

ARABIC/AJAMI MANUSCRIPTS:

RESOURCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
NEW KNOWLEDGE IN NIGERIA

Proceedings of the National Conference on Exploring Nigeria's
Arabic/Ajami Manuscripts



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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AJAMI MANUSCRIPT RESOURCES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW KNOWLEDGE IN NIGERIA

A.U. Adamu

Introduction

Ajami as the Arabic script domesticated for non-Arabic languages in northern Nigeria (and other parts of Muslim Nigeria) provides the potential of being a powerful instrument of social reconstruction in contemporary Nigerian polity. The reason is that as a daily script used by millions of *Tsangaya* (Islamic residential college) students (*Almajirai*) in the process of their reading, and subsequently writing the Qur'anic text, it offers a ready visual recognition if placed within the context of secular policy and civil society in transmitting new knowledge to the *Tsangaya* pupils and graduates. This will form the bedrock of the principles of "Ajamization of knowledge" – a principle that sees contemporary knowledge offered to indigenous peoples through a script for which they have a spiritual adherence, and consequently, higher learning value. In this paper, I explore the historical evolution of *Ajami* in Nigeria, and explore the challenges to such approach, as well as place the production of *Ajami* manuscripts within the context of best practices that work in similar literary cultural environments in Asia (particularly Pakistan and Malaysia) as part of internal processes of preservation of knowledge heritage of Muslim peoples.

Origins of *Ajami* in Pre-Caliphate Nigeria

Ajami was created at the moment the Arabic alphabet was first used to write a non-Arabic or non-Qur'anic name or object. The use of both Arabic and *Ajami* became gradual when communications between traditional rulers increased. During such communication, the adaptation of the Arabic script to represent non-Arabic names became inevitable. For instance, Hausa scholars would easily write Muhammad Rumfa's first name, *Muhammad*, due to its references and occurrences in both the Qur'an and the Hadith and thus their visual familiarity with its orthography. However, the *Rumfa* portion of the name requires their own invention of using Arabic alphabet to express the Hausa name. Gradually it became increasingly easy to use the Arabic alphabet to begin to express complete Hausa thoughts in what is later to become known as *Ajami*.

There are a series of claims as to the linguistic cluster that initiated the leap from using Arabic script to write the Qur'an to using the Arabic script to write an indigenous language in Nigeria. The main set of arguments were forwarded by El-Miskin (1989:2) who argued that the very concept of *Ajami*, as well as the actual word itself, were introduced into the indigenous lexicon of what became Nigeria by Bornouan scholars:

In Nigeria, three languages, Kanuri, Fulfulde and Hausa are known to have enjoyed the utilization of the Arabic script to write these languages, a system characterized as *Ajami*. The *Ajami* writing system of Nigeria first emerged in the Kanem-Bornu caliphate of the Saifawa rulers where it was applied to writing the Kanuri language. In the Nigerian context, it was in Borno that this writing system was first called *Ajami*.

El-Miskin further argues that the establishment of Islam, the study of its texts and the instituting of the Arabic language to a status of official importance in Borno, created a culturally hybrid situation that would naturally necessitate a trend of *Ajamization*. In other words, the detailed exposure of the Kanuri speaking population to the culture of Islam and the Arabic language factor was a development that would naturally favor a culturally hybrid system like *Ajami* that depends on the Kanuri and Arabic languages and Islam for its growth.

The linguistic leap from Arabic to *Ajami*, further argues El-Miskin, was made when it became necessary to express Kanuri names in correspondences, where scholars had to invent a scripting system to suit lexical Kanuri names and places. He cited eleventh century *Mahrans* (charters of privilege) of the Kanem-Bornu ruler Mai Umme Jilmi (Umme b. Abd al-Jalil, c. 1075-86) as an important historical document written in Arabic.

Because the subject matter of the *mahram* is Kanem-Bornu, its ulama, its political and educational traditions and its cultural destiny, references would naturally be there in the text to names and places that are not part of the Arabic lexicon as it is clear from the text. Such names of people and places had to be represented in the Arabic script. This

script representation for the Borno words in the Arabic text, the *mahram*, can be regarded as the earliest *Ajami* indicators that were eventually assimilated into the comprehensive *Ajami* tradition which emerged afterwards. (1989:4)

Secondly, El-Miskin also argues that there were many Borno Arabic texts that have made references to Hausa words, and

The representation of such Hausa words in the Arabic script by Borno scholars constitutes a prototype Hausa *Ajamization*. The fact that these words are of Hausa origin and that they are represented in the Arabic script by Borno scholars before the documented emergence of the Hausa *Ajami* tradition should be regarded as crucial in the development of *Ajami* in Hausa. Many such words have been recorded and transcribed in the Arabic alphabet by Ahmad B. Fartuwa in the chapter on "Kano expeditions" of his *sixteenth* century account of Idris Alauma's jihad, *Kitab Ghazawat al-sultan Idris Aluma*. The fact that in this and indeed other texts that have references to Hausaland lexical items of Hausaland origin have been transcribed in the Arabic script by Borno scholars should be regarded as an important phase in the development of Hausa *Ajami* as such transcriptions represent prototypes (El-Miskin 1989:16).

A third textual evidence for the use of *Ajami* from Borno scholars, according to El-Miskin, was in a *seventeenth* century poem titled *Badi Bismillahi* by a Borno scholar, Sheikh Tahir Fairamma, in which the first use of the word *Ajami* appeared.

El-Miskin concludes that this "Borno model" of linguistic domestication of the Arabic alphabet and its subsequent application to both the writing of *Ajami* and the learning of Arabic prevailed in the Qur'anic education and *Ajami* traditions of both Fulfulde and Hausa orientation. The migration of the model to Hausa linguistic settings was made possible due to the prominence of Borno as the center of Islamic scholastic excellence — the fabled *Gabas* finishing school for those seeking scholastic excellence.

Thus three documents, the *mahram* of Mai Umme Jilmi (11th century), Ibn Fartuwa's *Kitab Ghazawat al-sultan Idris Aluma* (16th century) and Sheikh Tahir Fairamma's *Badi Bismillahi* (17th century), provided the main basis for El-Miskin's arguments that *Ajami* as a methodology of expressing indigenous thought through an Arabized script, as well as a specific word must have originated from Borno scholars.

There are quite interesting points and observations to be raised about El-Miskin's hypotheses on the origins of *Ajami* in Nigeria. First, *Gabas* or Borno was indeed a center for scholastic excellence, with its well-organized *Tsangaya* system of schooling. As Bobboyi (1993:198) pointed out,

On the educational front, the *mahrams* were used as instruments for encouraging and sustaining the development of Islamic learning in Borno. The inviolability of the *mallemtis* apparently attracted a large number of students and provided a stable basis for the conduct of educational activities during the Saifawa period and beyond (1470-1808). The teachers in these centres were also counted among the leading scholars of their time, not only in Borno but in much of the central *Bilad al-Sudan*. In the seventeenth century, Shaykh Abu Bakr Zigagema was ranked among such scholars like Shaykh Abd Allah Suka and Shaykh Muhammad b. al-Sabbagh, and from all indications the settlement of Zigage continued to serve as an important centre of scholarship through much of the Saifawa period.

Going by this account, we can deduce therefore that it was during the Saifawa dynasty - almost at the same period with Kano's Sarki Muhammadu Rumfa (1463-1499)-that the Borno was consolidated as a center of learning. Yet the period between 1480 to 1499 was a time for imperious saber rattling among the various kingdoms of the Bilad-as-Sudan, with Kano, Borno, Katsina and Songhay each trying to establish a sphere of military, economic, political and intellectual influence and suspicious of one another (Barkindo, 1988). It was not clear whether these conditions allow for a scholarly migration of *ulama* across the boundaries to enable a sustainable learning system which would establish itself as a ready model.

Secondly, granted the *Mai Umme Jilmi Mahram* did indeed contain the earliest references to the use of *Ajami* script in an indigenous “Nigerian” language, it was not clear to what extent it was part of the curriculum of the subsequent *Tsangaya* schooling network of Kanem-Bornu and its exportability. Further, in the light of the doubts on its *eleventh* century origins, we are still to establish *when* and *the extent* to which it became a standard curricula text for the *Tsangaya* so that its literary influences could reach wide and far - certainly beyond the confines of Kanem-Bornu. Indeed as Bobboyi (1993:184) noted with regards to the authenticity of the mahram:

the text of the *mahram* itself bears an exact date, 978/1570-1 and not 478/1086, the date that Palmer adopted in his translation. Therefore, assigning the document to the eleventh century remains untenable and judgment on the *mahram* itself should be reserved until more evidence is forthcoming.

