

## Review Article

## Relevance of Hausa Folklore in Conflict Resolution

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**Abstract:** Conflict among global communities has become a general and disturbing phenomenon which engulfed millions of lives and property. This problem has militated many nations and authorities to become more concern in paving ways through which these conflicts can be identified and be minimized or curved properly. Hausa communities, being one of the popular African groups, they constitute significant integral part of world communities. The world has experienced different kinds of war, and all other related forms of violence. These social predicaments have serious impact on Hausa folklore which was reflected in its various channels such as proverbs, Jokes Riddles, Epithets and oral proems in which alternative ways of managing conflicts, maintenance of peaceful co-existence among communities are demonstrated. This however encourages social integration among not only nations but at continental level.

**Keywords:** Conflict among global, Hausa communities, Jokes Riddles.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Today the entire world peace is faced with economic and social threats of different forms of conflicts, each with its own dimensional approach. Some of these conflicts are religiously related, some are political while others are tribal. Just from 31<sup>st</sup> January 1999 to March, 2003 there were 52 attempts to assassinate very important political figures in Nigeria, (Kura, 2009:277-278). All these attempts were not unconnected with conflicts of political interests. The way on how these conflicts have caused destructions to human lives and property is devastating and enormous. This could be a pathetic issue of great concern to any meaningful citizen to think of ways that can bring lasting solution to the problem among world communities. It is on this basis that I want to use various aspects of Hausa folklore which is widely agreed among African folklorist that Hausa folklore contains philosophical substance that can deliver the message of conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence. This can serve as simple remedy to violent approach of the affairs which rampantly prevails among not only Africans but also in other communities of the world.

## 2.0 Conflict

The word conflict is defined by Oxford Dictionary<sup>1</sup> as a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in serious disagreement or argument. In other words it is defined as “A violent situation or period of fighting between two countries.”

Apart from dictionary meaning of conflict, there is need for this paper to complement with scholarly approach in the definition. Stanger, quoted in Bunza, (2002: 5) however defines conflict as: “A situation in which two or more human beings desired goals which they perceive as being obtainable by one or the other but not both.”

One can observe that all the definitions are related in passing the same message. The related Hausa words of “conflicts” are many words such as *Jidali* or *Faxa* or *Tashin- Hankali* and *Tarzoma* could all refer to one English word ‘conflict’.

<sup>1</sup> Hornby, A.S (2000) Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary Six Edition London, Oxford University Press page 239 .

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### 3.0 Folklore

According to Oxford dictionary is “The traditions and stories of a country or community.”<sup>2</sup> In other words it can be defined as “The vast treasury of learning or knowledge acquired and researched by a great proportion of the members of the people.” Encarta dictionary also defines folklore as “Traditional local stories, and explanations passed down in a community or country.”

In this regard we can assert that folklore can be considered as: “A collection of beliefs, thoughts, customs and traditions that people pass on from generation to generation which include fairy tales legends myths, dances, games, proverbs, riddles as well as stories” etc.

It is on the basis of above listed aspects of folklore that this paper will contribute to reflect messages of conflicts, resolutions, and peaceful co-existence. The folklore respect to be included in this exercise include: proverbs, jokes, riddles, epithets and selected oral poems.

#### Brief History of Hausawa

Scholars have divergent views on the origin of Hausas but the paper discussed on paper rows the word of Hausa, the origin of the Hausa people and their original habitation. The word ‘Hausa’ according to Nail Skinner originated from the language of Songhy people ‘aussa’ or ‘Hausa’ i.e West. Therefore the word ‘aussa’ refers to people living in the western part of Songhy empire.

Former Nigerian representative to United Nation, Yusuf Maitama Sule (Danmasanin Kano) has the opinion that the word ‘Habasha’ (Ethiopia) was transformed to ‘Hausawa’. After some phonological processes, the consonant sound /b/ was changed to vowel /u/ and the sound /h/ was deleted and the syllable [wa] was inserted. Their original royal title of Ethiopians was ‘Negus’ which was later transformed to ‘Naguza’ to ‘Neguzuwa’ and finally to ‘Maguzawa’. Maguzawa are considered as original native of Hausa people. Another Scholar Lavers, mentioned in his note that a German trader, Fedrick Herneman during his life in 16 century revealed that: In Western Timbuktu there are Western Sudan States called ‘Hausa or Afuno. Arabs called them (Sudan), they called themselves (Hausa), but Kanuri in Barno called them (Afuno).”

