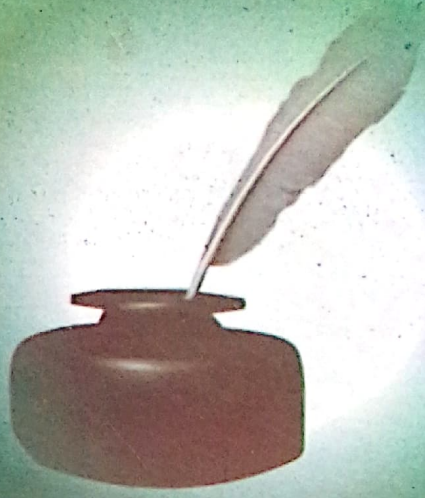
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NATIVIZATION OF ARABIC LOANS IN BAATONUM

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Introduction

Language is an important tool that every human community uses as a specific and common means of expression, communication and conveyance of different thoughts. It is also important as the source of history of any community, be it intellectual or spiritual. With the movement of languages and cultures from one environment to another and the resultant contact with other language(s) and cultures in the new environment, they influence one another resulting to language development or change. This development/change according to linguists is brought into a language through two factors: internal and external. While the internal factors are those that are inherent in the language itself, the external factors refer to situations in which changes are motivated by other languages through borrowing.

In the past, a considerable number of studies have been carried out on the influence of Arabic on some African languages and cultures such as Hausa, Yoruba, Swahili and Mandingo[1] etc, and the subsequent borrowing of a large body of lexical items of Arabic origin by these languages; much is widely yet unknown about some other African languages such as Baatonum [ba: t_num], which have been subjected to similar influence.

This paper therefore intends to shed light on the influence of Arabic (with particular reference to loan words) on Baatonum language, which is one of the minority languages in the West African sub-region, and one of such whose borrowing from Arabic is not much known. It further examines how the borrowing language nativized some linguistic elements of the Arabic loans.

Borrowing itself, being the consequence of cultural contact between two or more languages is motivated by 'need'. As speakers of a particular language take over new cultural items, new technical, religious terms or references to the foreign locations etc, there is obviously the need for vocabularies to express such terms and references. Nativization on the other hand, is the consequence of borrowing; it is the firm integration of the borrowed items into the linguistic structure of the borrowing language. In other words, it is a process by which a borrowed word

loses pronunciation features of the source language and assimilates to the pronunciation pattern of the borrowing language.[2] It is the hope that this study will enhance the development of Baatonum as a regional language, and also contribute positively to its linguistic state and to national and regional development.

The Baatombu and Baatonum Language

The Baatombu [ba:tɔmbu] (*singular Baatonu*) are an ethnic entity, and the dominant ethnic group that inhabited the ancient Borgu plateau (*Baru-wu*) that lies between the 9th and 12th degree latitude and between 1st and 4th degree longitude.[3] They are mainly composed of three distinct categories: the aborigines or *Baaton geobu*, the political migrants or *wasangari* and the commercial migrants. The aborigines or original Baatombu are today a class of commoners who are majorly farmers and hunters. According to Benjamin L. Hegeman, [4] historians can only guess when and why the original Baatonu people settled the plateau that now bears their name. There is no evidence. But that they came from somewhere is clear, and that they also isolated themselves from neighbouring invasions throughout many centuries is also clear. A theory suggests that they might have migrated from the middle Nile region. Several clans have been identified as being members of this category. They speak Baatonum (*Bariba*) as their first language (L1). Closely related to this category are the *Gando* people who are descendants of former slaves, war captives and "abnormal Batonu children" who settled in nearby separate villages and camps.[5] The second category, the *wasangari* nobles are most likely, former *Wangara* Sudanic warriors who migrated to Bussa somewhere after 1400 C.E. and who with the assistance of Islamic clerics, devised the 'popular' Kisra or Kisira legend to claim political legitimacy in their new land.[6] This category of Baatombu imposed themselves in the area progressively as political leaders from the 15th to the beginning of the 19th century. The last and final category is another group of immigrants or caravan communities, who are descendants of early Islamic scholars and traders from various parts of West Africa. The ancestors of this class reached Borgu (*Baru-wu*) long ago, either for commercial purposes or seeking refuge from war zones. In fact, it is not clear between the *wasangari* and this last category that which first came to Borgu. This group of migrants consists of many sub-clans. Among them are: Manne (Mande), Mansa, Sise, Sira (Silla), kuribari (Kulibali), Taruwere (Traore), Ture (Toure) from Mali, koburu (kabore), Fafana (Fofana) from Burkina Faso and Senegal, Kanike from Kanuri and Dikko from Fulani.[7]

