

Sunset At Dawn:

The Stagnation and Regeneration of Education in Kano

Abdalla Uba Adamu
Department of Education
Bayero University, Kano

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Introduction

Education in its broadest sense may properly be regarded as the process by which the culture of a sociocultural system is impressed or imposed upon the plastic, receptive infant. It is this process that makes continuity of culture possible. Education, formal and informal, is the specific means of socialization. By informal education is meant the way a child learns to adapt his behavior to that of others, to be like others, to become a member of a group. By formal education is meant the intentional and more or less systematic effort to affect the behavior of others by transmitting elements of culture to them, be it knowledge or belief, patterns of behavior, or ideals and values. These attempts may be overt or covert. The teacher may make his purpose apparent, even emphatic, to the learner. But much education is effected in an unobtrusive way, without teacher or learner being aware that culture is being transmitted. Thus, in myths and tales, certain characters are presented as heroes or villains; certain traits are extolled, others are deplored or denounced. The impressionable child acquires ideals and values, an image of the good or the bad.

The growing child is immersed in the fountain of informal education constantly; the formal education tends to be periodic. Many sociocultural systems distinguish rather sharply a series of stages in the education and development of full-fledged men and women. First there is infancy, during which perhaps the most profound and enduring influences of a person's life are brought to bear. Weaning ushers in a new stage, that of childhood, during which boys and girls become distinguished from each other. Puberty rites transform children into men and women. These rites vary enormously in emphasis and content. Sometimes they include whipping, isolation, scarification, or circumcision. Very often the ritual is accompanied by explicit instruction in the mythology and lore of the tribe and in ethical codes.

Thus Education is the transmission of the values and accumulated knowledge of a society. In this sense, it is equivalent to what social scientists term *socialization* or enculturation. Children--whether conceived among New Guinea tribespeople, the Renaissance Florentines, or the middle classes of

Manhattan--are born without culture. Education is designed to guide them in learning a culture, molding their behavior in the ways of adulthood, and directing them toward their eventual role in society. In the most primitive cultures, there is often little formal learning, little of what one would ordinarily call school or classes or teachers; instead, frequently, the entire environment and all activities are viewed as school and classes, and many or all adults act as teachers. As societies grow more complex, however, the quantity of knowledge to be passed on from one generation to the next becomes more than any one person can know; and hence there must evolve more selective and efficient means of cultural transmission. The outcome is formal education--the school and the specialist called the teacher.

As society becomes ever more complex and schools become ever more institutionalized, educational experience becomes less directly related to daily life, less a matter of showing and learning in the context of the workaday world, and more abstracted from practice, more a matter of distilling, telling, and learning things out of context. This concentration of learning in a formal atmosphere allows children to learn far more of their culture than they are able to do by merely observing and imitating. As society gradually attaches more and more importance to education, it also tries to formulate the overall objectives, content, organization, and strategies of education. Literature becomes laden with advice on the rearing of the younger generation. In short, there develop philosophies and theories of education.

Education in early civilized cultures

Prehistoric and primitive cultures

The term education can be applied to primitive cultures only in the sense of enculturation, which is the process of cultural transmission. A primitive person, whose culture is the totality of his universe, has a relatively fixed sense of cultural continuity and timelessness. The model of life is relatively static and absolute, and it is transmitted from one generation to another with little deviation. As for prehistoric education, it can only be inferred from educational practices in surviving primitive cultures.

The purpose of primitive education is thus to guide children to becoming good members of their tribe or band. There is a marked emphasis upon training for citizenship, because primitive people are highly concerned with the growth of individuals as tribal members and the thorough comprehension of their way of life during passage from prepuberty to postpuberty.

Because of the variety in the countless thousands of primitive cultures, it is difficult to describe any standard and uniform characteristics of prepuberty

education. Nevertheless, certain things are practiced commonly within cultures. Children actually participate in the social processes of adult activities, and their participatory learning is based upon what the American anthropologist Margaret Mead has called empathy, identification, and imitation. Primitive children, before reaching puberty, learn by doing and observing basic technical practices. Their teachers are not strangers but, rather, their immediate community.

In contrast to the spontaneous and rather unregulated imitations in prepuberty education, postpuberty education in some cultures is strictly standardized and regulated. The teaching personnel may consist of fully initiated men, often unknown to the initiate though they are his relatives in other clans. The initiation may begin with the initiate being abruptly separated from his familial group and sent to a secluded camp where he joins other initiates. The purpose of this separation is to deflect the initiate's deep attachment away from his family and to establish his emotional and social anchorage in the wider web of his culture.

