

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM AND IDENTITY: A STUDY OF VISUAL TRANSPORT LITERATURE IN KANO

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Abstract

Religious logos/symbols have been a dominant physical attribute of messages featured on all types of vehicles in Africa and Asian countries where automobiles are not only used as means of transportation but also as channels of socio-cultural and political communication. This paper uses Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and In-depth Interview research techniques to examine the intersection between religious symbols featured on public transport vehicles in Kano state and the religious/sectarian identity of the transport entrepreneurs/drivers. Two groups of eight public transport vehicle drivers were purposely selected in five national motor parks for the Focus Group Discussion, while eight public transport entrepreneurs were selected for the In-depth Interview. The study found that public transport entrepreneurs and drivers use religious visual messages on their vehicles to primarily construct religious identity and seek divine protection. The study concludes that the culture is a deliberate social communication tool aimed at promoting and strengthening traditional culture in Kano. The study recommends the use of transport literature by governments, organizations and civil society groups as effective means for socio-economic and political communication.

Keywords: Religious, Symbolism, Identity, Visual Transport, Kano

Introduction

Visual rhetoric is the transmission of information, ideas and thoughts using symbols, imagery, signs, graphics, films and typography. It is one of the popular triad classifications of human communication along with verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Transport literature popularly known as 'bumper sticker' is an aspect of visual communication and a genuine North American product or culture which evolved in post-World War II experimentation especially of the maturation of commercial screen printing (Schwab, 1952). Schwab argued that the culture overlapped from the tradition of advertisement on one's mode of transportation during the era of horse-drawn carriages where horse-fly nets were sometimes imprinted with the name of an advertiser. Elias (2011) observed that in pre-industrial society people used textual and visual messages to decorate their horses especially in South Asia.

Baker (2011) argues that, America's post-war obsession with automobile and the freedom it afforded influence the popularity of bumper sticker. He observed that the earliest bumper stickers were used to advertise tourist attractions, provide public safety initiatives, advance political sympathy, identity and ideology, advertise radio and television stations, as well as to express political and personal viewpoints. They were equally used to document social and historical events and trends.

In the mid-1960s, bumper stickers began to feature opinions and social statements that were often reflective of the turbulent times, such as the popular *Make Love, Not War* signs. The bumper sticker became a form of folk advertising, allowing anyone who owns a car to send messages to anyone who

happened to read it. Bearing diverse messages from the usual to the bizarre bumper stickers appear not only on bumpers everywhere, but are also found among significant cultural heritage collections to document American history and support research and scholarship in cultural communication (Baker, 2011).

In Africa, structural rigidity, low access to established mass media and the relative size and sophistication of information and communication technology and infrastructure have forced individuals and socio-cultural groups to use alternative communication media to disseminate news and information. The use of road transport vehicles, buildings, rocks, clothes and other cultural artefacts by non-professional individuals and sub-cultures in the process of mass communication is popular and prevalent in most African societies. This development has forced a redefinition of the concept of mass communication from organizational and technological base which subordinated human conditions to a more expressive perspective which strives to maintain the society in time, represent shared beliefs and interpret our experiences (Carey, 1975 and 1989).

The development of the first automobile and advancement in information and communication technology have democratized the process of information dissemination and liberalized the struggle between professional and non-professional individuals as well as between corporate and independent bodies to use conventional or alternative media to satisfy their audiences in an environment full of possibilities.

Statement of the Problem

The ubiquitous culture of writing textual and visual messages on public transport vehicles is not only evident, visible or popular to cultural anthropologists or communicators but to anyone who travels widely, especially in North America, Africa, Asia, South America, and specifically in Kano State- Nigeria. Textual and visual messages are inscribed on Buses, Lorries, Trucks, Taxi's and recently on Tricycles to the extent that a typical Kano street-scene would be impossible without it (Ya'u, 2016).

Nomenclatures, clauses, phrases, pictures, symbols, logos, graphics and drawings are elegantly framed on public transport vehicles. Most of these are clearly visible and can be enigmatic, ambiguous, or clumsy. They speak out and remain silent at the same time. People visualize or read them but do not comprehensively understand or decipher them. The texts are usually original because they are derived from and refer to a world well known to people in Kano.