Third, both the first available text that documented the use of *Ajami* in Hausaland, i.e. Ibn Fartuwa’s *Kitab Ghazawat al-sultan Idris Aluma*, and the intellectual legacy of the Saifawa, were events that happened in the latter part of the 16th century and extending to the 19th century. Yet there is evidence of the scholastic ascendancy in Kano even before Sarki Muhammadu Rumfa’s monumental reign (see, for instance, Al-Hajj 1968, Saad 1979, Mohammed and Khan 1981, Barkindo 1988)—a process that might have indeed provided the bases for forcing local ulama to make the scriptural jump from Arabic to *Ajami* in expressing Hausa lexical terms. Further, although additional collaborative scholarship is needed in this area, the Hausa have been most successful amongst the Muslim communities of northern Nigeria to domesticate the Arabic alphabet in a visually iconographic manner—an innovation traced to Rumfa’s reign.

This is because it is only in Hausa communities that an extensive system of mnemonic sound association between an alphabet and its visuality was developed. Thus the early Hausa *Ajami* teachers linked the letters of the alphabet with a corresponding behavior or structure. For instance, *jîm* (ج) became *jîm saƙe*—the *jîm* that is out of alignment. Further, *sin* (س) without dots becomes *sin kekashasse*—dry *sin*; while *sin* with three dots is *shin mai ruwa* (ش), *sin with water drops* with the three dots iconically

representing drops of water; khaa (ح) becomes *ha karami mai ruwa koma baya*, or “lower case “h” turning back, and with a dot.”

Thus my argument is that the foundation of a systematized language policy was established during Kano’s Sarki Muhammadu Rumfa’s reign—a much *earlier* time-scale than that provided by El-Miskin’s thesis on *Ajami* in Borno when experiments in writing with the adaptation of the Arabic script became a basis for the creation of an indigenized Hausa script, the *Ajami*.

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 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.

Perhaps the most eloquent testimony of al-Maghili’s intellectual influence on Rumfa was the former’s treatises, the most famous being *Taj-al-din fi ma yajibu ala’l muluk* and *Wasiyyat al-Maghili ila Abi Abdullahi Muhammad b. Yakub* (Muhammad Rumfa). 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 treatises 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 treatises written by al-Maghili for Rumfa provided the first recorded framework for the intellectual transformation of Kano on which subsequent Sarakunan Kano built upon. As Barkindo (1988:100) argued,

...by 1480, or middle rule of Sarki Rumfa, the Muslim community in Kano was urban in settlement and international in outlook. Their aspirations were therefore to see that development in their state were at par with those of the older (and considered more advanced) Muslim states. Their economic and social potentialities as well as their close-knit relations with each other made them into a formidable class whose aspirations a ruler could ignore only at his own peril.

It is from these intellectual elite that the language policy emerged to use *Ajami* to express indigenous thoughts. Consequently, the most significant Islamic educational reform 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 which used the familiar Arabic script, but with pure Hausa intonations. 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 basics, Muhammad Rumfa's Islamic scholars created a unique *Universal Basic Education for All* for the young learner in medieval Kano when the rest of what was to become Nigeria was unlettered. This methodology, allowing for linguistic regional characteristics, became more or less adopted gradually throughout Muslim Hausa northern Nigeria.

This position is indeed supported by El-Miskin's hypothesis of scriptural jump from Arabic to *Ajami* by early Muslim scholars in Kano and other parts of Hausaland. There was no reason to believe that such scriptural jump could not have been made independent of Borno since the need to Arabize (*Ajamize*) indigenous names and places in correspondences and treatises, must have arisen in the earliest Muslim communities established anywhere. Furthermore, the need to express distinctly *Hausa* vowels such as *ɗ* *k* and *ɓ*, and in correspondences by Muslim scholars in Hausa-speaking areas points to a further possibility of independent development of *Ajami* in Hausa-land from Borno, which thus could not have served as a model in the development of the script for Hausa usage.

This system sustained itself effectively throughout the Muslim Northern Nigeria right through to the Islamic and intellectual Jihad reforms of Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo which started in 1804. As John Hunwick (1997:210) noted,

A 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), *lughah* (Arabic language), *adab* (manners), *wa'z* (paraenesis), *tibb* (medicine), and *ta'rikh* (history), often, in fact, writing works that crossed these disciplinary boundaries.

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 Hausaland. Thus before the end of the 20th century, an intellectual and scholastic tradition based on Islam existed among the Muslims of Northern Nigeria.

This system-created in Rumfa's reign in 15th century and modified along the centuries-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, 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 have mastered the alphabet and can now communicate their thoughts in Arabized Hausa, or *Ajami*. It was effectively stopped by the British colonial policies (from 1903-1960) which introduced the Romanized alphabet as part of the formal secular

Western schools in 1910. The Muslim Hausa leaders who took over the mantle of leadership from the British in 1960 did absolutely nothing to sustain the literacy legacy of *Ajami*—in contrast with Nationalists in Pakistan who embraced the literary Urdu not only as a means of intellectual expression, but also as a marketer of Islamic identity.

Internal Barriers

While the use of *Ajami* as a Hausa domesticated script has been stymied by colonial policies and subsequent lack of political will, nevertheless there are a series of internal factors that contributed to the malaise in enabling *Ajami* script to be used in daily written discourse in post-colonial Muslim Hausa societies. This, I argue, has resulted in what I call focused literacy, in which Qur'an school pupils have high grasp of Arabic script, but have not been empowered to transfer that scriptural skill to other learning contexts. Interestingly enough, some of these internal factors also affect other indigenous communities where a cross-over is sought from Arabic scripturality and indigenous application of the script to widen access to education.

The Colonial Interregnum

First was the colonial interregnum. The northern Nigerian Emirates were subjugated by the British Colonial administration in 1903 by Lord Lugard on behalf of the British Empire. Without great resources at his control, 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. However, 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, but most importantly, to provide the colonial machinery with a communication system with the natives. As noted by Nikolai Dobronravine (2002:4-5),

Arabic remained the major written language of Islamic West Africa until the early 20th century. For political and other reasons, the colonial government of Northern Nigeria tried to get rid of Arabic supplanting it with Hausa (boko).

Hausa written in Arabic script soon became the major medium of communication between local Muslim rulers and the British officers who did not understand Arabic. F.W.H. Migeod, a colonial officer interested in Arabic-script Hausa writings, described the situation as follows: "As to correspondence in these Mohammedan countries, if a native is writing to a European, and knows that the latter is acquainted with the local language but not with Arabic, the local language will in all probability be used. Many of the letters addressed to political officers in Northern Nigeria are of this nature. One Hausa chief will not, however, correspond with another in his own language, but will invariably use Arabic."

When Hanns Vischer took over as the Director of Education and established the first western school, he ensured further that *Ajami* was not to be taught in any government school. His main arguments against using *Ajami* were articulated in his position paper written in March, 1910 where he stated, inter alia,

1. I have no hesitation at all in recommending that the Government should confine its efforts entirely to spreading the knowledge of writing in the Roman character for the following reasons:
2. By encouraging the study of the Arabic Alphabet the government would be actually assisting in the propagation of the Mohammadan religion.
 - b) The Arabic alphabet is suited to the Arabic language but is essentially unsuited to represent graphically the sounds of any other language. An English or Hausa word can nearly always be spelt in two or three different ways in Arabic character and it is hard to say which of these ways is right. (In point of fact when they write "*Ajami*" (i.e. Hausa in Arabic character) the Mallamai do frequently spell the same word in different ways in the same page.
 - c) The Roman alphabet can be acquired by a Mallam in about a month, and by a boy who does not know Arabic in about two months. It takes the latter more like two years to learn the Arabic character. (The rapidity with which small boys at

Sokoto have learned to read Hausa in Roman character has astonished me).

- d) It is very expensive to print the Arabic character (especially if the vowel points have to be added as is necessary when Hausa is written in Arabic character). The publishing of text books in Arabic character would be difficult and expensive,
- e) Comparatively few Political officers have mastered the Arabic character (the running hand) (Vischer 1910).

