

Religion and language in the transformation of education in northern Nigeria during British colonial rule, 1900-1960

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Abstract: This study discusses the vital roles that religion and language played in the transition and transformation of education in northern Nigeria during British colonial rule, 1900-1960. It traces the history of early contacts between European explorers and traders with the people of northern Nigeria and the Sokoto Caliphate before the establishment of colonial rule. In particular, the study discusses the colonial administration's policies on religion and language and how they were used as instruments of power and social stability. It probes the effectiveness of the Lugardian policy of non-interference in religious affairs in which Qur'anic schools and missionary schools were left to function independently to serve the interests of the colonial government. It also explores the issue of language, especially of writing Hausa and other Nigerian languages in Arabic script, called *Ajami* which was scrapped by the British colonial administration and its effects on the Islamic religious education and mass adult literacy in northern Nigeria.

Keywords: Northern Nigeria; British colonial rule; *Ajami*; Arabic script; Hausa.

Abstrak: Kajian ini membincangkan peranan agama dan bahasa yang penting dalam peralihan dan transformasi pendidikan semasa pemerintahan penjajah British di Nigeria utara dari 1900-1960. Ia mengesan sejarah hubungan awal antara pelopor dan peniaga Eropah dengan penduduk di Nigeria utara serta Kalifah Sokoto sebelum penubuhan pemerintahan penjajah tersebut. Secara khususnya, artikel ini membincangkan dasar pentadbiran penjajah terhadap

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agama dan bahasa serta bagaimana polisi tersebut digunakan sebagai instrumen kuasa dan kestabilan sosial. Ia mendalami keberkesanan dasar tidak campur tangan Lugardian dalam hal ehwal agama, yang mana sekolah pengajian Al-Quran dan sekolah Mubaligh dibiarkan untuk berfungsi secara bebas demi menyambung kepentingan kerajaan penjajah. Kajian ini juga meneroka isu bahasa, terutamanya penulisan Hausa dan bahasa-bahasa Nigeria lain dalam skrip bahasa Arab, dikenali sebagai *Ajami* yang telah dimansuhkan oleh pentadbiran penjajah British serta kesannya terhadap pendidikan agama Islam dan tahap literasi umum penduduk dewasa di Nigeria utara.

Kata kunci: Nigeria Utara, pemerintahan penjajah British, *Ajami*, skrip Arab, Hausa.

The colonial policies that prohibited the use of *Ajami* (Arabic script used for writing African languages; in this context Hausa) script in official documents and correspondence, the introduction of Roman script and the unilateral declaration of English as the official language of administration, education and commerce have extensively been studied by scholars such as Mazrui (1990), Philips (2000, 2004), Argungu (2005), among others. Scholarly studies have also been done on Islamic religious education and Western education both before and during British colonization of northern Nigeria by Graham (1960), Bello (1962), Ayandele (1966), Paden (1973, 1986), Fafunwa (1991), Doi, (1992), Feinstein (1998), Lemu (2002) and Abdulkadir (2011). In addition, there exist many biographies and autobiographies of eminent northern Nigerian nationalist leaders that discuss the history of education and educational policies during the Caliphate era as well as during the British colonial rule.

This paper discusses, among others, British colonial policies on education and the issues of indigenous languages with particular reference to the roles of Hausa as a regional lingua-franca and English as an official language. Many interpreted these policies as impositions specifically designed to serve the interests of colonial powers. Colonial policies on education, religion and language were viewed with caution and reservation especially by nationalists, political cynics and sceptics. Non-interference in religious matters, though welcomed, was also seen to be a strategy to pacify Northern emirs whose territories had just been forcibly occupied. The declaration of Hausa as a regional lingua-franca though helped to popularize the language by making it widely

spoken by other ethnic groups it was still viewed with suspicion. The banning of the use of *Ajami* script and its replacement with Roman script was in bad taste according to many Muslims. Although all these issues of colonial intervention and rule have been dealt with in diverse academic and scholarly studies, they will continue to generate interest and debate. Historical approaches will only be reliable and convincing if sociological and political dimensions are added to it as is done in this paper.

Prior to British colonial rule in Nigeria

Long before colonial rule, Nigeria existed as independent states and empires, which included among others, Nri Kingdom (948-1911), Kanem-Bornu (1068-1900), Kwararafa (1400-1800), Benin (1440-1897), Hausa States (1500-1808), Oyo (1608-1800) and Sokoto Caliphate (1809-1903). All these states, kingdoms and empires had well organized religious and political systems that existed for centuries before the arrival of European explorers, merchants and missionaries.

The Portuguese were the first European explorers and traders to come to Nigeria as early as in 1471 and had established a diplomatic contact with the Oba of Benin in 1481 (Fafunwa, 1991). But, while the Portuguese came, saw and left, the British who came many centuries later, saw and stayed. The imperial power of these ancient states that was derived from religion and culture was therefore challenged to the core. The social and political values that had made these states viable and strong were destroyed first through trade and diplomacy, and later, by the military might of the new European adventurers who would later become colonizers. Nigeria was no doubt an object of desire for the British not only because of its enormous natural resources, but also because of the need for the expansion of the British Empire where “the sun would never set.” This idealistic notion of a large and powerful empire became actualized.

