Arab Images in African School Curricula – A Study of the History of Learning and Contemporary Schooling Systems in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract
Discussing Afro-Arab "mutual perceptions" in the school curricula is essentially an historiographic excavation of the nature of the Afro-Arab relationship over the last millennia. The nature of this relationship must therefore divided into segments that correspond the to the establishment of the nation-states south of the Sahara as they came under imperial colonial control. Indeed, such control, which disrupted hundreds of years of mutuality and racial formation, created a new wedge that seeks to reinforce, rather an consolidate, racial and religious divides between Africans and Arabs in the school curricula. Prior to the colonial interregnum, the flow of scholarship was smooth and based on high mutual respect. After colonialism, school textbooks on History, Social Studies and Islamic Studies started to reflect a more "Africanist" perception of history of the influence of Arabs on African populations. This paper looks at the two broad strands of historical scholarship – pre-colonial and post-colonial as it affects the development of scholarship and mutuality between Arabs and northern Nigeria, with particular reference to Kano Hausa societies.

Introduction

This conference has set itself a very laudable and significant focus of Afro-Arab mutuality in school curricula. At the same time, it becomes challenging to determine the extent of the perceptions of Arabs in Nigerian curricular materials. The main reason is the long history of mutuality between Arab North Africa and the old political and commercial empires of northern Nigeria, particularly Kanem, Katsina and Kano. Centuries of mutuality and interactivity has created a singular mindset that sees little difference between Arab and Hausa particularly in areas of food and clothing (Adamu 1968, 2003), language (Abubakar 1972) and religion (Smith 1997).(I will restrict myself to Hausa mutuality in this presentation). Historically, therefore, the northern Nigerian Hausa Muslims had always seen the Arab world, particularly north Africa, as a source of spiritual and intellectual inspiration. As noted by O'Brien (1999:12):

> Saudi Arabia has become a potent source of cultural influence and the center of political and economic power to which many Hausa look for a model of development.

The picture is not always rosy, however, for as Dunstan M. Wai (1983:187) also noted,

> The twelve centuries of contacts between sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab Middle East have been asymmetrical. Arabs have penetrated Africa, enslaved some of its inhabitants, and imported their religion (Islam) and language (Arabic). They have felt superior as the conveyors of a 'civilised ' culture, and have generally tended to be condescending towards those regarded as 'inferior'. In their turn, many Africans today still view Arabs as cunning, crafty, dishonest, and untrustworthy, not least because their racial and cultural arrogance continues to revive 'memories' of the rampages of slave traders in their region.

Despite these mutual hostilities that lie underneath the surface, the relationships between Arabs and northern Nigeria were not based on slavery but scholarship and trade in commodities. In the eighth century of the Christian Era, two currents of Kharijism flourished, namely, Ibadism (which survives today in the Maghrib: at Mzab in Algeria, at Djerba in Tunisia and at Djebel Nafusa in Libya, as well as in Oman and in Zanzibar), and Sufrism. These currents, which had remained highly democratic since their establishment in Arabia, came into contact with, and subsequently merged with, the tradition of clan-based democracy of the Imazighen (as the Berbers call themselves) of North Africa.[1]

Thus, by the eighth century of the Christian era, the scientific and technical achievements of Greece and Persia had been reformulated and developed by this current of Islam established in the Maghrib, as well as in Oman at the same time. But whereas access to knowledge in the highly hierarchical society of ancient Persia, and even in the limited democracy of Greece, was reserved for an elite, the Ibadites made knowledge available to all, with a concern to provide widespread education that would not occur again in human history until after the French Revolution. A transition may thus be said to have occurred from an initiatory conception of knowledge to a universalist conception. Indeed, the Ibadites would soon abandon the offensive Holy War as a means of disseminating their doctrine, opting instead for education as a way of spreading knowledge.[2]

By the end of the eighth century, the doctrine was crossing the Sahara and would lead to the development in Black Africa of the only version of Islam that would be known there for centuries and that would accompany the expansion of the Soninke, and later the Malinke, diasporas, which Arabic speakers refer to as Wangara and which is today known as Dyula. Dyula Islam, codified in the fifteenth century by al-Hajj Salim Suware, may be regarded in its main lines as a legacy of Ibadism and indeed, one of the main Islamizing Wangara-Dyula groups, the Saghanogha, was Ibadite in the mid-fourteenth century, according to Ibn Battuta.[3] The emergence of this universalist, rationalist current of Islam south of the Sahara was so close in time to its establishment in North Africa that we cannot but conclude that the starting-point of the road of universalist rationality is the North Africa-Muslim West Africa nexus, and that this movement began in the eighth century of the Christian era.[4]

Afro-Arab Influences in Northern Nigerian Islam in Medieval Era

Thus the Islamic reforms of Mansa Musa in Mali (1312-1337, most memorable for his Hajj in 1326) created a large pool of Muslim Mandingo (Wangarawa) missionaries who became labeled the Dyula. Merchants to the core, these Muslim missionaries traveled from place to place spreading Islam. They arrived Kano in about 1380 during the reign of Yaji (A.D. 1349-1385) who readily accepted Islam from them and ordered it to be the State religion. Kano became officially an Islamic State since that year. This marked the beginning of Islamic ascendancy in Kano, and the diminishing of pagan religious practices. The community of Hausa who refused to accept Islam and maintained their religious identity subsequently became Maguzawa (those who ran away). Subsequent rulers in Kano strengthened the Islamic stand and this made Kano more attractive to other Muslim immigrants. According to the *Kano Chronicle*, the main source of the history of Kano,

> In Yakubu's (1452-1463), the Fulani came to Hausa land from Mele (Mali) bringing with them books on divinity and etymology. Formerly our doctors had, in addition to the Koran, only the books of the Law and the Traditions. The Fulani passed by and went to Bornu, leaving few men in Hausa land…At this time too the Asbenawa came to Gobir and salt became common in Hausaland. In the following year merchants from Gwanja began coming to Katsina; Beriberi came in large numbers and a colony of Arabs arrived. Some of the Arabs settled in Kano and some in Katsina. There was no war in Hausaland in Yakubu's time. He sent ten horses to the Sarkin Nupe in order to buy ten eunuchs. The Sarkin Nupe gave him twelve eunuchs (Palmer 1908, p. 77).

