

## **Ostentation as Lifestyle? Conspicuous Consumption, Identity and Home Culture in Northern Nigeria**

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In many West African societies immense amounts of industrially manufactured goods are accumulated in women's rooms. The first generation of these objects came from European or Asian centres of production. In Nigeria they began to be manufactured since the early 1950s, made of plastic, tin, enamel and glass. The great attraction of these objects is evident by the fact that nowadays one hardly finds any household without these mass-produced articles.

During several research trips to Kanuri- and Shuwa speaking people in Nigeria, it became evident that those mass products were integrated and 'domesticated', both as prestige articles and objects of daily use. They are arranged in an ostentatious style and exhibited in women's rooms. Quite often this form of conspicuous consumption falls under the Kanuri category of "aulo" – a behaviour that can be described as "to show off even if you can't".

This form of "ostentation" (Simmel 1899) can be found in many areas of Northern Nigerian life. Therefore, the central question of my article will deal with the different reasons for this form of visible consumption of objects, investigate the herewith established possibilities of social differentiation and consider the changes in the association with goods in the women's room.