



## The Hausa Code of World - Life: A Paremiological Exposition

Muhannad Lawal Aminu, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria

### Introduction

Analytic study of proverbs, most especially for proposing worldview or national character of a people has been a thorny issue among scholars. Thanks to the efforts of Shimkin DB & Pedros (1953), Raymond (1954) Tshimpaka (1977) Powe (1981) Dundes (1994) Cre'peau (Mieder & Dundes (1994) and Gyekye (1995). Gyekye (1995: 52-56) specifically records that the difficulty in analytical interpretations of proverbs “require painstaking care and intellectual and dispositional virtues.”

In the same vein, Mieder, (1993:178) possibly because of the multiplicity and or ambiguity of meaning in proverbs; cautions that: “...there is danger connected in deducing national/regional characters from folklore in general and proverbs in particular...” Notwithstanding, Powe, E L (Yahya 1981:43-66) usefully employs the semiological theory to interpret 150 *kirari* ‘epithets’ (which according to this writer are also *Karin managa* ‘proverbs’) thereby putting forward that the Hausa view world or life thus: “The world is illusory and transitory in nature and serves as a testing ground for men. It is however both awesome and tempting, leading the foolhardy, greedy, or unperceptive person to perdition. It is only the wise/and or patient man who sees its treachery...”. Similarly, Amin (2002:156-243) upon scrutiny of 230 proverbs records that the Hausa identify 14 attributes of world life – they are:

1. Transient/temporary
2. Hard/difficult/overburdening
3. Complex/complicated
4. Capricious/vicissitudinous
5. Deceptive/illusory/unreal
6. Haphazard/unplanned
7. Enjoyable/alluring/merry
8. Didactic/admonitory
9. Unkempt /filthy
10. Attractive/enticing
11. Contemptible/despicable
12. Subduing/subjugating
13. Hierarchical
14. Fastidious

It is however worthy of noting that the degree of predominance of the identified attributes within the corpus varies. Nonetheless, if the Hausa view life as having those numerous attributes listed above how then do they presume that such life should be confronted? In other words, what formulae do the Hausa propose for undertaking a good life despite the some what manifold and contradictory character of world life? It is against this background that this paper, leans on the Hausa proverbs, to propound the thesis for consideration on the Hausa code of world living.

The research therefore discusses the chief goal of Hausa life Zaman lafiya, i.e peaceful living, and its importance in Hausa thought. Consequent upon this the paper goes a head to discuss, from the paremiological perspective, what constitute Zaman lafiya in the Hausa



conceptual thinking. Hence, the indispensability for knowledge, (Ilmi/sani) patience, (Hakuri) perseverance, (Juriya/Jimiri), Honesty; truth; sincerity; and objectivity, (Gaskiya), caution, (Taka-tsantsan) resolutness, (himma) hard-work, (kwazo) contentment (Yakana) goodness and virtuousity (Kirki) obedience, (biyayya) respectability (mutunci) love for close relations, (zumunci) communality and mutual assistance (taimakon juna) as prerequisite for peaceful living are articulated, as well as the need for taking cognizance of the dynamic, transient and the changing roles and values in life.

### **The Goal of life: Zaman Lafiya (peace)**

To start with, notwithstanding their somewhat sceptic view about the seriousness of world-life, yet the Hausa hold that:

### **Zaman Duniya Iyawa ne - World living is a matter of ability**

That is to say, although life might be tough, capricious, uncertain, etc an expert can nevertheless manouvre his way and get the best out of life. In short, the Hausa agree that world-life could be meaningful if a serious measure is taken into consideration. i.e. competence.

In the following proverbs, the Hausa therefore, underscore peace as the chief goal of life:

### **Zaman Lafiya ya fi zama dan Sarki -**

### **Living in peace is worth more than being a prince.**

By this proverb, the Hausa suggest that no matter what position one might have attained, - be one a prince, which is virtually at the peak of Hausa political hierarchy – if one has no peace, the power is of little value. The Hausa do not only agree that peaceful life is above any political power but also agree that peaceful living is above any material acquisition in the proverb:

### **Zaman lafiya ya fi gara –**

### **Peaceful living is worth more than wedding commodities**

### **(That a bride takes to groom's house)**

Considering the importance the Hausa people attach to the size and variety of food items and other essential commodities with which a bride is taken to her groom's house, to the extent that a bride and her parents are jeered at for taking their daughter with insubstantial amount of 'Gara' to the groom's house, one can boldly say that really the Hausa revere Zaman lafiya, peaceful living, for favouring it over gara.

Thus, although power and material possession are the most important things that humans scramble for, the Hausa believe that Zaman lafiya, peaceful living is the cardinal companion that one should strive to obtain.