It is significant that the arrival of the Fulani to Kano coincided with the arrival of Arab merchants from north Africa within the same time period. Both the two groups of migrants brought with them new ideas of scholarship, statecraft and mercantile capitalism. Their foreign – and clearly superior status in terms of wealth, knowledge and skills – made them an elite class within a community that was thirsty for knowledge and commerce. Using their elite status, the two groups remained more or less exclusive. As Smith (1997:32-33) noted,

> Like Fulani, the local Arabs willingly accepted native women as wives or concubines while reserving their daughters for their kinsmen and fellow Arabs; but while Fulani exclusiveness helped to reinforce their specializations as pastoralists or as a closed intelligentsia in which Islamic learning and ideals were preserved and transmitted within lineages linked by kinship and marriage, among the Arabs ethnic closure enabled them to preserve their delicate and extensive commercial arrangements as a corporate ethnic monopoly. However they may have disapproved the local practice of Islam, as a protected group of alien merchants, these Arabs apparently withheld their comment and confined their public interests to the market and the caravan trade. Some adopted the local practice of slave farming in internally autonomous settlements under resident slave headmen. Occasionally, they served the chief or his treasurer, the Ma'aji, as scribes, creditors, commission agents or simply as translators and computers. As we have seen, they were also probably responsible for compiling and maintaining the local chronicle, whether with the ruler's support we do not know. Otherwise, they kept away from the court, and administered their community affairs after their own customs, as their descendants still do.

By the time of Muhammad Rumfa (1463-1499) Islamic scholarship was massively boosted by more immigrant influx of clerics and scholars. Most notable were another group of Wangarawa clerics from Mali (Al-Hajj 1968, Lovejoy 1978), and the noted Islamic scholar Al-Maghili from north Africa. Kano therefore became a second home for many north African Arabs. As Paul Staudinger reported in 1885 (during the reign of Muhammad Bello, 1882-1893):

> Kano is the capital of the richest and most flourishing province of present-day Hausaland. A tremendous quantity of treasures, that is according to the standards of the natives, lies stored within its walls…The reason for the prosperity of this metropolis is to be found…in the fact that Kano is the trade emporium for the whole of Hausaland and moreover the southern-most market of the Arabs. Perhaps sixty to eighty North Africans are permanent residents, but during the dry season several hundred of them live here. It is also then that huge caravans from different Tuareg tribes arrive with one of the most indispensable items of trade amongst all people — salt…So here is a confluence — all the articles of trade from the English and the French, from the Niger and the Benue, together with all the European and local articles which the Arabs bring…A good many of the skilled Semitic traders own permanent houses and live here married to natives (from Moody 1967, pp. 35-53).

The increasing influx of the Fulani clerics and herdsmen into the Kano basin, attracted by Kano being a center of scholarship as well as a fertile land ensured that a

significantly large number of Fulani settled in the territory. Thus gradually the Fulani and the Arabs merely became blended in the multi-ethnic mix of medieval Kano. And Kano did have that unique property: the ability to swallow up individuals and submerge their individual identities while providing them with a new one. The scholastic tradition the Fulani brought with them complement the efforts of the Wangarawa clerics and their descendents into further enriching the scholastic status of medieval Kano.

Afro-Arab Influence in Islamic Curricula

The end products of such scholastic flows were a structured educational system that is based on North African models of scholarship. This was because as Islam expanded to other regions and came into contact with other indigenous traditions and languages, it became necessary to create a cadre of Muslim experts who would develop sophisticated writings and textbooks on *Fiqh* - Islamic jurisprudence, *Sunna* – Prophet's traditions, *Hadith* – Prophet's sayings, and *Tafsir* - the interpretation of the Qur'an, to cater to the needs of non-Arab Muslim populations. Thus began the tradition of *Madrassa*, the center for higher learning the initial purpose of which was to preserve religious conformity through uniform teachings of Islam for all.

The first known Madrassa is said to have been established in 1005 by the Fatimid caliphs in Egypt. This Madrassa taught the minority Shi'ite version of Islam. It had all the ingredients of an educational institution. It had a library, teachers for different subjects were appointed and students who were admitted were provided with ink, pens and papers free of charge. An interesting fact about this Madrassa is that a catalogue of inventory of this Madrassa prepared in 1045 revealed that it had 6500 volumes on different subjects, including astronomy, architecture and philosophy (Anzar 2003).

When the Sunni Muslims conquered Egypt, they revamped the Shi'ite version of Islam in this Madrassa and replaced it with the Sunni version, destroyed the books and manuscripts that seemed contrary to their version of Islam and preserved the volumes that related to the earthly knowledge. A huge number of books were taken to Baghdad where a Seljuk Vizier called Nizam-ul-Mulk Hassan Bin Al-Tusi, established the first organized Madrassa in 1067 (Anzar 2003).

In the new Madrassa established by Nizam-ul-Mulk two types of education were provided: scholastic theology to produce spiritual leaders, and earthly knowledge to produce government servants who would be appointed in various countries and the regions of the Islamic empire. Later, Nizam-ul-Mulk established numerous Madrassas all over the empire that in addition to providing Islamic knowledge imparted secular education in the fields of sciences, philosophy and public administration and governance. Nizam-ul-Mulk is considered to be the father of the Islamic public education system. He himself is the author of a renowned book (among early Muslims) on public administration called *Siyasat Nama* (the way to govern)(Haqqani 2002).

Subsequent development of education in northern Nigeria followed this pattern, and the textbooks used were almost exclusively from North African scholars. A detailed analysis of the curricula provisions of the higher Islamic education system shows this. There are three broad "faculties" in the Ilimi school, defined by the list of books each

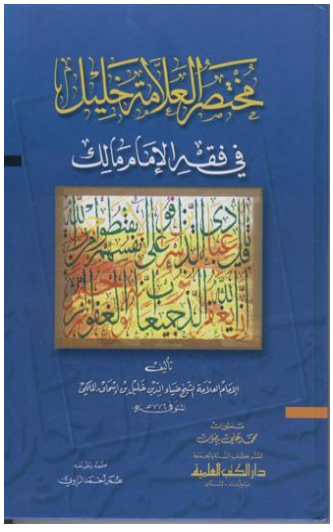
"faculty" has as recommended reading. Readings of these books are done in most cases concurrently.

The first cluster of books (at least 10) is based on *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence). Some of the recommended books in this "faculty" include a virtual encyclopedia of rules and regulations of Tauheed (oneness of Allah) called *Qawa'idi,* of unknown authorship but allegedly written by one of Yan Doto scholars based around Zamfara/Katsina axis before the 1804 jihad of Dan Fodiyo, *Al Akhdari* (Sheikh Allama 'Abdu'r-Rahman al-Akhdari), *Qurdabi* (Yahaya Al-Qurtubi), *Ishmawi* (AbdulBari Al-Ashmawiyyu Al-Rufaiyyu), *Nathmu Muqadimaati ibn Rushd* (Ibn Rushd), *Iziyya* (Abil Hasni Aliyu Malikiyyi Al Shazaliy), *Risala* (Muhammad 'Abdullah ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani), *Askari*, *Mukhtasar Allamatul Khalil* (Sheikh Dhiya'ul Deen Khaleel bn Ishaaq Al Maliki). A sample of these books as sold in Kano markets is shown in Plate 1.

