



Research Paper

## Exploring Themes of Occupations and Job-seeking in Some Hausa Oral Songs

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### Abstract

*This study explores the themes of occupations and job-seeking as depicted in Hausa oral songs, focusing on the works of Mamman Shata and DanAnace. It examines how these songs reflect the traditional and evolving economic activities of the Hausa people, from farming and butchering to modern professions like commercial driving and freight brokering. By analysing the stanzas, the study reveals the cultural significance of various occupations, emphasising their role in economic empowerment and social identity. The research defines key terms such as theme, oral song, Hausa, occupation, and job-seeking to provide a clear understanding of the context. Through detailed analysis of specific songs, the study identifies recurring themes, including the dignity of labour, the importance of skill and dedication, and the challenges and rewards associated with different professions. It also highlights the transition from traditional to modern occupations, reflecting the changing socio-economic landscape of the Hausa community. The study concludes that Hausa oral songs serve as valuable cultural documents, preserving and transmitting knowledge about the occupational practices and values of the Hausa people.*

**Keywords:** Theme, Hausa, OralSong, Occupation, job-seeking

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### I. Introduction

Hausa people had, even before their contacts with other people, many occupational, trading and economic activities. However, as a result of the contact later, they engaged in other foreign occupations brought to them. Occupations are the backbone of the economic empowerment of every nation. The Hausa engage in economic activities which include farming, butchering, barbing, labour work, transportation, freight brokering, hunting, commercial driving, boxing, teaching, trading. Blacksmithing and building.

### Definition of key Terms

In this part, the researchers try to define the keywords of the research: theme, Hausa, Oral Song, Occupation, job-seeking as follows:

#### Theme

Theme is a cultural topic, subject or message within a narrative. It is the central, underlying message or idea that a writer explores. It is not simply the subject of the story, but rather a broader, more abstract concept that recurs throughout the narrative. Themes are often universal, dealing with fundamental aspects of the human experience, such as love, loss, betrayal, or the struggle between good and evil. Essentially, a theme is what the story is really “about” on a deeper, conceptual level, and it is conveyed through the interplay of characters, plot, setting, and other literary elements.

### **Oral Songs**

According to Mack (1986:182), oral “*waka*” is appropriate to praise song. Oral songs, a vital component of orature, are musical compositions that are transmitted verbally from one person or generation to the next, rather than through written text. These songs serve diverse cultural functions, including storytelling, historical preservation, religious expression, and social commentary. They often feature repetitive structures, rhythmic patterns, and melodic elements that aid in memorisation and performance. Oral songs are deeply embedded in the social fabric of communities, reflecting their values, beliefs, and experiences, and they play a crucial role in maintaining cultural identity.

### **Hausa**

Hausa is the name of the people as well as the language they speak. The Hausa are a prominent ethnic group in West Africa, primarily concentrated in northern Nigeria and southern Niger. They are known for their rich culture, extensive trading networks, and the widely spoken Hausa language, which serves as a lingua franca across much of the region. Predominantly Muslim, the Hausa have a long history of established city-states and a tradition of skilled craftsmanship, agriculture, and commerce. Their influence extends throughout West Africa, contributing significantly to the region's cultural and economic landscape.

### **Occupation**

An occupation refers to a person's regular work or profession, the activity by which they earn a living. It encompasses a wide range of roles, from manual labour to highly specialised professional fields, and is often a significant part of an individual's identity. Occupations not only provide financial stability but also contribute to societal function and personal fulfillment, shaping individuals' skills, knowledge, and social interactions. The nature of occupations can evolve over time due to technological advancements, economic shifts, and changing societal needs.

### **Job-seeking**

Job seeking is the active process of searching for employment, involving a variety of strategies such as networking, online applications, and attending job fairs. It requires individuals to identify their skills and career goals, research potential employers, and effectively present themselves through resumes, cover letters, and interviews. Successful job seeking often involves persistence, adaptability, and a proactive approach to navigating the competitive job market.