Britain first considered the economic repercussions of such a gigantic military adventure on the mother nation. Economic prudence that dictated the decision to use trade and diplomacy as means of eventual colonization could be regarded as the best option that worked well. It was the Machiavelli’s maxim in reverse. The means justified the end. If the ultimate goal was colonization and if trade and diplomacy would lead to the realization of that goal then it was worth the effort. Gain

the territorial control first through trade and diplomacy and colonize later even if that would involve using military force. Consequently, as all colonization processes throughout human history had involved military interventions, Britain had to use its military might to acquire territories.

Northern Nigeria, which became a part of a larger federal union in 1914, was founded by Sheikh Usman dan Fodio in 1809, after his successful military campaign against Hausa states and in particular, the defeat of the Hausa Kingdom of Gobir. As a result, the Sokoto Caliphate (known in Hausa as Daular Usmaniyya) already had an organized political and administrative system for centuries before the arrival of the British and their subsequent annexation and colonization of the region. The British first came to Nigeria as far back as in the 1870s through the Southern coastal region in Lagos, Calabar and some cities in the Niger Delta region, and established their commercial and administrative centres. Later, they moved into Northern region and established their headquarters in Lokoja and Zungeru. Lokoja was an ideal and strategic location being at the confluence of Niger and Benue rivers suitable for shipping export commodities to Europe through Lagos and Calabar. Lokoja was also the headquarters of Royal Niger Company, the equivalent of Imperial East Africa Company and British East India Company in Calcutta.

Therefore, it would be valid to argue that the methods and motives of establishing both British East India Company and Royal Niger Company might not have been coincidental and concomitant, but a carefully planned and well executed British colonialist expansionist agenda. This success in their expansionist agenda was backed by very solid instruments of power they brought along with them: the three big B's, namely, "Bible, Business and Bullet" with which, the colonized Nigerians argued, the British controlled and dictated their cultural, religious and economic lives (Fafunwa, 1991, p. 74). On January 1, 1900, Royal Niger Company which later metamorphosed into United Africa Company became instrumental to the beginning of colonialism in Nigeria by ceding its territorial control to the British government after accepting a financial settlement, thereby leading to the merger of Southern and Northern Protectorates into a single nation which Lugard's wife, Baroness Flora Shaw, later named Nigeria. Arguably, the historical factors that led to the eventual colonization of Nigeria

were not merely an accident of history or a geographical necessity, but a carefully designed master plan for a bigger, richer and more powerful British empire.

Contact and consolidation

By the time the British made their first direct contact with the people of northern Nigeria, the Sokoto Caliphate was at the height of its imperial glory. Stories of its fame and power fascinated many European travellers, explorers and traders to Africa. Early contacts were made by British explorers such as Mungo Park, Hugh Clapperton and Richard Lander, who travelled to northern Nigeria. Mungo Park, a Scottish explorer whose journey was sponsored by African Society, followed the course of the Niger River and reached as far as Bussa near Sokoto where he died in 1806. Richard Lander, who was a member of Mungo Park's voyage, returned to Africa in 1830, but died before reaching Bussa in the same year.

Perhaps of greater significance was Hugh Clapperton's 1824 expedition to Africa. Clapperton travelled through many towns and cities under the Sokoto Caliphate and even visited Sokoto, where he had an audience with the Sultan of Sokoto in 1826. *The Travel Journal* of Hugh Clapperton, the first British traveller to visit the Caliph in Sokoto, corroborated Muhammad Bello's imperial vision. Muhammad Bello was Clapperton's biggest source in his discussion of the new world of the middle Belt. Clapperton's maps of the Caliphate and its Niger-Benue frontier, the first to be published in Britain, were drawn for him by Mohammed Bello, given to him from Mohammed Bello's collection by a member of his household, and drawn by Clapperton or others on the instructions of Muhammad Bello himself (Bello, 1962; Clapperton, et al. 2005; Ochonu, 2008). The leaders of the Fulani Caliphate of Sokoto continued their contact with the British explorers and traders even after Clapperton. Later, the British by design or destiny would become rulers and masters.

The Royal Niger Company, Britain's main proxy, also entered into a number of treaties with the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emir of Gwandu. With these treaties, the British gradually assumed the power of regulating the activities of foreigners in the Sultanate (Doi, 1992, pp. 70-71). One such treaty is as follows:

TREATY

Royal Niger Company and Sokoto.

Jurisprudence over Foreigners, etc., 15TH April 1890.

Literal translation of second Treaty, in Arabic, between Umoru, King of the Mussulmans of the Soudan, and Sultan of Sokoto, on the one part, and the Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited); on the other part.