Qawa'idil Islam, Anon

Ishmawi of AbdulBari Al-Ashmawiyyu Al-Rufaiyyu

Qurtubi of Yahaya Al-Qurtubi

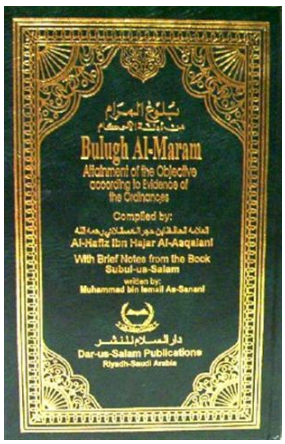


Akhdari of Sheikh Allama 'Abdu'r-Rahman al-Akhdari

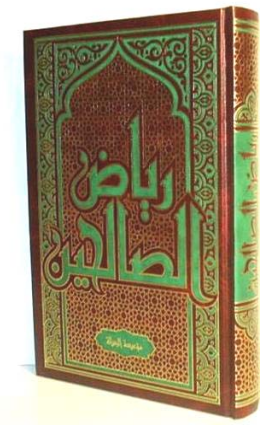
Mukhtasarul Allamatul Khalil of Sheikh Dhiya'ul Deen Khaleel bn Ishaaq Al Maliki

Plate 1: Jurisprudential Beginnings of Ilimi Schools, Northern Nigeria

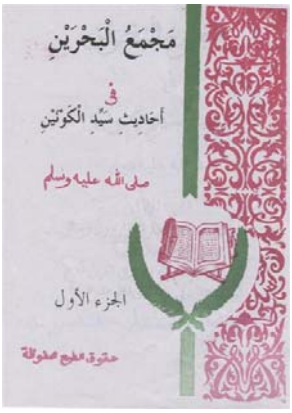
The next faculty is that of Hadith studies. Books in this faculty (also at least 10) included *Arba'un Hadith* (forty Hadith collection of Imam Al-Nawawi focusing on general guidance for pious living). Books read in conjunction or earlier than *Arba'un Hadith* include *Majmu'ul Baharain* (Kamal Deen Adamu Na Ma'aji, about 1980s, Kano region). Others include *Lubabul Hadith* (Abdul Rahman bn Kamal Al Suyuti), *Mukhtarul Ahadis* (Hashimi), *Bulugul Maram* (Ibn Hajr al-Asqalani), *Riyad As-Salihin* (Abi Zakariya Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi), *Muwatta* (Malik). The next stage is that of pure specialization in which there are at three different routes and Hadith scholars. These included *Sahih Buhari*, *Jami'us Sageer* (Suyuti), and *Tajj*. Plate 2 shows some of these recommended texts.



Bulugh Al-Maram of Al Haafidh Ibn Hajr Al-'Asqalani



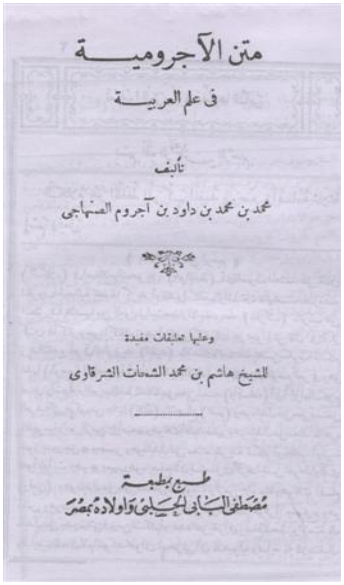
Riyad As-Salihin of Abi Zakariya Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi



Majmu'ul Baharain of Kamal Deen Adamu Na Ma'aji

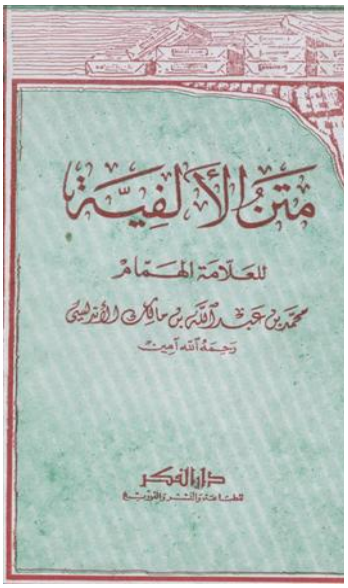
Plate 2: Delving further into the Islamic curriculum

The third learning faculty is devoted to Arabic grammar, lexicon, poetry and fiction. Grammar and Lexicology includes books such as *Ajuruma* (Hashim bn Muhammad Al Shaqawi), *Matnil Qadri*, Mulha, *Ibn Duraid*, *Lamiyya*, *Alfiyya* (Muhammad bn Abdulbaqi bn Malik Al'andalusi) *Hisnul Rasin* of Abdullahi Fodio), poetic works such as *Hamziyya* and *Al-Burda* (Sharaf al-Din Muhammad al-Busiri), *Ishriniyat* (Abi Bakarim Muhammad bn Malikiyyi bin Al Fazazi),) *Badamasi*, *Tantarani* (Anon), *al-Maksura* **(**Abu Bakr Muhammad b. al-Husain Ibn Duraid) *Daliya* (Abi Abdullahi Muhammad bn Nasiril Dar'i), *Shu'ara* and a fiction work, *Muqamat Al-Hariri* (Badi' al-Zamdn al-Hamadhdni). Some of the textbooks are shown in Plate 3.



Ajuruma (Hashim bn Muhammad Al Shaqawi)

Al-Burda (Sharaf al-Din Muhammad al-Busiri)



Al-Fiyya (Muhammad bn Abdulbaqi bn Malik Al'andalusi)

Plate 3: Linguistic and poetic elegance in Makarantun ilimi textbooks

Tafsir is the final stage of the scholastic learning. Tafsir al-Jalalyn of al-Mahalli (d.1459) and al-Suyuti (d.1505) was used.

The most distinguishing characteristic of this stage of learning is that it need not occur in the same place. A student can move from school to another, attaching himself to a scholar who specializes in one aspect or other of the broad curricular offerings of this stage of life long learning.

