KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY



THE FOURTH (4th) INAUGURAL LECTURE

NIGERIAN LITERATURE IN ARABIC: CONCEPT, CONTENT AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By

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Distinguished Invited Guests;
Great KWASITES;
Ladies and Gentlemen

Preamble

All praises, gratitude, glorification and adoration are due to the Almighty, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Creator of heaven and earth, Nourisher and Sustainer of all creatures therein, Alpha and Omega. His wisdom is infallible and His powers are limitless. It is He who has taught by pen and taught man what he knows not. He has revealed many books to His prophets and made the Arabic Qur'an the last of them. He has challenged mankind to compose the like of the Arabic

Qur'an and none has succeeded in doing so. In this regard, He says:

قُل لَّئِنِ اجتَمَعتِ الإِنسُ والجنُ عَلَى أَن يَأتُوا بِمِثلِ هَذَا القُرآن لاَ يَأتُونَ بِمِثلِهِ وَلَو كَانَ بَعْضُهُم لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا.

(سورة الإسراء 88)

Say; If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it, even if some of them were aiders of others (17; 88).

It is by the grace of the one who revealed the Qur'an in Arabic, and by the prestige of the Qur'an itself that I stand before you today to deliver the 4th in the series of inaugural lectures and the first from Languages and Literary Studies of the fastest growing University for which I pray to be great despite all odds.

Vice Chancellor sir, I consider it incumbent on me to relate to this gathering my relationship with Arabic Studies which is interesting and revealing. At early stage of my life after completing the mandatory Qur'anic recitation in Ilorin, and my father started to look for which school I will attend, my grandfather frowned at my father's intention and directed that none of his grandchildren should be sent to a western oriented school, a common practice among Muslim parents in those days and probably up till today. Those parents as at that time had enough evidence to make such a decision because only God knows how many Muslim children have been converted as a result of their exposure to western education which was almost totally under the

control of Christian missionaries. I don't blame them. Schools that time were established not only for education but also for evangelization. This action of my grandfather marked the beginning of my association with Arabic Studies. I was however very lucky to find myself in an Arabic School, first of its kind in Ilorin in the sense that it was established by the 9th Emir of Ilorin in collaboration with the Imams and Alfas in the Emirate and put under the academic guidance of Sheikh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilory.

By the curriculum Al-Ilory designed, we have been exposed not only to numeracy and literacy though without English Language but also given solid foundation for future educational development. The school and probably all Arabic schools as at that time never received any assistance from the government despite their immense contributions to educational development. This was so because Arabic Schools were seen as religious schools and the country is arguably secular, forgetting that missionary schools were religious schools too, but developed to their present state by Nigerians of different faiths.

The reluctance or total refusal of Muslim parents since that time, is in my view, the beginning of reactions against western education which has probably led to the present uncontrollable and very unfortunate armed Boko Haram movement. Had it been that proactive measures were taken by successive governments in Nigeria, at least since independence through modernisation, modification and nationalisation of Arabic education, we as a nation would not have found ourselves in this type of security mess called insurgency.

Arabic in Nigeria

Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, distinguished scholars, eminent ladies and gentlemen, in order to understand and appreciate the import of this lecture, it is pertinent to briefly relate the contact of Nigeria with Arabic.

Arabic is the language of the original Arabs who are the inhabitants of *al-Jazirah al-'Arabiyyah* (Arabian Peninsula). It is also the language of the Arabicised nations such as Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and the whole of North Africa. In all the aforementioned countries, Arabic, according to Qura (1969) is the language of education, communication, commerce and politics.

The early history of the language is not very much known. This is because the literature that is being referred to as the early literature of the Arabs was full of life and strength which presupposes that that literature could not have been the early literature of a language in its early stage. The potency of Arabic became strengthened with the revelation of the Qur'an, the book of Islam in the Arabic language. The Qur'an, in structure and style, has profound influence on the language in the volume of new words used to represent new concepts. The language became more powerful in terms of imaginative capability and communicative adequacy when non-Arabs entered into Islam and used it as the medium of communication, literary expression and scientific characterisation. Hitti (1970) therefore asserts that:

> Between the ninth and the twelfth centuries, more works, philosophical, medical, historical, religious, astronomical and geographical were produced through the medium of Arabic than through any other language. The languages of

> Western Europe still bear the impress of its influence in form of numerous loan words (p. 4).

Arabic is the classical language of West Africa. It is not therefore a surprise to know that Mungo Park had to delay his second journey to West Africa because he wanted to master Arabic more just because it was the language of the elites((AbdulRaheem, 2017).

The history of the Arabic language in Nigeria dates back to the 11th century AD or even earlier when Islam was first introduced. Its teaching and spread were therefore associated with Islam as it is the case in non-Arabic speaking world. The teaching of Arabic in Nigeria was however due to other reasons which include historical and cultural reasons (Abubakar, 2014; Abubakre, 2002; Al-Ilory, 1991). The other reason is diplomatic; considering Nigeria a leading country in Africa, the status that makes her to develop relationships with the Arabic-speaking nations in Africa and elsewhere as a matter of national policy.

The language, whether debatably considered foreign or indigenous, has penetrated into the linguistic, literary and social spheres of Nigerians' lives. At least two of the three major Nigerian indigenous languages have been so much influenced by Arabic in terms of number of words and expressions that have been derived from this language. Abubakar (2014) has estimated that one out of five of Hausa and Fulani words are of Arabic origin. In the same vein, Al-Ilory (1973) in his work, on the origin of the Yoruba, identified hundreds of Yoruba words that are of Arabic origin.

In addition, many Arabic words have found their ways

into Yoruba and Hausa oral and written literatures which we are going to discuss in the course of this presentation. It has also been discovered that some Yoruba literary genres such as *Waka, Were* and Storytelling are highly influenced by the Arabic literary tradition (AbdulRaheem, 2014a).

In his study of the novels of D. O. Fagunwa, Bamgbose (1971) identified four sources of Fagunwa's works, one of which is *The Arabian Nights*. This source, according to Glasse (2002), first appeared in Italy in the Middle Ages. Later in the 17th and 18th Centuries, the whole of *Alf layla wa-layla* (one thousand and one nights) appeared in Europe. The French scholar and traveller Jean Antonio Galland, published it for the first time, and from French, it was translated into other languages, including English language which influenced Fagunwa.

It is noteworthy that *The Arabian Nights* was of Persian origin, orally before it was, for the first time, translated into Arabic, the medium through which it spread across the world. This great Arabic literary work did not only influence Fagunwa's work but aslo had the strongest impact on the development of the Yoruba Novel (Ogunshina, 1992). Arabic is therefore a language that has got its indelible imprints on Nigerian History, Culture and Literature.

The language has, however, been facing stiff opposition since the arrival of the British rule in the country and the control of education by the Christian missionaries. The position does not need much explanation as British administration would not normally encourage another language that would rival its own language while missionaries would certainly work against a language that is so much associated with another important religion like

Islam. Thus, Fafunwa (1974) said that 'Christianity, commerce and colonialism' are responsible for educational backwardness of Muslims in Nigeria. It is indeed surprising that despite the independence Nigeria has gained, which ought to be independence of thought and action, many Nigerians cannot still accommodate Arabic as a language in their judgmental utterances just because of the association of the language with the religion of Islam as we see and read in the print media. For example, the Arabic script that was first used to record the Nigerian history, literature and culture (Abdulraheem, 1993) and was recognised by the British government and inscribed on Nigerian coins and currency notes was opposed by a Nigerian intellectual who is supposed to be a custodian of history and culture in person of our revered Professor Wole Soyinka who, as cited by Lawal (2006), was quoted to have said thus:

> …is it incidental that the other language on our national currency is Arabic? If any part of the nation feels that our official language must be Arabic then let us debate the issue at a national conference, rather than sneaking it into various currency denominations… (p. 33).

