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Arabic Manuscript and Islamic Heritage in Northern Nigeria: A Study of the Contribution of Selected Ulama’a in Adamawa Emirate

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Introduction:

Arabic Manuscript is a veritable tool for the generation of new knowledge. Thus, it would continue to draw the interest of researchers in various fields of humanities and other key endeavours of life. It is the sad situation however, is that this is resource which is widely available in various parts of Northern Nigeria is faces increasing threat by agents of deterioration. This paper attempt to draws attention to the urgency in the need to employ means preservation and conservation for this large collection of Islamic manuscripts. The Arabic Manuscripts in the Adamawa Emirate of Northern Nigeria is to be taken as a reference point in this paper, as to its current State and what to save those manuscripts recovered.

The Location of Adamawa

The present Adamawa Emirate, also referred to as Fombina Emirate, before the British conquest, was one of the most extensive and heterogeneous Emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. Its territory significant portions of North-Eastern Nigeria, Northern Cameroon and Baghirmi in Chad Republic Yola, the Centre and headquarters of the Emirate is located between latitudes 10’ North and 9’ South. The headquarters started from Gurin in 1809 and by 1841 Yola was found a the
The capital of Fombina (Adamawa) (Alkasum A 2003) The entire emirate extends from the Chad Basin to the northern limit of the equational forest in the south (Abba A.A 1975) With the founding of the Sokoto Caliphate began in 1804, under the leadership of Shaykh Uthman Ibn Fodio [d. 1817]; leading to the establishment of Adamawa Emirate about five years later in 1809. This was when Modibbo Adama [d. 1847] was appointed as flag-bearer. (Bobboyi et al. 2009). The capital was first in Gurin then moved several times until it settled in Yola, located on the River Benue of Nigeria around 1841. As at the time of Adama's death his realm encompassed parts of modern Nigeria and much of north of present Cameroon It was technically part of the Sokoto Caliphate and thus it had to pay the amount tribute to the leaders in Sokoto

**Arabic Manuscripts Activities in Adamawa Emirate**

As part of the efforts to safeguard and document the intellectual heritage of Northern Nigeria, Arewa House, Centre for Historical Documentation and Research, conducted an official reconnaissance survey to the emirate to ascertain the nature of Arabic manuscripts in the emirate for the purpose of survey /acquiring the Arabic Manuscripts. As a result of that, the centre surveyed the Fombina Palace Museum, Galadima Family, Modibbo Ahmadu Fufure collection and other notable Scholars in Yola and its environs between 13th and 17th February 2007. (Musa S M 2008) Consequently, the survey was able to accomplish the following:

1. We were able to check the condition of Chunkunga Holy Qur’an and digitize it using digital camera with total of 1368 pages. The same digitized Qur’an was copied and given to the Fombina Palace Museum to add in their collection.

2. Assisted in setting up the Fombina Palace Museum Archives, which include; sorting, arranging, listing, boxing, labelling of old Adamawa N.A and Provincial files recovered at
the palace. These include the many important Arabic manuscripts found in the Museum.
(Musa S M 2008)

3. The Arewa House Centre for Historical Documentation and Research facilitate the stabilization of Modibbo Ahmadu Fufure Arabic Manuscripts Collection. This was between September 2008, and March 2009. The work included arrangement, sorting, listing, cataloguing, and treatment, cleaning and stabilizing the collection. Then, the whole collection was transferred to Arewa House for permanent preservation and wider access.
(Musa S M 2009)


**Arabic Manuscripts Repository in Adamawa Emirate**

Between 2007 and 2010 I and Ms Michelle Biddle Head of Preservation Service of Wesleyan University, Connecticut USA, commenced a number of activities in Yola, which include A Survey of Arabic Manuscripts held in the area with a view to assessing the state of the Arabic Manuscripts Collection there. These include both private and public repositories in order to decide on appropriate steps to preserve them for the future. At the end of the survey, efforts were stepped up at the Modibbo Ahmadu Fufore and Fombina Palace Museum Collections. (Musa S M 2010)