In the same vein the Hausa hold that to attain Zaman lafiya there are certain important preconditions. Hence, it is agreed among the Hausa that for one to achieve Zaman lafiya one has to learn to control one's mouth, i.e. One should be careful and be wary of what one utters –

### **Alamarin duniya iyawa ne, ka ji ka kama bakinka –**

### **World affairs is a matter of control, (as) you hear (about something) you should hold (control) your mouth.**

Nevertheless, this does not mean one should not talk of, or report things that happen day by day, but in the contrary, the proverb warns man to weight what to say, how to say it and



when. Because as a similar proverb explains.

**Baki (Shi) kan yanka wuya –  
It is the mouth that severs the neck**

That is to say one should watch one's utterances and guard one's tongue against heedless talking for it may even cause one's death.

So far, this discussion has tried to demonstrate that being watchful of what one says is a criterion for peaceful living – the fundamental goal of the Hausa on Earth.

However, that alone is not the alpha and omega of attaining Zama lafiya. What then are the codes for peaceful living? For instance what should one say and when? How should one behave as an individual and as a member of the society? Attempt to answer these questions would be the pre-occupation here as follows.

**Knowledge - Ilmi**

The Hausa hold that to live in peace in this complex, complicated and unpredictable world one should be knowledgeable i.e Sani or ilmi, which is vividly captured in the following proverb.

**Ilmi gishirin Zaman Duniya –  
Knowledge (is) the salt of the world living**

Here, the importance of knowledge in leading a successful life is compared with that of salt in food. It is with knowledge that one would know what one should do and when. No matter how delicious and palatable a dish might look, if it does not contain salt (in whatever form) it will not be satisfying. This is also the case with knowledge – for no matter one's efforts, material acquisition and or power, without knowledge everything is of limited value. This is why the Hausa say:

**Rashin Sani ya fi dare duhu –  
Lack of knowledge is darker than night.**

That is, to say without knowledge one would only be groping in darkness without achieving one's desires nor living in peace. The Hausa similarly, though, comparatively describe lack of knowledge thus:

**Rashin sani kaza ta kwana kan dame da yunwa –  
(For) lack of knowledge a fowl spent a night over a bundle (of corn hungry)**

By analogy, lack of knowledge, as is put in this proverbs, deprives one from achieving what one aims to achieve. However, to the Hausa, the value of knowledge lies in the usage, this they say:

**Amfanin sani aiki da shi –  
The value of knowledge lies in its usage Patience and endurance (Hakuri/Jimiri)**

Consequently, in Hausa view, at every moment in life and in any situation one should be keen to ponder and utilize one's knowledge in dealing with matters, be they good or bad in this capricious world, even though doing so is not an easy task. This is why the Hausa believe that for a successful life one should beside knowledge, imbibe Hakuri, patience and perseverance.

**Hakuri Maganin Zaman duniya –  
Patience is the secret of world living i.e patience pays.**

The proverb suggests that patience and perseverance are the key to every affair. In other words, no matter what, with patience, one would undoubtedly overcome problems and



eventually triumph – this is why in another proverb dealing with the indispensability of Hakuri in achieving success it is said:

**Hakuri mai tad da rabo - Patience (Perseverance) leads to success**

Similarly, the Hausa are of the opinion that patience is affluence, for without it (patience) even if one possesses the whole world one may still not be contented. This is contained in.

**Mahakurci Mawadaci - The patient (is) the affluent**

The proverb is in essence saying that though power and wealth are more glaringly termed as the symbols of affluence, in the real sense Hakuri is affluence because without patience and perseverance they are not achievable. In other words, patience is synonymous with success.

To further stress the importance of Hakuri in unraveling the knotty life, the Hausa add that:

**Abin da ruwan zafi ya dafa idan an yi hakuri na sanyi ma zai dafa.**

**Whatever is boiled in the hot water, with perseverance, the cold water will also boil.**

By this, the Hausa underpin the relevance of perseverance in dealing with issues i.e no matter the length and difficulty of an affair, with perseverance one would succeed just as things are eventually boiled with cold water. Moreover, with patience and perseverance, one can attain the impossible, unattainable.

**Mai hakuri shi yakan dafa dutse –**

**(It is) the patient that boils bits of rocks.**

Patience and endurance in addition to knowledge are not enough to carry one through the odds and snares of the unpredictable, capricious, world-life. One is further advised to cling to Gaskiya in order to attain Zaman Lafiya good living.

**Honesty, Truth, Objectivity (Gaskiya)**

Gaskiya as an ethical concept is indeed a broad term that covers truth, honesty, sincerity, faith, fairness and objectivity. This is why Gaskiya is a pre-requisite for any worldly undertaking – without it one blurs oneself and one's effort even if initially posed as if to meet success, sooner or later the `marage' would either be withered away or lack solidity and substance. This is so, because only Gaskiya, truth endures the test of time.

