Design Elements and Illuminations in Nigerian “Market Literature” in Arabic and ‘Ajamī

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Abstract

“Market literature” in Arabic and ‘Ajamī is a particular variety of West African Islamic book culture, which is especially strong in northern Nigerian states. Arabic-script “Nithography” (by analogy to Nollywood, the modern Nigerian film industry) represents a unique phenomenon, although it is reminiscent of the nineteenth-century Islamic lithography in the Middle East. Nigerian “market literature” in Arabic and ‘Ajamī has mostly followed the pre-colonial manuscript tradition of Central Sudanic Africa, including writing styles, colophons and glosses. In contrast to Middle Eastern book culture, Nigerian typeset printing largely preceded the era of offset. The innovative elements of offset book design in Nigeria and further perspectives of “Nithography” in Arabic and ‘Ajamī are discussed.

Keywords

Islamic book culture – Nigerian “market literature” – Arabic – ‘Ajamī – book design and illuminations – catchwords – colophons – glosses – Hausa

Introduction: Legacy of John Hunwick and the Study of Nigerian Printings in Arabic Script

Somewhere after 1727, a West African Islamic scholar copied an Arabic translation of the New Testament and Ten Commandments.¹ The copyist tried to correct the Biblical text, inserting a number of Islamic interpolations. Thus, when he read the sentence *man yazru‘u bi-l-shuḥḥ bi-l-shuḥḥ ayḍan yaḥṣudu*, *wa-man yazru‘u bi-l-barakāt bi-l-barakāt ayḍan yaḥṣudu* [He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully] (II Cor 9,6), he replaced the Arabic word *shuḥḥ* “miserliness” with *shaykh*: *man yazru‘u bi-l-shaykh bi-l-shaykh yaḥṣudu* [He who sows under a shaykh will also reap under the shaykh]. Then, after a lengthy commentary on the correctness of this phrase, he wrote: *wa-man yazra‘u bi-kathīr al-barakāt ‘inda l-shaykh ayḍan bi-l-barakāt yaḥṣuduhu* [And who sows the *baraka* in abundance, will reap it].² In my opinion, John Hunwick was a shaykh with a great *Baraka*; his writings covered many fields, including African Diaspora and ‘Ajamī Studies.

The phrase “‘Ajamī Studies” was probably first used by Carleton Hodge in his proposal for the study of West African ‘Ajamī literature.³ By now it has become commonplace. Ngom has provided a detailed definition of this term:

The field of “‘Ajamī Studies” [...] is a bridging field, a domain of reconciliation and cross-pollination of disciplines, especially African Studies, Islamic Studies, and Linguistics [...].

One of the goals of the field of “‘Ajamī Studies” is to collect and translate ‘Ajamī materials into major European languages (and Arabic) [...]. Finally, ‘Ajamī Studies seek to grasp the centuries-old interplays between Islamic and local traditions and the resulting experiences recorded in the read, recited, and chanted devotional and didactic ‘Ajamī texts of Muslims who live beyond the boundaries of the Arab world.⁴

1 This copy is part of a miscellaneous collection of manuscripts catalogued as Ms. 17, “Collection of detached pieces, fragments, magical formulae, etc., in Sudanic and North African hands,” at Médiathèque du Palais des Arts, Vannes, France. For the original, see *Al-‘Ahd al-jadīd li-Rabbīnā Yasū‘ al-Masīḥ wa-ayḍan Waṣāyā Llāh al-‘ashar ka-mā fī l-aṣḥāḥ al-‘ashrīn min safar al-khurūj*, ed. Salomon Negri, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1727.

2 Médiathèque du Palais des Arts. Vannes, Ms. 17, fol. 65b, copied from *Al-‘Ahd al-jadīd li-Rabbīnā Yasū‘ al-Masīḥ*, p. 329. I would like to express my thanks to Ms Sophie Lemaure-Pautremat for the opportunity to consult this manuscript, which deserves a special study.

3 Carleton T. Hodge, “‘Ajamī Literature: A Proposal”, *Language Sciences*, 41 (1976), p. 36.

4 Fallou Ngom, *Muslims beyond the Arab World: The Odyssey of ‘Ajamī and the Murīdiyya*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 251.

As can be seen from this quotation, the field of 'Ajami Studies necessarily entails interdisciplinary and team research involving Islamic history, African linguistics, comparative literature, manuscript studies and the anthropology of writing. The scholarly legacy of John Hunwick is not confined to his publications. He also played an important role in the collection and cataloguing of Arabic and 'Ajami books in the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies at Northwestern University. Hunwick himself described the place of the market editions in the holdings of the Herskovits library as follows:

The Paden collection contains some 450 items, mainly hand-written, but with a number of privately printed editions published in Zaria, Kano, Ibadan or Cairo. There are also a number of what we have called 'market editions' that is works that have been reproduced by offsetting manuscripts in some way (lithography, photo-offset, xerography) and enclosing them in paper covers for sale in the market place. These are mainly works of Nigerian authorship or works of popular piety. The Falke Collection consists mainly of handwritten items with a few older (and now rare) printed works. The Hunwick collection is largely market editions, with a few printed books, including some Tijānī works from Morocco.⁵

The present article is based on the study of printed market editions in the Herskovits library, as well as my own collection of Arabic and 'Ajami books. Most of these (about one hundred items) were acquired during several visits to the Kurmi market in Kano.⁶ The expressions "market literature" and market editions have been widely used in the research on Nigerian printed texts in Roman script. The editors of a bibliography produced by the British Library defined such publications as "booklets written by Nigerian authors for Nigerian readers (mostly in English but also a few in some vernacular languages), which are printed and distributed by small, local, self-financing entrepreneurs".⁷ Since the 1990s the phenomenon of "market literature" in Hausa (in Roman script, or *boko*) has been well documented. The synonymous expression "popular literature" has become common in the field of Hausa literary studies.⁸ The

5 John O. Hunwick, "Catalog of Arabic Script Manuscripts at Northwestern University," *Sudanica Africa*, 4 (1993), 1993, pp. 210–211.

