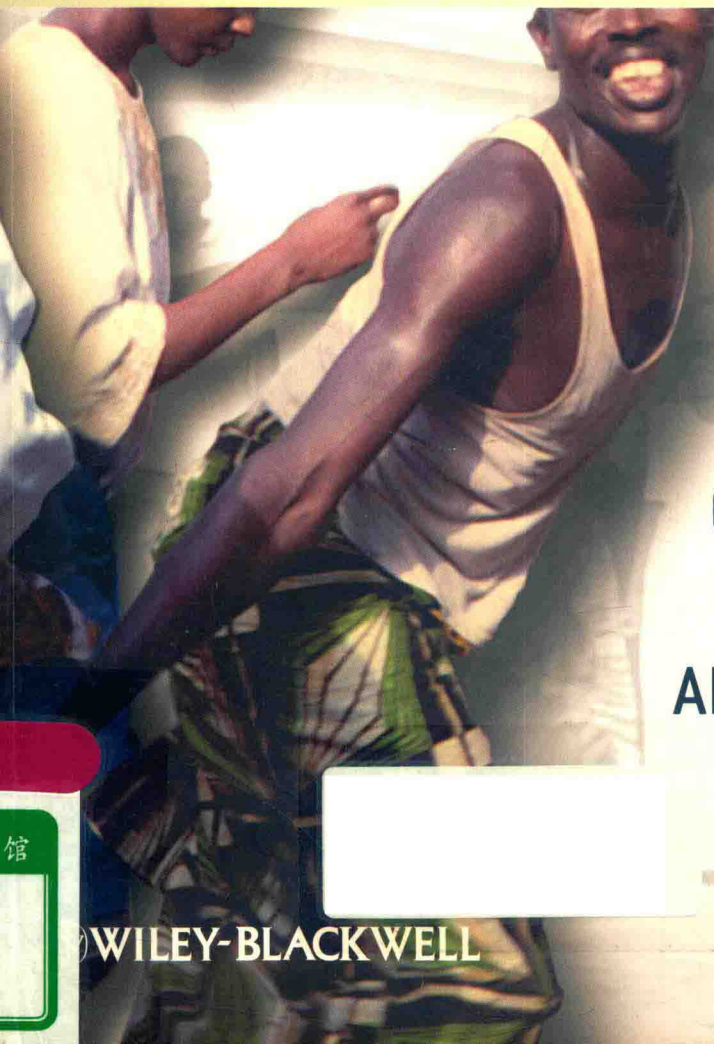


RUDOLF PELL
GAUDIO

ALLAH MADE US

SEXUAL
OUTLAWS IN
AN ISLAMIC
AFRICAN CITY



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RUDOLF PELL GAUDIO

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

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ALLAH MADE US

New Directions in Ethnography is a series of contemporary, original works. Each title has been selected and developed to meet the needs of readers seeking finely grained ethnographies that treat key areas of anthropological study. What sets these books apart from other ethnographies is their form and style. They have been written with care to allow both specialists and nonspecialists to delve into theoretically sophisticated work. This objective is achieved by structuring each book so that one portion of the text is ethnographic narrative while another portion unpacks the theoretical arguments and offers some basic intellectual genealogy for the theories underpinning the work.

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3. *Allah Made Us: Sexual Outlaws in an Islamic African City*
Rudolf Gaudio

For my parents, Christina and Alexander Gaudio, and my *oga*,
Phil Shea.

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NOTES ON ORTHOGRAPHY, TRANSLATION AND TRANSCRIPTION

Orthography

Hausa is usually written using a modified form of the roman alphabet that includes three special ‘hooked’ letters to represent sounds that do not exist in European languages: *D/ḍ* and *K/ḳ* are glottalized (pronounced like their unglottalized counterparts, but with a supplemental constriction of the glottis), while *B/ḅ* is implosive (pronounced with a sudden in-breath of air). Other consonants are pronounced approximately as in English, with the following exceptions: *t*s is glottalized; *c* is pronounced like English *ch*; *r* is trilled or rolled.

Hausa vowels are pronounced roughly as in Spanish, and are either long (*aa*) or short (*a*); they are also pronounced with a distinctive tone: high (*ú*), low (*ù*) or falling (*û*). Although distinctions of vowel length and tone do affect word meanings, they are not marked in standard orthography. In this book I generally use standard spellings, indicating distinctive vowel qualities only when necessary – e.g., to distinguish the words *bábà* [‘mother’] and *bàbà* [‘father’]. Excerpts from published texts are reproduced with idiosyncratic spellings intact.

I have chosen to treat the words *Shari’a* and *Bori* as proper nouns, capitalizing them to emphasize their special religious and cultural significance.

In accordance with the normal convention, single quotes indicate a gloss. Double quotes indicate a direct quotation.

Translation

In translating from Hausa to English, I have attempted to strike a balance between literal and idiomatic interpretation. Arabic expressions used in everyday Hausa speech are sometimes translated (e.g., *Wallahi* ['by God']), sometimes not. Where the Hausa original is provided along with an English translation, underlining, **boldface** and *italics* are sometimes used to indicate matching passages, e.g., an Arabic expression with its English translation, or a Hausa proverb with its English translation.