If it is because some or many Nigerians cannot read the Hausa language in Arabic script, there are many inscriptions that are readable but not understandable, yet unopposed. Take *Probitas Doctrina*, which is a motto of a federal university as an example. Why is it not opposed? It is accepted because it is western and it represents a culture. The Arabic script inscribed on currency symbolises another culture too. There is certainly the need for intellectual restructuring in Nigeria.

It is in recognition of the literary and cultural value of Arabic to national development that I have decided to speak before you today on Nigerian Literature in Arabic and its contributions to National Development with a view to justifying the need for cultural reorientation and intellectual restructuring.

Arabic for Literary Expression in Nigeria

The title of this lecture presupposes, although debatably, that Arabic is not an indigenous language in Nigeria. While this stand may be rightly opposed by some people, the fact still remains that Arabic is learned and acquired as a second or foreign language in Nigeria and it will be treated throughout the course of this presentation accordingly.

The use of a non-native language for literary expression has been a major literary discourse by African writers after colonisation, which has replaced African languages with the European languages to be used for education, administration, politics, international diplomacy and literature despite some linguistic constraints. While some writers out of protest against imperialism and whatever it represents, refused foreign language, some accept it though with reservation. The first position is probably championed by the Kenyan writer Nguigi who has decided not to use foreign language and declared as cited in Bier (1969) as follows: "we must be able to develop our national languages and develop literatures in those languages" (p. 111). The second position is probably championed by Chinua Achebe (1975) who declared thus "but for me there is no other choice I have been given this language and I intend to use it" (81). Achebe even went further to opine that any literature written in indigenous languages should

not be regarded as a national literature. This is to show his readiness and commitment to the use of English for literary productivity. Na'Allah (2011) perhaps stands between the two extremes when he declared "I have written Ilorin praise poetry in English, Yoruba and Hausa and continued my challenge to contemporary African poet to write in their mother tongue even as they write in European languages"(xiv). I think that these great African writers and others not mentioned have over flogged this matter when there is a more important issue also related to language which they should be considering and flogging. This is the issue of African language in education. It is my considered opinion that if education is transmitted in indigenous languages, it will not only retain African pride but it will also reflect on the quality of literature produced in them. The emotional sentiment for indigenous languages being mother tongues cannot bring quality literature if the literary artists do not pass through good training in their mother tongue. All intellectual and political wherewithals should therefore be used to have education in African languages.

The case of Arabic is however different especially in Nigeria. In the first place, it is a language that enjoys the emotive appeal of not less than half of the total population of the country. Secondly, it is a Nigerian language by history and geography having got an Arab ethnic group in Nigeria as attested to by Salih (1976). More importantly, Arabic is a language of affection and emotion and not a language of conquest and imperialism. This is in addition to its indelible imprints on Nigerian languages, education, history, culture and literature as we are going to see soon.

Nigerian Literature in Arabic as a Concept

My choice of, and preference to, the phrase 'Nigerian literature in Arabic' is intentional and deliberate. This is because the former nomenclature, 'Arabic literature in Nigeria', does not seem to recognise the indigeneity of the literature produced by Nigerians in Arabic. In other words, Nigerian literature in Arabic is just like Nigerian literature in English and not English literature in Nigeria. But looking at the Arabic literary tradition during the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods, it is evident that the early Nigerian poets of Arabic expression almost completely followed the Arab poetic tradition. For example, it was a tradition by the early Arab poets to start an ode with a hint about the beloved ones or places they have ever lived. The most popular odes in the pre-Islamic period popularly referred to as *mu'allaqat*, which literarily means "the hanged", all started with love or places in which the beloved ones had lived. For example, Imru'ul Qays, who was regarded as the greatest of the pre-Islamic poets (Nicholson, 1976), says in his *Mu'allaqah*:

قفا نبك من ذكرى حبيب ومنزل # بسقط اللوى بين الدخول فحومل

> Stop oh my friends, let us weep for the
> Remembrance of a beloved and a house
> At sandy desert between *Dakhul* and *Hawmal*

This tradition persisted even after the message of Islam which prohibits such amorous connection and its public display as we have seen in the Ka'ab bin Zuhayr's ode in praise of the prophet, where he stated as follows:

بانت سعاد فقلبى اليوم متبول # متيم إثرها لم يفد مكبول

Su'ad has gone far away and my heart has become completely captured
Not free, but chained since her departure

Despite the fact that Kaab had been declared *persona non grata* and he was about to come to the prophet to appeal in poetic form, he started his poem with that traditional form. It was this tradition that was followed by Muhammad Bukhari son of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio in praise of his uncle, as quoted by Galadanci (1983) when he said:

أصحوت أم هاجت هواك منازل # عفىّ معارفها البلى وهواطل
بتلاثامى أو بجن فما بها # إلاّ نعام ترتعى وفراعل(104)

Have you woken up or have some houses aroused your love
Which heavy rains have destroyed their signs
At *Talasami* or *Jenni* where there was nothing
But ostriches and tigers

Another tradition inherited by the early Nigerian poets is the stickiness to the Arabic meters well established in Arabic prosody.

As for the themes, the early Nigerian poets did not go beyond the normal poetic themes which include, among others, *madh* (praise), *ritha'* (elegy), *hijah* (satire) not commonly explored, *fakhr* (boasting), *wasf* (descriptive poem), and *nasib* and *ghazal* (love poem). As a matter of

fact, more than 80% of the early works in Arabic poetry were either *madh* (praise) or *ritha'a* (elegy) which is also a form of praise but for the dead.

Furthermore, because the early Nigerian Arabic writers did not inherit any major literary genre apart from poetry, there was no literary work like fiction and nonfiction writing or drama which a is new genre even among the Arabs until the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt in the 19th century (Oseni, 2002).

In view of the above, and considering the fact that Arabic in Nigeria was and is still probably part of the global Islamic culture, it is not out of place if Nigerian literary works in Arabic are called and referred to as Arabic literature in Nigeria as a result of their similarity in features, contents and general traditional patterns. But with the exposure of the Nigerian students of Arabic, not only to modern literary renaissance which encouraged nationalism in the Arab world but also to literary development in their country, the role of Arabic has gone beyond restricted Islamic jingoism. This is because the Arabs in their different countries now speak more of Arab nationalism, separating it from Islamic brotherhood that has hitherto bound Muslims together all over the world. Thus, Raji (2006) viewed the birth of Nigerian literature in Arabic from the secular perspective when he said that:

> It was the study of the Arabic language
> and literature in this secular context,
> reinforced by the modernization of the
> pre-colonial, traditional Islamic life,
> culture and scholarship that eventually
> gave birth to "Nigerian Literature in Arabic" (p. 226).

Looking at the birth of Nigerian literature in Arabic from the secular perspective may not be incorrect, the language styles and national themes now pervading literature in Arabic by Nigerians are also major contributors. What makes Nigerian Literature Nigerian is what has been described by Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2009)as "a body of creative writing that has kept faith with the experiences, occurrences, events, fortunes and misfortunes, dreams and aspirations, feelings and emotions and ways of life of a geographical and political location known as Nigeria" (p. 55).

