Sunset at Dawn, Darkness at Noon: Reconstructing the Mechanisms of Literacy in Indigenous Communities

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Saturday, April 24, 2004

Bayero University, Kano, Inaugural Lecture Series
No. 7

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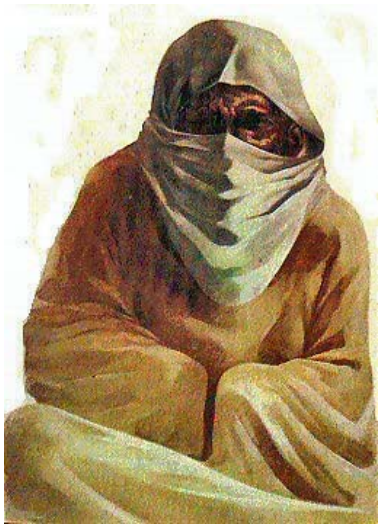
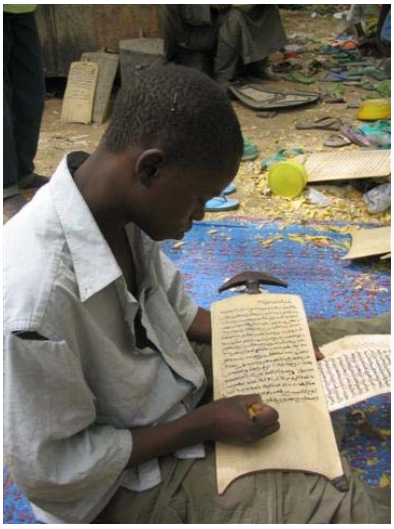
This *Inaugural Lecture* is dedicated to



Uthman b. Muhammad Fodiye b. Uthman b. Salih al-Fallati al-Ashri al-Maliki
(1755 to 1817)
For reigniting scholastic revolution in the Caliphate



The Post-colonially oppressed *Al-Muhajirun*, wherever they are

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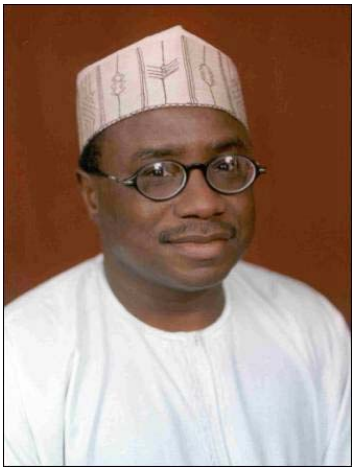
Summary of the Presenter's Bio-data



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Professor Abdalla Uba Adamu has a wide-ranging experience in the academic circles. He was first elected as a Sub-Dean of the Faculty of Education (BUK) in 1989 and became the Head of the Education Department (BUK) in 1995. At the end of the experience, he was appointed as the Director, Management Information Systems (MIS) in BUK in 1999. Outside the University, he was appointed Country consultant for World Bank's Nigeria Primary Education Project. In 1996 he served as a consultant to the National Open University on Information Technology and was elected to the Chairman of the Center for Hausa Cultural Studies in 2002.

Professor Abdalla Uba Adamu is a man of many 'firsts' in the Kano academic circle. He was the first Kano indigene to win the Fulbright Senior African Scholar Award (1991-1992); first Kano indigene to win the Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship (1993), and the first and only Kano indigene so far to be cited in *Who's Who in Science Education Around the World*.

Professor A. U. Adamu is also a prolific researcher and writer that has been published in at least six countries besides Nigeria. He is credited with two full books, 29 research monographs, over 35 refereed articles in reputable journals and 30 Technical Reports as well as other publication on the Internet where he is renowned web-designer that has made valuable contributions to the development of Hausa cultural studies. This marked his increasing research diversification into the areas of cultural studies.

In recognition of his tremendous contributions to Education he was admitted in 2002 as a member of the Nigerian Academy of Education (mnae) making him the youngest Professor to be so honored at that time.

Part I

Overture to the Soapbox Symphony

Introduction

The learning capacity of a society shapes, to a large degree, its economic, political, and cultural destiny. This is the case because learning is a central element in the reception, interpretation, transformation and sharing of experience. A society's learning processes are the nerve centers of its adaptive capability, and allow it to learn from the past, engage the present, and imagine the future. Whether one is talking about economic growth, the preservation of cultural heritage, social problems, citizenship, the acquisition of new knowledge, the degradation of the environment or about rights and responsibilities, one is ultimately talking about learning. The use of the term "learning", in contrast, to words such as schooling or education, for example, is in this context, deliberate. It is meant to convey the notion that learning occurs whenever and wherever people encounter experience, and engage in its reception, interpretation, transformation, and communication (Morrison 2001).

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

Negotiating the Meaning of Literacy

In the literacy domain, there is a long tradition of statistics gathering by scholars; however, because of changing definitions of literacy, and the dearth of accurate data in the educational measurement field, the data on literacy have long been open to question and debate. I want to add to this debate by widening the scope of literacy, so long as we accept literacy to mean the ability to *read* and *write* coherently.

There are many definitions of literacy. Yet all of them fasten on the ability to understand printed text, and to communicate through print. Most contemporary definitions conceptualize literacy in relative rather than absolute terms. They assume that there is no single level of skill or knowledge that qualifies a person as "literate"; but rather that there are *multiple* levels and kinds of literacy (e.g., numeracy, technological literacy). In order to have bearing on real life situations, definitions of literacy must be *sensitive to skills* needed in out-of-school contexts, as well as to school-based competency requirements. In this regard, a better definition of literacy is as provided by Unesco (1979):

> A person is literate who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life...A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community.

Moreover, most definitions of literacy have traditionally included calculating skills as part of a broad definition of literacy yet often these have been limited primarily to the four arithmetic operations. It is now widely assumed that numeracy assessment should encompass a broad range of skills, thought processes, and background knowledge (formal and/or informal).

Numeracy enables interpreting, acting upon, and communicating about, mathematical information in a wide range of everyday or work-related contexts. What is more, it is needed for effective functioning in a world of amounts, prices, weights, distances, and so forth. Thus literacy and numeracy are now considered to be at the center of the educational goals not only of children in school but also youth and adults in need of further education. In reviewing the various definitions of literacy it is clear that there are three types of literacy.

School-based literacy

The term includes the basic skills taught in conventional, formal school—reading, writing and math. The term also implies the popular notion of "functional education" or "functional literacy", of the kind referred to by Giroux (in Freire and Macedo 1987, 3) when he speaks of "...the need to train more workers for occupational jobs that demand "functional" reading and writing skills." A program for functional literacy is based on the acquisition of skills taught in formal school with some pre-determined level of proficiency.

Non-curricular literacy

The term "non-curricular" suggests learning that has no basis in formal school. However when people are uninformed about issues and procedures that are the primary domain of those in power, learning about these is also becoming literate. The term is not to be confused with community learning, popular knowledge or common sense. Non-curricular literacy is based on an assessment of the needs of adults such that it complements school literacy. This component of the process of literacy is what Freire (1987) refers to as the transformation of seized power. In beginning the process of literacy, learners are beginning to seize power. In learning the power systems, language, and issues critical to living in an unequal society, they are beginning the process of transforming or "...re-create(ing) and reinvent(ing) (of) power."(1987, p. 55).

Community knowledge/learning

This comprises the entire realm of experience in the lives of the learners. Freire (1987, 1970) says that the background that learners bring to the learning situation ultimately decides how they process and assimilate concepts. Community knowledge includes oral traditions, historic learning, and other non-formal kinds of information acquired through social and community networks.

It is clear that all three types of learning are important for any successful and complete literacy program. One fact that needs emphasizing is that all literacy training takes place within the non-formal, non-curricular framework of an adult learner's everyday life. We need to bear this in mind when designing programs.

Historically, it was possible to make an arbitrary distinction between those who had been to school and those who had not; this was especially obvious in the newly independent countries of the developing world, which were just beginning to provide public schooling beyond a relatively small elite. Those who had been to school were labeled as "literate." However, this situation has changed dramatically. While there are still millions of children and adults who have never attended school, in even the poorest countries of the world the majority of the population in the two youngest generations (up to about age 40 years) has received some schooling. While this leaves open the serious question of the level of literacy of this perhaps minimally-schooled population, it nonetheless points to a world with a much more variegated landscape of literacy skills, levels of achievement, and degree of regular use.

The invention of devices for representing language is inextricably related to issues of literacy; that is, to issues of who can use the script and what it can be used for. As I have argued

earlier, *competence with written language, both in reading and writing, is known as literacy*. When a large number of individuals in a society is competent in using written language to serve these functions, the whole society may be referred to as a literate society. Although the uses of writing reflect a host of religious, political, and social factors and hence are not determined simply by orthography, two dimensions of the script are important in understanding the growth of literacy: learnability and expressive power.