**A dade ana yi sai Gaskiya –**

**(Only) truth (and honesty) endure**

while:

**Karya fure take ba ta `ya'ya –**

**A lie (falsehood) (only) blossoms but bears no fruit, but forever**

In this opt quoted proverbs while truth with honesty are said to excel and stand the test of time, falsehood (lie) which is likened with karya, a flowering tree found in Hausaland, bears no fruit. In other words no matter how attractive and blossoming falsehood may look, the end result will not lead to fruition as the karya tree also bears flowers only without bearing any fruit. Falsehood as against truth is also aptly described as:

**Ramin Karya Kurarre ne –**



---

**The hole of lie is shallow**

Which means that if one opts for falsehood rather than truth, one would easily be found out, and the days of the dishonest are really numbered, as such one should hold to sincerity and honesty in order to live in peace – Zaman lafiya

Moreover Gaskiya is shown as a strong and virile vehicle for waging war against the difficulties of world-life, hence it said:

**Gaskiya ta fi dokin Karfe karfi –**

**Honesty is stronger than steel Horse.**

i.e with gaskiya one is gifted with a powerful companion to face any hard affair. Not only that, the Hausa maintain that with Gaskiya one needs not to dread nor panic, because:

**Ciki da gaskiya wuka ba ta huda shi –**

**The stomach that contains truth cannot be pierced (even) with a knife.**

This is so because no matter the severity of events in this complex world one would not be injured if one clings to Gaskiya. Indeed, the position of Gaskiya for a good worldly living in Hausa thought cannot be over-emphasized. Since Gaskiya is better than wealth as is said in:

**Gaskiya ta fi kwabo –**

**Truth is worth more than a penny,**

**or**

**Gaskiya ta fi Jaka –**

**Truth is worth more than a bag (of money).**

Therefore, one is advised to clench one's teeth to Gaskiya as one's best policy, no matter the temptation of any worldly material if really one hopes to win a peaceful life – Zaman lafiya.

However, even though the Hausa acknowledge that Gaskiya, truth, honesty and sincerity is hard to uphold or bitter to admit as in:

**Gaskiya wuyar fadi gare ta, in ka fada ka hau doki dan dubu –**

**Saying the truth is difficult, if you utter it better ride off on a fast running horse.**

**and**

**Gaskiya akurkin dundu mai wuyar saka hannu –**



---

**Truth (is) a thorny fowl-pen, difficult to insert one's hand.**

Yet one is still expected to remain resolute, committed and unshakable come what may since, Gaskiya is an effective protection for a good life, far more than any mysterious human efforts or assistance: it is said

**In zaka fadi, fadi gaskiya**

**Komai taka ja maka ka biya**

**Whenever you intend to speak, say the truth**

**Whatever it may cause to you take it (Zungur)**

**Gaskiya ta fi laya**

**Truth is superior to any (protective) charm**

**Caution (Taka-tsantsan)**

However, notwithstanding one's effort to internalize Hakuri, sani and Gaskiya, one needs not be overzealous, one should be sagacious and follow life with caution taka-tsantsan, and take things easily, calmly and carefully, Sannu-Sannu

This is so if one looks at the proverb:

**Duniya a bi ta a Sannu –**

**World (affair) should be followed with caution**

The proverb is in essence saying that in order to successfully deal with the complications and the unpredictability of world-life one has to be extra careful or cautious.

Likewise one is warned to be watchful of world-life and never allow oneself to be deceived, one should therefore keep calm and handle world affair with caution. This is contained in the proverb:

**Duniya Masakin kunu yaro bi/sha ta a hankali**

**The world-life is a kunu vessel, o boy follow/take it with caution..**

The Hausa generally agree that with time, care, and caution even the most complicated and difficult affair can be unravelled, this is why it is said;

**A kwana a tashi matankadi zai shiga gora**

**Day-in-day-out with (caution) a dum-palm-front made-tray can enter into a gourd.**



---

This means even an impossible looking affair, like inserting a large grass tray into a guard could be possible with care and patience. To further discourage over-enthusiasm and ineptitude in confronting world affairs, the proverb:

**Sannu ba ta hana zuwa -**

**Graduality does not prevent progress**

**i.e slowly wins the race**

Advises one to take things easily, calmly and gradually. In the Hausa view, one should never be disturbed with the slow rate at which progress is being recorded, because in most cases, should one decide to run faster than one's legs the result may end in retrogression, as it is said:

**Sauri kan haifi nawa**

**Over-zealousness can lead to retrogression**

**i.e more haste, less speed**

i.e instead of progression retrogression occurs. Man is advised not to be hasty but to always be careful and ponder over issues before embarking on things, not minding the length of time this may take. This is aptly stated in:

**Hanyar lafiya a bi ta da shekara**

**The safest way should be followed even if it takes one a whole year.**

Afterall, the Hausa say **Tafiya Sannu-Sannu Kwana nesa**; gradually and gradually a (distant) destination is reached.