6 My deepest thanks go to Professor Abdalla Uba Adamu and all my other colleagues and friends who have helped me become acquainted with the Arabic and Ajami book culture in Nigeria.

7 *Market Literature from Nigeria: A Checklist*, eds Peter Hogg, Ilse Sternberg, London, British Library, 1990, p. vii.

8 Graham Furniss; Malami Buba; William Burgess, *Bibliography of Hausa popular fiction: 1987–2002*, Cologne, Köppe, 2004; "Hausa Popular Fiction: Furniss Collection" in the library of

production of market editions in Arabic and ‘Ajami was also tackled, but not as a special subject.⁹ Andrea Brigaglia notes;

Market editions are lithographed or (more commonly) Xeroxed copies of handwritten samples, produced for wide distribution and market sale. These editions used to be very popular throughout West Africa during the 1950s and 1960s, and are still produced to a certain extent in some countries, especially in Nigeria, where they are ubiquitous,¹⁰

Brigaglia’s approach, following that of Hunwick, was apparently driven by the peculiarities of bookmaking techniques, which were seen as opposed to typeset printing. A market edition, as understood by Hunwick and Brigaglia, would look like a handwritten work. According to Graham Furniss, printing such a book entailed no typesetting, merely the production of a legible handwritten manuscript.¹¹ It is, however, not so easy to define the salient features of Nigerian market editions in Arabic and ‘Ajami. In most cases, the works mentioned by Furniss were not just found somewhere and brought to the printers. In fact, these texts were written especially for publication. They were intended for a relatively wide readership, and not only for a few learned people.

The pre-print preparation of manuscripts has precipitated a change in Arabic and ‘Ajami book culture, often overlooked by scholars. For example, Murray Last, who studied a great number of pre-colonial Islamic manuscripts from Central Sudanic Africa, saw Nigerian market editions exactly in the same way as handwritten works. He noticed that, besides unpublished manuscripts and scholarly editions of the Sokoto writings, numerous other texts have been printed privately or by the Gaskiya Corporation, but these copies are usually unedited and thus have the status of manuscripts.¹² This definition was implicitly shared by other scholars who studied ‘Ajami literature, such as Mervyn Hiskett in his research on Hausa Islamic poetry. Hiskett not only consulted market editions, but also used some of them as a collation base (“master text”) for comparison with extant manuscripts and other printed texts of a single

soas, University of London, listed in “Hausa Popular Literature Database.” <http://hausa.soas.ac.uk/perl/Project/index.pl?project=hausa>.

9 See e.g. Graham Furniss, *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture in Hausa*, London, Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 1996, pp. 12–13, 53–54.

10 Andrea Brigaglia, “Central Sudanic Arabic Scripts (part 1): The Popularization of the Kanawī Script,” *Islamic Africa*, 2/2 (2011), p. 52.

11 Furniss, *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture in Hausa*, p. 53.

12 Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, London, Longmans, 1967, p. xxix.

poem.¹³ The Hiskett collection in the Herskovits library includes offset books in Arabic and Hausa ‘Ajami alongside with manuscripts and Xerox copies of manuscripts.¹⁴

The vast majority of Nigerian Arabic and ‘Ajami printings differ from manuscripts in more than one aspect, such as the processes of edition, duplication and circulation. First, as indicated by the expression market editions, these works are indeed edited, though not in an academic way. In pre-colonial manuscript culture, various scribes could revise the text, adding marginal and interlinear glosses, correcting the errors of the original manuscript, etc. It is often forgotten that no such revisions in print are possible for technical reasons. Moreover, whatever the quality of manuscripts brought to the press, very few corrections are visible in the printed editions. An offset book in Arabic or ‘Ajami, with its errors, omissions and misprints, often looks more unedited than a manuscript. Another aspect is that of duplication. While every manuscript tends to be unique, a printed book usually exists in a significant number of identical copies. Nigerian market editions may also be “exclusive”, but this is mainly due to their paper cover, which will be discussed below. Then there is the issue of circulation. In the absence of reliable statistics, it is not possible to ascertain the place of “market literature” among Arabic and ‘Ajami books circulating in Nigeria and elsewhere in West Africa. The phrase “privately printed” often found in library catalogues, looks clumsy. According to the definition used by the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers, this should be “a book or pamphlet whose printing was paid for by an individual or group and is meant for private circulation, not public sale.”¹⁵ The problem with this definition is that Nigerian market editions are by no means confined to private circulation, even though the publication is often commissioned by a single person. A significant number of Arabic and ‘Ajami books in offset, and sometimes photocopies of such editions, are on sale in small bookshops in the markets.

The Kurmi market in Kano has the largest constellation of such businesses in the North of Nigeria. The same shops also sell local and imported Arabic-script literature printed in typeset. As concerns the classification of

- 13 See Mervyn Hiskett, *A History of Hausa Islamic Verse*, London, SOAS, 1975, and especially Hiskett, *The Ma'ama'are of Shehu Usuman dan Fodio as rendered into Hausa by Malam Isa: Ajami Text and Roman Transcription*, London, Department of Africa, SOAS, 1977, p. i, v.
- 14 Nikolai Dobronravov, *Catalog to the papers of Mervyn Hiskett: Held in the Arabic Room, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies, Northwestern University*, St Petersburg, St Petersburg University, 2002 (a computer-printed copy in the Herskovits library, unpublished).
- 15 International League of Antiquarian Booksellers (ILAB), *Glossary*, <https://www.ilab.org/eng/glossary/>.