Thus with the coming of the British colonial interregnum from 1903, the scriptural ownership of the Muslim Hausa was eroded. Those who acquired education through the Islamic education medium became relegated to the background and in Nigeria's development literature became labeled "illiterate". Those who acquired the new Roman-based literacy gained ascendancy and became leaders of thought and development. Romanization became the new panacea for development, while the development needs of millions of Muslim Hausa who became educated daily through the makhtab and madrassa systems were ignored. Tragically, those who took over the mantle of Nigeria's leadership from colonial administration, and who were very well versed in Islamic sciences, did nothing to preserve this cherished indigenous form of knowledge.

The Jaljaluffiya Jinx

The second barrier was the association of *Ajami* with Arabic, which created a scriptural cult of ownership among Muslim scholars. As Jack Goody (1975:11) noted,

The factors that restrict the full development of literacy are many...First there is the tendency to secrecy, to restrict the circulation of books. In West Africa, such secrecy even gathers round the Qur'an itself, increasing its magical efficacy as well as the power of its custodians. The magical books of medieval Europe and Mesopotamia 'were not intended to be read by human eyes', (Oppenheim 1964:234, in Goody 1975:11).

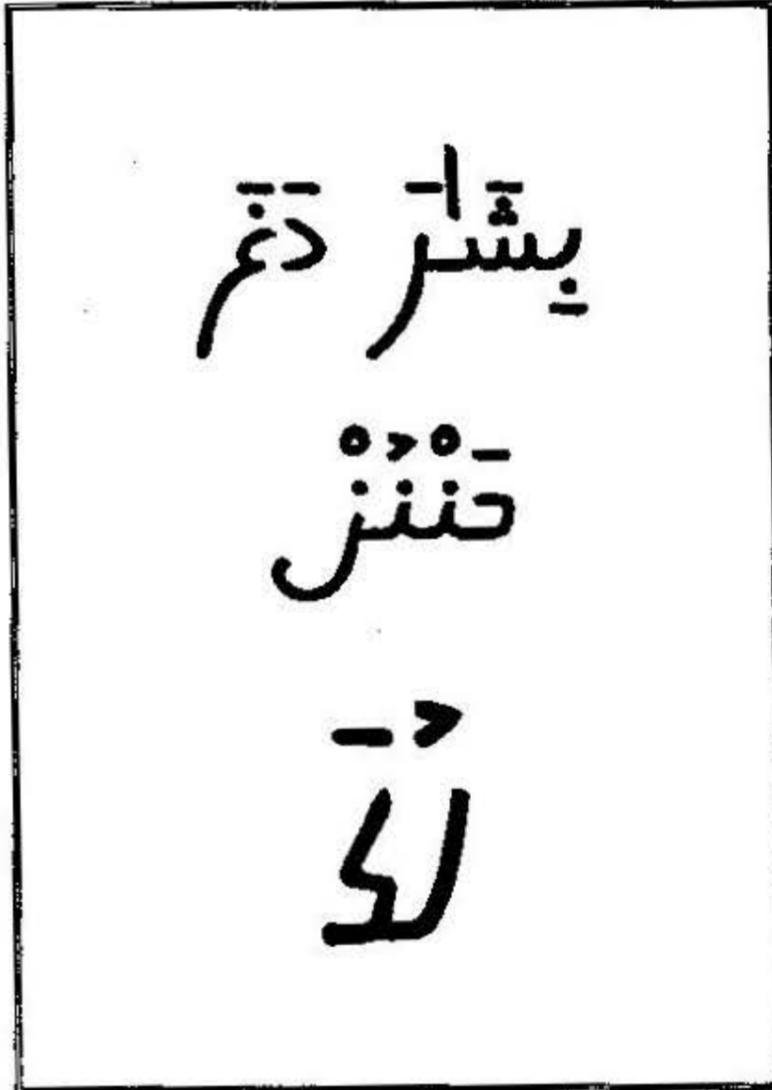
Thus attempts to use the Arabic script in non-religious discourse was not particularly encouraged among the Muslim Hausa. Consequently the vast

literature in *Ajami* written both in pre-jihad and post-jihad periods focused on religious themes. This discouraged the use of *Ajami* in discourses of the civil society, since the learned Mallams did not do it or encouraged it.

If the first barrier was institutional - from both colonial administration and post-colonial interlocutors-the second was deep-rooted internal from the community of *Ajami* scholars themselves. According to Sa'idu Bambale Garba (1989), Hausa scholars have placed a jinx on certain letters of the alphabet—called *jaljalufiyya* consonants—and refuse to use them in any *Ajami* writing. These letters are: **K, J, SH, TH, DHA, KH, Z, I**. Their main reasons for not using them in conversational or non-religious prose was that they were apparently more frequent in Surats of the Qur'an where Allah describes the terrible punishments to be meted out to non-believers; and also none of them apparently appeared in the Surat Fatiha.

Christian Hausa and *Ajami*

Secondly, the Christian Missionaries in Muslim areas of Northern Nigeria started using *Ajami* script in their tract literature from the 1940s especially various aspects of The Bible in the script. This actually broke an unspoken taboo about the use of the Arabic alphabet in non-religious Hausa writing. By using the *Ajami* to write Christian religious literature, the early evangelists realised the power of the written word—and the extensive community literacy level of the Hausa. Examples are given in Plate 1.



Bushara Daga Hannun Luke (The Gospel of St. Luke)

قَارُوا

سُورَةُ ١

① تَمَّ بِيئَرُ فَرَاوُا اَللّٰهُ بِاَ تَلْفَتَا سَمَّ ذَا لَسَا. ② لَسَا كُو
 سَتَرُوْا بِيْ، وَوَلِيْ كَمَّ تَمَّ كَمَّ لَسَنُورُ زُوْوِيْ كَمَّ سَمَّ ذَا: زُوْوِيْ
 اَللّٰهُ كُو بَتَا مَوْبِيْ تَمَّ بِسَرُ زُوْوِيْ. ③ كَمَّ اَللّٰهُ بِاَ بِيْ، تَمَّ
 تَسْبِيْ بِيْرُ لَسَنِيْ: تَسْبِيْ كُو بِاَ تَسْنِيْ. ④ اَللّٰهُ كُو بِاَ تَمَّ
 تَسْبِيْ بَتَا ذَا كِيْ: كَمَّ اَللّٰهُ بِاَ رَبَّ هَلِكِيْ تَسْبِيْ ذَا.
 ⑤ اَللّٰهُ بِاَ بِيْ ذَا تَسْبِيْ بِيْ ذَا: كُو بِاَ بِيْ ذَا بِيْرُ دِيْ
 تَكُوْنُ مَوْبِيْ تَكُوْنُ سَلِيْمَا كَمَّ كُوْتَا هَلِيْا بِيْ تَمَّ
 ⑥ اَللّٰهُ كَمَّ بِاَ بِيْ، تَمَّ سَتَرُوْا بِيْرُ لَسَنِيْ تَمَّ هَلِكِيْ زُوْوِيْ
 بِيْرُ رَبَّ زُوْوِيْ ذَا زُوْوِيْ. ⑦ اَللّٰهُ كُو بِاَ يَ سَتَرُوْا بِاَ رَبَّ
 زُوْوِيْ ذَا بِيْ لَقِيْشِيْ سَتَرُوْا ذَا زُوْوِيْ ذَا بِيْ بِسَرُ سَتَرُوْا تَمَّ كُو
 بِاَ رَبَّ. ⑧ كَمَّ اَللّٰهُ بِاَ بِيْ ذَا سَتَرُوْا سَمَّ تَكُوْنُ مَوْبِيْ
 تَكُوْنُ سَلِيْمَا كَمَّ كُوْتَا ذَا بِيْ بِيْ تَمَّ

Farawa – The Book of Genesis

Plate 1: The Holy Bible in Hausa © United Bible Society, 1932

Further attempts to use the *Ajami* in Christian scripture were made by Dr. Walter Miller of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) who wanted to translate the Bible into Hausa. According to Cooper (2006: 122):

Miller's initial effort was a translation of the Gospel of John into Hausa that was printed in Arabic script and is still used to evangelize among literate Muslim Hausa-speakers. By printing the Hausa text in Arabic script (a form of writing known as *Ajami*, which in Arabic implies nonsacred texts in any vernacular), Miller could introduce Christian writings to Muslims who were already literate. This text had a profound effect on proselytization until the 1930s and influenced later translation work. Given the reliance of Miller and others on literate Hausa Muslims and pilgrims for the earliest drafts, it is not surprising that many of the most important proper nouns in his translation come from Arabic: Allah (God), Ibrahim (Abraham), and Dauda (David).