Be it known that I, Umoru, King of the Mussulmans, am desirous of introducing European trade in all parts of my dominions, so as to increase the prosperity of my people, and knowing that this cannot be effected except by securing to foreigners the protection of European government, with power of exercising jurisdiction over foreigners, as is the custom with them; also with power of levying taxes upon foreigners as may be necessary for the exercise and support of this jurisdiction: I, Umoru, King of the Mussulmans of the Soudan, with the consent and advice of my Council, agree and grant to the Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited)- formerly known as the "National African Company (Limited)- full and complete power and jurisdiction over all foreigners visiting or residing in any part of my dominions. I also grant you jurisdiction and full rights of protection over all foreigners; also power of raising taxes of any kind whatsoever from such foreigners.

No person shall exercise any jurisdiction over such foreigners, nor levy any tax whatsoever on such foreigners than the Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited).

These grants I make for myself, my heirs, and successors, and declare them to be unchangeable and irrevocable for ever.

I further confirm the Treaty made by me with the National African Company (Limited) - now known as the Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) - in the month of June, according to European reckoning, 1885.

Dated at Wurnu this 15th day of April 1890 (Orr, 1911, p. 288).

These initial contacts were soon to develop into a more serious and sustained relationship in the form of direct imposition of colonial rule after the Sokoto Caliphate's initial military resistance. The Fulani Caliphate of Sokoto, founded by Usman dan Fodio, conquered and

ruled Hausa states until the British intervention and the war on the Caliphate. The British envisaged Nigerian colonial enterprise became a reality following the defeat of the Sokoto Caliphate at their hands in 1903 (Paden, 1986, p. 68). With their superior modern weapons, they subdued the Caliphate's army under the command of Sultan Muhammad Attahir I, who abdicated and went into exile in Sudan.

Before the defeat of the Sokoto Caliphate and the colonization of the Northern region, there existed a very viable culture of learning and scholarship. The founder and leader of the Sokoto Caliphate, Usman dan Fodio and his brother, Abdullahi dan Fodio, and son, Muhammad Bello, were great scholars who had written hundreds of books on Islamic theology, law, politics, history and philosophy. The scholarly contributions of the founding fathers undoubtedly helped the Caliphate to be an important centre for Islamic education.

Conflict of cultures and educational systems

Prior to the conquest of the Fulani Sokoto Caliphate by the British in 1903 and the subsequent establishment and consolidation of colonial rule, an Islamic educational system already existed. A renowned historian on the Sokoto Caliphate, Murray Last (2005), acknowledges the existence of a thriving and broad-based Islamic educational system that also incorporated the teaching of European languages and new sciences in its core curricula. The Caliphate recruited teachers, educational advisors and planners from Egypt, Tripoli and Ottoman Turkey, to help in teaching and reforming the Islamic system of education. This enduring legacy of Islamic religious education from the Sokoto Caliphate continued before and after the advent of colonialism. Scholars established Qur'anic schools and for so many centuries up to the colonial period, Islamic schooling was the formal educational system in northern Nigeria (Lemu, 2002). In the Northern Protectorates, when Lord Lugard came to take over as the Governor of northern Nigeria in 1914, he found over 25,000 Qur'anic schools with a total enrolment of 218,618 pupils (Fafunwa, 1991; Paden, 1973). These Qur'anic schools known as *Tsangaya* and their students called *Almajirai* from the Arabic word, *Almuhājir* or an immigrant, later enrolled in more advanced theological schools, or *madrasahs* where they studied Islamic Jurisprudence, Theology, History, Philosophy, Arabic Grammar and the Sciences.

Under the British colonial administration, the system of Qur'anic schools was maintained in order to avoid destroying the social fabric of the Islamic North. While the children of the aristocracy were educated in the elite schools, the majority of the rural population was able to send their children to Qur'anic schools (Giroaurd, 1909). Lugard not only acknowledged their existence, but also accorded them official status by paying monthly stipends to the teachers. However, things began to change after the consolidation of British colonial rule in northern Nigeria, with the introduction of colonial education. This new development polarized two elite groups, namely, the Christians and Muslims, in the management of public affairs, especially education. While the Government took the responsibility of providing colonial education in the so-called Muslim areas, the non-Muslim areas had their education from Christian missionaries (Ashafa, 2005). The political or religious motives behind this separation and its impact on the educational development in northern Nigeria during and after British colonial rule would later determine the entire course and progress of both secular and Islamic education in northern Nigeria.

The new British colonial administration in northern Nigeria under Governor Lugard, did strategically shield Islamic religious education from the influence of Christian missionaries. In fact, it allowed both the Islamic and missionary schools to operate independently, without interference from the colonial administration (Ashafa, 2005). This was a very fundamental colonial doctrine which helped it gain and maintain confidence of different religious faiths. It was also one of the articles of the agreement with the Emir of Zaria, Ja'faru Isiaku, signed and sealed by the British colonial governor, Sir Bernard Henry Bourdillion: "In the matter of Religion everyman is free to worship God in his own way, according to his own belief. There shall be no interference with any man's religion so long as it does sanction cruelty, or oppression or acts contrary to good government" (Doi, 1992, pp. 73-74). Lugard inherited this from his predecessors and used it to his political advantage. So this policy of non-interference in religious affairs was not only in line with the British colonial policy of divide and rule and indirect rule, but also of tremendous benefit to the colonial administration that regarded the Emirs as partners, if not collaborators in regional governance.

