

PERSPECTIVES ON KANO-BRITISH RELATIONS



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Chapter XII

SUNSET AT DAWN: COLONIAL POLICY AND MUSLIM HAUSA EDUCATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA, 1900 TO 1910.

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Introduction

Viewed in a narrow sense, *literacy* is the ability to comprehend and produce natural language in its written form. A broader definition of literacy encompasses functional notions of literacy tied to the ability to use both written and spoken language to accomplish specific problem-solving and communicative goals arising in the workplace or in conducting transactions within everyday institutions of the community (Venezky, Wagner & Ciliberti, 1990).

This paper pursues a yet broader notion of *literacy*, as that referring to the general semiotic ability of individuals to interpret and to act upon the world within cultural and social communities of practice (see Scribner, 1979, and Wertsch, 1991, for a discussion of relevant perspectives). It situates its arguments within the framework of British colonial interregnum in Northern Nigeria from February 1903 to October 1960 – an interim, which sees the stifling of the indigenous literacy base of the Muslim Hausa, amongst others, in the region.

The broader definition of literacy given in this paper proposes that there is a fundamental connection between language, communication, and everyday cultural activity. In order to participate in such everyday activities, individuals must interpret the cultural and social demands and contexts of activities, and the means of using language to participate effectively in cultural and social activities. This perspective on literacy emerges from the consideration of the social and cognitive roles language and communication play in people's daily lives. This approach to literacy is especially useful for a better understanding of how community members adapt to social environments involving multiple cultural perspectives and multiple languages.

This paper charts the odyssey of Hausa language expressed in Arabic script form called *Ajami* by the Muslim Hausa, although the term *ajami* is an Arabic expression for 'non-pure Arabic'. *Ajami* provides the Muslim Hausa, as well as many other Muslims as we shall see, with

scriptural power to express their thoughts, and thus lay the foundations for an effective indigenous knowledge literacy. It is essentially a Muslim literary and literacy strategy because it derives its direct antecedent from the educational heritage of Islam through reading the Qur'an. The paper finally looks at the effect of the British colonial policies on the development of the ajami script among the Muslim Hausa of Northern Nigeria, with particular reference to Kano.

From Orality to Scripturality

As psychologists and anthropologists were searching for the key that unlocked the secrets of the mind, others were worrying about the mind of a man who lived thousands of years ago. Literates had been enjoying the epic poems of Homer for over two thousand years. With the growing conviction that Homer was illiterate came the nagging question, how could such technically complex poems be composed without writing? Were these poems actually composed by a 'primitive' mind (Egan 1993, 15)? Linguists interested in the technology of writing theorized about writing's effect on primitive thought. Attention turned to the preliterate world.

To help describe this world, the term 'orality' was coined on the analogy of 'literacy' in the hopes that this new term would avoid the implications of failure inherent in the term 'illiteracy.' Unfortunately, as Rosalind Thomas points out, the term is prone to vagueness. It should mean relying entirely on oral communication rather than written. Orality, however, is idealized in the 'noble savage' and has become more than a descriptive tool. Orality now implies a whole mentality or worldview. This idealization has led some to conclude that 'oral culture is innocent, pure, and natural, uncorrupted by the written word . . .' (Thomas 1992, 7). As orality is contrasted with literacy, the question arises, what is literacy? Many different levels of literacy exist. The ability to read a label or fill out a form does not automatically imply an ability to comprehend complex texts. 'The tendency to treat literacy as if it were a monolithic skill may be a modern fallacy' (Thomas 1992, 8-9). Modern fallacy or not, literacy is seen by many as having a major effect on cognitive processes.

Eric Havelock provides one of the best summations of the theory on the effects of literacy on human thought. Beginning with the evolutionary theory of Darwin, Havelock points out that the human capacity for language brought society into existence. With society, came culture. Orality employed two senses, that of hearing and speaking. Writing added the sense of vision. Literacy produced changes in society,

but these changes came to a point of crisis with the introduction of the Greek alphabet because of its 'superior efficiency.' Vision was offered in place of hearing as the means of communication and as the means of storing communication. 'The adjustment that it caused was in part social, but the major effect was felt in the mind and the way the mind thinks as it speaks' (Havelock 1986, 100).

Literacy wiped out the pressure to store language in memorizable form. As humans no longer needed to spend energy memorizing, their psychic energy was released for other purposes. There was a push to record their thoughts as well as epic poetry, but it was no longer necessary to record these thoughts in story form so that they could be retrieved from memory. The removal of the narrative pressure brought a choice of subjects other than people. Abstract thought, which had existed to a limited degree in orality, brought with it the ability to treat topics as a subject of discourse. 'As language became separated visually from the person who uttered it, so also the person, the source of the language, came into sharper focus and the concept of selfhood was born' (Havelock 1986, 113). As readers composed a language of theory, they realized they were employing new mental energies of a different quality from those employed in orality. Pressure arose to give this mental operation a separate identity. These mental processes became known as the intellect (Havelock 1986, 115).

Havelock's premises are extensions of the theories of Jack Goody and Walter Ong. Goody, on field trips to Africa, had recorded the language and observed the social behavior of some non-literate societies. Although these societies had contact with literacy through Islam, Goody minimized Arabic's influence. According to Goody and Ian Watt, literacy radically affected culture. They eloquently described the transmission of cultural elements as "a long chain of interlocking conversations between members of the group. Thus, all beliefs and values, all forms of knowledge, are communicated between individuals in face-to-face contact" (Goody and Watt 1968, 29). The "savage mind" had been "domesticated" through literacy because such written tools as the list, the formula, and the table could be used in problem-raising and problem-solving (Goody 1977, 162).

Walter Ong lists specific characteristics of thought and expressions in primarily oral cultures. He believes that thought is additive rather than subordinate, aggregative rather than analytic. It is redundant, traditionalist, and close to life. It is sometimes antagonistic, sometimes

filled with praise. It is empathetic, homeostatic, and situational rather than abstract (Ong 1982).

On the other hand, one researcher, Jiajie Zhang, points out that writing, like beads on an abacus, is an external representation that serves as a cue to retrieve items from memory. External representations serve other functions besides that of memory aids. Diagrams, graphs, and pictures can affect decision-making and problem solving. According to Zhang, external representations need not be re-represented as an internal mental model in order to be involved in problem-solving activities. These representations can directly activate perceptual operations. Thus, in concert with the internal representations, external representations facilitate problem-solving behavior (Zhang 1997, 180-187). This does not mean that the basic cognitive processes change, but that new resources enable the cognitive processes to work more efficiently. Writing, as an external representation that facilitates memory and problem solving, can also inhibit communication (Olson 1996, 100). Body language, for example, is an important key to communication. Oral communication one-on-one facilitates personal relationships and aids in socialization. Those who rely on writing for memory have difficulty negotiating in cultures where oral methods such as proverbs are the tool of choice for expressing cultural wisdom.

Even though literacy provides access to more information, it is the culture that determines what it will do with that information.¹ Western culture uses literacy to advance its values of science, rationalism, and secularism. Other cultures, such as Japanese, Chinese, and Korean, though highly literate, value social relations and holistic concepts (Choi, Nisbett, and Smith 1997). West African "non-literate" communities share these same Asian values and have used traditional non-literate methods to teach them to their children for thousands of years.

A survey of the relationship between orality, as in spoken Arabic Qur'anic text and scripturality, as in an attempt to use the Arabic script to express a language other than Arabic, reveals a remarkable degree of

For more arguments, supported with field data, about non-literate orality and literacy, see Thompson, LaNette Weiss, 1998. *The Nonliterate and the Transfer of Knowledge in West Africa*. Thesis was presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

adaptation² of this methodology – and also reveals how the colonial machinery, coupled with Christian missionary strategies, succeeded in destroying the scriptural bases of Muslim peoples from Africa, through Europe and Central Asia.

The invention of devices for representing language is inextricably related to issues of literacy; that is, to issues of who can use the script and what it can be used for. Competence with written language, both in reading and writing, is known as literacy. When a large number of individuals in a society are competent in using written language to serve these functions, the whole society may be referred to as a literate society.

Although the uses of writing reflect a host of religious, political, and social factors and hence are not determined simply by orthography, two dimensions of the script are important in understanding the growth of literacy: learnability and expressive power. Learnability refers to the ease with which the script can be acquired, and expressive power refers to the resources of the script for unambiguously expressing the full range of meanings available in the oral language. These two dimensions are inversely related to each other. The ease of acquisition of a script is an important factor in determining whether a script remains the possession of an elite or whether it can be democratized, that is, turned into a possession of ordinary people. Democratization of a script appears to have more to do with the availability of reading materials and of instruction in reading and the perceived relevance of literacy skills to the readers. Even in a literate society, most readers learn to read only a narrow range of written materials; specialized materials, such as those pertaining to science or government, remain the domain of elites who have acquired additional education.