Crowder (1976) reported an opinion of another historian, Smith, A. who maintained that the origin of Hausas attracted wide scholastic argument that makes it difficult to make a stand. He referred to a Spanish explorer called Ibn Sa’ad in 13 century who made mention of ‘Hausiyin’. Another explorer Ibn Batuta said he got information about Hausawa kings called Kubur (Gobir).

Another history scholar, Adamu, (1978) maintained the opinion that “Hausa” is a word used by a section of Africa communities as name of their tribes. They are called by that name and they are known as ‘Hausawa’ by other people and they have no any state other than Hausaland.

As Hausa people called them selves ‘Hausawa’ but did not prevent other neighbouring tribe to give them different names. Bunza, (1988) observed that “Kasnuri” called Hausawa” Afuno”, Nupe people called them Abakwa, Jukun people called Hausas ‘Abakwariga”, Fulani called them Habe or Kado, Yoruba people called them Gambari, Kambari people called them Agana, people of Benin Republic called Hausas “Mallah”, while people of Fezza called Hausas “Sudan”, while Asante people called them ‘Morrava.” In addition to Bunza’s observation Igbo’s one of the Hausas neighbours in Nigeria called Hausas “Mallah”.

#### Who are Hausawa?

Answer to this question attracted various opinions, but this paper maintained the popular opinions by Adamu, (1976) which opined that: ‘Hausawa were the original occupant of Hausaland; all their generations, cultural heritage, religion and language were that of Hausas’.

Secondly Bunza, (1988) maintained closer opinion to that Professor Mahdi Adamu that: “Hausa people were those people that live in Hausa land originally. Their generation before and present were within Hausa land. Their culture and behaviours were that of Hausa people. Anything contrary to this could be regarded as cross-breeding of Hausa people and other tribes.” It is important to note that Hausa language is a member of the chadic family in the language classification, along with Kanakuru, Kare-Kare, Mandara, Margi, Miya, Ngizim, and Tera.

#### The Hausa States Rose To Powerful Kingdoms

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<sup>2</sup> Hornby, (2000): page 459

The Hausa states existed as powerful kingdoms and empires between 800 to 1808 A.D. Some these states included Daura, Gobir, Kano, Katsina, Zazzau, Kabi, Yauri etc. These Kingdoms were ruled by different kings and warriors. They faced attacks and as well launched attacks. These kingdoms rose as centres for trans-Saharan trade, for learning Arabic and Islamic knowledge and the spread of Islam, up till 19 century when Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo launched Jihad against Hausa states and finally conquered entire Hausa monarchs.

Hausa as a language has many aspects of literature that reflects entire life of Hausa people. Some of these aspects include: proverbs, jokes, epithets, that reflect on the conflicts that occurred between various communities and the peace that prevails in Hausaland after the independence.

#### 4.0 Hausa Proverbs and Conflicts

Proverbs in Hausa folklore have occupied prominent position, because it is among the branches of folklore that involves almost all aspects of lives of Hausa communities. Politics, administration, defense, transport, wars, diplomacy, crime, peace, judiciary, and economy are found in Hausa proverbs. This paper decides to touch conflicts as in proverbs. The paper classified the proverbs according to their role and the meaning they convey on either conflict or peace mission as follows:

##### 4.1 Hausa Proverbs of Confrontation or Intimidation.

**These are the proverbs that tend to indicate confrontation and worst conflict situations such as:**

*Komai ta banjama banjam*

“Let the worst happens”

*In ta yi ruwa rijiya*

*In ba ta yi ba masai*

“If the pit gives water, it serves as well”

“If no water is found it serves as latrine”

*Kowa ya kwana lafiya shiya so*

“Whoever sleeps in peace is his making”

**The Relevance Message Behind These Proverbs Is Related To Interpretation Of Another Proverb That Says:**

*Idan makaho ya ce a yi wasar jifa, ya ji ya taka dutsi.*

“If a blind man quests for trouble, he matches on a stone.”

And some time one could be pushed to the wall and in this situation he will be forced to turn back and react violently to show his rival that he is not afraid. And this is why the proverbs says:

*Tura ta kai Bango*

“Pushing has reached the wall”.

This is the kind of situation or condition that facilitates the formation of these proverbs and their application.

