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## Bandiri Music, Globalization and Urban Experience in Nigeria

*La musique bandiri, globalisation et expérience urbaine au Nigeria*

**Brian Larkin**

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Brian Larkin

## Bandiri Music, Globalization and Urban Experience in Nigeria\*

Beside Kofar Nassarawa, a gate to the mud wall that once ringed the Muslim heart of Kano, northern Nigeria, there is a *mai gyara*, a mechanic who repairs scooters and motorbikes. On this atrophying wall in the 1990s there was a poster of Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, a radical Islamic leader, and next to him one of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Shi'a leader Zakzaky championed. No doubt the mechanic or one of his assistants was a fan of Zakzaky, a figure of some charisma among the Muslim youth of the North, but the fact that someone else had tried to tear off the poster of Khomeini registered the wider suspicion that Hausa Sunnis have for Shi'a worship. Once, while my vespa was in a line waiting to be repaired, one of the assistants switched cassettes on an old tape player and started playing a *bandiri* tape. As he did so one of the customers started to hum along, recognizing the Indian film tune on which the song was based, but not knowing the words of this Hausa variation. Bandiri singers are Hausa musicians who take Indian film tunes and change the words to sing songs praising the prophet Mohammed. This action sparked an immediate response from two customers who looked with distaste—clearly uncomfortable at being subjected to this music while waiting for their bikes to be repaired. Their discomfort provoked a mild but clear debate splitting the mechanics and customers—all from the old city of Kano—into three discrete groups: those who wanted to hear the bandiri music; those, who included the man humming along, who did not care one way or another, and the last two customers asking for the music to be stopped.

Knowing the controversy around bandiri music because of my research on Indian film in Nigeria I found it interesting that the two customers

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reacted, not with anger but with a palpable sense of distaste, a sort of weary disappointment, as if the music like cigarette smoke in a restaurant was a repugnant physical presence being forced on them. It emphasised the ambivalent quality of a musical form such as bandiri which, with roots in a secular realm of entertainment, is also religious. It partakes of the elaborate Sufi tradition in which recitation of praises to the Prophet carry with them spiritual and sometimes magical benefits and sound has tangible properties beyond the aural. The distaste against bandiri may well have been motivated by a dislike of the migration of Indian films into Hausa popular culture. But while one may not like Indian music it does not make the same claims on one's spiritual well-being and mode of honouring God. It was the ability of bandiri to compromise its orthodox religious listeners by creating an unorthodox, Sufi environment that generated unease. This is an anecdote about the everyday reproduction of music and while a marginal, fleeting, moment it captures in that evanescence three themes that govern the production and circulation of bandiri music: the flow of Indian films to Nigeria, providing the raw symbolic material from which bandiri is fashioned; deep rooted practices of Sufism which have marked West African Islam for hundreds of years; and the recent spread of an anti-Sufi Wahhabi movement generating the contested religious space in which bandiri operates.

Singing live at public ceremonies such as weddings, or selling cassettes through local markets, when bandiri<sup>1</sup> singers sing Hausa praise songs to Indian tunes they are effecting a transformation from the profane to the sacred. The popularity of the genre rests, however, on the common cultural competence of listeners who recognise their favourite Hindi film songs. By doing so these listeners see through the mask, so to speak, as the profane original haunts the sacred copy. As suggested above this is a contested phenomenon in a Muslim society undergoing an Islamist revival. Is it really Islamic, many Hausa Muslims ask, to use songs taken from sensual, un-Islamic origins for religious purposes? Moreover, the controversy over bandiri music is not just about Indian love songs. Bandiri is named after the drum—the *bandir*—used in ritual practice by Sufis to enter into trance. Is it really Islamic, many Hausa Muslims ask, to enter into trance, or to use drums inside the mosque, indeed to be Sufi in a world where Wahhabi belief moves provocatively across the Muslim world? Bandiri sits at the nexus of these very different sorts of transnational flows, Islamist revival and Indian popular culture that meet and make sense in Northern Nigeria, in the context of a spatial configuration of culture, media and religion.

My aim in this paper is first to analyse the workings of a cultural form like bandiri with its complex intertwining of sacred and profane, remembering and repressing. Second, I wish to use the example of bandiri, and of the three networks or sets that it exemplifies: the history of Sufi adherence,

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1. Bandiri is also known as *mandiri* in Hausa.

the flow of Indian film to Nigeria and the recent rise of a new legalistic Islamic movement to make a larger argument about the construction of urban space in Africa. Focussing on Kano, Nigeria the city where bandiri began I argue, following Lefebvre (1991), that space is produced and organized over time by the penetration and transformations in capital which insert any particular place into wider networks of exchange that facilitate the flow of cultural and religious forms. Urban areas such as Kano are made up of congeries of overlapping networks. When new cultural and religious forms emerge they do so in an urban crucible that is already overdetermined according to the particular structure of those networks as they exist in a city like Kano. These networks provide the structural precondition that shapes the symbolic form and social meaning of a phenomenon like bandiri and it is the articulation of these networks together that creates the raw material from which urban experience might be fashioned.

### Producing Urban Space in Africa

Recent analyses of urban space in African studies and anthropology have stressed urban space as a crucible for the flow of cultural forms across borders (see for example: Appadurai 1997; Gaonkar 1999; Inda & Rosaldo 2002). The theoretical move here has been to argue that the West and non-West have mutually constituted each other in a structurally uneven, but nevertheless two sided, process. This is clearly aimed at asserting the agency of African or Asian societies, that while the traffic in culture from the West is prominent in African societies, as Jean-Francois Bayart remarks this is always an act of reinvention and appropriation rather than simply domination (Barber 1997; Barber & Waterman 1995; Bayart 1993; Hannerz 1992). Ferguson has recently made a persuasive argument that we ought to examine the nature of urban (and rural) identities in Africa as modes of cultural style: poles of signification that people can move between depending on wealth, education and cultural competence. Ferguson is mobilising an idea of urban space as defined by a syntagmatic chain of difference. To be "rural" or "urban" or "local" or "cosmopolitan" are not temporally distinct states of being where one evolves into another, but rather are produced in relation to each other within the same social field. Urban life, as represented here, is the matter of choosing between differing stylistic modes: whether to speak a European language or an African one; whether to dress in traditional clothes, in the bureaucratic attire of suits and ties, in baggy jeans and football shirts or in the hijab. The danger here is that the urban is defined as an arena in which a free flow of symbolic forms clash and compete without stepping back to address the issue of how these forms arrived in the first place.