**Organization/precaution and far sightedness (Lura + riga-kafi and hangen nesa)**

Furthermore, the Hausa advise man to learn lessons from others and from the day to day experience. As such, to live peacefully, one should take precautions against occurrence or re-occurrence of episodes, since:

**Riga-kafi ya fi magani**

**Prevention is better than cure, and**

**Idan ka ga gemun danuwanka ya kama wuta shafa ma naka ruwa**

**If you see the beards of your neighbour in flames you better pour water on your own.**

Similarly, one should look before one leaps rather than allowing urge or impulse to drive one into doing things. The need for planning is infact stressed in:

**Da muguwar rawa gara kin tashi**



---

**Better sit still than dance a bad dance**

One should be shrewd and farsighted as such one should not neglect even the minutest of affairs, because:

**Dan hakin da ka raina shi ke tsole ma ido**

**The small piece of grass that you disregard may poke your eye**

**i.e The minutest of things you neglect over burdens you later.**

By this, one is enjoined to be careful, cautious., reflect on the day-to-day happenings in order to live peacefully in the world.

**Resoluteness (Himma and Kwazo)**

The apparent over-emphasis on taka-tsantsan should however neither be misconstrued to mean killing initiative nor encouraging indolence and docility. Far from truth, on the contrary, the Hausa attach much importance to resoluteness, himma and diligence kwazo for a successful living. For instance in:

**Duniya ba ta auren rago**

**The world does not marry the indolent**

It is stated that there is no way that one can excel in any human endeavour and live peacefully in the world with laziness. One must therefore work relentlessly to meet one's goal. This is further accentuated in

**Zomo ba ya kamuwa daga zaune**

**A Hare is never caught while sitting.**

Nothing is achievable without efforts, just like a fast running small wild animal like a Hare can not be caught while one is still sitting. As such the proverb enjoins hardwork and industry in tackling any wordly affairs. The same message is delivered in





---

**Kyuya ba ta haihuwar da mai ido**

**Inertia does not beget a (male) child with eyes**

**Laziness can not produce a thing of worth**

This is even why the Hausa say:

**Rabon rago da arziki karayar zuciya**

**Timidity barricades off the timorous from prosperity.**

This is to say, the feeble minded would have been prosperous if not because of his indolence. The proverb is thereby urging the Hausa to work hard and never to chill their enthusiasm in confronting world-life. In all respect the Hausa condemn indolence and laziness and emphasize diligence, effort and trial instead.

It is even said:

**Motsi ya fi labewa**

**Moving surpasses lurking still**

**i.e (Active) Trial is worth more than inactive (lurking)**

another proverb asserts this very position, by saying

**Da haihuwar yuyuyu gara da daya kwakkwara**

**Rather than bearing many wastrel children, better a solid (active) one.**

Despite the Hausa love for children, yet they prefer one hard working, energetic person to bunch of lazy and feeble minded ones, as such it is said;

**Yaro bata hankalin dare ka yi suna.**

**Oh boy put nocturnal efforts to win fame.**

Which means in as much as one wants to attain glory and eventual peace in world-life one needs to labour for it.

The Hausa, all in all, believe that whoever refuses to work so as to live in peace, Zaman lafiya, will of course encounter difficulty and suffer humiliation; because it is maintained.

**Wanda bai ci hakurin wahala ba, ya ci na talauci.**

**Whoever does not persevere in hardwork would inevitably do so in poverty.**



---

Consequently, one should always remember that:

**Sai an sha wuya akan sha dadi**

**Enjoyment comes only after struggling**

and

**Mai nema na tare da Samu**

**Success goes with labour**

**Contentment (Yakana)**

Despite the Hausa appeal for hard-work and struggle to tackle worldly affairs, yet the Hausa entreatingly apprise man to always hold to 'Yakana' In other words, one should work to the best of one's ability to achieve what one wants to achieve in life, nevertheless to attain Zaman lafiya one should be contented with what one's humble efforts are able to achieve. For instance, the proverb:

**Guntun gatarinka ya fi sari-ka-ba-ni**

**Your little axe is worth more than (waiting for) someone else's bigger axe**

Suggests that one should always utilize the meager resources at one's disposal rather than rely on someone's glory or on wishful thinking. The Hausa also hold that:

**Abin aro ba shi rufe katare**

**A borrowed thing (cloth) does not cover one's thigh (genitalia).**

meaning that relying on someone else's assistance will not satisfy one's needs just as a borrowed cloth will not satisfactorily for ever cover one's loin. The likelihood for a borrowed piece of cloth to completely satisfy one's needs are put in doubt by this proverb. After all, it is not always that one gets what one requires, more so, the owner may decide to retrieve his borrowed thing at any time.

Further to the admonitions to man to be contented, the Hausa believe that:

**Kwadayi mabudin wahala**

**Greed or avance is the key to (all) trouble**

i.e should one be over ambitious or greedy to the extent of envying others, one is fore-warned that one is opening the gate of all troubles for oneself.



