

## **Hausa Language Writing As A Vehicle For Development Of Islamic Literature**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*These are two types of writing in Hausa language. They are Ajamin Hausa and Hausar Boko. Ajamin Hausa is writing<sup>1</sup> Hausa in Arabic scripts while Hausar Boko is the writing of Hausa in Roman script. The former started after the coming of Islam to Hausaland in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, while the later was introduced after the coming of the British Colonialists and Christian Missionaries to Nigeria at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This paper shall discuss the Hausa writings in Roman Scripts that deal with Islamic Studies disciplines. The paper mentions some of the literary works authored and translated by Hausa writers and the purpose they are meant to serve. The introduction of the paper gives a brief history of the Hausa people and the language they speak.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **The Hausa people**

The Hausa are the most numerous people of the Northern States of Nigeria and of the Southern Niger Republic. There are also many Hausa people in Northern Ghana and Benin, and many live as immigrants in the Sudan Republic. The early City States of the Hausa in what are now the Northern States of Nigeria were established at about 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. The traditional story of Bayajidda explains how the original seven states, *Hausa Bakwai* were established. It is said that Bayajidda, a Prince from the Middle East arrived in Daura and killed a snake which had stopped people from drawing water from the well. The Queen of Daura married Bayajidda and their seven sons became rulers of Daura, Kano, Rano, Gobir, Biram, Zazzau, and Katsina<sup>3</sup>.

Beyond the original Hausa Bakwai were other states and regions – Gwari, Kebbi, Kwararrafa, Nupe, Yauri and Zamfara. They are called the *Banza Bakwai* which means non Hausa people who are neighbours to Hausa states<sup>4</sup>.

Muslim influence spread from North African to the lands of West African region. The people who travelled along the Caravan trade routes into ancient market towns, cities and ports carried the message of Islam with them. It was in this way that Islam reached the Northern parts of Nigeria who are Hausa. By the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. Muslim States began to appear there<sup>5</sup>. Today, Northern Nigeria is highly populated by Muslims.<sup>6</sup>

It is pertinent to add that in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, an Islamic reform movement was launched by Shaykh Uthman Danfodiyo (1754-1817). Most of the Hausa states were conquered and an Islamic system of government was established.<sup>7</sup> Soon after the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British forces led by Lord Lugard defeated the Sokoto Caliphate forces in a fierce battle and took over the rule of the Caliphate and named it the British Protectorate of Northern Nigeria.<sup>8</sup> In 1914, the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was amalgamated with the Southern Protectorate to form a United country known as Nigeria today.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Hausa Language**

Hausa belongs, with some less important languages to the Chadic language group. Many words from Arabic are often used in Hausa largely because Arabic is the language of Islam, and many English words have also been borrowed.

Hausa has a rich tradition of oral literature. There are many animal stories and fables, and there are also myths which give explanations of historical events. Written literature began about 400 years ago with the use of the Arabic Script (ajami) especially for religious writing. Shaykh Uthman and his subjects wrote some religious works in ajami for teaching the masses the basic teachings of Islam. Prominent among such works is *Markab al-Awwam*<sup>10</sup> authored by Sa'idu b. Bello. As of now there is much modern writing in Hausa on history, religion, politics, and other disciplines. But many modern writers use the Roman alphabet (the one used for English and most European languages) called Boko in Hausa.

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### **Qur'anic Studies**

The Holy Qur'an is the word of Allah. It is a treasure of Divine Wisdom, the study of which would require a life-time to understand the real depth of every single verse, perhaps such personal efforts might not be sufficient without Allah's Guidance and firm faith (Iman) in His message. Because of the significance of the Glorious Qur'an as a guidance to every Muslim, the Hausa Scholars who are enthusiastic in imparting Islamic knowledge to the Hausa Muslims in particular and all those literate in Hausa literature; made several attempts to translate the Book of Allah into Hausa. Prominent among such translations are those authored by Shaykh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi,<sup>11</sup> Shaykh Haliru Binji,<sup>12</sup> Shaykh Muhammad Nasiru Kabora,<sup>13</sup> Sheikh Ahmed Lemu,<sup>14</sup> Shaykh Muhammad Nasiru Mustafa,<sup>15</sup> and Shaykh Bashir Mohyiddin.<sup>16</sup> Some Muslim philanthropists such as Bello Maitama Yusuf and Islamic Organization such as King Fahd Foundation in Saudi Arabia and Jami'iyat al-Da'wah of Libya contributed immensely towards the publication and free distribution of the Hausa translated Qur'an in many parts of West African region where Hausa is widely spoken and read.