The messages are usually taken from an old proverb, a modern saying, a religious scripture, newspaper report, and radio announcement, political or social event. The inscriptions tell personal history which is only known to the driver/owner and few insiders. The message may be conventional but its full meaning is unique and private (Lawuyi, 1988 and Bunza, 2005).

This practice can be considered an aspect of cultural communication through cultural determinism and populism which project the persistence of common values, attitudes and behaviour as a result of cultural factors in which individuals and groups use the conventional or alternative media for their own purposes.

In view of the preceding observations this paper examines the meaning, purpose and context of featured religious logos and symbols on public transport vehicles in Kano and the corresponding relation between the symbols and the religious identity of the entrepreneurs/drivers as an aspect of cultural communication.

Significance of the study

Road literature is variously used in different contexts, cultures and subcultures to articulate advance or address socio-economic and political goals. In North America it has been used at different times to rally for support for political candidates or parties, promote the sales or patronage of products and services as well as in the reflection of social history and construction of social identity (Baker, 2011). In South America it is essentially used for social communication and construction of social identity. While in the Middle East it is substantially used for reciprocal political communication between the Jews and Palestinians (Salgado, 2012). In Africa, available literatures have shown that substantial portion of the studied road literature is religious (Field, 1960, Lawuyi, 1988 and Van Der Geest, 2009).

The study explored the relative use of road literature in Africa by examining religious logos and symbols in the construction of religious/sectarian identity among public transport entrepreneurs/ in Kano. The study will add to the existing literature in the area of study.

Review of Literature

The culture of transport literature which involves the practice of writing textual and visual messages on road transport vehicles is very common in South Asian countries especially India, Nepal, and Pakistan. Public transport vehicles present an entirely different insight into life by their textual and visual messages which reflect the feelings, beliefs, and social history of the vehicles' owner or driver.

For example in India there is a popular culture of writing textual and visual messages on public transport vehicles. Some of these messages are basically alert to the approaching vehicles, some are creative and others are philosophical. Elias (2011) argued that Indian public transport drivers/owners reflect a healthy sense of patriotism and social responsibility through the various messages. He identified some of the most popular road literature on Indian public transport vehicles like *Horn Please, Slow-down Genius It Is Just a Journey*.

Field (1960) was one of the earliest anthropologists who attempted to decipher the meanings of vehicle texts in Ghana to a western audience. In 1960, she presented an extensive case report on 146 patients who visited priest healers in *Asante* in 1956. The complaints and requests put before the priests range from bad luck in business to infertility and marriage problems. Field was struck by the large number of bus and lorry

drivers in these clients and began to take an interest in their way of life and studied their histories and the text they write on their vehicles. She collected 144 inscriptions and interviewed the drivers for their personal contextual meanings.

In her study, Field categorized the texts as defensive, offensive, aggressive, and provocative. For example; *God Is Grace, God Help Me* are defensive inscriptions. While *Life Is War, Mind Your Own*, are offensive texts. However, some of the texts are romantic portraying the driver as a cultural hero. Here the central concern is not anxiety over unsecured undertaking but of bravura and self-confidence in spite of many dangers. Examples of these texts as identified by Field include *Fine Boy, Sharp – Sharp, No Play, Show Boy, London Boy*.

Van Der Geest (2009) observed that, in 1985 Nana Ampadu, one of the Ghana's most popular performers of highlife launched a song (in Twi) called *Driverfo*. It was an ode to public transport drivers that recounted the attractions and frustrations of their work, the passenger's behaviour, the role of the police, and the solidarity among drivers. The artist culminated with a comprehensive list of slogans and inscriptions found on public transport vehicles that expressed both the bravura or glamour and anxieties of the drivers. An excerpt from Ampadu's song translated into English reads:

‘...what I like about the work of drivers is that every driver chooses a name which he writes on his car. Some drivers are called by the name they have written on their car. Some inscriptions on cars are interesting. Some are religious, some romantic. Some are about family problems. Some are insulting....’ (2009, p. 258).