Ferguson is well aware of this danger and warns against it<sup>2</sup> though his central aim is not to analyse how cultural forms emerge from specific political-economic contexts. Rather, for the Copperbelt urban dwellers he examines, Western clothing, Congolese rumba, South African theatre and West Indian reggae comprise the established forms of urban space out of which cultural style is fashioned. By probing into the background of this space—how it comes to be organised in the way that it does—my aim is to unite this concern for hybrid cultural exchanges with a sense of the material underpinnings that make those exchanges possible.

Kano, northern Nigeria is a large, sprawling city on the edge of the Sahelian desert. If the city is an event, as Simmel has argued, and urban experience the outcome of a ceaseless series of encounters then those encounters in this city are constituted within the limits of the networks that bump up against each other there. Sufi religious brotherhoods, Lebanese businessmen, Ibo traders, and Hausa politicians are based in Kano but embedded in their own discrete networks that extend in different directions over the world. Space in this account is not something that is simply there but, as Lefebvre (1991) argues, is something that is the outcome of capitalist relations of exchange and those relations create the peculiar sets of networks that exist in any particular urban place. For the movement of cultural goods to occur—be they Indian films, hip-hop from the U.S. or high fashion from Europe and Japan—a formal and informal infrastructure has to be established creating the material channels that allow transnational cultural flows to move. These infrastructures connect certain points in a network, ranking and separating one place from another, enabling the possibility of certain connections while foreclosing other linkages. “Flows” for all their seemingly disembodied nature (see Tsing’s critique 2000) require material conduits and they appear because a place—in this case urban Kano—is embedded in precise networks of social relations built over time.

Infrastructures are the material forms that bind and knit urban spaces into wider sets—forcing us to think of space not in terms of discrete buildings or isolated moments on a landscape but as networked amalgams of built space connected physically by railways, shipping lanes, and air routes. As capital depends on infrastructure that facilitates the circulation of goods, successive regimes of capital build the infrastructures necessary for that mode of exchange in the process making over urban space in their own image (Harvey 2000; Lefebvre 1991; Graham & Marvin 1996, 2001). The

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2. Ferguson derives his concept of cultural style from performance theory and specifically the work of Judith Butler but he argues that this work can suffer from lack of attention to wider fields of political-economic structures. He cites Kath Weston’s work as a corrective to the tendency in performance studies to construe identity as in part of play of signification without due concern to the material constraints the shape the possibility of performance (FERGUSON 1999: 98-101). Ethnographically he supports this with a keen sense of the political-economic contexts in which Zambian migrants (and return migrants) operate.

location of markets; the siting of districts for business and residence; the layout of roads, railways stations, airports, are all fundamentally affected by waxing and waning of different infrastructural forms. Related to this is the fact that the physical links created by infrastructures—which places get connected into a network—has huge effect on the cultural life of a city. It shapes which migrants arrive there, which languages become commonly used, and which cultural forms become part of an urban arena.

Lefebvre argues that as space is continually reformed by the necessities of capital newly developed networks do not eradicate earlier ones but are superimposed on top of them creating an historical layering over time. As he memorably put it, this makes space seem like the flakiness of a *mille-feuille* pastry rather than homogenous and discrete (Lefebvre 1991: 86). At any one point, then, urban space is made up of the historical layering of networks connected by infrastructures. These are the conduits that dictate which flow of religious and cultural ideas move and therefore which social relations get mobilised in their wake. Their historical layering helps explain why dormant cultural, religious and economic forms can suddenly gain purchase again, be reawakened and re-energised in a new situation.

Urban spaces such as Kano can be seen as assemblage of different sets that connect Hausa to other networks. By set I am loosely using the mathematical definition of a set as the combination of different elements interlinked to form a totality. Infrastructures—both material and immaterial—are the connecting tissues that bind these elements to the whole. They are material in the obvious sense of the construction of air routes, railways and so on that join one place to another. They are immaterial in that they require linguistic competencies, professional expertise, educational styles and cultural philosophies that facilitate the exchange of information and goods across cultural boundaries. Islam, for instance, is one such set integrating Kano Muslims into a wider totality of the Muslim *umma* by means of shared religious practice, pilgrimages, education, Sufi adherence and so on. Islam itself can be broken down into multiple sub-sets only some of which Hausa are involved in. When we refer to the "urban experience" partly what we are referring to is the particular assemblage of sets that forms the unique configuration of a city. These are layered over time and the introduction of new layers interacts with previous existing ones, re-energising some, closing off others but creating the unique configuration of a city. This evolution orients Kano internally toward Southern Nigeria but also across the Sahara to North Africa and the Middle East, across the Atlantic and increasingly over the Indian ocean to Asia (Bayart *et al.* 1999). Northerners chase modernity through Muslim connections to Saudi Arabia, Dubai and other Islamic centres, as well as through connections to the West. All this makes Kano integrated yet distinct from its sister cities in the south and it is out of this Kano based configuration of Islamic and Western modernity, that the unlikely synthesis of bandiri music, with its roots in Sufi worship and Hindi lovemaking, is possible.

## Set One: the Lovers of the Prophet

In 1996 I was taken by the bandiri singer Lawan 'Dan Yaro Magashi to a bandiri performance in Magashi quarters of the Kano *birni*. Magashi is an area in the old city of Kano, for Muslims the traditional moral heart where Islamic values and lifestyles are maintained (Barkindo 1993; Larkin 2002; Tahir 1975). It is an overwhelmingly Sufi area, predominantly Tijaniyya but with a large and powerful minority of Qadiriyya followers (Paden 1973; Anwar 1989). Outside a house where a naming ceremony was being performed the group had tied loudspeakers to the walls across the narrow alleyway. The singer held the microphone and sang Hausa words to Indian film tunes and behind him four youths sang back in response each of them beating the bandir, the large black tambourine-like drum from North Africa. In front of them all were another seven or so youths dancing a Sufi dance, punching their arms back and forth in time to the music. In the doorways young girls listened, laughing, their bodies covered in brightly coloured prints and their heads encased by large scarves while the alleys around were packed with a mob of boys listening, shouting and sometimes singing to the song being played. Older men looked on, somewhat sceptically, from a distance. As the song finished another youth took the place of the singer pitting his skill at lyric writing and singing against the one who came before (and who would come after).

