

# JALIYA

celebrating African and Caribbean Folklore  
Issue Four - April 2023



# Kontigi Man

Honouring Dan Maraya  
and Hausa Folklore

compiled and edited by Natty Mark Samuels

# Editorial

## Dear Reader

We know the day of his passing, but the date of his birth has not been recorded; so I take this month's issue of JALIYA, to celebrate Dan Maraya. There are instruments that I associate with one person; for melodica its Augustus Pablo; seperewa, Osei Korankye; when I think of kontigi, I think of Dan Maraya. Of one or three strings, he played the former. From the Hausa of northern Nigeria; traders, scholars, masters of leather working and indigo dying.

Orphaned during early childhood, hence the moniker Dan Maraya of Jos – the Orphan Boy of Jos – he became father to many; as mentor, advisor and philanthropist. I think of him as a wise man of wide renown; the evening exodus of daily occurrence, to be in his presence. I see him being able to hold his corner during discourse, with a member of the elite, an academic, or a man in the street. A true master of storytelling, he could play multiple roles in one song, imitating the voices of a female, a child or a man. Another thing that endears him to me, is his lauding of the everyday person, as well as the emir: he chose who he would praise in song. I bask in the knowledge that his most popular song – *Wak'ar Karen Moto* – celebrates the driver's mate of the African taxi.

As well paying homage to him, we look at the tales of the Hausa. Introducing characters such as Gizo the trickster spider; Dila the Jackal, the wise one; Zankallala the diminutive hero, saviour of a boy from Dodo the monster; the Girringas, the multi-headed monsters and Buzuzu the beetle. Because of Rootical Folklore – celebrating African and Caribbean Orality through flora – I have to mention the Iskoki spirits, because they choose to reside in tamarind trees. I wonder if Dan Maraya had a favourite character.

He received a doctorate from Jos University and a Peace Medal from The UN. I give thanks for the man who dreamt and worked for a one Nigeria; using one string and one voice, he sent out that essential message of One Love.

***Jaliya* is a Mande term for their bardic tradition. The jali is storyteller, musician, historian, geneologist, tutor, advisor and envoy. Jalimuso is the female counterpart of Jali.**

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**Cover photograph of Dan Maraya from *The Guardian Nigeria News***

His death signals the exit of a great icon of African traditional music, a creative innovator in the Hausa musical genre and a great performer par excellence. He was a rare African soloist and instrumentalist who created a niche for himself in the Nigerian nationalist environment of the mid twentieth century. He was able to sustain the same over the decades, through his originality and creative genius...

**Akin Adejuwon**  
**Artistic director, National Troupe of Nigeria**

He was indeed a great musician whose place in the music firmament in Nigeria will be difficult to fill.

**Benson Idonije**  
**Broadcaster and writer**

As an artist who created a major brand for himself, he will be greatly missed not only by his biological family but also a network of other communities whose lives have been touched by his performances. Among these include fellow artists and the clan of teachers and scholars of oral performance whose job it will be to keep memories of Dan Maraya Jos's art permanently etched in the vibrant art academy. Indeed, a major cultural icon has departed but his legacies will remain with us."

**Dr Austine Ananze Akpuda**  
**Lecturer and poet**

We shared many moments. He was to me a brother and a friend. I am devastated. But I am proud he lived a very useful life, transforming society through music and silently through Islamic endeavours. May Allah grant him Aijannatul Firdaus.

**Ladan Salihu**  
**Close friend and Director General of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria**

Dan Maraya's death came to me as a shock and I want to use this medium to condole with the Dan Maraya family, the government and the people of Plateau state and all Nigerians over the irreparable loss.

**Yakubu Dogara**  
**Speaker of the House of Representatives**



from *Wikipedia*

# Kontigi

# Kontigi Man Chant

## **Spoken**

As well as the emir and elite,  
He sang of us also,  
Praising the little conquerors.

## **Chant**

Dan Maraya,  
Everyone's father,  
Sponsored young scholars:  
Come chant Kontigi Man with me.

Dan Maraya;  
Built a home for the elders,  
Funded pilgrims to Mecca:  
Come chant Kontigi Man with me.

## **Spoken**

So many prayers he sent for peace,  
Onward to unity,  
Believing in one Nigeria.

## **Chant**

Come chant Kontigi Man with me.



from *Amazon*

# Bring them all, Storyteller

You know how it goes Storyteller. Old L stepping in whenever he wants to, dragging that same old ragged sack behind him. So let the tale that is told tonight, be a long one. If you don't finish tonight, that's alright. Please continue the telling, till my eyelids meet and close; and Old L has to go elsewhere, taking another sack of unwanted things, to somebody else. So please extend the story, Master of the Spoken Word: bring them all in.

