PROSPECTS OF ARABIC LANGUAGE AS A UNIFYING FORCE FOR NIGERIAN MUSLIMS

By

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ABSTRACT

The assertion that Arabic language enjoys a wide patronage among Nigerian Muslims, like their fellow brothers and sisters throughout the globe, amounts to stating the obvious. However, the antagonist posture of colonial governments that held the sway before the country's independence, the lackadaisical approach of Muslim elites who have been privileged to rule the country in its post-independence history and the ignorance of today's Muslim youth of potentials of Arabic as an international, historical, political and religious significant language are some of the obstacles confronting its acquisition and spread vis-à-vis its two major rivals, English and French. This paper appraises the importance of Arabic as a widely-spoken and one of the earliest languages in the history of humanity. It x-rays the problems confronting it in Nigeria since its advent to the country, and consequently makes case for the government to accord it more priority and funding and serves as a wake-up call to the Muslim elites and intelligentsia of their vital role in patronizing this great language. The findings and suggestions provided in this work, if properly studied and adequately incorporated into the country's educational and political plans, will not only ensure the much-desired Muslims' unity in Nigeria but better the lot of the country in the comity of nations.
INTRODUCTION

LANGUAGE AS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY AND ITS ESSENCE TO MAN

Language is the medium of communication between human beings. It is a social activity that human life cannot be complete without. Every human being by nature has a language which he/she is affiliated with. Each community or group of people that speaks the same language is referred to as language group. Altogether, there are more than one thousand language groups worldwide.

There are languages whose speakers cannot exceed few hundreds of people while there are others whose speakers can be counted in millions. However, according to Al-Kiyaali (1990), there are twelve languages whose speakers exceed fifty millions per each of them. These are: English, German, Russian, Japanese, Arabic, Bengali, Claytonia, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Urdu and French.(1)

A language may have different forms or modes of speaking. These forms are normally referred as dialects. Arabic, for example, has different dialects that hold sway in different countries of the Gulf region, North Africa and far West Africa. The Egyptian dialect is quite different from the Saudi dialect. These two dialects differ from the version being spoken by the Arabs of Algeria. At the local level, Yoruba language which is one of the widely spoken Nigerian languages has dialects that include: Oyo, Egba, Ijesha, Ijebu, Ekiti and Ondo dialects.

However, with the advent of writing as a way of preservation and language communication, there is always a standard form or dialect which native speakers of a particular language normally succumbed to and gives preference above others. The factors and yardsticks used in determining this
standard dialect range from simplicity, originality, religious significance and general widespread. For example, the Quraesh dialect in which the Glorious Qur'an is written is the standard dialect for Arabic speakers while Oyo dialect has been unanimously accepted as the written and standard form of the language of the Yorubas.

Variety of languages is one of the signs of Almighty Allaah and one of the barometers used in identifying human beings and consolidating their relationships. Allaah, The Most Exalted, said: {And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and colours. Indeed, in that are signs for people of sound knowledge} (Quraan: Ar-Ruum 30:22). He also said in another chapter: {O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes you may know one another} (Quraan: Al-Hujuraat 49:13).

In fact, Allaah buttressed the fact that His message, like other human transactions, can not be efficiently carried out without correlation between the language of the Messenger and that of his audience where He stated inter alia: {And We did not sent any Messenger except with the language of his people in order that he might make (the Message) clear for them} (Quraan: Ibraaheem 14 4).

It is perhaps in the quest for making the world a global village and enhancing better understanding between different nations of the world that humanity has lately developed interest in invention of a universal language that will not know national and continental barriers. This led to the efforts of L.L Zamouhurf (1859- 1917 A.D.) who invented a language named Esperanto that is formed from modern European Languages and tailored in line with Latin language rules and grammar as the global language. However, the body language of America, the dominant contemporary Super power, is suggesting that powers that be are trying to make English the global language.
2:0 BETWEEN ARABIC AND ISLAAM
2:1 ARABIC AND ITS CUSTODIANS

Simply put, Arabic is the mother tongue of the Arabs and the official language of Islaam. The double-edged way in which this definition comes will make it absolutely imperative to dwell on Arabs and later about Islaam and the interplay between the religion and its language.

The Arabs are group of people that speak Arabic as their native language. Their language, along with Hebrew, forms the large chunk of the Semitic languages. Majority of Arabs originate from the Arabian Peninsula. Some scholars assert that the name Arab was derived from 'Arabah which is another name for Tuhaamah, a settlement in the Peninsula that the early Arabs were confined to and the social, cultural, religious and linguistic nerve of all the present-day Arabs.

Researchers agreed that there were some Arabs who have perished. This group is normally referred as Al- 'Arabul –Baaidah meaning: the perished (or no-more–living) Arabs. 'Aad, Thamuud (these two groups are mentioned in the Glorious Qur'aan), Tasam and Jadees.

{Has not the story of reached them of those before them? –the people of Nuuh (Noah) and (tribes of) 'Aad and Thamuud, the people of Ibrahaeeem (Abraham), the dwellers of Madyan and the cities overturned? (Qur'aan: At–Taubah 9:70) and :(And if they deny you, (O Muhammed) –so, before them, did the people of Nuuh (Noah) and (tribes of) 'Aad and Thamuud deny (their prophets)) (Qur'aan: Al –Hajj 22:42)

Another category of Arabs is the "Al– 'Arabul-'Aaribah" which roughly means: "the real Arabs". They are the Qataanis that live in the Republic of Yemen and Southern part of Saudi Arabia.