**(I)-Modibbo Ahmadu Fofure Collection:**

This collection consist of an approximately of 985 original manuscripts now deposited at Arewa House, Kaduna Nigeria. It is the personal collection of the late Modibbo Ahmadu Fofure of Yola (1885-1960), the Capital of Adamawa State of Nigeria. (Musa S M 2014) He was born in the year 1885 in Fufore, Adamawa Emirate to Alkali Muhammadu Fufore.
His ancestors were said to have migrated from Ngazargamu then to Kukawa, before moving to Dikkwa, all in the Borno Empire. From Borno they settled at Ribadu, and then at Fufore, before they finally moved to Yola, the Headquarters of Adamawa Emirate. His father introduced Moddibo Ahmadu to Islamic education early in life. Later, he was taught by renowned scholars in Adamawa, such as Modibbo Hammadu, Modibbo Mahmudu son of Alkalli Hamman-Joda, the most remarkable Islamic judge in the history of Adamawa Emirate who studied in the Middle East and taught for sometime in the Al-Azhar University in Egypt. (Efada Udoh Elija, 2004) Having passed through these great Islamic scholars, Modibbo Ahamadu became very versatile in various fields of knowledge, such as Jurisprudence (Islamic Law), Tafseer (Qur’anic exegesis) Hadith, Arabic Grammar, Logic, Poetry, Arabic literature, Astronomy, Mathematics and Medicine. (Musa S M, 2011)

His first appointment was in the Adamawa native Authority in January 1917 as Malamin Kasa, (The District Scribe) in Wuro Marafa, Vere District and later Alkalin (Judge) of Ribadu/Fufore in 1935. He was transferred to Jada as Alkali in 1940, and subsequently moved to the Grand Khadi court in Yola as the Grand Mufti under his teacher, Modibbo Mahmudu. Thereafter, he worked under some notable Alkalis like Hamidu and Hamman Gabdo in Yola before he was himself appointed Alkalin Alkalai (Grand Khadi) of Adamawa Province in 1953, This coincide with the installation of Lamido of Adamawa, Alhaji Aliyu Musdafa, as the 11th Lamido of Adamawa. (Interview Alkali Dahiru, 2009)

Apart from his achievements in the judicial services with the Adamawa Native Authority from 1917-1957, his greatest achievement was the number of notable Islamic scholars in Adamawa and Cameroon he produced. These included Modibbo Umaru Ngaundare, one
time Imam of Yola Central Mosque, Modibbo Barkindo, Imam of Yola Central Mosque, Modibbo Ahmadu Danburam, Modibbo Umaru Mbamba, Modibbo Abbasi Ribadu, Modibbo Yahya Ribadu, Modibbo Muhammamu Alkalin Garua, Modibbo Ibrahim Alkalin Ngaundare, and the late Lamido of Adamawa Alhaji Aliyu Musdafa. Modibbo Ahmadu was an honest and pious Islamic judge and scholar. His thoughts, words and deeds were guided by the dictates of the sacred book, the Holy Qur’an and until his death in 1960 he was a strong believer in Islam and all that it teaches. His Manuscript Collection is a clear testimony of the long intellectual history of Muslims in this country and their effort to promote all the branches of sciences. These works have played key role in the cultural development of Muslims and the history and civilization of Northern Nigeria. (Musa S M, 2009)

The collection is one of the largest of its kind in Adamawa Emirate so far recovered. The many scholarly treasures it contains and the breadth and scope of the subjects they cover make this collection one of the most important storehouses of Islamic knowledge and Northern Nigeria documentary heritage. The collection which contains about 985 were catalogued with Islamic Manuscripts Association (TIMA) grant 2013. They bear various titles as they were inherited from their great grand fathers in the period between the 14th and 20th century AD.

