

Pattern, Interaction, and the Non-Dialogic in Performance by Hausa Rap Artists

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Secure in the Knowledge of Context

In early September 1989 we encountered a group of popular entertainers, known as *'yan gambara* ("gambara drum players"), entertaining passersby on market-day at Ladin Makole market near Kano, Nigeria. They included the lead performer, Muhammed Duna, his main partner in performance Idi Dan Gyatuma, and a younger member of the troupe, Dan Bado, who occasionally interpolated responses. Using a video camera we approached and filmed them as they performed; at one stage they broke off their performance to talk for a few minutes before resuming. They were being passed small amounts of cash by members of the crowd; we also proffered money after some twenty minutes of filming. The whole event from encounter to parting lasted not more than thirty minutes.

This discussion represents, for its authors, an experiment. Among other topics, Ahmad (1986) had previously written on Hausa "traditional" narratives and their narrators, Furniss (1977) on a circle of Hausa poets writing in the mid-1970s. In both cases the presentation of texts was accompanied by information on the biographical backgrounds of the narrators/poets. One consequence of such work was to participate in the enhancement of the reputations of certain individuals in Nigeria, and to be seen to be claiming "importance" for certain "products." Reflecting upon the process in which we, as researchers, inevitably participate and the strictures laid upon investigators to provide as full a contextual background as possible in order to best "understand" the nature of the phenomenon, we came to the view that we would rather look to capture deliberately a fleeting moment, for us, in a performance chanced upon rather than pre-arranged, with people we did not know and whose individual backgrounds we would ignore. Our discussion would focus upon the observable

characteristics of the event and the information provided to us in the course of that moment. Nevertheless, we were aware of the existence of the category of performer we did in fact encounter and were familiar with previous performances by others.

The discussion that follows presents extracts from a filmed performance by the *'yan gambara*, with the text transcribed and translated from the spoken Hausa. The focus of the commentary below is upon a number of issues relating to the presentation of subject-matter and the perception of pattern in oral texts and the constitution of textuality and specialness of language—in particular the problematic distinction between everyday speech and special language (issues of genre, register, and style).

On “Genre”

A sense of specialness entails the “bundling” of language and performance characteristics (they may individually be common components of ordinary speech) in regular, recognizable, and recurrent patterns, thus creating identifiable “genres.” The question of genre, then, becomes one that relates not simply to the definition of characteristics allowing for comparison and subcategorization of forms but to the significance of specialness in the process of communication. Regular recurrence and recognizability are manifest in the characteristics both of form and of content. For example, on hearing a particular style of recitation with a particular rhyme and rhythmic pattern, there is, in Hausa, an expectation that the content will conform to a certain kind of religious didacticism. For a knowledgeable audience, it is therefore appropriate that the content be of a certain kind when the parameters of the form have been recognized. Thus, genre issues are crucial to considering the acceptability conditions of certain kinds of speech, appropriate content for appropriate “special” forms. In the context of the performance discussed here, we consider what it is that is made “acceptable” by being wrapped in this form. We trace the characterization, the “creation” of certain perceptions, and the evaluative overlay that informs that perception. It is this content that is made appropriate to the communicative situation by being embedded in its very form.

Typification of “drivers”

In the extract from the filmed performance under discussion here there are apparent subject sections sometimes distinguished by “section markers” such as a formulaic interchange between the lead, Muhammed Duna, and his main interlocutor, Dan Gyatuma, consisting of the interchange, sometimes repeated, of *Dan Gyatuma: Na’am* (“Dan Gyatuma”: “Yes”). In performance there is, however, no break apparent in the sense of an introduction, title, doxology, or introductory indication of subject change; the subject simply and abruptly changes. In the full text set out below, these changes of subject are indicated by bold headings, but they are not reflected in the performance. In the ensuing discussion we concentrate upon the typification process and the “chains” of association that are to be seen in the discussion of “drivers” and the standard of driving on Nigerian roads. The daily slaughter that occurs on Nigerian roads is a subject of perpetual comment among ordinary people, whose journeys to and from home villages and markets put them at the mercy of local bus and truck drivers.¹

The section “drivers” begins with the establishment of two parties to a discourse, “me” and the general category “drivers”; drivers as a category are then modulated to a particular driver, the Fulani man, Ibrahim. The notion of a relationship between “me” and Ibrahim is taken forward by the phrase “he amazed me,” which is ambiguous: is it amazement at his skill/excellence/goodness, which immediately sets a laudatory tone slotting into the “genre language” of praise, implying potentially a patron-client relationship between “me” and Ibrahim? Or is it amazement at his awfulness, which would imply the other side of the praise coin—a potential vilification? The ambiguity is not resolved in relation to Ibrahim because the topic of one particular driver produces an associational leap to another, “the Kanuri driver.” But in this case the question posed by the original ambiguity is resolved in a clear affirmation of a patron-client relationship in “he gave me money (and) . . . clothes to wear.” The next link picks up the original notion of a dialogue between “me” and “a driver” but inserts a new factor, the notion of truth, and leads into a “moral” framework of “good”

¹ Wole Soyinka’s acceptance of a national role in relation to road safety reflects the ubiquity and seriousness of concern about annihilation on the roads, both of the great and the good and the ordinary citizen.

and “bad.” Truths are moral truths. These contrastive categories then provide an alternation sequence of statements about “good” and “bad” drivers prefaced by an authorial disclaimer of bias against the “driver” category as a whole: “I am not opposed to people being drivers.”

