



ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com

Daath Voyage : An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English

A Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access
Vol.10/No.2 June 2025

Editor: Dr. Saikat Banerjee

An Exploration on Cultural Continuity in Northern Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects of Farmers

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Received- 16/05/2025, Revised-19/05/2025, Accepted-19/06/2025, Published-30/06/2025.

Abstract: This paper discusses the explorations on cultural continuity in northern Nigeria revealing the challenges and prospects of farmers. The study exposes the roles of farming in the norther Nigeria it shares that there are various of forms of cultural practices that have existed and some are still in existence but the major predominant one on continuity is farming. The culture and tradition of northern Nigeria is hugely attributed to the farming where every society has its won way of agricultural productivity in which it uniquely conduct its farming activities during both the rainy and dry seasons. The study adopts qualitative descriptive methodology to derive the data for the study. In doing so, secondary data is used in the presentation and analysis in the research. The theoretical thrust employs in the study is Functional Theory which is quite relevant in demonstrating the roles of songs, agriculture to the development of the people by exposing both the problems and prospects of these entrepreneurial acts. The study shows that challenges such as insurgency, banditry, government policies, flooding among others have crippled the conduct of farming which serves as the challenges while the prospects are wealth, comfortability of lives, materialism, excessive happiness, development of the economy of oneself and the nation as a whole. These benefits attach to farmers and the challenges that should be detached to them is the essence of the study.

Key words: Culture, Nigeria, Challenges, Prospects, Farming.

Introduction

Northern Nigeria is a region which occupied the majority of the people living in the country with tapestry of tribes, cultural heritages that existed for over centuries. One such cultural heritage that remains in continuity in the region which has been sustained to the very long is farming. Agriculture plays a significant role in the lives of the peasants in the northern Nigeria, and it does not only remain as a source of livelihoods to the people of the region but it also contributes to the economic advancement of the region and the country as a whole (Iguda, 2018).

Northern Nigeria as some called the region is a Hausa region or Hausa-Fulani which represents that, the majority of the people are Hausas but this is just synecdoche about the region. There are many tribes and linguistic groups in the region but the language spoken in the region which almost served as the lingua franca to the people is Hausa that is what qualified the region to any outsider to be called as Hausa or Hausa-Fulani region.

There are various cultural practices that existed in the past, probably twenty to thirty years ago. These practices among the northern Nigerian people are not sustained as a result of factors such as modernization and civilization, lack of training and drilling the children, lack of exposing the children/youth to the nitty-gritty of cultural practices, inadequate orientations of culture to the younger ones among others. Iguda (2018) has concurred that “agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Northern Nigeria”. But cultural practice as part of cultural continuity in relations to Northern Nigerian space, one long sustained cultural orientation that people had been ingrained with is farming which in essence this paper deals with.

The major predominant part of the economy of the country, Nigeria is agriculture which contribute to Growth Domestic Product of the nation annually. The region uses the farming as a cultural heritage and practice and now proliferates because it remains a viable source of income to the people. Since it is the major practice in the northern Nigeria, its practitioners are the people from the region who were already trained by their parents on the acts of farming or have learnt the works through their neighbors, friends, relatives among others. Endowed with this gift of farming and by the way the material benefits attach to it, the region of northern Nigeria does not only feed itself but also feed and provide agricultural products such as rice, beans, maize among others to the other region in the country which is Southern Nigeria. The primary provider of

food and animals to the southern Nigeria is northern Nigeria. Because of the tradition, once one farms, he/she will feed himself/herself and then sell the grains that were produced. As such, in northern Nigeria, two (2) types of agricultural practices exist: one, subsistence farming where farmers farm for the purpose of feeding their families and relatives or their communities as a whole. Second, commercial farming this form of farming is done with the purpose of selling the commodities and products derived from the farming. In this case, farmers are seen as the commercial drivers who used their energy in the act to sustain their livelihoods.