In a way, bandiri could only have emerged in areas like this in Kano, or similar areas in sister Sufi<sup>3</sup> cities in the north such as Sokoto and Zaria. Kano was one of the urban areas where Indian films first emerged in the 1950s and today it remains the distribution centre for pirate video cassettes of Indian films (the main way they circulate in the north). In the second half of the twentieth century it has been a font for the introduction of new modes of Islamic education paving the way for the emergence of a cadre of modernist religious scholars that have gone on to lead new anti-Sufi Islamist movements. But most famously for nearly a century has been known as a dominant centre of Tijaniyya Sufi affiliation and learning.

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3. Sufism is based around the charismatic authority of a founding saint whose knowledge, is passed down in a direct line of descent from sheikh to disciple. As orders mature over time they extend over space generating dispersed networks linked by common ritual practices, pilgrimage, and education. As Kano was an economic center of pre-colonial trade, there has been a long connection between Sufism and dominant Kano trading families. These families are associated with important Sufi Sheikhs and many have produced their own lineages of distinguished religious scholars. Many scholars have pointed out that the common religious affiliation of particular Sufi orders has been key to the creation of non-kin based trading networks that rely heavily on credit and trust and that the success of Sufism is an example of the clouding of religious and economic activities (PADEN 1973; TAHIR 1975). In Kano the success of the Sufi order Tijaniyya is strongly linked to its role in producing patron-client networks that are seen as central to the order's reputation for economic success. It is this crucible of Sufi affiliation that lies behind the success of bandiri.

Bandiri music developed from the religious use of the *bandir* drum by Qadiriyya Sufi adepts. Every evening in Kano, Qadiriyya Sufis gather at certain mosques for the public performance of the *dhikr* the ritual that uses the bandir drum to regulate the speed of chanting litanies (Loimeier 1997). Loimeier (1997: 60) highlights the importance of repetition "where through the constant chanting of a short phrase like Allah Allah [...] the participants breathe in or against the rhythm of their chanting." leading to the invoking of trancelike states (Buba & Furniss 1999). This is a public phenomenon and arose in the late 1950s as part of the effort by a Qadiriyya Sheikh, Nasir Kabara, to turn Sufi practice from an elite, secret movement into a mass movement. As Loimeier observes, the regular public ritual of bandir drumming has become a public spectacle of Qadiriyya affiliation in that "the presence of the tariqâ [Sufi order] in the city is underlined not only visually but also acoustically from day to day and night to night." (*ibid.* See also Paden 1973).

As a musical practice, bandiri derives significance from this ritual use but is different in key ways. For the most part it is played at events such as wedding parties and naming ceremonies which have both a religious and a non-religious dimension (see also Buba & Furniss 1999). Often times different singers will gather with the same backing group. They will take a particular Indian film, such as *Khahbi Kabhie* (Dir. Yash Chopra) and divide up the songs between them, each one responsible for translating a different song from the film into a Hausa praise song. Then during the performance the singers will take turns, each competing with one another for the best performance. There is a tremendous excitement to this, in the energy of the dancing, the sound of the drums, and the reaction of the crowd gathered around. While the audience is mostly young, certain songs are chosen from 1950s and 1960s Indian films to directly appeal to older people in the audience. Bandiri is seen by both performers and audience as a religious form but it clearly borders many of the activities and genres of secular music.

Bandiri originated in the practice of youths studying at Islamiyya schools, the new schools in Nigeria that teach Islamic subjects in a Western pedagogic framework. Students at these schools got together to sing songs in Hausa on how to obey parents, or translated short *hadith* (the record of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Mohammed) and turned them into songs, or simply sang praises to the Prophet Mohammed. The first songs were religious versions of popular songs by Hausa musicians such as Mamman Shata or 'Dan Kwairo and after a while youths began to adapt Indian film songs (it was and remains common for Hausa youth to sing Indian film songs in school). Their aim was revivalist, to introduce a more religious dimension to popular activities such as wedding parties and naming ceremonies and to attract youth back to religious contemplation through the form of popular mass culture.



In the late eighties as *bandiri* began to take off in popularity societies such as *Kungiyar Yabon Manzon Allah* (Society for Praising the Messenger of God) and *Kunigiyar Ushaq'u Indiya* (Society for the Lovers of India) were created to formalize the coming together of young Hausa singers performing *bandiri* music. *Ushaq'u* is an Arabic word meaning a passionate or ardent lover and is derived from *'Ishq*—passion or yearning. In Hausa (as opposed to Arabic) the word is associated with a religious register in contrast to the more familiar term for romantic love *so*. As one singer explained to me *'ishq*, in the Hausa usage at least, refers to the deepest possible love<sup>4</sup>. While singers do sell cassettes that are sold generally on the market *bandiri* is still primarily a live performance genre. Groups are sponsored by individuals to perform at specific ceremonies and they often try to translate their prestige from *bandiri* performance into a patron client relation with prominent Sufi *malams*<sup>5</sup> (religious teachers) (Buba & Furniss 1999). As *bandiri* gained in popularity singers started to sell cassettes through specialist dealers at the market. The first tapes were compilations of different *bandiri* singers and grouped under the heading of the Society of *Ushaq'u* singers<sup>6</sup> and labelled *Ushaq'u Indiya 1*, *Ushaq'u Indiya 2* and so on. The tapes themselves contain an opening prayer and a brief introduction to the singers. Some tapes address the audience as “My brothers, Lovers of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.)” implicitly constructing the audience as fellow Sufi members (likely to be the case) and reasserting the religious intention to the music.