This suggests that in most European colonies public transport vehicles are not only used in the absolute sense of their manifest function but latently used as means of social and cultural communication (Miller, 2001). However since the middle of the 19th century automobiles have become a central feature in the African road transport system and by implication the entire African culture. This is probably the reason why Kopytoff (1986) articulated for an anthropological research into the meaning of car in Africa.

In response to the above, historians, anthropologists, and cultural communicators have studied the role of car in the colonization and missionization of Africa and scholars in Africa described car as a manifestation of popular and material culture (Miller, 2001).

Public transport messages are so appealing and captivating to the extent that scholars, journalists, and even casual observers have tried their analytical skills on them. Lawuyi (1988) for example, used interpretative approach to study the world of Yoruba taxi driver in Nigeria and Burke (1996) did the same in Brazil. Similarly Klaeger (2001), studied religion on road, in Ghana and Van Der Geest (2009) studied lorry inscriptions in Ghana. These scholars conducted their studies by discussing the meaning of the texts with either the drivers or the owners of the vehicles and the readers.

Lawuyi (1988) argues that, the presence of religious or spiritual messages on commercial vehicles in Nigeria is a resort to symbolic action in the face of uncertainties. He observed that in Nigeria armed robbers may attack and steal the car, the road-side mechanic may mistakenly or deliberately connect wires that could ignite and burn the vehicle. Consequently, nobody can predict when accident may happen as drivers are often reckless.

He used interpretative approach to study *The World of Yoruba Taxi Driver* in the context of the taxi drivers and owners struggle for wealth accumulation and social mobility. He found that taxi drivers/owners used religious slogans to seek for the intervention of superior spiritual power to protect accidents, keep off policemen, and possible dishonesty from drivers and mechanics. He noted that 80% of Muslims, and 60% of Christians used religious slogans on their vehicles because they feel they are operating in a condition where life and property are highly insecure. Thus, inscriptions such as: *The Lord is my Shepherd, Jesus is Lord, Jesus is in control, No king as God* etc. are prominent on taxis.

Van Der Geest (2009) observed that scholars have developed a variety of systems to classify the primary themes of the popular inscriptions on public transport vehicles in Africa. He noticed the virtual religionisation of inscriptions especially in West Africa and particularly Ghana and Nigeria. He argued that more inscriptions are inspired or motivated by religious dogma. He concluded that religious texts and visuals are prominent on public transport vehicles and constituted more than 30% of the sample he studied. He provided some typical religious inscriptions which include, *Blood of Jesus, Clap for Jesus, Holy Spirit* etc. Based on his finding he argued that the general purpose of the inscriptions has not remarkably changed since Field's analysis in the late 1950's. Most of the car owners and drivers in Van Der-Geest's study emphasized the fear that envy and witchcraft pose to them and explained the meanings of the inscriptions as different responses to this perceived threat.

In his study Van Der Geest (2009) found that some themes related to vehicle inscriptions in Ghana may not directly relate to the car itself but to an important life event. For example a lorry driver commented that a popular politician and transport entrepreneur had many cars in Accra. When Rawlins came to power he went on exile in England, suddenly all his cars carried the inscription *I shall return*.

In Europe, Gardner (1995) observes that although transport literature is used in Europe to express political and commercial information, its usage is unpopular because of the socio-economic and political peculiarities of Europe that is totally different from countries of North America. He argued that what can be equated with transport literature is the presence of bumper sticker on almost all vehicles that indicate the country of origin and vehicles on international traffic. He also argued that aggressive use of transport literature for exclusive political, religious or ethnic sentiments is not evident particularly in the United Kingdom.

In North America and specifically the United States several studies were conducted to examine the use and meaning of transport literature. Studies conducted by (Schwab, 1952, Hanner, 2000, Levine, 2000 and Baker, 2011) lead to the portrait of America as a nation of people using automobiles in expressing views, sharing frustrations, offering perceived insights, solution or wisdom. The messages are also expressions of personal philosophy, political anger and outrage, religious conviction, parental pride, sexual preference, personal humour, ethnic identity, class resentment and social comment.