By non-interference with Islam, Lugard perhaps meant the non-enforcement of Christian missionary activities upon the Muslims and missionary centres would not be allowed in predominantly Muslim areas (Ashafa, 2005).

The Emirs, despite their territorial surrender to the British, did not openly oppose any colonial policy whether on educational reform or language. Indeed it has been alleged that the emirs rarely pressed the British to build more schools and throughout British rule in northern Nigeria, no emir ever asked the British for more money for the development of education in his emirate. The emirs did not encourage the spread of Western education probably out of fear that “a new educated class outside the malam class would challenge their political and religious authority” (Tibenderana, 1983, p. 517). This attitudinal change of the emirs, though unexpected, was not surprising as they would benefit more by remaining passive.

Far from being naïve, the decision to remain aloof was wise and mutually beneficial to them, because it served their imperial ambition. As long as the British would support them in ruling their people, they were satisfied. Certainly, the ulterior motive for the famous declaration was political and economic, which might be achieved through the implementation of certain policies. On the other hand, it would not be surprising at all, considering the fact that “indirect rule” as a colonial policy had already been successfully applied in other British colonies, notably, India and East Africa. Governor Lugard, the architect of indirect rule in the Protectorates of northern Nigeria, defined it as a “rule through the native chiefs who are regarded as integral parts of machinery of Government, with well-defined powers and functions recognized by the Government and by law, and not dependent on the caprice of an Executive Officer” (Okafor, 1981, pp. 5, 38). It was, therefore, a matter of political convenience emanating from experience. The introduction of indirect rule in northern Nigeria also meant that the emirs and chiefs were given the authority to govern their territories in accordance with Islamic religious institutions. In this regard, all British officers in northern Nigeria were required to uphold the Lugardian dictum that the colonial administration would not interfere with the Islamic religion and the institutions (Saeed, 2005).

The British colonial authority acted out of pragmatism and a sensitive awareness of the social reality and fear of destabilizing of what seemed to be well structured and governed emirates. Herbert Palmer, the Governor General of northern Nigeria and staunch supporter of indirect rule, opposed the idea of allowing Christian missionaries to establish centres in the predominantly Muslim cities by arguing that trying to convert the inhabitants of the old established Muslim cities would make it more difficult for the missions to operate (Saeed, 2005). However, despite objections, in 1927, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) was granted a new land in Wusasa, a mile from Zaria city, to establish their mission (Crampton, 1975). From all indications, the colonial government placed many obstacles to missionary advancement into Muslim strongholds. Although on the surface level it would seem that such measures were taken in keeping with the British colonial policy of non-interference in religious matters, other reasons might have been to placate the Muslim leaders for their defeat and to insulate the Northern emirates from being politically radicalized like the Southern states (Ubah, 1976). Whatever the real motives were, they certainly served the interests of the colonial government well. This cooperation and its social, religious and political implications is still a subject of debate by scholars.

The politicization of *Ajami* script and its implications on Islamic education.

As colonialism became firmly entrenched, British colonial government under Lugard began to see the advantage of adopting the Hausa language both as a regional lingua-franca and a semi-official language (Philips, 2000). Hausa was used as a language of communication in official documents, missionary schools and translation of the Bible. Lugard even vowed to “make West African Frontier Force, as far as possible, a Hausa-speaking pagan force and... it will thus be a far more reliable source of military strength” (Lugard, 1902, p. 27; Philips, 2004, p. 59). This arrangement worked well for Lugard until his successor, Captain Wallace, under the influence of the missionary Charles Henry Robinson, outlawed *Ajami* and introduced Roman script and English as an official language. Another colonial officer, Captain Merrick, who had initially supported the continuation of the Arabic, later argued for dropping *Ajami* script in favour of Roman script (Philips, 2000).

The introduction of Roman script, not only resulted in the gradual phasing out of Hausa Arabic script, known as *Ajami*, but also brought about fundamental changes in the educational and cultural development of the region (Argungu, 2005). The newly introduced “*Boko*” (Romanised Hausa) shook the very foundations of Islamic education and stunted the rapid development of adult literacy as well as the long established tradition of scholarly writings in northern Nigeria. Historically, *Ajami* literature had played an equally important role in mobilizing for the *Hijrah* (migration) and for understanding how it should be conducted in accordance with the tenets of the *Sharī'ah*. Sultan Muhammad Bello’s *urjuza*, titles *Yimre Jihadi*, is one of the extant works in this category of *Ajami* literature (Bobboyi, 2008, p. 128).

Sokoto *jihād* leaders relied on *Ajami* in reaching the people and spreading political and religious doctrinal teachings. Abdullahi dan Fodio, second in command of the Caliphate administrative and religious hierarchy, was emphatic on the role *Ajami* literature played in this mobilization process. During that time, Shehu Usman dan Fodio, the founder of the Caliphate, travelled to the east and the west calling people to the religion of God by his preaching and his *qasidas* in *Ajami* in both Hausa and Fulfulde languages (Bobboyi, 2008).