Duna: Dan Gyatuma!
 Dan Gyatuma: Yes
 D: I told the drivers
 D: You see this Fulani man is a driver
 D: He is Ibrahim the driver
 D: Yes, Ibrahim the driver amazed us!
 D: What about the Kanuri driver?
 D: After he gave me money
 DG: Yes
 D: He also gave me clothes to wear
 DG: He did indeed
 D: I asked him and I heard the truth
 DG: Absolutely
 D: I am not opposed to people being drivers!
 DG: That's right

The parallel pattern of A, B, A, B, representing “good” and “bad,” is then linked on to an expansion of the description of just B, the language of which we will comment upon shortly:

A: Dan Gyatuma, some people do drive
 B: And some sons of bitches are crazy
 A: When driving is well done it is clear to see
 B: Some of these sons of bitches are crazy

B expanded:

D: They'll drive for a year and yet have no decent clothes
 DG: Lord preserve us
 D: You'll see a driver going crazy and all for nothing
 DG: Yes
 D: You'll see a rogue in a gown with no sleeves.
 DG: Lord preserve us
 D: Like a vulture on a tall building!
 DG: The bastard!
 D: You'll see a slight rise in the road and he can't make it past it,

- DG: Just a small one
 D: The engine's dead and his eyes are bulging,
 DG: The bastard!
 D: "Come and give me a push!"
 DG: Lord protect us
 D: Someone says, "Can't the car manage this slight slope?!"
 D: See the rogue with a dark forehead like a barber's bag!
 DG: Lord preserve us!

Immediately after the lengthy "expansion of B," which contains the imitation and the pathetic flourish as the rhetorical high point of the discussion, there comes a junction/section marker, "Dan Gyatuma": "yes," at which the performer can make and mark a transition to another topic. Here, however, he opts to go around the subject again, making a loop through the sequence of components referred to above. First the naming of a driver, Sani, then Dan Wali, with whom he was in a patron-client relationship ("he paid for my music"), and a third, Mutari, whom he again praises as "he who drives with the guidance of angels." In contrast with the initial time around, the first two drivers have died and the performer and respondent invoke God's mercy upon them. The possible implication is that they died in road accidents, although that is not stated, thus reinforcing in that ambiguity, the overall point about death on the roads. The rhetorical punch of the second circuit of the topic lies again in the final invective against bad drivers and the invocation, "Lord preserve us from all this."

- D: Dan Gyatuma!
 DG: Yes
 D: May God be merciful to people
 DG: Allah amen
 D: Sani the driver from Tofa I remember
 D: Lord have mercy upon him
 DG: Allah amen
 D: What about Dan Wali?
 D: The Lord has called him
 DG: Allah amen
 D: Lord make his stay in the hereafter peaceful
 DG: Allah amen
 D: He paid for my music and no debt was incurred
 D: And now Muhamman Mutari
 D: Mutari the son of the people of Kabo
 D: He who drives with the guidance of angels.

- D: But you'll see another driver who's utterly crazy
 D: A black-arsed son of a bitch like a monkey on a bicycle!
 DG: Lord preserve us
 D: With a sleeveless gown like a vulture on a tall building!
 DG: Lord protect us!
 D: Lord preserve us from all this.

Manifestly, there are repetitive patterns apparent here in the ideational structure that indicate the necessary components in a certain sequence: “me” and “drivers,” a clientage relationship (praise), an evaluative framework of “good” and “bad,” rhetorical invective, and a junction point. In introducing this discussion we raised the issue of the distinction between special language and ordinary speech; in our estimation none of the individual characteristics outlined above is in itself a mark of specialness. Associational links, moral frameworks, junctions, and many other such features are part of the ebb and flow of all daily conversation; imagery, invective, and proverbial discourse, while sometimes more prevalent in forms of special language, are also a commonly encountered aspect of ordinary speech. What does seem to us to be particular to the constitution of a performance of this kind (in conjunction with the features outlined in the next section) is the parallel construction of sections along very similar lines, as illustrated above.

Orality and the Perception of Text

In an earlier paper by Furniss (1989), a process of attempted persuasion in poetry was analyzed as the deployment of a typification of the subject matter and the overlaying of an evaluative discourse that sets out for the listener or reader an ideological map, by which the listener is supposed to understand the significance of that “typified object.” This discussion looks not so much at the ideological overlay as at the “textuality” of this particular oral performance.

As researchers who have worked on oral and written forms in Hausa, we have proceeded, naturally, from tape to paper via transcription, translation, and commentary ordered in a “natural” flow of activity. Text on paper yields up its regularities and patterns through the spatial organization of repetitions, parallel structures, visual representations of rhythm, and so forth. Symmetries and paradigms leap out of the spatial

representations of the text on paper. A parallelism, be it of two or twenty lines set out in columns, is readable up or down. These representational habits are second nature to us. Yet any attempt to investigate the significance of such patterns in rhetorical effect must come to terms with the issue of how such seemingly inherent “spatial” patterns are perceived in performance, since it is primarily in the momentary act of oratory, proposition, or argument that “effect” takes place.