This Christian attachment to *Ajami* had the powerful effect of steering the Muslim Hausa away from any *Ajami* or *Ajami* literature because of its advocacy in evangelism by the missionaries. Further, in 1971 the C.M.S, Wusasa published an *Ajami* guide – *Ka Koya Wa Kanka Karatun Ajami* (published by N.N.P.C) which is a primer on reading *Ajami* – an effective way of enabling newly converted Hausa converts into understanding the Bible already translated into *Ajami*.

It was only in 1985 that Sheikh Muhammad Muttahki al-Kashinawi was able to publish an *Ajami* translation of 11 Suras of the Holy Qur'an. This was published in Syria, and is not easily or widely available. In fact it seemed to have been done as an experiment in literary studies; for there was no further follow-up.

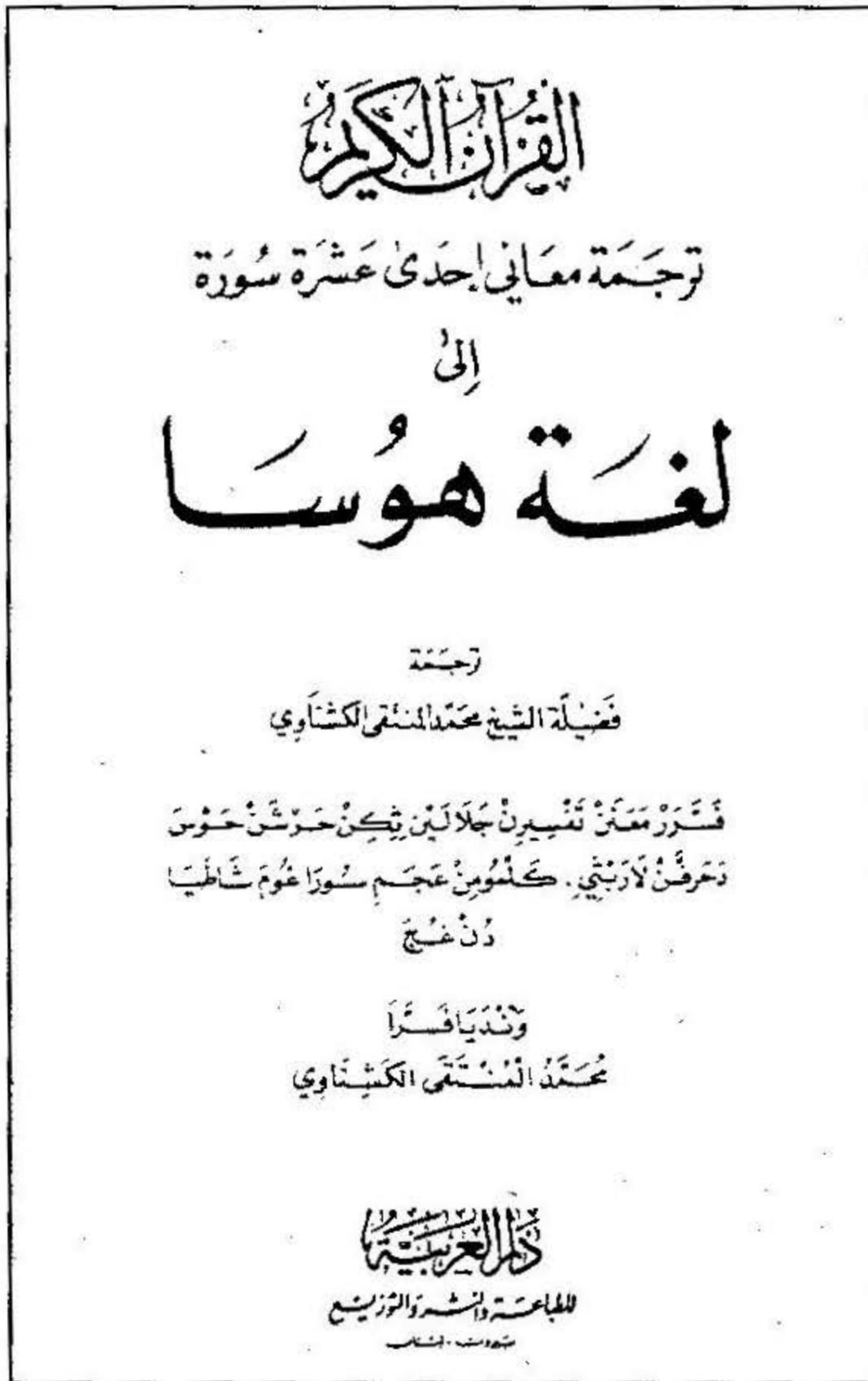


Plate 2 – Hausa Ajami Qur'an

It is thus ironic that the Christian Missionaries were more adroit in taking the advantage of the literary base of the literate Hausa and translated the Bible into *Ajami*. Hausa Islamic scholars, however, were soon enough busy trying to translate the Qur'an into *Roman* Hausa. According to Andrea Brigaglia (2005: 428),

The first Nigerian ever to write a complete translation of the Qur'an into Hausa was in 1979, the well-known ideologue of Islamic reformism and leader of the 'anti-Sufi' organization *Izàla*, Shaykh Abù Bakr Mahmùd Gumì (1922-1992). His translation, published thanks to the initiative of the Saudi Kingdom, provoked

the reaction of the leading authority of the Qàdiriyya Sufi order in Kano, Shaykh Nàsiru Kabarà (1925-1996), who, during the 1950s, had been one of the teachers of Gumì himself. Kabarà's alternative translation was published in a four-volume edition sponsored by the Libyan Daawa in 1988.

Thus the massive potential readership of the Hausa *Ajami* Qur'an was never explored – further alienating the millions of *Ajami*-literate for whom the Roman translation of the Qur'an was a further barrier to understanding the message of the Qur'an in their language.

Christian missionary efforts at using *Ajami* to communicate the gospel often leads to deadly consequences. This was demonstrated in Kano in 1991 when an *Ajami* poster was circulated in Kano City announcing the arrival of the German evangelist, Reinhard Boonke. The poster is shown in Plate 3.



Plate 3: Deadly use of Ajami script: The Reinhard Boonke Incidence, Kano, 1991

The poster, quoting sections of the Holy Bible, promised cure for all ailments and pointed to Jesus Christ (A.S) as the only way to salvation. Written in *Ajami*, it was clearly targeted at Qur'anic school-script literate Muslim Hausa, and this was not taken kindly. The end product was a full-blown riot with all its deadly destructive consequences. Needless to say the planned event was canceled. This use of *Ajami* in Christian tract literature—both in early stages of Nigerian education, and in

contemporary times—was thus another factor that discouraged its widespread acceptance, especially among the Qur’anic school pupils and students.

The Standardization Jinx

Third was the lack of “standardization” of *Ajami* as a script. While Roman Hausa was continuously being reinforced through books, conferences, workshops, seminars and departments in universities and colleges of education throughout the country, yet *Ajami* was restricted, at least in only one university (Bayero University Kano) to a section of a course in the Department of Nigerian Languages. This of course has the effect of stultifying the development of *Ajami* books and materials, simply because it was perceived there was no audience.

Lack of Standardization

A deliberate policy by the colonial administration led to the emergence of a colonial scriptural death trap for *Ajami* in a saying popularized during the colonial era: *Ajami gagara mai shi* (*Ajami*, tough even for its writer)—to further perpetuate the myth of non-standardization. The colonials were quick to come up with the final blow: *boko bokan Ajami* (Romanization, the specter of *Ajami*)—to perpetuate the view that Romanized Hausa will deal a death blow to *Ajami*.