The translations of the meanings of the Glorious Qur'an into Hausa did not only increase the understanding of Allah's message among the Hausa readers but also widen the scope of the Hausa vocabulary. Many of the Arabic words in the Qur'an are borrowed and adopted in the Hausa translations.<sup>17</sup> Some of those words include the following:

<b>ARABIC</b>	<b>HAUSA</b>	<b>ENGLISH</b>
Al-Dunya	Duniya	The World
Al-Akhirah	Lahira	The Hereafter
Al-Zunub	Zunubi	Sins
Al-Jahannam	Jahanama	Jahanam (the hell fire)
Al-Jannah	Aljanna	The Paradise

As of now several Arabic words have been Hausarised to the extent that a Scholar has once said that more than 500,000 Hausa words were loaned from Arabic; and almost twenty percent of Hausa vocabulary are borrowed from Arabic.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, the Hausa translation of the Qur'an has given non-Muslims who are literate in Hausa and illiterate in Arabic language an opportunity to have a glimpse of the meanings of the Glorious Qur'an. This has promoted religious tolerance among Nigerians. However, some of the non-Muslims such as Reverend Bako who have read the translated copies of the Qur'an misrepresented it and thereby caused religious crisis among Nigerians.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Hadith**

The second primary source of Islamic law is the Prophetic Traditions. The Hadith explains the injunctions of the Qur'an. It deserves proper study by every Muslim. Unfortunately, an illiterate Muslim in Arabic language will know very little about the Prophetic traditions without the guidance of a learned Scholar of the science of Hadith. In view of that, the translation of Hadith literature received great attention from the Hausa writers. Some of Hadith literature translated into Hausa include Yahya al-Nawawi's compilation of *Arbauna Hadith*<sup>20</sup> and *Riyad al-Salihin*.<sup>21</sup> The *Muwatta* of Imam Malik,<sup>22</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*,<sup>23</sup> and *Bulugh al-Marami*<sup>24</sup> of Ibn Hajra al-Asqalani are among the Hadith literature rendered into Hausa for Hausa readers.

However, it is pertinent to add here that very few works<sup>25</sup> exist in Hausa language on *Mustalah al-Hadith* (the science of Hadith). The science of Hadith is not widely studied in Hausaland until 1934 when the School of Arabic Studies was founded in Kano.

### **Tawhid (Unity of Allah)**

Islam is a monotheistic religion. Belief in Allah, the Angels, the Revealed Books, His Prophets, the Last Day, and in Predestination are the six articles of faith. Because of the importance of knowing these articles, a reasonable number of works have been compiled in Hausa to ease their comprehension. Some of the scholarly works of Shaykh Uthman Danfodiyo on *Tauhid* such as *Usul al-din* have been translated into Hausa to educate the Hausa Muslims on Islamic Creeds. Some of the Hausa works on Islamic Creed are *Tauhidi Mai Dalilai*,<sup>26</sup> *Ibada da Hukunci*,<sup>27</sup> *Sakon Malam*<sup>28</sup> and *Jagoran Tauhidi*.<sup>29</sup>

### **Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)**

Islam is a religion of faith and devotion. In many verses of the Qur'an emphasis is laid on combining faith with devotion.<sup>30</sup> They are complimentary to each other. To emphasize this companionship Abu Zayd al-Qayrawani says in his *al-Risala* "which is one of the most popular Islamic law books in Nigeria" Certainly, faith is confession with the tongue, sincerity of the heart and action of the limbs. It (faith) increases with good deeds and decreases with lewdness. Testimony to faith will be incomplete unless it is accompanied with right deeds. Both testimony and good deeds are unacceptable unless they are done with good intentions.