### **Theme of Farming**

In his song, “Noma Aikin ‘Yan Arewa”, Mamman Shata reflects farming: He says:

*Tsaya in zauna*

*In kau kumatafa,*

*Dan nagamaaikinanagona,*

*Ku gafartanya,*

*Ku mai da ta gonai,*

*Sai gobe in azzakar ta gabato,*

*Mu komaaikin ‘Yan Arewa.*

Translation:

Wait let me sit down,

And then touch,

I have finished my work at the farm,

See my hoe,

You return it to the farm,

Till tomorrow early in the morning,

We should return to the farm, northerners.

In the above stanza, Shata presents one of the most celebrated occupations of the Hausa which is farming. It is the major occupation of not only the Hausa but northwest in general. He presents the farming equipment used by the Hausa and calls on the Northerners on the benefits of farming.

### **Theme of Butchering**

In his song, “*Gumina nika ci*”, Mamman Shata did not leave out butchering occupation thus,

*Gama da mahautamayankashanu,*

*In kunyanka, idankunsaida,*

*Ku ware rabi, ku ware uwa ta,*

*Ku komagidakunajindadi,*

*Malamkai ma gumin ka kake ci,  
Kai 'yanyaraguminanike ci.*

Translation:

Be with butchers, the slaughters of cows,  
When you slaughtered, then sold it,  
Divide it by two, maintain the capital,  
And you return home jubilating,  
Sir, you enjoy the fruit of his labour,

Certainly, hardwork pays

Shata shows that butchering as an important occupation of the Hausa which brings lots of profit. It also allows enjoying leisure time after the day's business. Similarly, butchers gain a lot to take care of their families.

### **Theme of Barbing**

Barbers in Hausa society are in charge of haircuts, circumcision, facial and tribal marks, etc. Shata has a song for the occupation. In his song, "*WakarMai'aska Mamman Bello*", in which he sang for both his barber and the occupation, he says:

Muhamman Bello,  
*Zozaunakai mai aski na kimtsa,  
Mamman Bello mai'askaCiroman Askin Jalingo.*

*Sai ya ce man mai Shata,  
Salsal ko ai ma baba,*

*Bai da sana'asaiaski*

The importance of the barber in Hausa society is portrayed in the above song. The barbers in Hausa society have very important roles to play such as haircuts, circumcision, facial and tribal marks as seen in the stanza above.

### **Theme of Labour Work**

To Mamman Shata, labour work refers to all kinds of work which one uses energy and time to carry out. For this reason, in his "*Wakar Alhaji Abba*", Mamman Shata presents different categories of people working in different ways. He says,

*Masuzuwaofiskuyiofis,  
Masuzuwagonakuyigona,  
Leburakamhanyakuyiaiki,  
A yaukowaneguminaiyake ci,  
Kai 'yanyaraguminjanike ci.*

Translation:

Those going to the office, go to the office,  
Those going for farm, go to farm,  
For labourers go to work,  
Today everyone enjoys the fruit of his labour,  
Certainly, hardwork pays.

Shata calls on people to remain hardworking and committed to their individual work. Government workers should go to work punctually, farmers should go to their farms for their farming activities, and labourers who work on roads should also work tirelessly. He further mentions everyone enjoys the fruits of their work including him, the singer.

### **Theme of Transportation**

The Hausa has long engaged in transportation activities across towns and nations. Their means of transportation were donkeys, camels, horses and even carrying loads on their heads. After the arrival of Whiteman in their land, the Hausa now use other means such as motorcycles, vehicles, trains, ships, and aeroplanes wherever convenient.