All the groups were able to establish good relationship with one another through trade and inter-marriages. The present day Baatonu society is therefore a mixture of these three main groups, with the aborigines retaining their language and tradition, which are adopted by the other groups.

Baatonum, a language previously classified as an outlier of the Gur family[8] within the Niger-Congo family (the largest language phylum) of African languages, is now agnostically placed as an isolate within the Savanna languages.[9] The language is spoken by the Baatombu [ba:t mbu] as the lingua franca in Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria, where it is regarded as one of the minority languages. Aside Nigeria, the language is also spoken in the Provinces of Borgou, Alibori and in some parts of Atacora province in Republic of Benin. According to R. Jones, the total number of speakers in 1995 is about one hundred thousand (100,000) in Nigeria, and four hundred and sixty thousand (460,000) in Republic of Benin; [10] but recent findings reveal that there are perhaps a million Baatombu, 80% of them in Benin, where they are the fourth largest ethnic group and cover approximately 1/12 of the population.[11] The speakers of Baatonum as L1in Nigeria constitute the remaining 20%.

Baatonum shares the various phonological features of the Niger-Congo language family, like the use of tone, nasality and the use of particular consonant and vowel system. There are different dialects that differ considerably from one another phonologically and lexically with a degree of mutual intelligibility among them. However, the Nikki[12] dialect is widely accepted as the most standard and is being used for the purpose of writing and education using the Latin script.

Several alternate names are used to refer to the language, its people and its land; these include Baatombu, Barba, Baruba, Bariba, Bogung, Barganchi, Bargawa, Borgu, Bargu, Burgu etc. However, the nomenclature " Zana "[13] as mentioned by R. Blench[14] is a derogatory term used by the people of Kaiama[15] to despise the Baatonum speaking people, particularly those in Nigeria.

The Baatombu had had contact with different tribes and languages through trade, economic and religious activities. Some of these languages have a great deal of influence on the Baatonum language. Languages such as Arabic, Hausa, Yoruba, English, French and Dendi[16] have remarkable presence in Baatonum in form of loan words, loan translation and interlarling.

Arabic in Baatonum language

Arabic, a language spoken by about 235,000,000 native speakers and ranked fourth in world ranking of top most spoken languages by population[17] is regarded as a flexible language because of its adaptability and influence on many languages of the world; like English, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili, Kanuri, Hausa, and Turkish etc. This language also has its presence in Baatonum language because of the latter's nature as a receptive language. The influence of Arabic on Baatonum is in form of loan words. Arabic words in Baatonum could be noticed in religious, social, commercial and other spheres of human life. These words which have already been nativized are being used by almost all native speakers of Baatonum even unconsciously in their day to day interactions; since they use these words without even realizing that they are not originally theirs.

