



Justice et injustices spatiales, Nanterre 2008

Hypocrisy, spatial (in)justice and youthful 'policing' in northern Nigeria

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In 1999 and 2000, the implementation of *shari'a criminal* codes in twelve states of northern Nigeria brought heated public debate and violent conflicts over the legal bounds of civility and criminality, with armed youths the new agents of 'policing'. The gates of the predominantly Muslim Hausa *gari* (old city) of Kano, and ethnically diverse neighborhoods on the outskirts of the old city, became new points of surveillance as '*yan daba* (urban ward gang members) joined '*yan hisba* (the surveillance and enforcing tier of the *Shari'a* Implementation Committee) to 'police' women, non-Hausa Muslims and Christians. Yet, '*yan daba* diverged from '*yan hisba*, and the reformist *shari'a* state, sometimes violently, over the right to consume alcohol and Indian hemp, to use *tauri* (herbal ritual medicine that prevents injuries from weapons), and to enter spirit possession rituals, criticizing the hypocrisy of reformist Muslims on these issues. They joined Muslims and Christians, living outside the gates of the old city, to argue for individual human rights, and cultural rights to self-determination, challenging Kano's *shari'a* state and the United States government as democratic instruments for protecting individuals, and their political and human rights. '*Yan daba* evoked the question of 'authenticity' and practiced 'truth' versus 'hypocrisy' in public evaluations of Kano's *shari'a* state and of the United States' War on Terrorism and War on Iraq, focusing on the visible control of public space and resources. Contrary to the premises of Islamic re-traditionalization *and* revolutionary theses, I address the spatial histories of 'truth' among '*yan daba* and '*yan hisba*, and the geographies of (in)justice and accountability that have emerged through youthful vigilance. I focus on youths' surveillance and the power of visual, public culture in ongoing struggles for the codification of rights, privileges and protection in state, national and international law and practice. This includes an analysis of the ways in which media and social movements, particularly religious, economic and gender networks, organize communal responses to spatial (in)justice in the city of Kano.