Nigerian Arabic Manuscripts Project (NAMP) Poster Presentation at Ninth Islamic Manuscripts Conference, Magdalene College Cambridge, UK 2-4 Sept. 2013

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Introduction

Arewa House, Ahmadu Bello University, Kaduna

Arewa House, Archives/Library Building

- Arewa House Kaduna was established in 1970 by Professor Abdullahi Smith as a Centre for Historical Documentation and Research. It is a department of Abdullah Bello University in Zaire. ABU is the largest university in West Africa. Arewa House is located on the grounds of the home of the Premier of former Northern Region Alhaji Sir, Ahmadu Bello Sardauna of Sokoto (1910-1966) who was killed by disdain military 1966.
- Arewa House is concerned, not only with research and documentation of the history and culture of the people of Northern Nigeria, but also with contemporary issues on policy, peace, conflict resolution and leadership. For instance it recently organized and sponsored a conference on Sustainable Development in Northern Nigeria. It also sponsors an annual lecture that celebrates the achievements and ideals of the Sardauna.

GOALS
- As an academic institution the goal of Arewa House Archives is to provide institutional continuity and sustainable documentation - on Northern Nigeria. It is primarily concerned with procuring, preserving, analyzing and discussing issues of national and international interest, particularly as they affect the development of Northern Nigeria.
This started from a National Conference on Preserving Nigeria’s Scholarly and Literary Traditions and Arabic Manuscripts Heritage in 2007 with a grant from the US Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria. Followed by Two workshops on the Conservation of Arabic Manuscripts held at Usman Dafodiyo University Sokoto, and National Archives Kaduna 2008.

In 2008 the Ford Foundation gave the Centre a two-year research programme grant, through which the following were successfully implemented:

- Editing and Publication of the 2007 Conference proceedings
- National Technical Training Workshop on the Conservation of Arabic Manuscripts in 2009
- Award of Fellowships to 20 outstanding PhD students working on Arabic / Ajami manuscripts
- Editing & Publication of the 2009 National Conference Proceedings
Nigerian Arabic Manuscripts (NAMP)’s Collaboration

- THE activities of NAMP have led to a strengthening and more intense collaboration with.

1. Centre for Trans Saharan Studies University of Maiduguri, Borno State


3. Northern History Research Scheme, Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Samaru Zaria, Nigeria.


5. Kano History and Culture Bureau Kano,

6. Sokoto History and Culture Bureau, Sokoto State.
Special Collections

Collections

Records in the stack room

Other Collections holds in Arewa House are:

- Records of the Premiers Office 1959-1966
- Colonial Records of the Secretariat Northern Provinces 1900-1957
- Legislative debates of defunct Assemblies/House of Chiefs 1948-1966
- Legislative proceedings, policy papers, speeches and addresses 1948-1966
- Gazettes of Federal and Regional Governments 1900-1967
- Reports of Committees of Enquiry, audit and final reports 1900-
- Photographs
- Local daily newspapers, including Gaskya which is the first News Paper in Northern Nigeria published in Hausa Language during world war II, 1939- and which was recently digitized and published in EAP web page.
- Transcripts of the news broadcast of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation 1959-1966
Arewa House has a long history of work in the area of Arabic/Ajami manuscript preservation and has initiated many programs for the procurement and preservation of Arabic manuscripts.

It has over 836 photostats and photographs of Arabic/Ajami manuscripts in the form of letters, jurisprudence, history and poetry. These were collected by Professor Abdullahi Smith its former Director from (1970-1984) and his Students.

1- Kitab Majzaratul Sibyan: Written By Muhammad b Al-Sabagh b. Muhammad b. Al Hajj B Baraka b. Ibrahim al Kashinawi al Arabi, popularly Known as Ibn Sabbagh, and in Hausa Dan Marina, 1050/ 1640-1. Muhammad Bello describes him as a teacher and a mystic and an “ante-chamber of knowledge. His father was an Arab who arrive Kano from the east and was hosted by a dyer called Kayaba. He married the daughter of Sarkin Katsina, Mahmud who gave birth to Dan Marina.

He wrote many books one of which is, Mazjarnat al fityn ala taf nur Allah bi isyan:

2- Kitab Attiyatu al muuti: Written by Sheikh Abdullah b Muhammad b Salim, known as Abdullahi Suka or sika [ in Arabic al thiqa] al-Fullani al Baawi. A pupil of sh al Bakr and also of a certain Ibn ghanim. Abdullah al thiqa travelled to study in Agades and the Fezzan, The sultan of Kano, Bawa b Muhamma Kukuma [ 1660-70] patronised him, and he settled in the city and apparently died there. Muhammad Bello describes him as “unique in his time and alone in his age”. He defended the nomadic Fulani against the charge of kufr levelled against them by Sh. Al Bakr, and wrote a small treatise on the matter. His students included Muhammad al Ba’wi, the author of the famous book Adiyatu al Mu’uti. A Poem of 1456 vv rhyming in mim on the pillars of Islam and the Islamic ethics and conduct.