The initiation "curriculum" does not usually include practical subjects. Instead, it consists of a whole set of cultural values, tribal religion, myths, philosophy, history, rituals, and other knowledge. Primitive people in some cultures regard the body of knowledge constituting the initiation curriculum as most essential to their tribal membership. Within this essential curriculum, religious instruction takes the most prominent place.

Ancient Egypt

The Ancient Egyptians developed two types of formal schools for privileged youth under the supervision of governmental officials and priests: one for scribes and the other for priest trainees. At the age of five, pupils entered the writing school and continued their studies in reading and writing until the age of 16 or 17. At the age of 13 or 14, the schoolboys were also given practical training in offices for which they were being prepared. Priesthood training began at the temple college, which boys entered at the age of 17, the length of training depending upon the requirements for various priestly offices. It is not clear whether or not the practical sciences constituted a part of the systematically organized curriculum of the temple college.

Mesopotamia

As a civilization contemporary with Egyptian civilization, Mesopotamia developed education quite similar to that of its counterpart with respect to its purpose and training. Formal education was practical and aimed to train scribes and priests. It was extended from basic reading, writing, and religion to higher learning in law, medicine, and astrology. Generally, youth of the upper classes

were prepared to become scribes, who ranged from copyists to librarians and teachers. The schools for priests were said to be as numerous as temples. This indicates not only the thoroughness but also the supremacy of priestly education. Very little is known about higher education, but the advancement of the priestly work sheds light upon the extensive nature of intellectual pursuit.

As in the case of Egypt, the priests in Mesopotamia dominated the intellectual and educational domain as well as the applied. The centre of intellectual activity and training was the library, which was usually housed in a temple under the supervision of influential priests. Methods of teaching and learning were memorization, oral repetition, copying of models, and individual instruction. It is believed that the exact copying of scripts was the hardest and most strenuous and served as the test of excellence in learning. The period of education was long and rigorous, and discipline was harsh.

Northern China

Chinese ancient formal education was distinguished by its markedly secular and moral character. Its paramount purpose was to develop a sense of moral sensitivity and duty toward people and the state. Even in the early civilizational stage, harmonious human relations, rituals, and music formed the curriculum.

Aztec, Mayans and Incas

The outstanding cultural achievements of the pre-Columbian civilizations, i.e. Mayans, Inca, and Aztec, are often compared with those of Old World civilizations. From available documents it is evident that these pre-Columbian civilizations developed formal education for training the nobility and priests. The major purposes of education were cultural conservation, vocational training, moral and character training, and control of cultural deviation.

For instance, character training was one of the salient features of Mayan education. The inculcation of self-restraint, cooperative work, and moderation was highly emphasized in various stages of socialization as well as on various occasions of religious festivals. In order to develop self-discipline, the future priest endured a long period of continence and abstinence, and, to develop a sense of loyalty to community, he engaged in group labour.

The Muslim World

The system of education in the Muslim world was unintegrated and undifferentiated. Learning took place in a variety of institutions, among them the *halqah*, or study circle; the *maktab* (*kuttab*), or elementary school; the palace schools; bookshops and literary salons; and the various types of colleges, the *meshed*, the *masjid*, and the madrasah. All the schools taught essentially the same subjects.

The simplest type of early Muslim education was offered in the mosques, where scholars who had congregated to discuss the Qur'an began, before long, to teach the religious sciences to interested adults. Mosques increased in number under the caliphs, particularly the 'Abbasids: 3,000 of them were reported in Baghdad alone in the first decades of the 10th century; as many as 12,000 were reported in Alexandria in the 14th century, most of them with schools attached. Some mosques, such as that of al-Mansur, built during the reign of Harun ar-Rashid in Baghdad, or those in Isfahan, Mashhad, Ghom, Damascus, Cairo, and the Alhambra (Granada), became centers of learning for students from all over the Muslim world. Each mosque usually contained several study circles (*halqah*), so named because the teacher was, as a rule, seated on a dais or cushion with the pupils gathered in a semicircle before him. The more advanced a student, the closer he was seated to the teacher. The mosque circles varied in approach, course content, size, and quality of teaching, but the method of instruction usually emphasized lectures and memorization. Teachers were as a rule looked upon as masters of scholarship, and their lectures were meticulously recorded in notebooks. Students often made long journeys to join the circle of a great teacher. Some circles, especially those in which the Hadith was studied, were so large that it was necessary for assistants to repeat the lecture so that every student could hear and record it.