printed matter, the process of circulation apparently matters more than printing technique. For example, the facsimile publication of a text written in Arabic script does not necessarily fit into the definition of “market literature.” If the work is accompanied with a scholarly commentary or a vocabulary, one may be certain that it is not a market edition. Furthermore, many offset copies of Arabic and ‘Ajamī manuscripts have been published in Europe and North America without any commentaries, but it would be difficult to see them all as market editions. This is especially true of Christian missionary publications, which have been produced since the nineteenth century. In contrast, some typeset editions produced in Nigeria may be considered part of “market literature” because of their modes of printing and distribution.¹⁶

All the above-mentioned types of market editions are comparable to cheaply popular literature outside sub-Saharan Africa (English chapbooks, Russian *lubok*, various ephemera, etc.). One type of “market literature” easily found in the Kurmi market, is, however, very unusual. These are the copies of the Qur’ān printed on behalf of various Nigerian publishers in the Middle East. Such editions are similar to the rest of “market literature,” as they are sold in the markets and look like handwritten works, retaining the recognizable features of the Central Sudanic tradition. At the same time, these Qur’ānic publications are neither unsophisticated in their design, nor inexpensive.

Expansion of Arabic and ‘Ajamī Book Printing and the Development of “Market Literature”

Arabic and ‘Ajamī book printing in Nigeria started before the development of “market literature.” Various missionary and official texts were regularly produced in Arabic and “Algemie” (‘Ajamī).¹⁷ In Northern Nigeria, one stimulus to the production of such texts came from an unusual source. A survey class, then a school, was created in Kano in 1912 with the objective of training local specialists who then worked for Kano Revenue Survey. The records were typed in both Roman and Arabic script. Then the school acquired printing facilities

16 *E.g. Kitāb al-Tajwīd: li-l-sanat al-rābi’a wa l-khāmisa*, n.p., n.d., 16 p. I bought a copy of this work, stapled in the paper cover of a “Tofa exercise book,” which is a small book probably printed at Tofa Islamic Bookshop Enterprises in Lagos, Nigeria.

17 In other words, they were produced in ‘Ajamī, but also in Arabic in the Central Sudanic scripts. See Andy Warren-Rothlin, “Script Choice, Politics and Bible Agencies in West Africa,” *Bible Translator*, 60/1 (2009), pp. 59–60; and John Edward Philips, *Spurious Arabic: Hausa and Colonial Nigeria*, Madison, African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin, 2000, pp. 32–33.

in order to produce maps for the whole of the Nigeria protectorate. The annual report for 1925 stated, that "lithographic machines have been erected at the Kano Survey School and plans in different colors, which in the past were always prepared in England, can now be printed at Kano."¹⁸ The report of the Colonial Survey Committee described the choice of place and the effect of innovations as follows: "The lithography of the Nigerian Survey is concentrated at Kano, the climate being more suitable. The plant was increased by a rotary press, a ruling machine, a stitching machine, and two oil engines. Two million printing impressions were drawn during the year."¹⁹ The administrative reform of 1928 resulted in the creation of the Native Administration Surveying and Printing Department under British supervision. The printing of official forms for all the Native Authorities of Northern Nigeria continued in English and Hausa, including 'Ajami. In 1938, William Macmillan described the Kano Survey School in Kano as a striking example of vitality and natural growth:

Planted in an Islamic area, where general education is still the function of 'Koran' schools, it has followed rather in their tradition. As the mallams' pupils there learn as much as they do not by their memorizing of creeds from the Koran, but from serving their masters and living their life for years together, so the very varied work of the Survey School is done almost entirely by men who have grown up with it in the twenty or more years of its existence, trained and equipped wholly by the experience gained in its service, under its original European director. From the intensive revenue survey necessitated by the very close settlement of land in the immediate neighborhood of Kano city, it was natural for the school to pass on to other activities. The accumulation of records presently gave rise to printing, and the school is now the official N.A (Native Authority) printer, with a special facility for map-making which it does also for many neighboring districts.²⁰

The Kano editions produced by the Native Authority printer (known as *al-Maṭba'a al-Amiriyya*, or "Emir's Press") included the chronicles of Borno and Kanem published together in one volume, in typeset with a few facsimiles

18 Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Colonial Reports-Annual, No. 1315, Nigeria, Report for 1925*, London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926, p. 27.

19 Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Colonial Reports-Annual, No. 1325, Colonial Survey Committee Report, 1926*, No. 1325, London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927, p. 24.

20 Macmillan, William M. *Africa Emergent; a Survey of Social, Political, and Economic Trends in British Africa*, London, Faber and Faber, 1938, p. 303.

from the manuscripts.²¹ The typeset printing also took place in Kaduna, the capital of Northern Nigeria, and probably in Maiduguri. The quality of local publications was surprisingly high for the time and place. The anonymous reviewer of the Borno chronicles wrote: "The high quality of paper and typography used in this edition seems to show that the Amir of Kano possesses a printing press which many book-producers nearer the center of the Islamic world might envy."²² The book design of *Ta'riḫ Mai Idrīs* was similar to that of the books published in Egypt in the same period.