The collection is unique for two reasons. First, it contains many important items such as the finest illuminations and calligraphy with a variety of scripts of the Holy Qur’an, calligraphic art works, and other high-quality copies of many important works. Secondly, the collection is one of the most diverse in terms of the subjects that are covered by it. These include copies of the Holy Qur’an, works of Qur’anic sciences, Hadiths (reports
from the Prophet and the Imams), Tawheed or theology, Islamic law, prayers and sermons. Also in the collection are studies on mysticism, philosophy, ethics and politics, biographies, history, geographical works, Arabic and Fulfulde and Hausa grammar, lexicography and philology, poetry and prose, anthologies and other literary works, alchemy, astronomy, traditional medicine, traditional pharmacy and pharmacology. Most important also there are a large body of correspondences on Mahdism, and other subjection popular with politics of the Sokoto Caliphate etc. This outstanding collection is now accessible to the public in Arewa House Archives, Kaduna (Musa S M, 2009)

**The State and Condition of Modibbo Ahmadu Fufore Collection**

During my inspection of the materials in the Modibbo Ahmadu Fufore House, I discovered the Manuscripts in the house were mostly in a state of damaged. This was due to poor storage of records, under utilisation of the materials causing excessive humidity in Yola, heat and dampness. Dust and fluctuations in the temperature of the store also caused serious damage to the records making them to brittle and disintegrate to pieces. Rodents aggravated this, ants and insects that almost destroyed the precious documents beyond repair in addition to this was the constant movement of the records by those whom are not careful. The pages were collated and mixed up from many books, which would take time before they could be stabilized.

The spores can be sterilised by radioactive treatment, but the surface proteins are still active even though the spores are dead. Experiments have shown that treatment of mouldy paper with 70% alcohol will coagulate the surface proteins, so that the staff can handle the old papers without health problems (Musa S M, 2011)
Pic 2: Pic1 and 2 show the condition of records

Pic 3 show the sorting arrangement
Pic 4, 5, 6 show how conservation was carried out

II Fombina Palace Museum Manuscripts

The Fombina Palace Museum is in passion of large and rich collection of Arabic correspondences and copies of other manuscripts, the collection was in a bad condition of
preservation one of it was (Lamido Holy Quran) called Chukunga draw an urgent attention.(Musa S M, 2010)

Pic 6 Manuscripts in Fombina Palace Museum

The Qur’an (Chukkunga) is an ancient Manuscript, which have been used by Modibbo Adama, the founder of the Adamawa Emirate, (1771-1847). The Writer was Abd al-Qadir Bin Faqih Abdul Karim bin Sheikh Mohammad Al-Mutawakkil Rahim Rahman alias Batumeh. Galadima Abduh owned it, the son of Galadima Albah who was probably the Governor of Western Borno at Nguru, more than 250 years ago. This copy of the Qur’an is highly revered by the people of Adamawa and the people of Northern Cameroon.
Unfortunately, the copy is rapidly deteriorating and therefore, in need of professional intervention. Fortunately Ms Michelle Biddle, the head of Preservation Service of Wesleyan University, Connecticut, U S A, during the conservation of the Modibbo Fufere Collection (in March 2009), was able to identify the problems associated with the Qur’an and took measures to stabilize its condition. The proposed codicological assessment is therefore, timely and highly welcomed. She initiated to develop a proposal to The Islamic Manuscript Association (TIMA) for the conservation of the Chukkunga Qur’an in the Fombina Palace Museum, which was granted. The grant covered the supply of materials needed for the conservation work and small per diem for assistants enjoyed for the conservation project. Musa S. Muhammad, Archivist at Arewa House, was the leading member of the team. Malam Ahmadu Girei of the Trans-Saharan Centre, University of Maiduguri, Alhasan Kasim of National Museum, Yola and four Library staff of AUN, were other members of the team. The focus of the project was twofold; to stabilize the Chukkunga and to provide further conservation training for the team members in order to increase local capacity for conserving and preserving manuscripts in Nigeria. (Biddle M, 2010)
Pic 9 shows conservation works of Chukkunga Quran
Pic 10, 11 and 12 shows conservation works in progress.

The project lasted for about two weeks. This was between 11\textsuperscript{th} and 28\textsuperscript{th} May 2010 at the Lamido Zubairu Educational Centre, Yola. The Chukkunga had massive ink corrosion and which means that many folia will be needed to treat the manuscripts. Treating ink corrosion calls for careful attentive work, which should not be rushed (Biddle M, 2010).