Since at that time the schools in the Sokoto Caliphate taught only in Arabic and used *Ajami* script to make many people become literate, a new educational system would have to be created if Africans were to learn English instead. It also meant that the graduates of the 25,000 Qur’anic schools that Lugard found when he served as the Governor of northern Nigeria “would have to be re-educated before they could obtain employment with the colonial administration” (Philips, 2004, p. 66). Lugard’s drastic measure in replacing *Ajami* with Roman script was borne out of his ignorance of Arabic alphabets and its vowel system (Philips, 2004). Apparently, Lugard’s policy on Romanization of Hausa Arabic was consistent with the recommendations of Hanns Vischer, who was given an honorific title of “Dan Hausa” or “Son of Hausa” and who ironically introduced Roman script to replace *Ajami* Arabic script in 1909. At that time, Vischer was appointed by the colonial administration to reform the education system of northern Nigeria. Some of his arguments in favour of Roman script included “the use of *Ajami* would mean the government would be spreading Islam”; “learning Roman script would be faster”; “to print Arabic with vowels

would be very expensive” and “few colonial officers could write *Ajami*” (Philips, 2004, p. 75).

The colonial administration accepted and implemented the recommendations without thinking about their implications for future educational planning, whether Islamic or secular in northern Nigeria. From the logistical perspective, maintaining *Ajami* and gradual rather than automatic transition to the modern Roman system would have been cheaper and more effective (Philips, 2004). This policy alienated the Qur’anic schools that Lugard had found and allowed to function without interference. It also contradicted Lugard’s earlier support of the Qur’anic educational system and questioned not only his personal integrity, but also his lack of diplomacy. This singular act of proclamation altered the future direction of Islamic education in northern Nigeria. Thus, Roman script or *Rubutun Boko* replaced a centuries-old literate tradition and value system symbolized in the *Ajami* form of writing, which the Northern Muslims were already used to (Argungu, 2005).

The decision to ban the use of *Ajami* was not only unfair and unjustifiable in the view of Muslim northerners, but also lacked merit as *Ajami* script, through centuries of use, was proven to be more suited to the phonetic nomenclature of Hausa than Roman script (Argungu, 2005). As if that arbitrary and unilateral decision was not enough, the colonial government followed it up by making English an official language which turned out to be a unpopular move. Although it was premeditated, it was on the whole premature (Mazrui, 1998).

This sudden and radical shift from *Ajami* to *Boko* had resulted in the total transformation of Islamic education in the North. The theological hierarchy and the Muslim intelligentsia in particular vehemently opposed the idea of abolishing *Ajami* and substituting it with Roman script. The policy had an adverse effect, as it slowed the progress of Islamic knowledge in its written form especially in theological and literary aspects (Argungu, 2005). Furthermore, it destroyed the culture of reading and writing, foundations of a sustained and glorious civilization that had lasted for centuries. It was so crippling that it was like injecting poison in northern Islamic literate culture (Argungu, 2005). The banning of *Ajami* script and introduction of *Ilimin Boko* (Western education) concurrently did not exactly produce the desired results as the opponents of *Ilimin Boko* saw it both in concept and content as

specifically designed to make those who do not use it illiterate. The system of writing was different and today anyone who is not able to read and write in the *Boko* system is considered an illiterate (Abdulkadir, 2011).

This controversial decision born out of political adversity from the perspective of its proponents would later have negative effects on the development of mass literacy in northern Nigeria during the British colonial rule. The simplistic explanation of the banning of *Ajami* script would be that it was a misconception or even the result of ignorance of what it was and the role it played in the society. The banning of *Ajami* failed to distinguish between a native language written in Arabic script, and Arabic language as being synonymous with Islamic knowledge and values. It also failed to recognize the nature of the traditional rivalry between Arabic and English and more importantly, the introduction and entrenchment of English and its imposition on the natives as an official language of colonial masters. The major draftsmen of the proposal to ban *Ajami* no doubt knew what they were doing, despite their misconception and bias.

The preservation and promotion of Western cultural and political ideals through the use of Roman script and English, though more favourable and even practicable, were, in the view of colonialists, not necessarily, the best alternatives, even though they might appear to serve the interests of the British colonial administration. In reality, the colonialists feared that allowing Africans to learn Arabic and English languages might expose them to subversive and anti-colonial rhetoric and propaganda written in Arabic and English newspapers in countries that resisted the colonial rule: "In Arabic or English Africans could read anti-colonialist nationalist propaganda from Egypt, the United States and elsewhere" (Philips, 2004, p. 76). This fear of anti-colonial stance from Africans was justified because of colonial experiences in other countries. In fact, both Vischer and Lugard "considered African nationalism and anti-colonialism not as logical responses to alien rule, but rather as infectious mental illnesses carried on a vector of English and Arabic publications" (Philips, 2004, p. 76).