People, goods and animals are transported from one place to another, one town to another, or from one country to another. Shata has sung a song on this activity in his song, "*WakarDankaboJarmai Mamman*". He says:

*Tuna da direbamatu kinmota,  
Motar an laftamata kaya,  
Ya hautadayatuka,  
Ya rugaba dare ba rana,*

*Shi ma wannanguminciyake ci.*

*Mai abintaƴiyakoli,  
Dab da taurari Mamman x2,  
DankaboJarmai Mamman x 2,  
Sannu mai jiragedanHajjo.*

Translation:

Remember the driver who drives the car,  
With luggage loaded,  
He rides it,  
He runs it during the day and the night,  
He also enjoys the fruit of his labour,

Who can access up in the sky,  
Close to the stars Mamman x 2  
DankaboJarmai Mamman x 2  
Well done, DanHajjo the owner of flights.

Shata shows the new means of transportation in Hausaland by presenting driving occupation which is done 24/7. Perhaps because transportation is an activity usually known for its continuous engagement. He also shows the transportation activity done by the use of aeroplanes. Mamman Dankabo Jarman Kano was a known transporter internationally. His name is captured in the song and the kind of business he was engaged in.

#### **Theme of Freight Brokers/Loading Agents**

This is one of the new business activities of the Hausa. It came with the arrival of the modern means of transportation (vehicles) in Hausaland. Loading agents play a critical role in goods, passengers, and transportation management in vehicle garages. They negotiate transportation rates and coordinate payments. They also arrange transportation for cars, buses and trucks to customers as well as ensure compliance with regulations for vehicle transport. They are experts in streamlining logistics operations and transportation for both garages and customers/commuters. Shata did not leave this activity out. He has a song called “*Gumina nika ci*” in which he says:

*Gama da ‘yankamashon mu nabirni,  
Da ‘yankamashonmotar mu nakauye,  
Kowanemota ta tsaye nan,  
Kayan tasha a tashi a daure,  
Fasinja su caje su daure,  
Dukyai ta bi yaba su kuɗin su,  
‘Yarladar da mutumya cire yacema,  
Gida da shi da iyali,  
Zauresunjindadi,  
Shi ma wannanguminaiyake ci,  
Kai ‘yanyaraguminanike ci.*

Translation:

Find load agents of the city,  
And that of the village,  
Every car stands still,  
Get up and upload the luggage,  
Passengers go, they will upload the luggage,  
He follows and gives them their money.  
I said the profit gained,  
For him and his family at home,  
In the room enjoying.

He also enjoys the fruit of his labour,  
Certainly, hardwork pays

Shata presents how loading agents, carry out their work in both towns and villages. Their office is the garage where they look for both goods and passengers for the drivers. Of course, they are paid for the service which they use to cater for their families; who are in turn happy and proud of the work.

### Theme of Hunting

Hunting is a herculean activity and can only be done by fearless, courageous, brave but enthusiastic beings. The Hausa are known for this activity. Wild animals are hunted for consumption or other uses. Shata who himself was a hunter, encourages people to engage in this activity. For example, in his song “*WakarBakandamiya ta*”, “Alo-Alo”, he shows the benefit of hunting and calls on people to partake in it where he says,

*In ka je farautarkwanna,  
Kowakkashetorongiya,  
Shi yak kashebabannama,  
Rannanshi da makwabtanaisaimurna.*

Translation :

If you go hunting,

Whoever caught the male elephant,  
He caught a big prey,  
He and his neighbours will celebrate,

In this stanza, the benefit of hunting is clearly stated where he shows how the hunter, his family, and even his neighbours will enjoy the gains when a hunter is lucky to bring home, as largesse, a *torongiwa* (male elephant). The Hausa are known for their courage, bravery, and enthusiasm in hunting. They produce different hunting implements to carry out the activity.