In the 1930s, the colonial administration undertook a significant cultural reform which led to the Romanization of Hausa script.²³ Afterwards, Hausa 'Ajamī (and Arabic) gave way to English and Roman-script Hausa in all official matters. However, the use of Arabic script was still allowed, *e.g.* in the first regional newspapers. Interestingly, while printing activities in Northern Nigeria were led by the government, as well as the missionaries and Native Authorities, the development of the book industry in the South was also driven by private initiative. It has been argued that "market literature" in Arabic took its first steps in Abeokuta and spread to other cities in South Western Nigeria.²⁴ The Yoruba migrants then brought these books to the North, and in the 1940s the private printing presses started to grow in Kano. The state-owned "Gaskiya Corporation" created in Zaria in 1945, mostly published books in Roman script. In the 1950s the corporation became interested in the profitable field of printing in Arabic and 'Ajamī as well. Neil Skinner described the beginning of Arabic-script printing at "Gaskiya" as follows:

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- 21 *Hādā l-kitāb min sha'n sultān Idrīs Alawma wa-mā waqa'a baynahu wa-bayna umarā' bilād Kānim*, Kano, Emir's Press, 1932 (on the back cover: *Ta'riḫ Mai Idrīs wa-ghazawātihi li-l-Imām Aḥmad al-Barnawī*).
- 22 "Ta'riḫ Mai Idrīs al-Burnuwī. (With an introduction by Sir H.R. Palmer.)" *Luzac's Oriental List and Book Review*, 44 (1933), p. 133.
- 23 On this reform, see Philips, *Spurious Arabic*; Nikolai Dobronravin, "Hausa Ajami Literature and Script: Colonial Innovations and Post-Colonial Myths in Northern Nigeria," *Sudanica Africa*, 15 (2004), pp. 85–105. For a general overview, see Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya, *Hausa a Rubuce: Tarihin Rubuce Rubuce Cikin Hausa*, Zaria, Northern Nigerian Publishing Company, 1988.
- 24 Peter B. Clarke, "Islam and Change in Nigeria c. 1918–1960," in *Religion and Change in Africa: Proceedings of a seminar held in the Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 17th and 28th April, 1979*, eds A. Ross and R. Willis, Edinburgh, Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, p. 104; and Razaq D. Abubakre, *The interplay of Arabic and Yoruba cultures in South-Western Nigeria*, Okeḡla, Dār al-'Ilm Publishers, 2004, pp. 173–174. At least one lithographic edition of the Qur'ān also appeared in Lagos as early as 1905, but no details are known about its printer. See Adrian A. Brockett, *Studies in two transmissions of the Qur'ān*, PhD thesis, University of St. Andrews, 1985, pp. 68–70.

There were technical difficulties, as the work could not be typeset, the Corporation not being equipped for Arabic work. But, in fact, even if it had been, the result would not have been entirely acceptable to the average, or below-average Hausa reader, who is used to the local handwritten style of Arabic. These difficulties were obviated by having the text handwritten onto plates of a small Rotaprint (lithographic) machine.²⁵

Skinner did not specify what he meant by “the local handwritten style of Arabic.” In an apparent contrast to this description, most books printed by the “Gaskiya Corporation” and published by the Northern Region Literature Agency (NORLA, 1954–1959) did not follow the manuscript tradition of Central Sudanic Africa. In fact, the script of these publications was similar to Middle Eastern Naskh (e.g. the letter *fāʾ* with one dot above the letter and the *qāf* with two dots above, instead of the Warsh-based Maghribī *fāʾ* with one dot below the letter and the *qāf* with one dot above).

Besides, the set of letters and vowel-signs in the new variety of Hausa ‘Ajāmī used in these books had an exact equivalent in Roman script. Thus, such publications could be transliterated into Roman script with much greater ease than earlier manuscripts. Skinner mentioned, “in some instances, two-color printing, with the vowel-points in red (after the traditional calligraphy) added to the attraction of a work”, and that “handwritten Korans, produced in parts, were also done.”²⁶ The latter phrase is unclear. It seems to indicate that some copies of the Qurʾān were printed in offset, but I could not find any reference to such publications. Most Arabic and ‘Ajāmī books published by NORLA were produced with the author and title in English on the back cover; some works were sent for printing to Great Britain. The NORLA publications were usually sold not only in Nigeria, including small bookshops in the markets, but also abroad, where they were distributed by international booksellers. In contrast, Arabic and ‘Ajāmī books printed by small presses, e.g. in Abeokuta, were truly part of “market literature” in terms of production and circulation; only few of them were included in the national bibliography (“Nigerian Publications”).

The independence of Nigeria in 1960 marked the beginning of a new period in the history of national “market literature” in Arabic and ‘Ajāmī. In comparison to the earlier history of Arabic-script printing, this period may be seen as that of renewed ‘Ajāmization. To a certain degree, pre-colonial Islamic book culture was revived in post-colonial Nigeria. According to Graham Furniss,

25 Neil Skinner, “NORLA – An Experiment in the Production Vernacular Literature, 1954–59,” in *50 Years of Truth: The Story of Gaskiya Corporation Zaria, 1939–1991*, ed. Husaini Hayatu, Zaria, Gaskiya Corporation, 1991 p. 66.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

"[a]s far as poetry was concerned, the key technological development came in the early 1960s with the introduction of offset printing both into government presses and into commercial presses in the Sabon Gari quarters 'new town/strangers' quarters' of northern cities."²⁷ The British scholar, Furniss, also noticed:

Although the same process could have applied to prose texts, it was the religious orders, the Tijāniyya and the Qādiriyya, who took most immediate advantage of the new technology in the 1970s to produce poetry and religious literature for distribution within the brotherhood networks and for sale through the established book trade in the markets. Stall-holders in the markets operate networks of agents who travel from quarter to quarter in the towns and through the villages carrying a selection of popular works, the great majority of them religious, for sale to the public at large.²⁸

The growing production of market editions did not go unnoticed by scholars and bibliographers. In 1964, when John Hunwick worked at the University of Ibadan, there was an attempt to collect such "pamphlets":

A number of pamphlets and papers relating to Islam in Lagos were collected by the Arabic Sub-Librarian during trips to Lagos. These have been microfilmed for our collection. The existence of a hitherto unknown Arabic press in Ibadan was discovered, and publications were collected for the Library. A similar press has also been noted in Ijebu Ode, but has not yet been visited.²⁹

Undoubtedly, there were other "undiscovered" printing presses. "Market literature" in Arabic and 'Ajami was rarely mentioned in the national bibliography. In the last decades, there was no regular cataloguing of such publications.³⁰

27 Graham Furniss, *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture in Hausa*, London, Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 1996, pp. 12–13.