Baker (2011) argued that earliest bumper stickers were substantially used to advertise tourist's attraction, as public safety initiatives, political campaigns, as personal viewpoints, advertising radio and television stations and as documentation of social and historical events and trends.

In South America transport literature as observed by Burke (1996) is an established popular culture especially in Brazil, Argentina and Mexico since early 1960s. He noticed that a road traveller to or in Brazil specifically will hardly fail to spot painted messages and mottos on the back of commercial transport vehicles. He argued that most of these mottos and messages serve utilitarian functions because they provide safety initiatives such as *keep your distance*, *maximum velocity*, *phone numbers*. They also serve as channel for advertising products and services offered by individuals, corporate organizations, institutions, and governments.

According to Salgado (2012) Israel is one of the countries in the Middle East where bumper stickers as transport literature is extensively used to advance political allegiance and orientation. He observed that there is a connection between highlife songs and messages featured on commercial, private and official vehicles in Israel as most of the prominent national hip-hop artists captured the major themes of the messages on bumper stickers. In Israel bumper stickers are essentially used to demonstrate complete and total support to the state authorities and a means of expressing one's level of patriotism and nationalistic commitment.

In Palestine however, the culture of transport literature is equally evident in the multiplicity of the bumper stickers featured on substantial number of commercial, private, and official vehicles. The slogans on the stickers are general reflections of the public opinion of Palestinians on the territorial occupation, the right of the Palestinians refugees, and the denial of human rights in Palestine. Most of the popular bumper sticker slogans in Palestine advocate for peace and the rights of the Palestinians as a people.

It is argued by Salgado (2012) that substantial number of Palestinian transport literature is politically inclined due to the persistent political crisis in the Middle East in which Palestine is a major player. The messages portrayed by vehicle owners/drivers as patriotic and committed to the advocacy for justice, freedom, fairness, and peaceful coexistence.

Theoretical Framework

The espoused the Visual Rhetoric Theory. Visual rhetoric is the term used to describe the study of visual imagery within the discipline of rhetoric. Rhetoric originated in classical Greece and is concerned with the study of the use of symbols to communicate. Rhetoric has been historically associated with communication, but recently there has been a call to include visuals as well. In 1970, the National Conference of Rhetoric conceived the idea that rhetoric can include any human act, process, product, or artifact that may formulate, sustain, or modify attention, perceptions, attitudes, or behavior (Foss, 1997).

Kenneth Burke (Foss, 1997) contributed to indoctrinating visual images into rhetoric and Douglas Ehninger created a modern definition of rhetoric. There was early opposition to adding visual images to rhetoric: There was concerns that rhetoricians would not know enough about visuals to properly include it. Some thought that visuals were not an inappropriate medium to include with rhetoric because they can be easily misinterpreted (Foss, 1997).

The reasons why visuals in rhetoric succeed include:

1. The appeal of visual imagery to modern culture (example television)
2. The understanding that visuals provide a gateway to other human experiences not yet explored with communication/symbols
3. A desire for greater understanding of rhetoric theory and application

Visual rhetoric now refers to a visual object or artifact and a perspective on the study of visual data.

Visual Rhetoric as a Communicative Artifact

It can include any actual image rhetors can piece together from other visual symbols for communication. Not every visual object can be used for visual rhetoric; here are three prerequisites to determine a visual object's eligibility.

1. Symbolic action; must be able to transcend being a mere image and represent something else
2. Human intervention; humans give meaning to a visual object
3. Presence of an audience; you must be communicating to someone, even yourself.

Visual Rhetoric may also constitute a theoretical perspective that involves the analysis of the symbolic or communicative aspects of visual rhetoric. The field of visual rhetoric is vast and multifaceted because visual communicators can be interpreted in a variety of ways. It is impossible to narrow any component of visual rhetoric to a theory; you can merely have the choice of the method of viewing it.

Rhetorical perspective is also characterized by attention to three aspects of visual images:

- I. Nature of an image; it involves attention to presented elements and suggested elements
- II. Function of the image
- III. Evaluation; how we choose to assess the image.