² For more details of the development of Arabic script in West African Muslim languages, see the following pioneer works: Mohamed Chtatou, 1992. *Using Arabic script in writing the languages of the peoples of Muslim Africa*. Rabat : Institute of African Studies, 1992; Addis, R.T., 1963. *A study on the writing of Mandinka in Arabic script*. [S.l. : s.n.], 1963; Dobronravine, Nikolai, "Hausa Ajami Literature and Script: Colonial Innovations and Post-Colonial Myths in Northern Nigeria" at Institute For the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA): International Colloquium, 16 - 19 May 2002: *Muslim Responses To Colonial Rule in Africa*; Dobronravine, Nikolai, A. 1999. *Arabic Script Written Tradition of West Africa*. St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg State University. This book is the first systematic attempt at describing the Arabic-script written tradition in West African languages.

Historically, the rise of cities coincided with the development of a script suitable for serving bureaucratic purposes. Later, the scientific and philosophical tradition that originated in classical Greece and that prevails in the West to this day developed along with the alphabet. Some writers have argued that the alphabet was a decisive factor in the cultural development of the West, while others have claimed that the rise of literacy and the decline of 'orality' in the later Middle Ages were fundamental to the cultural flowering known as the Renaissance.

Whereas oral language is learned quite independently of whether it is taught or not, literacy is largely dependent upon teaching. While some local or indigenous scripts are taught relatively informally by parents or someone who knows the script well, widespread or universal literacy is dependent upon schooling. Indeed, in many societies schooling and literacy have been almost synonymous. Schools in such diverse places as Sumer and China developed concurrently with the development of a full writing system and were concerned primarily with teaching first adults and later children to read and write. And it is inconceivable that modern, technological societies could survive without schools to develop high levels of literacy.

Further, there is a general belief that literacy leads to logical and analytic modes of thought, general and abstract uses of language, critical and rational thought.³ In politics, literacy is said to be necessary for governments to function adequately and provide individuals with social equity. Literacy produces people who are innovative, achievement-orientated, productive, politically aware, more globally aware and less likely to commit a crime, and more likely to take education seriously. The common popular and scholarly conception that literacy has such powerful effects as these constitutes what Graff (1979) refers to as a 'literacy myth'.

There is a tendency to believe strongly in the powerful and redeeming effects of literacy, especially in times of complex social and economic crises (Goody & Watt, 1963; Havelock, 1963, 1982, 1986; Olson, 1977; Ong, 1982). Work on literacy has often ignored the language and the literacy skills of people in rural areas and the ways in which school-based literacy has often served to perpetuate social inequality while claiming, via the literacy myth, to mitigate it (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). This is especially true in a colonial setting, where the colonized are forced to accept the 'Master' language. It has been assumed for centuries that literacy gives rise

to higher-order cognitive abilities, to more analytic and logical thought than is typical of oral cultures (Musgrove, 1982). This almost common-sense assumption is disputed by Scribner & Cole (1981) in their classical work on the Vai, an ethnic group in Liberia. Among the Vai, literacy and schooling do not always go together. There are three types of literacy among the Vai: English literacy acquired in formal school settings, an indigenous Vai script (syllabic, not alphabetic) transmitted outside institutional settings among peers and family with no connection with western-style schooling, and an Arabic form of literacy. Each of these literacies is tied to a particular context of use. English literacy is associated with government and education, Vai literacy is used primarily for keeping commercial and personal records, and for letters, while Arabic literacy is used for reading, writing and memorising the Qur'an.

In this paper, I intend to show how the Muslim Hausa of Northern Nigeria (and other parts of West Africa, especially Niger and Ghana) have made the transition from *orality* to *scripturality* and eventually *literacy* by associating mnemonic graphic coding within their cultural environment to represent phonological sounds and thus enable them to manipulate an acquired literary script effectively to express the Hausa language. This resulted in an indigenously-adapted script, the *ajami*, derived from Arabic script, and used as the main curriculum for teaching, initially Qur'anic recitation, and subsequently general literacy to the Muslim Hausa. This transition, however, is not peculiar to Hausa Muslims. It was developed wherever Islam had a stronghold.

From Scripturality to Literacy

In the 7th century, Arabic, immortalized in the language of the Holy Qur'an, and Islam became inseparable. As Islam spread through North Africa, then through the Iberian Peninsula and eastward, from the Arabian heartland, to the heart of Asia, the tongue of the Arabs as a part of the new religion, rapidly spread. In a few decades, it became a leading world language and the intellectual medium, which united most of the civilized world.

Soon enough the Arabic *script* began to be adopted by the languages of the people who had been converted to Islam. In a few centuries, Kurdish, Persian, Pashto, Turkish, a number of tongues in the Indian sub-continent and languages like Berber in North Africa and Spain began to utilize the Arabic script. Its embracing by a great number of non-Arab Muslim tongues formed a cultural boundary, which demarcated the Islamic world from other lands.

Later, a good number of the Malayo-Polynesian dialects, the vernaculars of the Muslim peoples in West Africa like Fulfulde (Peul) and in East Africa, Somali and Swahili; some of the languages of Central Asia like Tadjik, Tartar and Uzbek; and in the Indian sub-continent such idioms as Kashmiri, Punjabi, Sindhi and Urdu; and a few Slavonic tongues in Europe, adopted the Arabic script. Table 1 shows the ways in which, the Arabic script was used by various Muslim communities with mutually non-legible languages.

Table 1: Similarity and Solidarity: Arabic script through the Languages⁴

Language	Original Expression
Arabic	أنا قادر على أكل الزجاج و هذا لا يؤلمني
English	"I can eat glass, and I will still be fine!"
Hausa	"Ina iya taunar gilashi, kuma in gama lafiya."...
Language	Ajamized Translation
Hausa	إنا إي تونر غلّاش كمّ إن عمّا لافيّا
Urdu	میں کانس کھا سکتا ہوں اور مجھے تکلیف نہیں ہوتی۔
Pashto	پوروخ هن ام هغه، هاش بل پوروخ شيشه خورم.
Farsi	من می توانم بدون احساس درد شیشه بخورم.
Turkish	زمن قوط یررض الثب مرولب هی یماج

The use of the Arabic script was well established in all Muslim lands until contested by the Spanish Reconquista and later by modern colonialism in Asia and Africa. With the European conquerors came

Source: <http://www.columbia.edu/kermit/utf8.html>, which details a project, aimed at finding out how different phonetic characters can be used to express the sentence, "I can eat glass". Full details of the project are located at this site: <http://hcs.harvard.edu/~igp/glass.html>.

missionaries and colonial administrators who, in the main, looked with disfavour on the Arabic language and its script. They reasoned that by doing away with the Arabic alphabet, the language of the Qur'an would become incomprehensible to the people, dividing them from their brother Muslims - hence, easier to control.

However, long before the colonialists came to Asia and Africa, the language of the Qur'an was already under attack. Spain banned Arabic soon after the fall of Granada but the Moriscos, former Muslims forcibly converted to Christianity, continued to secretly use the Arabic script. Even though they had forgotten Arabic, they wrote, until their expulsion from Spain in 1609, in *Aljamiado* - Spanish written in the Arabic script. After their banishment the Arabic alphabet disappeared from the Iberian Peninsula.

Again soon after the First World War the Arabic script employed in a number of languages began to be discarded. Swahili, spoken by the coastal population of East Africa from Somalia to Mozambique and inland to Central Africa, has met a similar fate. One of the most widely spread languages in Africa, it contains many Arabic loanwords, but the missionaries from the first day they set foot in Africa worked to do away with its Arabic script. Somalia, in the last few decades also abandoned the use of the Arabic script replacing the script with modified Latin alphabet. By about the mid 19th century onwards, the Arabic alphabet was completely ousted by a Latin-based script.

Arabic script and its local variants was also replaced by the Latin alphabet in the Muslim lands under Russian rule in 1927-28. In India, since independence, the Arabic script, for hundreds of years employed in languages like Kashmiri, Punjabi and Sindhi, is being gradually replaced by the Devanagari alphabet.

In the Malaysian/Indonesian archipelago up to the 13th century, Sanskrit was used in writing the dozens of languages used throughout the islands. By the 14th century after Islam had been introduced into the archipelago by Arab traders, the Arabic script began to replace Sanskrit by the peoples who had accepted Islam. The modified form of Arabic used in writing the Malay language became to be known as *Jawi*, the Arabic name for Java. Besides propagating Malay literature, it aided immensely in the dissemination and understanding of Islam.

With the influence of colonial administration gaining a bigger impact in the archipelago in the early 20th century, the trend for texts to be printed in the original *Jawi* script became less and less attractive. Handwritten manuscripts were a rarity by the 1920s and although *Jawi*

was maintained as the main script for printing text right up till the late 1950s, it was phased out in favour of the "romanised" or "Rumi" alphabets. *Jawi* is still used however in the teaching of religious texts, especially the Qur'an, and can be found widely used in the northern and east coast states of Malaysia, notably Kelantan and Trengganu as well as in the royal kingdom of Brunei. But the teaching of *Jawi* is certainly less appreciated and rarely used in the urban areas of Malaysia. The missionaries' self-serving argument that the Arabic script is not as well suited for reproducing sounds in the non-Arabic speaking languages has been swallowed whole by many of the educated Malay and other non-Arab Muslim people.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Arabic script was also in use among the Muslims. It was in fact the Arabic script used for the Croatian language and it constitutes the so-called *Adjami* or *Aljamiado* literature, as in Spain. Its first sources in Croatia go back to the 15th century. One of the oldest texts is a love song called 'Chirvat-türkisi' (Croatian song) from 1588, written by a certain Mehmed. Eventually its use declined, such that the last book in *adjami* was printed in 1941.