## Set Two: the Rise of Anti-Sufism

*Bandiri* music grew and developed in an arena of overt conflict. Those who perform *bandiri* realise that this is a controversial activity. As one

4. *Ishq* is an Arabic word and consequently has become common in several languages not the least of which is Hindi where it is used as a much more everyday term for love—witness the 1999 film, *Ishq* (Dir. Indra Kuma) starring Aamir Khan.
5. Singers do attempt to make money through the commodification of *bandiri* by selling cassettes but for the most part the material benefit of *bandiri* comes through prestige which can be used within the Sufi network itself. The most prestigious activity, for instance, is to be invited by an important Sheikh to perform at *maulud* celebrations that celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed or of important Sufi saints. These celebrations are deeply controversial in Hausa society. Many Wahhabis attack these acts of commemoration as un-Islamic. Despite that they remain central rituals in the Sufi calendar.
6. Each tape has a brief introduction which reaffirms the religious intent of the cassette and introduces the society and particular singers. I quote here from the opening to the cassette *Ushaq'u Indiya na sha biyu* (*Ushaq'u India* number 12). In the name of Allah the most gracious and most merciful, may peace be upon the Prophet Muhammad and may God bless him and his family. My relatives, lovers of the Messenger of Allah, we are now going to introduce *Ushaq'u India* cassette number 12. The singers are: Muhammad Lawan Yaro Magashi, Muhammad Abubakar Baffajo, Marmara Auwalu Iguda Takasai, Balarabe Musa Kabada, Sani Garba S/K Dan/Dago. Mallam Inuwa Bala is the person to beat the drum.

told me, "You know religion in our country. One man's meat is another man's poison" and that while many people are against bandiri music many more find it hugely attractive. This conflict does not just derive from the software of bandiri—the songs and their borrowing from Indian films—but the hardware itself—using the *bandir* drum—and the drum's significance as a symbol of Sufi adherence. The identification of bandiri with Sufism has made it deeply controversial in Nigeria piggy backing onto the wider religious conflict that has pitted established Sufi orders against the rise of a new Wahhabi oriented movement—Izala (*Jama'at Izalatil Bid'a wa Iqamatus Sunna* - The Movement Against Innovation and for a Return to the Sunna)—and its intellectual leader Abubakar Gumi (Barkindo 1993; Gumi 1972, 1992; Loimeier 1997; Umar 1993).

The rise of Abubakar Gumi is significant because his figure represents the shift to a new configuration of Hausa economy, politics and society. Gumi was one of the first Islamic scholars to be educated by the British within the colonial education system and certainly the first major religious leader to come to prominence through his participation in the colonial and postcolonial bureaucracy. Before him Sufi scholars were linked to aristocratic elites and to old trading families who were deeply suspicious of Western education and the *boko* (Western) lifestyle. Gumi's support network was different, it relied on his alliances within the postcolonial bureaucracy and his close relations with elected politicians, military figures and bureaucrats. And for Gumi it was precisely his bureaucratic colonial links—as a scholarship student to the Sudan, and as Nigerian Pilgrims Officer to Saudi Arabia—that Gumi began to travel widely within the Muslim world. Gumi was especially known for his close relationship with Saudi Arabia, one that began with his stint as Pilgrim's Officer but was cemented by his role as religious leader to the Sardauna of Sokoto, the Premier of the Northern Region of Nigeria at independence. Gumi adopted the legalistic, anti-Sufi brand of Islamic belief prominent in Saudi Wahhabism and it was this which he brought back to Nigeria.

In the early 1970s Gumi began to outline a critique of Sufism in a variety of fora from tafsir at the mosque, to newspaper articles, to radio broadcasts. This critique followed orthodox Wahhabi lines: he attacked Sufism as an innovation (*bid'a*) in Islamic practice in a religion where innovation in matters of faith was not allowed; he criticised the veneration of Sufi saints and the practice of Sufi orders, in its stead he argued for a return to the key texts of Islam—the Qur'an and the hadith—texts which were available to everyone through education and reason. In 1972 his critique was centralised into a book *The Right Belief is Based on the Sharia* which caused uproar in Nigeria. Gumi's strategy was to take central ritual symbols of the prominent Sufi orders in Nigeria—the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya—and to argue that they ran contrary to the teachings of the Qur'an. In the case of Qadiriyya the tactic was to take on one of the central ritual of the order—the use of the bandir drum in the mosque—and to argue that it was an illegal

innovation. Most shockingly he did so in sharp, inflammatory language claiming that “those who combine drumming with religion [...] reduce their religion to a plaything [...]. They will taste the punishment which they disbelieve” (Gumi 1972: 43).

The effect of this attack was electric. The history of Islam in Nigeria has been rent with religious conflict but to this point this had always been conflict within and between Sufi orders. Gumi was now claiming that they were all “imposters in islam” (1992: 142) sparking an intense backlash that spilled over into armed conflict between followers of the different camps. The use of the bandir was defended by Nasiru Kabara the Qadiriyya sheikh<sup>7</sup> with which the practice was most identified but Gumi’s attack, and Kabara’s defence meant that the use of the bandir drum came to be a defining symbol of Sufi belief or deviance. It became a dense symbol of the conflict between Sufis and anti-Sufis, something to be championed or rejected but never ignored.

It is no accident that the use of bandiri music, with its evangelical goal of using popular Hausa songs and Indian film tunes to bring youths back to religious practice arose at a time when Sufi practice itself was under unprecedented assault from a Wahhabi inspired anti-Sufi movement. The activity of singing praise songs, even of calling the singers “lovers of the prophet” is an implicit attack on the condemnation of praise singing by the transnational spread of orthodox Wahhabi ideas to Nigeria. These themes are often explicitly dealt with in the songs themselves when singers assert their right to praise the Prophet despite “whoever is against him”<sup>8</sup>, a dark warning neatly conflating non-Muslims with followers of Izala, the movement led by Abubakar Gumi. The background of Sufi-Izala conflict provides the cultural and religious reason why Indian film music was taken up—in this way and at this time. By drawing on the massive popularity of the film style and already existing practices of singing Hindi films songs, Sufi followers managed to establish a powerful and popular new music genre the significance of which lies in the layering of social relations and space: the position of Kano as the node of two very different circuits of cultural and religious flows: one reaching out across the Sahara and the other across the Indian ocean.

7. For an account see LOIMEIER (1997).

8. Take this example: a version of a song by Sidi Musa from the Indian film *Ham Dono*.

S: Praising Mustapha is necessary for us, whoever is against Him, the Prophet is ours....

S: In the name of God I intend to long....

I going to praise my Mustapha....

If they like it or if they don't like it....

Our Messenger is in front....

Because he is the one that we love my Mustapha....

A: Praising Mustapha is necessary for us, whoever is against Him, the Prophet is ours.

S: I swear I love you O Sayyadi....

O my life, O my Mohammad....