For both of us, the subjective personal experience, as receivers, of the moment of articulation is dominated by the battle to “hear and understand.” Standing listening is to be alert to the first impact of meaning, of making sense, and of struggling with bits that were “missed” or bits that were an immediate and transient puzzle, at the same time fearing incomprehension and miscomprehension. In that context form is background to the demands of understanding, yet sometimes serves as an aid to understanding such that, as soon as patterns are grasped, the unknown begins to diminish; expectation based on what has gone before, that the topic will lead to comment, or that repetition will take place, reduces the difficulty of understanding.

The “patterns to be grasped” are not, however, perceived in the neat geometry of paper diagrams; they are perceived only through the linearity of spoken language in performance. Structure, in such circumstances, can only be understood as chains of onward linkages or moments, one after another, when the listener and the performer become aware that something has “come around again” in one form or another. Thus patterning in the language of orality has predominantly to do with the recognition of repetition or of associational linkages; in order to represent the process of perceiving pattern in speech, therefore, there is a need to deploy a vocabulary that tries to render this linearity of sequence in time more clearly. We think therefore of transition points, of branching, of loops and recursion as well as links of association, and the array of sequential possibilities provided by normal syntax: main and concessive clauses, main and causal clauses, and so on.

On the one hand, we see the chains of association, logic, tense, and narrative that lead us on, as listeners, down the track. On the other hand, we see the telegraph posts of rhythm and drum flashing by wherever we are on our journey, and we recognize that sometimes our driver opts to throw the points and run round the loop line, coming back past where we were a minute ago, before switching back to the main line and a new valley that

must come after the next hill. As passengers we can only look out one side at a time, and when we doze for a moment we miss the bridge on the road from one town to the next. As travelers recognize the “train” experience from the nature of the vehicle, the telegraph poles, and the moving view out of the window, so “textuality” in the oral performance needs to be considered in terms of the perception of sequence and concurrence. Manifestly, a key question in considering the ideological and political implications of a text is effect and affectivity at that original perceptual level.

Textuality

Rhetorical questions and epithetic speech

In addition to the ideational structure of the piece, there is a dimension of language use that overlays the patterning apparent in the section: changes in language style corresponding to commonly recognized registers or genres. These referential overtones reverberate through the piece. While we will discuss in more detail the interaction between performer and respondent(s) in a later section, there is a mode of rhetorical question to which the respondent's comments do not constitute an answer; it is the performer who answers himself: “What about the Kanuri driver? After he gave me money he gave me clothes to wear”; “When driving is done well isn't it clear for all to see? Some of these sons of bitches are crazy”; “What about Dan Wali? The Lord has called him.” Corresponding to the rhetorical question-and-response form is also a form of direct reported speech:

I told the drivers:
 “You see this Fulani man is a driver,
 He is Ibrahim the driver,
 Yes, Ibrahim the driver amazed us.”

What about the Kanuri driver?

After he gave me money
 He also gave me clothes to wear
 I asked him and I heard the truth.

More significant in terms of the moral framework of the extract is, however, the way in which language use invokes the genre of *kirari* (“epithet”). Epithetic speech is most typical of praise and invective. Redolent with attitudinal rather than propositional characteristics, such speech styles make extensive use of imagery. This performer uses the evaluative density of epithetic speech with its striking imagery to carry the “punchlines” of the piece. But epithetic speech, rather than simply “epithets,” comes in a variety of recognized forms. There is the simple use of name plus juxtaposed occupation/place of origin as in “Ibrahim: the driver”; *Dan Barebari: mai tuki*, “the Kanuri man: the driver.” But there is also the more extensive vilificatory epithet, consisting of topic plus comment (sometimes extended with simile), as in the following, *direba sai haukan wofi* (“driver: only crazy and all for nothing”), *kafiri: da riga ba hannuwa kamar ungulu kan bene* (“rogue: in a gown with no sleeves like a vulture on a tall building”), *kafiri: bakin goshin sai ka ce zabirar wanzami* (“rogue: with a dark forehead like a barber’s bag”). The penultimate epithet of this section is picked up and repeated later in the second half along with an even stronger piece of epithetic invective: *dan burar uba bakar mara: sai ka ce Barau ya hau keke* (“a black-arsed son of a bitch: like a monkey on a bicycle”). The “punchline” of the first part of this extract finishes on a vilificatory epithet, but an important and amusing piece immediately preceding is in a contrastive mode: it is not authorial commentary, as with epithet, but an anecdotal imitation acting out the crazy driver and his useless vehicle:

You’ll see a slight rise in the road and he can’t make it past it, the engine’s dead and his eyes are bulging, “Come and give me a push!” Someone says, “Won’t it manage this slight slope?”

In the extract discussed above there is an ideational pattern through which one topic is linked on to the text, and a moral framework for the piece is established. This pattern is repeated and is overlaid by a series of switches of registers/genres, one of which, epithetic speech, is deployed to provide the punchline of the piece. The epithetic speech genre is most intensely evaluative, providing the strongest vilification of the performer’s target, the bad driver.

These components contribute to making this performer’s production distinctive. The next section will discuss other aspects of the performance of the text that also contribute to the establishment of distinctiveness before

turning to the significance, for its persuasiveness and ideological “force,” of one particular feature—the seemingly interactive, dialogic form of the performance.