A modified Arabic script is used to write Kurdish in Iraq and Syria, but Kurds in Turkey use a Roman-based script. Persian-speaking peoples use the Arabic alphabet, in addition to four letters (sounds) that do not exist in standard Arabic (p, zh, ch, g) (Iran, Afghanistan), or Cyrillic script (Tajikistan).

Until 1928, five years after the founding of the Turkish Republic, Turkish was written in the Arabic script, due to the enormous Islamic influence on the area. After language reforms were initiated in 1928, Turkish began to be written in a Roman-based alphabet with 28 letters. The old writing system was outlawed and soon became obsolete. In the transition to a Roman alphabet, many words of Arabic and Persian origin were purged from the language.

In Northern Nigeria, the onslaught of the British colonial interregnum from 1902, coupled with aggressive Christian missionary assault on the intellectual activities of the indigenous scholars and intellectuals, led to the enforcement of the Latin alphabet in place of the more commonly used Hausa *ajami*.⁵

The most comprehensive documentation of the destruction of *Ajami* by the colonial administration in Northern Nigeria is John Philips, *Spurious Arabic: Hausa and Colonial Nigeria*. n.p. but available John Philips at philips@goal.com.

Islam in Northern Nigeria

All these parameters that link orality, literacy and development of an expressive script with the creation of an literate citizenry, I argue, exist in the area which subsequently became known as the Muslim Northern Nigeria. The process started with the Islamization of the region as far back as 11th century in the Kanem-Bornu Empire.

Kanem-Bornu in the 13th century included the region around Lake Chad stretching as far north as Fezzan. Islam was accepted for the first time by the Kanem ruler Umme-Jimmi who ruled between 1085-1097 AD through a scholar named Muhammad ibn Mani who first brought Islam to that land. Umme-Jimmi became a devout Muslim and left on a pilgrimage but died, in Egypt on his ways, before reaching Makkah.

With the introduction of Islam in Kanem, it became the principal focus of Muslim influence in the central Sudan and relations were established with the Arab world in the Middle East and the Maghrib. Umme's son Dunama I (1092-1150) also went on a pilgrimage and was crowned in Egypt, while embarking at Suez for Makkah, during the third pilgrimage journey. During the reign of Dunama II (1221-1259), a Kanem embassy was established in Tunisia around 1257, as mentioned by the famous Andalusian historian Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406 C.E.). It was almost at the same time that a college and a hostel were established in Cairo, named Madrasah Ibn Rashiq.

Towards the end of the 13th century, Kanem became a centre of Islamic knowledge and famous teachers came from Mali to teach in Kanem. By the middle of the 13th century, Kanem established further relations with the Muslim countries, especially Kanem's diplomatic relations with Taut in the Algerian Sahara, and with the Êafsîd state of Tunis at embassy level. The Kanem scholars and poets could write in classical Arabic language of a very high standard during the 14th century. The historian Ibn Khaldun calls Dunama II the 'King of Kanem and Lord of Bornu,' because his empire had expanded as far as Kano in the west and Wadai in the east. The Maliki School of the Islam was firmly established in the central Sudan region, but the pagan practices also continued. The pre-Islamic tradition of the rulers hiding themselves from the public continued during Dunama II's time. It is said that Dunama II opened a Talisman (*Munni* or *Mune*), considered sacred by his people, and thus brought a period of hardship to his people. It was because of his enthusiasm for the religion of Islam that he committed this 'abomination' (perhaps the talisman was a traditional symbol of divine (kingship) and alienated many of his subjects).

In the late 14th century, a new capital of the Kanem empire was established in Bornu at Gazargamu by 'Ali b. Dunama, also called 'Ali Ghazi, who ruled during the period 1476 to 1503. This thriving capital continued until 1811 when it was captured and destroyed by the Fulani in 1812. 'Ali revived Islam. He was keen on learning its principles. He used to visit the chief Imam 'Umar Masramba to learn more about the Islamic legal system.

The mass Islamization of Bornu dates from the time of Mai Idris Alooma (1570-1602 A.C.). We come to know about him through his chronicler Ahmad bin Fartuwa, who wrote about the reign of Mai Idris. In the 9th year of his reign he went on a pilgrimage to Makkah and built a hostel there for pilgrims from Bornu. He revived the Islamic practices, which were to be followed by all and sundry. He also set up *qadi* courts and Islamic law was introduced in place of the traditional system of customary law. He built a large number of brick mosques to replace the existing ones, which were built with reeds. In 1810 A.C. during the period of Mai Ahmad, the glories of the Empire of Bornu came to an end, but its importance as a centre of Islamic learning continued.⁶

Islam came to Hausaland in early 14th century, brought by a cell of traders and clerics which found its way to Kano territory in the reign of Ali Yaji] an Tsamiya (1349-1358)⁷, who according to the *Chronicle*, was converted to Islam by Wangara Muslim *Ulama* from Mali under the leadership of Sheikh Abdurrahman Al-Zaghaite (perhaps from *Zaghari*, a village in Mali as detailed in Ibn Batuta's travelogue).

So far the most authoritative record of the arrival of the Wangarawa in Kano was *Waraqa maktuba fiha asl al-Wangariyin al-muntasibin lil-Shaikh Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Muhammad Qithima* as translated by Al-Hajj⁸.

A. Rahman I. Doi, Spread Of Islam In West Africa, earlier part of "The Planting and Diffusion of Islam in Africa - South of Sahara, *Al-Ittihad*, 1979 Web version prepared by Dr. A. Zahoor at http://www.el-haqq.com/About_Islam/Islamic_Info/Misc_/West_Africa/west_africa.html -->

It would appear, however, from various writings that there were earlier Wangarawa clerics resident in Kano even *before* the arrival of this larger body; see, for instance, Paul E. Lovejoy, "Notes on the Asl Al-Wangariyin" *Kano Studies (New Series)*, 1 (3), 1978; M. G. Smith, "The Kano Chronicle as History" in Bawuro M. Barkin]o (ed.), *Studies in the History of Kano*, Kano, 1983, pp. 31-56.

M. Al-Hajj, A Seventeenth Century Chronicle on the Origins and Missionary Activities of the Wangarawa, being a translation of *Waraqa maktuba fiha asl al-Wangariyin al-muntasibin lik-shaikh Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad b. Ibrahim b.*

Their arrival in Kano in about 1380⁹ merely continued the trend of migratory influx, which had been continuous throughout the period of Kano's history. When these *Ulama* first arrived in Kano, they settled in an open space near the king's house waiting for an audience with him to explain their mission and request permission to settle in his domain.

It was while they were waiting that one of the prayers chanced on them, and they performed ablution and started *Asar* prayer. The accounts in *Chronicle* revealed that as the prayer began with the leader of the *Ulama*, Sheikh Abdurrahaman, Al-Zaghaite, leading the congregation, the people of the area gathered around them, out of curiosity, shouting and calling the neighborhood to come out and see how some people prostrate and sneeze the earth, as the performance of the *Ulama* seemed to have indicated. The commotion attracted the attention of the *sarki*, who looked out from his house to watch what was happening. As he watched he admired greatly the performance of the *Ulama* especially the role of the leader in the prayer and the discipline of the followers. Immediately they finished the prayer the *Sarki* sent for them and when they were ushered before him he asked the leader, Shehu Zaghaite, to stay with him permanently in order to teach him and his subjects Islamic religion, which the leader and his followers all agreed to stay and teach.

The *sarki* subsequently built a house for the leader near the palace, so that the leader would always be near to him for his daily lessons and prayers. A former Jakara idols worshipping place was cleared and on it the first *Juma'a* Mosque in Kano was built at Unguwar *Juma'a* as the ward is known today. This was the first central Mosque in Kano Kingdom.

The *Ulama*, on their part advised the *Sarki* to make Islam a state religion. In accepting, he appointed the leader of the delegation as the Chief Judge of the city (*Kadi* or *Aljali*). The leader also was recognized as *Babban Mallami* in Madabo — meaning the most senior teacher of Madabo Wards, where he lived and established his famous school of Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), which is today regarded as the first Islamic University in Kano. Other appointments were that of the Imam of the central Mosque who would lead the Friday prayers and his deputy that would be leading the

Muhammad Qithima. *Kano Studies*, Vol 1. No 4. 1968, pp. 7-16. For another view of the Asl-Wangariyin, see Lovejoy, P. E., "Notes on the Asl Al-Wangariyin" *Kano Studies (New Series)*, 1 (3), 1978.