#### 4.2 Proverb and Conflict

Hausa proverbs can be classified into different forms depending on the message they contain and also the role of the message to the entire community. Bada, (1995)<sup>3</sup> categorized Hausa proverbs according to their roles into the following: Proverbs of conflict resolutions and proverbs of smoothing social friction”. This paper recognized this categorization in this context with little addition later consider the following:

**There Is Hausa Proverb That Says:**

*Ba a raba harshe da haqori*

“You cannot separate the tongue from the teeth”

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<sup>3</sup> Bada B.D (1995) “A Literary Study of These, Function and Poetic Devices of Karin Magana “PhD Thesis submitted to Modern European Languages ,Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto (p. 201).

The above proverb emphasizes on the level of closeness of individuals to each other even though they may have some conflicts. This proverb can be used to mediate between two greeting friends or relatives or neighbors in disputes. This however leads to related proverbs:

*Ko a tsakanin harshe da haqora a kan sava*  
“Even between tongue and teeth conflict can happen”  
In another proverb which is used in resolving conflict says:

*Zaman lafiya ya fi zama xan sarki*  
“Living in peace is better than being a prince”

In this class of proverbs Bada (1999:199) emphasizes on easing task of individual to adjust himself in his new situation. But the important thing is precautionary measures to avoid any act that can lead to conflict:

*Kada a mai da qurji gyambo*  
“Don’t turn the boil into an ulcer”

*A rufe tutu a ci tuwo*  
“Let’s cover human excrement and eat food”

*Mai jin yunwa bai son ba a, kar a tave shi*  
*Ta’adi shi kai*

“A hungry man does not like (any) joke, don’t touch him, He can  
Cause great damage”

*Fitina tun tana qarama ake kasha ta*  
“Trouble sameness (dispute) is resolved when it is small”

Another proverb that is closely related to the sayings of Prophet Mohammad (SAW) which also soothes friction in togetherness

*Fitina barci take yi*  
*Allah ya la’ani mai tashe ta*

“Conflicts is at rest  
God curses he who wake’s it up”

#### 4.3 Proverbs Global Integration

There were conflicts between communities within and outside a continent; these conflicts related contact necessitated different forms of relation within folklore that encourages people or tribal integration across tribes, nations and continent. Some of these Proverbs are:

*Banza a banza, Nasara ya ga zagi*  
“Nonentity, white man sees emir’s servant”

When white men came to Hausaland even the emirs were afraid of white men talk less of the servant. Let us look at the following proverbs

*Sabon shiga, Bature da feqe*  
“New in business, white man as calabash maker”.

*Abin mamaki Bature ya zama gyartai*  
“Surprising thing, white man as calabash maker”.

*A bari a gani an ba Bature ‘yar baqar fata*  
“We shall see; a white man got black lady as wife

However all these proverbs contain message of integration. All these indicate acceptance of white man in Hausaland be giving him wife, and by involving him in their typical traditional occupation “gyartai”

### 5.0 Hausa Riddles as a Tool for Global Harmony

This is another folklore area that recognizes peaceful co-existence and also integrate people from different parts of the world let us look at this:

*Question: Ja ya fashi Ja ya xauka*

Translation: Red has fallen and red has taken”

So the answer of the question could be either of the two.

1.A “Tuareg child carrying a palm fruit”

Or

2.A “Fulani boy carrying a palm fruit”

Going by the two interpretations as answer to the riddle the two sentences are all referring to specific tribes or community and this is showing how Hausa folklore is conscious of his neighbors. Such Fulani are immediate neighbors or brothers while Tuaregs are neighbors from in Niger Republic.

### 6.0 Hausa Jokes as Peace Maker and Entertainer

Jokes in every setting or groups are mostly welcome because it makes situation very lively. Hausa has different forms of jokes but the mission is maintaining peaceful co-existence and communal integration. The classification of jokes consist of the following:

- Joke between husband and wife ‘s junior brothers and sisters
- There is *shara* jokes
- Joke between grand- father or grand- mother and grandson or grand- daughter.
- Jokes between towns and cities
- Jokes between tribes.

Jokes classification could be more, but the paper is more interested in jokes between towns and cities and also jokes between tribes according to Tukur, (1994:13)<sup>4</sup> History reveals that there used to be conflicts and wars between kingdoms and empires in quest for slaves, arms and land. But peace and harmony rained after all the conflicts and wars among tribes. The best treasury where peace and harmony could be kept and managed is “Jokes” joke between the two tribes e g Yoruba and Gobirawa or between Gobirawa and Fulani or Kanuri and Fulani or between Dakarkaris of Zuru and Zamfarawa or between Kambari and Gungawa of Yauri is so interesting and encouraging.