Accompaniment, verbal style, and changes of register

Immediately apparent from the video recording is the striking combination of verbal style with drum accompaniment. The drum accompaniment provides a constant rhythmic pattern against which the words operate. We have not investigated in detail the relationship between words and drum, but it appears that each verbal phrase is accompanied by four measures in the drum pattern; this sequence is immediately followed by a pause in the recitation by the main performer during which the respondent interpolates responses of various kinds. This pattern of main line, pause, with accompanying insertion timed according to the drum rhythm, provides a general frame within which the performer operates. This acoustic organization is visually represented here by each line of text.

Perceptually more striking and salient, however, is the style of verbal performance of the words themselves. The performer shouts his words over the top of the loud noise of the drum; great volume is accompanied by speed, since the drum rhythm sets up a considerable tempo. These prime performance characteristics establish immediate perceptual distinctions between this genre and other named genres of Hausa entertainment and oral performance. The shouted spoken word of *'yan gambara* is differentiated from the sung *waka* of popular singers or the chanted recitation of the *waka* of poets.² This shouted spoken style is apparently typical of *'yan gambara* and is perhaps most reminiscent of the “rap” style of some modern popular music.

A further distinguishing characteristic of the performance is the language register within which it operates. But again, the performer plays with a number of registers as we will illustrate. The effect of the juxtaposition of such registers is to point up the specificity of the performer's own style and sometimes to throw a degree of irony into the use of contrasting styles. The popular understanding of who *'yan gambara*

² For a useful summary of the distinctive characteristics of these two forms of *waka* in Hausa, see Muhammad 1979.

are and what they do is not conveyed by the literal meaning of their name, which simply means “the people who play the *gambara* drum.” The popular perception is that they ridicule people, especially by the use of obscene language within which there are many underlying sexual “double entendres.” In the text as set out below, obscenity is marked in the translation by such phrases as “sons of bitches” in order to provide something of the flavor of the original *dan burar uba*, which literally translates as “son of his father’s penis.” This general tone, most clearly signalled by such phrases, is, however, only the most salient feature in a variety of language uses that range from raciness to slang. For example, expressions such as *duk rariya kamar dan akuya nake*, translated as “I am in the brothels street by street like a goat,” is in Hausa a racy way to talk but could hardly be construed as obscene. Similarly, *wallahi da ni da gona ko kewayya*, “farmland and me don’t mix” (lit., “by God, me and the farm, not even encircle/go near”), is emphatic and has a slang-like feel, but again is neither obscene nor reflective of sexual innuendo (as far as we are aware). Nevertheless, it is clear that the early dialogue talking of moisture from above and from below is one long “double entendre,” and the accompanying laughter in the audience, it would seem from the performance, is based upon “getting” that particular joke.

In contrast to this language register stands the switch into laudatory language during those brief moments when the performer is praising individuals, and there is a further contrast with the section headed “God the Almighty,” where the performer invokes the names of a number of religious books and the name of the Prophet, as well as praises God for his creation. The first part of that section is linked to an entreaty to the audience to give alms, and is thus very much in the style of religious mendicants and Koranic students who have traditionally lived by the generosity of local communities. That religious entreaty moves on, without obscenity or innuendo, to laud one particular part of God’s creation, thereby ensnaring one of the two observers who have authored this paper in the obligations of temporary patronage. Whether the praise was genuinely intended or ironic is a matter of interpretation.

Interaction and the non-dialogic

A striking characteristic of the performance by these *’yan gambara* is

the speed of the interchanges between the lead performer, Muhammed Duna, and his main respondent, Dan Gyatuma. Nearly every line by Muhammed is immediately responded to by Dan Gyatuma, giving the strong impression that not only is the performance dialogically structured but that a dialogue is actually taking place. The issue we discuss in this final section of the paper is the nature of the relationship between the two performers “in dialogue” and between the performers and the audience as witnesses to this performance. This discussion is based upon one particular performance, and indeed only one part of that; the points we make will therefore be relevant to a discussion of the rhetorical effect of what we observe here. It is not necessarily the case that what we say is characteristic of all performances by *'yan gambara* or even of these *'yan gambara* in particular.

In looking at how people argue or how they interact, there are myriad features to explore: propositions, contradictions, counter-propositions, ironic restatements, repetitions, questions, answers, qualifications, additions, silence interpretable as confirmation, silence interpretable as disagreement, and so forth. Generally, however, dialogue takes place where there is at least some independent input from more than one party, “independent” in the sense that the second party does more than simply repeat or affirm propositions from the first. In the performance being discussed here, the overwhelming incidence is of confirmation, in one way or another, by Dan Gyatuma (DG) of what is being said by Muhammed Duna (D). Call and response, question and answer typify the performance. Even where Duna asks a question, it is a yes/no question and he is answered by an affirmation:

D: Any old woman is a mother to you?

DG: Any old woman is a mother to me.

or

D: You hear me tell the truth, don't you?

DG: I hear the very perfection of truth.

or

D: Do they really mint money?

DG: They do indeed, Duna.

Again and again, Dan Gyatuma intervenes to confirm in a wide variety of ways what Duna has been saying. The full text in the Appendix below gives the interpolations as well as Duna's propositions. Only on one occasion in this performance did Dan Gyatuma intervene independently against a proposition by Duna, and then it is a qualification of an apparent self-criticism by Duna:

D: In all my family I am the only good-for-nothing.