Further, although the learning has a specific structure, nevertheless it also uses the liberal "course unit" system in that a student can combine studies of books from across the faculties, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Curricular Concurrency in Ilmi School

Madrasa Specializations		
Fiqh	**Hadith**	**Grammar and Syntax**
Qawa'idi	Arba'un Hadith (40)	
Ahlari	Arba'un Hadith (40)	
Ishmawi	Lubabul Hadith (400)	
Qurdabi	Lubabul Hadith (400)	Ajuruma/ Al-Burda
Ibn Rushd and Ibn Ashir	Mukhtarul Ahadis (2000)	Matnil Qadri/ Ishriniyat
Iziyya	Mukhtarul Ahadis (2000)	Mulha/ Badamasi/Tantarani, Daliya
Risala	Bulugul Maram	Mulha/
Askari	Riyadal Salihina/Muwatta	Alfiyya/Shu'ara
Mukhtasar, etc	Buhari or Jami'us Sageer or Tajj	Hisnul Rasin/Muqamat

This system of learning is the same across the Muslim world, perhaps with slight modifications as to the types of books studied. For instance, an account of the system in Central Asia reveals that most of the children who entered the *maktab* were able to at least read. There, in the *maktab* schools, in addition to reading and writing, children were taught elementary arithmetic, history, and geography. These *maktab* schools were held mostly in mosques, though often private homes were also used. *Maktab* schools could be considered to be much more secular and were usually taught or rather supervised by a well-established scholar who employed several assistants. Some *maktab*, usually in large urban centers, even offered courses in grammar, poetry, physical education, manners, and famous proverbs. In some *maktab* more than one thousand students were enrolled (Nakosteen 1963 p. 38).

Thus the influence of Arabs on northern Nigerian educational system is immeasurable. At the same time, the curricular materials are religious and deal with the reinforcement of the Islamic religious doctrine. As sociology texts, they merely provide a template for a universalized *Muslim*, rather than *Arab* behavior, and consequently contain only imageries of Arab societies as imageries of *Muslim* societies. This was to change with the arrival of Christian colonialism.

The Colonial Interregnum

The northern Nigerian Emirates were subjugated by the British Colonial administration in 1903 under Fredrick Lugard. 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 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),

> 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 ensure 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 take it that there can be no doubt at all that there is no idea of keeping the native permanently in a state of tutelage and that the objectives of the Government must be that outlined in B. Granted this 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 later 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).[11]

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 maktab and madrassa systems were ignored.

The creation of a national directorate for education by the colonial administration in 1910 in Kano and the subsequent merger of northern and southern Nigerian protectorates and the creation of the Nigerian state in 1914 provided a secular curriculum to Nigerian education, although based on Christian ethos and substrata.

Curriculum and Textbook Development in Nigeria

In August 1969 the Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Center (CESAC) of the University of Lagos, with funding from the Ford Foundation and the Nigerian Government, convened a National Curriculum Conference in Ibadan that provided a road-map on the future of Nigerian education. One of the more concrete outcomes of the conference was the blueprint of what eventually became the National Policy on

Education (NPE), which was presented to the public in 1973. Subsequent editions of the National Policy on Education merely reinforce the original broad policy guidelines of the policy concerning the structure of education in Nigeria which radically departed from the inherited British pattern to a more American structure.

Prior to the NPE the curriculum, as it were, in Nigerian schools was controlled by West African Examinations Council (WAEC) – it was basically syllabus outlines of the topics that will be examined at the end of secondary education. Textbook writers faithfully adhere to these syllabus topics, such that the best textbook in any subject is the one that comprehensively covered the WAEC syllabus for that subject. The NPE facilitated a more structured mechanism for creating what can be called a curriculum – rather than topic guidelines. To facilitate the proper development of curricular guidelines, the CESAC soon merged into National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in 1988 with the mandate, amongst others, of overseeing the issues of curriculum development in the country. The first curricular outlines were issued in 1983 for primary and junior secondary schools, while those for senior secondary schools were issued in 1988.

Textbook writers sustained the earlier strategies of studying the curricular guidelines and producing textbooks that are reflect the topics in the guides. Surprisingly, and contrary to curriculum development practices all over the world, the developers of the guidelines did not develop corresponding curricular materials in the form of teacher guides, student workbooks and other reference materials. The curriculum guidelines do contain sections that guide the teacher on the statement of each topic, its treatment and its evaluation; but this departed from the usual curriculum development strategies all over the world. In any event, independent authors emerged that took the process of writing textual materials to accompany the curriculum. The entire process is controlled by book publishers who often rely on high recognition factor of the author to commission a textbook.

The textbooks in Nigerian education are basically written by southern Nigerian and predominantly Christian authors who approached the process from a secular perspective. The securilarity of the Nigerian curriculum is a carry-over of the institutional security of the nation itself. Ironically, however, despite this avowed secularity, there is a sustained sheer animosity towards things Islamic, and Arabic was the first port of call for anti-Islamicist and anti-Arab forces in Nigeria.

Bigotry and Textbook Imageries – Arabs in Other Curricula

Representations of Arabs in the school curricula is most common in countries with either direct contact with Arabs (e.g. Israel) or where the media creates a direct focus on Arabs and Arab affairs. There are three main sources of concern by textbook developers of about Arabs in societies outside Arab culture.

First was the snare of global education – where curriculum reformers try to incorporate the current events concerning the mostly negative impact of Arabs on world affairs. Such focus is more an educational tool to provide a basis for understanding “them” to either deal with “them” or at least avoid “them”. Secondly this global view is accelerated by media in developed countries that perversely portray turmoil and violence in Arab societies – providing all the more reason to study “them”. Finally, societies with fluid demographic structures that absorb rapid

immigration pose a new challenges of constructing new identities for immigrants, and therefore this calls for a review of school curricula to alter previously held images – especially as "they" are now trying to become part of a multicultural "us". This is more so in countries with a large Muslim immigrant population, such as the United Kingdom.

Despite this cultural accommodation, societies that allude to liberal democracy and secularism are not immune from bigotry and racism in textbook production. For instance, Ruth Zinar (1975:34), quoting the American textbook, *How Music Grew from Prehistoric Time to the Present Day* by Marion Bauer and Ethel Peyser (1939) shows how racism and bigotry become embedded in curricular messages to children in the United. States. For instance, in noting the relation between race and music, Bauer and Peyser wrote that

> …All savage music has similar traits…The African show[s] us the steps from the primitive…to…music as an art…these people are a bridge between prehistoric music and …the civilized world. [p. 81]. This love of the beat is strong in the savage…These savages [i.e. "Africans"] sang groups of tones which **we** call chords…It is curious that these primitive people should have used methods more like our own than many of the races that had reached a much higher degree of civilization. [p. 181]. Like other savages, the African Negro loved rhythm better than melody…They had no stringed instruments [p 191]. It is only a little more than a hundred years ago since **we** stopped bringing these primitive people into America. [p. 181].

Arabs did not fare much better either, for according to the same authors,

> …The Arabs, on whom we look today as almost barbarians…[p. 551. The Arab's fondness for strings is proof that they were …sensitive and fine, while most of their neighbors liked the drums and brasses much more, showing a lower grade of civilization. [p. 601].