Elementary schools (*maktab*, or *kuttab*), in which pupils learned to read and write, date to the pre-Islamic period in the Arab world. After the advent of Islam, these schools developed into centers for instruction in elementary Islamic subjects. Students were expected to memorize the Qur'an as perfectly as possible. Some schools also included in their curriculum the study of poetry, elementary arithmetic, penmanship, ethics (manners), and elementary grammar. *Maktab*s were quite common in almost every town or village in the Middle East, Africa, Sicily, and Spain.

Schools conducted in royal palaces taught not only the curriculum of the *maktab*s but also social and cultural studies designed to prepare the pupil for higher education, for service in the government of the caliphs, or for polite society. The instructors were called *mu'addibs*, or instructors in good manners. The exact content of the curriculum was specified by the ruler, but oratory, history, tradition, formal ethics, poetry, and the art of good conversation were often included. Instruction usually continued long after the pupils had passed elementary age.

The high degree of learning and scholarship in Islam, particularly during the 'Abbasid period in eastern Islam and the later Umayyads in western Islam, encouraged the development of bookshops, copyists, and book dealers in

large, important Islamic cities such as Damascus, Baghdad, and Córdoba. Scholars and students spent many hours in these bookshop schools browsing, examining, and studying available books or purchasing favourite selections for their private libraries. Book dealers traveled to famous bookstores in search of rare manuscripts for purchase and resale to collectors and scholars and thus contributed to the spread of learning. Many such manuscripts found their way to private libraries of famous Muslim scholars such as Avicenna, al-Ghazali, and al-Farabi, who in turn made their homes centers of scholarly pursuits for their favourite students.

Fundamental to Muslim education as were the circle schools, the *maktabs*, and the palace schools, they embodied definite educational limitations. Their curricula were limited; they could not always attract well-trained teachers; physical facilities were not always conducive to a congenial educational environment; and conflicts between religious and secular aims in these schools were almost irreconcilable. Most importantly, these schools could not meet the growing need for trained personnel or provide sufficient educational opportunities for those who wished to continue their studies. These pressures led to the creation of a new type of school, the madrasah, which became the crown and glory of medieval Muslim education. The madrasah was an outgrowth of the *masjid*, a type of mosque college dating to the 8th century. The differences between these two institutions are still being studied, but most scholars believe that the *masjid* was also a place of worship and that, unlike the madrasah, its endowment supported only the faculty and not the students as well. A third type of college, the *meshed* (shrine college), was usually a madrasah built next to a pilgrimage centre. Whatever their particularities, all three types of college specialized in legal instruction, each turning out experts in one of the four schools of Sunnite, or orthodox, Islamic law.

Madrasahs may have existed as early as the 9th century, but the most famous one was founded in 1057 by the vizier Nizam al-Mulk in Baghdad. The Nizamiyah, devoted to Sunnite learning, served as a model for the establishment of an extensive network of such institutions throughout the eastern Islamic world, especially in Cairo, which had 75 madrasahs, in Damascus, which had 51, and in Aleppo, where the number of madrasahs rose from six to 44 between 1155 and 1260.

Important institutions also developed in the Spanish cities of Córdoba, Seville, Toledo, Granada, Murcia, Almería, Valencia, and Cádiz, in western Islam, under the Umayyads. The madrasahs had no standard curriculum; the founder of each school determined the specific courses that would be taught, but they generally offered instruction in both the religious sciences and the physical sciences.

The contribution of these institutions to the advancement of knowledge was vast. Muslim scholars calculated the angle of the ecliptic; measured the size of the Earth; calculated the precession of the equinoxes; explained, in the field of optics and physics, such phenomena as refraction of light, gravity, capillary attraction, and twilight; and developed observatories for the empirical study of heavenly bodies. They made advances in the uses of drugs, herbs, and foods for medication; established hospitals with a system of interns and externs; discovered causes of certain diseases and developed correct diagnoses of them; proposed new concepts of hygiene; made use of anesthetics in surgery with newly innovated surgical tools; and introduced the science of dissection in anatomy. They furthered the scientific breeding of horses and cattle; found new ways of grafting to produce new types of flowers and fruits; introduced new concepts of irrigation, fertilization, and soil cultivation; and improved upon the science of navigation. In the area of chemistry, Muslim scholarship led to the discovery of such substances as potash, alcohol, nitrate of silver, nitric acid, sulfuric acid, and mercury chloride. It also developed to a high degree of perfection the arts of textiles, ceramics, and metallurgy.