From the foregoing discussion, the literary production in Arabic by Nigerians qualifies to be named Nigerian literature in Arabic. It should also be noted that this new development is not achieved in a day but has passed through several periodical stages which have been discussed by the Nigerian literary historians or literary critics. Popular among these scholars are Al-Ilory (1992), Abubakar (2014), Galadanchi (1993) and Oseni (2002) who have discussed in details the periodisation of Nigerian Arabic literary works.

It is not my interest to compare the submissions as that has been adequately taken care of in another study (Abdulraheem, 2012). What is important, however, is to point to the huge and vast literary works by Arabic scholars in Nigeria, all of which are connected to our literary history, intellectual exposition and cultural heritage, part of which we are going to see in the next subsection about the contents of the Nigerian Arabic literature.

Content

An investigation into the position and status of Arabic

language in Nigerian literary output reveals that four types of literature exist within the Arabic literary milieu, namely:

1. Nigerian Literature of Arabic Expression
2. Nigerian Literature of Arabic Tradition
3. Nigerian Literature of Arabic Acculturation
4. Nigerian Literature of Arabic Translation

1. Nigerian Literature of Arabic Expression

This is the Nigerian literature expressed in Arabic language which is intelligible to any Arabic reader, though at times with some difficulties due to non-native speaker' idiosyncrasies. The major features of this type include language use, style of expression, especially metaphoric expression that is observed to be highly influenced by the mother tongue. Few examples will suffice for illustration. Late Daud Adekilekun of the University of Ibadan in his elegy for Professor Abdul of the same University stated that:

وإنا بما خاطبتنا ونصحتنا # نرى حبل شيطان الهوى يتقطع
فنم مطمئنا غير محزن # وعنك الخطايا والذنوب ستوضع
فنم آمنا لا تأكل الدود والثرى # وتحت ظلال العرش كن تتمتع

When you spoke and advised us
We saw the rope of Satan being severed
Sleep pleasantly without grief,
May you be relieved of the burden of mistakes and sins
Sleep pleasantly, do not eat ants nor sand
And under the shade of Allah's majesty, continue to enjoy (Adekilekun, 1990)

Personification, as an aspect of figure of speech, is common in both Yoruba and Arabic. But the underlined statement in the first expression goes further to confirm the influence of Yoruba on the poet. It reminds us of the popular elegy in Yoruba songs which goes thus:

Bio ba de 'le ki o ki le
Bio ba d'ona k o so yaya
bo dorun sun re
Ma jo kun ma je ekolo
Ohun ti won je lajule orun ni o ma ba won je
(Daramola, 1967, p. 192)

When you reach (the final) home, greet those
At home, when you are on the road, be cheerful
When you reach the heaven, sleep pleasantly
Don't eat millipedes or earthworms
Whatever is eaten therein, eat it with them

The statement will be incomprehensible to an ordinary Arabic speaker if the background is not given to him. Also in another ode of Daud Adekilekun he said:

بالعلم نحن اجتمعنا # مع الأكابر إنا
من أكلهم قد أكلنا # ويدنا قد غسلنا

"in pursuance of knowledge here we come together
With the elderly, certainly
From their food we have eaten
And our hands we have washed

Respect for elders in the Yoruba culture is held in high esteem. It is audacious for the young ones to move to, or eat with the elders. Nevertheless, young ones are allowed to get close to elders so long they are respectful and obedient. Washing of hands in order to eat with elders is not the intended meaning, but according to them the respect due to them, as contained in this Yoruba adage:

> Bi omode ba mo owo we, yoo ba agba jeun"
> "If a child washes his hands very well, he will
> dine with elders.

Adopting that style in writing, the writer is, according to Achebe (1975) conscious i.e. intentional. The Yoruba writers also have, in this type of writing, the support of Arab scholars like Wafy (1945), who allowed the coinage of metaphoric expressions as long as they conform with the principles of metaphor.

The second angle, through which that type of style can be looked at, is to assume that the writers are suffering from some linguistic inadequacies which are general features of a foreign language user as observed by Headbloom (1979). This means that a second language learner, having learned and 'mastered' what he could in the second language, communicates freely in "his own" language which is not totally the target language or his native language. Similar situation exists in Nigerian Literature in English as observed by Chinua Achebe who considered his style of writing in English as conscious while that of Amos Tutuola as natural due to his (Tutuola) apparent limitations in language, (Achebe, 1975). As far as Arabic writings of Nigerian authorship are concerned, there are few conscious writers while there are many natural writers.

Regarding issues discussed, Nigerian Arabic writers apart from writing on religious issues, they have also dwelt on many non-religious matters (AbdulRaheem, 2014b). In poetry, themes like Eulogy, elegy, Sufism, national and global issues, personal experiences and occasional matters have been touched. Few of non-religious poems included but not limited to "Our Country and Darkness" and "Asian Calamity," by Abubakar, 2008.

Similarly, stories/novels have begun to attract the interest of modern Scholars of Arabic. Some of the novels that have been written include:

1. *Limadha Yakrhunana* (Why Do They Hate Us) by Salisu mai Angwa in 2000
2. *Idfa' billati Hiya Ahsan* (Pay back with a Better coin) by Jamil Abdullahi in 2004
3. *Al-Sanat* (The Year) by Murtada al-Haqiqi in 2006
4. *Al-Walad al-Harib* (The Runaway Boy) by Abdul Baary Adetunji in 2004
5. *'Ala al-Tariq* (On the Way) by Adam Yahya al-Fulany in 2008
6. *Ahl al-Takrur* (The Black People) by Adam Yahya al Fulany in 2009
7. *Ra'i al-Ghanam* (The Shepherd) by Adam Yahya al Fulany in 2009
8. *Khadim al-Watan* (The Youth Corper) by Hamid al-Hijry in 2009
9. *Al-Rihlah* (The Journey) by AbdulKadir al Asaly in 2009
10. *Al-Sayyid al-Ra'is* (Mr President) by Hamid al-Hijry in 2010
11. *Ma'sat al-Hubb* (Tragedy of Love) by al-Hijry in 2013

12. ‘Abath al-Tufulah (Childhood Play) by Aliy AbdulKadir al-Asaly in 2015
13. Ahl al-Qura (People of the Village) by Abubakar Abdullahi in 2017

This is in addition to travelogues, which are nonfictional writings like the ones written by Moshood Jimba as follows:

1. *From Ilorin to Timbuktu* (2009)
2. *Nayl al-Maram bi Ziyarat Madinat Durham* (2015)
3. *Khulasat Akhbar fi Ziyarat Wilayat Adran* (2015)
4. *Al-Tafarruj bi-Rihlat London wa-Cambridge* (2016)

Another popular literary genre in Arabic literature during the Abbasid period is Maqamaat known in English as *the assemblies* which is a form of storytelling. This literary genre has almost faded away but was resuscitated by a Nigerian Arabic writer named Sheikh Muhammad Al Awwal in his assemblies called *Maqamaat-ul-Ilory*.

Regarding drama, it is observed that Nigerian drama in Arabic in print just started in 1994 with the work of Zakariyya Oseni titled *‘Al’amid-ul-mabajjal* (The Honourable Dean). Traditional scholars of Arabic had however in the past shown interest in Theater Arts for its importance in entertainment and education. Thus, Sheikh Kamaldden Al Adaby, Sheikh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilory and Sheikh Khidru Apaokagi allowed theatre to be staged at different times of training in their respective schools.