Despite the real or imagined danger of teaching Arabic and English to the colonized Africans, the entrenchment of the cultural and political values promoted by the two languages was inevitable. English, being

the official language of the British colonial administration, had been successfully introduced in other colonies including India and had to be sustained at all costs. The Arabic language in which the Qur'ān was revealed and in which Islamic theological teachings were handed down was already in use and was an integral part of the religious, educational and judicial systems in northern Nigeria. It would therefore be totally meaningless to ignore its influence on the people or attempt to undermine its existence and popularity. Thus, both English and Arabic were products of social and political necessity and were left to function, as long as they did not interfere with the overall British colonial objectives. Quite predictably, they did not, as history would later prove. As a result, English was declared the official language of the British colonial administration. However, since both English and Arabic were non-indigenous languages in spite of their prominence, the British thought it would be wise to make Hausa a regional lingua franca so that it would be easier for the British colonial administration to reach and administer the majority who could not speak Arabic or English. The goal was achieved with little or no resistance from the malam class or the ruling elites. In the case of Hausa, it was seen not only as a positive development, but also a smart move by the British, one that would bring them closer to their subjects.

Hausa as a lingua franca and official language of northern Nigeria

Hausa was an important regional language even before the arrival of the European explorers, merchants and missionaries as it was spoken by different ethnic groups. Hausa is third only to Arabic and Swahili in terms of geographical spread and number of speakers in Africa. Like Swahili, it has large numbers of loan words from Arabic, English, Fulfulde and Kanuri. Numerous studies have been done and books written on the Hausa language by leading scholars such as R. C. Abraham (1934a, 1934b, 1959), G. P. Bargery (1934), Neil Skinner (1985), Abdulkadir Dangambo (1980) and Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya (1988). Hausa is taught in universities in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Germany and broadcast by BBC and VOA as well as over radio in Moscow, Beijing, Cairo, and other cities.

The prominence of the Hausa language and its official recognition as well as adoption by the British as a regional lingua franca with a status second to English, were not just artificial creations. They were

historical antecedents and factors that were responsible for making that choice a reality. One major factor was anthropological in origin in which European explorers painted the idyllic picture of the racial characteristics of Hausa people who in intelligence, physiognomy, material culture and literary achievement surpassed other race. This perception of “the racial and cultural superiority of the Hausa people” was what attracted the Europeans (Adamu, 2004). Lugard, at the onset of his administration, found an easy solution to his communication problem in a northern language. He discovered Hausa to be the *lingua franca* and already widely spoken in these territories especially by speakers of many small languages of Jos Plateau and other areas to the south of the Sokoto Caliphate and Bornu (Philips, 2000).

In order to overcome the communication problems and speed up his administration, Lugard declared Hausa as an official language of the North (Argungu, 2005). The policy was not only accepted as a viable solution but also widely implemented where the Native Authority Police who could not communicate in English used Hausa. In addition, both colonial administrators and missionaries endorsed Hausa’s official status (Argungu, 2005). The endorsement of Hausa as a regional *lingua franca* proved to be a wise decision, one that helped to increase the level of adult literacy in the society.

The colonial government continued with its effort to support the Hausa language by making it a language for both the print and electronic media. BBC started a Hausa service broadcasting directly to Hausa speakers in West Africa. The success and wide popularity of the Hausa language policy motivated the colonial government to set up the Translation Bureau in 1929 (renamed in 1931 as the Literature Bureau) to promote the literary contest that will inspire young Hausa novelists to write indigenous novels following European tradition (Krasniewski, 2010). The Bureau started a full-fledged Hausa newspaper in 1939 called, *Gaskiya ta fi Kwabo* (Truth is Better than a Penny). This pioneering Hausa newspaper was established to promote the welfare of the country and its people, and to establish good relations between all classes, not liable to give offence, or excite bitter feelings between *Sarakuna* (Chiefs) and *Talakawa* (Commoners), southerners and northerners, Muslims and Christians, Europeans and Africans, whether editorial or contributed in the form of letter or news item, is absolutely banned. According to all indications, these laudable objectives were largely adhered to at least

during the time of its founding editor, Alhaji Abubakar Imam, who was destined to play a major role in the advancement of Hausa language and culture. Abubakar Imam was praised for his balanced and fair editorial policy both by the government and the people. Dr. Rupert East said Imam's literary style was imitated all over northern Nigeria (Hubbard, 2000; Krasniewski, 2010; Mora, 1989; Umar, 2006).

The government also established Northern Regional Literature Agency (NORLA) in 1954 under the guidance of Dr. Rupert East. Dr. East initiated a programme that encouraged literate Hausa speakers to produce literary works. Their literary efforts and output exceeded the expectations of Dr. East and the colonial government. Creative and talented writers in the competition and literary contest organized by Literature Bureau included Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (who later became the first Prime Minister of independent Nigeria between 1960 and 1966) in his novel, *Shehu Umar* and Abubakar Imam in his novel, *Ruwan Bagaja*. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's *Shehu Umar* became so popular that it was translated into English, converted into a play and later adopted for the cinema. Created by Umaru Ladan and Dexter Lyndersay, the play had its first premier in Kaduna, on December 1, 1972. The screen version directed by Alhaji Adamu Halilu was released a few years later (Krasniewski, 2010).