Rupert East's introduction to the Hausa edition of *Kano Chronicle*, *Hausawa Da Ma Jwabtansu* Vol II, p. viii. Zariya, 1933

daily ones. The rest of the *Ulama* were given accommodation in various wards, where they lived and established their own Qur'anic schools in order to teach and spread Islam among the general populace throughout the kingdom. Some of the wards where these *Ulama* lived still bear their names, such as Zaitawa, Mandawari, Jujin Yan-labu, Sheshe, Kabara, and so on.

Links between the Madabo school of intellectuals in Kano and the then ruling dynasty of *Sarki* Ali 'Yaji' became established when the clerics successfully persuaded the *Sarki* to perform the five daily prayers and to order the Kano towns to do likewise. They also provided the *Sarki* with an imam, who became not only the Chief Imam of Kano, but also of all the Wangarawa clan.

Education in Medieval Kano

The arrival of the Muslim clerics seemed to have paved way for the intellectual development of Kano, and served to attract yet more scholars and merchants to the territory. The intellectual legacy of Zaghaiti, like all intellectuals, survived his death, and was sustained by an Gurdamus Ibrahim, a companion of Zaghaiti and a one time Chief Imam for *Sarki* Yaji. It was under an Gurdamus Ibrahim that *Sarkin* Kano Umaru (1410-21) studied.

The choice of *Madabo* in Kano as an intellectual center and as a home for the Wangarawa was significant. According to Mohammed and Khan's interpretation¹⁰, the specific aim was to make a center of learning par excellence to which would be drawn and attracted scholars and students from all over the world. The Madabo mosque, the central focus for all the intellectual activity in Kano in the period, thus became a university, which drew people from all over the Sudan. The Wangarawa Chronicle, *Asl-Wangarawiyin*, records the intensity of the debates that took place in the Madabo School in the following episode:

An Egyptian Shaykh came to Kano and started teaching *al-Mukhtasir* of Khalil. When the news got to Zaita he decided to attend the lectures the following day. The news of his intention to attend reached the Egyptian Shaykh who spent the night preparing for the lecture. Zagaite was welcomed when he arrived and the lecture started. At one stage the Egyptian Shaykh made a statement. Zagaite disagreed and made his own

observation. When the Egyptian Shaykh referred to the book, Zagaite was found correct.¹¹

Sustaining the intellectual tradition established by the Madabo school was a stream of visiting scholars who came to Kano in the 15th century. Visiting Fulani scholars, coming to the Madabo school intensified the study of tawhīd and Arabic language, thus enriching the existing higher educational base of Fiqh, Hadith and Mukhtasar which had been well established by the Wangarawa at the Madabo school.

Thus the constant eddy of visiting scholars further fortified the Islamic curriculum of the Madabo School in Kano in the mid 14th century. Notable among the eddy of scholars who sojourned to medieval Kano and left intellectual legacies included Ahmad b. Umar b. Aqit, who on his way to Timbuktu from the pilgrimage to Makkah taught in Kano for some time in late 1480s. Another noted visiting scholar to Kano was the Moroccan Abdul Rahman Suqañ b. Ali b. Ahmed al-Qasri who was once a mufti of Fez. And in the first half of the 16th century, the Tunisian scholar, Shaikh al-Tunis came to Kano and taught. Similarly, Bornu and Aghirmi scholars were also numerous in Kano.¹² Generally, the educational system in Hausaland was framed along the Timbuktu pattern of learning in the fifteenth century. The method of education could be described as 'a master seeking method' i.e. it was largely dependent on the teacher who offered the instruction, guidance and prescribed textbooks for an individual student until he perfected and mastered a particular branch of knowledge¹³.

The Wangarawa influence was reinforced by political relationship between the *sarkin* Abdullahi Barja (1438-52) and the emperor of Borno to whom the former submitted religiously offering gifts to the latter. This diplomatic approach did open not only trade relationships between Kano and Borno kingdom but also opened the gate for the Borno clerics to come to Kano in order to preach Islam and teach the Holy Qur'an.

The subsequent arrival of the Fulani *Ulama* from the Mali Empire further strengthened the Islamic holding on the people of the kingdom of Kano. The Fulani according to the *Chronicle* came with special knowledge of divinity (*Al Tauhid*) and Arabic language (*Al-Lugga*). This was in addition to what was already obtained from the Wangarawa *Ulama* concerning the knowledge of jurisprudence (*Al-Fiqh*) and tradition of the

¹¹Al-Hajj, A Seventeenth Century Chronicle, p. 13.

Chamberlain, J.W. The Development of Islamic Education pg. 60.

¹³ Mohammed and Khan, *Cradle to Grave* p. 131.

Prophet (*Al-Hadith*), with the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an brought by the Borno *Ulama*. In a way it could be said that Kano in those days was the confluence of the two special branches of knowledge from the University of Sankore in Timbuktu in the Mali empire and Al-Azhar University of Cairo through Borno. It was on the basis of this that one justifies calling the Madabo school the Madabo University – for it met the criteria for the establishment and functioning of any university then existing anywhere in the medieval world.

Indeed Kano experienced a massive influx of immigrants during Abdullahi Barja's reign. For instance, more Tripolitanian Arabs decided to permanently settle in Kano, which had by then become the entrepôt of the trans-Saharan trade with its starting point at Ghadames near Tripoli. With the trans-Saharan traders increasing their volume of trade, camels became widely used in Kano, while at the same time, the Kano-Gwanja kolanut trade route also opened up extensively. So great was the influx that Murray Last hypothesized that Abdullahi Barja himself might have been an Azben Tuareg, since Barja's mother, Queen Tekida, seemed to have a name common among Tuareg women.¹⁴ Whatever the case, the nomenclature reflects various influences on Kano's cultural and intellectual structure.

From Tripoli to Kano: Scholastic Ascendancy in Kano

Thus the Wangarawa scholastic dynasty left a legacy in the establishment of the first higher education centers in Kano all networked to the Madabo schooling system. It was to this school, which had established itself authoritatively in the fashion of its antecedent University of Sankore, that scholars from all over Sudan flocked to study *fiqh*, *hadith*, and the *Mukhtasar*.

This tradition was strengthened by the arrival in Kano of Muhammad b. Abd al Karim al-Maghili, during the reign of *Sarki* Rumfa (1463-1499). Rumfa was perceived as the most radical and intellectual reformer among the medieval *Sarakunan* Kano, carrying, as he did, far reaching reforms in all aspects of his administration. Indeed the intellectual tradition of the present House of Rumfa in Kano can be traced directly to Rumfa's *Sarauta*. Rumfa according to Kano tradition, was also the most pious, upright, dynamic, benevolent ruler the Kano kingdom has

¹⁴ Murray Last, Kano: c.1450-1800, *Studies in the History of Kano*, edited by Bawuro M. Barkinjo, Kano, 1983.

ever had. As a dynamic visionary and foresighted king, the political and administrative reforms as well as the establishment of Kurmi Market are still considered by *Kanawa* as second to none in the entire political and economic growth of the kingdom since that time.

Although Gwarzo¹⁵ was to claim that when al-Maghili came to Kano 'there was in existence some Islamic learning, but Islamic institutions had not been properly developed'¹⁶ this is nevertheless not so. As we have seen, prior to al-Maghili's arrival in Kano there existed extensive network of theological colleges and schools under various *mallams*, all graduates of the faculties of the Madabo school established about fifty years earlier with the arrival of the Malian Wangarawa scholars.

Further, in a re-interpretation of the whole historical drama, Barkinjo¹⁷ suggests that 'by the time when Al-Maghili arrived in Kano, Rumfa must have completed most of the his reforms.' It would appear, therefore, that al-Maghili's presence in Kano served only as a catalyst towards accelerating an already reformist process of Rumfa. Perhaps the most eloquent testimony of al-Maghili's intellectual influence on Rumfa was the former's treatises. Al-Maghili wrote the first Kano Emirate constitution which was contained in *Taj-al-din fi ma yajibu ala'l muluk* and *Wasiyyat al-Maghili ila Abi Abdullahi Muhammad b. Yakub*¹⁸ (Muhammad Rumfa). These works are still available in Kano.

The treatises, being *wasiyyat* concerning the obligation of the prince (though more accurately, in this case, the Emir) to his subjects, followed the Machiavellian framework of a "wise one" providing over-the-shoulder religious guidance to a student on what was probably the first welfarist state policy in the Sudan. Incidentally, it was actually Rumfa who commissioned al-Maghili to write the books for him — revealing a desire on the part of *Sarautar* Kano to identify with classical Islam, much in the same way one of Rumfa's great-grandparents did with the Wangarawa clerics. There was no doubt these constitutions written by al-Maghili for

Hassan I. Gwarzo, The life and teaching of Al-Maghili with particular reference to Saharan Jewish community, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, p. 70.

¹⁶ Gwarzo, The life and teaching of Al-Maghili... p. 70.