A recurrent theme was of course linking Arabs and Islam (ignoring the millions of Arab Christians). In studying the interpretation of Islam in American schools, Douglass and Dunn (2003:60) noted that

> Explanations of Islam as the religion of the Arabs typically began by describing an arid, harsh physical environment inhabited by nomadic camel herders, traders and townspeople. The Arabian Peninsula is depicted as a remote, bounded locality, and nomadic culture is made the root of Islam…All of the books emphasize nomadism as a primary lifestyle of the Arabs, some older texts barely mentioning towns. Text illustrations offer images of modem Bedouin survivals and camels projected backward fourteen hundred years. The dry Arabian steppe is featured over arable or rain watered terrain, and little reference is made to interactions between Arabs and peoples of Syria Persia, East Africa or India before Islam. Only three of the books mention Roman or Sassanid relations with Arabia or with the cities of Petra and Palmyra. Some books describe the symbiotic relationship between sedentary and nomadic Arab groups, and four mention, or illustrate on maps, the long-distance trade routes that crossed Arabia.

Nowhere are Arab images portrayed more than in Israel, not surprising considering the years of hostilities between not only Palestinians, but entire Arab Middle East, and Israel. The battlefront was not only in the trenches, but also in the textbooks. For instance, in studying the Arab image in Hebrew textbooks, Daniel Bar-Tal (2001:7) noted that

> until 1930, Arabs were rarely mentioned in the history textbooks and, when the books referred to them, they were viewed a part of the "natural disasters" with which the

> immigrants had to cope in building their new life. Only after 1930, as the violent conflict escalated, did there appear detailed references to Arabs, describing them uniformly as "robbers, vandals, primitives and easily incited" (p. 128). The Arabs were also portrayed as being ungrateful, since the Jews carne to contribute to the development of the country, and the Arab leaders nevertheless incited them against Jewish settlement.

Given the limited gains made in peace-making efforts in the Middle East, one would have expected the images of Arabs in Israel textbooks to soften over the years. However, according to Fouzi El-Asmar (1986:82),

> …a study prepared by Dr. Adir Cohen and Dr. Miriam Roth, both of the University of Haifa, indicated that the perception of Arabs in the minds of youngsters had not changed. The study was based on a survey of 260 boys and girls in fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. A report on the study, published in Ha'Aretz on 30 January 1985, revealed that in it the Arab emerged as a "kidnapper of children, murderer, criminal, and terrorist. "

While school textbooks might be clouded by outdated anthropological approaches and perceptions of their writers, thus reflecting some form of bigotry, fiction tended to offer a more alternative perspective. Again looking at Israel-Arab imageries, Gilead Morahg (1986:151) noted that in any analysis of new Israeli fiction,

> All of these novels aspire tot his bilateral mode by creating a fictional context that enables significant interactions between equally realized Jewish and Arab characters. These new Arab characters are no longer static and stereotypical points of moral reference for a central Jewish protagonist; rather they are sharply differentiated individuals whose development in the course of the narrative is integral to its thematic signification…p. 151.

Arabic in Nigerian Civil Society

The first critical commentary on the links between Arabic and Nigeria in Nigerian civil society was made by Wilson Uwujaren, a journalist, who writing in *The Tempo* magazine of 8th October 1998 argued that:

> There are (six) historical evidence that could help illuminate the state of the Nigerian military today. It is called the Nigerian Army but very few Nigerians know that the motto of the country's army, 'Victory is from God alone' is adaptation from the flag of Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio, the first Sultan of Sokoto. Source: http://www.angelfire.com/az/4cain/discussion.html.

Uwujaren's observations were picked up by Nigeria's Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, in a blistering tirade against Islam, Arabs and northern Nigerians in a public lecture he gave on Friday 16th October, 1998 in Lagos where he asked:

> Insignificant? A purely accidental choice that carries no symbolism, no overtones from history, and no indices of future intent? Or was this choice deliberate? Certainly the fact that the inscription is in Arabic is not an accident of choice - English, to the best of my knowledge, is the official language of the nation and must therefore be the official language on so potent a symbol as the motto of a national army. We are speaking, after all, of the military, a political constituency that has dominated the affairs of this nation for nearly three decades since independence. I am, indeed, one of the Nigerians who did not know of the composition of this motto, but, as I started earlier, it was not for nothing that, amidst the welter of details of the lop-sided structure of a nation that claims to be one, this was the one that struck me most forcibly.
> http://www.nigerianmuse.com/opessays/?u=Soyinka_redesigns_Nigeria_October_1998.htm

It is significant, of course, that such deconstruction of the Arabic heritage of Nigeria came a few months after the death of General Sani Abacha (in June 1998), a Muslim military ruler from northern Nigeria. His death opened the doors to demands for the restructuring of the country through the "convocation of a National Conference" of which Soyinka was a leading advocate. It is instructive that Soyinka's tirade blinded him to the exact quotation on the Nigerian Army crest. This quotation, from Surat Saff (61), ayat 13, is reproduced below:

> Saff (61) 13
> 13. Waokhra tuhibboonaha ***nasrun mina Allahi*** wafathun qarreebun wabashshiri almu mineen**a**
> **13.** And another (favour will He bestow,) which ye do love,- ***help from Allah and a speedy victory***. So give the Glad Tidings to the Believers.

In the Nigerian Army crest, this was translated as "Victory is From God Alone" – surely a fairly presentation of the spirit, if not the grammatical accuracy of the *ayat*. And in the coveted English language too. Yet this was not enough for the secularists – who were willing to accept a Christian-inspired language, over a Muslim-inspired one, despite the fact that more than 50% of the Nigerian population is Muslim.

This is was, however, to be the beginning of the conspiracy theory that sees the Arabization of Nigeria in is public institutions. Wole Soyinka, in the same lecture, continued the tirade against the "Arabic inscription" on the Nigerian currently, the Naira, where he stated:

> Is it incidental that the other language on our national currency is Arabic? If any part of the nation feels that our official language must be Arabic, then let us debate the issue at a National Conference, rather than sneaking it onto the various currency denominations of our nation. And, if all the national conference, a part of the country feels that these monetary exchange pledges that are part and parcel of our commercial existence must be articulated in Kiswahilli, Esperanto or Amharic, then let us debate the issue - but it is intolerable that one section with its cultural leaning, should impose these designs on the rest. Such a conspiracy succeeds only as long as it remains uncovered. Once exposed, the next question is - what do we do about it. And if we do nothing, what are the consequences?
> http://www.nigerianmuse.com/opessays/?u=Soyinka_redesigns_Nigeria_October_1998.htm

The historical and literary significance of the "Arabic inscription" on the Nigerian currency, merely the announcement of the denomination in Hausa language using Arabic alphabet familiar to more than 50% of Nigerians were again glossed over in the vitriol against anything Arabic. The anti-Arabic inspiration on the currency vanguard was taken up in 2000 by a lawyer, Mr. Hya'Osahon Ihenyen, was granted leave to "challenge the Federal Government over the use of Arabic words on the country's currency" (*Vanguard* newspaper, 5th October, 2000). According to the news report,

> In a 13 paragraph affidavit in support of the exparte application, Mr. Ihenyen averred that "I know as a fact that the continued use of Arabic language on our currency note is an unnecessary discriminatory and an avoidable violation of my fundamental human rights as a free born of Nigeria, which has the tendency of making me a second class citizen in my own very dear and beloved country Nigeria."