The third category are called "Al– 'Arabul Musta'rabah" which can be translated to: Arabized Arabs, Arabs by adoption, or naturalized Arabs. These are the 'Adnaanis that are off –springs and results of the inter-marriage that
happened between Prophet Ismā‘īl Bin Ibrāhīm (P.B.U.H.) who was an immigrant to the peninsula and married to an Arab woman.(4)

Arabic is one of the earliest languages in the history of mankind. In fact, there are relevant traditions quoted by scholars that suggest that the name of progenitor of all human beings, Aadam, was coined from an Arabic word. (5) It is however, sure that the language was existing in 2500 B.C. based on acceptable findings of archaeologists (6) This is in spite of what Az-Zayyaat asserted that it is an impossible task for a researcher to lay claim to the knowledge of the origin, development and stages of Arabic as a language.(7)

It is, however, noteworthy that Arabism or affiliation with Arabic is no more confined to the three afore–mentioned categories. This is because of the fact that various tribes who were not formerly Arabs have been fully integrated into Arabism, courtesy of Islaam. Arabism can only be determined nowadays through acquisition of a combination of habits, customs, ethics and language of Arabs. In fact, the Noblest Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was reported to have said: "O you people! Arabic is neither a father nor a mother of any of you. It is, on the contrary, a language. Whoever acquires it has become an Arab".

2:2 ISLAM: THE IMAGE–MAKER OF ARABIC

Islam is a globally accepted celestial religion that has its adherents in the nooks and carnies of the world. It was revealed to Prophet Muhammad Bin Abdullah (P.B.U.H.), a Qurashite Arab man. Its holy book is Qur'an and its official language is Arabic. It has successfully participated in building the civilization of man, charting a nobler cause for him and improving his living standard either through preservations of cultures that predated it or its valuable voyage of discoveries in the fields of Medicine, Chemistry, Physics, Philosophy, Geography, Sociology, Literature and Astrology to mention but a few.
Islaam aims at unification of the human race and elimination of all forms of discrimination by establishing a religious brotherhood that reigns supreme over colour, race, language, class and blood affiliations. It is the only global religion that accommodates all the divinely sent prophets. Abdulkadir A. Sambo (2004) was right when he emphasized the uniqueness of Islaam in this area thus:

"A Jew only believes in the Prophet of Israel, a Christian believes in Jesus Christ and, in a lesser degree, in the Prophets of Israel; Buddhist in Buddha; a Zoroastrian in Zoroastrian (sic); Hindu in the prophets who appeared in India, a Confucian in Confucians; but a Muslim believes in all those prophets sent by Allah and also in Muhammad, the last of the prophets. Islam is, therefore, an all-comprehensive religion within which unifying force the world has ever known. It converted together the warring tribes of one country and established a brotherhood of all nations of the world, even welding together those who had nothing in common except their common humanity. Islam obliterated difference of colour, race, language and geographical boundaries."(8)

In spite of all these feats, the western powers, through their Imperialist-Zionist Alliance agenda, has waged and continue to wage different ideological and military wars against Islaam in other to weaker, its adherents to a state of disarray and followership to the West.

2:3 ARABIC AND ISLAM: TWO SIDES OF A COIN

As said earlier, Arabic language predated historical Islaam. However, the significance of Arabic as a language derived from the fact that the Qur'aan was espoused it in and in a grandeur that surpassed colloquial Arabic. Arabic is universally known as the language of Qur'aan and Islamic liturgy.

For example, as the language of Qur'aan, it is the final authority on Islamic matters. On pilgrimage, all Muslims are required to worship in Arabic. All Muslims, during their mandatory prayers, must recite portions of Qur'aan in its original Arabic, no matter their native tongue.(9) Outside the mandatory
prayer's however, Islaam has accorded a great award to whoever recite the Glorious Qur'aan in its original Arabic form, whether he/she understands its meaning or not. (10)

Translation, although vital in foreign language teaching and learning, can not be of much use in a first–hand study of Islamic faith. In fact, a prominent modern–day Saudi Scholar, Ahmad Abdul–Gafuur ʿAttaar, (1982/1402A.H) bitterly criticized his government for its generous funding of publications of translated versions of the Glorious Qur'aan thus: "It is better for those who spending hundreds of millions (of Saudi Riyals) on translating the meanings of Qur'aan to utilize that money in teaching Arabic to the generality of Muslims so that they can become familiar with it. This will undoubtedly consolidate their unity and enable them to regain their lost glory; because of the fact that Qur'aan will definitely unity them on the truth and prosperity. (11)

The above assertion collaborate the position of numerous scholars that Qur'aan is untranslatable and inimitable. According to R.D. Abubakre (2002), the dynasties of Umayyad and Abbasid Empires contributed immensely to the rise of Arabic as the official language of the Islamic religion, business and administration. This way, Arabic was able to gain linguistic pre–eminence over the territories of converts. (12)

3:1 ARABIC AND LANGUAGE QUESTION IN NIGERIA
3:2 ARABIC AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

Although it is right to refer to Arabic as the liturgical language of Islam, as asserted above, it does not derive its significance from the noble religion alone. Rather, it is an international language which enjoys a very wide acceptance. It is has played a vital role in the socio–political life of the early West African Empires.