### Set Three: Indian Films in Kano

Indian music saturates the popular culture of northern Nigeria creating a landscape of desire and spectacle and a field for nostalgia and memory. This nostalgia derives from the long historical popularity of Indian films among Nigerian audiences dating back to the 1950s which has imprinted generations of Hausa with the songs, narratives and stars of Indian film (1997). Bandiri taps into these emotions, creating an intertextual play with romance and devotion; charisma and stardom; traditional culture and modernity. It is a form of mimicking whereby the "copy" draws from the power and symbolic richness of the original but only at the cost of raising questions of cultural authenticity, and cultural erosion. The tunes that bandiri singers borrow bring with them memories and tastes of the original context of reception. A song about the love of followers for the Prophet Mohammed is shadowed by an image of the actor Salman Khan doing press-ups in the film *Maine Pyar Kiya*, and other songs are haunted by the actors and actresses symbolically superimposed over every song of praise. Nigerian Sufi followers resignify this music into devotional songs, syphoning and transforming charisma from one context to another. Bandiri thus relies upon a dialectic of similarity and difference. The copy has to be similar enough to the original be recognized, to recoup the profits of mimesis, but yet it has to be transformed, religiously and culturally. Its original context must be obliterated at the same time as it is invoked, in order to take on sacred meaning. This is the aura that local Hausa singers bring to a devotional tradition of praise singing with a long, elaborate history. At the same time as redefining Indian films in a Hausa context, then, they are redefining Sufi praise music in terms of its association with the glamorous modernity of Indian films. And they project, through mimicry, Hausa popular culture into the prestigious and alluring world of global cultural flows.

One of the interesting features of the popularity of Indian films in northern Nigeria is the dialectic of similarity and dissimilarity and the ways that cultural borrowing involves elaborate acts of remembering and repressing. For instance, I have previously discussed the complicated way in which Hausa people see Indian culture as "just like" Hausa culture: in its depiction of relations between the genders; in the negotiation between a reified "traditional" culture and an equally reified "Westernisation"; and in the mise-en-scène and iconography of everyday life (*ibid.*). This is one aspect of the ways in which Indian films benefit from a perceived similarity and a strong identification between the two cultures, one based on cultural practice, moral ethics and linguistic similarity. Many Hausa, for instance, argue that Hausa and Hindi are descended from the same language—an argument also voiced to me by an Indian importer of films in accounting for their popularity. While "wrong" in terms of linguistic evolution this argument takes

into account the substantial presence of Arabic and English loan words in both languages, a key factor in creating this perceived sense of similarity. Hausa and Indians have also been linked through the common denominator of the British Empire and it is interesting to speculate on the mediating presence that empire had in creating a sense of commonality that helps account for the popularity of Indian films<sup>9</sup>. All this feeds in to the cultural background of the Indian postcolony and explains part of the identification of Hausa audiences with Indian culture in the common historical experience of British Empire and the perceived tension between traditional culture and a modernising western one.

The powerful sense of identification between the two cultures is also explained in terms of Bollywood's alterity from American and British film and television and its depiction of moral problems that are simply absent from most Western media (*ibid.*). This was brought over to me in a discussion about the film *Maine Pyar Kiya* starring Salman Khan, a hit in Nigeria as elsewhere. My male friend identified hugely with the central tension of the films—Salman Khan's father forbidding his son permission to marry a poor girl and attempting to force him to marry the rich daughter of a business friend. The overt sentimentality was not seen in terms of fantasy but as something that emerges out of the historical experience of common people—an historical experience common to Nigeria and India: the power of elders over youth and the corruption of traditional relations by the pursuit of money. As my friend commented: "So the film is educative in fact. I have never watched an Indian film very interesting like this one. Because I shed tears, tears in watching the film [...] though knowing the film is fiction but I still shed tears, because it just showed a real dedication to what is happening in the world"<sup>10</sup>. This comment is common in northern Nigeria where people see Indian films as representing real, everyday problems and not in the terms of kitsch fantasy with which they are greeted in the West. This is what makes them educative. Bashir made this explicit: "American films are based mainly on [...] its either action, war or just a show, like documentaries, so that is it. But Indian

9. In many ways the British Empire can be regarded as a set that placed diverse societies into articulation via the historical experience of colonisation. When the British took over northern Nigeria they brought with principles of Empire that had been first elaborated in the crucible of South Asia. Certainly there was a traffic in administrative personnel, in modes of bureaucracy, in language (English) in educational principles, in cultural styles, fashions, food and even in forms of ritual such as the famous Hausa durbar (*sallah*)—now seen as a "traditional" Hausa festival occurring after the Eid festival but imported to Nigeria directly from India by the British. It is interesting to speculate whether this common historical experience may help account for the Hausa sense of similarities with Indian society.

10. Interview, Sani Bashir, November 1996.

films on the other side, they base their films on their problems and on the problems of the masses, their masses. Anyway I don't watch much American films..."<sup>11</sup>.

When Hausa refer to Indian films being "just like" Hausa culture—a sentiment echoed here by Bashir—they actually mean the films are *more like* Hausa culture than the other two dominant mass cultural fields Hausa engage in—southern Nigerian and American media. Indian films are more sexually demure than American films but they are far more transgressive than everyday Hausa culture and as much as reflecting problems inherent to that society they are potentially threatening and destabilising of it. This tension between like and unlike, similarity and distance is key to the appeal of transnational cultural forms as it allows imaginative play which is tolerated *precisely because it is different*. Hausa can watch Indian films and appreciate their similarities while the differences can be easily downplayed. This has been recently dramatised by the rise of a Hausa video film industry in the late 1990s. Unlike their southern counterparts Hausa filmmakers have explicitly borrowed from Indian films moving away from themes of magic, witchcraft, corruption and money that mark southern Nigerian videos and emphasising instead the theme of love. The alterity of Hausa videos from southern Nigerian ones and their similarity to Indian films is most marked by the song and dance sequences between the actor and actress which heavily borrow from Indian films. These sequences follow the generic conventions of Indian films: songs stand as a proxy for physical love and for intense emotions that cannot be expressed in everyday language; they take place outside of the diegetic space of the story in areas of picturesque natural beauty; and this fantastic, extra-real environment is accentuated by frequent costume changes within the same song sequence. While massively popular these sequences have caused huge controversy in Hausa society for initiating what is seen as an un-Islamic, and un-Hausa mode of courtship into Hausa film. In the wake of the introduction of shari'a law in 2001 and in response to the public outcry the making of these Hausa videos were banned in Kano state (the prime site of production). Later the ban was eased so that filmmaking could continue as long the song sequences did not include sexual intermixing. Interestingly enough, during this controversy the new Islamic state saw no need to ban Indian films and nor does the new censorship board censor Indian films which continue to be popular. The tension arose when styles of love and sexual interaction from Indian films were dramatised in a Hausa context. What could be tolerated while safely confined to the practices of another culture however "like" Hausa culture was simply too controversial when the necessary gap for cultural borrowing was collapsed. Indian films are more demure than Hollywood ones, less explicit than recent southern Nigerian videos, but they are still sexually transgressive for an orthodox Islamic society and like

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11. *Ibid.*

all cultural flows the popularity of Indian film depends on the maintenance of a safe distance, a stable alterity the lack of which can be powerfully threatening.