Factors that aided the influence

There are basically two factors that led to the influence of Arabic on Baatonu language. The first factor is the contact of the people with Islam in the early period. This might be traced back to the fifteenth century during the rise of the Songhai Empire, when Sonni Ali (Suno Ali in Baatonu History) and his successors launched series of campaigns against Borgu. Though the campaigns were not much successful, the rulers of Borgu agreed to say the Muslim prayers twice a year at the two principal festivals of *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha;* they also allowed Muslim traders and clergymen from different parts of West Africa into their kingdom. As a result, scores of Muslim settlers were found around Baatonu towns and villages such as Nikki, Parakou, Kandi and others where the Dendi who spoke a dialect of Songhai with Hausa traders and scholars constituted the Muslim communities.[18] These communities were known as *Wangara* communities and from there, they began to preach the word of God. Both the aboriginal Baatombu and the *wasangari* never thought of accepting Islam until after the failed war of 1830 with Ilorin. This incident opened the gate for Islam to make advances within the weakened feudal federation. The imams and chiefs of the *Wangara* settlements became the personal confidants and ideological ministers of the *wasangari* monarchs. Civil wars erupted and there was acute instability, and as chaos increased, the equestrian nobility distanced themselves from the Baatonu Traditional worship. It got to a point when the princes looked up to the prevailing sudanic powers of Islam and even sought spiritual protection, political insight, financial assistance and proxy leadership on their absence .[19] Gradually, Islam got into the hearts of some individuals and started to spread amongst those who initially abhorred it. As P. Marty observed "several Bariba

families, attracted by their (Islamic) example, have thus passed over to Islam".[20] However, until recent times, some *Baatombu* still considered Islam as a religion of the *Mannes*, *Taruweres* and *Tures* and therefore declined from embracing it.

As some individuals began to embrace Islam, some lexical terms of Arabic and Islamic practices began to penetrate into the Baatonu society. Those individuals, in an attempt to express some activities or practices of the new faith that do not exist in the Baatonu culture, had no option but to express them in the language of the faith, thereby adopting some Arabic words into Baatonu. The use of Arabic loan words increased as more people joined the fold of Islam and its knowledge been sought. With greater enlightenment, the last century witnessed exodus of many Baatonu natives to different parts of the world in search of Islamic knowledge. These individuals on return to their various communities engaged themselves in the spread of Islam. This century is not however left out in this direction. Youths from different towns and villages travel to towns and cities in Nigeria and Republic of Benin in search for Islamic knowledge; in the process, they adopt some Arabic words. All these, in no small way, have contributed and still contributing to the influence of Arabic on Baatonum.

The second factor is the trade link between the *Baatombu* and the caravan or *wangara* communities (particularly the Dendis and Hausas). For example, the Arabic weekdays were borrowed through Dendi, many of whom have become Baatombu. R. Jones also noted that hundreds of Dendi words, many of them originally from Arabic and mainly concerning religion, trade items, and abstract concepts which have been incorporated into Baatonum.[21] The Hausas on the other hand, who were traders in salt, onions, garlic, ginger etc. constantly visited the former Borgu Kingdom to sell their products. Additionally, the accommodating nature of the Baatombu, created an enabling environment for the visitors, some of whom settled in the land. The Hausas had before then borrowed a number of words from the Arabs, either through contact with Islam or through other languages like Kanuri. This, in the course of interaction between the two people (Baatombu and Hausas) in buying and selling, some Arabic words already adopted by the Hausas started to make their way into Baatonu language. It is remarkable to mention that some of those Hausa traders were equally knowledgeable in the field of Islam; and in order to exercise one of their religious obligations, they resulted into preaching Islam to their host communities, thereby using one stone to kill two birds at a time. This act of preaching also made considerable impact. By and large, the trade link between these people and good

neighbourliness among them greatly enhanced the influence of Arabic on Baatonu.

Areas of Influence

Arabic (as we shall soon see) has influenced Baatonum in two major areas of the language, namely: the lexis and the sound system.

1. The lexical influence

Arabic has played a major role in enriching Baatonum with a stock of vocabularies that has hitherto filled some gaps in the entire lexis of the latter. The adaptability of the source language on one hand, and the receptivity of the recipient on the other have both contributed to the large scale vocabularies of Arabic origin. In fact, among all the languages (both indigenous and foreign) that has influenced Baatonum, Arabic stands out as the greatest donor. Lexical items of Arabic origin in the fields of religion and religious practices, education, commerce, social, morals, personal attributes and lots more are abound in Baatonum lexis. As a common characteristic of loanwords, the Arabic loans have been subjected to some kind of changes (to be discussed in short while) in some linguistic elements.