For example, the famous Mansa Kankan Musa who ruled the Old Mali Empire between 1307A.D. and 1332A.D. utilized his connections with the
Arabs to better the lots of his subjects and consolidate his government. His historical pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324A.D. was a landmark event in the history of the Empire and a turning point in the prosperity of its economy. Find it difficult to forget the laudable role Mansa Musa's connection with the Arabs played in the life and educational development of his people. As Adekunle Ojelabi noted:

"On his return, Musa came back with Arab scholars to Mali who helped in raising the standard of learning and the form of architecture. Among others, Es-Saheli, a Spanish Arab who was also a poet accompanied Musa home. Saheli helped to build the magnificent brick mosques of Gao and Timbuktu. He also built a stone palace for Musa in Timbuktu. The Sankore mosque in Timbuktu also served as important centre of learning. The standard of learning was as high as in a modern university. This was evidenced by the fact that a teacher brought from Mecca by Musa had to be sent to Morocco for a three year further training before he could teach at Sankore" (13)

In fact, Mansa Musa's real claim to a place of distinction came in consequence of the foreign recognition he gained for Mali. As a result of his pilgrimage, Mali was recognized as world power. Under Musa, Mali established diplomatic missions in Egypt, Arabia and Morocco. He cultivated a somewhat intra-personal friendship with the sultan of Fez. In 1339, Mali was represented on a world map with the inscription "Rex Malley" while other maps in 1375 bore witness to the existence and greatness of Mansa Musa's Mali Empire. (14)

This situation of acceptability of Arabic in Africa is not limited to Old Mali Empire alone, it is a fact that Arabic has harmoniously related, and still relating, with the continent. It ranks as the language that has the most influence on African languages, especially, Swahili, Hausa, Wolof, Fulfulde and Yoruba. In addition to the major African languages, there are in Nigeria, such other languages such as Nupe, Ebira and Igala that have a large chunk of Arabic lexical items. In fact, Swahili which is one of the major African languages and,
perhaps, the most widely spoken of all them derived its name, as attested to by reader, from Arabic. According to Reader (1997): "The name itself comes from Arabic *Sahil*, meaning shore or coast, and could be translated to as "coast dialect".(15)

At the contemporary level, Arabic is socio-politically on the sprawl across international borders. The spate of spread and importance of Arabic, for example, is evident in the very frequent use of Arabic on the electronic media by the B.B.C., the V.O.N. and the Voice of Nigeria. The Dutch, French, German and Russian national radio stations continually air Arabic versions of their programmes regularly over their network. Besides, Aljazeerah (High Arabic Version of CNN's programme), beamed to the Arabic –speaking world. The numerous all –Arabic –satellite transmitting stations beaming programmes to the world give credence to the continuous rise of Arabic internationally. Currently, Arabic is being used as one the languages at the United Nations (U.N.) and at such regional groupings as the African Union (A.U.) and the Economic Community of West African States (E.C.O.W.A.S.) (16)

3:3 THE NIGERIAN LANGUAGE SITUATION

Nigeria, being the most populous African country, is being looked upon to take its rightful position in leadership position of the continent. Apart from the numerical strength that naturally gives the country an edge above other countries, to say the country is naturally endowed amount to stating the obvious. J. Reader observed thus: "The surge of optimism which has accompanied the transfer of power in Africa has been especially evident in the case of Nigeria. With the continent's largest population, experienced politicians, an efficient civil service and the benefit of a strong, diversified economy, Nigeria was expected to be at the fore-front of economic and political progress in Africa leading the continent's transition from an under –developed to a developed region". (17)
However, the materialization of the above hope remains a mirage due to a large number of factors too numerous to mention here. What this writer is preoccupied with is how multiplicity of languages has contributed to the backwardness or retardation of the country's socio-political and economic spheres. In order to establish the enormity of the problem, let us first take a brief look at the country's linguistic setting.

To try to determine the exact number of languages indigenous to Nigeria is a daunting task. Estimates have ranged from 200 to 400. The fundamental problem is a linguistic one: the problem of differentiating language from dialect, of deciding how to classify a particular speech system that serves for communication within a social group. In a situation of such multiplicity, it is not surprising (though not inevitable) that some languages have greater prominence determined by number of speakers. Again, for lack of reliable statistics, it is impossible to be precise, but there can be no doubt that the number of native speakers of three of Nigeria's languages, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, runs to several millions. Apart from the three languages, languages like Kanuri, Fulfulde, Tiv, Efik, Ibibio, Edo, Nupe, Gwari, Igala and Idoma have millions of people that are speaking each of them as their mother tongue.

It is this multi-ethnic situation that threw up the country's immediate post-independent rulers and the first generation of politicians who have been accepted as national heroes. While the duo of Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Sir Ahmadu Bello represented the interest of the Hausa – Fulani tribes of the North, Chiefs Obafemi Awolowo and, to a lesser degree, Samuel Ladoke Akintola were regarded as leaders of Yorubas while Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who was then assisted by Sir Michael Okpara held the sway the Igbo-speaking Eastern Nigeria. Each of these tried their best to protect and project the interests of their tribes and left no stone unturned to make their people the dominant tribe in the affairs of the country.
This scenario led to a lot of unhealthy rivalry, accusations and counter-accusations that heated up the polity and threatened to tear the nation to shreds. The events that led to the nation's protracted civil war were too glaring to expatiate on at this junction. That happened between 1967-1970.