28 Furniss, *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture in Hausa*, pp. 53–54. See also John N. Paden, "A Survey of Kano Hausa Poetry," *Kano Studies*, 1 (1965), pp. 33–39, and Paden, "A Note on Hausa Religious Poetry in Ajami Script," *Kano Studies*, 1/2 (1973), pp. 111–115.

29 University of Ibadan, Ibadan University Library, *Annual Report, 1963/64*, p. 10.

30 For the lists of Arabic and 'Ajami publications, see Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya, *Hausa a Rubuce*, pp. 236–239; John N. Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1973, pp. 436–442; Arabic Literature in Africa, vol. 11, *The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa*, general eds J.O. Hunwick and R.S. O'Fahey, Leiden, Brill, 1995, pp. 651–702 (together with manuscripts in Arabic and 'Ajami).

Nowadays, some market editions get an identifier (ISBN) and a copyright notice, with the corresponding © symbol, but this is still far from common.

Since the 1960s the repertoire of Nigerian market editions in Arabic and 'Ajami has included a few important texts from the Islamic "core curriculum,"

FIGURE 1 An 'Ajami book in Hausa about the Structural Adjustment Program. Tambayōyi talātīn da amsōshinsu a kan "Saf" da 'amfanin da aka-sāmu na "Saf", Kaduna, [1989], p. 96.

which had been used in education in Western and Central Sudanic Africa for several centuries.³¹ The works of nineteenth-century Sokoto writers, modern Islamic poetry and, much more rarely, books on post-colonial Nigerian politics and economy have also appeared in Arabic and ‘Ajāmī. Some publications on the new subjects did not look like traditional manuscripts, even though they were produced in offset.³²

Catchwords, Colophons and Other Elements of Book Design

With a few exceptions, mentioned above, Nigerian market editions in Arabic and ‘Ajāmī are visually similar to handwritten works. It is thus understandable why, for example, a significant number of offset books are found among the manuscript holdings of the Herskovits library. The same principle has been applied to the cataloging of lithographed books in Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish and other languages of the Islamic world. Such books have also been described together with manuscripts. More specialized publications, *e.g.* on lithographed books in Arabic, are less common, and their authors tend to come from the field of manuscript studies.³³

The page design of Nigerian offset publications in Arabic and ‘Ajāmī is typically different from that of typeset books in Roman script. In the latter, the use of decorative borders around the text is exceptional; these elements of design are mostly found on the covers and title-pages. The typeset page in Roman script normally has blank margins and interlinear space (also known as “interlinear blank”). On the contrary, the offset page in ‘Ajāmī often includes various types of borders around the main text. The margins and interlinear space may remain blank, but market editions with extensive marginalia and interlinear matter are much more common. Short glosses and longer commentaries are typically written in Arabic and Hausa; other languages, such as Kanuri and Fula, are also found in a few books.³⁴ The number of glosses

31 See Bruce S. Hall, Charles C. Stewart, “The Historic ‘Core Curriculum,’ and the Book Market in Islamic West Africa,” in *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Arabic Literacy, Manuscript Culture, and Intellectual History in Islamic Africa*, eds Graziano Krätli, Ghislaine Lydon, Leiden, Brill, 2011, pp. 109–74.

32 See for example a book in Hausa on the Structural Adjustment Programme: *Tambayōyī talāṭin da amsōshinsu a kan “Saf” da ‘amfanin da aka-sāmu na “Saf,”* Kaduna, n.p., printed by NNN Ltd, Commercial Printing Department, [1989]. 96 p.

33 See *e.g.* Adam Gacek, *Arabic Lithographed Books in the Islamic Studies Library, McGill University: Descriptive Catalogue*, Montreal, McGill University Libraries, 1996.

34 See *e.g.* Yahyā aḥya Qurṭubī, *Manzūmat al-shaykh Yahyā al-Qurṭubī fī l-‘ibādāt ‘alā madhhab al-imām Mālik ibn Anas*, Yarimari [Maiduguri], n.d. (Arabic, with interlinear

reaches its maximum in bilingual publications such as Hausa-Arabic vocabularies.³⁵ Like some handwritten works, printed market editions may have a wide interlinear space, with diagonal or vertical glosses between the lines. A more typical offset book includes glosses written horizontally above the lines of the main text.

In addition to borders and glosses, the market editions in Arabic and ‘Ajamī also exhibit various other elements of design. Some of these elements have been described as “illuminations,” including geometrical figures, magic squares, specific punctuation and mnemonic signs.³⁶ These illuminations have been retained, with a few exceptions and innovations, from the pre-colonial manuscript tradition of Central Sudanic Africa. However, there is one aspect where there is marked difference between manuscripts and modern “market literature” in Arabic and ‘Ajamī. In contrast to the handwritten works, the colors in the market editions are not as rich, and usually confined to black-and-white. The yellow and red colors, so typical of Central Sudanic manuscripts, are not used in the main text of most offset books. It is only on the covers that an additional color, typically red or blue, may be found. A few publications with multi-colored page layout also circulate in Nigeria, but most of them are the copies of the Qur’ān, which were printed in the Middle East and North Africa.