Pic 13 shows completed works of conservation of Chukkunga.
2- Hamman Joda Alkalin Kalan Adamawa

Alkali Hamman Joda Muhammad is awakening Scholar from Adamawa Emirate. He was born in 1822 in Chikali, received his Islamic education under Liman Muhammad of Ngaundere now in Cameroon then left for Girie and studied under Modibbo Raji in 1860. He left Yola with his two wives with the intention of going to Egypt for the search of knowledge, but the journey was truncated at Kurdofan in Sudan where he became a student under Sheikh Quraishi (Hamidu A 2006).

Hamman Joda, left Kordofan, likely traveling by the only direct route to Omdurman. The journey from Marwa to Omdurman must have been a great experience to Hamman Joda. He travelled by day, but mostly by night, on foot and horseback until he reached Omdurman (Sudan). There he had the opportunity to undertake various forms of scholarly activities up to the point he left abruptly due to the activities of Muhammad Ahmad, who later declared himself as the Mahdi and made the Sudan unsafe. (Hamid A 2006).

He then left for Egypt where he was engaged in menial jobs with his two wives to raise money for his admission to Al-Azhar University Cairo, where he specialized in Islamic Law, while in Egypt. Hamman Joda also secured employment as a teacher in a school affiliated to the University of Al-zahar. He also engaged himself in teaching in specialized subjects at advanced levels in a traditional and non-formal system. These include subjects as the science of rhetoric and eloquence, Balagah, one of the branches of languages studies, in the area he was living. In addition, he was visiting scholar and benefiting from them in many ways (Hamid Alkali 2006).
On the completion of his studies and scholarly activities at the University in Egypt (1880), Hamman Joda now made up his mind to return home. He then proceeded to Makkah for the pilgrimage, where he returned to Omdurman on his homeward journey. It was on this second coming to Omdurman that he went to the Sufi fraternity of the Sammaniyyah Order under Sheikh al Qurashi, where he spent about four years as a student visitor. Sufism was one discipline, which, perhaps, he has not had the opportunity to touch during his stay in the Hijaz and in Egypt. He was at the fraternity.

He came back to Marwa and then returning to Yola in 1886, he was appointed a councillor by Lamido Sanda of Adamawa, during his period, the judicial Institute of Adamawa was restructured and the post of Alkalin Alkalai (Grand Khadi) was created He was the first appointed Alkali of Yola, then he became Alkalin Alkalan Adamawa (head of the entire Adamawa judiciary) in 1887. (Efada U E 2004)

Among his collections is work, by Mas’ud bn Umar, known as Saad at Taftaazani, copied by his student named Ahmad Muhammad Arabi, which contained the following statement:
The writing of this blessed commentary is completed by the hand of its copyist. Ahmad Muhammad Arabi, to his Sheikh, the learned Professor of Jurisprudence, Muhammad Jodah al Fullani, in the year one thousand two hundred and ninety five (1295) of the Hijrah of the Prophet, upon whom are the best prayers and peace.

Hamman Joda died on the February of 1908

Other collections of the Fombina palace are correspondences between the rulers of Sokoto and Adamawa, Goni Waday and the Adamawa Scholars as well as internal correspondences. Below are some examples of correspondences and some of their basic details:

1- A Letter from Sultan Abubakar Atiku b Uthman Fodiyo to the entire Muslim Ummah, the Letter contains instruction on Islamic injunctions (Jihad), possibly targeting the leaders in the Emirates

2- A Letter from Muhammad to Sheikh Hayatu bn Saeed bn Sultan Muhammad Bello. It contains information about the emergence of Imam Al Mahdi

3- An Islamic commandment and the Prophet injunctions from Madina by Sheikh Ahmad, an employee in the Prophet Mosque.

4- An eloquent poem on Emir of Zakzak Muhammad Lawal Bn Uthman, written by Ahmad B Abdullah from Yola

5- A Circular from Abdullah b Muhammad Khalifa and the Commander of the Mahdi Army to the entire Muslim Ummah instructing them to leave Tijjaniya sect.

6- A Letter from Emir of Muri Hassan to the Emir of Gombe Umar explaining to him about the dispute, which occurred between their People.

7- A Letter from the Servant of Allah Muhammad b late Emir of Muri Abubakar to Hamma Hammadu Julde informing him about Mallam Buba’s letter requesting to go away from Muri Emirate.