Other Drama works followed that of Oseni in the following sequence:

1. *Ustadhun Raghma Anfihi* (A Teacher despite His Wish) by mas'ud AbdulGhaniy Adebayo in 2003
2. *Qad Gharat al-Nujum* (The Stars had Set) by Ghani Alabi in 2005
3. *Al-Ttajir wa- Sahib al-Mat'am* (The Trader and the Owner of the Cafeteria (2005)
4. *Baqa' Muqaddar* (A Destined Stay) by Adetunji in 2005
5. *Al-'Ajib wa-Najib* (The Surprising and the Intelligent) by Ahamd Rufai in 2005
6. *Al-Tabaqat al-'Ulya* (The High Class) by Zakariyau I. Oseni in 2006
7. *Al-Talib al-Mughtarr* (The Arrogant Pupil) by Lere Ibrahim Amin in 2009
8. *Zari' al-Shawkat* (The Thorn Grower) by AbdulRafiu Adebayo (2010)
9. *Mata Asir Kabiran* (When I become Old) by AbdulKadir Qasim in 2012
10. *Al-Dhakhirah* by AbdulGhaniy Alabi in 2013

and a few other Drama works.

It should, however, be observed that putting the three genres on the literary scale, the most celebrated genre by Nigerian Arabists is poetry, perhaps because of its popularity in Arabic literature. This has probably made our Vice Chancellor, Prof. AbdulRasheed Na'allah, to encourage the Arabic Unit to work hard and put together occasional poems from Ilorin in order to save them from extinction. This has led to the production of an anthology titled *Hasadul-ma'dubah* (Harvest of the Banquet) published by Na'Allah, 2014. In general terms, there are

many quality poems which have attracted the attention of literary critics locally and internationally while some could only be considered as junks.

As for novels and drama texts, the two have not really enjoyed prolificacy and productivity compared to poetry. Two reasons are responsible for this. First, the two genres are actually new in Arabic literature even in the Arab world, and are thereby not inherited by the early scholars of Arabic. Secondly, novels in particular require high level of artistry and refinement which may not be easily attainable by a foreign language user.

It should be expected that Arab literary critics should show more interest in this very important work in Arabic language as the West has shown interest in African literatures written in European languages. But since that has not been done by them, scholars of Arabic in Nigeria should do that, especially in English, in order to draw the attention of the international literary scholars to the volume and quality of Nigerian literature in Arabic. In my humble contribution, I have carried out critical studies of some of the Arabic literary works in English language. Some of those works include:

1. Arabic Writings in Ilorin (1993)
2. The Influence of Metaphoric Expression in Arabic Literature of Yoruba Authorship (1998)
3. Ilorin Travel Literature in Arabic: a Study of Travelogue by Shaikh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory (2014)
4. Periodisation of Nigerian Arabic Literature (2012)
5. The Influence of Arabic on some Yoruba Literary Genres

6. Promoting Women Education through Historical Antecedents: An Analysis of the Flyting of Ghoni and Dan Fodio as contained in *Tazyin-ul-waraqat* (2012)
7. Yoruba Oral Literature of Arabic Origin: A Study of Ilorin Waka as contained in Jimba's Collections
8. Non-religious Themes in Nigeria Poetry of Arabic Expression (2014).
9. The Quality Attributes of Women as contained in Nana Asmau's Poems of Elegy.

These humble contributions must have gone a long way to showcase the literary prowess of Nigerian writers and poets of Arabic. It gladdens my heart that some of the upcoming scholars of Arabic have begun to know the importance of this literary expedition.

2. Nigerian Literature of Arabic Tradition

This is a Nigerian literature written in Nigerian language but almost completely in line with Arabic literary tradition and even with some Arabic words and expressions. While we have many poetic works in Hausa, so also we have a few in Yoruba which have been heavily influenced by Arabic poetic tradition. In prose writing, scholars have identified areas of influence of Arabic stories on Nigerian folktales and stories we have mentioned before.

In poetry, the Hausa literature is known to be Arabic literature oriented for the influence of Arabic/Islamic culture on the Hausa speaking people. Abdullah (2009) classified Hausa poems into two: the oral and the written. The written one which is the focus of this study is the one recorded after the contact of Hausa with Islam. It is divided

into two: the one written in Arabic letters otherwise called *Ajemi* and the one written in classical Arabic. The focus here is on the first one which in both quantity and quality is huge and great. One of such poems has been chosen for discussion:

Mu'adh Hadeja in Abdullahi (2009) said:
Allah na ne budi gare ka
Zan wakar mashaya giya

Allah ka dandan basira gama
Koda ba ka ban zan godiya
Farkin wada zai ki ka Allah
In ka zamo mashi giya

San nan snuga ba mu musulumi
Annabi tun nan duniya

Lakan zai ki ka ramin wuta
Ya tabbah nan ga mai shan giya (pp. 96-97)

Each line of the poem, which is composed of a couplet, ends with the sound 'iya' which is an Arabic poetry tradition.

Translation:

O God assist me
To compose a poem about an alcohol drinker
God increase me in wisdom
And if you refuse, I shall continue to be grateful
Almighty will be first to detest you

If you are an alcoholic drinker
Then the leader of Muslim
That is our prophet in this world
The hell will be angry with you
Which is the abode of alcoholic drinker
The paradise will hate you and you will not enter it
If you are alcoholic drinker
You will never see Muhammad even in dream
If you are an alcoholic drinker
All the friends (of Allah) and the messengers
Have cursed an alcoholic drinker.

Reading through the poem, it is evident that apart from the Islamic cultural background exhibited in it, many Arabic words abound there, such as *Annabi* (Prophet), *Duniya* (Life), *Basirat* (Understanding) and *Awliyah* (friend. Similar poems exist in Yoruba, Nupe, Fulfude and so many other Nigerian languages that have close contact with Islam. In Yoruba for example, there was a particular one claimed to have been composed by Sheik Yusuf of Agbaji but the manuscript I have does not include the name. It goes thus:

Asalatu Salam Sarmada,
Koba Asiwaju eda sayyid-il-wara,
Mo she waka mo da waka koba Olorun,
Mo she asalatu fashaju eru Re
o ku kin wa ranti lodo Olorun
K'a si tele waka ko le dara.

Peace and blessing forever
To be with the leader of mankind
I compose poem and I sing poem for God

And I do Salatuu (prayer) for the leader of your creatures
It remains for me with God
We should follow the (instructions) of the poem to get reward

In the ode, apart from the '*rawiyy*' (rhyming end of each line), which follows the Arabic tradition, Arabic expressions abound in the poem some of which are *asalatu, assalam, sarmada, sayyid-il-wara*. These Arabic expressions have added some local coloration to the poem, especially the Yoruba Muslim speech community.

3. Nigerian Literature of Arabic Acculturation

The relationship between Arabic as a language and Islam as a religion is incontrovertible, not only because Arabic is a vehicle through which Islam was transmitted to the world but also because the two major sources of Islam are originally written in Arabic. These are the Qur'an and the tradition of Prophet Muhammad.

The twin disciplines could therefore be considered as a culture, especially in non-Arabic speaking societies like Nigeria. It is this culture that has influenced the Nigerian culture so much that it has become part of the indigenous philosophy and cosmology. This is more evident in Nigerian oral literature. For example, Abubakre (2004) identified many Yoruba literary genres that have been influenced by Arabic/ Islamic culture. These include: *Odu Ifa, Ijala, Ewi, Rara, Waka, Were* and *Owe*. I, however, like to limit my discussion to *Waka, Were* and *Owe* or *Karinmagana* (proverbs).