In Hausa land, folk songs as part of culture, are sung to the farmers who are seen as the drivers of the lives of the people as they go on farming. Iguda (2018) researched the songs that deals with agriculture drawing his data from the popular oral singer of Northern Nigeria (Dr) Mamman Shata. The oral singer Mamman Shata alone has sung about fifteen (15) songs on agriculture and its development to people which are adequately enough to see that the practice of farming in northern Nigeria is on continuity.

Not too long ago, the Federal Government of Nigeria under the former president Muhammadu Buhari has implemented various plans (like Ancho Borrowers) in a bid to promote and develop agricultural sector for its fruitful benefits to the people, nation and the overall growth of the country's economy. This is an attempt to keep the cultural practice of the farming to remains in existence. The prospects it provides make policy makers to keep urging authorities to provide more mechanize tools that will ease to process of farming thereby contributing to the region's satisfactory achievements in the field of agriculture and culture and ultimately traditions of the northern people.

This paper therefore, investigates the explorations on cultural continuity of farming in northern Nigeria by providing the challenges and prospects attached to it. The paper underscores that 'farming' is one of the cultural and agricultural practice that remains a continuous activity among the people of Nigeria and has been embraced by various people for either subsistence reason or commercial reason. That is why there is an adage in Hausa language of the northern Nigeria which says 'noma tushen arziki' meaning 'farming is the source of wealth.'

The methodology employed in this study is descriptive qualitative methodology. This method allows a researcher to descriptively draw instance from the chosen data of the study. The source of data for this study

are from the Hausa oral song that promote the practice of farming and motivate the farmers on the agricultural venture. However, the researcher has paid attention to the recent song sung by Dauda Abdullahi Kahutu Rarara on the flooding that occurred in Maiduguri, Borno State of Nigeria. This is to assert the fact that both the former and the present Hausa oral singers have indelible and incredible concerns on agriculture as such they sang songs of courage, motivation and inspirations to farmers for the prospects attach to it.

Northern Nigeria in the past twenty years or so is a peaceful setting characterized as the habitant region for all and sundry. The trend does not change in some parts but has changed significantly some other parts who are affected with the issues of Boko Haram (north east) and banditry (north west, some parts of north central).

Iguda (2018) examined the prospects of agriculture in his study titled: *Shata and Agricultural Development: Reflections on Shata's Poem of Dembaram in Daura Local Government Area and the Present Challenges Facing the Farm House* the researcher expounded the roles of singers in the promotion of farming activities in the northern Nigerian setting. Mamman Shata is one of the oral Hausa singers who has unarguably sang songs on almost every topic under discussion in the northern Nigeria. He is as such the paper focuses on the investigations and reflections of his musical and poetic imprints towards agricultural development in the northern Nigeria.

Chamo (2013) discussed the relevance of Hausa oral singers and songs on the overall development and integration of Nigeria. In the paper, the researcher has affirmed the singers in the northern Nigeria promotes the sense of patriotism, nationalism, hardworking, dedication and self-reliance among Nigerians. Agriculture is also seen as the veritable tool that unites the country and promotes unity among the people of northern Nigeria.

Abdulkadir (1975) has declared that Shata and perhaps other Hausa oral singers have focused their discussions on various topics of discussion such as agriculture, culture, economy, etiquettes, military, morality, trade and wildlife. These themes are of great significances in the northern Nigeria where Hausa oral singers paid their attentions to the most.

This study adopts the use of Functional Theory which examined the functions of oral literary products on the society and community. The framework is advanced in the works of Bichi (1992), Daba (2006); Zurmi (1981), Na Allah (2010) among others.

The functionalist view sees society as social institution which the oral singers have concerns on the society and the prevailing socio-economic currents of the society they live in. Oral literature and generally, literature revolves and evolves around the prevailing experiences of the society. The study adopts this theory because of its relevance on the nature of compositions such as folk songs in which the singers are functional frontiers of the community.