¹⁷ Bawuro .M. Barkinjo, The Role of al-Maghili in the Reforms of Sarki Muhammadu Rumfa (1463-1499) of Kano: A re-examination, *Kano Studies* New Series Vol 3 No 1, 1987/88 pp. 85-110; p. 86.

Translated as *The Obligation of Princes* by T. H. Baldwin (1932). Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique.

Rumfa provided the first recorded framework for the intellectual transformation of Kano on which subsequent *Sarakunan* Kano built upon.

Thus we can say that al-Maghili set out to remove innovations in the interpretation of Islam in Kano and strengthened already existing scholastic institutions and established new ones. This was because his first acts, the appointment of an Imam for the Friday prayer, and the *qadi*, were preceded by similar act of the Madabo Wangarawa faculty decades earlier. Al-Maghili later went to Katsina, which had become a seat of learning during the 15th century. Most of the pilgrims from Makkah used to visit Katsina and a number of scholars from the Sankore University of Timbuktu had visited the city and brought with them books of beliefs and etymology.

Incidentally, al-Maghili and his people settled in an area of the city now called Sharifai. When it was time for him to move on, he left his children with the remaining clerics he brought along. One of the sons, Isa became Sidi Fari and established a dynasty. Eventually *Sidi Fari* became a minor title reserved for *Sharifai* (descendants of Sharif, i.e. al-Maghili). The tradition has been that the *Sidi Fari* sits with the *sarkin* Kano. He is still a feature in the court of the current ruling dynasty.

From Scripturality to Literacy Among Muslim Hausa

The most significant Islamic reforms brought about by Muhammad Rumfa in Kano was in the adaptation of the Arabic script to become a basis for the creation of an indigenized Hausa script, the *ajami*. With the constant eddy of scholars and ascendancy of scholarship, it became clear that although Arabic was the preferred mode of instruction, nevertheless it was a difficult language to learn for daily discourse. A method had to be devised using the familiar Arabic script, but with pure Hausa intonation. More than this, the resulting script must not only retain the Arabic familiarity, but should have scriptural visibility that is unique to the mindset and cultural world of the young Hausa Muslim. In going back to basic Muhammad Rumfa's Islamic scholars created a unique nursery school education for the young learner.

This methodology, allowing for linguistic regional characteristics, became more or less adopted gradually throughout Muslim Hausa northern Nigeria. I will now look at this curricular methodology more closely.

The late Prof. Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya, in his monumental *Tarihin Rubuce Rubuce Cikin Hausa*¹⁹, narrates that from the coming of Islam in Hausaland up to the fifteenth century, there was no specific evidence to show that there was extensive indigenous literature in either Arabic or ajami among the Hausa literati and scholars. The use of both Arabic and ajami, however, became gradual when communications between traditional rulers increased. During such communications, the adaptation of the Arabic script to represent Hausa names became inevitable. For instance, Hausa scholars would easily write Muhammad Rumfa's first name, *Muhammad*, due to its references in both the Qur'an and the Hadith and thus their visual familiarity with its calligraphy. However, the *Rumfa* portion of the name requires their own invention of using Arabic alphabets to express the Hausa name. Gradually it became increasingly easy to use the Arabic alphabets to begin to express complete Hausa thoughts in what is later to become known as ajami. However, Hausa itself was not at the time (and is not) standardized, so naturally ajami writings began to take on regional and dialectical variations, just like the spoken Hausa, such that ajami writings from different regions are often mutually intelligible. This led to the creation of the term, *Ajami gagara mai shi!* (ajami is tougher even for its writer!).

Nevertheless, what subsequently evolved was an intricate system of education with a well-orchestrated early learning strategies. Because these early learning strategies were key points in the transition of the Hausa from orality to scripturality, let us look at them closely. There are three main stages in the process of learning in Hausaland, *abbaku*, *farfaru* and *haddatu*.

Babbaku

This stage focuses attention on basic letter recognition and the association of the letter with a mnemonic device that makes it easy for young learners to absorb. This stage is known as *Babbaku*, and can be equated to either kindergarten or playgroup. A sample of the alphabets and their associative ajami variants is given in Table 2

Table 2: Sample Ajamized Script

Hausanized	Variations	Arabicized	Alphabet
Alu/Alif	ا	Alifun	ا
Alu baƙi	ب	Alif	
Ba-guƙe	ب	Ba-un	ب
Ba	ب	Ba	
Be	ب		
Ba	ب		
Ta-guƙe	ت	Ta-un	ت
Ta	ت	Ta	
Ta	ت		
Ta	ت		
Ta-kuri	ت		س
Ca-guƙe	ج	Tba-un	ج
Ca	ج	Tba	
Ca	ج		
Ca	ج		
Jim Karami koma baya	ج	Jee-murn	ج
Jim Karami	ج	Jeem	
Jim saƙe	ج		
Jim saƙe koma baya	ج		
Ha Karami koma baya	ح	Haa-un	ح
Ha Karami	ح	Ha	
Ha saƙe	ح		
Koma baya	ح		
Ha Karami mai ruwa koma baya	ح	Khaa-un	ح
Hafarami mai ruwa	ح	Kha	

The curriculum, of course, is the Qur'an, and the letter recognition is started with writing out the Surat Al-Fatiha to Surat Al-Fil - a total of 11 surats. The demarcation to Surat al-Fil was essentially because these eleven surats contained the entire Arabic alphabet in them, except one, z, and even then, that appears in the next surat after Surat al-Fil, Surat Al-Humaza.

However, although these last 10 surats (plus the mandatory Surat Al-Fatiha) contain all the alphabets, some schools also use Ayat 29 of Surat Al-Fat-hi, which contain all the 28 Arabic alphabets, as seen in Fig. 1.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ
 عَلَيْنَا الْكِتَابَ الْعَرَبِيَّ
 الَّذِي لَمْ يَجْعَلْ لِحُكْمِهِ
 فَجْرًا قَدْ تَجَرَّبْنَا
 قَبْلَ هَٰذَا مِن آيَاتِهِ
 لَعَلَّ نَحْنُ مُوقِنُونَ
 وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ
 فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ إِنِّي
 جَاعِلٌ فَجْرًا بَيْنَكُمُ
 وَاللَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَعَلَّ
 تَتَّقُونَ
 فَجَعَلَ الْفُجْرَ بَيْنَهُمُ
 وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيُتَّقُوا
 يَوْمَ تُخْرَجُونَ مِنْ
 هَهُنَا تِلْكَ آيَاتُ
 اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ
 وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ
 وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ
 وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ
 وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ

Fig 1: Ayat 29 of Sural Al-Fat-hi, containing all the Arabic Alphabets.

Farfaru

The second stage of the learning process is *Farfaru*, which sees the beginning of word formation, after the letter recognition stage of Babbaku. In this stage, vowels are attached to the letters to form a word. The curriculum for this stage remains the same as the Surats covered in the first stage, only now they have proper vowels and complete words are

formed. The teacher reads out the word to the learners, with the latter repeating until the teacher becomes with the pronunciation.

Thus by the time the learner gets to Surat Fil, he is already familiar with Qur'anic Arabic alphabets and words. Also the fact that these Surats are among the most frequently recited during the obligatory prayers makes it easier to associate the words, the alphabets and the sounds together.

From Surat al-Humaza, it is expected that the learner can now understand the Arabic reading of the surat and the ones that follow, and the subsequent curriculum is in pure Arabic, with less emphasis on the Ajamized and iconic letter recognition of the earlier stages.

This system persists to date and provides the primary contact of the Hausa learner with a formalized literary curriculum. At the beginning of the introduction of this system, during Muhammadu Rumfa's reign in Kano at least, this created a desire to innovate and experiment, with the result that a scholastic community became formed, and a means of communication between people became facilitated by the simple fact that they had mastered the alphabet and could now communicate their thoughts in Arabized Hausa, or ajami.

The literacy base became empowered with the increasing trade and religious contact between the Hausa and Arab traders and missionaries. This led to an enriched Hausa vocabulary, such that at least one-fifth of Hausa words, from 1750-1960, are directly Arabic in origin.²⁰ These loan words cover not only religious activities, but also day-to-day affairs and objects.²¹ Again this further enhanced the vocabulary acquisition of the Hausa, and since the Babbaku and Farfaru stages of learning are compulsory early childhood education programs, a literacy base therefore existed even among those who did not go beyond the

Aliyu Abubakar, *Al-Thajafatul Arabiyyati Fi Nigeriya, 1750-1960* (Arabic Literature in Nigeria, 1750-1960). PhD Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1972.

The study of Arabic loanwords in Hausa seemed to have attracted a lot of attention from scholars, some of the more notable being: Rabi'u Muhammad Zarruk; Dangantakar Hausa Da Larabci, in Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya and Abba Rufa'i (eds), *Studies in Hausa Language, Literature and Culture - The First Hausa International Conference*, Center for the Study of Nigerian Languages, Bayero University, Kano, 1978; Baldi, Sergio. *A first ethnolinguistic comparison of Arabic loanwords common to Hausa and Swahili*. Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1988; Greenberg, Joseph. Arabic loan-words in Hausa, *Word* 3 (1947) 85-97; Hiskett, M. 1965. The Historical Background to the Naturalization of Arabic Loan-Words in Hausa. *African Language Studies* 6: 18-26; Anon. *The Northern Nigerian Code*, Arabic tr. Sokoto 1907.