Education in Medieval Kano

Having provided a generalized framework of the development of education from antiquity to medieval ages, let us look now at how the intellectual tradition evolved in Kano.

The arrival of Muslim clerics from Mali to Kano in about 1380 paved way for the intellectual development of Kano, and served to attract yet more scholars and merchants to the territory. Formalized Islamic education therefore established itself right from the reign of Ali Yaji dan Tsamiya (1349-1358). Indeed, one could argue that the complex structure of Islamic education system established by Zaghaita in 14th century Kano approximated any possible definition of a university.

This is because just like in Western Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia, the tradition of higher education in medieval Kano had followed the pattern of consistent linkages between theology and the ruling class. Education became a function of higher spiritual interpretation, and the ruling class became its conduit through whose patronage and peerage the lecturers of the antecedent universities were granted royal charters to teach, certify students and grant permission for faculties to be set up in various sections in the community.

Thus it would seem that ruling dynasties, regardless of how they ascended to their thrones, perceived patronage of the intellectual class as providing a more effective framework for maintaining the dynastic tradition.

As such, throughout the history of higher education, there had always been a linkage, whether direct or covert, between the ruling class in dynastic societies and the scholarship tradition as prevalent in the society. Emperors, Kings or Chiefs have, at various stages, encouraged the development of an elite intellectual class within their fiefdom. Scholastic services provided by the intellectual elite varies from period to period. While some services were rendered in the area of dissemination of knowledge on its intrinsic value, other services seemed to be more geared towards the metaphysical domain, with the intellectual elite class acting as soothsayers to advise the ruler on more exotic interpretation of existence and how he relates to the supernatural phenomena.

The scholastic tradition of Islam is as old as Islam itself. Indeed, the prime directive of Islam, as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the first revelation is that of knowledge manufacture and dissemination (*iqra*). It is not surprising, therefore, that the golden age of Islam becomes identified with the golden age of Islamic scholasticism. Consequently, if knowledge is to be perceived as a functional entity geared towards a more effective interpretation of codes of individual behavior in the society, it is not at all surprising that Shari'ah, the Islamic legal mechanism becomes the primary focus of Islamic scholastic research. Further, with Shari'ah providing the Islamic legal mechanism, it is only expected that the discipline becomes a concept that the ruling dynasties would wish to emphasize.

This was particularly applicable in the case of Kano territory in the medieval ages, since Zaghaita employed education and political power to promote the Shari'ah. He maintained the group's knowledge of and commitment to the Shari'ah by teaching it to them from the text of the *Mudawwana*, one of the early compendia of the doctrines of the Maliki 'school' of law¹.

Period of Consolidation

The intellectual legacy of Zaghaita, like all intellectuals, survived his death, and was sustained by Dan Gurdamus Ibrahim, a companion of Zaghaita and a one time Chief Imam for *Sarki* Yaji. It was to Dan Gurdamus Ibrahim that *Sarkin* Kano Umaru (1410-21) studied.

While in Kano, the choice of *Madabo* as a home was significant. According to Mohammed and Khan's interpretation², the specific aim was to make a center of learning par excellence to which would be drawn and attracted scholars and

¹ Chamberlain, J.W. *The Development of Islamic Education in Kano City, Nigeria, with emphasis on Legal Education in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1975 p. 52.

² Mohammed, A., and Khan, M. B., From Cradle to Grave: The Contribution of Ulama to Education in Nigeria. *Kano Studies* Vol 2 No 2, 1981 pp. 110-145.

students from all over the world. The Madabo mosque, the central focus for all the intellectual activity in Kano in the period, thus became a university which drew people come from all over the Sudan.

Sustaining the intellectual tradition established by the Madabo school was a stream of visiting scholars who came to Kano in the 15th century. Visiting Fulani scholars, coming to the Madabo school intensified the study of tawhid and Arabic language, thus enriching the existing higher educational base of Fiqh, Hadith and Mukhtasar which had been well established by the Wangarawa at the Madabo school.