Discussion

Farming has been the major component that sustains cultural continuity among the inhabitants of northern Nigeria. It attracts folksongs that targets at individual crop, individual farmer and successful harvest season. In Hausa communities, folksongs are handed down to younger generations on Mangoro (Mango), Kunun Gyada (thick juice from groundnut), Shinkafa (rice), rogo (cassava) and many other farm produce. Children get to know these produces by name before seeing them in the farm. Traditionally, all men were farmers, where most men attend to their farm before attending to their respective trading, craft or medicinal customers. These dual responsibilities were retained in rural areas, where cultural heritages are promoted to the benefit of communal members. Farming culture was promoted by renowned Hausa singers including Amale Sugugu Wako, Hassan Wayam, Dan Anace, Haruna Uji, Shehu Ajilo, Musa Dankwairo, Gawo Filinge, Mamman Shata and any more other singers.

Shata and Agriculture in Northern Nigeria

(Dr) Mamman Shata has sung variously and copiously on agriculture and farmers in Nigeria. The folk singer, Shata has exercised his creative talent to motivate and engage with the farmers the prospects of farming. He sang oral songs full of wisdom which accorded him to awarded as Honorary Doctorate Degree. In so doing, his indelible contributions also encompasses farmers and farming where in the singer, Mamman Shata has sung about fifteen (15) songs on agriculture and farmers alike. Here is the table drawn from Kankara (2013) showing the number of songs sung by Shata on agriculture and agricultural development.

Shata's Song on Agriculture and Agricultural Development

S/N	Title of the song	Time of singing	Focus of the song
1	<i>Hakananne Mamman kanen Idi wan Yalwa</i>	1943	Famine of 1942 and improved grains marketing
2	<i>Noma yakin 'yan arewa</i>	1966	Encouraging northerners to engage in farming
3	<i>Ku kama aiki tukuru abunda manya ka fada</i>	1966	Encouraging northern to work hard in farming activities
4	<i>Garkuwan Bauchi Amadun kari</i>	1971	Praising large scale farming activities of Garkuwan Bauchi
5	<i>Abdu bako Gwamnan Jihar Kano</i>	1972	Praising Audu Bako and his projects that encourages Kano people to engage in farming
6	<i>Nagode Habubakar Koko</i>	1975	Praising Commissioner of Agriculture of North Western State.
7	<i>Zani gidan gona Dabera</i>	1976	Appreciating the set up and arrangement of the farm house
8	<i>Kwamishina Sabo Jama'are</i>	1976	Praising the work of Commissioner of Agric. & Natural Resources Bauchi State
9	<i>Wo Ali na mani Kotoko</i>	1983	Praising the efforts of large scale farmer, the Sarkin Noma of Sokoto
10	<i>Mai noma Habu Garba dan Ammani</i>	1984	Appreciating the contribution of the large scale farmer in food production
11	<i>Sannu da aiki Garba dan Ammani</i>	1984	Greeting the large scale farmer for his farm work
12	<i>Baba Habu dan Ammani Garba</i>	1984	Saluting the owner of "Sai ka gani farms" located along Funtua – Gusau Road
13	<i>Mamman Yagode Aruwa</i>	1984	Saluting the owner of "Jeka ka gani farms" located along Zaria – Kaduna Road.
14	<i>Muna gonar masarar Abbou</i>	1994	Describing the maize farm of Alhaji Abbou at Gamdare, Northern Cameroun.
15	<i>Wo Alhaji Abbou na Gamdare</i>	1994	Praising the large scale farming activities of Alh. Abbou na Gamdare

Source: Kankara (2013)

Farming remains the major source of livelihood among the majority of rural inhabitants in northern Nigeria while civil service takes over urban locations. Farming culture directly and indirectly sustains livelihood in urban locations. Rural farmers and farming culture are attacked by certain socio-political factors including:

Insurgency

Insurgency and insurgent activities of Boko Haram had affected the activities of farming in rural areas where farming is the only means of livelihood. Farmers are scared and forced to abandon their farm land and homes. Their farms were burned to ashes and their bans were destroyed. They were forced to be refugees in locations other than theirs. Rich farmers were frustrated into accepting dependent life in refugee camps. Insurgency assumed a mighty destructive face in the eyes of farmers. Many famers were killed and others forced to abandon their crops in their effort to save lives first. Book haram insurgency was predominant in Northeastern Nigeria as it originated from Maiduguri, the state capital of Borno state and where later spreads to other villages within the state and beyond.