### Theme of Commercial Driving

Like it is with loading agents' work, commercial driving as an occupational activity came into Hausaland with the coming of vehicles in the land. Animals such as donkeys and camels were being used as means of transportation in Hausaland before the coming of the Whiteman who brought the modern means of transport (vehicles, ships, aeroplanes, trains, etc). Shata explains that this occupation is a tasking and challenging one. According to him,

*Ga maijirgi, ga maimota Sanda sadauki,  
Da can direbabobi, akaiwawaka,  
Yanzudirebazanyiwawaka,  
Ko da can batta ba ta daukuwa ga raggo,  
Ko yadaukasai ka ga zuba,  
Ko yadaukasai ka yazuba,  
Mai kwazoyadaukeabinai.*

Translation:

Sanda Sadauki the owner of the flight and car,

The song is for drivers  
I will sing for a driver,  
If not, it will make the lazy famous,  
He thought you will fail,  
He thought you would fail  
The victory is for the brave.

He adds that,

*Barka da fama, barka da rana,  
Barka da yakinbadarnau da jammai.*

Translation:

Well done! Good day,

Well done for the battle well fought.

Indeed, the occupation is so challenging that Shata equates it with the Islamic Battle of Badr in which the Muslims during the time of the Prophet of Islam fought fearless, courageously and bravely and in the end won the battle. This is akin to the task of driving as an occupation of Sanda Sadauki as presented in the stanza above.

### Theme of (Dambe) Boxing

Boxing is not only a sport but also a powerful tool for economic empowerment, personal growth, and community development. It can also lead to fame, financial security and societal recognition. The Hausa are known for this activity, although many boxers in Hausa society have other occupational or trading activities aside from boxing.

Shata in his boxing song, “*Wakar Sarkin Bakwaina Sabon Birni*” talks about dambe (boxing) thus,

*Amma fada wa Abu Ba'are Dattijo,  
Yaran gidan ka Dantawaye,  
Koyamutu ni ba na nan,  
Ko ankasheshini ban zo ba,  
In aka tashirabongadonai,  
A ba ni jakumindambenai,  
In natarar babu jakumindambenai,  
A ban zare, a ban sulu nai,  
Idan naishebazarenshe ko sulu nai,  
Kwance kafar sa ban akayaunai.*

Translation :

But, tell Abu Ba'are,  
Your children, the twins,  
Even if he dies, I am not around,  
When he dies, I did not come,  
If they will read his will,  
I will find there would not be his boxing ornament,  
Give me his thread,  
If I found his local charm made of the robe,  
Untie his leg, I will not stand the heat.

Shata praises the occupation, *dambe*, in the above stanza and goes further to showcase the kinds of protection ornaments used by the Hausa boxers.

Another Hausa singer, DanAnace, equally presents *dambe* occupation in many of his songs. For example, in his song “*Wakar Shago*”, he praises his hero, Shago in such a way that no co-boxer could face Shago. In fact, *dambe* is among the occupations of the Hausa which is only done by the brave, fearless, courageous and powerful individuals.

### Theme of Teaching Occupation

Teaching is about transmitting knowledge, skills and/or values to learners. It also involves attending to people's needs, experiences, and feelings. However, the process of teaching extends beyond simply conveying information; it also aims to inspire learners' interests in learning and critical thinking still as well as prepare them for the challenges they may face.

In his “*Wakar Habu Kaita Sarkin Mallamai*”, Mamman Shata has to say:

*Ku zokuraka ni ga Sarkin Mallamai,  
In je in korijahilcia ka,  
Ya gwada mani ba, sin mi 'ara*

Translation:

Come and accompany me to meet the Teachers' leader,  
I will fight ignorance,  
He will teach me A, B, C ...

Mamman Shata praises the teaching profession and the leader of teachers Habu Kaita in Kaita, Katsina State. He shows the teacher as a person who is always consulted for knowledge.

Similarly, Dan Maraya Jos, in his “*Wakartica*”, he says:

*Albakacin Ma'aiki,  
Wannankidintica ne,  
Wannanbatuntica ne,  
Tica ubankaratu,  
In ba don akwaiticaba,  
Yaya akai a koya?*

Translation:

For the blessings of the Holy Prophet,  
This song is dedicated to the teacher,  
This is a talk of the teacher,

Teacher, the knowledge provider,

If not for the teacher,

Learning becomes impossible.