### Bandiri

Emerging out of the long Sufi tradition of singing praise songs to the Prophet, bandiri partakes of that tradition in using a language of erotics whereby mystical arousal is linked to emotional arousal. In ritual use, trance can be used to provoke mystical love culminating in ecstasy whereby the person possessed can mystically communicate with God or the Prophet (Qureshi 1995). In bandiri, Mohammed is often the focus of intense love and longing and bandiri singers (and Sufi adepts) refer to themselves as “lovers of the prophet” the emotional excessive realm of secular love being used to convey to quite different but equally emotional parameters of religious love. Take this example sung by Sidi Musa and adapted from the film *Geet Gata Chal* (1975 Dir. Hiren Nag):

- S: My heart is longing for you, my soul loves you, me, I am longing for my messenger, the Prophet of God  
 A: My messenger the Prophet of God  
 S: My heart is longing for you, my soul loves you, me, I am longing for my messenger, the Prophet of God  
 A: My messenger the Prophet of God  
 S: Owo You are the one I am longing for Mustapha na Sayyadi. You are the one longing for Habibi, Prophet of God.  
 A: Habibi, Prophet of God.  
 S: I am longing... O... I am continuously longing for you. I am longing more and more.  
 A: O Mohammad Prophet of God, O my lover<sup>12</sup>.  
 (S = singer; A = *Amshi* or reply).

In this Hausa song the vaulting strings of Indian film songs are absent as is the western and Indian instrumentation leaving only the beating of the drum. Where the original film song is based around a duet between a man and a woman each singing verses in turn Sidi Musa uses the more familiar African form of call and response played out between him and his backing singers. What is shared between Musa’s song and the original is the melody and the sense of emotional excess, with Sufi followers using the ecstatic enactments of love in Indian films and stripping them of their secular trappings. Bandiri creates a play of similarity and difference, like and dislike, profane and sacred. We can see this process at work better by examining a Hausa song, *Zumar zuma bege*, by the bandiri singer Lawan ‘Dan yaro Magashi. *Zumar zuma* is an adaptation of a famous song *Jumma chumma*

12. See also BUBA & FURNISS (1999: 39).

*de de* (Jumma give me a kiss) performed by Amitabh Bachchan in the film *Hum* (1991 Dir. Mukul Anand).

The song sequence from which *Jumma chumma* is taken is set in an Indian shipyard warehouse where a petty rogue, Tiger, dances with his docker friends singing to his girlfriend demanding that she give him a kiss. Jumma refuses as she sashays across a platform above them, raising her long red flamenco dress and revealing her black stockinged legs while her breast heaves in and out. Tiger and his friends dance in choreographed ecstasy, their pelvises thrusting back and forth. Finally, Tiger, impatient with her denials, picks up a hose large enough to represent the symbolic ejaculation of the dockers and drenches Jumma, tearing off her dress, knocking her from her platform into the midst of the gyrating men below. The distance between them collapsed, she dances with the men, her body wet and uncovered. Still she refuses to kiss her lover maintaining the teasing distance between them until finally she and Tiger are engulfed by the dancing men and when Tiger emerges his face is covered with the bright red marks of her lipstick.

‘Dan Yaro Magashi took the song from this sequence and wrote a Hausa version in honour of the prophet Mohammed. In this version the Tiger’s song to Jumma is transformed into an African call and response between ‘Dan Yao Magashi and the bandiri drummers providing accompaniment. The skill here lies not just in copying the Indian tune or the quality of the singing, but also in the cleverness with which ‘Dan Yaro chooses Hausa words which closely mirror the original Hindi.

**Jumma chumma de de**

Jumma chumma de de  
jummaa chumma de de, jumma  
jumma chumma de de

Jumma chumma de de jummaa

Jumma ke din kiyaa chumma  
kaa vaadaa

Jumma ko to diyaa chumme  
kaa vaadaa  
le aa gayaa re phir jummaa-chummaa  
Jumma chumma de de

**Zuma zumar bege**  
S: Zuma zumar bege  
zuma zumar bege mu sha  
A: Zuma zumar bege  
S: Bege bege  
A: Zuma zumar bege mu sha  
S: Zuma zumar bege.....bege  
zuma zumar bege mu sha  
A: Zuma zumar bege  
S: Bege bege  
A: Zuma zumar bege mu sha  
S: Zumar yabo ta gurin  
dan Amina,  
manzo masoyi masoyina  
na raina  
ko yar kadan ni ina so na kurba in sha...  
A: Zumar zuma bege

(S = singer; A = *Amshi* or, reply).

“Jumma chumma de de jumma” (Jumma—a girl’s name—give me, give me a kiss) becomes “zuma zumar bege mu sha” (honey, honey we are longing to drink). Similarly, the verse line “Jumma ke din kiyaa chumma kaa



vaadaa” is transformed into “Zumar yabo ta gurin dan Amina”. The purpose of bandiri music is to strip the Indian song of its original lyrics, thus symbolically divorcing it from its original filmic context. Here that context is a song sequence famous within Indian films for its raunchiness<sup>13</sup>. Bachchan plays a docker and Katkar the object of his desire. The sequence opens with Katkar parading down a runway above a band of seething dockers alternately raising and lowering her red flamenco dress. The wide shots of the group are intercut with medium close up of Tiger (Bachchan) and his cronies thrusting their pelvises in and out. Here the Indian films plays with the boundaries of the gendered moral universe of Indian films. As Sunita Mukhi points out Katkar repeatedly says “no no” to Bachchan while her actions mime “yes yes”. It is striking that a song with such a sexualised, origin could be seen as fodder for religious meditation but this is part of the ambiguous place Indian films play in the landscape of Northern Nigerian culture.