The Arabic loans in Baatonum, as would be listed below are grouped into three groups. Group A consist of lexical items that came in with the advent and expansion of Islam among the Baatombu. In other words, it is made up of vocabularies that are purely Islamic religious terminologies and practices. Group B contains lexis that got in through Hausa and perhaps one or two other neighbouring languages like Dendi. Group C consists of vocabularies that occur in both languages; this however predicts a kind of genetic relations between the two languages. In all, 168 loans of Arabic origin are recorded.

Classification of Arabic Loans in Baatonum

1. Group A: (Religious terminologies/ practices)

Baatonum	*Arabic*	*Gloss*
Adiini	ad-din	religion
ɪdua	ad-duᶜa'	supplication
aluwala	al-wuduu'	ablution
ami	āmīn	amen
alaasaru	al-ᶜaṣr	afternoon prayer
alijanna, arisanna	al-jannah	paradise
asuba	aṣ-ṣubḥ	dawn

atafaru	az-zuhr	noon, noon prayer
ataiya	at-tahiyyāt	supplication at sitting position
balaga	bulūgh	maturity, puberty
gaafara	ghafara	to forgive
hadaya	hady	sacrifice
haila	ḥayḍah	menstruation
hijira	hijrah	migration
ibaada	ibādah	worship
idi	ᶜīd	festival/festive prayer (Baat.)
jahannama	jahannam	hell fire
jamàá	jamāᶜah	congregation
janaba	janābah	sexual impurity
kabara	takbīrah	glorification
kabura	iqāmah	establishment of prayer
kasaru	qaṣr	shortening of prayer
kiyaama	qiyaamah	resurection
magarubi	maghrib	west, dusk prayer
masalaasi	muṣallā	mosque
muriidi	murḥd	sufi student
niiyã	niyyah	intention
raka	rakᶜah	unit of prayer
rukû	rukūᶜ	bowing (in prayer)
saarɛ	Saḥūr	meal at dawn during ramaḍān
sakâ/zakâ	zakāh	charity
salaati	aṣ-ṣalāh	invoking blessing on the prophet (saw)
sallama	sallama	say as-salāmuᶜalaikum to terminate prayer
sujada	sujūd, sajdah, sajada	prostration, to prostrate
sunna	sunnah	tradition of the prophet (saw)
tuuba	taubah	repentance
waraha	ḍuḥā	forenoon, prayer at forenoon (Baat.)
wiridi	wird	initiation
zikiri	zhikr	remembrance of God
zumàá/jumaa	ṣalātul-jumᶜah	jumat prayer

2. Group B (1): (Education/Learning)

Baatonum	*Arabic*	*Gloss*
Aaya	āyah	verse
Bayaani	bayān, bayyana	explanation
Darasi	dars	lesson
faham	fahm	understanding, intelligence
fasaaha	faṣaḥah	eloquence/intelligence (Baat.)
fasara	fassara	to explain
fasali	faṣl	chapter
fazuukuu	fadhūkū	then have a taste / not following Procedure in learning (Baat.)
hadisi	ḥīdith	prophetic traditions
hantun	khatt	writing, calligraphy
iziu	hizb	one sixtieth of the qu'rān
ilimi	ᶜilm	knowledge
kalami	qalam	pen, biro
kuraani	al-qur'ān	the Koran
lahan	laḥan	grammatical mistake/lack of Understanding (Baat)
Madirasa	madrasah	school
Maana	maᶜnā	meaning
Nazari	an-nazar	glance
Suura	sūrah	chapter of the Qur'ān
Tadawa	dawāt	inkpot, inkstand/ ink (Baat.)
Tafsiiri	tafsīr	exegesis of the Qur'ān
Takaran	taqra', qirā'ah	reading, recitation
Walâ	al-lauḥ	slate
yaarabaawa, jaarabaawa	jarraba	examination

3. Group B (2): (Social life/ morals)

Baatonum	*Arabic*	*Gloss*
Alaada	al-ᶜādah	tradition, culture
Aleebu	al-ᶜayb	fault
Aliumma	al-'ummah	nation, people
Arufaasaru	al-faḥshā'	indecency, monstrosity
Amaana	amānah	trust
Faari	fakhr	pride