Similarly, faith, action and intention are unacceptable except they are performed in accordance with Prophetic Practice (Sunnah).<sup>31</sup>

Islamic literature in Hausa that deals with Islamic Jurisprudence could be classified into two groups: Hausa literature and Jurisprudence translated from Arabic sources: Such works include *Mukarar al-tauhid*,<sup>32</sup> *al-akhdari*,<sup>33</sup> *al-Ashmawi*,<sup>34</sup> *Muqadimmat al-Iziyyah*,<sup>35</sup> *al-Risala*,<sup>36</sup> and *Mukhtasar al-Khali*.<sup>37</sup> The other group consists of works compiled on jurisprudence such as *Ibada da Hukunci*, Rariya Matatar Addinin Musulunci,<sup>38</sup> *Gabatar da Addinin Musulunci ga dalibai*<sup>39</sup> and several others. *Gabatar da Addinin Musulunci ga dalibai* and several others.

Furthermore, some Hausa works on jurisprudence deal with specific topics such as prayer, fasting, zakat, hajj, marriage and divorce. Prominent among such works are *al-Hajj al-Mabrur*<sup>40</sup> by Alhaji Usman Mani.

### **History and Biography**

Another aspect of Hausa Islamic literature is the works dealing with Islamic history and biographies of Prophet Muhammad (SAW); the four rightly guided Caliphs of Islam, and some eminent companions of the Prophet. The titles of works that deal with these topics include: *Tarihin Annabi Kamalalle*.<sup>41</sup> *Labarun Musulunci Goma*,<sup>42</sup> *Musulunci da Bazuwarsa*.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, Hausa literature on the history of Islam in the West African region are available in Nigeria. The celebrated work of Amir al-Muminin Muhammad Bello titled *Infaq al-Maysur fi Tarikh Bilad al-Tukrur*<sup>44</sup> have been rendered into Hausa for the benefit of non-Arabic speakers. Furthermore, the biographies of eminent Muslim scholars in Nigeria such as *Mujaddadi Shaykh Uthman b. Foduye*<sup>45</sup>, *Shaykh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi*<sup>46</sup>, *Tarihin Fulani*<sup>47</sup> have been compiled in Hausa.

### **Mada'ih (Eulogies)**

Eulogy of the Prophet of Islam and Saints is another manner of expressing love of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and eminent Saints of Sufi Orders. The emergence of Sufi Orders in Nigeria, such as Tijjaniyyah<sup>48</sup> and Qadiriyyah<sup>49</sup>, has led to literary composition of poems on eulogy and elegy in Hausa language. The poems are in most cases imitation of Arabic odes on eulogy and elegy. Hausa writers have been influenced by the odes of Alfazazi<sup>50</sup>, and Muhammad al-Busayri<sup>51</sup>, the authors of *al-Burdat* and *al-Hamziyyat* in praise of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Prominent among the Hausa writers and poets of Madh are Alhaji Akil Aliyu<sup>52</sup>, Alhaji Aliyu Namangi<sup>53</sup> and Alhaji Yusuf Bichi<sup>54</sup>.

### **General Works**

As Islam is a complete way of life, there is hardly a field of human endeavour that the Islamic aspect of it has not been documented in Hausa language. There are Hausa Islamic literature on Islamic Philosophy, Islamic Economics, politics in Islam, Astronomy, Astrology and other fields of social and natural sciences.<sup>55</sup>

### **Appraisal**

A cursory look at the proliferation of Hausa literature on Islam in Northern Nigeria will portray the death of Arabic Scholarship in the country.

Muslim scholars in Hausaland devoted their attention to writing manuals on Islam and translation of Islamic literature in Arabic sources into Hausa in order to facilitate the understanding of Islam among the Hausa readers who have no working knowledge of Arabic. The major aim of these publications is to curtail the influence of colonialism whose attitude towards the study of Arabic and Islamic studies was retrogressive. The colonialists deprived Muslim children time and opportunity of acquiring proper Islamic education and training by establishing public schools where untrained Arabists were recruited to teach Islamic studies.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to that the Christian missionaries established Western Oriented public schools where Muslim children who attended them were either converted to Christianity or rendered nominal Muslims<sup>57</sup>. Therefore, to save the Muslim children from abysmal ignorance of Islam, an effort was made to compile Islamic literature for them in their mother tongue. Even after the attainment of independence in 1960, the production of Hausa literature on Islam continues to thrive because the educational institutions give Muslims and their wards little opportunity to acquire proper Islamic education. For instance, out of thirty six Federal Universities in Nigeria today, only four<sup>58</sup> offer courses in Islamic Studies.