Deductive Application of the Rhetorical to the Visual

Scholars can use a rhetorical perspective to visual imagery to illustrate, explain, or investigate rhetorical constructs. Inductive exploration of the visual to generate the rhetorical. Another application of rhetorical perspective on visual imagery is to analyze the features of an image to create rhetorical theory in light of distinct characteristics of the image

Methodology

This study is a qualitative research which is less concerned with generating or providing an extensive perspective (producing findings that can be generalized more widely) than providing intensive insights into complex human and social phenomena in specific circumstance.

The study adopted Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as its primary method of scientific inquiry.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an experiential qualitative research approach developed specifically within psychology. It is now widely used by researchers in health, clinical and social psychology particularly in the United Kingdom. It is also being used by researchers in human and social sciences, as well as in media and cultural communication. The method is essentially concerned with understanding lived experiences and with how participants make sense of their experiences. In other words it is centrally concerned with the meanings which those experiences hold for the participants (Deacon, D. et al, 2007). Most IPA is conducted using intensive qualitative research approach such as in-depth interview, focused group or observation (Baran and Davis, 2012).

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all the religious logos, symbols, signs, graphics and visual messages displayed on public transport vehicles and all owners/drivers of public transport vehicles with a textual or visual message displayed on it in Kano state, Nigeria. Owners/drivers of vehicles with textual or visual messages are selected because of the need to interpret and understand the socio-psychological or cultural contexts of producing the messages. In theory all transport literature are produced with the culture and socio-political contexts of which they are a part.

Sampling Technique

IPA studies are conducted in small sample sizes because it is aimed at providing comprehensive analysis about the perception and understanding of a particular group rather than making a more general claim. Smith (1996) observed that IPA researchers usually use purposive sampling technique to generate a fairly homogeneous sample for which the research question will be significant.

Thus small samples generated more informally and organically were used than those typically used in quantitative research so as not to preclude the intensive analysis needed in qualitative studies (Silverman,

2008). As obtainable in qualitative tradition samples in this study are considered as illustrative of broader social and cultural practices rather than as strictly and generally representative.

Instruments of Data Collection

The study employed semi structured face to face in-depth interview and face to face focused group discussion (group interviews) as the instruments for collecting the primary data.

The in-depth interviews were held with eight public transport vehicle owners who have been in the transportation business for ten years. The researcher posits that this period is both sufficient and adequate to provide the vehicle owners with a proper understanding of the dynamics, trends and challenges of the business. These experiences may affect the pattern and selection of the textual and visual messages used to reflect social history and identity,

The interviewees were selected from five national motor parks in Kano. These are *Dawanau, Mariri, Naibawa, New Road and Kofar Wambai*. These parks are purposively selected because they are national motor parks hosting vehicles that operate on inter and intra state services.

Face to face focus group otherwise known as group interviews were conducted with two groups of eight drivers in each of the five motor parks identified. Drivers who have been in the job for ten years were selected to form membership of each group, the period is assumed to be enough for the drivers to accrue multiple experience and proper understanding of the dynamics, trends, prospects and challenges of transportation which shape the pattern and selection of the textual and visual message used.

These instruments allow the researcher and the participants to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants' responses and the investigator is able to probe interesting and important areas which arise.

Method of Data Analysis

The primary data generated were analysed using Phenomenological Analysis technique. It is an approach to the analysis of qualitative data which centres on the discovery of meaning of events and texts in a specified context (historical, social and cultural) (Smith, 1996).

The strategy forms an opposite to those research methodologies which stress objectivity and independence of interpretation in the formation of knowledge. This approach enables the researcher to elicit an in-depth meaning of human practices, culture, works of art and texts. The researcher used constant comparative analysis to compare the data generated from the interviews and focus group sessions so as to develop conceptualization of the possible relation between various pieces of data.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis of the data generated is segmented into two sections based on the research questions as follows.

What is the purpose of the religious logos and symbols featured on public transport vehicles in Kano?

Purpose generally denotes an anticipated outcome that is intended or guided by an organized social action or decision. It indicates what someone hopes to accomplish by indulging into a specified social action.