One measure that the successive military governments that ruled the country thought will break the backbone of predominance of three major tribes on the national scene, the unnecessary rivalry between them and what resulted from their over bearing posture at the regional level was states' creation. The then powerful three regions were continually broken into smaller and weaker states that stand now at 36 and the Federal Capital Territory (F.C.T.)

However, states, creation and breaking of the country into smaller units had, rather solve the pathetic situation, aggravated Nigeria's ethnic and social problems. The hitherto smaller tribes who counted very little or nothing in the scene during the era of regions have become —supers and formidable challengers in the present day states. With each of them insisting to be officially recognized, virtually every tribe in each of the states want its language recognized and given its due by airing news and events in its mother tongue. Jowitt asserted that in old Plateau State which consists of the present Plateau and Nasarawa States, news was usually given in no fewer than eleven languages while in the old Bendel State, which has been broken to Edo and Delta States, the situation was not far from being similar as news was being aired in seven different languages.

In a nutshell, the multiplicity of Nigerian indigenous languages has been a curse to the country more than a blessing. It has led to shedding of blood, intra-friction, inter-friction and bitterness between contending tribal leaders who are always at each other's throat. In addition to this, it has battered the country's image abroad and contributed in no small measure to the economic retardation and retrogression of the country. Not few people in and outside the country believed that the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election won by the
late business mogul, Chief Moshood Abiola and the political impasse that followed the sinful action was due to the reluctance of the then military government headed by a Northerner to hand over power to a freely and democratically elected Yoruba man from the south. Or else, how can one justify annulment of election won by a fellow Muslim brother who happened to be a friend of the head of the then military junta? This ugly situation has led to the efforts to search for a common or national language that will unify all Nigerian regardless of their affiliations and the geographical locations where they hail from.

3:4 **ARABIC: THE MOST VIABLE OPTION AS A NATIONAL LANGUAGE**

The advent of Arabic to Nigeria, as said earlier and as common to all places whose people embraced Islam, is closely linked to the advent of the religion to the country. This has been as far back as eleventh country. This means that the advent of the language to Nigeria has clocked 1,000 years or very close to that. This is because of the fact that "Mai Umme Jilimni (better known as Ibn Abdul Jelil) was the first Bornu-ruler to accept Islam in 1085. Dunama Dabeleni was the next ruler to accept and this was in the 13th century". (20)

With the above fact, Arabic is the first foreign language that made successful incursion into the Nigerian soil. In fact, referring to Arabic as a foreign language is not accurate as it is known that the Shuwa Arabs of the present-day Bornu State, although relatively small in number, speak Arabic as their mother tongue. So, this writer is very comfortable to say categorically that Arabic is the only indigenous Nigerian language that enjoys global widespread and international acceptance.

Also, Nigeria stands to benefit economically and socially if Arabic is given its rightful place both at the official and unofficial quarters. There is virtually no country in the world today, except the Vatican, perhaps, that has no teaming
Muslim population that stands at, at least, tens of thousands. As at 1978, the Muslim world population was estimated to be 700 million people. This figure must have doubled by now. The most populous Muslim nation is Indonesia which had 135 million Muslims as at then. It is followed by Bangladesh which had 75 millions. Standing in the third position is Pakistan with the 73 million Muslim populations. Other populous Muslim nations are: India, Turkey, Nigeria, Egypt and Iran which had 65 millions, 40 millions, 35 millions, 34 millions and 33 millions Muslims respectively \(^{(21)}\). The figures quoted above must have doubled by now since more than thirty years have passed after the quoted estimation.

We can notice the vintage position Nigeria occupies among the highly populous Muslim nations. Most of the above-named countries are more developed than Nigeria economically, technologically and militarily. This is apart from Saudi-Arabia and the Gulf nations which, although smaller in Muslim population than Nigeria, have Arabic as their mother-tongue and official language and have an almost 100% percentage Muslim population. The economic and strategic importance of these Gulf States in the contemporary world, especially Saudi-Arabia and United Arabs' Emirates, can not be over-emphasized. The summary of this proposition is that adoption of Arabic as the national language is not a self-serving agenda of the Muslims alone but a holistic approach of making the country more integrated into the world and benefit from the enormous resources of the Arabic-speaking countries through bilateral trade that can be facilitated by sharing their language.