The word *Allah* is sometimes translated as 'God' and sometimes left untranslated; this choice follows the practice of English-speaking Muslims in Nigeria and elsewhere, who use both names more or less interchangeably. (Note that Hausa- and Arabic-speaking Christians also refer to God as *Allah*.)

All singular Hausa nouns, pronouns and adjectives are grammatically feminine or masculine; plural forms are unmarked with respect to gender. When grammatical distinctions of gender and number are relevant to my analysis, they are indicated in English translation using superscript forms, e.g., *ke* ['you^f], *kai* ['you^m] or *ku* ['you^{pl}]; *dogo* ['tall^m] or *doguwa* ['tall^f].

Transcription

Where a verbatim transcript of Hausa speech is provided along with an English translation, punctuation marks (period, comma, question mark, exclamation mark) are used as in colloquial written English. Other transcription conventions are as follows.

= indicates latching, i.e., a quicker-than-usual transition between speaker turns unaccompanied by a conversational pause.

[indicates the beginning of a conversational overlap, with the open-bracket being located as closely as possible to the point in the first speaker's utterance at which the second speaker started talking.

] indicates the end of an overlap.

- () indicates uncertainty regarding the accuracy of the transcription inside the parentheses.
- (xx) indicates indiscernible speech.
- (..) or <..> indicates that speech has been omitted from the transcript.
- (()) or < > indicates my commentary about the interaction (as an analyst, not as a participant).

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INTRODUCING 'YAN DAUDU

Hajiya Asabe had a feminine name and a handsome, mustached face. In the room he rented in Kano's infamous Sabon Gari neighborhood, he received a daily stream of visitors: girlfriends stopping by to gossip, out-of-town relatives seeking financial assistance, flirtatious boyfriends, hopeful suitors. People knew they could count on finding Hajiya Asabe in his room because, as a self-described *karuwa*, or 'prostitute,' he woke up late most mornings and stayed close to home during the day. Most evenings he spent at a nearby nightclub where a modestly upscale, male clientele came to listen to live performances of Hausa and Arab music, to drink beer or a nonalcoholic alternative, and to socialize with the women and 'yan daudu, feminine men like Hajiya Asabe, who served as the club's unofficial hosts. (Regular customers had to pay a door fee; women and 'yan daudu did not.) Among the 'yan daudu who frequented the club, Hajiya Asabe stood out with his stylish dress and a graceful, self-confident demeanor that was both charming and haughty. It was this demeanor that had made me notice him during my earliest visits to the club, and that made him so alluring to the men who sought his company.

One day late in the dry season in 1994, I went to pay Hajiya Asabe a visit. As I entered the cement courtyard, I found him kneeling on a small mat outside his room. Not wanting to disturb him as he performed the late-afternoon *la'asar* prayer, I took a seat on a nearby bench while the compound's other residents – most of them non-Muslims from southern Nigeria – went about their regular activities. Once he finished praying, Hajiya Asabe joined me on the bench

and called for Mama Ayo, the middle-aged Yoruba woman who managed the compound, to bring me a cold beer. Hajiya Asabe did not drink alcohol, but he was unfailingly hospitable towards his guests, and in the early days of our friendship he always offered me a bottle of Gulder, the most expensive beer on the market, whenever I came by to visit. Although Hajiya Asabe and I had been casually acquainted for almost a year, we had only recently begun spending time together, so we were still getting to know one another. After the usual exchange of greetings and small talk, he complimented me on my command of Hausa, the major language of northern Nigeria, and suggested that all that remained for me to become a ‘complete Hausa’ [*cikakken Bahausha*] was to embrace Islam. He even offered to slaughter a ram in my honor if I were to convert. Hajiya Asabe’s religious zeal astonished me. After all, the social milieu in which I knew him was hardly one that most people would characterize as Islamically devout.

“But how could I become a Muslim?” I asked him, clutching my bottle of Gulder. “I like this,” I reminded him, pointing to the beer. “And I like *harka*” – the ‘deed’ – that is, sex between men.

“Come now, Sani,” Hajiya Asabe replied, addressing me by my Hausa name. “Muslims do these things too. They do them more than anyone!”

My first interpretation of this surprising exchange was that, for Hajiya Asabe, being a Muslim was less important than being Hausa, and had more to do with the performance of cultural rituals than it did with accepting the moral precepts of Islam. His irreverent claim that Muslims engaged in forbidden acts like drinking and homosexuality “more than anyone” was clearly facetious, yet I knew it was based on his experiences in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, where he had performed the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, more than once. Like many other poor pilgrims, Hajiya Asabe had overstayed his visa on several occasions in order to live and work illegally in the port city of Jiddah. While most undocumented Nigerians take on menial jobs that are Islamically legal, Hajiya Asabe supported himself through what he called *karuwanci* [‘prostitution’], providing social and sexual companionship to men, some of whom might also enjoy the company of female prostitutes as well as marijuana, cocaine, or even alcohol. His most recent sojourn had ended over a year earlier, when he was arrested, deported and forced to leave behind most of the