Learnability refers to the ease with which the script can be acquired, and expressive power refers to the resources of the script for unambiguously expressing the full range of meanings available in the oral language. These two dimensions are inversely related to each other. The ease of acquisition of a script is an important factor in determining whether a script remains the possession of an elite or whether it can be democratized, that is, turned into a possession of ordinary people. Democratization of a script appears to have more to do with the availability of reading materials and of instruction in reading and the perceived relevance of literacy skills to the readers. Even in a literate society, most readers learn to read only a narrow range of written materials; specialized materials, such as those pertaining to science or government, remain the domain of the elite who have acquired additional education.

Historically, the rise of cities coincided with the development of a script suitable for serving bureaucratic purposes. Later, the scientific and philosophical tradition that originated in classical Greece and that prevails in the West to this day developed along with the alphabet. Thus unarguably, alphabet was a decisive factor in the cultural development of the West. At the same time, rise of literacy and the decline of "orality" in the later Middle Ages were fundamental to the cultural flowering known as the Renaissance in 14th century.

What is interesting is that up until this point, literacy was still deeply implicated in orality for one simple reason. Written documents were still read out loud and vocalized. Things were written down in order to be reproduced as speech at a later point. Silent reading was next to impossible because the Greeks and most ancients used *scriptura continnua* - no spaces, no punctuation. These graphic units were invented by European monks during the period that we now call the "Dark Ages," around 600 CE, in the British Isles. Again, spaces and punctuation seem like a small, almost meaningless innovation, but they allowed people to read silently and privately to themselves, without even sub-vocalizing. What modern people today known as "reading" did not exist before this time. Those small marks made a very big difference.

Reading and writing, thus, existed in the European Middle Ages (476 to 1453), but they remained restricted activities, largely limited to the clergy and the medieval 'schoolmen' who tirelessly copied and re-copied Aristotle. The peasantry and most of the populace still lived by orality, although they did have what Illich calls "lay literacy," (in Olson & Torrance 1991, p. 102) which was an awareness of the existence and importance of books and deference to the authority of written documents, even if they themselves could not read them. Some had "sub-literacy," which was the ability to read a church inscription or two, without full mastery of written Latin or written forms of their own vernacular. Literacy remained an elite privilege, and until 1500 CE, most likely not more than 10% of the populace in Europe could read or write (see, for instance, Boyarin, 1993; Goody, 1987; and Salzman, 1993).

What changed was the arrival of Gutenberg's printing press and movable type in about 1455. Until Johannes Gutenberg's invention, the only way to reproduce text was copying by hand, a laborious task left mainly to monks in their monasteries. The printing press made books a mass commodity, and for precisely that reason, literacy became a mass phenomenon. Standardized typefaces made reading an easier activity, because readers no longer had to deal with the idiosyncrasies of another person's handwriting. The errors so frequently made by scribal copyists were eliminated, and thus thousands of people could have access to the same, presumably error-free "standard edition" of a text. (Provenzo, 1986.)

Whereas oral language is learned quite independently of whether it is taught or not, literacy is largely dependent upon teaching. While some local or indigenous scripts are taught relatively informally by parents or someone who knows the script very well, widespread or universal literacy is dependent upon schooling. Indeed, in many societies schooling and literacy have become almost synonymous. Schools in such diverse places as Sumer and China developed concurrently with the development of a full writing system and were concerned primarily with teaching first adults and later children to read and write.

Further, there is a general belief that literacy leads to logical and analytic modes of thought, general and abstract uses of language, and critical and rational thought. In politics, literacy is said to be necessary for governments to function adequately and provide individuals with social equity. *Literacy produces people who are innovative, achievement-orientated, productive, politically aware, more globally aware, and less likely to commit crime, and therefore more likely to take education seriously*. The common popular and scholarly conception that literacy has such powerful effects as these constitutes what Graff (1979) refers to as a "literacy myth" (see also Hornberger, 1998; Baynham, 1995, and Street, 2001).

At the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand, a joint committee was adopted by member countries to provide basic education for the people as prescribed in the Declaration that was adopted after the Conference. The Jomtien conference influenced the definitional aspect of the literacy goal by broadening the discussion to that of basic learning needs or competencies (BLCs), which are seen not only in terms of mastery of the 3 R's (**r**eading, w**r**iting and a**r**ithmetic), but also in terms of other knowledge, problem-solving and life skills. Together, BLCs are thought to promote empowerment and access to a rapidly changing world. They should support independent functioning and coping with practical problems or choices as a parent or worker or citizen, and are seen as critical gatekeeper to job entry and societal advancement in all countries. Thus, when defining BLCs, there is a need to refer both to formal school-based skills (such as ability to read prose text or to understand mathematical notations) and also to the ability to manage functional tasks and demands, regardless of whether such competencies were developed through formal or nonformal education, or through personal experiences in diverse informal learning situations. The challenge of changing definitions is not a trivial one, and will influence not only how policy makers view literacy goals, but also how program developers will seek to promote literacy in the 21st century.

From Orality to Scripturality…

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

To help describe this world, the term "orality" was coined on the analogy of "literacy" in the hope that this new term would avoid the implications of failure inherent in the term "illiteracy." Unfortunately, as Thomas (1992, p. 7) points out, the term is prone to vagueness. It should mean relying entirely on oral communication rather than written. Orality, however, is idealized in the "noble savage," and has become more than a descriptive tool. Orality now implies a whole mentality or worldview. This idealization has led some to conclude that "oral culture is innocent, pure, and natural, uncorrupted by the written word . . ." (Thomas, 1992, p.

7). As orality is contrasted with literacy, the question arises, what is literacy? Many different levels of literacy exist. The ability to read a label or fill out a form does not automatically imply an ability to comprehend complex texts. "The tendency to treat literacy as if it were a monolithic skill may be a modern fallacy" (Thomas, 1992, p. 8-9). Modern fallacy or not, literacy is seen by many as having a major effect on cognitive processes.

Eric Havelock provides one of the best accounts of the effects of literacy on human thought. Beginning with the evolutionary theory of Darwin, Havelock points out that the human capacity for language brought society into existence. With society came culture. The term "orality" was employed in two senses: that of hearing and speaking. Writing added the sense of vision. Literacy produced changes in society, but these changes came to a point of crisis with the introduction of the Greek alphabet because of its "superior efficiency." Vision was offered in place of hearing as the means of communication and as the means of storing communication. "The adjustment that it caused was in part social, but the major effect was felt in the mind and the way the mind thinks as it speaks" (Havelock, 1986, p. 100).

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

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

Ong lists specific characteristics of thought and expressions in primarily oral cultures. He believes that thought is additive rather than subordinate, aggregative rather than analytic. It is redundant, traditionalist, and close to life. It is sometimes antagonistic, sometimes filled with praise. It is empathetic, homeostatic, and situational rather than abstract (Ong, 1982; Kveim, 1997).

On the other hand, another researcher, Jiajie Zhang, points out that writing, like beads on an abacus, is an external representation that serves as a cue to retrieve items from memory. External representations serve other functions besides that of memory aids. Diagrams, graphs, and pictures can affect decision making and problem solving. According to Zhang, external representations need not be re-represented as an internal mental model in order to be involved in problem-solving activities. These representations can directly activate perceptual operations. Thus, in concert with the internal representations, external representations facilitate problem-solving behavior (Zhang 1997:180-187). This does not mean that the basic cognitive processes change, but that new resources enable the cognitive processes to work more efficiently.

Writing, as an external representation that facilitates memory and problem solving, can also inhibit communication (Olson 1996, p. 100). Body language, for example, is an important key to communication. Oral communication one-on-one facilitates personal relationships and aids in socialization. Those who rely on writing for memory have difficulty negotiating in cultures where oral methods such as proverbs are the tool of choice for expressing cultural wisdom.

Thus I argue that moving from orality to scripturality in all societies creates bases for *recording* information and consequently, *using* the information as a means of social advancement. However, even though literacy provides access to more information, it is the culture that determines what it will do with that information, as for instance, argued by Weiss (1998).

Thus, for instance, Western culture uses literacy to advance its values of science, rationalism, and secularism. Other cultures, such as Japanese, Chinese, and Korean, though highly literate, value social relations and holistic concepts (Choi, Nisbett, and Smith, 1997). West African "nonliterate" communities share these same Asian values and have used traditional nonliterate methods to teach them to their children for thousands of years.

This lecture pursues a yet broader notion of *literacy*, as that which refers to the general semiotic ability of individuals to interpret and to act upon the world within cultural and social communities (for a discussion of relevant perspectives, see Scribner, 1979, and Wertsch, 1991). The lecture situates its arguments within the framework of British colonial domination in Northern Nigeria from February 1903 to October 1960 — a period which saw the stifling of the indigenous literacy heritage of the Muslim Hausa, amongst others, in the region.

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

These multiple cultural perspectives and languages lead me to propose, as my central thesis—and the "professoring" I have been doing all these years—the theory of *scriptural transferabilit*y. In my definition, this is the ability of an individual to transfer *acquired* scriptural skills from one *learning* context to *another*. Thus an individual with two or more scripts can be empowered to use *both* the scripts to produce *a superior individual* with only one scriptural ownership.