Babba'ku and Farfaru stages of their curriculum. The third stage, *haddatu*, sees the beginning of the learning of the Qur'an off-head, as it were, since by now the young learner has mastered enough of the vocabulary to enable him to read the subsequent portions of the Qur'an on his own, although reading in the presence of the teacher. An example of common usage of ajami is in Fig 2 which reproduces the first page of Malama Hassana Sufi's translation of *Hayatil Islam*, published in Kano, 1979.

This system, which started in Muhammad Rumfa's reign in Kano, sustained itself effectively throughout Muslim Hausa right through the Islamic and intellectual Jihad reforms of Shehu Usman Dan Fodiyo, which started in 1804. As John Hunwick noted,

The real revolution in Arabic-Islamic writing took place in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, associated with the reformist Fulani scholars Shaykh 'Uthman b. Muhammad Fodiye (or Fodio, d. 1817), his brother 'Abd Allah (d. 1826), and his son Muhammad Bello (d. 1837). Between them they produced over 300 works in prose and verse as well as dozens of occasional poems. In addition to writing in Arabic, Shaykh 'Uthman also wrote poetry in Fulfulde, some of which was translated into Hausa by his son 'Isa. His daughter Asma'u was also a poet in both Arabic and Fulfulde... The reformist triumvirate, who founded a large state based on Sokoto, wrote in most of the Islamic disciplines: *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *tawhid* (theology), *tasawwuf* (Sufism), *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), *hadith* (Prophetic traditions), *lugha* (Arabic language), *adab* (manners), *wa'z* (paraenesis), *tibb* (medicine), and *ta'rikh* (history), often, in fact, writing works that crossed these disciplinary boundaries.²²

It is of course instructive that the Fulfulde and Hausa poems were written in ajami script – the scholarly script then available to all students and teachers throughout Muslim Northern Nigeria. Thus before the end of the 20th century, an intellectual and scholastic tradition based on Islam existed among the Muslim Hausa of Northern Nigeria – the largest ethnic group in the area.

Fig. 2 Sample Hausa Ajami Writings

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
 الحمد لله الذي هدانا لهذا
 الذي كنا لنهتدي لولا
 أن هدانا الله
 والحمد لله رب العالمين
 آمين

الحمد لله الذي هدانا لهذا
 الذي كنا لنهتدي لولا
 أن هدانا الله
 والحمد لله رب العالمين
 آمين

الحمد لله الذي هدانا لهذا
 الذي كنا لنهتدي لولا
 أن هدانا الله
 والحمد لله رب العالمين
 آمين

الحمد لله الذي هدانا لهذا
 الذي كنا لنهتدي لولا
 أن هدانا الله
 والحمد لله رب العالمين
 آمين

Sunset at Dawn: The Colonial Interregnum

Towards the turn of the 20th century the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Britain began to prepare a small body of chosen recruits for pioneer work in Hausaland. In 1897 a small party, including the recently-qualified Doctor W.R.S. Miller, went to study the Hausa language in Tripoli – where a thriving Hausa community, on their way to Makkah from Kano and other territories – flourished. Towards the end of 1899 Miller and his party set out from England to Nigeria with great hopes of evangelizing the Hausa people. With Miller were the Reverend Dudley Rider, the Reverend Richardson, and Mr. Burgin. At Lagos they were joined by Bishop Tugwell. As they journeyed north by foot they crossed

the path of Lugard's military forces that were preparing to advance north.²³

Crampton records that many people had misgivings about the venture. Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, had minuted that he wished the Mission were not going. It seemed premature to him and likely to give rise to trouble. The Marquess of Salisbury also advised missions not to be too hasty in their efforts to reach the Muslims. It was feared that if Muslim passions were aroused it might cause bloodshed." Lugard himself was very conscious of the need to maintain the prestige of the 'whiteman' in Africa. If European missionaries were attacked he would feel that he would have to take punitive action and he wished to avoid this.

Lugard gave instructions to Tugwell that when he moved north from Jebba he should make contact with the military authorities and not attempt to outrun them. As the missionaries moved northwards however they received such a welcome from the common people that they felt that they could move anywhere. They took it upon themselves to explain the purpose of the British occupation to the masses. Their welcome was genuine. Even the Emir of Zaria felt relieved at the coming of the British and was friendly to the missionaries. Miller advised the Emir that his security depended upon his welcoming the British and he influenced the letter sent by the Emir to Lugard requesting British protection. Later this attitude of the Emir of Zaria made possible the capture of the Emir of Kwantagora, and Lugard was grateful to the missionary party for their diplomatic services.²⁴

Unfortunately the party did not stay long in Zaria, but ignoring the advice of the Emir there and the wishes of Lugard as made known to Tugwell at Jebba they took the precipitate step of moving on to Kano. The reception given to them along their route beyond Zaria was much less warm than previously. At Kano they were humiliated by the Emir, Aliyu (1895-1903), who is recorded as saying:

'We do not want you: you can go. I give you three days to prepare: a hundred donkeys to carry your loads back to Zaria and we never wish to see you here again'²⁵

E.P.T. Crampton, 1975, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*. London, Geoffrey Chapman/Cassel, p.37-40

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid*

It is this incident that had a lasting impression on Reverend Miller. It is also clear from his narrative that the colonial machinery was working closely with the missionary ideology to penetrate Muslim northern Nigeria, despite later claims to the contrary by colonial officials. Muslim Northern Nigeria was of course, a challenge to the missionaries due to its long-established intellectual and literary tradition – based on intelligence information gathered and well-documented by earlier reconnaissance teams under the guise of explorers and adventurers.

Thus while the sun was rising for the British Empire at the beginning of the 20th century, it was setting in West African kingdoms. The Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was declared in 1899, and Lord Lugard was appointed the first Governor-General. Lord Lugard's memoirs left no doubt about the British mission in tropical Africa:

Let it be admitted at the outset that European brains, capital, and energy have not been, and never will be, expended in developing the resources of Africa from motives of pure philanthropy that Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane; that the benefit can be made reciprocal, and that it is the aim and desire of civilised administration to fulfil this dual mandate.²⁶

Subsequently, while the ostensible reason for declaration of colonial rule in Northern Nigeria by the British was to stamp out slavery, the actual reason was to further economically, intellectually and politically enslave the native races by substituting their traditional mindsets with an imposed one. As Lord Lugard recorded,

'We hold these countries because it is the genius of our race to colonise, to trade, and to govern. The task in which England is engaged in the tropics--alike in Africa and in the East--has become part of her tradition, and she has ever given of her best in the cause of liberty and civilisation. There will always be those who cry aloud that the task is being badly done, that it does not need doing, that we can get more profit by leaving others to do it, that it brings evil to subject races and breeds profiteers at home. These were not the principles, which prompted our

²⁶ Frederick Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, 1926, web version (portions) at <http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/tburke1/8bsyllabus/dualmandate.html>.

forefathers, and secured for us the place we hold in the world to day in trust for those who shall come after us'.²⁷

Without great resources at his command and facing an often-hostile population, Lugard began to build an administrative staff of Africans and Europeans. He devised the system of indirect rule, which was adopted in Northern Nigeria (and subsequently imitated elsewhere) in order to take advantage of the existing Caliphate system of government and its legitimacy, but he still faced the problem of choosing a language of administration, and of training clerks who could use that language. Lugard's decision to use Hausa, as the language of his administration was to help spread Hausa even more widely within Northern Nigeria than it had previously been.

The British military sorties against the Northern Nigerian emirates were concluded by February 1903 with the capture of Kano. In order to defuse the possibility of an uprising as occurred in other parts of the colonial empire with strong Islamic culture (Sudan and Egypt, for instance), the British adopted a tactical policy of pledging non-intervention in religious affairs of the northern peoples, especially the Muslims, upon their arrival and subsequent subjugation of Northern emirates in 1903.²⁸ This pledge involved preventing Christian missionaries from establishing schools in Islamic areas of the north, although they were given free access to 'pagan' areas of the north and southern Nigeria by the colonial administration. As Lugard stated, Government did not interfere in the indigenous Koranic Schools, in which reading and writing in the Arabic and (Ajemin) (sic) character and memorising passages from the Koran formed the curriculum. They were estimated at some 25,000 with over a quarter of a million pupils. These Koranic schools had produced a literary class known as 'Mallamai', learned in Arabic and the teachings of the Koran and commentaries, from whose ranks the officers of the Native Administration, the judges of the Native Courts and the exponents of the creed of Islam were drawn. They were a very influential class, some of them very well read in Arabic literature and law, and deeply imbued with the love of learning.²⁹

²⁷ *ibid*

Sonia F Graham, 1966, *Government and Mission Education in Northern Nigeria, 1900-1919 - with special reference to the work of Hanns Vischer*. Ibadan, Ibadan University Press.