It is also pertinent to mention that the teaching of Islamic studies in tertiary institutions is through the medium of English. This policy deprives many private students of Islamic studies who have no working knowledge of English language from gaining admission into Nigerian Universities. Some of these students are now studying in Arab countries where the medium of instruction is Arabic.

## II. CONCLUSION:

From the afore-mentioned we have observed that a considerable number of Hausa Islamic literature exist in Northern Nigeria. We also mentioned that the main sources of such works are the Arabic literature on Islam. While some of these works are translations of the Islamic literature in Arabic, others are exposition of the teachings of Islam on various aspects of human endeavour. It is my ardent hope that the trend will change easily if facilities and opportunities are made available for Nigeria Muslims to acquire Arabic and Islamic education without tears in all tiers of the educational sector. As of now the level of Arabic writings in Nigeria with a population of more than seventy million Muslims is far below expectation. In Nigeria today there is no single periodical that publish in Arabic language whereas there are many newspapers and journals that publish in English and Nigerian languages regularly. Thus trend portrays the level of Arabic Education in Nigeria today.

### Endnotes:

- [1]. For details on the history of Ajami writing in Hausaland see: Aminu Batagorawa "The History of Ajami Writing in Hausaland". *Zaruma Magazine*, No.8, 1989, pp.8-11.
- [2]. Oxford University Press, *African Encyclopedia*, (Oxford University Press, 1974, pp.243).
- [3]. Ibid. p.224.
- [4]. Ibid. p.224.
- [5]. I.A.B. Balogun and M.E. El-Dasuky; *The Life of Muhammad*, (Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau, 1978). P.34.
- [6]. Ibid.
- [7]. I.A.B. Balogun, *The Life and Works of Uthman Dan Fodio*, (Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau, 1976). P.1-30
- [8]. J.A.S. Johnston, *The Fulani Empire* (London, Oxford University Press, 1967), p.240
- [9]. Michael Crowther: *West Africa: An Introduction to its History*. (London, Longman Group, 1977), p.148
- [10]. See *African Encyclopedia*, p.244
- [11]. The book deals with Islamic jurisprudence. A manuscript copy of it is available at Kaduna National Archives, Ref. No. A/ARI/IB.
- [12]. His translation in titled: *Alkur'ani Mai Girma da Kuma Tarjama Ma'anoninsa zuwa ga Harshen Hausa*. Published by Majma Fahd, Saudi Arabia, and also in Beirut in 1981.
- [13]. His translation is made for primary school pupils and covers only some chapters in the last 30<sup>th</sup> part of the Qur'an (Juz 'Amma) see: Haliru Binji; *Littafin Addini 1&2* (Zaria, NNPC, 1967), pp.4-12.
- [14]. The translation is titled: *Ihsan al-Manan fi Ibraz Khabaya al-Qur'an* and published in four volumes Jam'iyat al-Da'awah al-Islamiyyah al-alamiyah, Turabulus in 1998.
- [15]. The translation covers only the last part of the Holy Qur'an (Juz' Amma)
- [16]. He is the co-author of Sheikh Ahmed Lemu in his translation of the Qur'an into Hausa.
- [17]. The translation is titled: *Alkur'ani Mai Girma: Fassara da Bayani* published in India in 1986 by Continental Book Centre.
- [18]. For details see: Umaru Ahmed and Bello Daura: *An Introduction to Classical Hausa and the major Dialects*. (Zaria, NNPC 1970), pp.9-11.
- [19]. See Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya, *Hausa A Rubuce*. (Zaria, NNPC 1988).
- [20]. For details see: "The Crusader Mentality Returns" in *Inquiry Magazine*, Vol.3, No.5, 1987, p.20.
- [21]. It was translated by Shaikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi and published in 1978.