Waka is a Hausa word meaning *poem, verse or song*. The two words are regarded to be synonymous according to Daba (2006). The genre is one of the principal genres of Hausa literature if not the most important (Daba, 2006). It is not unlikely that the word got its way to Yorubaland through religio – cultural interactions between Hausa and Yoruba. While *Waka* in Hausaland means any poem or song, it is considered Islamic religious hymns in Yorubaland. There are two types of *Waka*, the one that follows the Arabic poetic tradition and the ones that are considered free verse type of *Waka*. The first type comes under Nigeria literature of Arabic tradition while the second one is under literature of Arabic acculturation, which is the main focus here. I therefore bring a Yoruba Waka by one Sheikh Muhammad Bello Ajongolo of Ilorin for illustration and analysis which goes thus:

Omo ilu Alfa Alimi lokunrin
Omo ilu Alfa Alimi lobinrin
Ologbon inu e o fogbon e gbe
Eyin te niye nikun e o fiye sii
Alukurani t'Olohun fun Muhammo akeinde
Talufa Alimi gbe wole yi
Oun naa la n lo tee doni
Imo amolo t'Olohun fun Muhammo akeinde
Talufa Alimi gbe wole yii
Oun naa la n lo te e doni
Esin asinla t'Olohun fun Muhammo akeinde
Talufa Alimi gbe wole yii
Oun naa la n lo te e doni
Aliumo Anabi lokunrin
Aliumo Anabi lobinrin
Mo f'orun akosun mo e be yin
Mo file ogbere mo e be yin

Orun akosun nijooku
Ile gbere n kabari
Ile ta o mo ti o n pin loojo
Booru la ba kan nibe o ko sabebe
Bojo wa ni be iwo nikan
Ko so ni faaji ninu ebi
Ko so ni faaji ninu iran
Ko so ni faaji lokunrin
Ko so ni faaji lobinrin
A o fi o le nibe o, iwo nikan
A o kegi le o loke pelu ewe
A o bu yepe tutu sori ewe
Onikaluku yoo gba le e lo
O o gbo jawabi ara ile?
Eni te e gbe re kaa oun da ri?
O o gbo jawabi bi won tin wi?
Eni a gbe re kaa te wi
Igba ti a feru feni to leru
La wa ba dari la ba n bow a
O wa keru o ku ise eru
Bo ba seere eru nuun
Bi o si seere eru nuun
O wa keda ku ise eda
Awon munkara o won o ba wa
O ku lamoyin omo lamoyin
Monrobuka o monrobuka
Boo ba ri jawabi fun won wa
Bo o si ri jawabi fun won wa
Yoo fi weelu selee re
Jaanomo ni o gbe e niyawo
Oba jabarun a be o
A fola anabi beluwa mi
Ko to di joo gbende
Se dekun aye fun Mumini

Meaning:

O men of Alfa Alimi town
O women of Alimi town
O the intelligent ones, you did not ponder
O the wise ones, you didn't think
The Holy Qur'an that God gave the last of the Prophets
Which Sheikh Alimi brought to this town
Is the one we are using till today
The useful knowledge that God gave the last Prophet
Which Sheikh Alimi brought to this town
Is the one we are using till today
The religion of salvation that God bestowed to Muhammed
Which Sheikh Alimi brought to this town
Is the one we are using till today
O the followers of Muhammed among men
O the followers of Muhammed among women
I appeal to you with first sleep (first day after death)
I appeal to you with the everlasting abode
The first sleep is the day of death
The everlasting abode in grave
It is a house that is built in a day
If it is heat we meet there, no fan
If it is racing it is you alone
No play mate therein among the family
No play mate therein among the kin
No play mate therein among the men
No play mate therein among the women
We would leave you there alone
We cut trees and leaves in your grave
We put wet mud on the leaves
Everybody will go back to his house
You will not hear the reaction of the people in the house
Where is the one you took to the backyard

The one we took to the backyard
We have taken the luggage to the owner
And we have come back
It remains only the servant and his deeds
If it is good, that is left to him
If it is bad that is left to him
What remain there are man with his deeds
Then munkara and nakeer will come
And they will say somebody son of somebody
Who is your God who is your God
If you get answer (good for you)
If you don't get answer
There will be calamity for you
And fire will be your mate
We beseech you o our Lord, the Jabbaru
We beseech you in the name of the Prophet
To make things easy for the believers
Before the day of resurrection

The subject matter of the poem is the last destination of every human being. The poet started by calling on the people of Ilorin, his immediate community, to ponder on the Qur'an which God gave to Muhammad and which Sheikh Alimi brought to Ilorin. He thereafter appealed to them to always remember the last day, how great the day is and how dreadful the last abode of every man is. He then described how man will be put in his grave in a narrative style that portrayed the picture of a dead person being laid to rest. As for the language, the poet, being inspired by the content of the Qur'an, used many Arabic words, which carry a lot of meaning and concepts. These include *Aliummat*, meaning nation or people. Here, he means Muslims. Other words are:

Kabari: *Qabru*, meaning grave
Jawabi: *Jawab*, meaning answer or reaction to a statement
Munkar: it is one of the two angels that will come to the grave to ask questions.
Weelu: meaning woes. The word was used in Qur'an several times to shower curses on hypocrites and other bad doers.
Mumini: meaning believers
Man robbuka: this is a complete phrase in Arabic meaning who is your Lord

As for the literary devices, there are some which need to be identified. First is repetition which is a general feature in Yoruba oral literature. This we have found in the first stanza. Although not fully repeated. This is what we call partial repetition. Another device is tonal counterpoint which Olaosebikan in Olatunji (1984) identified for Yoruba oral poetry. Another device is word play which appears in the poem thus:

Igbati a feru feni to leru
O wa keru ati ise eru

The luggage has been given to its owner, Eru (luggage) and Eru (servant)

The deed of the dead is also personified when he says:

O wa keru o ku ise eru
It remain the servant and his deeds

In addition to the language and literary devices we identified, the poem has a sociological importance where

the poet said:

Eni e gbe re kaa ohun da ri*? The man whom you have taken to the backyard, where is he.* This is suggestive of where Ilorin people normally bury their dead. *Waka* poems therefore are bound to interest students and researchers in the field of sociology.

It is worth mentioning that the influence of Arabo-Islamic orientation did not end with indigenous languages. Rather, the Nigerian literary Artists in English language are also influenced by Arabic/Islamic orientation. For example, Na'allah (2009) in his elegy for Ajetunmobi said:

If no one ever dies, then we would have met our prophet,
If no one ever dies, then we would have met our Muhammad,
Ten and thousands of rasulu's companions have gone
None of them we met on earth

Ajetunmobi

Was that cloud that often carried his rain to the Ilorin youths
He shared his rain with houses where water was scarce
When it seemed he alone had water, he would often announce
No, water is your root, Ilorin, water is your fadama!(p. 7).