This became catalytic to continued media campaign by Christian southern Nigerian newspapers for the removal of what they consistently refer to as "Arabic inscription" from the Nigerian currency notes. Fairly typical examples are:

> …the Arabic writing on our Naira notes in the denomination of N5, N10, N20, N50, N100, N200 and N500 is inimical…It is a humiliation, a gross disrespect to the sovereignty of this nation, when her official lingua franca was not sufficient to render whatever message it intended on her currency notes, her most valued possession. Augustine Osih, "This Country And Her Naira", *Vanguard***,** 6 September 2001

> Those who find relevance in the use of Arabic in their cultural intercourses should feel free to continue with it. Those who wish to study it as one of their pet foreign languages such as Chinese, French and what have you, are free to do so. But no further attempt should be made to impose it on all Nigerians as one of our national values. The truth is this: it is not! Ochereome Nnanna, "Naira without Arabic symbols", *Vanguard* (Lagos), 22 February 2007.

The Central Bank of Nigeria, capitulating to these whims, and without broad-based consultation in a democratic setting, decided to issue new currencies on 27th February 2007 that have the "Arabic inscriptions" removed. This was in fact a reflection of the educational process in Nigerian textbooks that correspondingly delegated over 500 years of scholarship, culture and learning between Arabs and northern Nigeria, when under a Federal national policy on education, none of the centuries of mutuality were taken into consideration in any Nigerian textbooks.

Nigerian Textbooks and Perception of Arabs

Educators have identified stereotypes in textbooks and curricular materials that limit children's dreams and visions. If new options and alternatives are not provided, the limiting stereotypes will become the only standards by which students will judge themselves and be judged by others. Daniel Bar-Tal (1998) in his study of beliefs of conflicts in Israeli textbooks quotes a myriad of studies that reflect the power of textbooks over impressionable minds. He points to studies by Apple 1979, and Bourdieu, 1973 who argued that school textbooks have the power to create and sustain societal beliefs from one generation to another. Consequently, textbooks provide an official view of knowledge and culture of the learner, as argued by Luke 1988. Further, textbooks provide students with their first and firm conception of reality – which is likely to carry them well into their adulthood, and orient the learners towards a certain perspective, stereotypes and embedded bigotry (Apple & Christian-Smith 1991; Meyer 1977; Paquette 1991; Rothstein, 1991).

What makes further the connection to school is the perception of textbooks as factual, and the reliance of teachers on such textbooks for their lesson plans and examinations. Since textbooks are likely the sole most authoritative source of information for many pupils and students, they have often been the subject of critical analysis for the dominant values they hold about a particular society (Anyon 1979; DeCharms & Moeller 1962; Ichilov 1993; McClelland 1961; Selden 1987, Wiberg & Bloom, 1970). For instance, according to Apple and Christian-Smith (1991:4):

> Texts are really messages about the future. As part of a curriculum they participate in no less than the organized knowledge system of society. They participate in creating what a society has recognized as legitimate and truthful. They help set the cannons of truthfulness and, as such, also help recreate a major reference point for what knowledge, culture, belief, and morality really are.

I will now look at the portrayal of Arabs in selected Nigerian textbooks targeted at primary, secondary and college level students. The subjects are those most likely to contain sociological accounts of Arabs for Nigerian children, and these are *Social Studies*, *History*, *Islamic Studies*, *Geography* and *Literature*. The methodology involved analysing nine most commonly used textbooks in these subjects, and studying them for any depiction of Arabs or Arab Muslim societies. No specific codes or categories of depiction were created for this because of the restricted area of focus – depiction of Arabs. The specific topics where such depiction might occur are extremely narrow – dealing basically with historical, rather than contemporary issues. It is in fact likely that if the textbooks were to be revised, some of these impressions would no longer be tenable – not because the textbook authors had become more objective, but because the original scenario created about Arabs in certain contexts is no longer tenable.

As I pointed out earlier, the religious divide in Nigeria created a perfect atmosphere of hostility towards not only Islam but any symbolic attachment to Islam in Nigeria; and Arabs are the central core of such attachment. Yet the Arab presence in Nigeria goes beyond acceptance of Islam (and not all Arabs are Muslims, anyway). There are genuine Arabs in Nigeria, some of whom migrated from North Africa and settled in northern Nigerian cities of Kano and Katsina since 1450 (Adamu 1968, 1998). Others, such as Baqqarah who speak Shuwa dialect of Arabic (and therefore referred to as *Shuwa Arabs*) are indigenous to Nigeria – no matter the configuration accepted, and not transnational migrants (see for instance, Brann 1993, Holl and Levy 1993, Owens 2005).

While Muslim northern Nigeria reflected not only Arab influences in its traditional learning cycles of methodologies, school calendar, curricular structures and textbooks, the rest of Nigeria trod a more secular, and often antagonistic path. The historical reasons are easy to locate, as indicated in this excerpt from *Nigeria Since Independence – The First 25 Years Vol IX: Religion* History textbook aimed at College students:

> The type of education received also influenced the religious orientation and world view of the Nigerian leadership. While leaders like Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, had close allies and friends in the Arab world, others like Chief Obafemi Awolowo got attracted by the development experience and strategies of Israel. This divergence in the orientations of the leadership was bound to affect the foreign policy, the economic system and the general political ideology of the country (Balogun 1989:57).

What also emerged was a sustained hostility against Arabs, Islam and northern Nigeria in the Nigerian critical civil society. It also found its way into textbooks. A fairly typical distortion of historical truth by Nigerian Christian textbook authors was the allusion to the "foreign invader theory", which in some textbook accounts made Hausa Muslims foreigners to Nigeria! An example is given by Oladele et al (1977:34) who re-wrote Hausa history in Nigerian Social Studies by declaring that:

> The Kano Chronicle records that the people of Hausaland came originally from Baghdad. According to this tradition, one Bayajidda, Abuyazid fled from Baghdad to Kanem-Bornu after he quarreled with his father. He also came to Daura where he was said to have met the Queen of Daura whom he helped by killing a snake which had become a menace to the people by preventing them from getting regular supply of water. The end result of the association as the marriage between both resulting in the birth of a son called Gawo. Later, Bawo had seven

> children, who became the founders of the original Hausa States called Hausa Bakwai. These were Kano, Daura, Gobir, Zaria, Katsina, Rano and Biram.