Scriptural Potency

A significant difference in the use and spread of the two scripturalities: Arabic and Roman in all societies was that in the case of Islam and Arabic, there was no intended force in the use of the *script* in daily discourse. Arabic was absolutely necessary to understand the Qur’an; but most Muslim communities the further away from the original Arab progenitors of Islam did not make the leap from Qur’anic proficiency and the use of Arabic in daily discourse. Thus vast Muslim communities can read and write the Qur’an with effective fluency, yet although they may read other Arabic texts outside the Qur’an, they may not comprehend the *meaning*, except for scholars and learners who dedicate their studies to understanding and application of Arabic language in daily discourse. Thus educational policy makers in Muslim lands have, by and large, failed their communities in lack of their attempt to use the Arabic script beyond

Qur'anic studies and into community resource for teaching and learning indigenous knowledge bases.

This is radically different from the "potency" of the Roman script which embed, in its teaching, a mechanism for transferability of the acquired linguistic literacy into the use of language for conversational discourse, a process continuous reinforced by availability of books, and other facilitative methods, including signboards, etc.

Arabic therefore became restricted to a mere *instructional* script and language, rather than to a *community* script. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the Qur'anic schools were structured right from the beginning to be just that the centers where a *Universal Basic Education For All* is provided. Furthermore, the lack of cross-over is perhaps attributed to the awe and respect with which the Qur'an is upheld in all Muslim communities, and thus the feeling of desecration if the Arabic script were to be used in any non-religious contexts—a view reinforced by Muslim scholars who wish to monopolize all knowledge in their communities, and later, by colonialists who wish to destroy any alternative literacies.

The literacy base became empowered with the increasing trade and religious contact between the Hausa on the one hand, and Arab traders and missionaries on the other. This led to an enriched Hausa vocabulary, such at least 1/5 of Hausa words, from 1750-1960, are directly Arabic in origin (Abubakar 1972). These loan words cover not only religious activities, but also day-to-day affairs, objects (see, for instance, Greenberg 1947; Hiskett 1965, and Baldi 1988).

The spread of Arabic script was quite rapid. Within 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 embracement 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 and East Africa, some of the languages of Central Asia, the Indian sub-continent, and a few Slavonic tongues in Europe, adopted the Arabic script. Table 1 summarizes the languages

using Arabic script either continuously or at one stage or other in their intellectual history.

Table 1: Languages and Regions using Arabic Script

S/N	Language	Country
1.	Azerbaijani	Azerbaijan
2.	Bakhtiari	Iran
3.	Balochi	Pakistan
4.	Balti	Pakistan
5.	Farsi	Iran
6.	Fulfulde	Guinea, Niger, Nigeria
7.	Gilaki	Iran
8.	Hausa	Nigeria, Niger, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, CAR
9.	Hindi	India
10.	Indonesian	Indonesia
11.	Ingush	Russia (Chechen)
12.	Iranian	Iran
13.	Jahanka	Senegal, Guinea, Gambia
14.	Jawi	Malaysia
15.	Kanuri	Nigeria
16.	Kashmiri	India
17.	Kazakh	Kazakhstan, Russia, China
18.	Kenuzi-Dongola	Egypt, The Sudan
19.	Kirghiz	Turkey, Russia, Mongolia
20.	Kyrgyz	Kyrgyzstan, China, Mongolia
21.	Kurdish	Iran, Iraq
22.	Kurmanji	Turkey (Latin) Syria, Iraq, Iran
23.	Maha	Somalia
24.	Malay	Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia
25.	Malayalam	India (Kerala)
26.	Mandinka	The Gambia, Senegal, Guinea Bissau
27.	Mwani	Mozambique
28.	Nobiin	The Sudan
29.	Parsi-dari	Afghanistan, Iran
30.	Pashto	Afghanistan, Iran
31.	Punjabi	India
32.	Qashqai	Iran
33.	Sindhi	India, Pakistan
34.	Somali	Somalia

S/N	Language	Country
35.	Sonrai	Niger
36.	Sulu	The Philippines. Indonesia (Kalimantan), Malaysia (Sabah)
37.	Tagdal	Mali
38.	Tajik	Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia
39.	Takestani	Iran
40.	Tamasheq	Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso
41.	Thaana	Maldives
42.	Turkish	Turkey
43.	Turkmen	Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Iraq
44.	Uyghur	China
45.	Urdu	India, Pakistan
46.	Uzbek	Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan
47.	Western Cham	Cambodia, Vietnam,
48.	Wolio	Indonesia (Siluwesi), Malaysia
49.	Yakan	The Philippines, North Borneo,
50.	Zamra	Niger

This table was collated from various language history websites on the internet

It is clear, therefore, that in almost all Muslim communities that suffered some form of colonialism, the basic literary base was eroded and replaced with Romanized literacy. A revival of this lost literary tradition is therefore necessary to provide new knowledge to traditional communities. This revival is not necessarily contemporary; it had been in the process for a very long time but because it was locked into the religious mode, it never made the leap to popular writing. I will look into three case studies from Nigeria, Pakistan and Malaysia where *Ajamized* literature is used as part of public education.

Breaking the Jinx – Enter the Mujahedeen Shehu Usman Dan Fodiyo

For the *Ajami* user, any presentation of knowledge would indeed be a “new knowledge” simply because new concepts and ideas are being introduced to him for the very first time. If the new knowledge in whatever form is to spread, it has to break the historical jinx on the domestication of *Ajami* to secular writings. The first intellectual to do this in Hausaland was Shaykh Uthman ibn Foduye.

When the Shaykh started the religious, educational, political and social reforms of the Hausa community systems in 1804, he was working from an extremely strong scriptural base. An impressive set of curricula materials as well as a learning system had been in existence since about 1400. It is precisely because of this indigenous knowledge base of the Hausa kingdoms that the Shehu was able to create an effective curriculum for indigenous education throughout the Jihad areas. As Dahiru (1998: 335) pointed out,

The Shehu's zeal for Islamic reformation (*Tajdid*) in Hausaland forced him to deviate from the revered age-old tradition of the use of only Arabic for the purpose of dissemination of religious knowledge. Instead he resorted to the use of Arabic script (*Ajami*) in the indigenous languages of Fulfulde and Hausa. He introduced the native language especially Fulfulde as a medium of religious education and wrote poetry as his sermons. Through the use of poetry in Fulfulde with the aid of the Arabic script he was able to versify enormous Islamic literature for the immediate comprehension of his audience. He has indeed established a school of poetry in Hausaland which was hitherto not known before his epoch.

Further, the Shehu resorted to the poems composed in Arabic script to educate the vast Muslims of Hausaland who accepted his ideas of reform. His intention was to bring Islam to the doorstep of every Muslim who accepted his preaching. For the tenets of Islam are contained in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna (practice of the prophet) a primary source which is not readily accessible to the non-Arabic speakers. Therefore the only alternative means for mass education was the use of the vernacular indigenous language in the Arabic script.

The Shehu however more than just used a script; he re-invented it. Seeking to communicate to vast school of *Fulfulde* speakers, he essentially reduced, for the first time, Fulfulde to writing, thus becoming the first to create *Ajami* Fulfulde poems. Armed with scripturalized Fulfulde, classic literary works in Arabic were then translated into Fulfulde. These included the poems of Imru-ul Qays: Zuhair b. An Salma al-Nabigha al-Dhubyani, Labib b. Rabi'ah: Amr b. Khlthum: Tarafa b. al-Abd b. al-Nabbas and

Antara b. Shadad. Also added to this were the *al-Burda* and Hamziyya of Sharaf al-Din Abu Abdullah Muhammad b. Sa'd al-Busir d. 694 A. R/1296 A.D.; the *Ishriniyat* of Abu Zayd Abd alYakhlaftan b. Ahmad al-Fazazi d.627 A.H./1230 A.D. and the *Maqamat al-Hariri* of Abu Muhammad al-Wasim b. All b. Uthman al-Hariri d. 515 A.H./1121 A.D. Thus in addition to the Arabic versions, efforts were made to provide local Fulfulde versions in *Ajami*.

These efforts therefore localized the materials that were hitherto available only in Arabic, and made them accessible to larger number of scholars and learners. Writing in both Arabic and Fulfulde the Shehu proved a versatile curriculum developer, virtually setting the rules for curriculum development, for as Dahiru (ibid) noted,

The use of Arabic script in Fulfulde is exploited in Islamic higher education (Makarantun Ilmi) whereby an existing Arabic text is rendered into Fulfulde. The Fulfulde text translates the Arabic word for word. The translation is rendered by inserting the Fulfulde meaning on top of the Arabic word through the use of a sharp pen. A typical example could be cited from the *Kitab al-Zuhd* of Ali b. al-Husain (d. 917 A.H/1511 A.D.).

