Hausa Language Writing As A Vehicle For Development Of Islamic Literature

Dr. Hamza A. Ainu
Centre for Hausa Studies
Usman Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria
Corresponding Author: Dr. Hamza A. Ainu

ABSTRACT
These are two types of writing in Hausa language. They are Ajamin Hausa and Hausar Boko. Ajamin Hausa is writing 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 13th century, while the later was introduced after the coming of the British Colonialists and Christian Missionaries to Nigeria at the end of the 19th 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 13th century. 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.

Beyond the original Hausa Bakwai were other states and regions – Gwari, Kebbi, Kwararafa, Nupe, Yauri and Zamfara. They are called the Banza Bakwai which means non Hausa people who are neighbours to Hausa states.

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 12th and 13th centuries A.D. Muslim States began to appear there. Today, Northern Nigeria is highly populated by Muslims.

It is pertinent to add that in the early 19th 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. Soon after the end of the 19th 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. In 1914, the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was amalgamated with the Southern Protectorate to form a United country known as Nigeria today.

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 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.
**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 lifetime 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,11 Shaykh Haliru Binji,12 Shaykh Muhammad Nasiru Kabora,13 Sheikh Ahmed Lemu,14 Shaykh Muhammad Nasiru Mustafa,15 and Shaykh Bashir Mohyidden.16 Some Muslim philanthropists such as Bello Maitama Yusuf and Islamic Organization such as King Fahd Foundation in Saudi Arabic and Jamii’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.17 Some of those words include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARABIC</th>
<th>HAUSA</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al-Dunya</td>
<td>Duniya</td>
<td>The World</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al-Akhirah</td>
<td>Lahira</td>
<td>The Hereafter</td>
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<td>Al-Zunub</td>
<td>Zunubi</td>
<td>Sins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al-Jannah</td>
<td>Jahanama</td>
<td>Jahanam (the hell fire)</td>
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<td>Aljanna</td>
<td>The Paradise</td>
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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.18

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.19

**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 Hadith20 and Riyad al-Salihin.21 The Mawwata of Imam Malik,22 Sahih al-Bukhari,23 and Bulugh al-Marami24 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 works25 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 Tawhid 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 Tawhid Mai Dalilai,26 Ibada da Hukunci,27 Sakon Malam28 and Jagoran Tawhidi.29

**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.30 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.

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

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, al-akhdari, al-Ashmavi, Muqadimmat al-Iziyiyah, al-Risala, and Mukhtar al-Khilli. The other group consists of works compiled on jurisprudence such as Ibada da Hukunci, Raraya Matatar Addinin Musulunci, Gabatar da Addinin Musulunci ga dalibai 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 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, Labaran Musulunci Goma, Musulunci da Bazowarsa.

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-Maysir fi Tarikh Bilad al-Tukrar have been rendered into Hausa for the benefit of non-Arabic speakers. Furthermore, the biographies of eminent Muslim scholars in Nigeria such as Magajadadi Shaykh Uthman b. Foduye, Shaykh Abubakar Mahmud Gummi, Tarihin Fulani 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 Tijaniyyah and Qadiriyyah, 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 Alfaazazi and Muhammad al-Busayri, 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, Alhaji Aliyu Namangi and Alhaji Yusuf Bichi.

**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.

**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.

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. 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 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:
[6]. Ibid.
[10]. See African Encyclopaedia, p.244
[12]. His translation in titled: Akur’ani Mai Girma da Kuma Tarjama Ma’anomina 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 30th part of the Qur’an (Juz ‘Amma) see: Hulun Binji; Littiffin Addini 1:2 (Zaria, NNPC, 1967), pp.4-12.
[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.
[21]. It was translated by Shaikh Abubakar Mahmud Gunmi 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.
[25]. Translated by Ibrahim Abubakar, I’Tofa and published by Haadhibiyah Foundation, Kano in 1995. It is also translated by Sunusi Muhammad and published by Alhaji Hadi Zakari, N.D.
[26]. See Mustapha Dundume: Ilimin Hadisi A Sausake N.B., N.P.
[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.
[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 Idris 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.
[40]. Written by Alhaji Idris 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.
[44]. Written by Dr. Saidu Muhammad Gusau a Senior Lecturer in Department of Nigeria languages, Bayero University, Kano.
[45]. Written by Dr. Umaru Ahmed and Bello Daura: Fassara da Bayani published in India in 1986 by Continental Book Centre.
[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 Hudaahuda publishing company in 1999.
[48]. Written by Alhaji Juma’u and published by NORLA in 1959.
Among his Odes that are prevalent in Nigeria are Burdat al-Madih (Mantle of Praise) and al-Hamziyyat.

See Aliyu Akila; Fasaha Akiliya, Zaria, NNPC, 1977.

See Wakokin Infiraji published by NORLA in 1958.


For more details on Hausa works on Islam see: Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya; Hausa A Rubuce (Zaria, NNPC, 1988).

S.A.S. Galadanci; Harakat al-lughah al-Carabiyah wa Adabuha, (Cairo, 1982) pp.20-44.