In the first stanza, Dan Maraya confirms that his music here is for the teacher and the talk is about the teacher who leads in knowledge dissemination. In the second stanza, he agrees that if not for the teacher, no skill, knowledge or technical know-how can be achieved. In fact, the teacher takes the learners from the unknown to the known to make their lives better.

### Theme of Trading (Buying and Selling)

The activity is about buying and selling different items for profit. Hausa people are known for this activity. Mamman Shata was a trader before shifting to singing. He has enough knowledge to share with people when encouraging them to participate in trading activity. He was a colanut seller. In “Wakar Alhaji Baƙo Inusa”, he says,

*Ya tafiikko Baƙo Inusa,  
Je ka Amerika Baƙo Inusa,  
Daga nan zaiwucehar Cairo,*

*Saye da sayarwake kai wannan,  
Ko birnin Kanon mu ta Dabo,  
Saye da sayarwake kai wannan,  
Saye da sayarwa ne kayansa.*

Translation:

Baƙo Unisa went to Lagos,  
Went to America, Baƙo Inusa,  
From there, he proceeded to Cairo,  
Even our Kano, the city of Dabo  
Buying and selling will allow this,  
Buying and selling make it possible.

The song shows the trading activity Baƙo Inusa engages in locally and internationally. He goes to Cairo, India, and America all for trading activities.

Mamman Shata does not stop at singing for the male only. He goes further to sing a song for a woman trader who made in food selling. She is Hajiya Hauwa Maituwo, Tashar Kuka, Kano whose big food sale is brought to light by Shata in saying:

*HauwauwarHauwa,  
Kululu mai abinci na saidawa,  
Tsayawatamaituwo a cikinbirni,  
Tuwonta take birni,  
Takan tuwonta ta saidaduk,  
'Yan birnisukaruda ta,  
Sun zuga ta saitajjaHauwa,  
Sai gashi tai tuwonba ta saidaba,  
Ta yi talla ta gaza saidawa,  
Ta kaishi gaba ba ta saidaba,  
Sai tayyitsugunne tana kukaaf,  
Wayyo ni Allah!  
'Yan birnikuniza ni kun gaza fid da ni,  
Tafi can kitubawurin Hauwa,  
Kila kiyituwonki ki saida kaf.*

Translation:

Hauwa the mother of Hauwa,  
Kululu the food seller,  
Stop one food seller in the city,  
She sells food in the city,  
She does and sells all her food in the city,  
The citizens confuse her,  
They push her to fight Hauwa,  
She did and could not sell her food,  
She advertises but could not sell,

She took it to another place, yet could not sell it,  
She bows down crying,  
Oh! Allah,  
The citizens pushed and could not take me out,  
Go and seek blessing from Hauwa,  
That you could cook and sell your food.

In the above song, Shata praises a renowned food seller, Hajiya Hauwa Mai TuwoTashar Kuka, Kano. According to Shata, she sells her food before all other food sellers. In fact, other co-food sellers could not sell until they seek her blessing.

## **II. Conclusion**

The analysis of Hausa oral songs reveals a rich tapestry of occupational themes, providing a window into the economic and social fabric of the Hausa people. These songs not only document the historical evolution of occupations, from traditional practices like farming and hunting to modern professions such as commercial driving and freight brokering but also underscore the cultural values associated with labour. The emphasis on hard work, dedication, and the dignity of earning a living permeates these musical narratives, highlighting the importance of contributing to the community and achieving personal fulfillment through one's profession.

This analysis demonstrates the enduring significance of oral literature as a repository of cultural knowledge. By examining the themes of occupations and job-seeking within Hausa oral songs, we gain a deeper understanding of the societal values, economic realities, and historical transformations that have shaped the Hausa community. The songs serve as a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the Hausa people, reflecting their ability to navigate changing economic landscapes while preserving their cultural heritage. Furthermore, this research underscores the power of oral traditions in transmitting vital information and fostering a sense of collective identity across generations.

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