The central thesis of the preceding perspective is that *scriptural transferability* widens up access to education and fulfils the empowerment functions of mass education especially in societies with multiple forms of literacy. I argue for the theory of scriptural transferability through *historical matrix*, because we need to engage with history to understand what leads to the need for reconstruction of scriptural transferability as a civil society strategy among Muslim Hausa learners. Once we accept historical rationale for reconstruction scriptural literacy and re-inventing it to serve civil society in a wider context, we will begin the journey to a fully literate society.

Thus any indigenous community that has non-Roman script as part of its indigenous knowledge base is capable of creating a new world of literacy for itself in order to communicate its indigenous knowledge capabilities. As a dedication to this cause, I sub-title this lecture *Manifesto for Civil Society* because it is intended to be a template in awakening the civil society of indigenous communities to the *transferability* of its intellectual and scriptural heritage and thus take control of its affairs. However, while broad in scope, the Manifesto will draw specific

implementational examples from the literacy experiences of Muslim Hausa of Western Africa, with particular emphasis on northern Nigeria.

Thus the lecture traces the odyssey and potency of Hausa language as expressed in the Arabic script form called *Ajami* by the Muslim Hausa, although the term *ajam* is an Arabic expression for "non-pure Arabic". Ajami provides the Muslim Hausa, as well as many other indigenous Muslims as we shall see, with scriptural power to express their thoughts, and thus lay the foundation for an effective indigenous knowledge literacy. It is essentially a Muslim literary and literacy strategy because it derives its direct antecedent from the educational heritage of Islam through the reading of the Qur'an.

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

Thus a survey of the relationship between *orality*, as in spoken Arabic Qur'anic text and *scripturality*, as in attempt to use the Arabic *script* to express a language other than Arabic, reveals a remarkable degree of adaptation (see, for instance, Chtatou, 1992; Addis, 1963; Dobronravine, 1997, 2002) of this methodology—and also reveals how the colonial machinery, coupled with Christian missionary strategies, succeeded in destroying the scriptural bases of Muslim peoples from Africa, Europe, and Central Asia.

Part II

Sunset At Dawn: The Colonially Scripturalized Mind

From Scripturality to Literacy

In the 7th century, Arabic, immortalized in the language of the Holy Qur'an, and Islam became inseparable. As Islam spread through North Africa, then through the Iberian Peninsula and eastwards from the Arabian heartland to the heart of Asia, the tongue of the Arabs rapidly spread as a part of the new religion. In a few decades, it became a leading world language and the intellectual medium which united most of the civilized world. Soon enough the Arabic *script* began to be adopted by the languages of the people who had been converted to Islam in much the same way the English Roman script in Imperially controlled lands, and Cyrillic in Soviet sphere became used as bases for literacy (Salloum, 2001).

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 (Salloum, 2001). 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

S/N	Language	Country
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
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

Source: Compiled from various language history websites on the internet.

Table 2 shows the ways in which the Arabic script was used by various Muslim communities with mutually non-legible languages (Cruz, 2001).

Table 2: Scriptural Solidarity: Arabic script through the languages

Language	**Original Expression**
Arabic	أنا قادر على أكل الزجاج و هذا لا يؤلمن
English	**"I can eat glass, and I will still be fine!"**
Hausa	**"Ina iya taunar gilashi, kuma in gama lafiya."…**
Language	***Ajamized Translation***
Hausa	إِنا إِيَ تونر غِلَاشِ كُمَ إِن غَمَا لَافِيَا
Urdu	میں کانچ کھا سکتا ہوں اور مجھے تکلیف نہیں ہوتی ۔
Pashto	زه شيشه خوړلې شم، هغه ما نه خوږوي
Farsi	من می توانم بدون احساس درد شیشه بخورم.
Turkish	جام ييه بيلورم بڭا ضررى طوقونمز

The use of the Arabic script was well established in all Muslim lands until contested by the Spanish Reconquista and later by modern colonialism in Asia and Africa (Salloum 2001). Table 3 shows the dates Arabic script stopped being a major force in the education of indigenous communities in colonized lands:

Table 3: Sunset at Dawn—Checking the Growth of Indigenous literacy

Language	***Country***	***Date:***
Change by British Colonial Administration:		
Hausa	Ghana, Nigeria	After World War I
Swahili	Kenya, Tanzania	After World War I
Malay	Malaysia	After World War I
Change by French Colonial Administration		
Bambara, Malinke	Senegal to Ivory Coast	After World War I
Teda, Tanuchek	Chad, Niger, Mali	After World War I
Change by Dutch Colonial Administration:		
Malay	Indonesia	After World War I
Change by National Administrations:		
Serbo-Croatian	Yugoslavia	c. 1890
Turkish	Turkey	After World War I
Albanian	Albania	After World War I
Change By U.S.S.R. Colonial Administration:		
Kazakh	Kazakhstan	1927
Adharbayjani	Adharbayjan	1922—1937 (Latin Since 1937)
Kirgiz	Kirgizistan	1927
Tadjik (Farsi)	Tadjikistan	1940
Tatar, Bashkir	Tatar Asian Soviet Socialist Republic	1927
Turkic	Turkmenistan	1940 (Latin 1928—1940)
Uzbek	Uzbekistan	1930 (Latin 1920—1930)

Source: Haywood and Nahmad (1965).

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

However, long before the colonialists came to Asia and Africa, the language of the Qur'an was already under attack. Spain banned Arabic soon after the fall of Granada but the Moriscos, former Muslims forcibly converted to Christianity, continued to secretly use the Arabic script. Even though they had forgotten Arabic, they wrote, until their expulsion from Spain in 1609, in *Aljamiado* - Spanish written in the Arabic script. After their banishment the Arabic alphabet disappeared from the Iberian Peninsula (Chejine, 1983).

Swahili has a long tradition of literary production, and poetry has been written in Swahili since at least the middle of the 17th century. It draws on Arabic, Persian, and Urdu literary sources. Though Swahili was originally only written in Arabic script, Latin script became more popular in the mid-19th century, and has since become standard. The oldest surviving Swahili epic is the Hamziya, which was written by Sayyid Aidarusi in Arabic script in the old Kingozi

dialect in 1749. Bwana Muku II, the ruler of the island of Pate, off the coast of present-day Kenya, commissioned the poem (Lodhi, 2002).

Literacy in these linguistic clusters therefore extended beyond the ability to read and write in English. *It includes the ability to use a non-European script to express thoughts fluently and effectively in indigenous communities*. However, in colonial communities, this was actively discouraged, and Romanization was forced into the school system that in a very large way contributed to the "literacy problems" of West Africa and Asian Muslim communities. I will give a detailed account of this process.

Muslim Asia

In India, since independence, the Arabic script, for hundreds of years employed in languages like Dari and Pashto in Afghanistan, Kashmiri, Punjabi (where it is known as *Shahmukhi*) and Sindhi, is being gradually replaced by the Devanagari alphabet (Russell, 1999).

In the Malaysian/Indonesian archipelago up to the 13th century, Sanskrit was used in writing the dozens of languages used throughout the islands. By the 14th century after Islam had been introduced into the archipelago by Arab traders, the Arabic script began to replace Sanskrit by the peoples who had accepted Islam. The modified form of Arabic used in writing the Malay language became to be known as *Jawi*, the Arabic name for Java. Besides propagating Malay literature, it aided immensely in the dissemination and understanding of Islam (Salloum 2001).

There are differences in opinion of the exact date, probably as early as 440 H (1104 A.D.). However it is believed that the Arabic script was adopted into Jawi script after 7 Hijrah/13 A.D. A more concrete evidence of the earliest Jawi writing is as found on the *Batu Bersurat Terengganu*, dated 1303 A.D. For many centuries, up to early this century, it was the dominant writing in the Malay world, widely used in the court and outside for writing. However the arrival of western influence had changed its dominance with the introduction of roman script, and today the influence of Romanized scripts is widely spread as compared to Jawi script (Ahmad, 1999).

Jawi is still used however in the teaching of religious texts, especially the Qur'an, and can be found widely used in the northern and east coast states of Malaysia, notably Kelantan and Trengganu as well as in the royal kingdom of Brunei. But the teaching of *Jawi* is certainly less appreciated and rarely used in the urban areas of Malaysia. The missionaries' self-serving arguments that the Arabic script is not as well suited for reproducing sounds in the non-Arabic speaking languages, has been swallowed whole by many of the educated Malay and other non-Arab Muslim people (as for instance discussed by Yaacob et al, 2001, Ming, 2003).

Muslim Soviet

Muslim communities in Soviet Asia had their indigenous literacy base eroded by the Soviet Union. Table 3 shows the language clusters that were forced to adopt the Soviet Cyrillic script, and thereby abandon Arabic.

Table 3: Arabic to Cyrillic

S/N	Language	Script(s)
1.	Azerbaijani	Arabic, Cyrillic, Latin
2.	Farsi	Arabic
3.	Kirghiz	Arabic , Latin, Cyrillic
4.	Kurdish	Arabic, Cyrillic, Latin
5.	Tajik	Arabic, Latin, Cyrillic (→ Latin)
6.	Turkmen	Arabic, Latin, Cyrillic (→ Latin)
7.	Uyghur	Arabic, Latin, Cyrillic, Uyghur

In the late 1920s, there was a great push to stamp out illiteracy in Azerbaijan. A modified Arabic alphabet (based on the Persian script) had been in effect since the Arabs conquered the region in the 7th century, as seen in Fig 1.