---

Granted that one is able to obtain what one envy's of others, still the Hausa are of the view that one is bound to be enslaved because:

**Idan baki ya ci, ido da kunya**

**When mouth eats the face is in shame**

By this proverb, the Hausa believe that whosoever is not contented with what he possesses and solely relies on others, surely his integrity is at stake and is bound to be spited.

Similarly, one should not neglect and throw away what one has in anticipation of something, which might not necessarily come along in this ephemeral world. This is why one is advised and reminded that:

**Sandar da ke hannunka da ita kake duka**

**You use the stick in your possession (in defense) (rather than rely on someone else's)**

**Zakaranka rakuminka**

**Your fowl is worth more than someone else's camel.**

**Da babu gara babu dadi**

**Better a ranking (dish) than none**

**Da hanau gara Mannau**

**Better a minute thing than none**

In furtherance, one should always move at one's pace rather than running faster than one's legs as is captured in:

**Kowa ya daka rawar wani ya rasa turmin daka tasa.**

**Whoever tries to imitate someone else's dance without possessing the expertise of doing so, will surely end in adversity.**

In essence, the Hausa society expects one to be contented 'Yakana' in order to live in harmony and have immunity against the hard, difficult and complex behaviour of world-life.

**Goodness and virtuosity (Nagarta + Kirki)**

Since Zaman lafiya is identified as the chief target that one should aim at in one's life, one should then know how to live with fellow humans. As a general guiding principle for peaceful co-existence within the community therefore, the Hausa hold that one should be Good all round and simple, Nagari is a good virtuous person



---

Nagari who lives in harmony with all, is in turn loved by all as it is said:

**Nagari na kowa, Mugu Sai maishi**

**The good one is for all (while) the evil is only for his kith and kin.**

Similarly it is said:

**Kowa ya yi nagari don kamsa**

**Whosoever does well is for oneself.**

**Nagari shike sai da kansa**

**The good (behaviour of) one advertises oneself**

However, being good is a broad term that encompasses many traits such as obedience biyayya, good-naturedness alheri love of close relations mutunci respectability etc.

Biyayya otherwise respect, obedience, or loyalty is revered by the Hausa. The leaders, parents, elders deserved to be respected and obeyed. The Hausa believe that to have a good and peaceful life Zaman lafiya, respect for one another is an essential recipe.

Hence it is said:

**`Yi `na yi' `bari' `na bari' ta raba ka da kowa.**

**`Do' `I do', `cease' `I cease'; `I cease' makes you live peacefully and harmoniously with all.**

**i.e tolerance and respect for all earns you peaceful co-existence with all.**

Moreover the Hausa say:

**Kowa ya bi a bi shi**

**Whoever follows (in loyalty) will (also) be followed**

**i.e the obedient will be obeyed.**

In other words the proverbs advise one to do unto others, as one would want it done to oneself. It is observed that nobody would want to be disrespected this is why it is said if one disrespects his elders or leaders, one would sooner or later meet the same because **“abin da ka shuka shi kakan girba’**. (You harvest what you plant).

The Hausa therefore say:

**Da biya kan samu**



---

## **Loyalty leads to success**

to unequivocally buttress the need for loyalty and respect as a vehicle for success.

Nonetheless it should not be assumed that the Hausa view elders and leaders as Semi gods who are infallible. It is the intelligibility and the critical thinking that they are expected to use in dealing with situations that earn them this position. The Hausa say:

**Banza Girman Mahaukaci karamin mai wayo ya fi shi**

**The un-intelligent is big for nothing the little sagacious fellow is worth more than him.**

Moreover, the Hausa, despite their esteem for respect and loyalty for leaders and elders are also aware that leadership is also taxing and over-burdening, this they say in

**Gaba da wuya baya da takaici**

**Forward is tasking (while) rear is contemptible i.e**

**Leadership is difficult while followership is annoying**

In the same vein leaders are compared with rubbish-heap in

**Babba Juji (ne)**

**A leader is a rubbish-heap**

who condones all sorts of rubbish, such as adjudicating disputes, absorbing accusation. The king is even seen as a father to all, as in:

**Sarki Baban Kowa**

**King the Father of all**

Meaning that whoever has any problem of whatever sort is free to go to the king for solution – just like children go to their parents for solutions to their problems.

**Alheri** – goodness otherwise **kirki** is yet another attribute of **Nagari**. Being good and kind to all is being good to oneself since the result returns to the doer-as is seen in:

**Alheri gadon Barci**

**Goodness is (one's) sleeping bed**

or as is more succinctly expressed in:

**Alheri danko ne ba shi faduwa kasa banza**

**Goodness is a magnet, it does not fall to the ground for nothing.**



The proverb compares goodness to Danko, a chewing gum. That is, should a chewing gum fall on the ground it will surely stick to dust on the ground - so also is alheri, if a person does good things to others, it will in turn get kindness to him.