In an attempt to discuss, identify and interpret the purposes of the various religious textual and visual messages displayed on Public Transport Vehicles (PTVs) in Kano, the data from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) held with drivers of PTVs and In-depth Interview held with transport entrepreneurs in Kano revealed that most of the messages are ambiguous and enigmatic because their meanings or purposes are associated to a particular social or personal context unknown to the audience. From the primary data generated the following purposes of the visual messages featured on PTVs in Kano are identified:

Talismanic Visual Messages

These are religious visuals, signs and symbols featured on public transport vehicles. They include portraits of religious sectarian leaders, religious symbols and signs. In their individual responses to the question on the purposes of religious visual messages, the participants in the FGD and in-depth interview reported that apart from textual messages visual religious messages also featured on transport vehicles as means of invoking the intercession of spiritual powers for defense, protection and prosperity as well as for the construction of religious identity.

Five out of the eight transport entrepreneurs acknowledged that portraits of religious sectarian leaders such as *Sheikh Ahmad Tijjani*, *Ibrahim Inyass*, *Nasir Kabara*, *Sharif Sani*, and *Ibrahim Zakzaky* featured on their vehicles to serve as protective mechanisms against evil and also as means of invoking stability and prosperity. Also, Islamic symbols and signs such as crossed swords, Mosques, date tree and Al-Buraq (the winged horse that carried Prophet Muhammad SAW on his night journey) featured on transport vehicles as generic symbols of Islam and to seek for the blessings of the symbols and construct religious identity.

A transport entrepreneur clarifies this argument in an interview held at his residence in Wudil on 30th July 2014. He explained:

All my buses feature the portrait of either Sheikh Ahmad Tijjani or Ibrahim Inyass because essentially am a Muslim, I adhere to the Tijjaniyya doctrine and I believe that their spiritual faithfulness can serve as a protective mechanism against all contingencies.



Figure 1 showing Islamic Visual Symbols for protection and religious identity

At Gaya on 5th August, 2014 a transport entrepreneur who participated in an in-depth interview reported that the primary concern for most entrepreneurs is the fear of uncertainty which serves as the major challenge to their success and stability in business. He explained:

You may or may not be conscious of the evil or enemy but certainly some people are plotting evil against you. So the only option is to seek for the intervention of spiritual or divine power to protect you and guarantee your success and prosperity. This can only be achieved by the use of religious or talismanic logos and symbols to overcome all difficulties and challenges. I believe that Allah is supreme and can intervene and stabilize all conditions. This is the moral basis of featuring religious and talismanic textual messages on PTVs in Kano. This faithfulness however has openly established my religious identity as a Muslim.

Earlier at new road Motor Park on 27th July, 2014 a Christian transport entrepreneur reported that symbols such as the cross, portrait of Jesus Christ, portrait of Virgin Mary are used as a Christian means of protection and success. He stressed:

Christian signs and symbols are featured by many Christian transport entrepreneurs to solicit for divine intervention and intercession especially in difficult times and conditions beyond human control. The cross signifies the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ to humanity whoever believe in this, Christ will be his saviour in this life and the hereafter. That is why we feature the Christian cross on our vehicles to seek for cover with the blood of Jesus against any evil and to be identified as Christians.

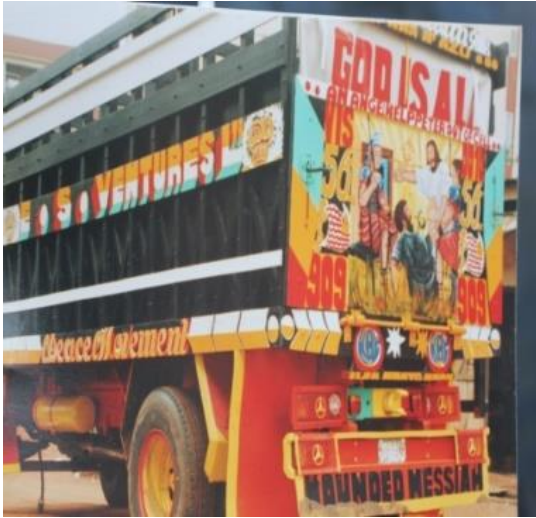


Figure 2 showing Christian Visual Message for protection and religious identity

Another Christian participant during the FGD held with drivers in New Road Motor Park on 23rd June, 2014 explained:

Biblical signs and symbols are used on transport vehicles as a form of spiritual or divine protection from enemies, witches, wizard and all forms of evil. In this business anything can happen; accidents, armed robbery attack, mischief from mechanics etc. So as a Christian seeking Jesus intervention is the only way out. Sometimes the attack could be from your friends or even relatives who do not want your success in life. These symbols also indicate the religious identity of the driver as a Christian.