DG: It's not true! You're no good-for-nothing, you're just earning your daily bread.

While the performance involves a continuous flow of verbal interaction between performers, it is a flow that, in the terms we have outlined above, is predominantly non-dialogic; it is a monologue in dialogic form (in contrast with other performances where a single actor articulates both parties to a dialogue, be it client and oracle in divination, or *griot* representing characters in a drama). However, this flow of interaction does, we believe, have considerable rhetorical effect upon the persuasiveness of the performance in terms of getting across to the audience both the typification of the subject-matter and the ideational evaluations that go with it. While members of the audience exercise, no doubt on reflection, their own independent judgments as to whether they accept and endorse Duna's typifications of prostitutes, of Tofa people, of drivers, of 'yan *gambara*, or of white men, the presence at the very same split second or two of a voice that is saying "it's true, it's true" tends to incorporate into the moment of understanding a truth value overtone to the proposition. It is in the dynamics of the relationship between proposer, confirmer, and listener that the confirmation tends to exclude or preempt the possibility of counter-perception in the listener.

It is a commonplace that the presence in a meeting of nodding heads or murmured agreement can obviate, even if only briefly, the possibility of counter-perceptions, or at least make more socially difficult the public articulation of them. In this case such confirmatory interpolations constitute not sporadic moments but rather an integral part of the pattern of the whole performance, perhaps adding to the "bundle" of characteristics that distinguish it as a genre.

Our experiment then has led us to consider the relation between "appropriate" subject-matter and the "appropriate showcase" for it. In discussing the way these performers typify "drivers," we saw the pattern in

the presentation of the subject-matter and sought to comment on the need to understand pattern within the linear constraints of oral articulation and perception. Characteristics of the performance event, from drum accompaniment to call-and-response form, provided the elements of “textuality” contributing to a distinctive, recurrent set of “special language” features—perhaps a “genre.” As the audience smiled with recognition and we smiled with them, we participated in the transfer of a particular view—of drivers, of the people of Tofa town, of white people. The major components of that view were a particular typification and an evaluative overlay upon it. What our experiment failed to demonstrate, among other things no doubt, was the articulation of counter-perceptions, either pre-existing or subsequent, that would illustrate the contestation of ideological space, be it over evaluations of farming as an occupation, drivers, white people, or any other aspect of the daily experience of ordinary people. But the constant affirmation in the responses of Dan Gyatuma within the performance itself set up a defensive/offensive position against the possibility of counter-perception—all part of the *rhétorique du quotidien*.³

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Muhammad 1979

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Appendix (Texts)

D: Muhammed Duna
DG: Idi Dan Gyatuma
B: Dan Bado

Introductory conversation

D: This one is Dan Bado
D: He only blossoms with water
D: May your life last long
D: Without water he will not blossom, he withers
D: But when he gets water, he blossoms
D: This one, whenever he sees an old woman he treats her as his mother
D: That’s the way he is
D: Meaning when he sees an old woman he sees his mother
D: That is the reason
D: As for me, whatever you see that is black is my favorite
D: Everything of mine is black
D: My face is jet black
D: My teeth are the only exception
D: Even my drum is black, you see?

Gabatarwa

Wannan Dan Bado ke nan
She ba ya toho sai da ruwa
Ranka ya dade
In ba ruwa ba zai tohu ba sai ya langabe
Amma in ya sami ruwa sai ya yi ta toho
Wannan inda duk ya ga gyatuma uwarsa ce
Ka ji yadda yake
Watau shi da ganin gyatuma ya ga uwarshi
Ka ji dalili
Ni kuma duk inda ka ga baki nawa ne
Kome ka gani nawa baki ne
Ka gan ni fuskata baki kirin
Hakora ne kawai suka dan surka fari
Ka ga ma gangar baka ce, ka gani?

D: But the moment I pick it up, it's white:⁴ To amma da na dauka sai ka ga ta zama fara
I make Naira A sami Naira

(Drum starts)

D: This is how things are Ka ji yadda al'amarin yake
D: Dan Gyatuma! Dan Gyatuma!
DG: Yes Iye
D: You hear me tell the truth, don't you Ka ji gaskiya in ce ko?
DG: I hear the very perfection of truth Na ji gaskiya tsantsarta
D: Everything in the world is there for a Kome na duniya da dalili
reason.
D: Now you, Dan Gyatuma Yanzu wai kai Dan Gyatuma
D: I have a question for you To ka ga wata tambaya ina so in ma
DG: Go ahead and ask me, if I can I'll To tambaye ni, in na sani in gaya ma
answer you
D: Now in this world is any old woman a Yanzu nan duk duniya ba ka da tsohuwa a
mother to you? nan in ba tsohuwa ba?
DG: Any old woman is a mother to me Duk gyatuma ni uwata ce
D: No, that can't be right! A'a sai an gyara!
D: You said any old woman is a mother Na ji ka ce duk tsohuwa uwarka ce?
to you?
DG: Yes Ee
D: Even a *bamaguje*,⁵ a pagan? Har bamaguje ma arne?
DG: Yes Ee
D: Is he your father? Babanka ne?
DG: Yes Ee
D: They drink beer in their house, is she Gidansu fa ana shan giya, babarka ce?
your mother?
DG: Yes Ee
D: You agree? Kai ka yarda?
DG: Yes Ee
D: There's someone on a bicycle, is he Ga mai keke nan, shi ma babanka ne?
your father?
DG: Yes Ee
D: Now Dan Bado what do you say? Yanzu Dan Bado yaya maganarka?