²⁹ <http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/lobby/5144/lugard.htm>

Yet despite this pledge, it was the colonial administration, in cohort with the Missionary agents that conspired to destroy the scriptural basis of Muslim Hausa literacy. Crampton records that

'As early as 1900 Lugard was debating the question of whether to use Roman or Arabic script in the official Hausa orthography. Although some of his officials would have preferred Arabic script, Lugard chose the Roman. Had he chosen Arabic it would have made it harder for the pupils to learn English later on in their school careers and would have further widened the gap between the educational systems in the North and south of Nigeria'.³⁰

Crampton — a missionary historian — thus underplayed the significance of Arabic script in the education of Muslim Northern Nigerians, and ignored hundreds of years of antecedent literary substrata which the colonial machinery could have built upon, if it indeed it had wanted the education of the colonized to have any meaning. The real reason behind Lugard's rejection of the Arabic script, however, was more sinister. As Crampton further notes, Miller said that in an interview with Lugard in 1900 he strongly urged him to adopt the Roman script because he felt that the scholars of the future would thus be drawn to the 'endless storehouse of Western literature', and the 'priceless heritage of Christian thought' rather than 'the somewhat sterile Muslim literature and the religion of Islam'.³¹

The Reverend Miller, still smarting from the humiliating reception according to him and his missionary party by the Emir of Kano, Aliyu in 1899 on his failed mission to bring the 'good news' to the 'heathens' in the area, thus took his revenge by ensuring that any further development of Arabic script — and its subsequent variants and adaptations including *ajami* — was stifled. This is because even during the colonial arrival, the emirs were using Arabic and *ajami* to communicate with the new overlords as a veteran of the times recalled.

'In those days if a man wanted to send a letter, he has to come to a Malam. And people used to do it a great deal, for if a man had a message to send, and he merely sent a servant, it might be that the servant would not give the full message correctly... It was from Zaria that the practice of writing in Hausa with some skill spread. Because sometimes when they wrote in Arabic, they might use language that the reader at the other end

³⁰E.P.T. Crampton, 1975, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*. London, Geoffrey Chapman/Cassel, p.99.

³¹ *ibid.*

would fail to understand. And that was why a District Officer in Zaria had the bright idea – in fact he made it an order – telling people to stop writing in Arabic, seeing that it was not our language'.³²

The Reverend Miller got his chance to entrench the use of Romanized script to replace Arabic (and ajami) when on August 2nd, 1902, even before the conquest of Sokoto, Lugard asked him to translate proclamations into Hausa for use by his administration. Miller expected English and Roman letters to replace Arabic and Ajami.' He also thought that the liquor and trees proclamations could not be translated into Hausa, only Arabic. Therefore he submitted translations of the sections 'that can be thought by a Hausa'. Who, if not educated Hausa scholars, was supposed to understand the Arabic versions Miller did not say, and it is likely that Miller's own Hausa was more at fault than the language itself. Still, it should perhaps be remembered that Arabic was the language of law and administration in the Caliphate, and that the idea of translating proclamations into written Hausa was very new and strange to local scholars as well. As late as the 1950s Arabic was the only language most Shari'ah court judges read or wrote and they tended to "think legally in it.'" Hausa would need more development and would need particularly to acquire more vocabulary, both from English and from Arabic, as it was used for administration in Northern Nigeria.³³

Miller subsequently sent Roman and Ajami Hausa translations of the proclamations to Lugard. He referred to Ajami as 'Aljemmi'. According to John Philips accounts the secretary acknowledged receipt for Lugard on October 26th, 1902 but pointed out that Lugard was 'no judge' of the translations' At about the same time came the first intimation that Lugard intended to replace Ajami with Romanized Hausa. On October 29, 1902, in reply to a resident who was worried that the forthcoming language examinations for colonial officers might contain a section of Ajami, the Secretary to High Commissioner Lugard revealed that it was the intention of the new administration to use Romanized Hausa for administrative correspondence with Africans rather than Arabic. Arabic would still be important, so that was the second language that the resident was requested to learn. Realizing that he would still need to use Arabic at least at the beginning of his administration, on November 2nd, 1902

Alhaji Mahmud {o}ji, in his own words as narrated to Neil Skinner in 1967. Alhaji Mahmud {o}ji was born during the Kano Civil War (1893-94) and died in 1976.

³³John Edward Philips, nd, *Spurious Arabic: Hausa and Colonial Nigeria*. John Edward Philips, Hirosaki University, Japan, philips@gol.com.

Lugard wrote to Professor H. A. Salmore of King's College, University of London to translate his proclamations into Arabic for a fee.³⁴

Lugard stuck to his goal of substituting the Roman for the Arabic character and of using Hausa instead of Arabic as the administrative language, but acknowledged that at present he lacked the resources and control to do so. As Philips noted, Lugard wrote that he preferred 'national' development using Hausa in Roman characters to 'Arabic Mohammadan progress' and 'Algemie, - (a spurious Arabic' Romanized Hausa would also be better for helping Africans get jobs with British commercial firms... He stated his real objective forthrightly: 'I hope that, in course of time, this [policy] may result in the formation of a class of people who can read and write Hausa in the Roman character, *though unable to speak English.*' He therefore wanted the CMS schools also to teach Romanized Hausa, not English.'³⁵ (emphasis added).

Thus even in the introduction of the Romanized Hausa, the objective was to provide a base communication facility, which is not expected to enable the native learner go beyond a certain level of proficiency. In other words, all that is needed is sufficient to command him, but not to communicate with him. As Philips argued, this meant that a new educational system would have to be created to teach Romanized Hausa to Africans. As he further quoted, Lugard in 1904 noted that in the teaching of Mallams at a school opened by missionaries:

'Some progress has been made, both in the teaching of English and of the substitution of the Roman character for the vernacular manuscript. I look on this experiment with great interest, and I am personally anxious to introduce the Roman instead of the Arabic characters for the writing of Hausa, as being more adapted to express its sounds and readable by every political officer'.³⁶

Nonetheless, both among missionaries and among administrative officers there were those who argued for the use of Ajami. Lugard's temporary replacement, Acting High Commissioner William Wallace, under the influence of Canon Charles Henry Robinson, ordered all residents to begin using Ajami and to notify all emirs and mallams that Arabic letters would no longer be accepted. This was in September 1903.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ John Philips, *Spurious Arabic...* p. 33.

³⁶ Ibid.

Nevertheless, he did hold out the hope that "before long" Roman characters could be used to write Hausa.³⁷

However, while there were missionaries and administrative officers who argued for the Romanization of Hausa, Major Alder Burdon, an administrative officer, and Canon Charles Henry Robinson, a missionary, were not among them. According to Philips, Robinson indeed grew effusive, if a bit inaccurate about other African peoples, in defending the continued use by the Hausa of their own script:

'One of the most characteristic marks by which a civilized nation is distinguished from an uncivilized one is the possession of a written language and literature. Apart from the Hausas there is no race north of the equator, nor indeed in all Africa, outside Egypt and Abyssinia, which has reduced its language to writing, or made any attempt at the production of a literature. The Hausas have adopted a modified form of the Arabic alphabet, and have produced a number of national poems or songs, besides a limited amount of history in the form of annals and legal documents'.

Philips noted that in his defense of *ajami* as a script of communication, Burdon took great pains to explain that "Ajami", which he carefully spelled out in Arabic script, was not, as Lugard had written, "Algemie - a spurious Arabic" but any foreign language in Arabic script, especially Persian. The Arabic alphabet better suited Hausa, in his experience, since it more easily showed vowel length. This was not a new script since it had already been used for poetry, just as the first written English had been poetry. "Any attempt to resist the natural march of progress is bound to fail." he wrote, "Hausa in the Arabic character is not only the line of least resistance, but it is inevitable."³⁸

Burdon continued answering the arguments of his opponents. Supporters of Romanization said that the field was wide open, but in fact the only educated people in the country already knew Arabic, many already wrote *Ajami*, and all could be taught in a few days. The difficulty of the Arabic script had been greatly exaggerated. It was easier to teach 100 Englishmen *Ajami* than to reeducate all the educated Africans in the Roman script. After the initial expense of typeface Arabic would be as inexpensive to print as Roman. Therefore writing in *Ajami* and its standardization should be encouraged, as should language examinations for colonial officers in *Ajami* and the use of *Ajami* by mission schools.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 36.

These arguments found favour with Lugard's successor, Governor Girourard, an engineer sent in to build a railway from Kano to Lagos. Girourard had already concluded that teaching Hausa *Boko* in Government Schools was a setback for British policy, since (according to him) it was impossible to get Muslims to abandon Arabic for Roman character. The use of Ajami would certainly have reduced the educational burden on the government, since the many existing schools could have been used effectively. But mission schools continued to instruct their pupils in *Boko*. The Sudan United Mission School in Muri province taught reading, writing and geography in Romanized Hausa.