Yet despite this sterling example of the use of the Arabic script in teaching Fulfulde and Hausa learners tenets of intellectual scholarship, this particular example of the Shehu was not taken beyond the level of religious discourse. This created an intellectual cul-de-sac in the educational development of non-Roman literate Muslim Hausa.

Attempts were made by National Primary Education Commission (N.P.E.C), which later became Universal Basic Education Commission (U.B.E.C) and the National Mass Education Commission (N.M.E.C) as well as individual state government efforts, notable Kano State, and other agencies such as Arewa House, to create an "Integrated Qur'anic Curriculum" for use in Tsangaya Schools. This aimed at introducing secular subjects into the Tsangaya schools to make them "modern". In October 2008 the Federal Government provided more impetus to the Qur'anic Integration Project (Q.I.P) by disbursing N90 million naira to 15 northern Nigerian State Governments to undertake the integration project

(U.B.E.C 2008). It is still not clear up to 2009 what specific direction the integration would take place, or what role *Ajami* would play in the process. None of the schemes worked as expected principally because the Tsangaya schools were not on a mission to “modernize”. Further, the introduction of a whole new script into their already ordered education system entails a new range of learning behaviors they were not ready to accept.

Efforts made so far to harness the *Ajami* script for education is at individual and community level, principally centered around the Kasuwar Kurmi booksellers in Kano city. A study of the volume of the books and other materials collected over five years and produced by the book sellers indicate an overwhelming focus on religious tract literature—mainly of the textual amulet variety used as incantations in solving one problem or the other. Plate 4 shows examples of some of the works in this direction.



Mallakin Zuciyata

Textual Amulet



Fassarar Akhlari 1

Religious textbook

Aikin Hajji da
Umra (Gumi)

Hajj Manual

Plate 4: *Ajami* educational materials

Still based on individual initiatives, some of the *Ajami* authors I talked to realized that many of their audiences can in fact read Romanized literature—having attended some form of basic modern schooling. This promoted the production of mixed-script reading material—the first of its kind in the history of *Ajami* literature in Nigeria. Two examples of this mixed-script literature, are shown in Plate 5.

Bismillahir Rahmani
Rahim, waallallahu
alannabiyil Karim

fadakarwa mai girma
yakamata jama, a
kusan Duka aikin
ibadayawa Jaba
Ayima sa niyya
wa to don haka aka
shiryawa dan nan-
Niyyovi dan ibadun
musulumci

Sbai da ku wa fa dar
Annabi sallallahu ala-
yhi wa sallama "Inna-
mal A. amalu binn-
tyyati wa Innamali
kullumri inna Nawa.
(Hadisu Sharifu)

1 Sabo da haka
idanza kayi aiwatta
wajen wan ke hannu
dafari sai kace
bismillahi- Nawai tu
su nanul wu ru i

2 wa jen wan kefuskn
kuma ka ce na
nawatu fara iril
wuru i

3 Idan ka zosallar
Azuhur kace

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ الْكَرِيمِ
فِي طَرَفِ الْبَيْتِ
يَا كَمَا تَمَعَهُ كَسْرُكَ
يَا كَرِيمًا يَا وَجْهَ الْكَرِيمِ
وَأَنْتَ دَرَكُكَ أَكْثَرُ وَطَرِ
يُؤَيِّبُكَ مِنْ عِبَادِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ
يُنَادِيكَ كَرَامَةُ الشَّرِيفِ
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَنَعْمَ الْعَمَلُ
الْبَيْتِ وَالْمَلِكِ الْفَرِيدِ
مَنْ تَرَى مِنْ شَرِيحِ
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ الْكَرِيمِ
فِي طَرَفِ الْبَيْتِ
يَا كَمَا تَمَعَهُ كَسْرُكَ
يَا كَرِيمًا يَا وَجْهَ الْكَرِيمِ
وَأَنْتَ دَرَكُكَ أَكْثَرُ وَطَرِ
يُؤَيِّبُكَ مِنْ عِبَادِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ
يُنَادِيكَ كَرَامَةُ الشَّرِيفِ
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَنَعْمَ الْعَمَلُ
الْبَيْتِ وَالْمَلِكِ الْفَرِيدِ
مَنْ تَرَى مِنْ شَرِيحِ

Littafi Ibada Na Daya
Religious Guide

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ الْكَرِيمِ
وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الْمَجِيدِ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَنْذُورًا حَمِيدًا
نِيْلُنْ وَأَنَا حَمِيدًا
ذَوْ شَفَا يَوْمَ الْمَعَادِ
مِي سُونَسْ بَدِي بِقِنْ تَكِيَا
رَبَّنَا بِدَعْنِ أَمْنِي
طَاوْنِيْسْ دُونْ كَرْمِي
وَنَدَّ كَبَا شَوْعِيْسِي
بَابِي هُوْرُوَا بَادْ كَنْفَرَابَا

Bismillahirrahmanirrahimi
wasallallahu alannabiyil karimi
wa ala alihi wasahbibi wasa llama
Bismillahil majidi nai nufin waka jadidi in yabon
Manzo hamidi zu shafa yaumal mi'adi
1. Maison sa ba zai bakin ciki ba
Rabbana ya dadin aminci gun mafificin matunci
Da waninsa don karumci wanda kaba shugabanci
2. Yayi horu bada kangaraba.

Imfiraji 1 - Wakar Majidu 1
Classic Poetry

Plate 5: Hybrid Hausa Literacy – Roadmap to the Future?

This hybrid strategy of mixing the two scripts together works effectively on two levels. First it acknowledges an increasing Romanized literacy rate among members of the Hausa civil society as a result of increased educational enrolment campaigns. Secondly, it reinforces the significance of *Ajami* as a literary script to the same target audience thus providing a transition zone between Romanized to *Ajami* scriptural literacy.

In the civil sphere there seemed to have been little efforts to utilize *Ajami* as part of broad-based informational strategy. One of the first recorded uses of Hausa *Ajami* in a campaign poster is reproduced in Plate 6.



“Yar Aduwa da Aminci”

Plate 6: Gubernatorial Campaign Poster – in *Ajami*, 1999

The *Ajami* poster of Shehu Musa ‘Yar Aduwa in his campaign for the position of the Executive Governor of Katsina State in 1999 remained one of the very few attempts by the political class to acknowledge the existence of millions of voters who are literate but excluded with Romanization.

Other Modern Practices—Urdu in Pakistan

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan as well as the language of wider communication in that country. It is also associated with the Muslim community in India. Urdu is not considered sacrosanct in itself because it is not Arabic, though it is written in the Persian *nasta‘līq* script which, in turn, is based on the Arabic calligraphic style of *naskh*. It also has a number of Arabic loanwords, though, for that matter, it has even more words of Persian and some of Turkish origin. For all these importations of Muslim lexicons, it is a derivative of Hindui or Hindvi, the parent of both modern Hindi and Urdu (Rai 1984).

However, while Urdu was not considered holy, nevertheless it was part of the Islamic culture and Muslim identity in India because it was the language of the dominant elite. When these elite lost its political power in

the wake of British colonialism, it consolidated its cultural power through the techniques and artifacts of modernity. The most important changes created by modernity were a formal chain of schools, the printing press, an orderly bureaucracy and the concept of the unity of India. Schools in North India used Urdu as a medium of instruction (Rahman 2002: 210-11). The printing press created and disseminated books in Urdu in larger numbers than could have been possible earlier. The Pakistani ulama were quick to seize this new technology to spread Urdu, thus gaining cultural ascendancy. This domestication indeed addressed the issue of Urdu standardization right from the start. As Ali (1920: 29) argued:

I wish to draw attention to two points in Urdu Orthography in regard to which European printing presses can render us a great deal of service. My first point may be summed up in a general plea for uniformity of Urdu spelling. My second point urges the necessity of supplementing certain Urdu letters by modified forms to represent distinct sounds. This especially refers to vowel sounds. As to uniformity: the question chiefly arises with reference to the treatment of compound verbal forms or compound forms of other words involving suffixes.