A	آ ا	آغیز، آتا، آدا
I	ایـ یـ ی	ایلدیریم، قیژ، دیرناق، آیی، داری
O	اوـ وـ	اوغوز، سوْن، دوْن
U	اوـ وـ	اوجوز، بوْروق، دوْز
Ə	ا ه ـه	ال، اپریمک، سپه‌له‌مک، دده، ننه
E	ائـ ئـ ئ	ائو، گئتمک، یئمک، یئ، دئ
Ö	اوـ وـ	اوْرنک، گوْن، اوْن
Ü	اوـ وـ	اوْچ، گوْن، دوْنن
İ	ایـ یـ ی	ایکی، بیز، دیز، دلی، دری

Fig 1: Azerbaijan Babbaku chart

During the oil boom period in the early 1900s, there had been considerable discussion about whether to modify the Arabic script so that it more closely suited the nuances of the Azerbaijani language or to opt for a totally new script – Latin. The Soviets were quick to see that by prohibiting the Arabic script, they would be able to diminish the grip of Islam on the region (Talibzade, 2000).

In 1926, Baku hosted the First International Turkology Congress to promote the universal acceptance of a Latin script among all Turkic-speaking nations – and thus depart from the use of the Arabic script for literacy purposes. By 1930, all of the Soviet Turkic republics had adopted some form of the Latin alphabet (Garibova and Blair, 2000).

Turkey made the change to the Latin alphabet in 1928. Prior to this, Turkish was written in the Arabic script, due to the enormous Islamic influence on the area. After language reforms were initiated in 1928, Turkish began to be written in a Roman-based alphabet with 28 letters. The old writing system was outlawed and soon became obsolete. In the transition to a Roman alphabet, many words of Arabic and Persian origin were purged from the language (see Balçýk, 2000).

In 1937, Stalin made it mandatory for all the Turkic republics of the Soviet Union to adopt Cyrillic. Georgia and Armenia, however, were allowed to keep their original alphabet. Stalin was a Georgian, and one of his closest advisors - Mikoyan - was Armenian.

All Turkic republics were given the right to configure their own alphabet in relationship to the sounds that were not found in Russian but were indigenous to their own language. But this lack of state coordination resulted in similar Turkish sounds being represented by different symbols. This meant that the linguistic clusters became mutually exclusive. Thus the Azerbaijanis were no longer able to read anything written in Uzbeki, Turkmen. Bashkirian or Chuvashi, even though the languages were fairly closely related. It was a clever move on the part of the Soviets. It further squelched any attempts at unification among the Turkic nations (Anar, 2000).

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Arabic script was also in use among the Muslims. It was in fact the Arabic script used for the Croatian language and it constitutes the so-called *Adjami* or *Aljamiado* literature, as in Spain. Its first sources in Croatia go back to the 15th century. One of the oldest texts is a love song called “Chirvat-türkisi”‘ (Croatian song) from 1588, written

by a certain Mehmed. Eventually its use declined, such that the last book in *adjami* was printed in 1941 (Zubrinic, 1995).

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

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

Islam and Scholarship in Northern Nigeria

In Northern Nigeria, the onslaught of the British colonial interregnum from 1902, coupled with aggressive Christian missionary assault on the intellectual activities of the indigenous scholars and intellectuals led to the enforcement of the Latin alphabet in place of the more commonly used Hausa ajami in the Hausa-speaking areas (see Philips & Daigaku, 2000).

Thus all parameters which link orality, literacy and development of an expressive script with the creation of an literate citizenry, I argue, exist in the area which subsequently became known as the Muslim Hausa Northern Nigeria. The process started with the Islamization of the region as far back as 11th century in the Kanem-Bornu empire, which by the end of the 13th century, became a center of Islamic knowledge and famous teachers came from Mali to teach in Kanem. By the middle of the 13th century, Kanem established further relations with the Muslim countries, especially Kanem's diplomatic relations with Taut in the Algerian Sahara, and with the Eafsid state of Tunis at embassy level. The Kanem scholars and poets could write in the classical Arabic language of a very high standard during the 14th century.

However, the mass Islamization of Bornu dates from the time of Mai Idris Alooma (1570-1602 A.C.). We come to know about him through his chronicler Ahmad bin Fartuwa, who wrote about the reign of Mai Idris. In the 9th year of his reign he went on a pilgrimage to Makkah and built a hostel there for pilgrims from Bornu. He revived the Islamic practices which were to be followed by all and sundry. He also set up *qadi* courts and Islamic law was introduced in place of the traditional system of customary law. He built a large number of brick mosques to replace the existing ones which were built with reeds. In 1810 A.C. during the period of Mai Ahmad, the glories of the Empire of Bornu came to an end, but its importance as a centre of Islamic learning continued (Doi, 1979).

Islam came to Hausaland in early 14th century, brought by a cell of Dyula traders and clerics which found its way to Kano territory in the reign of Ali Yaji Dan Tsamiya (1349-1358), who according to the *Chronicle*, was converted to Islam by Wangara Muslim *Ulama* from Mali under the leadership of Sheikh Abdurrahaman Al-Zaghaite (perhaps from *Zaghari*, a village in Mali). So far the most authoritative record of the arrival of the Wangarawa in Kano was *Waraqa maktuba fiha asl al-Wanqariyin al-muntasibin lil-Shaikh Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Muhammad Qithima* as translated by Al-Hajj (1978).

Their arrival in Kano in about 1380 (East 1933/1971, p. viii) merely continued the trend of migratory influx of scholars which had been continuous throughout the period of Kano's history. When these *Ulama* first arrived in Kano, they settled in an open space near the king's house waiting for an audience with him to explain their mission and request permission to settle in his domain. The *sarki* subsequently built a house for the leader near the palace, so that the leader would always be near to him for his daily lessons and prayers. A former Jakara idols

worshipping place was cleared and on it the first *Juma'a* Mosque in Kano was built at Unguwar Juma'a as the ward is known today. This was the first central Mosque in Kano Kingdom.

The *Ulama*, on their part advised the *Sarki* to make Islam a state religion. In accepting, he appointed the leader of the delegation as the Chief Judge of the city (*Kadi* or *Alkali*). The leader also was recognized as *Babban Mallami* in Madabo — meaning the most senior teacher of Madabo Wards, where he lived and established his famous school of Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) which is today regarded as the first Islamic University in Kano. Other appointments were that of the Imam of the central Mosque who would lead the Friday prayers and his deputy that would be leading the daily ones. The rest of the *Ulama* were given accommodation in various wards, where they lived and established their own Qur'anic schools in order to teach and spread Islam among the general populace throughout the kingdom. Some of the wards where these *Ulama* lived still bear their names, such as Zaitawa, Mandawari, Jujin Yan-labu, Sheshe, Kabara, and so on.

Links between the Madabo school of intellectuals in Kano and the then ruling dynasty of *Sarki* Ali 'Yaji' became established when the clerics successfully persuaded the *Sarki* to perform the five daily prayers and to order the Kano towns to do likewise. They also provided the *Sarki* with an imam, who became not only the Chief Imam of Kano, but also of all the Wangarawa clan. Islam thus became a State religion in Kano from 1380, although obviously a community religion exists much earlier among the populace due to presence of earlier Wangarawa clerics.

From Scripturality to Literacy—Origins of Ajami in Pre-Caliphate Nigeria

There are however 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 first main set of arguments were forwarded by El-Miskin (1989) who argued that the very concept of ajami, as well as the actual word itself, were introduced into the indigenous lexicon of "Nigeria" by Borno 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, 1989, p.2)

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 *Mahrams* (charters of privilege) of the Kanem-Bornu ruler Mai Umme Jilmi (Umme b.Abd al-Jalıl, *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. (El-Miskin, 1989, p. 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, p. 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, p. 198) pointed out,

> On the educational front, the *mahram*s 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 — 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 the 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.

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 we have seen evidence of the scholastic ascendancy in Kano even before Sarki Muhammadu Rumfa's monumental reign — 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.

Thus my argument is that the foundation of a systematized language policy was established during Kano's Sarki Muhammadu Rumfa's reign (1463-1499) — 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), translated by Baldwin (1932) as *The Obligation of Princes*.

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, p. 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 this 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, ɓ and ƙ, 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.

Origins of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Medieval Kano

The ajami script, allowing for linguistic regional characteristics, became more or less adopted gradually throughout Muslim northern Nigeria as a de facto language policy and medium of discourse among the scholastic community. I will now look at this curricular methodology more closely.

The late Prof. Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya (1988), in his *magnum opus*, *Tarihin Rubuce Rubuce Cikin Hausa*, narrates that since the coming of Islam to Hausaland from about 11th century up to 15th century, there was no specific evidence to show that there was *extensive* indigenous literature in either Arabic or ajami among the Hausa literati. Lack of evidence, however, is not necessary evidence of lack. Private letters, notes and other correspondences might have existed among the Muslim scholars of the period, since obviously they have a script to enable them to express their thoughts.