Another factor that makes Arabic the most viable alternative to English is the fact that it is the only language that Nigerians, indeed the world at large, acquire willingly without thinking of any material gain. It predated English by centuries and has, therefore, become part and parcel of millions of Nigerians and their means of communication that does not know state and regional
barriers. This fact has been buttressed by a Christian researcher who asserted thus:

"English is not the only non-indigenous language learned by Nigerians. Long before the first Englishmen visited the coast of Nigeria, Arab missionaries, explorers and traders had brought their language to what is now the Northern part of Nigeria. The more intensive Islamization of North in the nineteenth century resulting from the Jihad of Usman dan Fodio meant a great increase the number of Nigerians learning Arabic for religious purposes, chiefly in Koranic (sic) schools, and this increase has undoubtedly continued to the present day, especially as many facilities have been created for the study of Arabic at Secondary and tertiary levels. From Arabic, numerous words have entered into the vocabulary of certain Nigeria languages, notably Hausa was written in Arabic script. For some Nigerian Islamic teachers or students, Arabic potentially serves not only as a language of study and religious observance but also for inter-personal communication; and many of them know Arabic better than English. One small group in Borno State has Arabic as its mother-tongue". (22)

From the above, we can deduce that the decision to adopt English as the Nigeria's official language was not well thought by the first generation of our indigenous rulers. I heap the blame on the first set of our indigenous rulers because they had the ample opportunity of changing the status quo immediately the colonialists granted independence to this country. This writer is surprised to discover that the colonialists, despite their wickedness and selfishness, never declared English as the official language. This fact was exposed by another Christian researcher, Ayo Banjo (1996) said inter alia:

"The colonial government never expressly declared English as the official language of Nigeria. The tradition going back to the Roman Empire was simply assumed that the colonized adopt the language of the colonizer since the
Colonizer can not be expected to operate in anything except in his own mother tongue” (23).

4:1 ARABIC BETWEEN ITS PROTAGONISTS AND ANTAGONISTS
4:2 EFFORTS OF THE PROTAGONISTS TO AID THE SPREAD OF ARABIC

Whether officially recognized or not, it is a fact that Arabic has come to stay in Nigeria. This judgment is not only based on the assertions, confessions, and confirmations of those who will be categorically classified as enemies of Arabic, by the virtue of their religion and areas of specialization, but also on the manifestations of this fact that can be enumerated thus:

1- Enrolment of wards in Arabic schools and making it mandatory for them to learn Quranic recitation before embarking on any course or training that they may wish to make their livelihood from. This is added to the vintage position that a Muslim scholar enjoys among the general populace.

2- Priority that Nigerians accord to inclusion of Islamic teaching and da’wah programmes in any event they organize. For example, occasions like marriage and naming ceremonies always feature da’wah and Islamic awareness activities in their programmes. The apt attention people give to such sermons and lectures make them to develop interest in the acquisition of Islamic education, and, by extension, Arabic language.

3- The spread of Islamic and Arabic schools in the nooks and crannies of the country despite the fact that they do not enjoy patronage from government and the meager source of revenue of their sponsors.

4- The spread of Quranic schools in the length and breadth of the country. It is very rare to find a town or village in Nigeria, no matter how big or small, which does not have his kind of schools. The learning period in
these schools is either in the early morning (after the dawn prayer), after the mid-day (Asr) prayer or in the night (after Ishaai prayer).

5. Establishment of Departments of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the indigenous Universities. The products of these Universities constitute a greater percentage of teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigerian public schools.(24)

4:3 CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS ENEMIES OF ARABIC

I deliberately classify the enemies or antagonists of Arabic into conscious and unconscious because, ordinarily, no Muslim should be regarded as enemy of the liturgical language of Islaam. The reality, however, point to the fact that some Muslims are either waging war against Arabic or getting involved in efforts aimed at relegating it to the background or retarding its progress. This category of people are either being used or ignorant of the fact that their status if being a Muslim is not complete until they know certain basic elements of Arabic, in the least, and actively being pro-active in the battle to make it triumph over other languages, either foreign or local. This category of people, consequently, can also be regarded as enemies of Arabic, whether they acknowledge it or not.

On the other hand, ideologies that are openly engaging Arabic language and its twin-brother, Islaam, in bitter war. This category is not pretending under any guise to be associated with Islamic and can, therefore, be regarded as conscious enemies of Arabic. Most of the elements in this category are foreign-based, externally influenced and deliberately aiming to hurt the feelings of Muslims.

Because of the fact that the anti-Arabic activities of this second group are more pronounced than the latter's efforts and my discovery that very little people give attention to their attempt at staging a deadly blow to Arabic, I will start with it before I discuss the other category.
1) **IMPERIALIST-ZIONIST ALLIANCE**

This is a combination of accords, relationships, goals and plans jointly hatched and being executed by western imperialist powers and interests on one hand and the international Zionism on the other hand. Those who are at the receiving and of this unholy alliance are the Muslim nations in particular and the third world in general. The Muslims has been the ultimate target of the west, which is playing god-father role for the Zionism, since the past two centuries ago. This age-long antagonism has, however, metamorphosed to enmity and open confrontation since 1948 in the so-called Middle East and became more pronounced in 2001, immediately after September 11 world trade centre and the pentagon events.

This antagonistic posture of the Zionism in particular and the western imperialism in general was borne out of the face the west has always suspect, rightly or wrongly, that Islaam and its civilization, which has Arabic as a major component, is the only viable alternative to the dwindling western civilization. This has led to the suspicious look of the west, with America as its arrow-head, to Islaam and its adherents.

In other to nip the successive vialibility of Arabic and Islaam in the bud, various ideological terms have been coined to label those who really ally with Islaam and its civilization. These include: fundamentalism, fanaticism, extremism, terrorism and Islamism. On the other hand, some other terms have been coined to describe those who denounce Islam and or those who merely ally with it by name alone. Some of these are: liberalism, moderation and civilization. Also, globalization is another theory the West is currently propounding to achieve their Unipolar word agenda.
2) **CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS FANATICISM**

By religion fanaticism, I mean a form of over-zealousness in admiring a particular religion or belief that makes it adherents to under-estimate and under rate the opinions, rights and civilization of other religions to the point of waging unjustified propaganda against who differ with this set of people in religion and civilization and, thereby, crating unnecessary rivalry that is aimed at cultural annihilation of others and or continuous confrontation with them.