Apart from seeking spiritual or supernatural intervention portraits of religious leaders such as Sheik Ibrahim Inyass, Sheik Ahmad Tijjani, Sheik Nasir Kabara, Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, Jesus Christ and Virgin Marry and other religious symbols are used by transport entrepreneurs to construct their religious or sectarian identity.

In an interview held with an entrepreneur at New Road Motor Park on 27th July, 2014 he explained:

The Christian cross is not only use for protective or prosperous measures but also for the identification of the vehicle, entrepreneur and business with Christianity and its spiritual doctrines. Whoever sees the symbol of a cross will know that the vehicle belongs to a Christian or the driver is a Christian.

All the Muslim transport entrepreneurs interviewed agreed independently that Islamic symbols are used by entrepreneurs to establish their religious or sectarian inclination or adherent to a particular doctrine in

Islam. This is exemplified by an entrepreneur interviewed on 22th July, 2014 at Kofar Wambai Motor Park he explained:

As a Muslim and an advocate of Qadiriyya doctrine I display the portrait of Sheikh Nasir Kabara or the present apostle of the doctrine Sheikh Qaribullah on my vehicles especially the buses and taxis to construct my religious identity as a Muslim and sectarian sympathy as adherent to Qadiriyya sect.

Another transport entrepreneur illustrated the claim in an interview conducted on 26th July, 2014 at Mariri Motor Park. He explained:

All my buses feature the portrait of the spiritual leader of the Shia movement, Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, to identify myself as an adherent to that religious or sectarian dogma.

It could be discerned that the use of religious symbols, logos, signs and graphics on PTVs in Kano are meant to construct the religious/sectarian identity of the entrepreneurs/drivers and to seek for divine or supernatural protection in a business where life and property are highly unsecured. Quranic and Biblical verses, portraits of spiritual faithful, and religious symbols are very popular as acknowledged by the transport entrepreneurs and drivers. Portraits of religious leaders such as Sheik Ibrahim Inyass, Sheik Ahmad Tijjani, Sheik Nasir Kabara, Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, Jesus Christ, cross, palm tree, sword and Virgin Mary are portrayed on vehicles in Kano.

Findings of the study

1. The study found that the purpose and meaning of the religious transport literature is to seek for divinely or talismanic intervention to defend and protect the entrepreneur from all forms of evil attack as well as to invoke success, stability and prosperity for the entrepreneur.
2. The religious transport literature is also used to construct religious identity and establish sectarian sympathy. This is the apparent connection between the religious logos, symbols and the identity of the entrepreneurs/drivers as adherents and champions of religion. This indicates the strength and significance of religion in contemporary African society.
3. The study also found that all religious transport literature are produce from socio-cultural contexts with purposes and are shaped by pressure and possibilities generated by the contexts in which they are embedded.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The study concludes that the popular religious signs, symbols and logos featured on public transport vehicles are essentially used to construct the religious identity of the stakeholders and to invoke protection and stability in the business. The culture is an effective means of social communication among transport

stakeholders in Kano state. This realization is in consonance with the findings of Field (1960), Lawuyi (1988), Bunza (2005) and Van Der Geest (2009) who found the popular use of religious textual and visual messages to invoke protection and construct religious identity.

The study recommends an examination of writers, meanings, purposes, social contexts and audiences of the popular textual and visual messages on public transport vehicles in Nigeria. The study also recommends the formal utilization of public transport vehicles as means of social, political and cultural communication in Nigeria. This will probably improve the quality of the textual/visual messages.

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