The use of both Arabic and ajami, however, became gradual when communications between traditional rulers increased. During such communication, the adaptation of the Arabic script to represent Hausa names became inevitable. For instance, Hausa scholars would easily write Muhammad Rumfa's first name, *Muhammad*, due to its references 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*. However, Hausa itself was not at the time (and still now) "standardized", so naturally ajami writings began to take on regional and dialectical variations, just like the spoken Hausa, such that ajami writings from different regions are often mutually intelligible.

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

The Three Stages of Rumfa's Policy on Education

Babbaku

This stage focuses attention on basic letter recognition and the association of the letter with a mnemonic device that makes it easy for young learners to absorb. This stage is known as Babbaku, and can be equated to either kindergarten or playgroup. A sample of the letters of the alphabet and their associative ajami variants is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Hausa Ajami Alphabet

Hausanized	Variations	Arabicized	Alphabet
Alu/Alif	ا	Alifun	ا
Alu baki	ـا	Alif	
Ba-guje	ب	Ba-un	ب
Ba	بـ	Ba	
Ba	ـبـ		
Ba	ـب		
Ta-guje	ت	Ta-un	ت
Ta	تـ	Ta	
Ta	ـتـ		
Ta	ـت		
Ta-kuri	ـة		ة
Ca-guje	ث	Tha-un	ث
Ca	ثـ	Tha	
Ca	ـثـ		
Ca	ـث		
Jim karami koma baya	ج	Jee-mum	ج
Jim karami	جـ	Jeem	
Jim saɓe	ـجـ		
Jim saɓe koma baya	ـج		
Ha karami koma baya	ح	Haa-un	ح
Ha karami	حـ	Ha	
Ha saɓe	ـحـ		
Koma baya	ـح		
Ha karami mai ruwa koma baya	خ	Khaa-un	خ
Hakarami mai ruwa	خـ	Kha	

Thus in order to create a mnemonic sound association between an alphabet and its visuality, the early ajami teachers linked the letters of the alphabet with a corresponding behavior. For instance, jîm (ج)became jîm *sabe*—the jîm that is out of alignment. Further, sin (س) without dots becomes *sin kekashasshe*—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 **(خ)** becomes *ha karami mai ruwa koma baya*, or "lower case "h" turning back, and with a dot."

The curriculum is of course the Holy Qur'an text, and the letter recognition is started with writing out the *Surat Al-Fatiha* to *Surat Al-Fil* - a total of 11 *suras*. The demarcation to Surat al-Fil was essentially because these eleven *suras* contained the entire Arabic alphabet in them, except one, "z", and even then, that appears in the next surat after Surat al-Fil, Surat Al-Humaza. However, although these last 10 suras (plus the mandatory Surat Al-Fatiha) contain all the letters of the alphabet, some schools also use Ayat 29 of Surat Al-Fat-hi which contain all the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet, as seen in Fig. 2.

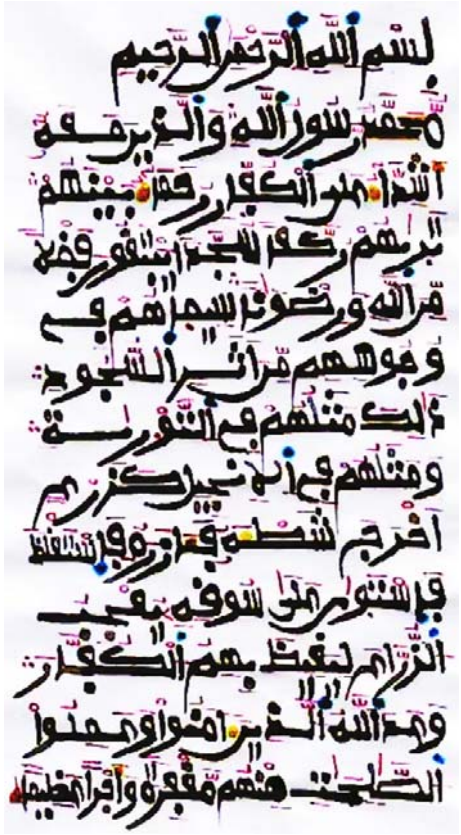


Fig 2: Ayat 29 of Surat Al-Fat-hi, containing all the letters of the Arabic alphabet

The letters of the alphabet are written on a wooden slate, *allo*, initially for the pupil by the teacher or an assistant, but gradually by the pupil himself as he acquired manipulative skills enough to write out the alphabet himself.

Farfaru

The second stage of the learning process is *Farfaru*, which sees the beginning of vowel and word formation, after the alphabet recognition stage of Babbaku. In this stage, vowels are attached to the letters to form a word. The curriculum for this stage remains the same as the Surats covered in the first stage, only now they have proper vowels and complete words are formed. The teacher reads out the word to the learners, which the latter repeats after the teacher until the teacher becomes satisfied with the pronunciation.

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

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

Once the Farfaru state is well articulated—a process that can take weeks—it becomes easier for the pupil to move to the next stage, *Zube*, which entailed learning, reading and writing the Holy Qur'an. The pupil, now a master copier, copies all the 114 suras of the Qur'an on his *allo* segment by segment until he finishes the whole book and masters the art of writing and recitation devoid of mistakes in pronunciation, rhythm, style or penmanship. At this stage,

which ends his elementary education, he graduates in a process called *sauka*, usually marked by public reading of the Qur'an by the pupil from a brilliantly decorated allo, *zayyna*, which becomes his *certificate*, and a proof of academic proficiency.

For many pupils, this marks the end of the basic Qur'anic education, and the process, lasting years, would have certainly make them literate enough to use the Arabic script in any context. This is reinforced by the years they spend painstakingly copying the Qur'an from printed materials to their wooden slates, starting with smaller sura segments until they get to the larger complex ones. The process, as outlined above, goes beyond mere copying; the pupil had to demonstrate to the hearing of the master (Mallam) that he can read, and correctly too, what he has written.

The emphasis is on these early stages is not on the learner understanding the *linguistic* meaning of the Qur'an, since this is covered during extracurricular activities in either the school or the community, particularly during the Ramadan when *Tafsir*, the translation and meaning of the Qur'an is offered by Qur'anic teachers of professorial status. Education at this level at least enables the learner to participate, not lead, in basic Muslim activities and appreciate their significance. In any event, familiarity with the Qur'an during these intensive studies—both scripturally and linguistically—has enriched the Hausa vocabulary with well over 1,025 Hausa words borrowed from Arabic (Zarruk, 1978).

Haddatu

A boarding pupil or one within easy reach of the school may continue with his studies after graduation at a higher level with the aim of becoming a *Mallam*. He continues with more advanced syllabus from a stage called *haddatu*, which sees the beginning of the learning of the Qur'an off-head, as it were, since by now the young learner has mastered enough of the vocabulary to enable him to read the subsequent portions of the Qur'an on his own, although reading in the presence of the teacher. The allo is of course replaced with the printed Qur'an. Once he can commit the entire Qur'an to memory, he moves to the next class, *Tilawa* which is a revision stage and enables him to perfect his mastery of reading of the Qur'an from his memory, rather than from the printed book.

Once he can commit the entire Qur'an to memory, he is expected to reproduce it in the next stage of learning, *satu*, which means entails writing the portion of the Qur'an from memory until he can write out the complete Qur'an—which becomes his dissertation. He is then subjected to *musabaha*—a process in which he publicly submits and reads this dissertation. Once he completes this dissertation to the satisfaction of his examiners, he becomes a *Hafiz*, after which he can either terminate his studies, or go for specialized advanced studies. In any event, he has become a *Mallam*.

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.

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, further studies by Greenberg, 1947; Hiskett, 1965; and Baldi, 1988). Again this further enhanced the vocabulary acquisition of the Hausa, and since the Babbaku and Farfaru stages of learning are compulsory early

childhood education programs, a literacy base therefore existed even among those who did not go beyond the Babbaku and Farfaru stages of their curriculum.

An example of common usage of ajami is in Fig 3 which reproduces the first page of Malama Hassana Sufi's translation of *Hayatil Islam*, published in Kano, 1979.

Fig. 3 Sample Hausa Ajami writing

This system sustained itself effectively throughout the Muslim Northern Nigeria right through to the Islamic and intellectual Jihad reforms of Shehu Usman Dan Fodiyo which started in 1804. As Hunwick (1997, p. 212) 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), *lugha* (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 Northern Nigeria. Thus before the end of the 20th century, an intellectual and scholastic tradition based on Islam existed among the Muslims of Northern Nigeria.

Part III

Darkness At Noon: The Colonial Interregnum

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

> Let it be admitted at the outset that European brains, capital, and energy have not been, and never will be, expended in developing the resources of Africa from motives of pure philanthropy that Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane; that the benefit can be made reciprocal, and that it is the aim and desire of civilised administration to fulfil this dual mandate (Lugard 1965, web version).