3- f
Since 2009 four collections of original Arabic/Ajami manuscripts have been added to the Arewa House Archives:

MODIBBO FUFORE COLLECTION

This collection consists of approximately 600 original manuscripts deposited in Arewa House. It is the personal collection of the late Modibbo Ahmadu Fofure of Yola (1889-1960).

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. 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 diverse in terms of the subjects it covers.

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, 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, and most importantly a large body of correspondences on Mahdism, etc.
Arabic/Ajami manuscripts Collections cont.

- SHEIKH AHMAD ARABI JOS COLLECTION
  - This is the second Arabic manuscript collection in Arewa House, Kaduna. It belonged to the late Sheikh Ahmad Arabi of Jos in Nigeria (1910-1973)
  - The collection consists of 156 copies of handwritten manuscripts, including 930 volumes of *hadith* and *fiqh* works, some dating from the eighteenth century.

- MALLAM ILLIYASU DALHAT KATSINA COLLECTION
  - The collection is made up of about 30 copies of original manuscripts written in the period between 18th and 20th centuries. It belonged to Mallam Musa Ilyasu Dalhat in Katsina state of Nigeria.
  - The works covered subjects such as Sufism, and Islamic law and theology. The entire collection was purchased by Arewa House from Mallam Iliyasu Katsina in May 2009.

- MALLAM AHMAD GWARAJE, KIYAWA, JIGAWA STATE
  - The collection has more than 350 copies of Manuscripts acquired by Arewa House, in 2011 by during our survey activities
Sample Arabic Manuscripts

Mss written on Astrology, chams

Mss on mathematics astronomy
PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

- Each of these four collections has undergone preliminary preservation stabilization with each folio being brush cleaned on both sides, individual manuscripts being housed in acid-free folders and then boxed. These boxes have been made from acid-free cardboard found in local markets.
- Many folios have had pages mended. However the majority of these manuscripts are in dire need of further conservation work.
Arewa House is in the process of finishing a catalogue of these collections with a grant from TIMA. This catalogue will include the condition assessments of the Manuscripts and content, the catalogue would be available in Ahmadu Bello University Web site. [www.abu.edu.ng](http://www.abu.edu.ng) and also in printed when completed.
Challenges Continue..

- In the near future Arewa House plans to organize workshops for local Islamic scholars and known families holding Arabic/Islamic manuscripts in order to equip them with basic techniques on preservation of these rare, unique and fragile documents.

  a. M.Biddle our consultants shows the participants the local made of conservation boxes.
  b. Manuscripts displayed after treatment
CHALLENGES:

- **CONSERVATION:**
  - Arabic/Ajami manuscripts in West Africa are generally in very poor condition due to rough storage, heavy use, harsh climate and voracious insects. In Northern Nigeria Arabic/Ajami manuscript collections are widely dispersed and there is a need for well-trained preservationist and conservators for each collection.
  - Arewa House Kaduna is centrally located in the North and would be an ideal location for a well-equipped conservation laboratory which could also serve as a training centre. If funding can be obtained Arewa House plans on developing such a paper and book conservation laboratory.

- **COLLECTION:**
  - NAMP scholars estimate that 80% of the Arabic/Adjami manuscripts are still in private hands. The recent acquisition of the Arabi Jos, Daji Jos and Dalhat Katsina, and Ahmadu Gwaraje, Jigawa collections, all previously unknown, lends support to that contention.

Pictures above showed the activities of the participants during a intensive training in Arabic Manuscripts conservation organized by Arewa House 2010
### Challenges Continue...

**Activities and Future needs**

**Samples of Damaged manuscripts**

- **PUBLICATION:**
  - In the near future Arewa House plans to publish and freely circulate all the proceedings of the workshops and conference held on Arabic/Ajami manuscripts in order to capture the interest of those in universities and government agencies.

- **DIGITIZATION:**
  - In the near future Arewa House plans to develop additional professional expertise in computer technology and digital preservation issues.

- **CONCLUSION:**
  - The Arewa House Archives is a public trust that safeguards records vital to the government, citizens and general researchers, useful for interpretation of the past for the benefit of the present and future. Safeguarding its Arabic/Ajami Manuscript Collection and providing access to it is an integral part of this trust and one that we hope to develop and enhance.

- **Thank you for your attention.**
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