Transition and transformation of education in northern Nigeria

Language policy of the colonial administration could also be linked with educational policy. The banning of *Ajami* script was definitely a wrong decision that brought great resentment towards the British colonial government. It also helped to slow the development of Arabic Islamic studies. The gains made by *Ajami* script as one of the major vehicles of Islamic literary scholarship that existed for centuries were wiped out just by the stroke of the pen by Lugard.

Unilateral as it was, the decision was upheld. Roman script and the English language were to play major roles in the period of transition from Islamic education to Western education called *Boko*. Although Islamic education was allowed to continue, there was a paradigm shift. The educational policy not only shifted from religious to secular, but also structured in such a way as to favour Western education. Traditional Islamic education in the form of the Qur'anic school system became marginalized and teachers who taught in the traditional Islamic method

were either disregarded or forced to adopt the new system. There were other obstacles, too, one of which was finance. The Qur'anic schools were left on their own with very little or no support from the government. They relied on the support of parents which was normally meagre as well as on charity which rarely came. Qur'anic school teachers resorted to sending their pupils to beg for food and money. This tarnished the image of the schools and undermined the integrity of the teachers as well as their pupils. However, despite the limited means of finance, the Qur'anic schools thrived because the teachers of such schools were dedicated. Not only did they consider their mission as a divine injunction, they were also convinced that their efforts would be worthy of being rewarded in the hereafter. Both strong faith and goodwill helped to sustain the Qur'anic school system. There was no doubt that these schools served a useful purpose especially from the social, educational and religious perspectives during the period of transition from traditional Islamic education to dual educational system introduced by the British. One of recorded achievements of these Qur'anic schools, as mentioned above, was that they had an enrolment of approximately a quarter of a million pupils. In addition:

These Qur'anic schools had produced a literary class known as "Mallamai," learned in Arabic and the teachings of *Qur'an* and commentaries, from whose ranks the officers of the Native Administration, the judges of the Native Courts and the exponents of the creed of Islam were drawn. They are a very influential class, some of them very well read in Arabic literature and law, and deeply imbued with the love of learning (Paden, 1973, p. 58).

The contributions of those trained in such schools, could be regarded as important for they were instrumental to the establishment of formal judicial schools by the British for the training of judges in both *Sharī'ah* and Common Law. Although, in theory, the British recognized and permitted only two judicial systems to operate, namely, the *Sharī'ah* and the Magistrate Courts, in practice they also allowed Customary Courts in areas with significant non-Muslim or Christian populations. Litigants were free to take their cases to any of these courts based on their religious or social beliefs.

All these factors were responsible for the transition and transformation of education under the British. The British realized

the urgency to reform the entire educational system by teaching both religious and secular subjects. Since the British had already permitted the Islamic legal system to operate alongside the Western one, they felt it necessary to train *Sharī'ah* court judges as well. So in 1933, they set up a *Sharī'ah* Law School, also known as Shahuci Judicial School, in Kano for the training of *Sharī'ah* Court Judges (Lemu, 2002). This school would later become Kano School for Arabic Studies (SAS) which would train not only *Sharī'ah* Court judges but teachers as well (Lemu, 2002; Paden, 1973). Teachers were recruited from Britain and Sudan to teach students both secular and Islamic subjects in English and Arabic.

Katsina College and the training of future leaders

Prior to the establishment of Kano Law School, the British had already set the future direction of education in northern Nigeria, in which the main objective would not only be to educate young men and women in Western education, but also to establish a school specifically. Thus, Katsina College was opened in 1922 to be a training ground for princes, similar to those set up by the British in India. Graduates of this sole secondary school were considered to be teachers (Bello, 1962; Feinstein, 1998). Sir Ahmadu Bello one of the former students of Katsina College who later became the premier of northern Nigeria and one of the architects of Nigeria's independence, in his autobiography, *My Life*, commended the solidarity that existed among the students who were almost exclusively Hausa speakers except for Kanuri, the dominant ethnic group of Bornu Province in north-eastern Nigeria. On the other hand, he was critical of the lack of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the College:

Except for Kanuri we had the common link of the Hausa language, but we were all Muslims. There were no people from non-Muslim areas among us. I see now that this was perhaps a fault; it should have been better to have had more varieties of men in the College. Anyhow, a similar College should have been established for non-Muslims, but that was not part of Sir Hugh Clifford's plan. He had in mind, I think, the special colleges for princes, I think, which they had in India (Bello, 1962, p. 31).