8- Bayan Nuru al Imam Muhammad al Mahdi: Written by Muhammad b Sulaiman b Fadhil (Goni Wadaye) its contains information about the coming of Imam Mahdi
9- A Letter for the Servant of his Lord Muhammad al Mahdi b Sayyid Abdullah Sheikh Hayat b Saeed on Mahdism

10- A Letter from Amir of Yamen (Fombina) Muhammad B Barau to Amirul Muminina Muhammad Attahir informing him about the consensus reached by their people

11- A Letter from Amir of Yamen (Fombina) Muhammad b Barau, to Amirul Muminina informing him about the wish of the people of Fombina for peaceful resolution of dispute in the appointment of Saad

12- A Letter from Amir Yamen (Fombina) Muhammad Baraú to Amirul Muminina about the horses

13- A Letter from the Brother of Sarkin Yamma (Fombina) It contain transaction matter in slaves.

14- A Letter from Wakili Muhammad Gabdo to Emir Umar b Modibbo Adama congratulating him on his coming back from war

15- A Letter from Amir of Yamen (Fombina) Umar bn Alim Adama May Allah have mercy on him, to Amir Mumina Umar informing him about his letter sent to him and praying for victory and success, including the gift of fifty slaves.

16- A Letter from Amir of Yamen (Fombina) Umar b Alim Adama to Wazir of Sokoto Muhammad Bukhari, informing him that they completed their duties

17- A Letter from Amir of Yamen (Fombina) Zubair b Modibbo Adama, to Waziri of Sokoto informing him about his concern and fear that his People abandon Jihad and concentrated on trades

18- A letter from Waziri of Sokoto Muhammudu Bukhari to the Amir Yamen( Fombina) acknowledging of his letter which he requested a prayer for victory against the coming Nasara (Christians/ colonial ) to his territory

19- A Letter from Amir Saad to Amir of Yamen (Fombina) Zubair b Modibbo Adama contains an acknowledgement of gift of slaves to him
20- A Letter from Maigari to his leader Amir Yamen (Fombina) Zubair b Modibbo Adama. It contains information about the coming of Christians/Colonialist to some part of the Emirate.

21- A Letter from Abubakar to Amir of Yamen (Fombina) Zubair b Modibbo Adama. Its on Judicial matters (felony).

22- A Letter from Amir of Yamen (Fombina) Zubair to Amirul Muninal Abdurrahman b Atiq informing him that Colonialist/Christian are raging war on his territory.

23- A Letter from Abubakar, to Amir Yemen (Fombina) Zubair. It contains information about those defying his call and requesting permission to bring them to law.

24- A Proclamation Letter from Amirul Muminina Muhammad Bello b Uthman B Fodiyo to the People of Modibbo Adama. It contains commandments, on how to rule according to Islamic injunctions.

25- A Letter from Muhammad al Mahdi bn Abdullah to his fellow believers in Allah and His Book Amir Malik bn Muhammad and the whole Muslim Brothers. The Letter contains an Islamic Commandment on Socio-Political Matters (Mahdism).

26- A Letter from Goni Waday to his friend and beloved one for Allah, Ardo Wubawo Buba Adama seeking an assistance concerning his runaway slave.

27- A Letter from Goni Wadaye to Qadi Muhammadu Fufore, welcoming his allegiance to the principle of Mahdism.

28- A Letter from Goni Wadaye to his friend Qadi Muhammadu Fufore explaining to him about the unbelievers’ resistance and the Jihad between them and the unbelievers.

29- A Letter from Goni Waday Muhammad bn Sulayman b Fadli, seeking his advice about his confrontation with the colonial/Christians.

30- A Poem written by Waziri Junaidu in appreciation of his visit of Modibbo Adama tomb in Yola on 26 Jimada Ula 1374 AH.

31- A Poem written by Modibbo sent to Amirul Muminina Ali b Muhammad Bello.

32- A Letter from Ahmad b Abdullah to his leader Amir of Yaman (Fombina) Ahmad explaining to him about his intention to perform pilgrim to Makka and Madina.
33- A Letter from Amirul Zak Zak (Zazzau) Dalhat b Usman to his brother and friend Muhammad Amir al Yamen (Fombina). It contains a commercial transaction between Adamawa and Zazzau.