The first few verses remind us of the popular song 'Pupils in Ile Kewu' used to sing as follows:

Bo ba se pe aiku laaye
A ba ba Muhammadu
A ba ba muhammada
Oke mefa legbaji
Awa o ba kan laye mo
(May the soul of Ajetunmobi rest in peace)

Na'Allah (2014) in his collection also said:

A gidan ilori
A gidan ilori ai sallah muke
Ba mu san da kai ba
Amman gidan ilori kai sallah mukai
A gidan ilori ai ilmi mukai
Ba mu san daku ba
Amma gidan Ilorin dan ilmi mukai
A gidan ilori biyaya mukai
Ba mu san daku ba
Amma gidan ilori biyaya mukai
A gidan ilori Magana mukai
Ba ma san daku ba
Amman gidan ilori magana mukai
A gidan ilori kiraya mu kai
Ba ma san daku ba
Amman gidan ilori kiraya muke
A gidan ilori albarka muke
Ba ma san daku ba
Amman gidan ilori dan albarika muke
A gidan ilori siyasa muke
Ba mu san daku ba
Amma gidan ilori siyasa mukai
In ba ka san allo ba
Don ka gan Ilorin
Tilawa mu kai (pp. 77-78).

Translation:

At the home of Ilorin
Ilorin, it is salat we perform
We don't know about your own
But in Ilorin, it is prayer we do
In Ilorin, it is knowledge we cherish
We don't know about your own

In Ilorin, we are children of knowledge
In Ilorin, we revere parents
In Ilorin, we are eloquent
We don't know your own
In Ilorin, we eulogize
We don't know about you
But in Ilorin we eulogize
In Ilorin we are blessed
But in Ilorin we are offfsprings of the blessed
In Ilorin we play politics
If you did not know Ilorin
You don't know the slate
When you visit Ilorin we recite (Qur'an)

All the italicised words are Arabic words with their meanings as follow:

Salah - Prayer x 1
Ama - But x 7
Ilmi - Knowledge x 2
Albarka - Fortune
Siyasa - Politics x 2
kiraya' - Reading x 1
Allo - Slate

If we imagine that all the Arabic words are taken away or not understood, what will become of the beautiful composition? This is little out of many areas where Arabic has played significant role in the Nigeria literary productivity. It has assisted to raise the literary standards of our writers, especially those using Nigerian languages as medium of their literary expression.

Were: This is another poetic genre that is, Arabo-Islamic motivated. The word *Were* means quickly, the

origin being *e ji Were* which means wake up quickly. It is rendered during Ramadan in the midnight to wake up the Muslim faithful.
One of such *Were* songs goes thus:

O de yin oni le
Ike ko ba gbogbo yin
Owa da wa alejo
Ola ko ba gbogbo wa
Atike atiola
Ola ko ba onisenla
Anabi t io sipe wa
Kolo ba muhammed /2ce
Anabi ti o sipe wa/2ce

Meaning:

To you the resident
May the blessing be with you all
And to us and the visitors
May peace and blessing
Be with the grate messenger, Muhammad
Who will come to our rescue (AbdulRaheem, 2008 p. 14).

As it can be seen, the words like *Ike* and *Ola* though Yoruba words are Yoruba Muslim registers. Another popular poem marking the end of the completion of the Quran goes thus:

Laileka ya Muhammad /2ce
Bo lowo sore Anabi yoo so re wa
Opopo maka maroro
Al-Janna ni ile wa

Meaning:

To you
O Muhammed
If rich people befriend Muhammad
He will befriend us
The streets of Mecca are very tidy
Paradise is our abode

E yin te ekewu e ku ya
Awan jaye kalamu
Mina liafi nasira
Wa akaru adada

Those of you who are not literate in Arabic
You are really suffering
You will soon know who is better equipped
And who has less supporters.

Apart from the fact that the song is Islamic oriented, the songs contain Arabic expressions which require the knowledge of Arabic to understand. The last two lines are extracted from the following verse of the Qur'an:

من أضعف ناصرا واقلّ عددا

Who is weaker in helpers and fewer in number
(72:24)

This quotation from the Arabic Qur'an shows strong ties between the people and Arabic language which has now become part of their culture.

As for the stories, Hijaz (2009) enumerated many Hausa stories as contained in *Magana Jarice*(speech is

investment) that are from Arabic sources in both structure and content.

Similarly, the Yoruba mythology on the origin of the Yoruba race as contained in Johnson(1921) is not but a corrupted narrative of the story of Ibrahim as contained in the Qur'an (21: 51–70). This is also the position of Ogunbiyi (2008).

The influential powers of Arabic on major Nigerian literary setting are not a strange phenomenon as Arabic as a language and Islam as a culture have greatly influenced literary genres of many nations in Africa, Asia and Europe. The Persian literature was influenced by Arabic literature in the area of storytelling as evident in the story of Yusuf and Zulaikha, and in the area of platonic love poems (Shuaib, 1969). The influence of Arabic was also observed in the poems of *Troubadour of Southern Europe*, while *Divine Comedy* by Dante was said to have been influenced by *Risalat-ul-ghufran* written by Al-Ma'arry (Hilal, 1990).

Proverbs (Owe) or (Karimagana)

Proverb has been defined by Ogunbowale (1970) as a criticism of life and a product of the popular mind, which reflects prevalent attitude with didactic intent. It has also been considered by Olatunji (1984) to be traditional and to have originated from the observations of natural phenomena and human relations.

The long stay of Islamo-Arabic culture in Nigeria especially in Hausa and Yorubaland had led to certain proverbial expressions all of which are considered to be part of the Nigerian proverbs.

In Hausa for instance, Hijaz (2009) has made a compilation of Hausa proverbs that have Arabic/Islamic cultural background. In the same vein, AbdulRaheem

(2008) has collected some Yoruba verbs/popular sayings that are traceable to the Islamic concepts. This area of sociolinguistic aspect of the Arabic/Islam culture in Nigeria confirms the cultural originality of Arabic in our literary productivity which should be appreciated and cherished and retained for the unborn generation for the Nigerian intellectual restructuring.

4. Nigerian Literature of Arabic Translation:

This is Nigerian literature written in Nigerian languages or English and translated into Arabic by Nigerian scholars of Arabic. Scholars of Arabic in Nigeria in their quest to popularise Nigerian literature have translated some Nigerian literary works into Arabic. Aside from the Arab world where such works are read, the other parts of the world including Asia and Africa where readers of Arabic exist will now get to know more of the Nigerian literary endowment through the translated works.

Great Nigerian writers like Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka have got most of their works translated into Arabic by the Arabs themselves. Few of such English works have also been translated by Nigerians. This included but not limited to the *Burning Grass* translated by Mas'ud Raji, a Professor of Arabic at Ahmadu Bello University and *African Night Entertainment* (1994) by Olalere Adigun of University of Jos (now late). Efforts have however been more in the area of translating Nigerian literary works in Nigerian languages into Arabic. Some of these works include:

1. Ireke Onibudo translated by Ahmad Shehu Abdussalam (1994)

2. Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale translated by Mashood Jimba (1995)
3. Ruwan Bagaje translated by Atiku Abubakar Balarabe (2003)
4. Ote nibo translated by AbdulRaheem Lawal (2009)

The Yoruba folktales collected and translated into Arabic by Isaac Ogunbiyi are another form of translation

There are many others who have completed their translations but have yet to print and publish them. The point being made here is that literary activities in Arabic by Nigerians are becoming huge and vast, and any attempt by design, desire or accident to hide the upsurge of such cultural repository and intellectual endowment will be tantamount to cultural demolition and intellectual destruction which may not be in the interest of the nation.