As usual, the British known for their diplomacy had done what they believed, in principle, would please the ruling class. In theory, the implementation was also consistent with their educational policy of

non-interference in religion, which permitted such segregation based on religious beliefs. The British had already allowed Catholic and Protestant Churches to build and maintain their schools in Wusasa and Kano without the interference or support of the colonial government. During his speech at the official opening ceremony of the college in 1922, the Governor of Nigeria, Sir Hugh Clifford, said that the college was designed to, among others, train young men who would

thereafter be entrusted the duty of training and instructing the boys who attend the Provincial Schools in which they will later be employed. And it will fall to them to teach these boys, not only the lessons learned from books which they will here acquire but the way that good Muhammadans should live, the good manners, good behaviour and the courteous deportment without which mere book learning is of little worth (Bello, 1962, p. 29).

He went further to state that the broader objectives would and should include, “cherish their traditions” “observe their religious duties” “show respect and courtesy to their parents and those in authority and old people.” These objectives were certainly laudable as they conformed to the cultural and religious values of the people. As history has confirmed, most of the objectives and principles were largely achieved.

On the whole, education in northern Nigeria under the British colonial rule served the purpose for which it was intended; the gradual but ultimate secularization and modernization through the abrogation of *Ajami* script and its replacement with Roman script as well as the declaration of English as the official language of administration. This necessitated fundamental structural changes in educational philosophy in terms of the content of the curricula and teaching methodology. Katsina College which was the brainchild of the colonial rulers would have been an experimental project that became successful. Looking back at the time when the College was established in the society that was undergoing a painful period of transition from traditionalism to modernism, one would understand the political circumstances behind the idea of setting up such an educational institution. Some fundamental issues that challenged the core British humanistic and democratic ideals remained unaddressed and unsolved. For instance, when the British colonized Nigeria, they

found a rigid social structure that undermined human progress in terms of dignity and basic rights. They found social disparities in which the upper class and their cohorts manipulated the political and economic system to their advantage. They found a society where women were marginalized and denied rights to education, political awareness, participation and economic welfare. They also found glaring poverty and illiteracy which were most prevalent among the lower classes. They did not do much, if at all, to change all these by empowering women and poor people. They initiated and pursued educational reforms that alienated the masses from the mainstream political structure. In other instances, they collaborated with the aristocracy and ruling elites by helping them to gain greater economic and political advantages.

Education would have been a perfect way of empowering women and the poor. Yet, the British gave men greater advantages in education than they gave women, while totally ignoring the children of the poor people. While the children of the aristocracy were educated in elite schools, majority of the rural population were able to send their children to Qur'anic school. The Western educational system introduced by the British tended to favour children of the aristocracy and the elite. As a result, children of the poor did not benefit because of the lack of financial support: "Very few people went through the schooling process in northern Nigeria in 1930s. Such education was generally restricted to the children of the royalty and occasionally extended to those of the aristocracy and the related mallam class" (Feinstein, 1998, p. 51). Hence, Katsina College was opened primarily to train "young men" to be future teachers and administrators. In conformity to the colonial agenda, most of those students admittedly came from royal and aristocratic backgrounds with only a few exceptions. Perhaps what was most surprising was the clear absence of any future plan by the government to establish a similar school for women. However, decades later, before independence, more schools for boys and girls known as Provincial Secondary schools were built by the British colonial government. By that time, the educational gap between boys and girls had widened. Boys' Secondary schools built by the government still outnumbered those of girls. They also had better science laboratories, libraries and teachers. They performed better in GCE examinations than Girls schools. In the whole Northern

Region, no Government Girls Secondary School or College came close to Government College Keffi or Barewa College Zaria, both opened in 1949, in terms of academic excellence. One year before Nigeria's independence in 1959, the British colonial government appointed Sir Eric Ashby to study and give recommendations for the development of higher education in Nigeria. Ashby recommended the establishment of Ahmadu Bello University which was opened in 1962. With this development, the future and direction of education in northern Nigeria were now set.

Conclusion

Nigeria celebrated its independence from Britain on October 1, 1960. At the dawn of the new and free nation, it had a great deal to celebrate at least at the moment of hoisting its new sovereign flag. It would look back with pride at its achievements during the colonial rule and the period of transition from a British colony to an independent nation. With the era of colonialism gone, it would now look forward to the future with cautious optimism and guided pragmatism. It had a lot to hope for its future in terms of social, economic and political developments. However, the hope would not only be in drawing examples from its ancestral and colonial legacies, but also in developing its own national ideals.

The transition from traditional and Islamic educational and administrative system from under the Sokoto Caliphate to the modern and secular British system of governance had a tremendous impact on the people. The British colonial policy of non-interference in religion had helped to preserve the Islamic culture and educational system. Governor Lugard's official declaration of Hausa as regional *lingua franca* had also popularized the language and earned it universal acceptance through its thriving movie industry and market literature. Evidently, both religion and language had played important roles in the transition and transformation of education in northern Nigeria. They had also been used as useful instruments of power by the British administration. As it turned out, the best British colonial legacy was not dual mandate after all, but dual educational and linguistic systems; Islamic and Western educations, and English and Hausa. Nigeria and Britain will not only be partners in human development and progress, "but always as friends."

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