Bring Gizo the spider,  
And the lion called Jaki.  
In the tamarind tree,  
Live the spirits called Iskoki.  
Bring them all, Storyteller,  
Dila the jackal too;  
So he can sprinkle a little wisdom,  
Around the moonlit fire.

And the sacks Old L carries around are weighty, heavy with people and time. And to each presence he gatecrashes, he brings to them a different sack, emblazoned with the soul of the host. And he brings the unrequested bundle, when you least want to receive it. So I beg you, bring them all in, all our favourite characters.

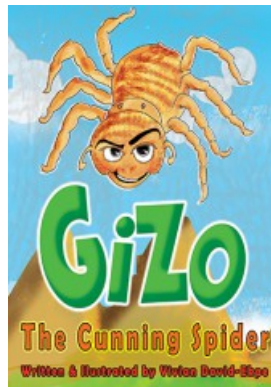
Giwa the elephant,  
Kura the hyena.  
That heron called Zalbe,  
The cock known as Zakara.  
Bring them all, Storyteller,  
Dila the jackal too;  
So he can sprinkle a little wisdom,  
Around the moonlit fire.

As time rolls on, we hope not to make additions to the ragged sack, overloaded as it is. And that the visits by Old L, will become less frequent. But there is enough inside the sack already, to keep him coming back. So while he's here, bring something else to the table.

Jimina the ostrich  
And Zaki the donkey.  
Dorina the hippo,  
The camel called Rakumi.  
Bring them all, Storyteller,  
Dila the jackal too;  
So he can sprinkle a little wisdom,  
Around the moonlit fire.

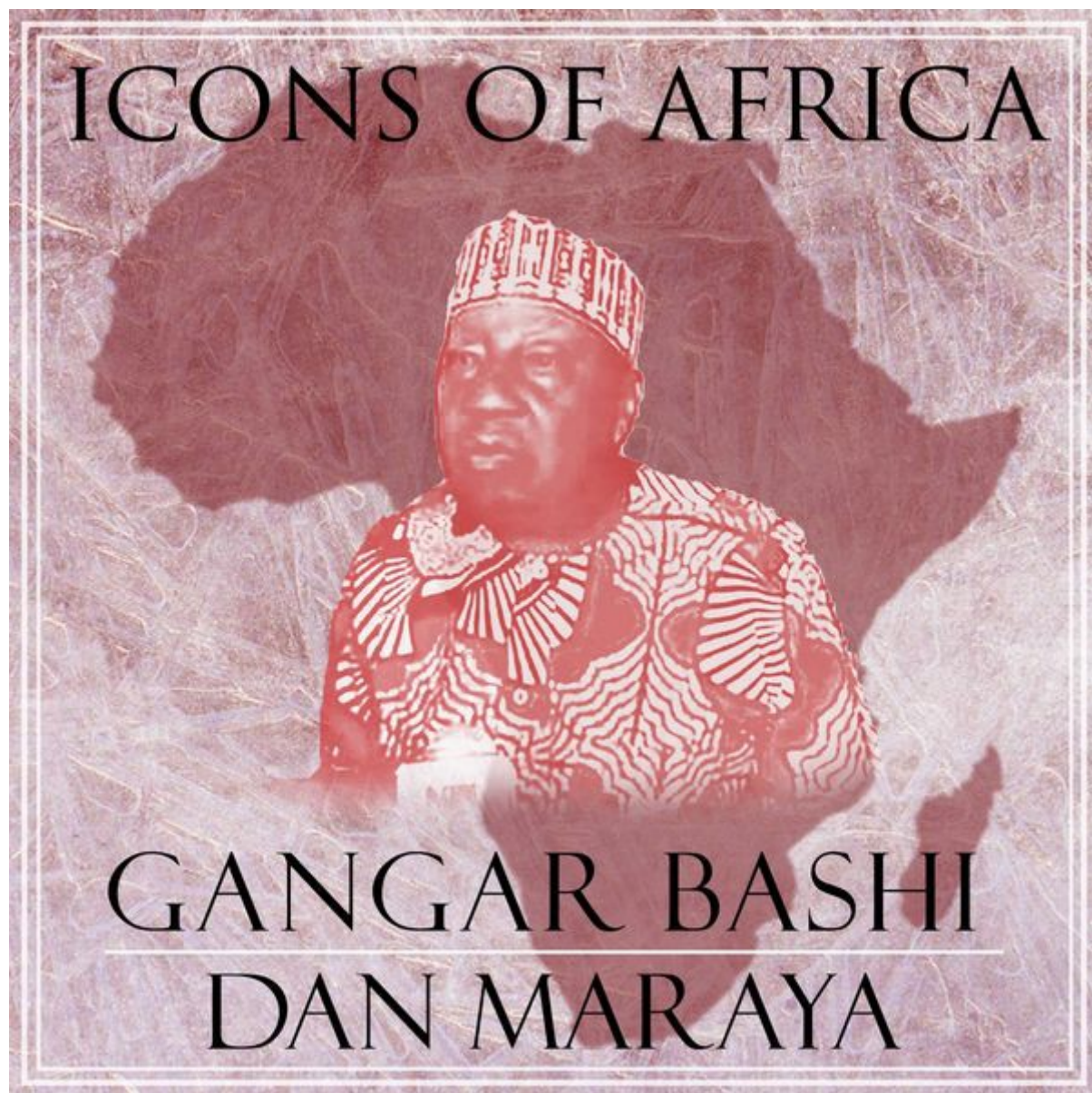
There are things eternal, that do not come with an erasure; Old L knows that, as well as you and I. We go on, sagging inside, externally straight-backed. Old Loneliness stepped in this evening, so I ask of you counteraction.