⁴ "White" is commonly used in Hausa to imply "advantageous/beneficial": *farin jini* (lit. "white blood"), "popularity"; cf. inter alia *bakin jini* (lit. "black blood"), "unpopularity"; *farin ciki* (lit. "white stomach"), "happiness"; *bakin ciki* (lit. "black stomach"), "unhappiness."

⁵ *bamaguje*, "non-Muslim Hausa."

- B: Well ask me
D: Now you, however wide the pond, if there's no water in it you won't blossom?
B: No I won't blossom!
D: Well your beard has blossomed so it must get moisture
B: Moisture indeed!
D: Well, there you are
D: Wait, I want to ask you a question
B: Well ask me
D: Upper moisture or lower moisture?
B: Whichever, I like both!
D: Dan Gyatuma!
DG: Yes
D: There's something wrong with this statement
DG: Then correct me
D: You Dan Bado there's something wrong with what you said
B: Then correct me
D: You see upper moisture is rain and it causes growth
DG: Absolutely
D: When God brings the rains
D: There'll be guineacorn when it has blossomed
DG: Quite right
D: Millet will blossom
DG: Absolutely
D: And other vegetation will blossom
D: But the lower moisture doesn't do that
B: Not at all, it just wets you
D: You see Dan Bado there is something wrong with what you said
DG: Move back, people, move back!
- To tambayar ni
Yanzu kai duk fadin kududdufi in ba ruwa kai ba ka tofo?
A'a ba na tofo!
Yanzu gemunka da toho nan laima ta samu
Laima tsaf!
To ka ji fa
To tsaya zan maka tambaya
To tambaye ni
Laimar sama ko kuma laimar kasa?
Kowacce, sonta nake!
Dan Gyatuma!
Iye
Da gyaran maganar nan
To gyara min
Kai Dan Bado da gyaran maganar nan
To gyara min
To ka ga ruwan sama shi ne ruwa shi ke sa toho
Kwarai
In dai Ubangiji ya yi ruwa
Dawa ta samu ko ga sai ta yi toho
Kwarai da gaske
Gero ya yi toho
Kwarai
Sauran itatuwa ma su yi toho
To shi ko ruwan kasa ba ya wannan
Yauwa, sai dai ya jika ka
To Dan Bado da gyaran maganar nan
Ja da baya, ja da baya!

Drivers

- D: Dan Gyatuma!
DG: Yes
D: I told the drivers
D: You see this Fulani man is a driver

Direbobi

- Dan Gyatuma!
Iye
Na gaya wa direbobi
Ka ga wannan ma dan Fulanin tuki ne

- D: He is Ibrahim the driver
 D: Yes, Ibrahim the driver amazed us!
 D: What about the Kanuri driver?
 D: After he gave me money
 DG: Yes
 D: He also gave me clothes to wear
 DG: He did indeed
 D: I asked him and I heard the truth
 DG: Absolutely
 D: I am not opposed to people being drivers!
 DG: That's right
 D: Dan Gyatuma, some people do drive
 DG: Absolutely
 D: And some sons of bitches are crazy!
 DG: Without a doubt
 D: When driving is done well isn't it clear for all to see?
 DG: Quite right
 D: Some of these sons of bitches are crazy!
 DG: Without a doubt
 D: They'll drive for a year and yet have no decent clothes
 DG: Lord preserve us
 D: You'll see a driver going crazy and all for nothing
 DG: Yes
 D: You'll see a rogue in a gown with no sleeves
 DG: Lord preserve us
 D: Like a vulture on a tall building!
 DG: The bastard!
 D: You'll see a slight rise in the road and he can't make it past it,
 DG: Just a small one
 D: The engine's dead and his eyes are bulging,
 DG: The bastard!
 D: "Come and give me a push!"
 DG: Lord protect us
 D: Someone says, "Can't the car manage this slight slope?!"
 D: See the rogue with a dark forehead like a barber's bag!
- Ibrahim direba kenan
 To Ibrahim direba ya burge mu!
 Dan Barebari mai tuki fa?
 Bayan ya ban kudi
 Iye
 Ya kuma ban tufar da zan sanyawa
 Ya ba ka
 Kuma na tambaye shi na ji batun gaskiya
 Kwarai
 To ni dai ban hana a hau bisa mota ba!
 Haka aka yi
 Dan Gyatuma wadansu da tuki ake
 Kwarai
 'Yan burar uba wadansu da hauka suke!
 Ba shakka
 Wai ashe tuki ya yi kyau ido ke nunawa?
 Kwarai da gaske
 'Yan burar uba wadansu da hauka!
 Ba shakka
 A shekara tuki ake amma ba riga
 Allah ya kiyaye
 Wai ka ga direba sai haukan wofi
 Iye
 Sai ka ga kafiri da riga ba hannuwa
 Allah ya kiyaye
 Kamar ungulu kan bene!
 Dan burar uba!
 Sai ka ga dan hawa a nan ba fa wucewa,
 Ai kankane
 Mota ta mace yana zare idanu,
 Dan burar uba!
 "Ku zo ku tura ni!"
 Subhanalillahi
 Ana "wannan dan hawan ba za ta wuce ba?!"
 Ji kafiri bakin goshin sai ka ce zabirar wanzamai!