- [22]. Translated by Tijjani M. Iman and published by Baitul Hikmah, Bureau for Islamic Research, Translation and publication, Kano, N.D.
- [23]. Translated by Tijjani Muhammad Adam and Ibrahim Mahmud and published by Baitul Hikmah, Bureau for Islamic Research, Translation and publication, Kano.
- [24]. Translated by M.S.A. Gumbi and published by Dar al-Arabia, Kano in 1984.
- [25]. Translated by Ibrahim Abubakar, I.Tofa and published by Hudaibiyah Foundation, Kano in 1995. It is also translated by Sunusi Muhammad and published by Alhaji Hadi Zakari, N.D.
- [26]. See Mustapha Dandume: *Ilmin Hadisi A Saukake* N.B., N.P.
- [27]. Written by Alhaji Haliru Binji and published by NNPC, Zaria in 1971.
- [28]. Written by Sheikh Ahmed Lemu and published by NORLA, Zaria in 1959.
- [29]. Written by A.S. Waziri and published by NNPC, Zaria in 1971.
- [30]. Written by Alhaji Muhammad Modibbo, N.D., N.P.
- [31]. The Qur'an reminds believers (Muminun) to do righteous deeds. See Qur'an 5:93.
- [32]. Abu Zayd al-ayiwani: *al-Risala* (Zaria, NNPC, 1970).
- [33]. It is written in three volumes for Primary School Pupils.
- [34]. Translated by Muntaka Coomasie and published by NNPC, Zaria, 1980.
- [35]. Translated by Hamza Jibril Ahmad and Published by Anwar Arabic Bookshop, Kano, N.D.
- [36]. Translated by NNPC, Zaria and published by it in 1970.
- [37]. Translated by NNPC, Zaria and published by it in 1970.
- [38]. Translated by Muntaka Muhammad Uthman (Bilbis) as *Dausayin Musulunci* and published by Garewa Kapital Press, Abuja, 1995.
- [39]. Written by Alhaji Usman Gombe and published by NNPC, Zaria in 1974.
- [40]. Written by Aisha Lemu and translated by an anonymous author, N.D. and place of publication.
- [41]. Written by Alhaji Usman Mani and published by NNPC, Zaria in 1959.
- [42]. Written by Alhaji Abubakar Imam and published by NORLA in 1957.
- [43]. A.R. Nuhu: *Labarun Musulunci Goma* (Oxford University Press, 1975).
- [44]. Written by Dr. Saidu Muhammad Gusau a Senior Lecturer in Department of Nigeria languages, Bayero University, Kano.
- [45]. Translated by Jean Boyd and Sidi Suyuti Ubandoma and published by NNPC, Zaria in 1974.
- [46]. Written by Alhaji Ibrahim Imam and published by Gaskiya Corporation in 1966. Furthermore *Daular Usmaniyya* written by Muhammad Isa Talata-Mafara was published by Hudahuda publishing company in 1999.
- [47]. Written by Alhaji Salihu Kubau and published by Paragan printers Kaduna in 1993.
- [48]. Written by Alhaji Junaidu and published by NORLA in 1959.
- [49]. For the history of Tijjaniyah in Nigeria see: J.S. Trimingham; *Islam in West Africa*, (Oxford University Press, 1976).
- [50]. Ibrahim Imam: *Tarihin Mujadadi Shehu Usmanu Dan Fodio*, (Ghaskiya, 1966).

- [51]. Among his Odes that are prevalent in Nigeria are *Burdāt al-Madīh* (Mantle of Praise) and *al-Hamziyyat*.
- [52]. See Aliyu Akilu; *Fasaha Akiliya*, Zaria, NNPC, 1977.
- [53]. See Wakokin Infiraji published by NORLA in 1958.
- [54]. Yusufu Bichi; *Ishriniyyah Yusufiyya*, (Sokoto, Sidi umaru Printing Press, 1979).
- [55]. For more details on Hausa works on Islam see: Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya; *Hausa A Rubuce* (Zaria, NNPC, 1988).
- [56]. S.A.S. Galadanci; *Harakat al-lughah al-Carabiyah wa Adabuha*, (Cairo, 1982) pp.20-44.
- [57]. See W.O.A. Nasiru: "Attractions and Reactions of Lagos" Muslims to Christian sponsored Western Education 1890-1926 *al-Fikr* Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies, No.13, 1992, p.71.
- [58]. S.K. Rashid (ed.) *Islamic Law: Teaching and Application* (Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau, 1986) pp. 109-116.

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