Bring Damusa the leopard,  
And the crow Hankaka.  
The wildcat Muzuri,  
Plus the dog Hamiziga.  
Bring them all, Storyteller,  
Dila the jackal too;  
So he can sprinkle a little wisdom,  
Around the moonlit fire.



from *Okada Books*





from *Qobuz*

One of Nigeria's foremost Hausa musicians, poet, philosopher and philanthropist, Dr Adamu Dan Maraya Jos has answered Allah's call about an hour ago

**Ladan Salihu**  
**Close friend and Director General of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria**

Due to his immense musical talent and traditional literary prowess the university decided to confer on him the honorary Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The late Dan Maraya proved to be a great ambassador of University of Jos, Plateau, Nigeria and Africa as a whole and was celebrated in almost every continent of the world.

**Professor Hayward Mafuyai**  
**Vice Chancellor, University of Jos**

...becoming an icon of our traditional music and custodian of its culture and tradition.

**Atiku Abubakar**  
**Former Vice President**

A colossal loss to the world of art, entertainment and humanity in general. He was a musician with a unique character and talent.

**Liz Asabe Ikilama**  
**Lawyer**

An icon and beacon has gone. May the family you left behind continue to keep the torch you've lit burning.

I remember the name from younger days. May he rest in paradise.

So sad. Grew up always hearing him been mentioned as a great northern musician by my father, even though we're from the south.

**Three comments from *Gistmania***

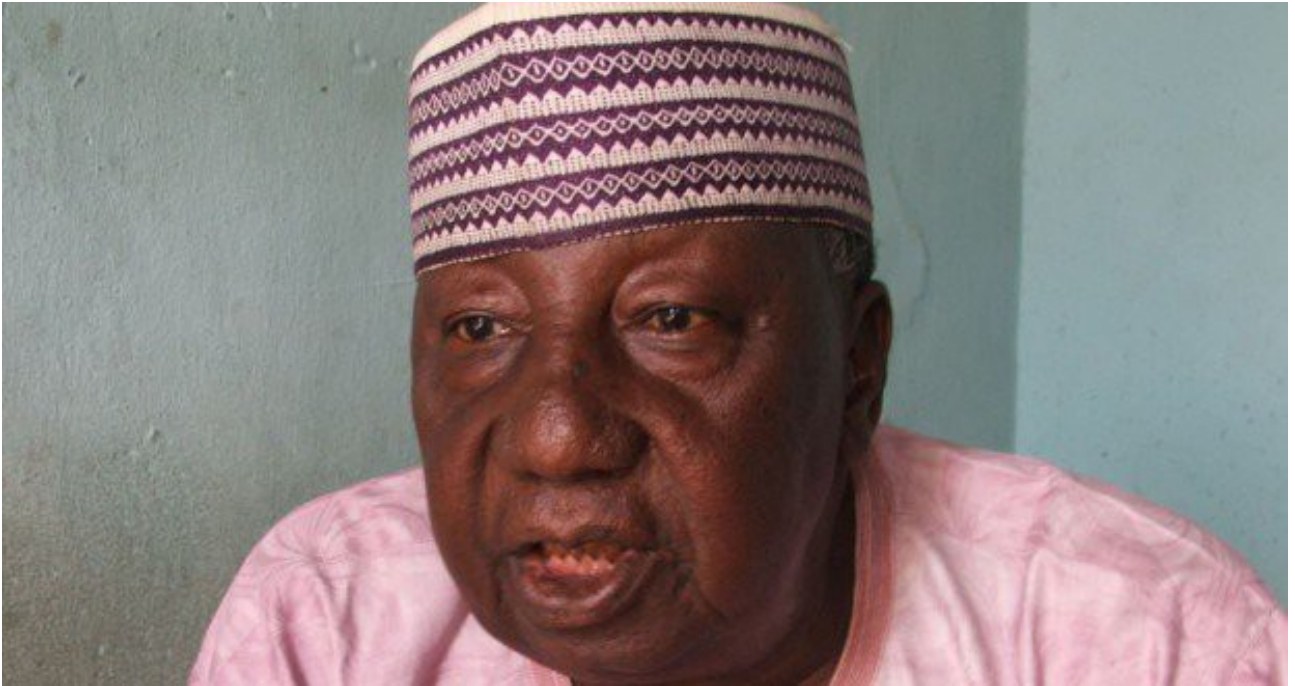
The late Dan Maraya has written his name in gold in the annals of Nigeria's history as a talented musician, poet and a philosopher. His music was full of wisdom which will not only outlive him but will continue to be a reference point for generations to come. Pray God Almighty to give his family the fortitude to bear the loss.