Faasikiru	fusūq	lewdness, dissipation
Iyaali	ᶜiyāl	family
Jamâ/samâ	jamāᶜah	community, group
Ladabi	al-adab	good manner
Madiu	madḥ	eulogies to the prophet Muhammad
Muliki	mulk	kingdom, rule (Baat.)
Munaafikiru	nifāq	hypocrisy
naam/naa	naᶜam	yes, answer to a call (Baat.)
sallama	sallama	say as-salām alaikum
saawara	tashāwara	seek for advice
seeda	shahida	to bear witness
sɛria	sharīᶜah	law/code/ punishment(Baat.)
walima	walīmah	banquet/celebrating completion of the qur'ān (Baat.)
zamba/samba	dhamb	crime/dupe (Baat.)
zina/sina	zinā	adultery, fornication

4. Group B (3): Words Related to Trade

Baatonum	*Arabic*	*Gloss*
Asaara	khasira	lose
Lisaafi	al-ḥisāb	calculation
Riba	ribā	usury
Aziziki/arisiki	ar-rizq	wealth

5. Group B (3): Names/Attributes/Titles of Persons

Baatonum	*Arabic*	*Gloss*
Alaaji, alaasi	al-ḥājj	the pilgrim (masc.)
alaaja, hajia	al-ḥājjah	the pilgrim (fem.)
arufa, aafaa	khalīfah	successor, learned Muslim
alikaali, alankaali	al-qāḍī	judge
anaaimi	an-nā'ib	deputy imam
annabi	annabiyy	the prophet
ataajiri	at-tājir	trader
azaalimi	aḍh-ḍhālim	oppressor
bahilli	bakhīl	miser
baitillaahi	baitul-lāh	house of God/one who

		performs hajj (Baat.)
bintu	al-bint	a girl
leman	al-imām	leader/leader in prayer (Baat.)
faasiki	al-fāsiq	lewd
kefeeri	kāfir	infidel
laadan	al-adhān	call to prayer / a caller to prayer (Baat.)
laarubu, araabu	al-ᶜarab	an arab
maalam	muᶜallim	a male teacher, male adult
maalama	muᶜallimah	female teacher, female adult
munaafiki	munāfiq	hypocrite
muumini	mu'min	a believer (masc.)
musulumi	Muslim	a muslim
sahaabe	ṣahābiyy	companion of the prophet (SAW)
shakii	shaqiyy	rogue
sheu	sheikh	chief, old
taabi'I	tābiᶜiyy	follower of the companions of the prophet (SAW)
ummi	umm	mother
ustaaz	ustādh	teacher, professor
walî	waliy	a saint, guardian
waziiri	wazīr	minister, secretary, deputy emir (Baat.)
wakiili	wakīl	representative, agent

5. Group B (4): (Days of the week

Baatonum	*Arabic*	*Gloss*
Alahadi	al-aḥd	Sunday
atɛnɛ/litɛnɛ	al-ithnain	Monday
atalaata	ath-thulathā'	Tuesday
alaaruba/laaruba	al-arbiᶜā'	Wednesday
alaamisi	al-khamīs	Thursday
arzuma/azuma	al-jumᶜah	Friday
asibiti	as-sabt	Saturday

6. Group B (5) Household Items

Baatonum	*Arabic*	*Gloss*
al-kidiri	al-qidr	kettle pot
alumasaru	al-baṣal	onion

fitila	fatīlah	wick
tasa	ṭast	wash bowl, basin

7. Group B (6): Dresses

Baatonum	*Arabic*	*Gloss*
hijaabu	ḥijāb	screen, woman's veil
jalaabia	jallābiyyah	loosed shirt-like garment, common among men in Egypt. quṭān long sleeved outer garment, open in front and fastened by waist band