### 7.0 Hausa Epics as Agent of Peace and World Integration

Epics in Hausa plays a very important economic role toward involving world communities to work as one.

Epics or proverbs singing popularly known as “Kirari” in Hausa is classified also into many categories. There are town epics it is also done to emirs, individuals, tribes, occupations, animals, spirits, towns and cities. But the paper is more concern with epics involving tribes and individual.

Hausa communities relate with their neighboring counterparts and their interaction with other tribes can be traced clearly through epics eg.

#### 1. Hausa epic for Nupawa<sup>5</sup>

*Na Alolo*

*Masu kashi a ruwa*

“Alolos who passes pieces in the river”

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<sup>4</sup>Tukur, A. (1994) Kowace qwarya da abokiyar Burminta: Kano, Gidan Dabino (shafi na 13.)

<sup>5</sup>Nupawa are tribes in Northern Nigeria predominantly found in Niger State, the emir of Bida is titled “Etsu NUPE”.

This is an epic that contains message of jokes with the aim of causing laughter. But this shows that Hausa has recognized Nupawa people as their peaceful and good neighbors

## 2. Hausa epics for Kambari

Kambari people are found between Yauri in Kebbi State and parts Niger State. Hausa has epics which they always address Kambari with it but they normally reply with another epics as answer to Hausa as follows:

Hausa:

*Kambarin dawa xan Zaki*  
"Kambari son of Lion"  
Kambari: *Agana xan Kura*  
"Agana son of hyena

One can give interpretation on this small epic drama. But precisely Hausas shows their reduction to Kambari with simile to their father as lion, the most powerful animal in the bush. But they reply with another slimily, ridiculing Hausa by attributing their father with hyena the most prominent coward animal in the bush. One can see clearly the nature of the interaction is playful and joyful not talk about conflict.

## 3. Hausa epic for white man

The epic as folklore aspect has traveled to Europe. And one can find many Hausa epics for white man but this paper will use few as example. In Aminu (2013)<sup>6</sup> gave number of these epics example:

*Bature huntu ubangijin mai riga*  
"Nude person ruling well-dressed people  
The epic is relating nature of how Whiteman dresses,  
they used to be in shorts which is contrary to culture of Hausa.

*Bature ka ci gari ka kwana a daji*  
"Capture a town and sleep in jungle"

This epic reveals how Hausa communities in regard Whiteman most dangerous and war some especially the violent nature with which he came to Hausaland.

### 7.1 Inter Tribal Jokes in Hausa Oral Poems

One can also find many jokes that can be sustained as good material for maintenance of harmony and diplomacy. Musa Dankwairo in his son "Na yarda da Sarki Ado"  
Says:

*Kak ka bari ana fada ma*  
Don't let them make fool of you

*Mike bugi kan Buzaye*  
Rise up and beat the head of Tuaregs

*Randa Buzu yas sha kashi*  
If Tuareg is beaten properly  
*Ya kama gudu sai Tawa*<sup>7</sup>

Xankwaro tries to relate the joke with the historical relation between Kano and Tuaregs in Niger republic. Xankwairo is telling the Tuaregs that still Kano is untouchable because the emir is still tough.

Similarly Sani Sabulu in his song "Yau da gobe"  
He made mention of similar message:

*Kona goye ya san kura*  
Even small baby knows hyena

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<sup>6</sup>Aminu, N. (2013) Wane Ne Bature A Idon Bahausha" takardar da aka gabatar a taron kara wa juna ilimi na qasa kan harshe da al'adun Hausawa a cibiyar Nazarin Harsunan Nijeriya Bayero Kano, (shafi na 13).

<sup>7</sup> Waqar Sarki Ado ta Musa Xankwaro.

*Sannan Buzu ko bai da raqumi ya san cau*<sup>8</sup>  
And even Tuareg man doesn't have camel knows "cau"

The paper is particularly interested with the term "Cau" which is a language of communication with camels, to know with Tuareg is very tight.

## 8.0 CONCLUSION

It is open fact that Hausa folklore operates within social and cultural context which both reflect and influence not only Nigerian folklore but also Africa which however and hopefully will gradually make wider impact in the global trend. The paper discussed that conflict, has been a global phenomenon that has facilitated and influenced the enrichment of conflict related folklore.

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<sup>8</sup> The word "Cau" is commanding language to any camel asking him to stand up.