### Remembering and Repressing

As much as bandiri rests upon the dialectic of similarity and difference it intimately engages emotions of remembering and repressing. For copying to be successful the original tune has to be recognised and the Hausa lyrics are tied physically to the Hindi originals. But every moment of copying carries with it the anxiety produced by the immoral origins of the song. This immorality is heightened when we consider the ambivalent place of cinema within the conservative social arena of northern Nigeria. There cinemas used to be largely all male places, the few women who did attend were seen as prostitutes and sexual desire was to be found both on and off the screen (Larkin 2002). Since the introduction of Islamic law in 2001 women have been formally banned from these arenas and strict sexual segregation enforced. It is in this context that Indian films, the aura of relative sexual freedom they display and the teasing independence of actresses (shown well in Kimi Katkar’s flirtation with Bachchan) gain sexual and moral purchase. Indian actresses are often seen as quintessential prostitutes not because they are immoral but because their deportment and relative freedom in interacting with men, their sexual freedom and their glamour are all attributes associated with *karuwai* (prostitutes) in Nigeria. It is not uncommon that important female and male homosexual prostitutes in Kano name themselves after favourite film actresses, playing with these identities and borrowing from the aura of Indian stardom in a way that is analogous to bandiri music but morally inverting its use. In the context of Hausa society then, Indian films can be sexually transgressive, their erotic display, their sexual

13. The song sequence by Laximant won the 1991 Filmfare award for best song sequence.

intermixing and the use of music for carnal and not religious purposes combine to keep them beyond the pale of orthodox Islam. For bandiri singers these origins must be repressed at the moment they are invoked, forgotten (so to speak) just at the time they are remembered for the transformation from secular to sacred to occur. This action is often addressed in the songs themselves as in this example from Sidi Musa's song from *Geet Gata Chal* cited above:

- S: My heart is longing for you my soul loves you. I am longing for my messenger the Prophet of God  
 A: My messenger the Prophet of God...  
 S: Oh whenever I start translating an Indian song leave me this work and I shall finish it.  
 A: Ai you are the one to finish it...  
 S: Those who are longing for women should stop it. They should long for my Messenger the Prophet of God.  
 A: My Messenger the prophet of God  
 S: Those who are longing for women should stop it. They should long for my Messenger the Prophet of God.  
 A: My Messenger the prophet of God.  
 S: We should forget about Indian songs, they are useless.  
 A: They are useless  
 S: I am saying, in Indian songs I heard them singing Geet Gata Chal, but I am singing the Prophet of God.  
 A: The Greatest  
 A: O Mohammed, Prophet of God, O my lover.  
 S: Sidi Musa, son of Sidi, I am the one who composed this Praising of the Prophet of God.

Here you get a prime instance of the ways in which the original context is repressed in the moment of its mimesis. The association of songs and longing for women sets up the unIslamic nature of Indian song—*ba shi da amfani*—it is useless. But at the same time the song carries the intense emotions familiar from Indian films. As in Western musicals, songs in Indian films are often timed to appear as proxies for powerful feelings characters cannot convey in everyday conversation. Bandiri singers wish to maintain that intensity of emotion, to copy it, but then to divorce it from its original context leaving only a heightened state of being.

Mimicry then, lies at the heart of the social meaning of bandiri music. Taussig (1993: xiii) argues that “the power of mimesis lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and power”. What is occurring here is a siphoning of charisma, as Sufis are harnessing the glamour and transnational prestige associated with Indian films to the quite different charisma of religious devotion<sup>14</sup>. But in this case, bandiri can only be

14. Meg McLagan provides an interesting discussion of the tension between religious charisma and media celebrity in her discussion of the resignification of the Dalai Lama in the Tibet movement. See MCLAGAN (2002).

successful if the meanings generated through mimicry can be limited. Whether this can be completely achieved is an open question. Certainly older Hausa and non-Sufis who look down on bandiri music and some who criticise it fiercely believe that the shadow of its original filmic performance haunts the reproduction, undermining it and making it either detrimental to Hausa culture (because of foreign borrowing) or unIslamic, depending on your point of view. Peter Manuel (1993) observes the same tension operates in the performance of parodies in the Indian context, especially devotional ones where “the borrowed melodies may remind listeners of the specific cinematic scenes in which they were picturized” and that these “extra-musical” associations can never be divorced, and perhaps threaten to overwhelm, the transformed meaning of the copy.

This suggests the difficulty, mentioned above, of being able to “repress” the filmic origins of particular songs to the degree necessary to make them sacred and no longer profane. The singer Lawan ‘dan Yaro Magashi explained to me that he always sings “classic” songs from older films because it takes the older generation by surprise when they recognise a song from their youth. He talked of how old people would come up and reminisce about seeing the film from which the original song was taken, suggesting that he explicitly aimed to evoke the original moment of reception in order to draw upon it to give the Sufi version emotional resonance and meaning. Sudhir Kakar (1989) has written about the important ways that the common cultural competence of youths immersed in Indian films (or any other sort of films) such as my Hausa friend above, creates a common memory that provides a field of nostalgia later in life. Writing of himself, Kakar recalled his early childhood sexual pleasure at watching wet saree scenes. When he saw such a scene recently, “I felt grateful to the world of Hindi movies for providing continuity in an unstable and changing world [...] When I was a child, the movies brought the vistas of a desirable adulthood tantalizingly close; as an adult, I find they help to keep the road to childhood open” (1989: 26). Remembering and repressing, mimesis and alterity are the oppositions that provide the productive tensions making bandiri work.

### Indian Songs, Copies, Originals, and Copies again

If Bandiri music is a copy it brings up the question of what is the original of which it is a copy? This can be a significant question in the case of Indian film songs which, as many observers point out, are nothing if not rapacious in culling melodies and rhythms from religious, folk and popular musics of the world. One famous source of Hindi film songs, for instance, are qawwalis, the rhythmic chanting, drumming and clapping performed by Sufi followers in India and Pakistan, intended to stimulate intense emotions (Qureshi 1995; Manuel 1993). From the inception of Indian cinema qawwali was subsumed to the secular needs of the new medium. Instrumentation

was made more diverse, emotional intensity was retained, but the focus was shifted to include romance as well as religion. Qureshi points out that over time there has been a feedback loop between live qawwali performances and filmic qawwalis. Film music has borrowed heavily from the religious genre, but then the transformations it has introduced have fed back into live qawwali performances. Moving across space to Northern Nigeria, Hausa Sufi followers, unaware of the Sufi roots to some of the songs they listen to nevertheless recognise the emotional intensity (that first attracted music directors to qawwali) and re-resignify that emotional ecstasy back into an "original" Sufi context. Which one is the copy? In the case of *Jumma Chumma* this is all the more byzantine in that, unknown to Lawan 'Dan Yaro Magashi the Hausa singer of *Zuma zumar bege*, *Jumma Chumma* is itself an adaptation of *Yeke Yeke* a west African song by the Malian singer Mory Kante.