Subsequently, while the ostensible reason for declaration of colonial rule in Northern Nigeria by the British was to stamp out slavery, the actual reason was the economic, intellectual and political enslavement of the indigenous people by substituting their traditional mindsets with an imposed one. As Lord Lugard (1965) wrote,

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

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, but he still faced the problem of choosing a language of administration, and of training clerks who could use that language. Lugard's decision to use Hausa as the language of his administration was to help spread Hausa even more widely within Northern Nigeria than it had previously been, but most importantly, to provide the colonial machinery with a communication system with the natives. As noted by Dobronravine & Philips (2004, p. 89),

,

> 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."

The British military sorties against the Northern Nigerian emirates were concluded by February 1903 with the capture of Kano. In order to defuse the possibility of an uprising as occurred in other parts of the colonial empire with strong Islamic culture (Sudan and Egypt, for instance),

the British adopted a tactical policy of pledging non-intervention in religious affairs of the Northern peoples, especially the Muslims, upon their arrival and subsequent subjugation of Northern emirates in 1903 (Graham, 1966).

This pledge involved preventing Christian missionaries from establishing schools in Muslim areas of the North, although they were given free access to "pagan" areas of the North and Southern Nigeria by the colonial administration. As Lugard (1965) stated,

> Government did not interfere in the indigenous Koranic schools, in which reading and writing in the Arabic and Ajemin (sic) character, and memorising passages from the Koran formed the curriculum. They were estimated at some 25,000 with over a quarter of a million pupils. These Koranic schools had produced a literary class known as "Mallamai", learned in Arabic and the teachings of the Koran and commentaries, from whose ranks the officers of the Native Administration, the judges of the Native Courts, and the exponents of the creed of Islam were drawn. They are a very influential class, some of them very well read in Arabic literature and law, and deeply imbued with the love of learning.

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

> As early as 1900 Lugard was debating the question of whether to use Roman or Arabic script in the official Hausa orthography. Although some of his officials would have preferred Arabic script, Lugard chose the Roman. Had he chosen Arabic it would have made it harder for the pupils to learn English later on in their school careers and would have further widened the gap between the educational systems in the North and south of Nigeria (Crampton, 1975, p. 99).

Crampton—a Christian missionary historian—thus underplayed the significance of Arabic script in the education of Muslim Northern Nigerians, *and ignored hundreds of years of antecedent literary substrata which the colonial machinery could have built upon*, if it indeed it had wanted the education of the colonized to have any meaning. The real reason behind Lugard's rejection of the Arabic script, however, was more sinister. As Crampton (1975, p. 99) further notes,

> Miller said that in an interview with Lugard in 1900 he strongly urged him to adopt the Roman script because he felt that the scholars of the future would thus be drawn to the 'endless storehouse of Western literature', and the 'priceless heritage of Christian thought' rather than 'the somewhat sterile Muslim literature and the religion of Islam.'

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

> In those days if a man wanted to send a letter, he has to come to a Malam. And people used to do it a great deal, for if a man had a message to send, and he merely sent a servant, it might be that the servant would not give the full message correctly…It was from Zaria that the practice of writing in Hausa with some skill spread. Because sometimes when they wrote in Arabic, they might use language that the reader at the other end would fail to understand. And that was why a District Officer in Zaria had the bright idea — in fact he made it an order — telling people to stop writing in Arabic, seeing that it was not our language (Koki & Skinner, 1977, p. 46).

Dobronravine & Philips (2004, p. 89) further ague that while the attitude of the new rulers towards Arabic was generally negative, most British administrators saw Hausa as an important native language comparable to Urdu in India:

> And as in India where the British greatly contributed to the growth of Urdu and Hindi literatures in the 19th century through an elaborate combination of education and government decrees, the colonial administration of Northern Nigeria contributed to the growth of Hausa literary output from 1900 to 1930.

Reverend Miller got his chance to entrench the use of Romanized script to replace Arabic (and ajami) when

> On August 2nd, 1902, even before the conquest of Sokoto, Lugard asked the missionary Dr. W. R. S. Miller to translate proclamations into Hausa for use by his administration. Miller expected English and Roman letters to replace Arabic and Ajami.' He also thought that the liquor and trees proclamations could not be translated into Hausa, only Arabic. Therefore he submitted translations of the sections "that can be thought by a Hausa". Who, if not educated Hausa scholars, was supposed to understand the Arabic versions Miller did not say, and it is likely that Miller's own Hausa was more at fault than the language itself. Still, it should perhaps be remembered that Arabic was the language of law and administration in the Caliphate, and that the idea of translating proclamations into written Hausa was very new and strange to local scholars as well. As late as the 1950s Arabic was the only language most Shari'ah court judges read or wrote and they tended to "think legally in it."" Hausa would need more development and would need particularly to acquire more vocabulary, both from English and from. Arabic as it was used for administration in Northern Nigeria (After Philips, 2004, p. 62).

Miller subsequently sent Roman and Ajami Hausa translations of the proclamations to Lugard. He referred to Ajami as "Aljemmi". At about the same time came the first intimation that Lugard intended to replace Ajami with Romanized Hausa. On October 29, 1902, in reply to a resident who was worried that the forthcoming language examinations for colonial officers might contain a section of Ajami, the Secretary to High Commissioner Lugard revealed that it was the intention of the new administration to use Romanized Hausa for administrative correspondence with Africans rather than Arabic. Arabic would still be important, so that was the second language that the resident was requested to learn. Realizing that he would still need to use Arabic at least at the beginning of his administration, on November 2nd, 1902 Lugard wrote to Professor H. A. Salmore of King's College, University of London to translate his proclamations into Arabic for a fee (Philips & Daigaku, 2000)

Lugard stuck to his goal of substituting the Roman for the Arabic character and of using Hausa instead of Arabic as the administrative language, but acknowledged that at present he lacked the resources and control to do so. As Philips & Daigaku (2000, p. 33), noted,

> Lugard wrote that he preferred "national" development using Hausa in Roman characters to "Arabic Mohammadan progress" and "Algemie, - (a spurious Arabic)"…Romanized Hausa would also be better for helping Africans get jobs with British commercial firms…He stated his real objective forthrightly: "I hope that, in course of time, this [policy] may result in the formation of a class of people who can read and write Hausa in the Roman character, *though unable to speak English*." He therefore wanted the CMS schools also to teach Romanized Hausa, not English." (emphasis added).

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

> Some progress has been made, both in the teaching of English and of the substitution of the Roman character for the vernacular manuscript. I look on this experiment with great interest, and I am personally

> anxious to introduce the Roman instead of the Arabic characters for the writing of Hausa, as being more adapted to express its sounds and readable by every political officer (Philips & Daigaku, 2000, p. 33).

Nonetheless, both among missionaries and among administrative officers there were those who argued for the use of Ajami. Lugard's temporary replacement, Acting High Commissioner William Wallace, under the influence of Canon Robinson, ordered all residents to begin using Ajami and to notify all emirs and mallams that Arabic letters would no longer be accepted. This was in September 1903. Nevertheless, he did hold out the hope that "before long" Roman characters could be used to write Hausa (Philips & Daigaku, 2000, p. 33).

However, while there were missionaries and administrative officers who argued for the Romanization of Hausa, Major Alder Burdon, an administrative officer, and Charles Henry Robinson, a missionary, were not among them. According to Philips & Daigaku (2000, p. 33), Robinson indeed grew effusive, if a bit inaccurate about other African peoples, in defending the continued use by the Hausa of their own script:

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

Philips & Daigaku (2000, p. 36) noted that in his defense of ajami as a script of communication,

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

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

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

It was of course not surprising that Mission schools refused to use the ajami script in their schools, even though they were to later use it as an instrument of propaganda to entice Muslims into Christianity by translating the Bible and other Christian tracts in the script. It was not in Missionary interest to acknowledge the existence of ajami — a script with direct roots in Islam. Further, by insisting on Romanized Hausa, or *Hausar Boko* as it became to be known, they

would be setting the standards around which any subsequent education policy would be created. This would further disenfranchise Muslim learners. Part of the subsequent silent resistance against this missionary inspired education was the creation of the derisive term, *Bokoko A Wuta* (Schools of Hell) that became identified with western education in Muslim Northern Nigeria.

"Dan Hausa" and the Destruction of Muslim Education in Nigeria

However, perhaps the biggest blow to Muslim Hausa education was the appointment of Hans Vischer, a former missionary, as the first Director of Education on July 1, 1908. As Philips & Daigaku (2000, p. 37) noted,

> Vischer recommended Roman characters because (1) *otherwise the government would be spreading Islam*, (2) there was as yet no standard orthography, (3) the Roman alphabet could be learned faster, (4) it was very expensive to print Arabic with vowels, (5) few political officers wrote Ajami, (6) while certain letters were found in Arabic and not in Roman, the reverse was also true, (7) it was a "fallacy" that the Arabic alphabet had been modified by Hausa scholars, since all the new letters were found in North Africa, except for two (unspecified) ones; which Vischer admitted were "peculiar to the Soudan" but which he also claimed were found in the Qur'an and Arabic books. Finally he claimed that it was not practical to try to standardize Ajami. Therefore he recommended teaching officials and chiefs' sons to write in the Roman alphabet. He insisted that he did not wish to discourage either Arabic or Ajami, admitting that he lacked the power to do so anyway (emphasis added).