Contributions

Development can be appreciated from material and non-material perspectives. While the material development belongs to the purview of what man does with his hand as we have in technological development, the non material development is embedded in what directs man's thought and actions. Thus, Prah (2009) said:

> Culture consists of two parts: material and non-material culture. Material culture consists of all that is physical and is the result of human ingenuity and fabrication. It includes the total manifestation of human handiwork. Non-material culture includes religion, ritual, customs, values, beliefs and language. Of all these, that is, both material and non-material elements of culture,

> language is the central pillar and the transactional medium through which culture is created, shaped, adapted and adopted. As such, language is also a register of the records of humanity. It is indeed a representation of the history of humankind. It is the collective memory par excellence of its owners and users. This is why language is so crucial to development. (p. 18)

The case of Arabic as a language is even greater considering the fact that the Arabic Qur'an which is the major source of inspiration for the Nigerian Arabic writers contains a lot of guidance for humankind such as justice, kindness, taking care of the kith and kin in addition to shunning shameful deeds, evil doings and transgression (Q.16 (90). The Qur'an also contains encouragement for seeking knowledge and acquiring it (Q.22 (11). All these guidance principles have their influence on the Nigerian writers of Arabic as evident in different literary genres they have explored.

In poetry, the flyting poems between Abdullah bin Fodio & Mustapha Goni come to mind regarding women education. Sheikh Mustapha Goni has criticised Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio for allowing women to mingle with men during the latter's lessons. Ghoni said:

عليك منا تحيات مباركة # شممن مسكا وسكا من يلاقينا
أيا ابن فودي كنت تنذر الجهلا # لعلهم يفقهون الدين والدينا
فامنع زيارة نسوان لوعظك إذ # خلط الرجال بنسوان كفى شينا
لا تفعلن ما يؤدي للمصائب # لم يأمر الله عيبا كان يؤذينا

To you from us are blessed greetings which have been
mixed with music to be smelled by whoever meets us
O son of Fodio, rise to preach to the ignorant
So that they may understand religion and the world affairs
Forbid women to visit your preaching (lesson)
For the mixing of men and women in sufficient a disgrace
Do not do what contributes towards disgrace
For God has not ordered vices which will harm us.

On receiving this message, Sheikh Usman asked his brother, Abdullah, to reply him and he said:

يأيها ذا الذى قد جاء يرشدنا # سمعا لما قلت فاسمع أنت ما قلنا
نصحت جهدك لكن لست تعذرنا # وقلت سبحان هذا كان بهتانا
إن الشياطين إن جاءوا لمجلسنا # هم يبثون سوء القول طغيانا
لسنا نخالط بالنسوان كيف وذا # كنا نحذر لكن قلت سلمنا
إن كان ذاك ولكن لا أسلم أن # يتركن بالجهل هملا كان إحسانا
إذ ارتكاب أخف الضر قد حتما # يكفر الجهل إن ذا كان عصيانا
هذى البلاد وجدنا قومها غرقوا #في الجهل، تمنعهم أن يفقهوا الدينا

O you who have come to guide us aright
We have heard what you said, listen to what we say
You gave advice to the best of your ability
But you would have freed us from blame
And you spoke-glory be to God – this was calumny
Indeed devils, if they come to our gathering
Spread evil speech, exceeding all bounds

We do not mix with women, how that should be
We have been cautious, but you said it is all right
Even if that is acceptable
But we cannot accept to leave them in ignorance
For the committing of the lesser evil is better than ignorance
Having met our people in deep Ignorance
Do we leave them to remain so.

The two poems are brought here to drive home an important national issue regarding education in general and women education in particular especially in Northern Nigeria. It is clear that the aggressive pursuit of knowledge embedded, in the Islamic culture was replicated in the northern Nigeria where history recorded great intellectual achievements, especially in the Sokoto Caliphate ever before the advent of the Europeans in Nigeria. If the North is today considered relatively backward in education and some people see the Islamic culture as the cause, the historical antecedents do not lend support to this perception if the efforts and activities of Dan fodio's family are anything to go by. The system of education used that time was able to produce scholars of international repute like Abdullah bin Fodio who was described by Hisket (1963) as the Doyen of Black Intelligentsia and nick named as the Moving Encyclopedia. As for Nana Asmau, she was described by Awwal (2007) as a poet, a prolific writer and linguist. If northern females and even males alike had followed the footsteps of Nana Asmau, the status of education in the north would have been different.

On good governance, Oseni (2002) quoted Sheikh Apaokagi's speech in October, 1979 on the occasion of swearing in ceremony of Chief M. A. Ajasin as the Chief

Executive of Ondo State the translation of which goes thus:

> Your Excellency the governor, if we want the house to last long ….it must be built on a firm and strong foundation. If the pinnacle of wisdom is the fear of God, then there is no doubt that government requires religious education for children and the growing generation which would help in building the personality of the students in the religious, moral, educational and social domains and consequently help them to attain success in this life and in the hereafter. The requisite steps towards progress and fluorescence which you are taking are praise worthy. We do always welcome them whole heartedly and by that your Excellency's name would be written in the record of immortality. Finally, we praise God the most glorified and most exalted for choosing for this growing state a just governor who is ready to help the helpless poor and serve this state (with devotion) . May God reward you with all that is comely (p. 20).

Other areas include National integration as contained in the works of Al-hijry titled M*a'sat al-Hubb* (Tragedy of Love) whose humane feelings were projected and man-made acrimonies were decried (Jamiu, 2017) Also, Jamil's novel titled *Idfa' Billati Hiya Ahsan* (repay with that which is better) projects national integration. This is because, according to Katibi (2017), the main character Bashir, a Hausa man from Kano, spent his one year national service in Oyo state and he was able to understand and appreciate the diverse culture of the people. Bashir, finally came back home with a Yoruba girl (Nabila) to replace his confused

former fiancé from Kano and to cap it all, it was one Alhaji Abdulkareem, an Ibadan-based businessman, that was asked to represent Bashir's family to ask for Nabilah's hand in marriage. It was a beautiful show of integration of the two cultures as depicted in the novel.

Some of the societal problems have also been handled by Nigerian writers of Arabic. The issues of terrorism and insurgency, which are considered to be the major security challenge in Nigeria, have been handled by some Nigerian poets in Arabic. These include Issa Abubakar (2008) when he said:

قذفوا الرعب فى قلوب العباد # واسالوا الدماء فى كل واد
كيف تحقيق ما يرومون بلإر # هاب أو هدم سور أمن البلاد
إن مالا ينال بالسلم قد يص # عب إحرازه بغارات عاد
أي شئ يا قوم أغلى من النف # س التى يرهقونها بفساد
أي دين دعا إلى العنف والتم # ثيل بالابريا لنيل المراد
قاتل الله من يشجع في ك # ل مكان تشدد الأوغاد
إن إرهابهم يفيد عدو # الله من قبل ضيره للعباد (2008)

They threw terror in the hearts of the people
They shed blood in all places
How achievable is their goal with terror
Or destroying the security gates of cities
What is never achievable with peace
May not be possible by the attacks of the aggressors
What is more precious, O my people, than
Human life which they terminate with impunities

Which religion calls for callousness and killing of the innocent?
In order to achieve any goal
May the Almighty wage war against who encourage
The heartlessness of the senseless
Their terrorist attacks are beneficial
Only to the enemies of God
In addition to their havoc to the servant of God

These messages need some appreciation in order to get the messages contained therein. The issue of terrorism has become a major concern in every country today. Several governments have been trying to combat the menace in order to get peace which is prerequisite for development. Despite the fact that terrorism cuts across political, religious and ideological boundaries, Muslims have become major target accusation. But, here is a poet who can also be regarded as a Muslim scholar expressing disgust and sorrow about the activities of the terrorists showering curses on them and making them realise that the acts of violence are fruitless and ungodly.