Like in Nigeria, there were also attempts to “Integrate” Pakistani’s Urdu-based “dars-e-nizami” (Tsangaya Schools) with modern secular education in Pakistan. As in Nigeria, this failed in Pakistan because, as Ahmad (2002:2287) pointed out:

One of the common criticisms voiced is that the dars-e-nizami has remained unchanged for at least two centuries. This is how it has to be if the madrasas have to fulfil the role that is expected out of them. It would be foolhardy to expect that they would change their syllabus simply because some well-meaning members of the community feel that times have changed and madrasas should now orient themselves to meeting demands that secular educational institutions should meet. It would amount to digging their very root out of existence. Changes in theological and religious orientation do not come about by reorienting the mode of religious education. It comes out of historical exigencies. As historical exigencies change



Party Political Poster Campaign



The History of Genghis Khan

Plate 8: Old Script, New Knowledge – in Urdu

Thus while the Pakistani intellectual class domesticated the Arabic script and made it possible to create a vast literary base for new knowledge as it unfolds for the Pakistani, the Hausa intellectual class have not been able to do the same with *Ajami*-even on community levels.

Other Modern Practices - Jawi in Malaysia

The Jawi alphabet is one of the earliest scripts used for writing Malay. The Jawi alphabet has existed for many centuries in Nusantara (the Malay world). Its development is linked with the arrival of Islam. It consists of mostly Arabic characters along with some extra characters unique to Jawi. It has been in use since the era of the kingdom of Pasai, to the era of the Sultanate of Malacca, Sultanate of Johor and also Aceh and Sultanate of Patani in the 17th century.

The Jawi script was the official script for Unfederated Malay States during British protectorate. Usage of Jawi was gradually phased out throughout the 20th century, although it has never been officially banned as the Ottoman-Arabic script had been in Turkey. Today, the script is used for religious and Malay cultural administration in Terengganu, Kelantan, Kedah, Perlis and Johor. The Malays in Patani still use Jawi (Paterson and Blagden 1924).

There are factors that threatened the usages of Jawi. One dominant factor is the growing reluctance among local publishers to publish religious books for the public mainly in Jawi. Economic pressures favor publications in Rumi Malay that would include quotations from the Quran printed in Arabic script. This is because fewer Malays are Jawi literate and the situation is exacerbated by the wide availability of Romanized word processing software that can easily accommodate Rumi Malay (Muhammad Mun'im and Haliza, 1994). The consequences were felt by the national Jawi daily newspaper Utusan Melayu, which almost stopped its print run due to lack of sales (Ahmad Zaki 1998).

An attempt to revive the use of Jawi was initialized when the Ministry of Education in Malaysia introduced the teaching of Jawi script in public primary schools. The essence of this is reflected in one of the mission statement of the Department of Islamic and Moral Education Malaysia that is, to ensure that every Muslim child that completes year six at the primary level can read the Quran as well as read and writes Jawi (Yaacob *et al* 2001).

A second approach was the popularization of the use of Jawi through information technology. Research and development in this area was dominated in the early years by academics from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (U.T.M). U.T.M produced the first prototype computer, which can handle the Jawi script, in 1983 (Abu Bakar 1998).

*The Malaysian government's involvement in popularizing the use of Jawi was more active through the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (J.A.K.I.M), which was established by the Malaysian Council of Rulers (Majlis Raja-Raja Malaysia) in January 1997. One of JAKIM's missions is to increase the reverence and acceptance of the Jawi script by using information technology as an enabler (Yaacob *et al*, 2001). A memorandum of understanding was signed between J.A.K.I.M, the Association of Jawi Writing Enthusiasts (P.E.N.J.A.W.I.M) and a software company (Allis Tech) in 1997 and as a result, the JAWINET homepage was launched and was maintained by P.E.N.J.A.W.I.M. These projects enables selected schools with computers that can support and have Internet connections send and receive e-mails, as well as post web pages in Jawi. The project uses a multilingual browser called Tango distributed by Allis Technologies Inc. The end product was an online Jawinet portal*

that enables Jawi to be read and written online. Plate 9 shows the Jawinet Home page.

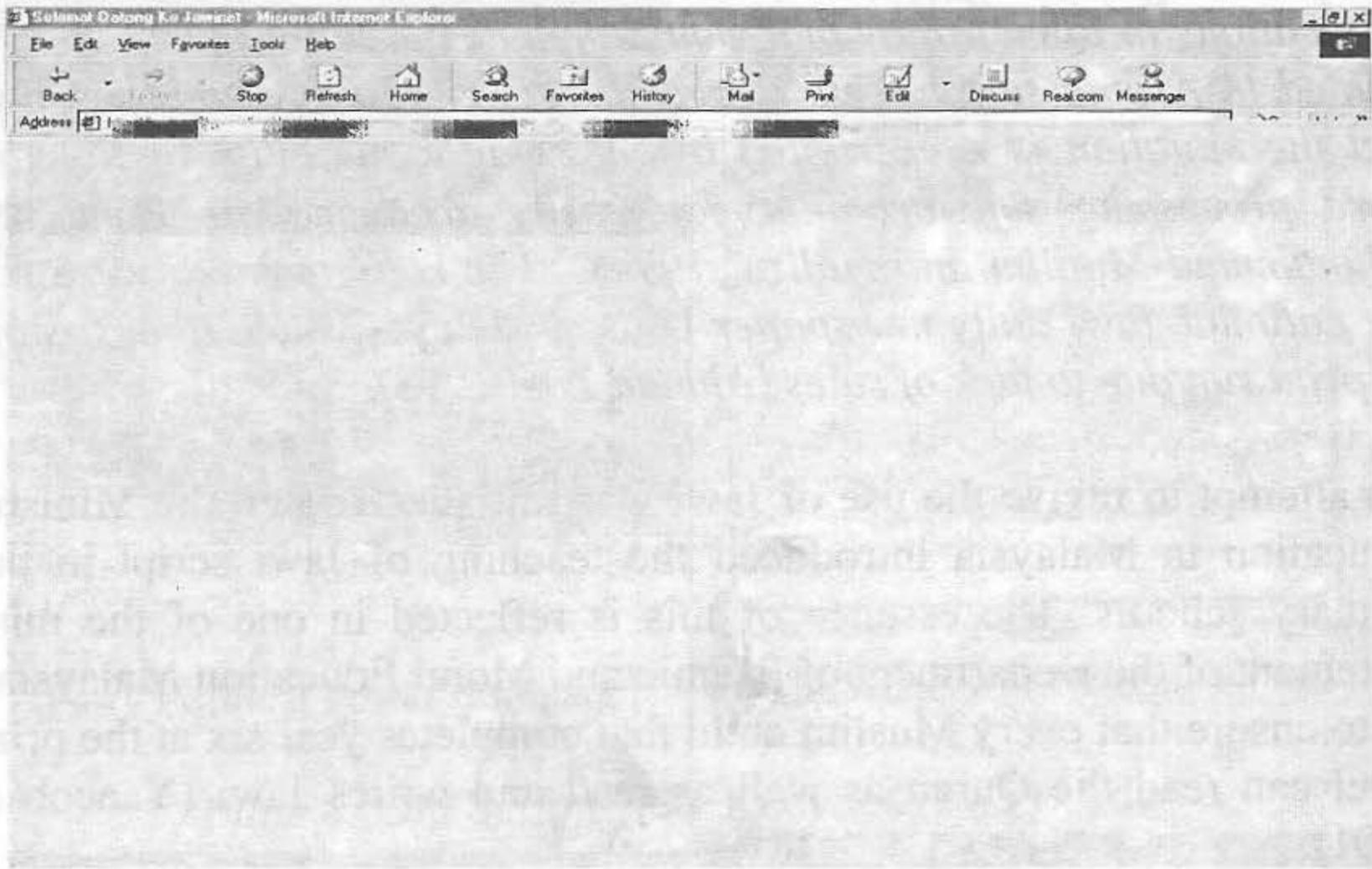


Plate 9: The Jawinet Home page

The University of Malaya currently provides and maintains a Digital Jawi Laboratory, where most of the Jawi script projects were developed.

To provide more support for such initiative, software programmers were encouraged to develop software that makes it easy for primary school children to learn to use Jawi. For instance, a program developed for an undergraduate degree in Computer Engineering at Universiti Malaysia Perlis, called the Jawi Generator Software, generates and creates Jawi script easily (Osman 2008).