Hans Vischer, affectionately nicknamed *Dan Hausa* (a true Hausa) due to his command of the Hausa language, and the erroneous perception of the local authority that he was sympathetic to their worldview, proved the thin edge of the wedge that finally stymied the development of ajami as an educational script for Northern Nigeria. As I argued earlier, the missionaries had already set the standards of what education should be, Vischer merely followed the script by modifying it to include a "functional" education for the natives. As Philips & Daigaku (2000, p. 37), further pointed out,

> Vischer's real purpose was to perpetuate British colonial imperialism by forbidding the use of either Arabic or English for administration. In either of these languages Africans could read anti-colonial nationalist propaganda from Egypt, the United States and other countries. Vischer was opposed to the use of Arabic even in the Sudan, where it was the first language of millions, and even objected to the teaching of English in schools in Egypt and the Gold Coast (now Ghana.) He wanted only to train enough clerks to avoid the necessity of introducing clerks from Southern Nigeria, who might bring with them nationalist ideas. Thus his ideas fitted well with those of Lugard.

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

The chief's sons and other students of his first schools in Kano in 1909 and 1910 eventually took over the mantle of political leadership in Northern Nigeria—and perpetuated the colonial agenda by refusing to acknowledge ajami as a legitimate scriptural expression of the Muslim Hausa and thus even after independence in 1960 did not pay any attention to it and its power to focus collective Muslim Hausa thought. Thus since the British did not bother to develop any standard for it, neither did their Nigerian successors. *Hausa Boko* thus reigned supreme even amongst the educated elite in Muslim Northern Nigeria (Philips, 1994).

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

The colonial administration, had of course, realized early enough that despite its long history of usage, Ajami had never been accorded official recognition by the authorities in Hausaland, especially after the 1804 jihad, when its orthography should have been standardized. The colonial administration seized this opportunity to further entrance Roman scripted Hausa. Court proceedings, payment receipts, government notices and other official matters were written in boko script. *Boko* received official backing and gradually over-shadowed Ajami. Where Ajami had lacked a standard orthography, the colonial administration insisted on standardizing boko from its inception. Rules for orthography were constantly issued and revised and boko newspapers and literary competitions were introduced to hasten its development. Worse, *the missionaries started using Ajami for evangelical purposes which had the effect of driving people away from it*. The introduction of adult education, a literacy campaign and the establishment of a translation bureau in 1930 to translate material into boko further helped to weaken Ajami. Boko met with such resistance that its use almost disappeared, but the Emirs counteracted by reiterating the advantages of this new writing system and argued that it was a necessary step towards development. Attempts to revive Ajami were ineffective, although it is used to this day in private correspondence and in religious tracts.

This was further entrenched with the organization of a literary competition in 1932 which yielded Romanized Hausa novels (Ruwan Bagaja, Jiki Magayi, Shehu Umar, Gandoki, Idon Matambayi) that came to be seen as the classics of Hausa literature — completely sidelining thousands literary works by indigenous scholars in the ajami script. This marginalization continued well into the century, and supported by the "enemies within" — scholars entrenched into mainstream educational systems in Northern Nigeria, and who were seen as promoters of Northern Nigerian literary culture. A good example is Mervin Hiskett, a teacher in the School for Arabic Studies, Kano — and who before his death in 1994 started getting worried about the increasing encroachment of Islam in his homeland of Britain — and who wrote a guide for teaching Arabic in primary and secondary schools. Dobronravine & Philips (2004, pp. 91-92) pointed out that

> …It is worth mention that during his work at the School for Arabic Studies in Kano Mervin Hiskett prepared the guidelines for teaching Arabic, where Ajami was seen as an unwanted local variety of Arabic script: "Attention should be paid to the correct formation of letters according to the naskh system. *In particular the writing of Ajami, and other local scripts should be avoided*" (Hiskett 1963, 32). Hiskett's view on Ajami was further developed in the work of A.D.H.Bivar …in whose classification, the meaning of "ajami" became restricted to a variety of Arabic script derived from Bornu court hand and widely used in Kano. (emphasis added).

Views such as these helped to sustain a contempt for ajami, and sadly its potential for providing what can be considered instant intellectual energy for the de-secularization of millions of Muslim northern Nigerians — for the beauty of ajami is that it is a *technique* not tied to any specific language. Notice how the translation of the Holy Qur'an by Abdullah Yusuf Ali into English, and similar translations in Hausa Roman script by late Sheikh Abubakar Gumi and Sheikh Nasir Kabara revolutionized access to the Qur'an by millions of western-induced scholars who had no knowledge of Arabic language, and thus no access to the direct meaning

of the Qur'an. Such literary revolution by these translators could easily be replicated using Ajami for millions of non-boko literate Northern Nigerians.

Part IV

A Manifesto for Civil Society

Back to the Future: Writing the Rites to Right the Wrongs

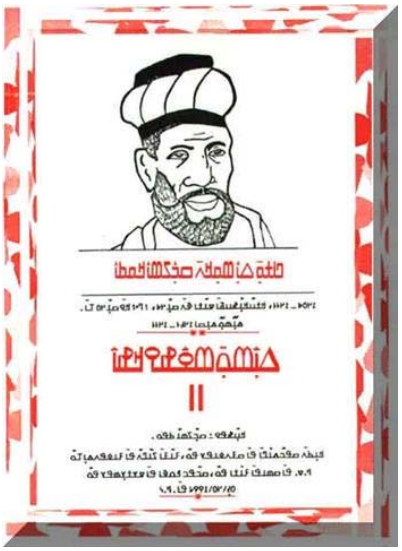
There is a tendency to believe strongly in the powerful and redeeming effects of literacy, especially in times of complex social and economic crises (Goody & Watt, 1963; Havelock, 1963, 1982, 1986; Olson, 1977; Ong, 1982). Work on literacy had often ignored the language and the literacy skills of people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

Yet ajami is not the only alternative mode of literacy in Africa that has been suppressed (Mafundikwa, 2003). Many communities have developed ways of expressing their language in other forms that communicate ideas and concepts. But because of a seemingly world-wide conspiracy to suppress them, these alternative literacies are not encouraged to develop, even in the countries they originate. This is a radical departure from the development of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Sanskrit alphabet in Asia that have had definite world-wide confidence as legitimate forms of literacy expression for thousands of years.

For instance, the N'ko alphabet was developed in the Malian basin by Souleyman Kante in 1949. It was made to correspond with tones in non-western languages that cannot be approximated using Roman letters. It is currently used primarily by speakers of Malinke, Bambara, Dioula and their dialects, especially in Guinea, Mali and Ivory Coast. One of his goals was to show that African languages, and Mandinka (closely related to Bambara) in particular, could be written. Another of his goals was to increase people's knowledge of Islam by translating the Qur'an into Mandinka and writing it in N'ko. A third goal was to preserve traditional knowledge, by giving people a way to write it down in their own language without having to go to school. N'ko is becoming increasingly popular, with the number of people literate in it probably numbering in the tens of thousands (for more on N'ko, see Dalby, 1969; Kanté & Jaané, 1962; Oyler, 1995).

It is written from left to right, and from top to bottom. Words are written by stringing together the characters along a base line. For example, the name of the alphabet (N'ko) written in script is:  . Below is the N'ko numerical system:

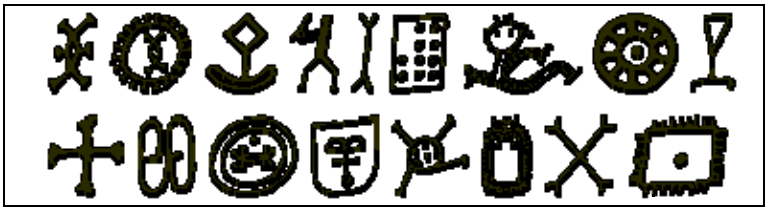
Cover of introductory N'ko book. Souleyman Kante holding a lamp, representing the light of knowledge from N'ko.



Manden History Vol. II

Nsibidi, Cross River State, Nigeria

A complex system of pictograms and ideograms, known as Nsibidi (or Nsiberi) has been used traditionally in the cross river area of Nigeria, especially among the Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio. Associated particularly with the male Ekge (or Egbo) society, most of the usages of Nsibidi are kept closely guarded secrets by society members.



Nsibidi, Cross Rivers, Nigeria

The system is known to have many usages, however, ranging from warfare to magic, and includes the use of symbols in combination to record narratives, such as the evidence recorded in continuous love-affairs or "woman-palaver". Nsibidi symbols may be carved on calabashes, etc., painted on walls, printed on cloth, or tattooed or painted on the human body.

