

## WHERE DID QUANTITATIVE METRICS IN HAUSA AND OTHER CHADIC SONGS COME FROM?<sup>1</sup>

Russell G. Schuh  
UCLA

### 1. Original Goals of this Little Paper

- Invited paper to be presented at a conference where most of the audience would be Hausas familiar with Hausa poetry and song
- Greenberg (1949) proposed a set of features in Hausa verse prosody that he attributed to Arabic influence; my intention was to suggest that, by and large, these features were inherited by BOTH Arab and Hausa singers/poets from a much earlier source, perhaps shared Afroasiatic language speaker ancestors. ... or, more adventurous, they are part of UM!

### 2. Two Traditions of Hausa Quantitative Meters in Hausa

#### 2.1. Written tradition: meters clearly taken from the Arabic tradition

Arabic *hafiif* meter with the “rule” or “deviation” *habni* applied (Galadanci 1975)

- (1) Feet:    -    v    -    -    |    -    -    v    -    |    -    v    -    -
- Kui yi na-zar 'yan-'waa kù saa- mùu kù duu-bàa,  
Don nà-sii-haa ku zam fa-dìi don mù-hib-bàa,  
Mù ta bîn goo- da-bee mu-tsee-rèe à- zaa-bàa,  
Duk ku sau-raa- ri zaa ni waa- kaa ku tuu-ba,  
Koo ku saa-muu ku tsii-ra tab- ban ha-kii-kan.  
(Shehu Usman ibn Hodiyo, “Wakar Tabban Haƙikan”, verse 3)
- ‘Do a study, kinsmen, obtain it and look,  
For good advice keep saying it in order [to obtain] respect,  
Let us follow the [right] road and escape torment,  
You all listen as I am about to sing, and repent,  
Such that you might receive salvation, with complete certainty.’

#### 2.2. Oral tradition: a ubiquitous popular meter

A non-Arabic meter used in both Hausa written poetry and Hausa oral song

---

<sup>1</sup> I am honored that the conference Chairman and Convener have invited me to present at the First International Conference on Endangered Languages in Nigeria. I very much regret not being able to attend in person. I am also pleased to offer a presentation that I hope will befit the memory of the late Professor M.K.M Galadanci, whom I knew well and whose work I admired. Prof. Galadanci probably would not agree with some of the points in this paper, but without his insights regarding Hausa poetic form, the paper may not have come into being at all and certainly would be much different from what it is.

$$(2) \quad \text{Meter: } \left\{ \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \{v\} \\ - \end{array} \right\} v \right\} - \underline{vv} - \underline{vv} - v -$$

Asma'u 'yar Shehu (Boyd & Mack)	A mu goodee Jalla da munku sam Nasaraa, jama'aa mu yi goodiyaa.	Let us thank the Lord that we have attained Victory, people let us give thanks.
Akilu Aliyu ( <i>Fasaha Akiliyya</i> )	Sun cee mata daad'ii gooma wai, Wannan maganaa naa dai jiyaa.	They say of her ten pleasures, This talk I have indeed heard.
Dan Maraya Jos (“Jawabin Aure”)	(v) Uwaa da ubaa gaa gargadii, Kun ga auren tiilas baabu kyau.	Mother and father here is an admonition, You see that forced marriage is not good.
Haruna Oji (“Naira da Kwabo”)	Nairaa da kwaboo saabon kud'ii, Bana dai darajaa tasa taa da'fu.	Naira and kwabo, the new money, This year its value has increased.

The same meter as found in Greenberg's (1949) “popular verse”

(3)	Meter 1:	(v) Abin da na bai waa Shaa-wuya, Baa naa bai waa Doodangaba.	What I give to Sha-wuya, I don't give it to Dodangaba.
	Meter 4:	Mai baabu da zaafin zuuciyaa, (-) Koo kuturuu bai fii shi ba.	The poor person has a bitter heart, Even a leper is not more so.

The same meter used in Ngizim in improvised lines to a song with a refrain *karniga jingaa karniga*

(4)	Kaane soo bee kaarak dengara, <i>Ai karniga jingaa karniga.</i> Andəmiina[a] Maalam Baabayo, <i>Ai karniga jingaa karniga.</i> Kaane Dokta[a] Gimba[a] <sup>2</sup> dengəri, <i>Ai karniga jingaa karniga.</i> Kaane anci kəmu yaareewa da? <i>Ai karniga jingaa karniga.</i>	Well here it is something nice has come, Refrain (All of you) greet Malam Babayo, Refrain Well Doctor Gimba has come, Refrain Well does he want to hear our language? Refrain
-----	--	--

Lines from tãhe traditional Ngizim song

(5)	(vv) Bataaba rəptu gaʒiigərin, <i>Ai karniga jingaa karniga.</i> See da ram maa, “Gwarboo aa rawan?” <i>Ai karniga jingaa karniga.</i>	When Bataba opens his granary, Refrain Then he says, “Where is Gwarbo?” Refrain
(6)	(Too) matawallen Fiika[a] nakee kiraa, <i>Ai karniga dingaa karniga.</i> (Lau)kee waaka ndaruu sai sa kurbukoo, <i>Ai karniga dingaa karniga.</i>	[Well] it is the Matawalle of Fika that I am calling, Refrain [Who]ever finds a way, he must escort (him), Refrain

<sup>2</sup> Reference is to my collaborator in Yobe State language research, Prof. Alhaji Maina Gimba of the University of Maiduguri English Department.