This has been clearly demonstrated by the action of unmediated past administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo who, in collaboration with Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, the ex-governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (C.B.N) single-handedly removed Arabic inscriptions from all Nigeria currencies. Do they know better than our foremost nationalists who put it there to represent the interest of the teeming Nigerian Muslim population and millions of the admirers of Arabic as their language of civilization?!! English, as affirmed earlier, only represents our colonial past and, at best, symbolized the Christian world which the west symbolized and is not, and should not be regarded as, the Nigerian national language.

It is undoubtful that this unguided decision has given the Nigerian Christians are edge over their Muslim counterparts which is clearly unfair. It is also certain that this action has gladdened the hearts of Christian fanatics who see nothing wrong in offending the feelings of Muslims. I will buttress this point by a rejoinder written by one Adesoji Moses in Friday, July 31, 2009 edition of *Nigerian compass* which is entitled: WHY ARABIC ON THE NAIRA? The man wrote thus:

"It is disheartening that our Muslim brother, Ishaq Lakin Akintola could raise the issue of removal of Arabic from the naira note as a coup against Arabic. Using English to represent Christian population is
erroneous. If English is for Christian, he was supposed to have written his write-up in Arabic. Obasanjo -Soludo decision is commendable for including the three major Nigerian languages with English which is general (sic) language. What should be our objective now is unity not a religion overriding the other. I advise President Musa Yaradua not to put Arabic on the naira note as he has been accused of bias and northernalisation of Nigeria in his political appointments".

The write-up quoted above is full religious bias, sentimental argument and lop-sided assessment of issues. While it is not my concern to reply this Lilliputian writer who may not, after all, be privileged to read this work, I want to assert that allying Arabic and Islaam with the North alone as some of my fellow Muslim brothers erroneously do, is not only far from truth but equally annoying and offensive to the feelings of the southern Muslims. While this paper is not aimed at fledging muscles, I want to humbly submit that I am a Muslim whose ancestors up to the fifth generation were practicing Muslims. Without being immodest, I want to add that I have been associating with Arabic for more than thirty years, whether by learning or teaching, and I have not met any northern Muslim who speaks Arabic better than I do, even during my ten-year sojourn in Saudi Arabia.

On my own part, it is not disheartening that Obasanjo and Soludo did what they did to the Islamic interest and that another fanatic Christian is drumming support for them, what is disheartening, however, is that the present Muslim-led administration who has spent more than two years in government is ready to redress this injustice. It is also worrisome that our brothers, who constitute the majority in both the past and present administrations, did not live up to the past of their electorates on this vital issue.
As if this insult was not enough for Nigerian Muslims, the Obasanjo government also went ahead to declare French the second Nigerian official language. He based this notorious decision on the argument that apart from English, French is the official language of the majority of the fellow West African countries. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo, while taking this faulty and stinking decision, forgot or pretended to forget that no responsible government sacrifices the interest of its citizenry to satisfy its neighbours. He also ignored the fact that while Nigeria stands to gain a lot from moving closer to Arabic – speaking countries and the Islamic world with its vast economics and human resources, the reverse is the case with consolidating relationship with West African Countries who are not only densely populated, but devoid of any technological or economic advantage that Nigeria can tap from. After all, what has father –Christmas role Nigeria has been playing for these countries offer us in terms of international recognition or regional appreciation from the benefiting countries? There is no doubt that the decision was ill –conceived and aimed at hurting the feeling of the Muslims and feed them with another bitter pill of relegation. May I ask how many Nigerians speak French compared with Arabic whose admirers, speakers and advocates can be counted in millions among Nigerians?

I am sure that if our brothers in politics have given the then government a spirited fight on the matter, as they did with it on third-term agenda, the story will have been different today. Let us, at this junction, remind, evaluate and assess ourselves on the basis of remarks of Almighty Allaah which goes thus -:{Nay, you prefer the worldly life, while the Here after is better and more enduring}. (Qur'aan: Al-A'laa 87-17)
3) **RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Racial discrimination is a facet of racism that relies on the theory of racial superiority. It is an ideology that classifies human beings on the basis of racial identity which renders some of them superior and the others inferior. This theory, based on this biased classification, segregates human beings and grants preferential treatment to the superior (or higher) class in terms of recognition, social service being rendered to the citizenry and access to the juicy positions in government. This will be in contrast with the dealings with the inferior (or lower class) who will suffer degradation, humiliation and constraints to menial jobs and access to limited basic amenities that will be grossly inadequate for an enviable living that an average human being desires to lead.