Thus the constant eddy of visiting scholars further fortified the Islamic curriculum of the Madabo school in Kano in the mid 14th century. Notable among the eddy of scholars who sojourned to medieval Kano and left intellectual legacies included Ahmad b. Umar b. Aqit, who on his way to Timbuktu from the pilgrimage to Makkah taught in Kano for some time in late 1480s. Another noted visiting scholar to Kano was the Moroccan Abdul Rahman Suqan b. Ali b. Ahmed al-Qasri who was once a mufti of Fas. And in the first half of the 16th century, the Tunisian scholar, Sheikh al-Tunis came to Kano and taught. Similarly, Bornu and Aghirmi scholars were also numerous in Kano.³

Generally, the educational system in Hausaland was framed along the Timbuktu pattern of learning in the fifteenth century. The method of education could be described as "a master seeking method", i.e. it was largely dependent on the teacher who offered the instruction, guidance and prescribed text books for an individual student until he perfected and mastered a particular branch of knowledge⁴.

The Wangarawa influence was reinforced by political relationship between the *sarkin* Kano Abdullahi Barja (1438-52) and the emperor of Borno to whom the former submitted religiously offering gifts to the latter. This diplomatic approach did open not only trade relationships between Kano and Borno kingdom but also opened the gate for the Borno clerics to come to Kano in order to preach Islam and teach the Holy Qur'an.

The subsequent arrival of the Fulani *Ulama* from the Mali Empire further strengthened the Islamic holding on the people of the kingdom of Kano. The Fulani according to the *Chronicle*⁵ came with special knowledge of divinity (*Al*

³ Chamberlain, J.W. *The Development of Islamic Education...*p. 60.

⁴ Mohammed and Khan, *Cradle to Grave...*p. 131.

⁵ *Tarikh Arbab Hadha al-balad al-Musamma Kano*, Anon, the oft quoted *Kano Chronicles* as translated by H. R. Palmer and published in the *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol 38 (1908) pp. 59-98 and republished in his *Sudanese Memoirs* (3 volumes: London, 1928), 3:

Tauhid) and Arabic language (*Al-Lugga*). This was in addition to what was already obtained from the Wangarawa *Ulama* concerning the knowledge of jurisprudence (*Al-Fiqh*) and tradition of the Prophet (*Al-Hadith*), with the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an brought by the Borno *Ulama*. In a way it could be said that Kano in those days was the confluence of the two special branches of knowledge from the University of Sankore in Timbuktu, Mali empire and Al-Azhar University of Cairo through Borno. It was on the basis of this that one justifies calling the Madabo school, *the Madabo University* — for it met the criteria for the establishment and functions of any university then existing anywhere in the medieval world.

From Tripoli to Kano: Scholastic Ascendancy in Kano

Thus the Wangarawa scholastic dynasty left a legacy in the establishment of the first higher education centers in Kano all networked to the Madabo schooling system. It was to this school, which had established itself authoritatively in the fashion of its antecedent University of Sankore, that scholars from all over Sudan flocked to study fiqh, Hadith, and the Mukhtasar.

This tradition was strengthened by the arrival in Kano of Muhammad b. Abd al Karim al-Maghili, during the reign of *Sarki* Rumfa (1463-1499). Rumfa was perceived as the most radical and intellectual reformer among the medieval *Sarakunan* Kano, carrying, as he did, far reaching reforms in all aspects of his administration. Indeed the intellectual tradition of the present House of Rumfa in Kano can be traced directly to Rumfa's *Sarauta*.

Rumfa according to Kano tradition, was also the most pious, upright, dynamic, benevolent ruler the Kano kingdom has ever had. As a dynamic visionary and foresighted king, in the political and administrative reforms as well as the establishment of Kurmi Market are still considered by *Kanawa* as second to none in the entire political and economic growth of the kingdom since that time.

Although Gwarzo⁶ was to claim that when al-Maghili came to Kano “there was in existence some Islamic learning, but Islamic institutions had not been properly developed”⁷ this is nevertheless not so. As we have seen, prior to al-Maghili's arrival in Kano there existed extensive network of theological colleges and schools under various *mallams*, all graduates of the faculties of the

92-132. Also translated as *Hausawa Da Makwabtansu* Vols I and II by Rupert A. East (Zaria, 1932 and 1933), and reprinted in 1970 (Zaria, NNPC). Henceforth referred to as the *Chronicle*.. It was adapted from the history of Kano which *sarki* Muhammad Bello (1883-1893) ordered to be collated from earlier records whose initial writing might have started as early as 1650. It was originally written in Arabic.