Banditry

Banditry, like insurgency attacked farmers but in faraway Kaduna, Katsina and Sokoto lands. It attacked farmers also in Zamfara and Kebbi states. Bandits assumed the power that even emirs, professor and business men cannot travel safely on the Funtua-Sokoto axis. Not only farmers, but everyone finds it difficult to visit home, take in or take out farm produce to market or for consumption. Banditry becomes so popular that its leaders are seen as heroes in the eyes of unpopular singers. One of the songs is Turji Maganin Maza, where Bello Turji is address as Jarumi (outstanding), Gwani (expert), ci mazaje (destroyer of men) and wuce kwatance (beyond description) and other exaggerate/heroic references.

Kidnapping

Kidnapping becomes popular in northern Nigerian when Kidnappers opted to make huge amount from farmers. Farmers are kidnapped one after the other. Their family members are then forced to sell farm produce in raising the required amount to set them free. Farmers are being taken away from their home into the bush only to negotiate on the amount to release them. Same farmer can be kidnapped severally. Some farmers lost their lives in the hands of kidnappers.

Flooding

Flooding becomes popular when it washed away farm lands, crops and farm houses. In some situations, like in the recent Maiduguri flooding, cities are affected. Flooding is a negative challenge that faces farmers in the northern Nigeria. The issue of flooding affects the people and therefore their cropping.

Government Policy

In addition to earlier mentioned, government policies play vital role in attacking farming culture, farmers and farming activities in Northern Nigeria. Cashless policy which was rejected by the farmers and rural dwellers makes it difficult for farmers to afford Farming essentials. Currency change which was accompanied by confusion among rural dwellers affected farming processes. Fuel subsidy removal rendered farmers out of livelihood. Prices of fertilizer, cost of labour, insecticides, seeds and transportation rendered the majority of the traditional farmers hopeless.

Consolation

Religious leaders and popular singers assume the role of good leaders by consoling Talakawa (the poor) as Rarara (one of the popular Hausa singers) calls them in his aftermath of Maiduguri flood song with Talakawa as its chorus. In it, the singer recalls:

Ga matsalar su ta Boko Haram ba ta shude ba

Kasuwa tai gobara a jihar ba su warke ba

Sai ga ambaliya ta ruwa ba su shirya ba

Translated:

We know of their calamity of Boko Haram which still lingers

The market fire disaster is still fresh

And now flood that they did not prepare for

The common man, representing mostly farmers, is left to face all the calamity, the disaster and the unprepared flooding. The singer calls on them 'Jama'ar Borno kui hakuri' (the people of Borno) and remind them of their divine belief in destiny 'Abun daga Allah ne' (it is from God) and concluded that 'Komai yayi tsanani gaban sa akwai sauki' (all that becomes difficult will be relieved).

Conclusion

This research paper discussed an exploration on cultural continuity in northern Nigeria by expounding the challenges and prospects of farming/famers. The paper has discussed thoroughly and critically that northern Nigeria is a culturally oriented region where in the major source of livelihoods remains farming in the past

decades and even in the present day the sector of farming a component of the region. People farm because of two obvious reasons. One is to provide food and comfortable lives to their families, relatives or communities. Two, is to venture into farming, cultivate and harvest crops for commercial purposes. As such, the popular adage of Hausa affirms that ‘noma tushen arziki’ which is ‘farming is the source of wealth’. There are various challenges that face farmers in the region such as insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, flooding, government policy among others. However, there are prospects attach to it such as wealth, comfortability of lives, materialism, excessive happiness, development of the economy of oneself and the nation as a whole among many others. The study also deduced that northern Nigeria is full with pool of cultures but the most sustained one is farming and its practitioners are farmers.

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