4) **RACIAL SUPERIORITY**

It is a twin-brother of racial discrimination. It can even be argued to be its mother because it is a theory, belief and conviction that give birth to racial discrimination. It assumes that human beings are genetically and racially distinct in such a way that they are not equally created intellectually. It was formulated as a result of the dire need of the West to justify the atrocities committed by them against their fellow human beings in the ages of history in general and last two centuries in particular. This theory has metamorphosed to different terminologies and surfaced in different forms. It has given birth to the theory of White Man's burden among the English, surfaced as Nazism in Adolf Hitler's Germany, led to the Apartheid system in Pre-Mandela's era in South Africa and graduated to Zionism that humanity has been plagued with and is still battling with in Israel.\(^{(26)}\)

It is noteworthy to mention here that although Islaam and Arabic are greatly suffering from this sinful theory, they are not the only casualties as the West itself has suffered from one form of facets of this theory or
the other in its not-too distant history. In fact, it amounts to saying the obvious if we assert that the global community is suffering from this theory as the case of flagrant disobedience of Israel to United Nations’ Security and General Assembly resolutions easily come to mind. In the past century, the West has swallowed the bitter pill of Nazism that it finds and will continue to find difficult to forget.

5) IMPERIALISTIC EXPANSION

Imperialism in international politics means the activities and movements of the European countries to establish colonies in other countries of the world, especially in African and Asian countries that are regarded to be backward, that will serve as fertile lands for getting raw materials needed for their industries and double as markets for their finished products. This theory has its roots in the second part of the nineteenth century when Industrial Revolution was the order of the day. The monster was nearly curtailed by the end of 1960 when virtually all the colonized countries attained independence from their different colonial masters. There was, however, a major set-back to this independence drive in 1948 when the Jews, with Britain and U.S.A as their major backers, established the state of Israel on the Palestinian soil.\(^{(26)}\)

It is, however, worrisome that this theory, although denounced globally, generally condemned and regarded as an aberration in the history humanity, is rearing its ugly head in another forms exemplified in the building of military bases by the United States of America (U.S.A.) during the inglorious reign of George W. Bush (Jnr), imbalanced trade accords and relationships between the so-called developed countries and their developing counterparts, meddling in the internal affairs of sovereign nations and lately, the much-trumpeted global economy that the whole have been, willy-nilly, formed to share.
The above factors, as can be observed, are inflicted by people who are not Muslims and, generally, emanate from outside the boarders of Nigeria. There are, however, other factors that originate from the Nigerians themselves. In fact, the majority of these obstacles to the growth, flourish and consequently, adoption of Arabic as the national language are handiwork of Muslims themselves. This is why I tag these people, agents and factors unconscious enemies of Arabic.

1) BLEAK PROSPECT OF FURTHERING ARABIC AQUISITION TO THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

In Nigeria today, tens of thousands of pupils and students graduate annually from the popular Arabic schools available throughout country. These holders of Mutawassitah (Junior Secondary) and Thanawiyah (Senior Secondary) certificates are generally regarded to be unqualified for admission into the indigenous universities and other tertiary institutions because of lack of necessary pre–requisites for admission. This is what lead many of them to engage in menial jobs that are not only unsuitable for custodians of the sacred knowledge they possess but make them to forget this hard earned language easily.

2) NON-RECOGNITION OF ARABIC/ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN THE OFFICIAL QUARTERS AND AMONG THE WESTERN – ORIENTED MUSLIM SCHOLARS

The fact that the Nigerian protagonists of Western Education and the government accord little or no recognition to scholars of Arabic/Islamic education is too obvious to expatiate on. It is not uncommon for parochial Nigerian elites who are trained in the Western way, Muslims inclusive, to under–rate Arabic/Islamic education and allege that it is
archaic and can not cater for the contemporary needs of modern-day man.

It is very saddening that some Islamic and Arabic scholars, who are expected to be at the vanguard of agitation for recognition of Arabic language and its civilization, have betrayed the trust of knowledge and joined forces with the enemies in this regard. This writer personally know some university dons who are products of Arabic schools but have opportunity of acquiring western education, whether by learning or by the virtue of the environment they are privileged to be, who will shamelessly declare that scholars in either Arabic or Islamic Studies disciplines who are devoid of western education are not fit to be scholars.

3) WEAK SYLLABUSES

The laid–down syllabuses of majority of Arabic schools are very weak and uncoordinated. Also, they lack revisions and frequent upgradings that are basic elements of a standard syllabus. This is the reason why some Arabic schools' proprietors still stick to textbooks authored in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Egypt which the producing countries have abandoned a couple of decades ago! The situation in universities and other institutions of higher learning is even more pathetic. Some Arabic language courses in most of these institutions are taught through English language as medium. This is the reason why majority of products of such institutions can hardly construct good simple sentences in Arabic. (28)

5:1 ARABIC: ITS UNIQUENESS AND WHY NIGERIANS MUST GIVE IT THE DUE RECOGNITION AND ACCEPTANCE

5:2 THE UNIQUENESS OF ARABIC

Apart from being the universally accepted language which acceptance is devoid of any material gain, Arabic possesses some distinct attributes which make it unique. Some of these attributes include:
1- The fact that Almighty Allaah uses it as the medium through which He spoke to the mankind. As said earlier, the missionaries of all the Messengers that preceded the advent of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) were restricted to their different peoples and generations. This is contrary to Islaam that is the only universal religion by design. {Indeed, we have made it a Qur'aan in Arabic so that you may understand} (Qur'aan: Az – Zuhuruf 43:3).