8. Group B (7): miscellaneous

Baatonum	*Arabic*	*Gloss*
Alaafia	al-ᶜāfiyah	health, sound health
alaamari	al-amr	affair, issue
ãnfaani	an-nafᶜu	benefit
aliheeri	al-khair	good
ajali	ajal	appointed time
amma, adama	am-mā	but
alijannu, ziini	al-jinn	demon
asali	aṣl	origin, basis
baaru, laabaaru	al-khabar	news, information
balaai	balā'	disaster, affliction
baruka	barakah	lots of blessing
dabaara	dabbara	arrange, organize
daliili	dalīl	evidence, manual
anduuniya	ad-dunyā	world
faraabada	Abadan	forever
fitina	fitnah	disturbance, seduction
gaafara	ghafara	to forgive / excuse (Baat.)
halaka	halāk	ruin, destruction
ibilisi	iblīs	devil
izini/isini	idhn	permission
laakari	alᶜaql	common sense
malaaika	malak/malāikah	angel

musiiba	muṣībah	catastrophe, misfortune, distress
nasara	nasrun	success
saabu/sabaabu	sabab	reason, cause
sãma	samā'	sky
shetaani	shaiṭān	devil
taarihi	tārīkh	history
wakati	waqt	time
wallafi	allafa	to author a book
wasika	wathīqah	document, record/ letter (baat.)
zaaamani	zamān	period,time

8. Group C: Occurring in both languages

Baatonum	*Arabic*	*Gloss*
Abura,yabura	ibrah	needle
Asansi	asās	base
Asiiri	sir	secret
Banaa	binā'	building
Matarika	miṭraqah	hammer
Saa	sā^{c}ah	time/period
suru	shahr	month
suuru	ṣabr	patience
tibu	ṭibb	medicine

2. Phonemic Influence

It was mentioned earlier that the sound system of Arabic differs from that of Baatonum; this differences gave rise to the many phonological modifications of the Arabic loans in Baatonum. A quick look at the list of lexis above indicates the acquisition by Baatonum of the Arabic phonemes /j/ and /sh/. These two phonemes do not originally exist in the sound system of Baatonum; [22] they were brought in as a result of the linguistic borrowings by Baatonum from Arabic. The phoneme /j/ occurs in initial, medial and final positions of the Arabic loans, while /sh/ occurs in word initial position only. Examples of such Arabic loans with the phonemes /j/ and /sh/ in the receiving language among others include: jamâ [dʒæmɑ:], sujada [sudʒædæ], alaaji [ælɑ:dʒɪ] and sheu [ʃeiu], shakii [ʃækɪ:] etc.

Arabic Loans and Nativization in Baatonum

One major difficulty with borrowing from a foreign language is th languages may differ considerably in their phonology. Therefore, a common characteristic of loaned words is that they usually undergo some kind of adjustments: phonological, morphological and other forms of adjustments to suit the rules of such linguistic elements in the receiving language. Obviously, Arabic loans in Baatonum are subjected to some aspects of morpho-phonological nativization as we observe in the following paragraphs:

Phonological Nativization

The most important nativization processes involve phonology, since we have to make the borrowed word pronounceable in the borrowing language. It is explicitly clear that the sound system of Baatonum differs greatly from that of Arabic, while the former has eighteen (23) consonantal and twenty-four (19) vowel sounds, [23] the latter has twenty-seven (27) consonantal and eight (6) vowel sounds.[24] This difference culminated in the nativization of some Arabic consonantal phonemes in Baatonum. The phonemes so affected are those that do not have a match in Baatonum; the reason being that when faced with foreign sounds that do not exist in one's language, the most natural thing to do is to substitute them with native sounds similar to those foreign sounds. The following Arabic sounds are not found in Baatonum language: /ء/ - [ʔ], /ث/ - [θ], /ح/ - [ħ], /خ/ - [x], /ذ/ - [ð], /ص/ - [ṣ], /ض/ - [ḍ], /ط/ - [ṭ], /ظ/ - [ð], /ع/ - [ʕ] /, /غ/ - [ɣ] and /ق/ - [q].