Vai, Liberia

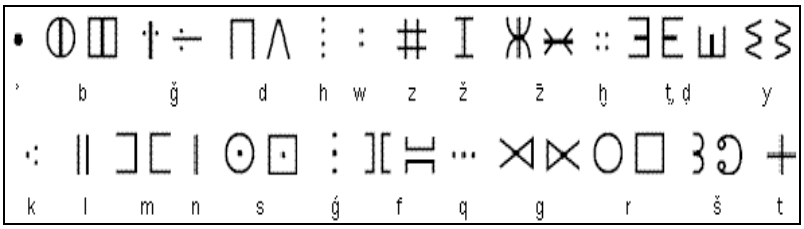
Vai is spoken by about 100,000 people, mostly in Liberia. A native Vai script was apparently developed in the 1830s by a group of native speakers of the language, the leader of which, Dualu Bukele, claimed to have been presented a book in a dream by white men. The Vai had been in contact with Portuguese traders, perhaps as early as the end of the 15th century (Scribner and Cole 1981; Dalby, 1967).

Vai Script

Further, it has been assumed for centuries that literacy gives rise to higher order cognitive abilities, to more analytic and logical thought than is typical of oral cultures (Musgrove, 1982). This almost common sense assumption is disputed by Scribner and Cole (1981) in their classical work on the Vai; they estimated that about 20% of the adult male Vai population were literate in Vai script, 16% were literate in Arabic, and 6% were literate in English. Each of these literacies is tied to a particular context of use. English literacy is associated with government and education, Vai literacy is used primarily for keeping commercial and personal records, and for letters, while Arabic literacy is used for reading, writing and memorising the Qur'an. Many adult men were literate in more than one script, and Vai literates were reported to sometimes write English and Arabic with Vai script. Arabic was used for writing out prayers in Vai and much less for secular purposes. (For further discussion of local literacies, see Street, 1994).

The Tuaregs

The Tuaregs have preserved and continue to preserve a simplified variant of their language, Tamasheq as a living tradition, used for letters or graffiti or occasionally poetry. They have, over the years developed an elaborate script for it, as shown below



Tifinagh, Tuareg (Niger and Mali)

They call this script Tifinagh, and, despite attempts in Niger and Mali to replace it with the Latin alphabet, it is still in wide use today. It is interesting to note that this script is more widely used by women than men; figures suggest 2/3 of Tuareg women are literate in it, in contrast to 1/3 of men, who are more often literate in the Arabic script, or even in the Arabic language instead, to deal with the outside world (Souag, 2004).

Thus a base exists in various indigenous African communities to communicate literacy using non-Roman scripts; but lack of political will and desire to be submerged in globalized vacuum prevented further development. This is not only peculiar to West Africa. For instance,

> in Mexico's bilingual education program, indigenous language instruction is used in the early grades as a vehicle for teaching fluency and literacy in Spanish. Bilingual education, however, does not lead to literacy in indigenous languages. One reason is that there is hardly anything for speakers of indigenous languages to read, once they are out of school. Recently, some Mexican Indians have begun printing

books in their own languages -- using adaptations of Roman script and the technology of desk-top publishing (Bernard 1999).

Moreover, Wagner's (1993) research in Morocco shows the ease with which multiple literacy can be achieved. Differences in mother tongue (Arabic or Berber) provided no long-term advantage to rural children who were learning to read French. This finding is particularly striking since French and Arabic differ radically in lexicon, syntax, and script. This provides support for the interdependence thesis (Cummins, 1979): *that learning to read in any language produces skills that are transferable to any other language*, thus making it easier for children to become bi-literate or multi-literate. The cultural and political-economic conditions under which the interdependence thesis works (that is, when, exactly, are literacy skills actually transferable from one language to another?) is a topic of considerable interest and discussion (see Bell, 1990; Bernhardt and Michael, 1995; Verhoeven, 1994).

Internal Barriers

While the use of ajami as an indigenous Hausa 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. *It is precisely what this lecture is about: transferability of scriptural skills to enhance literacy*.

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.

First was the association of ajami with Arabic, which created a scriptural cult of ownership among Muslim scholars. This was not restricted to Muslim West Africa, however. The magical books of medieval Europe acquired a similar character. Many of the ceremonial texts of Egypt and Mesopotamia 'were not intended to be read by human eyes' for they were essentially communications between man and god, not man and man. 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.

Further, according to Sa'idu Bambale Garba, 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: **ƙ, 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 (Garba, 1989).

Secondly, Christian Missionaries in Muslim areas of northern Nigeria started using ajami script in their tract literature from the 1940s. This had the powerful effect of steering people away from any ajami or ajami literature because of its advocacy in evangelism by the missionaries.

A "deadly" use of the ajami by the Christian missionaries was demonstrated in Kano, in 1991 when an ajami poster was circulated in Kano City announcing the arrival of the German evangelist, Reinhard Boonke, as shown in Fig. 4.

The poster that led to full-scale riots in Kano, Nigeria, October 1991. It was written in Hausanized Arabic script, the ajami, and aimed at attracting Muslims to attend a planned Crusade by German evangelist, Reinhard Bonnke.

Fig. 4. Deadly use of ajami script: The Reinhard Boonke Incidence, 1991

The poster, quoting sections of the Holy Bible, promised cure for all ailments and clearly pointed to Jesus Christ (AS) 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. The use of ajami in Christian tract literature was thus another factor that discouraged its widespread acceptance, especially among the Qur'anic school pupils and students.

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—lead 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. This was similar to what happened in the ajamization of Malay, Jawi due to

> the growing reluctance among local publishers to publish religious books for the public mainly in Jawi. Economic pressures favour publications in Rumi Malay, that would include quotations from the Qur'an 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…The consequences was felt by the national Jawi daily newspaper *Utusan Melayu,* which almost stopped its print run due to lack of sales (Zaki, 1998).

A significant difference in the use and spread of the two scriptualities—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 the 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—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.

Strategies for Achieving the Empowerment Objective

It is clear therefore that to promote literacy in indigenous communities we have to break the mold that sees literacy as the ability to read and write in an imperial language. We have to absorb alternative literacies that would enable effective communication of ideas, policies and concepts to learners, regardless of their age, and most especially out-of-school youth and adult learners. We have to use the advantage and head start of hundreds of years of scriptural dexterity and familiarity. This will be achieved by positing public policy dialogue as dialogue 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*.

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 sectorial 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 (Hoppers, 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. Such policy dialogues could result in:

- 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. In the United States, many philanthropists and organizations sponsor the establishment of whole departments, and indeed universities, in the pursuit of knowledge. For instance, Trinity College, North Carolina became, under an endowment from the tobacco magnate James B. Duke, Duke University in 1924. Similarly, Harvard University was one of the most abundantly endowed academic institutions, with a capital outlay of more $120 million dollars in 1929.
- 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.
- 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 young, 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 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. Mlama 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*, *Karamin Sani Kukumi, Da'u Fataken Dare, Ilya Dan Mai Karfi*, *Ikon Allah* etc. Noted contemporary academic *ajami* scholars can be sponsored by NNPC to do this in collaborative partnership with community ajami scholar. After all, NNPC 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 NNPC to attempt to redeem itself

- Publishing classic *ajami* literary materials in all aspects of history, sociology and political affairs in Kasar 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. After all, the huge amounts of money they splash at book launchings could better be utilized in this way.
- 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.

Conclusions

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

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

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

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

ajami scripts, has clearly demonstrated the tenacity of indigenously adapted Arabic scripts to integrate with any modern system of social discourse.

To test the theories of indigenous scriptural literacy advocated in this lecture, I hereby present my Manifesto for a Civil Society—a series of texts on *Qur'an, Peace and Conflict Studies, Prose Fiction and Social Studies—in ajami*. I hope this is the beginning of the end of the intellectual and scriptural marginalization of millions of scholars in Nigerian Muslim communities. It should mark the beginning of the application of *scriptural transferability* as a means of empowering these young scholars to participate in the development of their nation.

هَنْيُوينْ وَرْوَرِى

رکشی – رکشی

Sunset at Dawn, Darkness At Noon:
Reconstructing the Mechanisms of Literacy
in Indigenous Communities

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فَسَّرَرْسُورُوارِى

غُومَ

اَلَمْ تَرَكَيْفَ ذُوَا نَاس

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PROFESSORIAL INAUGURAL LECTURE
BAYERO UNIVERSITY, KANO

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Musa Abdullahi, and the entire community of the Bayero University, Kano, invite the General Public to the Seventh Professorial Inaugural Lecture of the University. Details of this important academic event are set out below.

TOPIC: **Sunset at Dawn, Darkness at Noon: Reconstructing the Mechanisms of Literacy in Indigenous Communities**

LECTURER: **Professor Abdalla Uba Adamu (mnae)**
B.Sc (Edu.) ABU; PGD (Sc. Edu.) & M.A. (Sc. Edu.) London;
PhD (Sussex)
Professor of Science Education & Curriculum Development

CHAIRMAN: Professor Musa Abdullahi
Ph. D., M. A. (Chicago); M.A. (Kent), B. A. (ABU)
Vice Chancellor, Bayero University, Kano.

DATE: Saturday, 24th April 2004

TIME: 10:00 PROMPT

VENUE: Theatre 1, BUK, Old Campus

Be there

Announcer: Public Lecture Series Committee, BUK