**Yakubu Dogara**  
**Speaker of the House of Representatives**

# Children of Agadez

Excitement abates,  
As the camel train eases down for the night,  
After bringing salt and dates from Bilma.

But a new, quieter stirring arises,  
As a group of children,  
Watched over by an elder and the moon,  
Learn a lesson about truth,  
Through the story of Gizo and the Lizard.



from *Business Hallmark*

# Torch of Darkness

Come Buzuzu,  
Bring the magic of bioluminescence.  
Pass over my hand,  
So I can guide the children,  
Through the darkening forest;  
Keeping them safe from Dodo  
And all those Girringas:  
Let me be their Torch of Darkness.



*from YouTube*

# Twinkle

## **First Voice**

That's why they twinkle:  
Sparkling with the stories being told.  
    Wrapped up in the telling,  
        Enraptured,  
They shine even brighter.

## **Second Voice**

Ahhh, Moon, you have the largest audience of any storyteller. And what an auditorium!  
Every night, millions gather to hear you, appalled in spangling white. What tale will you  
    tell them tonight?

## **Third Voice**

In Constellation Classroom, the starlets are eager to learn, for a star cannot be thought of  
as dull, when iridescence is the objective. Impatient to shine to their fullest, they're waiting  
    in the evening class, for Elder Celestia to begin his talk.

## **Fourth Voice**

As moonbeams and shooting stars,  
    Somersault across the sky,  
    Red dust embraces orange gas,  
And a dwarf star sits alongside a giant one,  
    To listen again to the Moon,  
        Who offers light,  
So the Hausa can listen again,  
    To how little Zankallala,  
    Defeated gargantuan Dodo.





from RYM



For many years, I have had a special relationship with the great Dan Maraya Jos. I remain a fan of his, mystified by his stupendous talent. He was my friend in all seasons.

Throughout my tenure as president of PMAN up to my present period as Chairman of COSON, Dan Maraya was an unflinching supporter always urging me on. The news of his death has left me numb. Dan Maraya was not just a great talent but an incredibly polished gentleman, humble beyond belief. His yes was his yes and every word of his was a bond.

The last time we were in each other's company was at the COSON Extra Ordinary General Meeting at Lagos Airport Hotel in December 2014. He was hale, hearty and happy. After the meeting, I saw him to the car and we discussed my paying him a visit in Jos. My previous visits to Jos had been very memorable as the great Dan Maraya would be my chauffeur, driving me everywhere and making sure I did not lack anything. Dr Dan Maraya rarely came to Lagos without bringing me fresh fruits and farm products from the plateau. We had a unique likeness for each other.

Nigeria has lost a prodigious talent who for many years held millions spellbound with a voice that caressed different octaves like that of a nightingale. His simple one string instrument from which he created unique rhythms and melodies and the unforgettable lyrics of this incredibly gifted poet will live in our hearts forever. I hope that both the Federal Government and the Plateau State Government will take steps to immortalize this extraordinary Nigerian who brought happiness to many across our nation.

Of course, there will be more musicians who will come and go. There will be more polished gentlemen who will come and go but there will never be another Dan Maraya.

**Chief Tony Okoroji**  
**Chairman Copyright Society of Nigeria**



from *YouTube*

# Chant Zankallala

## **Solo Voice**

They call his name

## **Voices**

Zankallala.

## **Solo Voice**

Wherever he goes

## **Voices**

Zankallala.

## **Solo Voice**

Lavender Waxbill,

Melodius Warbler.

They sing of him

## **Voices**

Zankallala.

## **Solo Voice**

They protect him

## **Voices**

Zankallala.

## **Solo Voice**

Attacking his foes

## **Voices**

Zankallala.

## **Solo Voice**

Tambourine dove,

Woodland kingfisher.

They keep him safe

## **Voices**

Zankallala

## **Solo Voice**

The Dodo can't touch him

## **Voices**

Zankallala.

## **Solo Voice**

No monsters or witches

## **Voices**

Zankallala.

## **Solo Voice**

Indigobird,

Cinnamon Bunting.

They chant his name

## **Voices**

Zankallala



from *Melody Dialogue*

..we lost a hero today but Allah knows best, may his soul rest in peace.

**Ali Nuhu, actor**