The covers of the market editions may also include pictures, such as a mosque or a Sudanic African writing board. The issue of pictures was the subject of controversy as early as 1932. In the discussion about the newspaper to be published in Northern Nigeria, Gordon J Lethem asked the Chiefs and Emirs if they wished pictures to be included. The answers varied greatly:

‘As regards pictures we regard them as things possessing shade, and anything which is a representation of living things must not be made’

word-for-word glosses in Kanuri); ‘Uthmān ibn Muḥammad Fūdī, *Qaṣā’ša al-fulāniyya*, Kano: Adebola Printing Press, n.d., pp. 36–43 (poetry in Fula, in a collection), Hunwick/149.3/ME, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies Northwestern University, <http://search.library.northwestern.edu>; see also Arabic Literature in Africa, vol. 11, *The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa*, general eds J.O. Hunwick and R.S. O’Fahey, Leiden, Brill, 1995, p. 70, 80.

35 Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ibn Muḥammad al-Wushīshī, *I-‘ānat al-muta’allim wa-ifādat al-mutakallim fī l-lūgha l-‘arabiyya*, Kano, Sambash, n.d. (for another edition and book design see *op. cit.*, Kano: Alḥājī Muḥammad ‘Dan Jinjiri, n.d., Hunwick/30/ME, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies Northwestern University, <http://search.library.northwestern.edu>).

36 For more insight into the terms “decoration,” “illumination,” and “illustration” see *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies: An Introduction*, general ed. Alessandro Bausi, Hamburg, Tredition, 2015, pp. 106–108, 507–510.

(Alkali of Bauchi); 'I consider it to be immaterial whether pictures are included or not' (Talba of Bornu); 'With regard to the question of pictures there are different kinds of representations. Some Mallams say that anything which is represented on paper or is drawn on a rug or traced on the ground is not forbidden; the only thing which is forbidden is a representation which casts a shadow. I therefore see no objection to including pictures in the paper' (Waziri of Kano); 'I agree with the Waziri of Kano. It is only a thing which has a shadow which is forbidden' (Emir of Bida).³⁷

The first regional newspaper, *Northern Provinces News*, was started as an illustrated quarterly periodical in Hausa, English and Arabic. It included pictures and captions in Hausa written in Latin script, English and Arabic. As concerns the Arabic and 'Ajamī books, the state-owned companies and missionary printing presses have had a tendency to include the same type of illustrations as their Roman-script publications. Private printing presses have not always followed this approach. Some books have pictures on the cover, while other editions are

FIGURE 2 *Dīwān of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Niasse* (Nuzhat al-asmā' wa-l-afkār fi madh al-Amīn wa-ma'āni l-Mukhtār, Kano, Alhaji Ahmad Tijjani and Sons, 1386/1966–1967), pp. 288–289.

37 Northern Provinces of Nigeria, Advisory Council, *Record of Proceedings at Full Meetings with Emirs and Chiefs*, Kaduna, Government Printer, 1932, p. 21.

devoid of any imagery. Islamic architecture is a very popular element of the cover. The photo of the author is also possible, but not so common.³⁸

Most market editions in Arabic and ‘Ajamī include catchwords and colophons. Catchwords represent one of the most characteristic features of pre-colonial book culture in Western and Central Sudanic Africa. François Déroche gave the following general description of catchwords in Islamic manuscripts:

The catchword is a word (or phrase) written at the bottom of a page that repeats the first word(s) or phrase(s) of the following page. [...] In a few manuscripts from the late eighth/fourteenth century, the catchwords run diagonally upward. A catchword might also be written horizontally, quite close to the last line of text, itself slightly raised to leave a space for the catchword within the frame of the written area. Horizontal catchwords close to the line of text seem to have been favored by Maghribī copyists, at least until the late ninth/fifteenth century. [...] Catchwords appeared in Maghribī manuscripts in the second half of the eighth/fourteenth century, and were generally written horizontally, although in the tenth/sixteenth century writing a diagonal catchword on every folio became the rule.”³⁹

The manuscripts of Western and Central Sudanic Africa, with their mostly horizontal catchwords at the end of every folio, long retained the features common to the North African written tradition between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, *i.e.* prior to the Moroccan invasion of the Niger Valley in 1591. With the development of Nigerian printing in Arabic and ‘Ajamī in the twentieth century, catchwords started to disappear from market editions.

However, many authors and copyists retained this element of design in the manuscripts they prepared for offset publication. If the main text is set within a frame, which is often the case, the catchword and the page number are written outside of it. The catchwords in Nigerian market editions may look redundant, as they are printed alongside page numbers. This redundancy is particularly striking in the publications where there are both traditional (“Indian”) and European numbers on the same page. In such books, there

38 I have seen only one book with the photos of the author on the cover and in the main text, the *Dīwān* of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Niasse (*Nuzhat al-asmā’ wa-l-afkār fī madh al-Amīn wa-ma’ānī l-Mukhtār*, Kano, Alhaji Ahmad Tijjani and Sons, 1386/1966–1967).

39 François Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology: An Introduction to the Study of Manuscripts in Arabic Script*, London, Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2005, p. 97, 99.

seems to be a correlation between the choice of pagination style and the use of the page surface: the “Indian” number is typically found on the upper margin, while the European one is in the center of the lower margin, to the right of the catchword. The parallel use of catchwords and page numbers is not confined to Nigeria, as it is also found in some Arabic and ‘Ajamī books printed elsewhere in West Africa.⁴⁰ Ngom noticed that in Senegal, “the use of western numerals in paginations in Murid communities is a post-colonial phenomenon because manuscripts written before Senegal’s independence (1960) do not use numerals for pagination,” while the “Indian” numbers have survived “in Islamic medicine, numerology, or potent prayers.”⁴¹

The colophons in West African manuscripts have already been described in detail.⁴² In Salah Hassan’s book on Hausa written tradition, the textual content of the colophons is presented in the following lines:

This is an inscription at the end of the manuscript, usually on the last page. The colophon gives facts about the production of the work, similar to information found today in the title page of a contemporary printed book or on the copyright page. It gives facts about the completion of the work by the author, in addition to the name of the copyist and the date of completion of the copying. Thus, the colophon is co-authored by the author of the copied work and the copyist himself. [...] The colophon is in most cases enveloped or framed in a triangular pattern of decoration. This decoration is not as fancy or colorful as those found in the Qur’ānic manuscripts. As in the case of the title page or the conclusion, the colophon also follows a traditional style of composition and involves a doxology or praise for the Lord and prophet Muhammad. In the colophon it is also possible to find information about the person for whom the manuscript

40 See e.g. [‘Abd Allāh al-Marrākushī], *Takhmīs al-Burda al-mubāraka fī madh̄ khayr al-barriyya*, Abidjan: n.p., n.d.

41 See Fallou Ngom, “Murid Ajami Sources of Knowledge: The Myth and the Reality,” in *From Dust to Digital: Ten Years of the Endangered. Archives Programme*, ed. Maja Kominko, Cambridge, Open Book Publishers, 2015, p. 343.

42 See e.g. A.D.H. Bivar, “The Arabic Calligraphy of West Africa,” *African Language Review*, 7 (1968), pp. 3–15; Adrian Brockett, “Aspects of the Physical Transmission of the Qur’ān in 19th-century Sudan: Script, Decoration, Binding and Paper,” *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, 2 (1987), pp. 45–67; John O. Hunwick, “West African Arabic Manuscript Colophons: I: Askiya Muḥammad Bāni’s Copy of the Risāla of Ibn Abi Zayd,” *Sudanica Africa*, 13 (2002), pp. 123–130; Hunwick, “West African Arabic Manuscript Colophons: II: A Sixteenth-Century Timbuktu Copy of the Muḥkam of Ibn Sida,” *Sudanica Africa*, 13 (2002): 131–152; Nikolai Dobronravin, “Arabic and Ajami colophons in West African and African diaspora Islamic manuscripts,” *St Petersburg Annual of Asian and African Studies*, 1 (2012), pp. 89–94.

was intended. Information pertaining to the ownership or inheritance of the manuscript are also written. These are either written by the copyist or the giver of the manuscript. For this reason it is usual to find several hands on the colophon.⁴³

In Nigerian market editions, the names of the author and copyist, as well as the date of publication are often written on the front cover. This information may be duplicated in the colophon on the last page of the work. The texts of the colophons are not as extensive and varied as in the manuscripts. The study of Arabic and 'Ajami "market literature" makes it possible to classify printed colophons according to their geometry, additional design, and textual content.⁴⁴ This classification may be summarized as follows:

A. Colophon geometry: (1) angular (triangular, rectangular, ledged) colophon; (2) wavy/semicircular and other varieties of colophon geometry; and (3) no special form (the colophon follows the main text of the manuscript).

B. Additional design: (1) smaller or less calligraphic writing (in most publications); (2) special design of the frame (floral, eye-shaped; multiple lines; etc.); and (3) other forms of additional design.

C. Textual content: (1) "Signal words" (*intahā* "ended," etc.), 'Ajami text with the same meaning, special signs; (2) Doxology (*al-ḥamd li-Llāhi* "praise be to God," etc.); (3) Name of the copyist, title and authorship of the text; (4) Date of publication; and (5) Other textual content.

Personal names in the colophons of West African manuscripts are of particular importance, because they may hint at the date of composition. Earlier pre-colonial manuscripts (especially those of Western Sudanic origin⁴⁵) often include references to both father and mother of the author, copyist or owner or the name of a person's mother alone. More recent manuscripts and printed works tend to be patrifocal, i.e. only with the name of the author's father (*e.g.*

43 Salah M. Hassan, *Lore of the Traditional Malam: Material Culture of Literacy and Ethnography of Writing among the Hausa of Northern Nigeria*, E. Mellen, 1991, pp. 186–187.

44 Based on Nikolai Dobronravin, "Arabic and Ajami Colophons."

45 See Darya Ogorodnikova, "Exploring Paratexts in Old Mande Manuscripts," in *Tracing Manuscripts in Time and Space through Paratexts: Perspectives from Paratexts*, eds Giovanni Ciotti, Hang Lin, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2016, pp. 1–33.

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ibn Muḥammad al-Wuṣhīshī). Comparing the colophons in West African manuscripts and “market literature,” Brigaglia wrote:

[M]arket editions—contrary to most manuscripts—often include a note with the name of the copyist. When such is the case, this information is extremely important for the study of West African calligraphic styles, as it provides the researcher with an otherwise rare opportunity of identifying individual hands and observing evolutions and changes in the style of individual copyists. Finally, as some of the scribes / calligraphers who were active in the drafting of handwritten samples for market editions are still alive, the study of these items can also be integrated with the voice of the authors and their own designation of the scripts used, thereby also addressing West African Arabic scripts as a living tradition, rather than exclusively from the point of view of paleographic studies.⁴⁶

In fact, although there are currently no statistics about the use of copyists' names in either handwritten or printed works, the colophons are often reduced to doxologies in Nigerian market editions. It seems to me that the name of the copyist is more common in authored editions and, in the calligraphic publications of the Qurʾān in particular.