In the same vein, the Hausa hold that mugunta, / keta wickedness, also returns to the doer i.e it also attracts wickedness in the same token as is said in:

**Keta fitsarin fako, ga mai shi yake komawa.**

**Wickedness is (like) urinating on a flat earth it (consequently) splashes back to the urinator.**

**Alhaki kwikwiyo ne mai shi yakan bi**

**Wickedness is (like) a puppy that trails its owner.**

The afore-mentioned proverbs confirm that one should decide on what to do whether good or bad, but should bear in mind that the result will come back to one, just as urine will splash back to the uriner in a barren earth. In other words wickedness or goodness recoils onto its doer or as Shakespeare said, the engineer is hoist with his own petard.

Furthermore, alheri as an ingredient of being Nagari involves giving out something to others, so as to love one another. But the Hausa believe that being kind is more than any material assistance because it is said:

**Shimfidar fuska ta fi shimfidar tabarma**

**To spread face is better than the spread of mat.**

In other words to give an enthusiastic welcome to a stranger is better than to merely spread a mat to him without being happy with his arrival. The proverb is saying that display of sympathy, compassion and good human relations to others, as a principle of being Nagari is better than any material assistance done in bad mood.

All in all, the Hausa believe that one harvests what one sows whether good or bad.

**Abin da mutum ya shuka shi yakan girba.**

**What a man sows, that he harvests**

as such one should be cautious and be good to all in order to live in peace. Even if one intends to be cruel to others one should bear in one's mind that:

**In za ka gina ramin mugunta, gina shi gajere, (watakila kai ka fada.)**

**When digging a treacherous trench, (better) dig it shallow (for you might fall victim into it).**

**i.e Take care so that you are not hoisted with your own petard.**

By the foregoing, it is discernible, that the Hausa place much emphases on kindness and goodness to mankind, this alone is indeed enough reason to rebut the claim in some quarters such as Johnston (1962: xxxi) that the Hausa 'possess a residual streak of cruelty.'

The Hausa do not in any way allow brutality and cheating, as far as this research is concerned it is yet to come across any proverb that encourages wanton attack on fellow humans.

The Hausa respect level-headedness in contrast to arrogance, as such one is expected to be humble and modest while relating with others so as to live peacefully. In addition, one must not despise nor look down upon others with contempt as contained in:

**Girman kai rawanin tsiya**



---

**Arrogance leads to downfall**

and in

**Mai wulakanta jama'a zai ga iyakarsa**

**The days of the arrogant are numbered**

Similarly one should also not be jealous of what others are blessed with, because

**Hassada ga mai rabo taki**

**Jealousy is manure to the lot of the destined victor.**

The Hausa as seen here, believe that jealousy or envy does not prevent one from acquiring what one is destined to acquire - nor does it decrease one's chances. In fact in Hausa thought it is agreed that being jealous and covetous to someone is like applying fertilizer to his chances, as such.

**Hassada ba ta hana bawa rabo**

**Envy does not deny fellow human his lot.**

To be good and gentle in Hausa society one has to observe Zumunci. Zumunci covers clan feeling, brotherliness and friendliness. Zumunci is normally observed by visits and associating with clan members, friends, and near and close relations in sorrow and in happiness. As it is said 'A friend in need is a friend indeed'. The Hausa say of zumunci:

**Zumunta a kafa ta ke**

**Zumunta is maintained through mutual visits.**

Traditionally, a kinsman, brother, friend or clan fellow whether rich or poor, nearby or far, should be visited from time to time. They should also be assisted whether in request or not

The Hausa society permits one to seek for assistance from his zumu, relation, when in need, this is why it is said:

**Zumu zuma**

**A kinsman is candy**

i.e a kinfolk is as sweet as any sweet thing like honey because of mutual assistance and efforts in alleviating the problems of one another. Nevertheless though it is permissible to seek for help from a relative, one should not be overburdened and overstretched - hence it is said:

**Gidan zumu ba kasuwa ba**

**The abode of kinfolk is not a market which one can visit at will.**

By and large, Hausa society like most African societies attaches an immeasurable importance to communality and mutual assistance to one another. It is believed that a tree does not make a forest and that nobody can survive in isolation. To this effect, for one to live in peace, zaman lafiya, one must work in unison with the community. The Hausa therefore say:

**Hannu daya ba shi daukar jinka,**

**A single hand cannot lift and put on a thatch roof.**

The proverb reflects the Hausa traditional way of thatching their houses - where dry grass and midrib of raphia are used to make the Jinka thatch on the ground before it is finally lifted and put on top of the building in order to roof it by the combined efforts of many people. By this, the Hausa view that just as the jinka could not be lifted up by a single person and put at its appropriate place, so also joint communal efforts of all and sundry are very much needed to forestall orderliness and zaman lafiya. This view is more conspicuously captured in:

**Zaman Duniya tamkar rumbu ne, 'miko mini', 'in miko maka'.**



---

**World-life is like (out door) corn bin, (where) ‘you hand it to me’ and I hand it in turn to you.’**

Similarly the Hausa hold that:

