005. and as if to prove that the sword and sorceryurvey epic has indeed been explored earlier with Hausa motif, Babangida Abdu S. Kayyu re-released in 1995 fantasy novel, *Gugan Karfe* in 2006 to cash on the sudden popularity of what I call Battle Novels. Indeed the reappearance of *Gugan Karfe* merely drew attention to the fact that the translation of sword and survey Eastern novels had enjoyed a brief period among the contemporary Hausa novelists.

It is significant that the new surge in translating Eastern folklore into Hausa tends to tilt predominantly towards the macho image of the male, and in almost all the cover art used to illustrate the novels, the bulging biceps, long hair, loin-cloth and other hardware of maleness were pointedly engaged ton emphasize the testosterone-charged nature of the narratives, even if a damsel is in distress (thus revealing a soft romantic theme beneath the steel muscles). This radically differs from the soft-image of pastel colored picture of either idealized Hausa female beauties, or Hindi and film stars on the covers.

Conclusion

In concluding this essay, I would wish to draw my theoretical framework fromcases and examples of media flows in visual popular culture, before applying it to Hausa popular novel to explain the Eastern Focus in Hausa novel. My main focus is on

regional influences of media flows, particularly in Asia which leads to appropriations of visual popular culture due to perceived cultural proximity between the giver and the taker. This is seen in quoted regional studies of media influences which seems to indicate that a cultural resonance is often created from a media-rich country to another country sharing *similar* norms and values. For instance, according to Jane O. Vinculado (2006 p.234),

> The phenomenal Taiwanese soap opera hit Meteor Garden in 2003 has transformed the face of Philippine programming. It paved the way for the influx of Asian dramas from Taiwan, Korea and very soon, Japan. Dubbed in Filipino (the local Language), these chinoveals (a play of words from the words Chino meaning Chinese and telenovela derived from the soap opera format of Latin American countries) is common fare on Philippine television, with about the one or two of them occupying the primetime schedules of the top networks and some appearing in non-prime time slots like daytime and week end timeslots.

This "Asian media invasion" was welcomed by Vinculado's respondents, for as she reported (p.238).

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

> any of these places, they are familiar with the settings. The university and coffee shop may look different, but they are constantly exposed to similar setting.

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

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

> I asked Taiwanese audiences comparative questions about Japanese dramas, Taiwanese dramas, and America drama. Most of my interviewees in Taipei noted that emotionally they engaged more with Japanese dramas more than they did with Western or Taiwanese dramas. Of course in so far as Japanese dramas are broadcast in Japanese with Chinese subtitles, the Taiwanese cannot help but regard them as foreign; but for all that, they do not regard such dramas in quite the same way they do to American programs. This is because Taiwanese audiences tend to remark that, racially and culturally, they have more in common with the Japanese than they do with the Americans. "Yeah, Japan is a foreign country and this (foreignness) makes Japanese programmes look

> gorgeous and appealing. But the distance we feel to Japan is comfortable, Americans are complete strangers".... "The West is so far away from us, so I cannot relate to American dramas".

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

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

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

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

> The rapid and successful development of the more popular and successful francophone transnational television station in Africa has resulted from France's own political and cultural approach, which among other things seeks to extend and strengthen cooperation between countries that have the French language in common. In effect francophone African countries have joined with France, Canada, Switzerland and Belgium an international 'community' held together by the French language. Interestingly, bilingual Canada appears to be the most active of these countries outside France. The policy of cooperation with state-owned African televisions services, which France has maintained since independence was gained by its former colonies, has been implemented thanks to good relations with these African states. France has extended its policy of cooperation to include those states that were former Belgian colonies.

For Anglophone African counties, transnational television comes in the form of South Africa's cable services of MNet, MultiChoice and its subsidiary, DSTV. But with a subscription of USD60, these services are essentially limited to elites – or those with

enough interest to break out of traditional home-based media fare. In effect, it is paying for the privilege of accessing American programs – the starting point! Further, the African continents especially series dramas) of the station in these services had no appeal for northern Nigerian Muslim audience.

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

> Bollywoods distributors explain that the growing acceptability as also resistance against Indian cinema emanates from the same fact: the cultural revival of Afro-Asian societies after they overthrew European imperialism. The Indian Masla film is closer to the emotional grammar of the Asians and Africans than the Hollywood box office bonanzas. Hollywood's story of American divorcees does not

> touch the emotional chord of Afro-Asian families. Their emotional ambience is closer to something like Humm Aapke Hain Kahn. The interaction between the characters in a Hindi film family drama is recognizable, therefore it holds their attention. Besides, song and dance plays a pivotal role in the social life of Afro-Asian societies. M. Shamim, "Bollywoord films make waves around the world", *The Hindu* Sunday, February 25, 2001.

Thus "cultural resonance" explains why young Hausa filmmakers, spoon-fed on Hindi film fare from birth openly embrace the Hindi film motif, even if aware that the cultural and religious realities of their society is totally different from that of India. This also explains not only how Hausa filmmakers appropriate Asian film templates (love triangles and forced marriages), as well as heroic tales form Middle Eastern folklore and domesticate them into Hausa language. The perceived shared "cultural spaces" between Hausa Muslim societies and Middle Eastern societies creates a cultural proximity separate by not only physical, but also historical distances. Southern Nigeria, close by is seen as cultural distant. Other African countries with rich media culture, e.g. Mali, Guinea, Niger, Burkina Faso have not developed effective ways of distributing their media products to non-French speaking countries, despite a sizeable number of Fulbe and Hausa ethnic nationalities in these countries.

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