It was of course not surprising that Mission schools refused to use the ajami script in their schools, even though they were later to use it as an instrument of propaganda to entice Muslims into Christianity by translating the Bible and other Christian tracts in the script. It was not to Missionary interest to acknowledge the existence of ajami — a script with direct roots in Islam. Further, by insisting on Romanized Hausa, or *Hausar Boko* as it became to be known, they would be setting the standards around which any subsequent education policy would be created. This would further disenfranchise Muslim learners. Part of the subsequent silent resistance against this missionary inspired education was the creation of the derisive term, *Bokoko A Wuta* (Schools in Hell) that became identified with western education in Muslim Northern Nigeria.

However, perhaps the biggest blow to Muslim Hausa education was the appointment of Hanns Vischer, a former missionary, as the first Director of Education on July 1, 1908. As Philips noted, Vischer recommended Roman characters because (1) otherwise the government would be spreading Islam, (2) there was as yet no standard orthography, (3) the Roman alphabet could be learned faster, (4) it was very expensive to print Arabic with vowels, (5) few political officers wrote Ajami, (6) while certain letters were found in Arabic and not in Roman, the reverse was also true, (7) it was a "fallacy" that the Arabic alphabet had been modified by Hausa scholars, since all the new letters were found in North Africa, except for two (unspecified) ones; which Vischer admitted were "peculiar to the Soudan" but which he also claimed were found in the Qur'an and Arabic books. Finally he claimed that it was not practical to try to standardize Ajami. Therefore he recommended teaching officials and chiefs' sons to write in the Roman alphabet. He insisted that he did not

wish to discourage either Arabic or Ajami, admitting that he lacked the power to do so anyway.³⁹

Hanns Vischer, affectionately nicknamed [*an Hausa* (a true Hausa) due to his command of the Hausa language, and the erroneous perception of the local authority that he was sympathetic to their worldview, proved the thin edge of the wedge that finally stymied the development of ajami as an educational script for Northern Nigeria. As I argued earlier, the missionaries had already set the standards of what education should be, Vischer merely followed the script by modifying it to include a "functional" education for the natives. As Philips further pointed out, Vischer's real purpose was to perpetuate British colonial imperialism by forbidding the use of either Arabic or English for administration. In either of these languages Africans could read anti-colonial nationalist propaganda from Egypt, the United States and other countries. Vischer was opposed to the use of Arabic even in the Sudan, where it was the first language of millions, and even objected to the teaching of English in schools in Egypt and the Gold Coast (now Ghana.) He wanted only to train enough clerks to avoid the necessity of introducing clerks from Southern Nigeria, who might bring with them nationalist ideas. Thus his ideas fitted well with those of Lugard.⁴⁰

Interestingly, the colonial records of 1913 show that there was an estimated 19,073 Muslim schools, with 143,312 pupils. This contrasted with only 47,000 students in mission and government schools in the whole of Nigeria in 1918. Yet it was the larger pool that was marginalized. It is this refusal to acknowledge a literacy base on the part of Hanns Vischer, coupled with his missionary agenda of limiting the education of the African to craft-based occupations that laid the foundation of imbalances in the Nigerian education system.

The chiefs' sons and other students of his first schools in Kano in 1909 and 1910 eventually took over the mantle of political leadership in Northern Nigeria – and perpetuated the missionary agenda by refusing to acknowledge ajami as a legitimate scriptural expression of the Muslim Hausa and thus even after independence in 1960 did not pay any attention to it and its power to focus collective Muslim Hausa thought. Thus since the British did not bother to develop any standard for it, neither did their Nigerian successors. *Hausa Boko* thus reigned supreme even amongst the

³⁹ Ibid. p. 37.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 37

educated elite in Muslim Northern Nigeria.⁴¹ Acquisition of *Hausar Boko* and its derivatives created an '*Yan Takarda* (educated) elite with full pride in their impeccable Queen's English and contempt for indigenous linguistic or intellectual studies. This transcended generation barriers, to such extent that even in the 1980s and 1990s, the examination results of the majority of students in Kano State (for example) became known as the *Kano Combination* – because most of the students passed only Hausa and Islamic Studies subjects at the West African Examinations Council examinations Ordinary level.

This was further entrenched with the organization of a literary competition in 1932 which yielded Romanized Hausa novels⁴² that came to be seen as the classics of Hausa literature – completely sidelining thousands literary works by indigenous scholars in the ajami script. This marginalization continued well into the century. For instance, even the first efforts to translate the Holy Qur'an first by late Sheikh Nasiru Kabara (1988 and 1997), and Sheikh Abubakar Gumi (1999) in Hausa were done in Romanized Hausa, instead of ajami – even though there were more ajami script readers than Romanized Hausa readers among their target audiences!

Conclusions

The analytical stand taken in this paper is the theme of the role of scripturality, especially indigenous script, and literacy. The argument is that once an indigenous community develops its script, then it has a basis for creating its literacy base which is centrally located within the community's mindset of values.

This is more so because *literacy* describes the condition of societies in which reading and writing, based on the technology of a given writing system and possibly linked to technical modes of storage, transmission, and reproduction such as printing, form a channel through which communication in language takes place alongside speaking and listening. When used to describe individuals, as the term commonly is, "literacy" describes a set of skills of reading and writing (and so contrasts in this sense not with 'orality' but with 'illiteracy').

⁴¹ For further arguments on this issue, see John E. Philips, *Dalilin Da Ya Sa Boko Ya Tsere Wa Ajami A Halin Yanzu* (Why Romanized Hausa is ahead of Ajami today). *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* (Kaduna, Nigeria) 28th March, 1994, p. 6. Including *Ruwan Bagaja* (Abubakar Imam), *Jiki Magayi* (Wusasa and East)

Orality and literacy do not form a symmetrical binary opposition. Orality exists very often without literacy; but wherever there is individual or collective literacy, there is also orality – literate societies involve a mix of the written and read with the spoken and heard; and the term 'functional penetration' is used to characterize the range of roles or tasks generally performed in a society or period through reading and writing. The two realizations of language (speech and writing) are also acquired differently. Orality is the result, except in pathological cases, of a universal process of language acquisition in humans that requires little or no formal instruction—though it can be trained toward specialized, conventional capabilities in oral societies, such as memorization and formulaic narration (as has been shown in detail by Finnegan, Goody and Watt, Lord, Ong, Parry, and others). Literacy, on the other hand, is only acquired through a conscious, deliberate process of learning to read and write, usually in formal educational situations.

Given an idea of literacy as a scale of skills that are progressively developed, the question immediately arises how much you need to be able to read and write to be described as literate. In historical studies, mere signatures have often been taken as an index of literacy – for instance in the signing of treaties with natives. In contemporary educational programs, on the other hand, specially constructed tasks (often based on an essay-text principle rather than on signs, lists, business records, signatures, or labels) are widely used to define "functional literacy," which is characterized in turn, by literacy-promoting organizations such as UNESCO, with regard to one or more of the following considerations: some estimate of a desirable degree of democratic participation in a given society's political processes; some idea of employability, within increasingly technical and complex industrial processes; or some concept of educated consumerism or reachability by complex legal and administrative procedures. The effective use of Urdu in Indo-Pakistan region, as well a Farsi in Iran – both *ajami* scripts has clearly demonstrated the tenacity of indigenously-adapted Arabic and their ability scripts to integrate with any modern system of social discourse.

Calculating on the basis of definitions of functional literacy such as these, C. A. Anderson has suggested (influentially but also controversially) that 40 percent literacy in a population signals a readiness for economic take-off in development terms (though Anderson does not make clear what level of 'literacy' is required or what precisely 'economic take-off' means). More generally, definitions of functional literacy are abstracted from educational processes as a whole and are used to shape

more specialized literacy programs, as well as being used in other areas of economic and political planning.

This paper argues that these theoretical constructs would have been used effectively in the development of Muslim Northern Nigeria if the British had adopted the ajami script. The fact that they refused to do so, and the fact that they were aided by subsequent local power-brokers who sustained the British legacy of contempt for ajami as a script for expressing the literacy of the Muslim Hausa is one of the most tragic episodes in the development of the Muslim Hausa communities.

Ajami, however, did not die. It was too firmly entrenched in the mindset of the Muslim Hausa to be easily killed. Indeed the fact that both the British colonial machinery and the subsequent local collaborators of the British ignored it, enabled the script to remain as pure to its scholastic roots as possible. In 2000 an ajami revivalist strategy was started in Kano under the banner of Ajamization of Knowledge through which the Holy Qur'an, the Hadith and other religious books will be translated into ajami for use in Qur'anic schools, as well as the first three years of primary schools in Kano (as an experimental base). This will be followed by short stories, plays and other materials – all in ajami. It is the only way to mass education, rather than perpetuating the missionary agenda through contemporary Nigerian educational policies.

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Perspectives on Kano-British Relations is a bold attempt to examine and review Kano-British relations in the last one hundred years with particular emphasis on the Colonial period and its consequences on the city and society of Kano. The book contains thirteen well-researched chapters dealing with different themes of the relationship. It is an invaluable reference material and a must read for students and scholars of History and the Social Sciences and anyone interested in the history of Kano.

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