2- Almighty Allaah qualified Arabic with the best attributes that a language can be qualified with. The Most Exalted used it to qualify His Book where He says: {A Book whose verses have been detailed, an Arabic Qur'aan for people who know} (Qur'aan: Fussilat 41:3). In the same vein, He also described it as a plain and clear language thus: {And truly, this Qur'aan is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. Which the trustworthy Ruuh (Jibreel) has brought down. Upon your heart (O Muhammad) so that you may be one of the warners. In the plain (clear) Arabic language} (Qur'aan: Ash – Shu'raa 26:192-195)

3- It is the only language that has stood the test of time without any transformation and alteration. It is a well –known fact that most modern European languages originated from Greek and Latin. In fact, the English in which Shakespeare wrote his plays in the sixteenth century can only be understood by the present generation of Britons and other English – Speakers through explanations and illustrations. This is unlike Arabic which has remained protected and preserved in the same for more than sixteen centuries, courtesy of the Glorious Qur'aan. A speaker or learner of Arabic will encounter no difficulty in reading the works of the first generation of Arabic poets like Imru'ul–Qaes, Zuhaer and Labeed. He will understand their poems just as he will understand the works of Jareer, Al – Farazdaq and Al – Mutanabbiy that lived centuries after the first generation. The works of these two groups are not linguistically
disconnected from the contributions of modern poets like: Al –Baaruudi, Shaqey and Haafiz.

4- Another uniqueness of Arabic emanates from the fact that it is the only international language spoken by a segment of Nigerians as a mother tongue. This is true in the case of Shuwa Arabs of Borno State who speak Arabic as their indigenous language.

5:3 ARABIC: THE ANSWER TO THE QUEST FOR A NATIONAL LANGUAGE

Based on the qualities enumerated above, we can glaringly see that Arabic provides the best answer for Nigeria's quest for a national language. However, Muslims should be at the vanguard of this noble cause because Islaam is, as explained and analyzed in the previous chapters, inseparable from Arabic.

By adoption of Arabic as the national language, Nigerian Muslims, nay Nigerians at large, will be become more united since language barrier breeds suspicion and suspicion leads to, in most cases, confrontation. This is the reason why Allaah unites the whole mankind in the earliest and biggest gathering ever known by humanity, Hajj, in one singular language which is Arabic. Sambo (2004) confirms this reality thus:

"The language of worship for Muslim denounces unwarranted suspect (sic) that adherents of Islaam are into different denominations like Christians. Arabic language is spoken during all spiritual devotions there by facilitating participation by every Muslim wherever he finds himself. Hence, this important aspect of globalization and a proof that Islaam is a global religion “(30)

To make this dream of Arabizing Nigeria or making Arabic the Nigerian national language a reality, I hereby recommend the following actions and steps:
1) Nigerian Muslims need a coordinated social mobilization of the entire citizenry to acknowledge the importance of Arabic language.

2) Muslim politicians should rise to their religious responsibility of fighting for the cause of Arabic through relevant legislations, financial support and needed acquisition.

3) Any attack or relegation aimed at Arabic should be seen an attack and relegation of Islaam.

4) Muslim scholars in the academics should organize different fora, symposia and seminars to sensitize the Nigerian elites about the role Arabic has played and is still playing in the civilization and development of man.

5) Establishment of a national board that will be responsible for the establishment, funding and co-ordination of Arabic schools available through-out the length and breadth of the country. This educational supervisory body should be well funded in other to be able to perform its administrative and over-sight functions effectively.

6) Arabic scholars in the academia should rub minds on how to improve the standard of Arabic being taught at various institutions. A national policy that will see that Arabic is taught and researched through the medium of the language alone should be formulated. On no conditions should Arabic scholars who speak good English should allow the language of Islam be subjugated to an imperial, colonial and foreign language. "So long as the Muslims continue looking toward the western civilization as the only force that could regenerate the stagnant civilization of Islam, they weaken their self-confidence and, indirectly, support the western assertion that Islam is a " spent force". (31)

7) An erroneous reference to Arabic as a foreign language should be corrected. Rather, the language should be tagged "the Nigerian indigenous language with international appeal".
CONCLUSION

In this paper, an attempt has been made to trace the history of Arabic as an international language, analyze its relevance in the contemporary world, explain its link and relationship with Islaam and, above all, advocate for its adoption as the Nigerian national language. Also, the prospects of the language and the bitter ideological and political wars being waged against it were equally analyzed. Although, this paper does not shy away from the fact that the battle to make Arabic our national language should be spearheaded by Muslims who, by the virtue of their religion, hold it or should hold it in high esteem, it appeals to all and sundry as it makes case for the language for the numerous social, economic and political advantages that are attached to its adoption. Thus, a sincere and honest implementation of the recommendations enumerated above will go in long way in solving the country's social and economic problems.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


3- See: "Semitic" in: *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary*


13- Ojelabi, Adekunle. *A textbook of West African History (1000 to the present day)*: Ibadan, Educational Research Institute, p. 13


17- Reader J. *op.cit.* p. 660.


21- Al-Kiyaali, *op.cit.* vol 1, p.189

22- Jowitt, *op.cit.* p.21


25- Al-Kiyaali, *op.cit.* vol 1, p.788

26- *Ibid*, vol 1, p.771

27- *Ibid*, vol 1, p.804


29- "Assaakir, Abdul Fattah, *op. cit.*, vol 5, p.295

30- Sambo, AbduKadir, *op. cit.*, p.69