⁶ Hassan I. Gwarzo, *The life and teaching of Al-Maghili with particular reference to Saharan Jewish community*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, p. 70.

⁷ Gwarzo, *The life and teaching of Al-Maghili*...p. 70.

Madabo school, established about fifty years earlier with the arrival of the Malian Wangarawa scholars.

Further, in a re-interpretation of the whole historical drama, Barkindo⁸ suggests that “by the time when Al-Maghili arrived in Kano, Rumfa must have completed most of the his reforms.” It would appear, therefore, that al-Maghili’s presence in Kano served only as a catalyst towards accelerating an already reformist process of Rumfa. Perhaps the most eloquent testimony of al-Maghili’s intellectual influence on Rumfa was the former’s treatises. al Maghili wrote the first Kano Emirate constitution which was contained *Taj-al-din fi ma rajibu ala’l muluk* and *Wasiyyat al-Maghili ila Abi Abdullahi Muhammad b. Yakub*⁹ (Muhammad Rumfa). These works are still available in Kano.

The treatises, being *wasiyyat* concerning the obligation of the prince (though more accurately, in this case, the Emir) to his subjects, followed the Machiavellian framework of a “wise one” providing over-the-shoulder religious guidance to a student on what was probably the first welfarist state policy in The Sudan. Incidentally, it was actually Rumfa who commissioned al-Maghili to write the books for him — revealing a desire on the part of *Sarautar* Kano to identify with classical Islam, much in the same way one of Rumfa’s great-grandparents did with the Wangarawa clerics. There was no doubt these constitutions written by al-Maghili for Rumfa provided the first recorded framework for the intellectual transformation of Kano for which subsequent *Sarakunan* Kano built upon.

Thus we can say that al-Maghili set out to remove innovations in the interpretation of Islam in Kano — thus becoming the first *Izala* advocate in the kingdom — and strengthened already existing scholastic institutions and established new ones. This was because his first acts, the appointment of an Imam for the Friday prayer, and the qadi, were preceded by similar act of the Madabo Wangarawa faculty decades earlier.

Incidentally, al-Maghili and his people settled in an area of the city now called Sharifai. When it was time for him to move on, he left his children with the remaining clerics be brought along. One of the sons, Isa became Sidi Fari and established a dynasty. Eventually *Sidi Fari* became a minor title reserved for *Sharifai* (descendants of Sharif, i.e. al-Maghili). The tradition has been that the *Sidi Fari* sits with the *sarkin* Kano. He is still a feature in the court of the current ruling dynasty.

⁸ Bawuro .M. Barkindo, The Role of al-Maghili in the Reforms of *Sarki* Muhammadu Rumfa (1463-1499) of Kano: A re-examination, *Kano Studies* New Series Vol 3 No 1, 1987/88 pp. 85-110; p. 86.

⁹ Translated as *The Obligation of Princes* by T. H. Baldwin (1932). Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique.

In order to boost the morale of the *Ulama* to take up the task of the educational revolution serious Rumfa paid huge amount to every one of them on weekly basis (*kudin laraba*), so called because the money were paid on each Wednesday (*Laraba*) of the week. Since the idea of salary and wages were not known in Kano then as rewards for public services offered by individual; the remuneration given the *Ulama* by Rumfa was called (*sadaka*) or alms from the king.

Rumfa's enthusiasm in revolutionizing Islamic nature of Kano were matched only by his *Ulama* who undertook the task vigorously. In order to make learning easier and quicker, Arabic alphabets were Hausanized and the teaching method was divided into what seemed to be introductory and specialization stages. In the introductory stages all the students were taught the reading and the writing of the Holy Qur'an in general terms, from the very beginning to the end of sixty *hizifs* of its contents. This stage took about five years to complete depending on the learning aptitude of the individual students.

In the second stage, the students were divided in two. The first group is made up of those who revealed signs of ability and interest in the further study of the Holy Qur'an were sent to Borno in the east (or *gabas*) where they would study various professors of Qur'anic education (called *gwani*). *Gwani* is an academic title somewhat equivalent to a doctorate degree given to an expert in the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an who graduated directly either from Al-Azhar University in Egypt or from the hands of its old graduates. After the completion and graduation from Borno, the Qur'anic *Ulama* were given called Bornawiyans or *Barnawa* in order to signify their specialization area. They established Qur'anic schools in various places for both children and adults.