**Hannu da yawa maganin kazamar miya  
Many hands finish off the unsavoury soup.**

**Tsakuwa daya ba ta dabe  
A (single) pebble does not make (floor)  
i.e A tree can not make a forest.**

**Kwarya guda ba ta amo  
A single hand does not clap**

Therefore, for a good living in the community one should operate or function usefully and as well be concerned with one’s neighbours, town or village folk and all citizens because it is all agreed that

**Zaman duniya cude ni in cude ka  
World-life is (like) scratch my back I scratch yours.**

Hitherto, Hausa society as shown, reputes communality as a way of conducting good life, however, by no means, it does not kill individual efforts to confront issues and tackle the challenges of life. In fact, the Hausa on the contrary encourages individuals, as building blocks of the society, to start something good from oneself because:

**Doka daga gida takan fara  
Charity begins at home**

and

**So Duka so ne amma son kai ya fi  
It is good to love all, but to love oneself is the best.**

By the above quoted proverbs one should love and help all, but one is expected to also be good to oneself first.

Similarly, the Hausa though they agree that whether in peace or in crisis people should help one another, yet when the situation is beyond control, in order not to loose all (a yi tagwayen rusassu), individuals are at liberty to rescue themselves, at least, this is why the Hausa say:

**Kowa tasa ta fis she shi  
Let everyone rescue oneself,**

and

**Iya ruwa fid da kai  
Ability to swim is ability to rescue oneself.**

the just quoted proverbs are stating that should one be confronted with hard life situation along with others such as about to be drawn in a river with others, in that situation one should put efforts to rescue oneself since the chance of rescuing all is an impossibility.

The following proverb also support this stand.

**Kowa ya iya allonsa ya wanke  
Let everyone move at his pace,**

and

**Idan ba ruwanka da magana bi ta da “mhm”**

In the same vein if an individual meets an opportunity that needs to be utilized, one should not waste time in doing so because opportunity once lost can hardly be regained, as such:

**Kowa ya samu rana, sai ya yi shanya**





---

## Whosoever gets an opportunity should utilize

### Conclusion

So far, the paper has identified peaceful living - zaman lafiya, as the main object of life to the Hausa, and to that effect proverbs are treated to support the stand.

However this does not mean that the Hausa disregard materialism. The Hausa as discussed earlier encourage hard work and industry. Similarly, it is believed that money otherwise kudi are good companions of life. This is why it is said:

### Zuwa da wuri ya fi zuwa da wuri-wuri

#### Arriving with cowry is better than arriving very early.

Cowry which symbolizes money - materialism was the currency being used in Hausaland prior to the coming of the Europeans. The proverb, as such, underpins the importance of money in day to day affairs. Rather than going to the market or any related place very early, better go with money even if late.

Furthermore, the Hausa say:

### Yaro da gari abokin tafiyar manya

#### A rich boy is a journey mate of elders.

Here, despite the Hausa stand on respect and strict adherence to social ordering based on age rather than other things, yet they still agree that social position, particularly wealth, is of significance - hence a mere boy but because of his riches is a compeer of adults.

Other proverbs indeed overstate the important position of money or wealth in general as against being poor. For instance:

### Idan ba ka da kudi sai a sayar da uwarka kana gani

**If you are penniless, your mother could be sold in your very presence/before your very eyes**

This proverb thus records the significance of money in the society and depicts how poverty can lower one's personality. The Hausa as well say:

### Neman kudi makahon ciniki

#### Struggle to accumulate money is a blind trade.

i.e normally when one struggles to acquire wealth one ventures in to it with all one's efforts, though the Hausa are mindful that:

### Zafin nema ba ya kawo samu

#### Excess search does not lead to finding

Indeed the Hausa stress the importance of money in zaman lafiya good living:

### Kudi abin zaman Duniya

#### Money good companions to world-life

by this proverb it is portrayed that money - wealth is also vital relevance in leading a good life.

In the same vein, despite the strong weight the Hausa put on morality, goodness and mutual assistance as prelude to zaman lafiya - good world-life as discussed above yet the Hausa are cognizance of the dynamism, and transience of the world and the changing of roles and values in the society, the fact contained in the proverb.

### Zamani Riga

#### Life moments are like gowns



---

i.e just as different styles, fashions and designs are being discovered day by day so also world-life - values change most especially in the globalized world of today.