The "Chronicle" said nothing of the sort.[5] The Chronicle merely provided the process of state formation in Hausaland, and did not in any place indicate that Hausa themselves were Arabs. But the association of Hausa with Islam, an association that dates back to over 600 years created the impression that the Hausa themselves must necessarily have been Arabs. In this Africanist context, Islam is seen as alien to the base "African" culture, and therefore any association with Islam must be foreign. Similar accounts were more accurately given by non-Nigeria History textbook author, Adu Boahen (1966:38) but whose textbooks are heavily used in Ghana, his home country, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. He observed that:

> The Hausa have their own traditional accounts of their origins. The most popular and well known of them is the account known as the Daura legend. According this Daura was the first of the Hausa states to be founded by one of the daughters, named Daura, of a grandson of a Canaanite named Najib who left Palestine with all his family and settled in Libya. During the reign of her successors, the son of the King of Baghdad arrived in Daura with his followers after having first lived in Bornu. He is said to have killed a huge serpent that was preventing the people of Daura from fetching the water from their only well except on Fridays, and in appreciation of this service, the Queen agreed to marry him. They had a son called Bawu (sic) who succeeded his father. He also had six sons and each of them founded a town which later developed into a state, hence the seven Hausa bakwai.

Again in this account the Hausa, at least in the primary Hausa political state, Daura, was connected to Canaanite, essentially therefore making Hausa who originated from Daura (the Hausa did not singularly originate from any one city) Arabs. However, a more sanguine account of Arab relations with Black Africa is given in the same history textbook by Adu Boahen when he noted that

> The activities of the Almoravids contributed to the fall of Ghana…First, the wars and conquests between 1054 and 1087 diverted attention from the soil. The countryside was laid waste and agriculture was neglected. Ghana must, therefore, have lost part of her fertile land and consequently part of her productivity and wealth. Secondly…the kings of Ghana derived a great part of their revenue from import and export duties while the ordinary Ghanaians earned their livelihood by acting as middlemen in the caravan trade. The wars of the Almoravids, which affected the whole of the western Sahara and Morocco and even extended into the Iberian peninsular, must naturally have disrupted the caravan trade in those regions. The inevitable result was a great decrease in the income of the Ghanaians… p. 11. Adu Boahen.

Full of speculation "…Iberian peninsular, must naturally have disrupted….", it goes out of its way to blame any misfortunate of the Ghanaian empire on the Almoravids – and subsequently set a template for young learners to acquire a taste of bigotry early enough.

In some textbooks Islam is placed squarely and exclusively in Arabia. This is for instance given in *Ilesanni Social Studies for Nigerian Primary Schools Book Six*, where it stated:

> The Islamic religion is common in the Northern parts of Africa, Arabia (the original home of Islam) Asia and parts of southern Europe (Adelola 1980:55)

In others, Arabs barely get a mention. For instance, one of the most widely used geography books in Nigeria, *Certificate Physical and Human Geography* (Areola et al 1992) provides no information about Arabs or the Middle East – thus denying Nigerian school children to learn their heritage – for Kano alone has thousands of Hausa Arabs – or provide global education for school children. The main focus of the textbook is on Western Europe and industrial development.

Similarly, *Social Studies for Junior Secondary Schools Student Book 3* (Ahmed et al 1990) was unsure of the racial position of Arabs in its categorisation of Human Race. Adopting a more anthropologist perspective, it gave the following categorisation:

> Negroid – long-headed, wooly hair, dark complexion, flat-nosed. The negroes and pygmies of Africa are typical members of this group.
> Australian – long-headed, wavy hair, dark complexion, flat-nosed. These are the original inhabitants of Australasia, also including certain primitive tribes of Southern Asia.
> Caucasian – long-headed, wavy hair, brown to light complexion, narrow-nosed. These include the long-headed peoples of Europe and ***North Africa***, Western and Southern Asia. There are traces of similar populations further to the east.
> Mongoloid – Broad-headed, straight hair, yellow or red complexion, nose of various types. This group includes most of the peoples of Eastern Asia, such as the Chinese, and the original inhabitants of America (pp. 12-13, emphasis added).

Thus this gave the impression that Americans, Italians, Britons and North Africans (whether Arab or not) belonged to the same racial category – Caucasian. Other History textbooks exploited the more negative, but factual, reconstruction of the relationship between North African Arabs and Africans south of the Sahara, particularly the slave trade. For example, according to an account in *School Certificate History of West Africa Book One* (Onwuibiko's1985:258)

> …with the Muslim conquest of North Africa and its conversion to Islam in the seventh century A.D. the trans-Saharan slave trade increased greatly in volume. Because Islamic law forbids Muslims to enslave fellow Muslims, the pagan Negroes to the south of the Sahara desert were purchased in ever-increasing numbers and sold to Arab slave dealers who took them to North African slave-markets in Cairo, Alexandria, Tunis, Tripoli and Fez. When the Sudanese states were converted to Islam, the pagans of the forest belt of West Africa became the victims of slave-raids. The caravan routes of the Sahara told the story of the barbarism of the trans-Saharan slave trade. the routes were littered with the skeletons of slaves who died during the long journey to North Africa (Onwuibiko 1985: 258).

Aisha Lemu's portrayal of pre-Islamic Arabs was done without any prejudice – despite her being an English woman who converted to Islam and married a Nigerian. In her narrative, given in *Islamic Studies for Junior Secondary Schools Book One*, she noted that

> The Arabs identified himself (sic) with his clan or tribe, right or wrong. He took greater pride in the deeds of his forefather. It was considered a point of honour to uphold this tribal pride. Consequently when any dispute broke out between individuals of different tribes, the quarrel would spread to other members and became an inter-tribal dispute. If a member of one tribe was killed it became a matter of honour to avenge his death. In this way vendettas and wars between clans and tribes could continue for many years. The Arabs were therefore never united as one nation. Instead they were divided and formed shifting alliances and confederations among the various tribal groups (Lemu 1993:179).

However, in a section she herself labeled "objective assessment", she noted,

> Not all the habits of pre-Islamic Arabs were bad. Some were good, and were also commended by Islam. Among such good habits was the practice of hospitality both to friends and strangers. The Arabs' value for personal courage and endurance was also commendable…However, by and large the practices described above indicate a society of low morals, a harsh way of life and confused beliefs. It is all of these which are comprised in the term Jahiliyya (Lemu 1993:181).

Islam transformed these beliefs and behaviors of the Arabs to a new more dynamic society which served as a model for other countries and communities to emulate.