The second group, made up of those who would like to specialize in the Islamic religious knowledge, apart from their Qur'anic education, were attached to what became called *Zaure* schools which were established in various wards in the city. In turn the *Zaure* schools were opened by *Ulama* who, in some cases, studied directly from the University of Sankore in Timbuktu or from the hands of some *Ulama* who studied and graduated there. Like their counterparts from the Borno schooling system, the *Zaure* school student study and specialize in Arabic language and literature, Islamic religious knowledge, history theology, Islamic jurisprudence and other branches of Islamic education. After completing their studies and graduation such *Ulama* were given the name Tumbuktian or *Tumbuktawa* also to signify their area of specialization.

It was during this period and for the propagation of Islam that the Hausa language began to adopt some Arabic words. Hausa grammar relied on the Arabic grammar until it became a written language in Arabic character called *Ajami*. It was also at this period that the tradition of interpretation the Holy Qur'an to the members of the general public during the month of Ramadan (*Tafsir*) was started. During the interpretations, it was established that a Barnawiyān Mallam would read the text as an expert in the reading and recitation of the Holy Book, while the Tumbuktian Mallam would interpret the contents in Hausa to the listeners.

The scholastic influence in Kano was not only a service restricted for the ruling house. Abundant evidence, both the chronicle, and other sources seemed to reveal that Islam was not just a state religion in Kano, but a practical way of life since the late 15th century. Clerics of high scholastic caliber taught and wrote commentaries on many aspects of Islamization of Kano. Such high caliber clerics were more often than not canonized while they were still alive. Examples included *Wali* (saint) mai Aduwa, Wali mai Geza. However the most outstanding of them was Wali mai Kargo. A 15th century figure — the era of Wangarawa and al-Maghili influences — Muhammad Zara, who later became Wali mai Kargo, preached the purification of Islam, but apparently, according to Chamberlain, too zealously, for he was executed¹⁰. It was clear therefore that Islamic piety and purity were a common currency at the mass-level in Kano even in that period.

New Foundations, Shaky Buildings

But what have we done with this impressive educational legacy? Left it to rot. When colonialism came in 1903, the battle fought by our forefathers was for political supremacy, not intellectual preservation. Subjugated and later patronized, our intellectual fountainheads were happy to be used as showcases of educational success of the colonial policy through high government positions. They were more interested in becoming ministers, councilors, directors, Permanent Secretaries, than sustaining the literary and educational heritage bequeathed upon us by our ancestors

Nowhere is this more vividly expressed than in the development of reading materials for schools. Sometimes in 1933 a colonial officer came up with the idea that the best way to encourage people to go to schools and ensure those in the schools stayed was to write a series of primers in Hausa language aimed at primary schools. The establishment of the Translation Bureau in 1929 first in Kano before being move to Zaria, and its literary competition of 1933 yielded the first clutch of now Hausa *boko* literature classics (*Ruwan Bagaja, Shehu*

¹⁰ Chamberlain, J.W. *The Development of Islamic Education...*p. 63. Chamberlain however did not provide account of the circumstances of Wali Mai Kargo's execution.

Umar, Ganjoki, etc). It must be kept in mind that the scholastic tradition of the Hausa has always been the preserve of the *mallam* class; consequently even in popular literature the fountainheads, being carved out of that class, reflected their antecedent pedagogic traditions.

And that was where the first mistake was made. These scholastic fountainheads should have been encouraged to use the *English language* to write their primers. The colonial government, very well aware of the intellectual caliber of the Muslim Hausa teacher, afraid of confrontation if given the mastery of the English language, unsure of how such mastery could affect long-term colonial policies (as indeed it yielded the first clutch of revolutionary protests in Southern Nigeria, and in the north, the first radicals like late Malam Aminu Kano), were too happy to give the scholastic fountainheads the impression that if they were to write their materials in Hausa language, they would have been more acceptable to their people!