Pre-colonial manuscripts could contain dates with year, month, day and time of the day. One such date was found in a seventeenth-century Qurʾān from Borno: “in the forenoon of Sunday the First of Jumadi the Second of the months of the year eighty after one thousand of the Prophet's Flight,” i.e. on the 1st of Jumada II AH 1080/26th of October, AD 1669.⁴⁷ The day and the time of the day seemed to be most popular forms of the date in Western and Central Sudanic African manuscripts, while the year was often omitted, much to the dismay of modern scholars. Nowadays, Nigerian market editions in Arabic and ‘Ajamī usually contain dates with year only, like most Western publications. The year when the text was published or compiled may be dated with a chronogram (Arabic: *ramz*). According to Déroche, “[t]his system was used in the Orient, but was also very popular in Morocco for dating inscriptions, historical texts and manuscripts from the Saʿdian period onward.⁴⁸ Chronograms

46 Brigaglia, “Central Sudanic Arabic Scripts (part 1),” pp. 54–55.

47 A.D.H. Bivar, “A dated Kuran from Bornu,” *Nigeria Magazine*, 65 (1960), p. 203. For more study on the Borno manuscript tradition, see Dmitry Bondarev, “Multiglossia in West African Manuscripts: The Case of Borno, Nigeria,” in *Manuscript Cultures: Mapping the Field*, eds Jörg B. Quenzer, Dmitry Bondarev, Jan-Ulrich Sobisch, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2014, pp. 113–156.

48 In other words, the system has been used since the first half of the sixteenth century. It was this dynasty that conquered the West African empire of Songhay in 1591, under the Sultan Aḥmad al-Manṣūr al-Dahabī.

are also often found in manuscripts from sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁹ A modern Nigerian work on numerology, also intended for chronogram making, has been published in various editions since 1962.⁵⁰

A few elements of design, common in Nigerian market editions, were not found in the manuscripts written before the advent of Arabic and 'Ajami printing. These innovations include the Arabic formula of reference to the person who commissioned the work, [*tubī 'a(t)*] '*alā nafaqat...* "printed at the expense of..." usually on the front cover and title-page. In the nineteenth century, this formula was common in the lithographed editions produced in the Middle East, but hardly familiar to most authors and scribes in today's Nigeria. "Market literature" in Arabic and 'Ajami has also adopted the Western model of book design in what concerned the front cover, back cover and spine. The types of soft and hard covers are mostly the same as in the typeset publications. The books with a small number of pages, around twenty to fifty, are usually stapled in a paper cover. It is this cover, often made of an A4 sheet with any imaginable type of text (official letters, bank contracts, etc.), that makes every single copy of a market edition look like a unique work. For example, a copy of an Islamic prayer book from Kano was stapled in the printout from the website of the Fourth International, with the web page address on the cover.⁵¹

In pre-colonial Western and Central Sudanic Africa, the manuscripts were mostly loose-leaved, although, according to Karin Scheper, stabbed sewing was also known.⁵² Nowadays, the calligraphic editions of the Qur'an, which

49 Déroche, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 326. Also see Hassan Ibrahim Gwarzo, "The Theory of Chronograms as Expanded by the 8th Century Katsina Astronomer-Mathematician Muḥammad b. Muḥammad," *Research bulletin, Centre for Arabic Documentation, Institute of African Studies (Ibadan)*, 3/2 (1967), pp. 116–23; Christiane Seydou, "Note sur le 'mot-date' (Procédé mnémotechnique et littéraire utilisé par les écrivains peul et haoussa)," *Journal de la Société des Africanistes*, 38/1 (1968), pp. 15–18; Fallou Ngom, *Muslims beyond the Arab world: The Odyssey of 'Ajami and the Murīdiyya*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 267, footnote 136, and Ngom, "Murid Ajami Sources of Knowledge: The Myth and The Reality," in *From Dust to Digital: Ten Years of the Endangered. Archives Programme*, ed. Maja Kominko, Cambridge, Open Book Publishers, 2015, p. 364.

50 'Ubā Na-Kachalla Kanō, *Ḥisābi a saukakē*, ed. al-Ḥajjī Sharīf Balā Gabārī, Kano, n.d.; *ibid.*, Kano, Buharu Islamic Book Shop, [1999]. For a different edition see: *op. cit.*, Kano, Oluseyi Press for 'Abd Allāh al-Yassr, Falke/1284/ME, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies Northwestern University, <http://search.library.northwestern.edu>.

51 *Du'ā' ḥijāb al-qahr wa-ḥiya ḥiṣn ḥāṣin wa-ḥirz manī* ' , Kano, printed at the cost of 'Alī na-Al-ḥājjī Bashīru na-Mālam Sa'adu Yantandū, n.d. 22 p., stapled in: David North, "Lessons from History: The 2000 Elections and the New 'Irrepressible Conflict,'" *World Socialist Web Site*, accessed September 07, 2016, <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2000/12/dn-d11.html>.

52 Karin Scheper, *The Technique of Islamic Bookbinding: Methods, Materials and Regional Varieties*, Leiden, Brill, 2015, pp. 72–73. See also Déroche, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 88, 290–291;

FIGURE 3 *A prayer book stapled in the printout from a website. Du ʿāʿ hijāb al-qahr wa-hiya ḥiṣn ḥāṣin wa-ḥirz manīʿ, Kano, printed at the cost of ʿAlī na-Al-ḥājji Bashīrū na-Mālam Saʿadu Yantandū, n.d. 22 p., stapled in: David North, “Lessons from History: The 2000 Elections and the New ‘Irrepressible Conflict’”.*

are prepared in Kano and then sent for printing to the Middle East, continue to be published as separate single leaves, with a decorative slipcase imitating the traditional leather book bag.

“Market” Calligraphy and Handwriting: Cherishing the Manuscript Tradition

Brigaglia has stressed the importance of market editions, including the calligraphic copies of the Qurʾān, for the study of Arabic script in West Africa.⁵³ Qurʾānic editions present the case of the most successful modernization of African Islamic book art. This type of Nigerian “market literature” occupies a

Brockett, “Aspects of the Physical Transmission of the Qurʾān in 19th-century Sudan”, pp. 47–48.

53 Andrea Brigaglia, “Central Sudanic Arabic Scripts (part 1): The Popularization of the Kanawī Script,” *Islamic Africa*, 2/2 (2011), pp. 52–55.

special place among the copies of the Qurