

ARABIC LANGUAGE AND THE TRAINING OF NIGERIAN MUSLIM WOMEN

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Abstract

One of the problems confronting Muslim women in Nigeria today is lack of good knowledge of Arabic and Islamic Studies. This is greatly affecting their roles to rear children that will contribute positively to the society. The glorious Qur'ān shows that women are competent by making them partners with men in the work of preaching (*Da'wah*). A detailed knowledge of Islam is, therefore, needed and this made knowledge of Arabic language necessary for every Muslim woman. This work looked into the benefits of Arabic language and literature especially for women. Methodologies adopted in this study are historical, moral and sociological approaches. Our findings revealed that Arabic has become the religious language of all Muslims; male and female. It was also discovered that training of Muslim women in Arabic language greatly helps in the understanding of Islamic literature materials, particularly the Qur'ān, which was revealed in Arabic language. We also observed that the understanding of rules of law from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* could only be derived if stylistic peculiarities of Arabic language are understood. In conclusion, the work recommended intensive training of Muslim woman in Arabic language and literature so as to justify her position as first school for children.

Keywords: Arabic language, Islamic literature, Muslim women, society, Qur'ān and *Sunnah*

Abstrait

L'un des problemes auxquels sont confrontees les femmes musulmanes au Nigeria d'aujourd'hui est le manqué d'une bonne connaissance des etudes arabes et islamiques. Ceci est grandement affecter leurs roles a elever des enfants qui vont contribuer positivement a la societe. Le Saint Coran montre que les femmes sont competentes en faisant d'eux des partenaires avec les hommes dans le travail de la predication (*da'wa*). Une connaissance

approfondie de l'islam est, par consequent, necessaire et cette connaissance en langue arabe necessaire pour toute musulmane. Ce travail s'est penche sur les avantages de la langue arabe et la litterature en particulier pour les femmes. Methodologies adoptees dans cette etude sont historiques, approches morales et sociologiques. Nos resultats ont revele que l'arabe est devenu la langue religieuse de tous les musulmans, homme et femme. Il a egalement ete decouvert que la formation des femmes musulmanes en langue arabe grandement contribuer a la comprehension des materiaux de la litterature islamiques, en particulier le Coran, qui a ete revele en langue arabe. Nous avons egalement observe que la comprehension des regles du droit du Coran et de la Sunna ne peuvent etre obtenus que si les particularites stylistiques de la langue arabe sont compris. En conclusion, le travail a recommande une formation intensive d'une femme musulmane en langue et litterature arabes afin de justifier sa position en tant que premiere école pour enfants.

Mots clés: Langue arabe, la litterature islamique, les femmes musulmanes, de la Societe, Coran et de la Sunna

Introduction

Islam in Nigeria owes its spread and expansion, as in other parts of West Africa, to the work of the reforming movements founded by Sufi orders, especially the Qādiriyyah and Tijāniyyah orders³⁰. Most of the mosques and Arabic schools were built by the Sufi orders where people went to learn about Islam. Moreover, the enthusiasm of Nigeria Muslim women in preaching (*da'wah*) and the zeal to revive Islam have been traced to the Sokoto Jihad led by Shaykh Uthman ibn Fudi, popularly called Usman Dan Fodio. The Jihad fought vigorously against all the harmful and oppressive practices women were subjected to in the name of Islam and called for their emancipation.³¹

The fact is that Islam, as a universal and natural religion, recognizes that human beings are either male or female and gives certain specific roles to each of the genders. Some roles are even general and therefore, expected to be carried out by both males and females. One of such roles has to do with education. In other words, Islam is not biased against women because men and women were the recipients of the message of Allah through Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad ibn Abdullah was entrusted by Almighty Allah to teach people,

³⁰ I. O. Uthman. *Muslim Women of Nigeria and the Feminist Discourse of Shaykh Al-Albānī*. (Malaysia: International Islamic University Malaysia Press, 2008). 100.

³¹ Uthman. *Muslim Women of Nigeria...* 102.

both male and female. He was reported to have said: “Seeking for knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim” which implies that Muslim women are also included.

This study will look into the necessity of Nigeria Muslim women education especially in the area of Arabic language. In doing this, it will talk briefly on women education in Islam, Arabic language in Nigeria before going to the benefits of Arabic language to Nigerian Muslim women.

Islam and Women Education

The status of women in Islam is something unique, which has no similarity in any other system. A comparative study of other systems or civilizations reveals that no religion or western system or civilization has dealt with women status as Islam does. For example in India, inheritance was traced only through males. In Athens, women were considered inferior to men³². In Islam, the rights and responsibilities of women are equal to those of men, but they are not necessarily identical with them.

The fact is that man and woman are not identical but they are created equal. Equality can be seen from being just, fair; but sameness is not. People are not created identical but they are created equal. With this distinction in mind, there is no room to imagine that woman is inferior to man. In other words, the status of women in Islam constitutes no problem. Islam, without any iota of doubt, subscribes to the fact that a woman is as vital to life as a man himself.

It is a fact that Islam gives equal rights to women in the pursuit of education. The intelligence of women is not in any form doubted by Islam. The Prophet, therefore, directed all Muslims regardless of sex to search for knowledge. During his lifetime, the Prophet fought against ignorance. Many Hadiths had also been reported from him by which he encouraged Muslims to learn³³. The implication of the sayings of the Prophet referred to above is that every Muslim boy or girl, man or woman, should pursue his or her education as far as it is possible.

However, any knowledge sought has to be with the fear of Allah, according to Qur’ān 35: 28 which says: “Only those of His servants who are learned truly fear Allah”. In other words, the general term ‘Muslims’ as used in the context of Hadith quoted above denotes both male and female Muslims. The Prophet is also reported to have said, according to Hadith narrated by ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud: “If a female daughter is born to a person and he

³² A. K. Makinde. “Gender and Education: The Need for Women Education in Islam”. *NATAIS: Journal of the Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies*. Akungba. 10, 2007. 3.

³³ Makinde. “Gender and Education ...” 5.

brings her up, gives her good education and trains her in the art of life, I shall myself stand between him and the hell-fire.”³⁴

The Prophet even went further to declare that a person who has a female slave in his charge and takes step to give her a sound education and trains her in the arts and culture, and then frees her and marries her will be doubly rewarded³⁵. The above favourable conditions were enjoyed by Muslim women in all areas where Islam reached except where such rights were tampered with.

Moreover, all human beings without exception have been given the opportunity to learn, understand and utilize all kinds of knowledge. Women like their male counterparts, have been asked to use their intellect in order to understand the power of Allah. During the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad, a number of women became very learned in Arabic language including his young wife, ‘A’ishah from whom the Prophet said that Muslims could take half of their religion. She was among the leading narrators of Hadith. About 2210 Ahadith were recorded for her³⁶. The academic status of ‘A’ishah, according to Agboola³⁷, in relation to modern educational system cannot be less than a Professor.

Umm Salama, another wife of the Prophet was also classed amongst Abu Bakr, Abu Hurayrah and ‘Uthman because of her contributions to the science of Hadith. The names of Hafsa, Maymuna, Umm Habibah are also known to every student of Hadith. With the knowledge of Arabic, some were medical doctors such as Zaynab, who was an optician and Umul-Hassan Bintul-Qadi Abi Ja‘far who was an expert in medical science³⁸.

After the death of the Prophet, woman like Asmā’u bint Yazid became a well known teacher. Nafisah had a circle of students among whom Imam Ash-Shāfi‘ was at one time included. Shaykha Shuhud lectured publicly in one of the principal mosques in Baghdad on literature, poetry and rhetoric to large audiences. Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio also worked tirelessly to ensure women’s right to education. Asma’u, the daughter of Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio was laudable example of women of letters. In Baghdad, Rabihah Al-Adawiyyah also

³⁴ J. M. Kaura. “Emancipation of Women in the Sokoto Caliphate” in A. M. Kani and K. A. Gandi (eds.) *State and Society in the Sokoto Caliphate*. Sokoto: Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, 1990).

³⁵ B. A. Lemu and F. Heeran. *Woman in Islam*. (London: The Islamic Foundation, 1978). 15.

³⁶ A. S. Agboola. “Nigeria Muslim Women and Empowerment Phenomenon” *JORAC: Journal of Religion and African Culture*. Akungba. 2(1&2), 2006. 209.

³⁷ Agboola. “Nigeria Muslim Women...” 209.

³⁸ Lemu and Heeran. *Woman in Islam...* 17.

taught many eminent scholars and her teachings, to a very large extent, influenced the like of Imam Al-Ghazali³⁹.

Arabic Language in Nigeria

There has been a variety of existing links between various states and peoples in the ancient and medieval periods. These links were mostly at the instance of diplomacy, visits of itinerant and wandering scholars, diffusion of religions and political ideas and above all, trade. For instance, commercial activities have made Arab merchants in the earliest time to explore some parts of Africa, which made the beginning of Afro-Arab contact possible. Arab knowledge of Africa dates from the earliest days before the arrival of Islam in the continent.

It is also a fact that military and religious conquests played important role in the diffusion of languages and cultures among diverse groups. For instance, the Islamic movement made Arabic the language and culture of people beyond the Arabian Peninsula. In a nutshell, with Islam, Arabic became the dominant language not only among its sister Semitic languages but also in Africa.

Consequently, Arabic became the indigenous language of places nowadays recognized as 'Arab' countries in Africa like Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Mauritania, Algeria and Sudan to some extent. It thereby overwhelms the native languages of those countries and others, and also makes heavy linguistic borrowings from Arabic. Hausa, Swahili, Fulfulde and Yoruba are best examples⁴⁰.

Arabic language and Islam reached the Savannah region of West Africa in the 8th century and spread to the part of Northern Nigeria called Kanem-Borno Empire in 1085 C. E. Later, it reached Hausaland and therefore, spread to Yorubaland in the 18th century. From the 16th and 17th centuries, Kano and Katsina were famous centres of learning to which students from the present day Northern States of Nigeria and the Niger Republic came to receive their education. From the early 19th century, Sokoto too became a major focus of learning⁴¹.

It was established that Arabic education was the first form of education known in Lagos and was also the first form of literacy in the whole of West Africa. The Shuwa Arabs, an ethnic group based in Northern Nigeria, speak no other language besides Arabic. A number of local works have also been compiled in Hausa, Fulfulde and Yoruba by

³⁹ Agboola. "Nigeria Muslim Women..." 209.

⁴⁰ A. A. Sirajudeen. "Background to Arabo-Islamic Culture in Nigeria". *AL-FIKR: Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*. Ibadan. 21(1), 2008. 47.

⁴¹ K. F. Tijani. "Arabic Language and Information Technologies" in M. A. Muhibbu-din (ed.). *Globalization and Terrorism: The Response of Islamic Scholarship*. The Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS) Publication, 2006. 50.

indigenous writers in their native languages using the Arabic script. It was largely during the 19th and early 20th centuries that Arabic education began to enjoy a wide popularity, not only in the Northern States but increasingly in the present Oyo, Osun, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo and Edo States⁴².

The growing need and desire of Nigerians to learn Arabic, coupled with the Arabic literary production in the early 20th century attract some foreign researchers to Nigeria such as Mr. W. E. N. Kensdale, the Deputy Librarian of the University of Ibadan who was also an Arabist⁴³. In addition, the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies was established in 1961 at the University of Ibadan with the aim of training Arabic and Islamic Studies teachers, among others. The Diploma course was also introduced in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan. The students drawn from purely traditional Arabic schools were exposed to sound training in Arabic, Islamic Studies, History and English language to raise their educational standard in the western sense⁴⁴.

Mr. Kensdale also built up a considerable collection of Arabic manuscripts gathered from various areas in Nigeria, thus, these documents formed the raw material of research work in the fields of African Arabic and African history⁴⁵.

The Uniqueness of Learning Arabic Language in Nigeria

In Islam, Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe is the source of all true knowledge. In this regard, the rhetoric question coming from Allah Himself in Qur'ān 67: 14 comes to mind: How could it be that He Who has created (all) should not know (all)...". He taught the first man, Adam, the names (of) all (things) (Qur'ān 2: 31). Thus raising him above the angels by a dint of the knowledge, which was bestowed on him. Subsequently, He taught the descendants of Adam the use of the pen and the ability to access knowledge and disseminate it, thus teaching humanity what they did not know (Qur'ān 96: 1-5).

The knowledge that was so bestowed on man was meant to enable him to function as the vicegerent, trustee of Allah on earth (Qur'ān 2: 30). He is required to use that knowledge in fulfilling that function of Khilāfah (vicegerency) as well as the purpose of 'Ibādah for which he was created: "And I have created the Jinn and human for no purpose other than to worship/serve Me" (Qur'ān 51: 56). The obvious implication of this is that knowledge that man is required to use in fulfilling that task and thus reciprocate the Creator's kind gesture

⁴² Tijani. "Arabic Language and Information Technologies". 51.

⁴³ Tijani. "Arabic Language and Information Technologies". 50.

⁴⁴ Tijani. "Arabic Language and Information Technologies". 51.

⁴⁵ Tijani. "Arabic Language and Information Technologies". 52.

must be in accordance with the purpose set by the giver and guidance coming from Him. Conversely, it is that kind of knowledge that enables man to appreciate the greatness and wisdom of the Creator and the need to adhere strictly to that guidance coming from Him (Qur'ān 35: 28).

Moreover, the history of learning Arabic throughout the Islamic world had been the history of the spread of Islam. Wherever Islam was preached, encouragement was given to the learning of Arabic and to the establishment of schools for teaching the reading of the Qur'ān and for the study of the Arabic language and Islamic literature. This is in consonance with the divine injunction in the Qur'ān, which stresses the importance of literacy in the life of man. (Qur'ān 96 verses 1-5).

Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the most generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not.

The significance of Arabic as language derives from the fact that the Qur'ān was revealed in it. In a nutshell, Arabic is universally known as the language of Qur'ān and Islamic literature. As the language of the Qur'ān, it is the final authority on Islamic matters. On pilgrimage, for example, all Muslims are required to worship in Arabic. During their mandatory prayers also, they are required to recite portions of the Qur'ān in its original Arabic, no matter their native tongue. Outside the mandatory prayers, however, Islam accords great respects to whoever recites the Glorious Qur'ān in its original Arabic form, whether he or she understands its meaning or not.

Apart from being the universally accepted language, Arabic possesses some attributes which make it's learning beneficial not only for Nigerian Muslim women, but also for men. According to Oladimeji⁴⁶, the messages of all the Messengers that preceded the advent of Prophet Muhammad were restricted to their peoples and generations. This is contrary to Islam which is the only universal religion with a universal language by design. Qur'ān 43 verse 3 confirms thus: "Indeed, We have made it a Qur'ān in Arabic so that you may understand". In other words, Almighty Allah uses it to address the mankind.

The fact that Allah describes Arabic as a plain and clear language makes it unique to be studied. Qur'ān 26 verses 192-195 state: Verily, this (Qur'ān) is revelation from the Lord

⁴⁶ A. A. Adedimeji. "The Prospects of Arabic Language as a Unifying Force for Nigerian Muslims" in M. A. Abdur-Raheem (ed.) *Challenges of Moon Sighting and Preservation of Arabic Manuscripts in Nigeria*. The Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS) Publication, 2012. 134.

of the worlds. The Faithful Spirit (Jibrīl) brought it down into your heart, that you might warn mankind in plain Arabic language”. Qur’ān 43 verse 1 also states: “A Book whose verse have been detailed, an Arabic Qur’ān for men of understanding”.

Arabic is also the only language that has not undergone any transformation or alteration. It is an undisputable fact that most modern European languages originated from Greek and Latin. The English which Shakespeare used to write his plays in the 16th century can only be understood by the present generation of Britons and other English speakers through explanations and illustrations. This is contrary to Arabic which has remained the same for more than 16th century. This is possible because the Glorious Qur’ān was revealed in Arabic. A learner or speaker of Arabic will not encounter any difficulty in reading the works of the first generation of Arabic poets like ‘Imrul-Qays and Zuhayr. He will understand their poems just as he will understand the works of Jarir, Al-Farazdaq and Al-Mutanabbi that came after them. The works of these groups are not linguistically disconnected from the works of modern poets such as Hāfīz, Shawqī and Al-Bārūdī⁴⁷.

Arabic is also unique in the sense that it is the only international language spoken by a segment of Nigerians as their mother tongue. This is true in the case of Shuwa Arabs of Borno State who speak Arabic as their indigenous language.

Arabic Language and Nigerian Muslim Women

Having discussed the uniqueness of Arabic language in Nigeria, it becomes necessary to explain why the knowledge of Arabic is significant for women among the Muslim Community in particular and the society in general. Since it is a fact that Muslim women also have certain roles and responsibilities to discharge like their male counterparts as prescribed by Allah, adequate knowledge of Arabic will, therefore, assist them in carrying out those responsibilities. This segment will be examined under religious, social, moral, economic and *da‘wah* advantages.

Religious / Spiritual Advantage

The purpose for which men were created is to serve or worship Allah as clearly stated in the Qur’an, Chapter 51 verse 56 quoted earlier. The word ‘men’ in the context of the verse is applicable to both men and women. A Muslim woman, therefore, is an individual as far as faith is concerned. In fact, Islam addresses her directly and does not approach her through the agency of Muslim males. In terms of religious obligations, woman is not different from man. The following Qur’anic verse confirms this:

⁴⁷ Adedimeji. “The Prospects of Arabic Language...” 135.

And the believers, men and women, are friends to each other. They enjoin good and forbid evil and observe prayer and pay the Zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger. It is these on whom Allah will have mercy. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise. (Qur'an 9: 70).

As long as they both fulfil these religious obligations perfectly, they are promised the reward, without minding whether the doer is a male or a female. It is made clear that sexes do not determine the quantity and quality of the reward of the individual but quantity and quality of the individual's deeds. This is also confirmed in the following verse:

Who so acts righteously, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely grant him a pure life, and We will surely bestow on such their reward according to the best of their works. (Qur'an 16: 97).

According to Islam, woman can reach the highest level of spirituality and piety like man. The Qur'an even mentioned names of some pious women in history such as Maryam, 'Imran's wife, and the Fir'awn's wife, among others, to show that during the long ages of the history of mankind, women were able to reach a top position of spirituality, piety and virtue⁴⁸.

As earlier observed, education, as conceived by Islam, is not a preserve of only one sex. All human beings without exception have been given the opportunity to learn and utilize all kinds of knowledge. Women like their male counterparts, have been asked to use their intellect in order to understand the power of Allah. Through education, women would be able to understand the details of the *Shari'ah* and the principal provisions of worship in Islam. The main factor responsible for the spread of Arabic to areas outside Arabian Peninsula is Islam. Wherever Islam was preached, encouragement was given to the establishment of schools for teaching the reading of the Qur'an, Arabic language and Islamic literature. Therefore, training of Muslim women in Arabic language would help them in understanding of Islamic literature materials, particularly the Glorious Qur'an, which was revealed in Arabic. The fact that every Muslim, including women, must recite some portions of the Qur'an in its original Arabic while performing his or her ritual prayers, makes the study of Arabic important for all Muslims.

In other words, the quest for knowledge of Arabic language is necessary for Nigerian Muslim women in respect of their religious practices such as the articles of faith, rules and regulations regarding ablution, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, business transaction and other

⁴⁸ Kaura. "Emancipation of Women..." 81.

duties which they have to accomplish and which God commands that they should be taught. Therefore, if women were to be successful in their religious duties, adequate knowledge of Arabic and Islamic Studies is compulsory for them.

On the other hand, Islam prohibits intermixing of men and women even in the course of learning. If this prohibition is to be maintained, women should be given adequate training of Arabic and Islamic Studies so as to conduct classes for the womenfolk separately. This point is very relevant to our time since most of the schools we have, both religious (traditional) and secular, have male teachers. With qualified Muslim women teachers, majority of parents, guardians, and husbands would be more than willing to send their women to these schools. Even the possibility of teacher-student illicit relationship might be curtailed⁴⁹.

Social Advantage

In the social structure of the Islamic life, humanity represents one family springing from one and the same father and mother, and aspiring to the same ultimate goals. Every human being is a member of the universal family and entitled, therefore, to enjoy the common benefits as he or she is enjoined to share the common responsibilities. The structure of social life in Islam is very lofty, comprehensive and lofty.

Moreover, Islam wants to ensure a situation whereby the society is devoid of evil deeds; hence the Qur'ān charges Muslims to enjoin what is good and forbid what is bad (Qur'ān 3: 104). Educating Muslim women with Arabic and Islamic Studies will promote morality in the society. They will also aware of their religious duties which include religious obligations. The knowledge of Arabic language will bring about proper home training of children because as mothers, they will impart necessary morals to their children which will make them become responsible citizens.

The Prophet is reported to have said: “A mother is a school, if she is educated, then a whole people are educated”⁵⁰. This implies that the first school a child passes through is that of his or her mother. If she is well-trained, the society will feel the positive impacts, if otherwise, the negative impacts will be on the society. In addition, Arabic as a language has highly developed literature, which is very evident in the life of the Arabs, right from the pre-Islamic era to the present day. Poetic verses that teach social norms are taught to students at all levels of Arabic education.

⁴⁹ Kaura. “Emancipation of Women...” 84.

⁵⁰ Makinde. “Gender and Education ...” 5.

Moral Advantage

As secular education has beneficial effects on religious knowledge and practices, Arabic and Islamic education in turn improves the quality of secular life. In other words, both secular and religious education have mutual advantages for the overall progress of human beings. Obviously, Arabic and Islamic Studies alone does not produce an accountant or medical doctor, but adequate training in religious education enables the potential accountant or doctor to imbibe enough moral ideals like honesty, humility and self-discipline with which he or she should practice his or her profession.

The self-discipline accountant or doctor would constantly feel the ever-presence of God, even if nobody is near him or her. Humility, which has become part of him or her, out of his or her religious training, would make him or her attribute whatever success he or she achieves to the maker of his or her brain (Allah) and not to the brain itself. In a nutshell, it should be stressed that knowledge without the fear of Allah is abhorred by Islam. It has been said earlier that the main objective in Islam is to fear Allah. The main aim of education as observed by Lemu is as follows:

To facilitate the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses. The training imparted to a Muslim must be such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality and creates in him an emotional attachment to Islam and enables him to follow the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and be governed by the Islamic system of values willingly and joyfully so that he may proceed to the realization of status as *Khalīfatullah* to whom Allah has promised the authority of the universe⁵¹.

Therefore, Muslim women are expected to be educated with utmost fear of Allah, for Arabic and Islamic education is expected in them the knowledge of Allah as well as that of the profession they have chosen.

Economic Advantage

Islam reminds man that Allah is the Real Owner of all properties, whilst human beings are mere agents or trustee appointed by God to administer His properties. Islam, as a complete way of life, sees the economic roles of women within an Islamic society differently from other ideologies. The prime aim is to produce women with a balanced role between transcendental and material values. It does not sacrifice spiritual well-being on the altar of mundane values.

⁵¹ Makinde. "Gender and Education ..." 8.

Though Islam considers women's primary roles as wives and mothers of paramount importance, it, at the same time, condemns any attempt by men to block the way of women to the realization of material gain by allowing women to be educated in the law of business transactions. In other words, Islam gives women the opportunity to pursue their economic activities by following the laid down procedure. It is a common knowledge that there is a strong commercial link between Nigeria and her citizens on one hand, and Arab countries in Asia and Africa on the other hand. Although, Islam does not allow women to undertake a long journey without her husband or blood relation, it is a fact that some Nigerian Muslim women transact business in Egypt, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, among others. It is believed that knowledge of Arabic and ability to speak Arabic will assist, to a great extent, in boosting such commercial transactions.

Arabic language can also create a source of income for Nigeria Muslim women through the establishment of Arabic schools. Through this they can become employers, thereby reducing the rate of unemployment in the country.

Da'wah Advantage

The impact of Arabic language on Nigerian Muslim women can also be viewed from *da'wah* activities among women by organizing educational classes. In the first place, they will play a great role in the dissemination of knowledge to their brothers, sisters and even their children. Secondly, they will play there in the field of preaching through poems in both Arabic and local languages. In a nutshell, as soon as women became soundly educated in Arabic language, they will start conducting classes for girls and women, which will help in widening the circle of knowledge among the womenfolk.

Many women scholars such as Khadijah, Fātimah, Nana Asmā'u, Maryam in the Sokoto caliphate composed useful poems in different discipline⁵². Khadijah dealt with the science of Muslim jurisprudence and Arabic Grammar in her two distinct poems. Yet in another one she talked about the ethics of obedience to parents. Nana Asmā'u in one of her poems exhorted Muslims to seek intercession from the verses of the Qur'ān. The name of the poems is "Good news to the brethren in seeking for intercession with the verses of the Qur'ān from the creator of bounties"⁵³.

In the field of preaching, Fātimah also composed poems on people who have reached the ages of fifty, sixty and seventy years. She asked such people not to seek admonishment from preachers; rather they should look at the hair of their heads, eyes, sense of hearing for

⁵² Kaura. "Emancipation of Women..." 89.

⁵³ Kaura. "Emancipation of Women..." 93.

admonishment⁵⁴. Therefore, the efforts of these women should serve as an inspiration to Muslim women of our time. They should acquire knowledge and impart it for the benefits of our society. They should, however, note that the *Shari'ah* provisions were taken into consideration in both the quest and dissemination of knowledge.

Concluding Remarks

The socio-economic well-being of any society is largely depended on the productivity, commitment and determination of its members, which can be as a result of the kind of education and training they have acquired. It then follows that an educated personality is the one who has faith and knowledge and who is conscious of Allah in all he does. We have established in this study that knowledge of Arabic language for Muslim women in Nigeria becomes paramount so as to give room for their participation in solving the contemporary challenges in their homes and in the society, which will eventually pave the way for necessary services that the Muslim community will demand from them. The service includes enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. In conclusion, the study recommends adequate training of Muslim women in Arabic language and literature.

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