- DG: Lord preserve us!
 D: Dan Gyatuma!
 DG: Yes
 D: May God be merciful to people
 DG: Allah amen
 D: Sani the driver from Tofa I remember
 D: Lord have mercy upon him
 DG: Allah amen
 D: What about Dan Wali?
 D: The Lord has called him
 DG: Allah amen
 D: Lord make his stay in the hereafter
 peaceful
 DG: Allah amen
 D: He paid for my music and no debt was
 incurred
 D: And now Muhamman Mutari
 D: Mutari the son of the people of Kabo
 D: He who drives with the guidance of
 angels
 D: But you'll see another driver who's
 utterly crazy
 D: A black-arsed son of a bitch like a
 monkey on a bicycle!
 DG: Lord preserve us
 D: With a sleeveless gown like a vulture
 on a tall building!
 DG: Lord protect us!
 D: Lord preserve us from all this.
- Allah ya kiyaye!
 Dan Gyatuma!
 Na'am
 Allah ya jikan maza
 Allah amin
 Sani direba Tofa na tuna shi
 Allah ya jikansa
 Allah amin
 Wai shi Dan Wali?
 Ubangiji ya yi kiransa
 Allah amin
 Allah ya sa kiyamarsa da sauki
 Allah amin
 Ya biya kidana ba bashi ba
 Yanzu sai Muhamman Mutari
 Mutari dan mutanen Kabo
 Mai tuki mala'iku na tura mai.
 Amma ka gano direba sai haukan wofi
 Dan burar uba bakar mara sai ka ce Barau ya
 hau keke!
 Allah ya kiyaye
 Sai riga ba hannuwa kamar ungulu kan bene!
 Allah ya kare!
 Wannan Ubangiji Allah ya kare.

Gambara the Best Music

- D: You see it's *gambara* which has made
 me like this
 DG: Without a doubt
 D: But just as I am I thank God!
 DG: Thank God
 D: Anything to be gained through music
 has come to me through this drum
 D: Dry and wet season, I take life without
 a care!
 D: Me go out and dig? God forbid!
 DG: Amen

Gambara Namijin Kidi

- To ka ga gambara ce tai min haka
 Ba shakka
 To ai ko yanzu ma na gode Ubangiji!
 Mu gode ubangiji
 Duk abin da kan wa mai kidi gangar nan ta
 yi min
 Rani da damina wannan duniya zaman karya
 nai mata!
 In sunkuya? Allah ya kiyaye!
 Amin

- | | |
|---|--|
| D: I only ever bend to take a sip or bite,
DG: Without a doubt | In na sunkuya fura zan sha ni,
Ba shakka |
| D: Or when I need a crap!
DG: Yes | Kashi ya matsa min!
Iye |
| D: Farmland and me don't mix
DG: Yes | Wallahi da ni da gona ko kewayaya!
Iye |
| D: If I don't get something to eat my head
begins to ache!
DG: Absolutely without doubt | In ban sha fura ba kaina ciwo yake!

Ko shakka babu |
| D: My drum ensures . . .
DG: Yes | Gangar ta yadda
Iye |
| D: That today I am in this town and
tomorrow another
DG: Absolutely | Yau ina wannan gari gobe in sauka a wancan
gari
Kwarai |

Prostitutes**Karuwai**

- | | |
|--|---|
| D: If not for prostitutes I'd be riding a
Honda now!
DG: The bastard! | Ba don karuwai ba da kan Honda nake!

Dan burar uba! |
| D: I am in the brothels street by street like
a goat
DG: Without a doubt | Duk rariya kamar dan akuya nake

Ba shakka |
| D: You see women don't allow me to save
any money! | Ka ga mata ba sa bari in yi ajiya! |
| D: Dan Gyatuma!
DG: Yes | Dan Gyatuma!
Iye |
| D: Women like ours in this country
D: They're not like in other countries!
DG: Without a doubt | Mata kamar irin namu na nan kasar
Ba irin wadancan ne ba!
Ba shakka |
| D: Our women are very cunning,
DG: Without a doubt | Irin namu na nan kasar dabara ta samu,
Ba shakka |
| D: They get a <i>malam</i> or a <i>boka</i> to work for
them ⁶
DG: Yes | Wai ka gansu nan da malam aiki ake da boka
aiki ake,
Iye |
| D: They make charms and place them in
the pillowcases,
DG: Yes | Wasu layu ake a bakin gefen fililika an jera su

Iye |
| D: When you get up on the bed,
D: If you lay back your head then you're | In dai ka hau gadon,
In dai ka dora keya to an kama ka! |

⁶ *malam*, "teacher, Islamic scholar"; *boka*, "traditional healer."