34- A Letter from Wazir of Sokoto Abdullah to Amir of Yamen (Fombina) Umar b Lawal expressing his gratitude for his visit

35- A Letter from People of Fombina to Wazir of Sokoto Ibrahim Khalil informing him about the death of Lamido Muhammadu Lawal and notifying him about nomination of his brother Umar as successor.

36- A Letter from Lamido to Ardo Malabo on the enrolment of pupils to Primary Schools

37- A Letter from Amir Yamen (Lamido of Adamawa) Muhammad to Ardo Wuba on the issue of taxation

38- A Letter from Ahmad b Adama to his son Amirul Yola Muhammad Abba. It contains the acknowledgement of his letter on the leadership matter

39- A Letter from Shaaban b Muhammad known as Goni to Mualim Haman Gabdo and all Muslim Brothers on Mahdism

40- A letter from Amiru Yamen Mustapha b Amir Muhammad b Ahmad b Modibbo Adama to Amir Bebemi Muhammad Jidda b Mansur requesting to pardon of one of his servant

41- A Letter from Muhammad to Abdulqadir Wazir Yamen the letter contains inheritance for his children

42- To Muallim Ahmad Mufft of Grand Qadi of Adamawa about inheritance

**Recommendations:**

It is evident from this paper that the state of preservation and conservation of Arabic Manuscripts is a serious one that needs urgent attention. This is evident from the lack of proper preservation, coupled with inadequate storage facilities found in some areas in Northern Nigeria. The sad consequence of this age-long problem is that many of the vital
Arabic manuscripts in Nigeria are now in an advanced stage of deterioration. We have equally made it clear that the repository where the ancient manuscripts are kept has a number of problems, ranging from lack of paper conservation laboratory for the treatment of dilapidated scripts, complete absence of conservation facilities for proper archiving, shortage of manpower to inadequate funding. In view of the problems mentioned above the following measures are suggested for meaningful progress to be made:

(a) Since the Nigerian Arabic manuscripts collection has a heavy insect infestation, it should be placed in an anoxic environment without delay. This, according to conservation experts, is the preferable means for non-toxic insect eradication.

(b) There is an urgent need for a paper conservation laboratory and a big well-equipped training centre. This will serve as a training unit for the execution of the train the trainer program which will generally benefit all manuscript holders and public officers working in the preservation of Arabic /Ajami scripts in Nigeria.

(c) Advanced training in the area of paper and material conservation. A conservator trained in both paper and book conservation would be even more useful because he can also train others for those who are working on Manuscripts.

(d) There is also the need to publish and freely circulate all the proceedings of all the workshops and conferences held on Arabic manuscripts in order to capture the interest of those in the tertiary institutions and government agencies.

(e) There is need to organise series of workshops for local ulama (scholars), imams and the people involved with manuscripts to sensitize them on the importance of preserving these rare, unique and fragile documents and promoting increased access and use.
(f) Where highly resourceful owners of manuscripts are discovered, preservation equipment should be provided to such people. Such equipment should include protective manuscript albums, fire proof metal boxes to keep the manuscript albums inside and whatever other tools those are useful for preservation. These items and whatever additional confidence building measures that would enhance the process of acquiring and preserving manuscripts and enhance confidence in the resource persons assisting in the process, should be adopted as ethical principles.

(g) National Computerized Catalogue there are robust cataloguing software systems in the market such as Museum Software we purchased. We should evaluate and buy one that meets our needs and also helps us to collaborate with others.

(h) Inter-disciplinary Research on the manuscripts collections that addresses some key challenges of our developing polity. These include Islam, Science and Technology in the History of the Central Bilad al-Sudan. It would go counter to the narrative of Boko Haram, Governance and Development Administration to take advantage of the Sokoto literature on the subject and the Mahdiyya in Adamawa to utilize the Ahmadu Fufore Collection.

(i) Translation into English of key Arabic sources that shed light on the history of the sub-region.

(j) The Ajami Project, focusing on the retrieval, cataloguing, preservation and study of Ajami manuscripts.

(k) Training on digitization to empower collection owners to manage effectively their manuscripts resources.
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