Thus in Malaysia, as in Pakistan, there was a structured intellectual effort to domesticate the Arabic alphabet as part of a script for generating new knowledge and education. While in Pakistan, Urdu usage adopted a more community but wider approach, in Malaysia, information and communication technologies, backed by a committed government policy was the main pathway followed to legitimize Jawi as script for educating thousands of learners.

Ajamization of Knowledge

None of the strategies employed in Pakistan and Malaysia seemed to be in place in the use of *Ajami* in Nigeria. Abandoned by the Ulama and the Romanized intellectual Muslim Hausa class, *Ajami* became a lost script, floating in the rivers of goodwill of the few individuals who have a passionate interest in it. Its vast potential for the educating of millions of Tsangaya pupils and graduates remains largely ignored by the civil establishments.

To provide any impetus for new knowledge, and in the light of the failure of the “integration of Qur’anic education” schemes, and with examples of best practices that work in Pakistan and Malaysia, it is clearly possible for the agenda on the *Ajami* zation of Knowledge to be revisited in order to use the script as a basis for generating, preserving and sustaining new knowledge in all spheres.

A clear head-start will be achieved by positing public policy dialogue as interaction between fields which problematizes the relationships between knowledge, power and human development. The basic perspective follows from Gramsci, Foucault and Freire, and has been articulated in the African context by Odora Hoppers (1997) as both a methodology and strategy for ensuring informed participation and thus empowerment. This empowerment strategy entails the involvement of at least three constituencies (be they at national or international levels): individuals and organizations in civil society, the scientific, and especially the academic community, and policy makers. This was the strategy followed in the revival and widespread use of Jawi in Malaysia.

By the “science community” is meant to include individuals based in universities, and the academia in general. But this also includes autonomous authoritative and influential persons in academic or intellectual institutions who are able to contribute to indigenous knowledge on a global or Muslim Hausa (as an example of one nationality) perspectives to indigenous knowledge systems. The role of this constituency will be to interrogate and explicate the epistemological foundations of knowledge systems and the processes of knowledge generation that take place within these institutions. Policy makers in general refer to sectoral ministries. In Nigeria, these include special boards for primary education, Ministries of Education and its various agencies.

The role of policy makers will be to interrogate and explicate the epistemological parameters of current and emergent policy, specifically with reference to the relations between knowledge and power, and perceived limits to policy within existing parameters.

Individuals and organizations in civil society may be drawn from constituencies presently defined as “social partners”: business, labor, critical interest groups such as the Committee on African Renaissance, NGOs, and authorities in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (such as Qur’anic learning) within communities. Their role will be to interrogate and explicate the links between epistemology, cosmology and democratic participation, and to establish how the existing strategies can be further improved (2002).

At a higher level, the “dialogue” between these constituencies also signifies a dialogue between the fields of theory, practice and policy. All three participant constituencies (the scientific community, civil society and policy makers) need to engage with one another in all three fields, but in emphases and roles appropriate to their immediate concerns and potential contributions. The dialogue will deconstruct and reconstruct each field from the perspective of epistemology. The studies of micro-practices should lead to a reconstruction of theories, and to policy critiques and recommendations.

Manuscript Resources for the Development of New Knowledge in Nigeria

In conclusion, I would like to remind us of the community efforts made by the Ajamawa (advocates of *Ajami*) community in Kano specifically to provide knowledge, albeit in a limited form, to *Ajami* readers. We have also seen how other Muslim communities in Pakistan and Malaysia and often parts of Indonesia with Malay populations use the *Ajami* script to promote learning and development of new knowledge in their communities.

To achieve these best practices that work, we need to consider the following strategies for the *Ajamisation of Knowledge*.

- Immediate establishment of a *Center for Ajami Studies* or the *Department of Ajami Studies* in any patriotic University whose purpose will be to refine the study of *Ajami* as a scriptural language. If

the National Universities Commission will not support the establishment of such department or Center, then the patriotic philanthropists of Kasar Hausa should come together and do so.

- A variation of the institutional approach could be the introduction of *Ajami Subject Methodology* in the Education curriculum of Departments of Education, and Colleges of Education which will provide an experimental basis for the full development of *Ajami Study Skills* at an advanced stage.
- Introduction of *Ajami* as a distinct subject along with the current subjects of Hausa, Arabic and English in primary schools as an initial step in institutionalizing the policy
- The standardization myth needs to be revisited. To insist on the standardization of *Ajami* is akin to insisting on standardization of a spoken language ignoring the facts of local dialects and variations. The variations in *Ajami* were based more on the differences in Kano, Zaria, Katsina, Sokoto Hausa dialects, rather than structural problems inherent to the core engine of *Ajami* itself. Language is determined by usage—and unless *Ajami* is used on a mass scale, it cannot be standardized. Indeed the standardization bottleneck is a further attempt to limit the usage of the script.
- Encouragement of the development of *Ajami* word processor. With the massive drive of the Kano State Government to provide I.C.T skills to thousands of Alarammomi (Tsangaya school professors), an *Ajami* word process would certainly poise the *Ajami* script into modernity. Indeed the word processor has been developed on a prototype basis, but never sustained.
- Introduction of *Ajami* as a distinct subject in Tsangaya schools there is certainly support from the Federal Government which provided N6 million Naira to 15 northern Nigerian states to implement an education program for the Almajiri (U.B.E.C 2008).
- Publishing of books in all genres aimed at increasing and enhancing mass reading habit among *makarantun allo* youth. This will have to rely on private initiative of writers. The *fact* that bold and innovative Hausa language novelists (e.g. Yusuf Adamu, Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino, Bala Anas Babinlata, and Balaraba Ramat Yakubu) have succeeded in awakening the society through the private publishing of new Hausa novels and creating the Contemporary Hausa Novel means that a network of printing, distribution and absorption of books written in *Ajami* exists. For instance, In East Africa, *Swahili*-language

translations now include works by African as well as Western writers. *Swahili* authors who have received local and international acclaim include the novelists Euphrase Kezilahabi and Mohammed S. Mohammed and the dramatists Ebrahim Hussein and Penina O. Mlamba of Tanzania, as well as the Kenyan novelists Ali Jemaadar Amir, Katama Mkangi, and P.M. Kareithi. What will make this process easier in *Ajami* is the fact that *Ajami*, unlike say *Urdu*, or *Swahili* is not really a totally different language from the conventional Hausa language; its strength and character comes from its *written* rather than spoken form.

- Translating classic Hausa literature books into *Ajami*. Instances that come to mind here include *Magana Jari Ce*, *{aramin Sani {u}umi*, *Da'u Fataken Dare*, *Ilya {an Mai {arfi*, *Ikon Allah* etc. Noted contemporary academic *Ajami* scholars can be sponsored by N.N.P.C to do this in collaborative partnership with community *Ajami* scholar. After all, N.N.P.C sponsored a competition in 1978 to boost creative reading habits among Hausa youth. Well they now have about six million more Hausa youth from the *makarantun allo* streams — which means a larger market! Both the 1933, 1978 and 1980 literary competitions ignored the creative reading habits of millions of our youth. This would be an opportunity for N.N.P.C to attempt to redeem itself.
- Writing *Ajami* secular scientific texts—Health, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Astronomy—in *Ajami* for civic use.
- Publishing classic *Ajami* literary materials in all aspects of history, sociology and political affairs in {asar Hausa. These could eventually be housed in a special *Ajami Library* which will be under the Library Board and serve as a resource center for both the *mallams*, their pupils and numerous researchers. This will also rely on private initiatives, but with institutional support—as in the case of Jawi in Malaysia.
- Creating *Ajami* study centers in scholastic communities that provide support group and discussion clusters for the advancement of literary works in *Ajami*. In Kano, for instance, *Madabo* would be an ideal starting point, as it was the site of the first university in Kasar Hausa. *Ajamawa* devotees could start this, and subsequently, with support from many people, it could evolve fully into an intellectual movement.
- Incorporating *Ajami* in signboards, road posts and other buildings, both by the Government and individuals. Despite the hundreds of years of *Ajami* scholarship in Kano, only one building, Gidan Goldie, has an *Ajami* signboard — and this was written in early 1920s. Monumental

building such as Gidan Murtala, Museums, Hospitals and even Government House remain Romanized.



Museum in Kano, Nigeria, with Roman script



Museum in Aceh, Indonesia with Jawi script



Gidan Goldie Kano, the only public building (colonial for that matter!) to acknowledge Ajami

Endnotes

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