- bewitched!
 DG: Completely
 D: Whatever she asks of you you'll give her
 DG: All of it?
 D: You'll hand it all over
 D: You won't be able to argue, just as if you were in the next world
 DG: Dumb son of a bitch!
 D: You wake up without a penny on you!
 D: In the morning you have to borrow money,
 D: They'll see you boggle-eyed going, "But I haven't had any breakfast!"
 D: Dan Gyatuma!
 DG: Yes
 D: You know the art of music is not inherited
 D: If you follow my genealogy, my father was a *malam*
 D: In all my family I am the only good-for-nothing
 DG: It's not true! You're no good-for-nothing, you're just earning your daily bread!
- Da kyau
 To kome gare ka in ta tambaye to ka mika shi,
 Gaba daya?
 Duk mikawa kake,
 Ba ka gardama kamar ka shiga lahira
 Burar uba shiru!
 Sai ka tashi ba ka da ko kwabo!
 Gari ya waye da safe sai neman rance,
 Sai a gan ka kana zare idanduna kana "ban karya ba!"
 Dan Gyatuma!
 Iye
 Ka san kida ba gado ba ne
 In ka bi salsala ubana malam ne
 Duk gidanmu ni ne shashasha
 Ina! Ba shashasha ba ne kai mai neman tuwo ne!

The People of Tofa Town

- D: Dan Gyatuma!
 DG: Yes
 D: I will ask you in God's name
 DG: I am listening
 D: Well the people of Tofa
 D: I ask you in God's name!
 D: Garba, the district head of Tofa!
 DG: Alhaji Garba, the district head of Tofa!
 D: Garba, the grandson of Garba!
 DG: Garba, heir of Garba!
 D: The chief of village elders!
 D: May I ask you one question Dan Gyatuma?
 DG: What is it?

Mutanen Tofa

- D: Dan Gyatuma!
 Iye
 Zan tambaye ka domin Allah
 Na ji
 Su kau mutanen Tofa
 Na tambaye ka domin Allah!
 Garba sarkin Tofa!
 Alhaji Garba sarkin Tofa!
 Garba jikan Garba!
 Garba magajin Garba!
 Sarkin dagatai!
 Wai nai maka tambaya guda daya Dan Gyatuma?
 Yaya yake?

- | | |
|--|---|
| D: Well the people of Tofa, | Su kau mutanen Tofa, |
| D: Do they really mint money? | Wai kudi ko kira sukai? |
| DG: By God they do indeed, Duna! | Wallahi kau haka ne Duna! |
| D: Clothes, do they machine weave them? | Riguna ko saka su su kai? |
| DG: Honestly God has been generous to them! | Wallahi Allah ne ke ba su! |
| D: Knowledge, do they drink it through their water? | Karatu a ruwa suke sha? |
| DG: God has blessed them! | Allah ya yarda! |
| D: Any Tofa man, if you touch him for money you're sure to get some! | Duk mutumin Tofa in dai ka dungure shi yai maka kyauta! |
| DG: God has blessed them! | Allah ya yarda! |

God the Almighty

- D: Allah amen, Allah amen
 D: God may our wishes come true
 DG: Allah amen
 D: For the sake of *Lawwali* including *Risala*
 DG: Allah amen
 D: For the sake of *Kawaidi* and *Iziyya*⁷
 D: Amen Oh Allah
 D: Let alms be given
 DG: Definitely
 D: Let tithe be given for the sake of the Messenger of Allah
 DG: Without a doubt
 D: It is not me saying it, it is Allah who has said it
 DG: Without a doubt
 D: Everything I said here is good tidings
 DG: Without a doubt
 D: It is God who has decreed
 DG: Without a doubt
 D: He created the non-believer and the believer
 DG: Without a doubt
 D: Then he created men and women
 DG: Without a doubt

Allah Mai Girma

- Allah amin, Allah amin
 Ubangiji biya mu bukata
 Allah amin
 Don Lawwali gamin da Risala
 Allah amin
 Domin Kawaidi da Iziyya
 Amin ya Allah
 A yi sadaka
 Kwarai
 A yi zakka sabo da Manzon Allah
 Ba shakka
 Ba ni na fada ba ka ga Allah ne ya fada
 Ba shakka
 Kome na ce a nan wurin na yi bishir ne
 Ba shakka
 Don dai Ubangiji ne ya yadda
 Ba shakka
 Allah ya yi kafiri ya yi musulmi
 Ba shakka
 Kana ya yi maza yai mata
 Ba shakka

⁷ A series of well-known religious texts.

- | | |
|--|--|
| D: He made the city and the village | Yai birni Ubangiji yai kauye |
| DG: Definitely | Kwarai da gaske |
| D: See he has made people | Duba ka ga ya yi mutane |
| DG: Without a doubt | Ba shakka |
| D: He made the trees and planted them
everywhere | Ya yi itatuwa duk ya saka su |
| DG: Definitely | Kwarai |
| D: He made the white men, it was here
they came into being | Ya yi Turawa nan kuma sun samu |
| DG: Without a doubt | Ba shakka |
| D: And they made vehicles for riding in | Su ma sun yi mota ta hawa |
| DG: Without a doubt | Ba shakka |
| D: And they made motorcycles and
bicycles | Sun kuma babura sun mana keke |
| DG: And airplanes | Ga kuma jirgi na sama |
| D: And airplanes for you to go on
pilgrimage in and to perform <i>arfa</i> ⁸ | Ga jirgin sama ka je haji ka yi arfa yanzu |
| DG: Without a doubt | Ba shakka |
| D: Was this possible before? | A zamanin da ai haka? |
| DG: No way! | Ina! |

⁸ Part of the religious observances performed during the Haj (“pilgrimage”).