Remarkably however no matter the changes in values, to the Hausa, money/wealth/materialism is not the supreme nor the chief goal of life since it is believed that:

**Mutunci ya fi kudi**

**Respectability (Peaceful coexistence) is worth more than money.**

Mutunci is significantly symbolized as riga or cloth without which one is either regarded as mentally sick/lunatic or a shameless rogue i.e

**Mutunci Riga**

**Mutuality (Peaceful coexistence) is a gown.**

As such one is expected to live in peace with oneself and with all, in the society and never to allow one's mutunci to diminish, because

**Mutunci Madara (ne)**

**Self-respect (is like) milk**

whenever it is spilt it is hardly to be regained. Moreso, the desirability for Mutunci in peaceful living as against materialism is so imposing, hence it is expressed in:

**Tsira da mutunci ya fi tsira da kaya**

**Success in peaceful coexistence is worth than materialism.**

Finally, it is hoped that this paremeological exposition of Hausa code of world-life would give an insight on how this moist populous ethno-political community in the West African sub-region, and indeed one of the three most populous linguistics communities of Africa (Hausa, Swahili and Arabic) views life. This undertaking would undoubtedly be an important factor particularly in coming to terms with recent trends of events in the globalized world.



---

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Abraham, R. C. (1962/1978):** Dictionary of the Hausa Language  
London Hodder & Stoughton
- Adamu, A (1994):** Tunanin Bahausha game Da Duniya  
Unpublished BA Dissertation Department of  
Nigerian & African Languages ABU Zaria, Nigeria.
- Aminu, M. L. (2002):** The Hausa Metaphysical World  
View: A Paremeological Exposition Unpublished  
PhD Thesis Department of Nigerian and African  
Language, A.B.U. Zaria – Nigeria
- Aminu, M. L. (2003):** **“Falsafar Bahausha Game Da**  
**Mutum Da Rayuwa Da Rasuwa”** in Muhammad,  
D (ed) Harshe Journal of Studies in African  
Languages, Literature & Cultures (Forthcoming)  
Vol. II Issue II Nigerian & African Languages ABU  
Zaria – Nigeria.
- Appiah, K. A (1992):** In My Fathers House: Africa in the Philosophy of  
Culture. New York. Oxford University Press.
- Bargery, G. P. (1934):** A Hausa English Dictionary and  
English Hausa Vocabulary London Oxford  
University Press.
- Barkow, J. H (1970):** Hausa and Maguzanci: Process of  
Group Differentiation in a Rural Area in North  
Central States of Nigeria Unpublished PhD Thesis  
Illinois Chicago.
- Brikay, S. (1982):** (Trans) (Unpub) The Maguzawa: Die  
Maguzawa Under the auspices of Centre for the  
Nigerian Cultural Studies ABU Zaria – Nigeria
- Chinueewu, O etal (1980):** “On the Structure of the Proverb in  
Proneibuium No: 25 pp. 961-973. New York  
Garland also in Moieder, W & Dundes, A (eds) The  
Wisdom of Many: Essays on Proverb 1981 pp. 43 –  
64 U.S
- Fordes, D (1955):** African Worlds: Studies in the



- 
- Cosmological Ideas and Social Value of African Peoples London Oxford Uni. Press.
- Fortes, M. (1965) (ed):** African Political Systems London Oxford Uni. Press.
- Fortes, M. (1975):** Studies in the African Social Anthropology London Academy Press.
- Greenberg, J. H. (1946):** The Influence of Islam on a Sudanese Religion. New York
- Gyeke, K. (1995):** An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme Philadelphia Temple University Press.
- Gyeke, K. (1997):** Tradition And Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience New York Oxford Uni. Press.
- Kekes, J. (1990):** The Nature of Philosophy London, Blackwell.
- Kirk-Greene, A. H.M (1974):** Mutumin Kirkii: The Concept of the Good Man in Hausa (Hans Wolf Memorial Lecture) Bloomington Indiana African Studies Programme
- Mbiti, J. S. (1970):** African Religious and philosophy New York Doubleday Anchor Books
- Mieder, W. (1993):** Proverbs Are Never Out of Season Oxford Uni. Press.
- Mieder, W & Dundes (1991) (eds):** The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb New York Garland Publishing.
- Mieder, W. et al (1994) (eds):** Proverbium Year Book of International Proverb Scholarship Queen city Printer Inc. Vermont.
- Muhammad D (1997):** “Nagari Na Kowa: Nazarin Tunanin Hausawa da Adabinsu” Lakcar Tunawa da marigayi Farfesa Ibrahim Yaro Yahya” (1944-1995) (Prof. Ibrahim Yaro Yahya Memorial Lecture. Bayero University Kano – Nigeria)



- 
- Olaniyan, R. (1992) (ed):** African History and Culture Ikeja  
Lagos, Longman Nigeria.
- Onyewuenyi, I. C. (1993):** The African Origin of Greek  
Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentrism Enugu,  
University of Nigeria Press.
- Onyewuenyi, I. C. (1995):** A Philosophical Reappraisal of  
African Belief in Reincarnation Enugu, University  
of Nigeria press
- Parndder, E. G. (1962):** African Traditional Religion New  
York Macmillan.
- Zarruk, M. R. et al (1982):** Kirarin Duniya 222 Ganuwa Publishers, Zaria  
Nigeria