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When, between 1970 and 1983, the Nigerian government banked \$140 billion from the boom in oil revenues the surge of these oil monies through the urban networks of cities such as Lagos, Port Harcourt, Onitsha and Kano had similar and dissimilar effects. On the one hand all of them experienced the 'fast capitalism' of oil wealth: rapid urban growth, a flood of consumer goods, and a shift toward a consumption based economy (Watts 1992). But in many ways these monies set in motion different effects. The south's long-standing interaction with the West led to an increased penetration of evangelical Protestantism into southern Christianity and meant that more people than ever before began to travel, work and be educated in Europe and the United States. In the north of Nigeria, the arrival of oil monies hugely intensified Hausa interaction with the wider Islamic world. Oil enabled Hausa to invigorate pre-colonial and colonial participation in Sufi networks. It facilitated mass participation in the hajj intensifying the educational, financial and political links between Nigeria and Saudi Arabia that were crucial to the rise of Wahhabi ideas and movements.

In this way the structural reorganization brought about by the oil boom set in motion both similar and dissimilar effects in Nigerian cities. The reason for this lies in the historical residue of social practices, the layering of social spaces, which accumulate in any particular place. Transformations in capital energize the historical layers embedded in a city, facilitating the intensification of some, initiating others while closing down still more. It helps explain why dormant cultural, religious and economic forms can suddenly gain purchase again, be reawakened and re-energised in a new situation. As Lefebvre (1991: 73) argues, "itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others".

Bandiri emerges out of the urban crucible of Kano, northern Nigeria and the specific historical configuration that creates the conditions for Kano urban experience. In Kano, air routes link the metropolis to Beirut, Jeddah, Lagos and London. Stickers of Sufi preachers contest with Osama Bin Laden, Sani Abacha, Shah Rukh Khan, Tupac Shakur, and Ali Nuhu for space on Kano buses and taxis<sup>15</sup>. The recent revival of Shari'a law is contemporaneous with the jump in popularity of gangsta rap and hip hop available on vcd and satellite television. As an urban centre Kano is the node of overlapping sets of cultural, religious and economic networks that provide the skeleton around which Kano urban life is built. They provide the raw material that cultural actors use to express identity. Cultural and economic ties to the West are countered by the increasing orientation of Nigerian traders toward the Middle East and Asia and the pilgrimage to Mecca has become the context for legal and illegal trade as well as for religious observance.

The bricolage of culture inherent in a phenomenon such as bandiri is not a free-floating event. It is the fashioning of cultural performance from the availability of cultural forms in a particular given space—urban Kano, Nigeria. Media generate urban form by activating connections in a network, placing Kano Hausawa (Hausa people) into material and immaterial connection with movements and ideas from over the world making the urban arena “a multiplicity of spaces crosscutting intersecting or aligning with one another, or existing in relations of paradox or antagonism” (Massey 1994: 3). In this way bandiri can be seen as an epiphenomenon of an historical trajectory that brings certain social sets into articulation in the crucible of Kano bringing about the historical conditions of possibility from which something like bandiri might emerge. Urban possibilities are formed out of the unintended juxtapositions of different sets present in urban space. Bandiri music highlights how much Hausa audiences are avid and longtime consumers of a transnational circulation of Indian images and music for which they are the unintended recipients. For forty years an information flow has been persistently diverted off the mainstream of its distribution circuit to other places south of the Sahelian desert. It is there that in rubs up against an Islamic society in the midst of religious revival and out of that experience a new form of music—bandiri—emerges.

*Barnard College, Columbia University.*

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15. Osama Bin Laden is the Islamic terrorist; Sani Abacha is a former dictator of Nigeria; Shah Rukh Khan is a famous Indian film star; Tupac Shakur is the late African-American rap artist and Ali Nuhu is a star of Hausa video films.

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## ABSTRACT

This paper provides an analysis of the working of a musical form: bandiri. Bandiri is a musical genre performed by Sufi adepts in northern Nigeria who take popular Hindi film songs and change the words to sing praises to the Prophet Mohammed. In doing so they are involved in a complicated process of taking a profane genre and sacralizing it. I argue that bandiri is the result of the convergence in Kano, northern Nigeria of three very different sorts of transnational cultural and religious networks: the long presence of Sufi brotherhoods in the north, the recent emergence of an anti-Sufi Islamist movement; and the continuing popularity of Indian films and songs. As an urban centre Kano is made up of overlapping sets of cultural, religious and economic networks that constitute its particular configuration. These networks create structural preconditions that provide the raw material from which urban experience might be fashioned.

## RÉSUMÉ

*La musique bandiri, globalisation et expérience urbaine au Nigeria.* — Cet article offre une analyse du façonnement d'une forme musicale : le bandiri. Le bandiri est un genre musical pratiqué par les Sufi du nord du Nigeria qui se servent des chansons des films indiens et en modifient les paroles pour chanter les louanges du prophète Mohammed. Ils sont ainsi engagés dans un processus compliqué qui consiste à s'emparer d'un genre profane pour le sacraliser. Dans cet article, on soutient que le bandiri est le résultat de la rencontre, qui s'est produite à Kano au nord du Nigeria, de trois différentes traditions culturelles et religieuses transnationales : celle des confréries sufi du nord de ce pays, celle du mouvement anti-sufi qui y a récemment vu le jour et enfin celle des films et des chansons indiens. En tant que centre urbain, Kano se compose de réseaux culturels, religieux et économiques qui lui donnent une configuration singulière. Ces réseaux constituent la matière première sur laquelle s'édifie l'expérience urbaine.

Keywords/*Mots-clés*: Nigeria, globalization, popular culture, urban space, Indian film/*Nigeria, globalisation, culture populaire, espace urbain, films indiens.*