In the event of adoption by Baatonum of any Arabic lexical item containing one or more of these phonemes, the Baatonu replaces it/them with phoneme(s) from his language that is/are closely similar to such phonemes. The Arabic words below, followed by their Baatonum counterparts to the right serve as examples.

wathīqah [wæθi:qæh] (Ara)→ wàsika [wæsɪkæ] (Baat) document /record /letter
ḥarām [ħæra:m] (Ara) → haraamu [hæra:mu] (Baat)
fakhr [fæxr] (Ara) → fáàri [fa:rɪ] (Baat) pride
dhikr [ðɪkr] (Ara) → zikiri [zɪkɪrɪ] (Baat)
muṣībah [muṣi:bæh] (Ara) → mùsiiba [musi:bæ] (Baat) misfortune/distress
al-wuḍū' [alwuḍu:] (Ara) → aluwala [æluwælæ] (Baat)
ṭast [ṭɔst] (Ara) → tasa [tæsæ] (Baat)
aḍh-ḍhālim [æðða:lɪm] (Ara) → azaalimi [æza:lɪmɪ] (Baat) oppressor
sharī'ah [ʃæri:ʕæh] (Ara) → seria [sɛriə] (Baat) law/code
ghafara [ɣæfæræ] (Ara) → gaafara [ga:færæ] (Baat) to forgive/excuse
ṣadāq [ṣɔda:q] (Ara) → sadaaki [sæda:kɪ]

In these examples, the Arabic phonemes: /th/, /ḥ/,/kh/, /dh/, /ṣ/, /ḍ/, /ʿ/ /ᶜ /, /gha/ and /q/ are replaced with /s/, /h/, , /a/, /z/, /s/, /l/, /t/, /a/, /g/ and /k/ respectively. However, there are some other modifications on certain consonantal phonemes which cannot be accounted for based on the above factor; this is because such phonemes already exist in Baatonum, e.g.

Al-baṣal [ælbæṣæl] (Ara) → arumasaru [ærumæsæru] (Baat) onion

The phonemes /l/ and /b/ in Arabic are replaced with /r/ and /m/ respectively even though the two phonemes exist in the Baatonum sound system.

Other important phonological adjustments that could be noticed are. vowel insertion or epenthesis and metathesis as the following examples make evident:

aṣl [æṣl] (Ara) → asali [æsælɪ] (Baat) origin

maghrib [mæɣrɪb] (Ara) → magarubi [mægærʊbɪ] (Baat) the dusk prayer

tasbīh [tæsbi:h] (Ara) → tasubáà [tæsʊba:] (Baat) Glorification

zamān [zæma:n] (Ara) → zaámani [za:mænɪ] (Baat) time/era

dawāt [dæwa:t] (Ara) → tadawa [tædæwæ] (Baat) ink pot

The first three examples show vowel insertion that breaks the consonant clusters /ṣl/, /ghr/ and /sb/ of Arabic in Baatonum. Another vowel insertion that is prominent among the Arabic loans is that which opens the closed syllables at the end of almost every all the items. This is because in Baatonum, only syllabics (vowels and /m,n/) occur finally in morphemes; and of these, /n/ does not occur finally in an utterance. On the other hand, the last two examples demonstrate the process of metathesis where segments interchange positions. We however excluded tonal adjustment deliberately in this discussion, owing to the fact that all Arabic loans in the language are tonally modified, because Arabic is not a tonal Language.

Summary and Conclusion

In this study, we were able to ascertain the fact that Baatonum language as other African languages had been greatly influenced by Arabic; thanks to the numerous lexis of Arabic origin. In fact, no other language (foreign or local) had contributed such a large number of lexical items into Baatonum as did Arabic. We also observed that Baatonum acquired two consonantal phonemes from Arabic; these phonemes had become part of the sound system of the receiving language. An attempt has also been made to analyze the aspect of nativization as it affects the Arabic loans in Baatonum. The nativization process majorly involves the phonology of the Arabic loans, beside other forms of adjustments. In the course of our analysis, we observed that almost all the Arabic loans had undergone at least one form of phonological adjustment or the other.

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