### 3. Two Songs from Yobe State

Lines from a grinding song in Ngizim

(7) NGIZIM: "Ruwak Adak Vənyi" [Song on a Grindstone]

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{cccc|cccc} - & v & - & - & v & | & - & v & - & - & v \\ - & - & - & - & - & | & - & - & - & - & - \end{array} \right\}$$

- a. Naa ra- mau da yaa- ree- gaa,
  - b. Naa ra- mau da yaa- ree bai.
  - c. Kun ngaa- kun? Ja n- gaa- ja,
  - d. Suu ndə- ma N-gə- zəm bii bi?
  - e. Sau- ra- gaa A- laa ngəb- ro,
  - f. Naa ndə- mau kə ndat- taa- wa.
- a. I am speaking in my language,
  - b. I am not speaking in a foreign language.
  - c. "Are you well?" "We are well,"
  - d. That is an Ngizim greeting, isn't it?
  - e. My father-in-law, "*Ala nguburo*," [a polite greeting from Kanuri]
  - f. I am issuing a greeting for respected people.

Lines from a traditional song in Bole

(8) BOLE: "Kona"

$$v \quad | - \quad v \quad - \quad v \quad | \left\{ \begin{array}{ccc} - & v & - \\ - & - & v \end{array} \right\}$$

- a. N ku-me luu-la ii- pu ii- pu,
  - b. I- na zon-ge doo 'yan le wa?
  - c. Kaa- na Dii-sa bee Ba- laa- wo.
  - d. Ki- naa tii-shi Bee- ge Ab- ba,
  - e. Na Daa- da Goo-ro ndag goma Nga-ra,
  - f. Dei- di Dii-sa boo pal- la- sa.
- a. I hear crying, "Ow! Ow!"
  - b. I ask is it a hyena or whatever?
  - c. But it's Disa son of Balawo.
  - d. He failed to eat food, Bege Abba,
  - e. They say Dada Goro went to Ngara market,
  - f. And left Disa because of gossip (about him).

Basic metrical pattern for the Bole song in (11)

(9)  $v \quad | - \quad v \quad - \quad v \quad | - \quad - \quad v \quad -$

### 4. Quantitative Metrics of Chadic Songs in Broader Perspective

Review of Greenberg's (1949) arguments for the hypothesis that Hausa prosody has developed from Arabic influence

#### 4.1. “the quantitative nature of [Hausa] verse ... is unparalleled ... among African peoples not subject to intensive Islamic influence”

The claim is false: there are African peoples who have not been subject to intensive Islamic influence that have songs based on quantitative prosody

#### 4.2. “...the division of the line into hemistichs”

“Hemistichs” are really just “lines” grouped as couplets. Traditional folk songs tend to group lines in this way as well.

#### 4.3. “...Arabic verse avoids sequences of short syllables, a succession of three being rare and that of four almost unheard of”

Sequences of three or more light (= short) syllables are as uncommon in traditional Yobe State songs as they are in Arabic and Hausa. (How about sequences of heavies?)

#### 4.4. “...the alternative use of a long syllable or two short syllables...”

The equivalence of – = vv is found throughout traditional Yobe State songs—the lines in (10) come from the song exemplified in (8-9)

- (10) a. (Luula Diisa) juutuu ko bin.      ‘(the cries of Disa) raised the hut roof’  
       b. (Yaaya Gimba) wona laaduwo      ‘(Yaaya Gimba) the dance is canceled’  
       c. (Daada Juuma) ndag goma Ngara      ‘(Dada Juma) went to Ngara market’  
       d. (Ndii da wuya) zali da wuya      ‘(To go is difficult) to begin is difficult’

#### 4.5. (4v) “...reckoning of final syllables as long for metrical purposes”.

Example from Akilu Aliyu “Saƙo a Hannun Mumini” showing neutralization of heavy and light in line final position; compare the line final syllable in (11)

- (11) Baa shii kaƙai ba, tsayaa ka ji,      ‘It’s not only him, wait and listen,  
       Har yau da sauran maaganii.      Even today there are other remedies.’

### 5. Conclusion

THE HYPOTHESIS OF UNIVERSALS OF QUANTITATIVE METRICS: Prosodic systems of languages in which syllable quantity is phonologically salient will exhibit the properties in (4).

**REFERENCES:** See paper, posted on the website.