Finally, perhaps one of the most devastating portrayals of Arabs in Nigerian curricula must surely be Ayi Kwei Armah's reconstruction of African history in his novel *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973). Perhaps imbued with accounts of the impact of Arab slave traders in historical accounts of a fellow Ghanaian, Adu Boahen, Armah spared no punches in painting as dark picture of Arabs as he could in the novel, which is part of the reading materials for secondary school students in Nigeria. In the novel, the setting is an unspecified African country, standing for all of sub-Saharan Africa. The story truly begins with the coming of the predators – Arabs – who bring ruin. And always there are the weak and complicit locals helping to bring ruin from within. As a typical scene narrates, depicting the debauchery of the Arabs,

> Faisal: He, the only one this night, had insisted on having his favourite askari with him inside the place this night. Not, indeed, for the askari's normal duties of defence against justice armed, but for reasons even sweeter to the predator's lechery. Most of the night Faisal had spent happily licking his young askari with not one thought of females…Faisal sang that night. Laughing he sang. The words, what were they but a demented Arab praise song to black bodies? The lyrics were a confession Faisal wished to make, having lost control of the last remnants of his will, a confession that all his religion's stories of odalisks (sic) and little white virgins were fantasies for weak, crippled minds with little of the power of imagination, and no knowledge at all of the real truth (Armah 1973:22).

Thus Arabs, initially labeled as predators, were painted as lecherous, sadistic, and hedonistic, although the *dramatis personae* in the novel all got their just desserts when they were murdered by their victims – an event graphically described by Armah, as if expunging the pains of historical arrival of Arabs to Black Africa.

Conclusion

As I argued earlier, there are at least three main reasons for cultural reflection of a particular group of people in school textbooks. The first was desire for global education. The world is getting increasingly small due improved communication facilities – Internet, satellite broadcast, mobile telephony, etc. Consequently there is a need to provide school children with a more accurate depiction of a group people. In any event, even if textbook writers do not provide this accurate picture, the Internet will, since it provides almost everyone with the opportunity to correct any impressions given.

Secondly, the same media often creates an imagery of a group of people based on often violent and distorted political history. The Western media used its effective powers to portray its bigotry against Arabs in all media (Majaj 2003, Ahmed 2002, Akram 2001, Ezroura 1995, Jabara 1989, Velloso 1998, Loshitzky 2000, Saad 1996).

The Muslim Hausa of northern Nigeria face similar imagery from Nigerian press that often paints a violent and bloodthirsty picture of what the press calls "almajiri" during times of communal conflicts. Two of the more typical commentaries from the more virulent anti-Northern newspapers in Nigeria are as follows:

> *ThisDay* (2001):
> "…due to the low level of education and orientation, the majority of the Northern Muslims still behave very barbaric by constituting themselves into nuisance to unleash terror on their fellow human beings…It is basically as a result of the lack of integration and parental training arising from the almajiri syndrome in the North that has given birth to the moral degeneration of the Northern youths, leading to the frequent religious crisis in the North." Lumumba C. Achilonu, "Analysis, Northern Muslims And Religious Violence" in *ThisDay*, 12th November 2001, online edition.

> *Vanguard* (2004)
> "Anyone that is familiar with the history of almajiris might find it difficult to isolate violence from it. They are violence personified…At the slightest provocation, the almajiris are on the streets maiming, killing and destroying properties of private citizens. They constitute a serious menace to non-northerners and non-Muslims living in the northern part of the country.…Because of their little or no education, they have been misdirected and misused against indigenes of other ethnic groups living amongst northerners. They have not been a good advertisement for the northerners." *Vanguard*, Editorial, "Educating the Almajiris", 25th August 2004, online edition.

Thus after the American 9/11 incidence, the "almajiri" have graduated to "terrorists" – in a blind desire to link any civil disturbance to Arabs – whether Islamic or not. This is shown, for instance, in the arguments by Awofeso et al (2003:320) trying to link what they define as terrorist activities with the madrassa system drawing parallels between the Islamic schooling system in Nigeria and Pakistan. As for northern Nigeria, they argued that

> During the Zangon-Kataf riots, fundamentalist Mallams called for the killings of all "infidels" (meaning all non-Muslims), in Kaduna State, in retaliation for the killings of "pious" Muslims earlier in the riot. The scale of the retaliation, and the manner in which terrorist acts were carefully targeted by the Almajirai on churches, Christians, and Mallams's critics during the Mallams's sanctioned Jihad, attests to the Mallams potential to facilitate terrorist acts.

The *al-muhajir* – referred to as "almajirai" in Nigeria – are Islamic education pupils exposed to highly organised form of Arabic learning system which has been a consistent educational fare in northern Nigeria for over six hundred years. However, in Nigerian political economy, their Islamic education is equated to illiteracy – and subsequently a tinderbox of murderous rioting behavior. Further exacerbating the anti-Arab sentiments in Nigerian secular intelligentsia was the presence of the script – Ajami Arabic – on the Nigerian currency. This is seen as the adoption of an "foreign" script – when the script had been in use in the country hundreds of years before any of the secularist cities were even formed. Textbooks – and academic research papers – therefore became the new media in promoting bigotry not only against Arabs but also against Muslims in northern Nigeria.

Third, the transnational flow of people across borders provide a sufficient base enough to incorporate images and depictions of migrant groups as part of in-group culture. However, as I pointed out earlier, Arabs are not alien to Nigeria – indeed when the first Arabs migrated to Kano early 14th century (Palmer 1908), the rest of

Nigeria had no defined empire-states. When Islam came in 13th century – via Black Dyula (Wangara) merchants – it found an established civilization in northern Nigeria – a far cry from southern coastal territories that were still scattered villages. The increasing absorption of Magheribi (Smith 1997) Yemenite (Adamu 1999) and Lebanese (Albasu 1989) into the social and cultural fabric of northern Nigeria, as well as the presence of "authentic" Baqqara (Shuwa) Arabs in North-Eastern Nigeria clearly created a problem for textbook writers who see Arabs or Arabic language as foreign to their conception of Nigeria.

This lack of representation (for some of the textbooks were notable for their lack of representation of Arabs in any sphere) is not surprising considering the fact that Nigerian ethnic groups are not sufficiently portrayed in the textbooks. This of course reveals the static nature of the curriculum – in which despite hundreds of communal clashes (Muhammed and Adeoye 2006, Alanamu et al, 2006) yet the textbook developers in Nigeria would rather pretend on dry static and often quaint descriptions of Nigerian societies.

The Nigerian curriculum, and by extension, the textbooks lack global relevance in the contemporary world. Their failure is not only in relation to insufficient representation of a vital chunk of Nigeria's population – the Arabs – but also inability to even capture the currents at home that should provide a template for future citizens about the real structure of their future world.

Notes

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2. Ibid.
3. For details see, H. A. R.' Gibb, Ibn Batuta: Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354, and published originally in 1929; re-printed as *Ibn Batuta: Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354*, London, Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1983, p. 322.
4. Rey, *Andalus…*
5. *Tarikh Arbab Hadha al-balad al-Musamma Kano*, Anon, the oft quoted *Kano Chronicles* as translated by H. R. Palmer and published in the *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol 38 (1908) pp. 59-98 and republished in his *Sudanese Memoirs* (3 volumes: London, 1928), 3: 92-132.

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