Almost all literary genres that Nigerian Arabic writers explored, tackled one national issue or another. Issues like corruption in power sector and tertiary institutions have also been handled by the artists. In the same vein, politics without bitterness and spirit of national integration have been cleverly treated by Al-hijri in his work, Mr. President and studied by Jamiu (2017).

It is in view of the value of Arabic in the understanding and appreciation of Nigerian history, culture and literature in addition to its contribution to national development, I venture to suggest and recommend that Arabic be allowed to be used as an alternative medium of instruction. The

recommendation was based on the following facts:

1. Ever increasing number of Arabic schools in Nigeria which indicates the increased interest in the language. This interest could be exploited to teach the sciences and mathematics through Arabic medium. Such exposure, if well managed, will certainly serve the overall interest of the nation scientifically and technologically.
2. Arabic is not a newly developed language, its orthography, grammar and literature have been well developed centuries ago and it is considered one of the leading international languages of our time. It also has enough materials for educational purposes
3. The Kwara state college of education Ilorin has a success story of which I was a part to tell about Arabic medium program. The college introduced NCE Arabic medium where students learn Islamic studies, Education and General studies in Arabic (student handbook 99-2004). The college is the first in the country to be accredited for the program. Most of the products of the program have proved themselves worthy of representing the program not only in terms of language competence in Arabic but even in English which was well packaged for them as a course. Students were admitted to the program on the basis of their Arabic secondary certificate. This category of students would have been education casualties if such an opportunity was not provided.
4. A reasonable number of Nigerian children speak Arabic as their mother-tongue. They include the

Shuwa-Arabs of Borno state. The use of Arabic medium for their education will be most perfect.

5. There are many Muslim children, especially in the North who go about doing nothing but asking for alms. These children are said to be under some Arabic teachers who in addition to teaching them the Qur'an, also always send them to practice beggary. An Arabic medium system of Education will put an end to this anti-socio phenomenon as there will be no more excuse for not attending schools.
6. Al-Ma'had Al-Azhary in Ilorin is an Egyptian Education Experience (EEE) in Nigeria. The institution has two sections, namely Al-I'dady (the junior secondary) and Al-Thanawy (senior secondary). Some of the products of the junior secondary level, and who had the opportunity of furthering their studies in Egypt or elsewhere in Arabic speaking countries, came back as medical doctors, geologists, pharmacists and agricultural scientists.

Challenges

The proposed system, despite its huge prospect, has four major challenges which are: religious issue, the problem of multilingualism in education, the issue of duality of education system in the country and the issue of teachers to handle all courses in Arabic.

As for religious issues, non-Muslims might argue that the government was spending public funds to support the program of a religious group. As a matter of fact, each time a matter pertaining to Arabic is mentioned, Nigeria

Christians do not normally take it nicely. This has made some scholars of Arabic (Ogunbiyi, 1978; Raji, 1986) call for the separation of Arabic from Islam. Whether or not Arabic is separated, governments should consider the issue dispassionately. After all, western education that all of us received, irrespective of our religious persuasions, is not but a Christian legacy. This has been attested to by prominent scholars including Fafunwa (1974), Adeshina (1977) and Taiwo (1981). Furthermore, if a particular system of education that a large number of the citizens want is for the overall development of the citizenry, such a system deserves the backing of all and sundry. The call of some language educators, such as Omojowa (1980) and Ihebuzor (1984), that Arabic should be thought in Muslim areas is therefore appreciated. It would, however, be more appreciated if the call was not limited to Muslim dominated areas. If Muslims and Non-Muslim could develop Christian education to its present level, it is just fair that a strong support is given to Arabic learning, despite its association with Islam.

As for the issue of Multilingualism, many problems have to be contended with. Already a child learning in the Nigeria school system has to contend with the challenges of bilingualism (mother-tongue and English). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1981), in its National Policy on Education, states that it is compulsory for every Nigerian school child to learn English and one of the major Nigerian languages. i.e. Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. The National policy says that either of the foreign languages (Arabic and French) may be learnt at both junior and senior secondary levels.

The implication of the above is that a Nigerian child is

expected to learn two Nigerian languages (i.e. mother-tongue and one other Nigerian language) and two foreign languages, Arabic or French and English). How is it going to be possible for a child to master any of the languages if he has to learn all? The Abacha regime's pronouncement on the status of French language creates further problems for Arabic learning despite the availability of many Arabic schools in the country. While the government is free to take whatever decision she likes for whatever political reason, National interest should be more paramount in the minds of the policy-makers at any given time, and under any circumstance. In view of the above, the choice of Arabic medium Education will minimize the linguistic confusion caused by the national policy on education, as Arabic is both indigenous and international. Regarding duality of educational system, if practiced, the proposal does not prevent students from learning English as they must offer it as a course.

As for the problem of teachers, three ways are hereby suggested to tackle the problem. First is to seek the aids of Arab governments such as Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, Syria and others for science teachers. Second, some Nigerian graduates of Arabic may be sent to the Arab world to acquire necessary skills and academic competence to handle science and social science subjects in Arabic. Third, a translation bureau should be established to carry out translation of materials related to the Nigerian environment into Arabic.

As earlier said, the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction does not in any way preclude pupils from learning English which is still the unifying language in Nigeria. What is however required is a kind of curriculum

re-organization which has been described by AbdulRaheem (2005) as a sort of reordering the already existing learning experiences with a view to reordering their sequence. For example, students of Arabic coming from Arabic secondary schools with Arabic certificates should be exposed to a four-year-English curriculum which will equip them with mastery of English language at the end of their four-year program in the university.

It is unfortunate that neither the NUC nor the NERDC has developed English program for students coming from non-English background as if all Nigerians must have O'level English at WAEC or NECO. I think what is more important is English language mastery, especially for those coming from Arabic background. Similar suggested curriculum may be useful for Nigerians coming from non-English background.

Conclusion

In the foregoing discussion, attention has been made to see and appreciate Nigerian literature in Arabic and how the language has influenced our history, culture and our general thoughts. It is in view of the importance and relevance of the language, I have made a principal recommendation that Arabic be considered as an alternative medium of instruction as a way of exploiting the emotional appeal that the language enjoys among a sizable number of Nigerian population to foster education; it should be added that any National Curriculum of education that does not put into consideration the teaching and learning of Arabic is a great disservice to Nigerian nation. The more Arabic fades away from Nigeria, the less Islam is understood and the more Islam is misunderstood the more confused some people

become and the more opportunity is given to selfish and ignorant people to interpret the Arabic Quran with support of Hadith for their selfish ends which certainly is dangerous for the Nigerian society as a whole.
Finally, I like to add few recommendations:

- Government should establish a translation bureau to take care of translating needs of a country looking for progress
- Establishment of Arabic Boards in the states where there is a substantial number of Arabic schools for the purpose of regulating their curriculum and for quality assurance.
- Private Arabic Schools should be granted aided not necessarily in term of money but by way of sending teachers and materials to them.
- -Arabic should be made alternative to French as it was before in the National Policy on Education.

It is when such recommendations based on facts and findings are favourably considered that Arabic with its strong influence on our history, culture and literature will be allowed to reshape and restructure our intellectual framework for the overall national development.

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