The challenge to our pioneer teachers in 1933 would have been to devise ways and means of making their young audience learn the language. For one wishes to argue that had the initial language of instruction in those early schools or books been English, and with such rich literary heritage dating back to 14th century, the Hausa of Northern Nigeria would have been producing Nobel Prize winning writers in every discipline by now. This is because those who have produced the Nobel Prize writers were much much late starters in the educational field; the records show that the scholastic tradition of Northern Nigeria, and Kano in particular, is older than for any other organized settlement in present day Nigeria.

Thus because the initial educational activity in Northern Nigeria, and in Kano in particular was in the Hausanized English alphabet, it had two damaging effects. **First** it squashed the development of the English language and made writings in Hausa the mode of literary expression. The consequence of this is that whereas a large volume of materials appeared in Hausa language in virtually all the disciplines, it soon became either overtaken by events, or became stagnated. I will give an example in science. In addition, it makes it difficult for most of our students to understand the other subjects in the curriculum taught in English language.

Almost everyone here has come across Abubakar Imam and Rupert East's *Ikona Allah* — the elementary science text book first written by the duo in 1949. Yet up till now, **no one** has updated the book to reflect more wonders of Allah (e.g. Saturn's rings, planetary travel, genetic code, animal behavioral mechanisms, satellite and communications developments, etc). But we all know that if any of our science graduates is asked to write a simplified, modern and

updated English version of *Ikon Allah*, it would be very easy and more digestible to do so *for the modern schoolboy*.

There have been attempts to write similar thesis as *Ikon Allah*, but not *expand* it. This is seen, for instance, in Danjuma Katsina's *Mai Yadda Ya So*, which was more philosophical than scientific. Others include A. Sambo's *Mu Koyi Imin Halitta* (1976), Aminu Dorayi's *Kimiyya Don Makarantun Firamare* (1981), and M. Kabir's *Aikin Likita* (1982). All were all half-hearted attempts at bringing science to an increasingly disenchanted school populace, and none of these books went beyond where it was meant to go.

The **second damage** done by the colonial educational policy was the total neglect of the *ajami* as a language of expression. Basically there were two kinds of schoolboys: those who went to *boko* schools, and those who predominantly went to *makarantun allo*. The appearance of text materials in Hausa English script had catered for the literary needs of the first group (even if, as I argued earlier, it has stunted the growth of the academic tradition). Yet the non-availability of secular materials dealing with science, hygiene, environment, prose fiction, geography, etc *written in ajami*, has totally alienated the huge pool of *makarantun allo* pupils who are thus denied access to knowledge necessary to successfully integrate in the modern scheme of things. And this is the *second disservice* performed by our scholastic fountainheads: lack of any provision for the secular learning of this group, who in the final analysis constituted the largest proportion of our youth population.

Writing the Rites to Wright the Wrongs

My arguments are simple, and I would wish to state my proposition for further debate. I argue that almost every almajiri youth from age of seven can read eloquently in Arabic script. After all, he does read the Qur'an more or less perfectly. Thus he has a complete grasp of an alphabet and sentence formation. Now imagine what life would have been if we have *Ikon Allah* written in *ajami*, so that our almajiri could have access to it. Then imagine further the social revolution that would have happened if other materials — fiction, geography, environmental studies, etc — were also all written in *Ajami*. If there are less *almajirai* among the *boko schoolboys* (due to their education) then it follows that *there would be much less almajirai* among the *makarantun allo* schoolboys! For the most important function of education is that of giving the student a sense of dignity and self-respect. The almajirai have been given the erroneous assumption that being an almajiri means being a scholar-beggar. If they had an enriched curriculum which supplements their Islamic learning, then they will value their scholarship more, just as it is any primary school pupil will find begging disdainful.

And yet this particular thought was not created in 1933 when our fountainheads were busy writing their novels, or in the 1940s and 1950s when other supplementary educational materials were being produced. And because of that we have a large of pool of uneducated graduates of both the *boko* and *makarantun allo* schooling systems.

If we wish to lead our people into the next millennium, we must break the paralysis of guilt, indifference and begin to start write the rites to write the wrongs inflicted on our society by our intellectual fountainheads in active collaboration with their colonial Svengalis. If the future is ours, and the future is now, then we must break from the horrors of the past. Let us free them from an imposed prison of intellectual provincialism. Let me be therefore the first to throw down the gauntlet: let us start the *ajamization of knowledge movement* which will open all vistas knowledge, not just religious, for our teeming millions of our people.

As we celebrate 31 years of this great institution, let it be said loud, clear and proudly, that the *ajamization of knowledge movement* started here and started now!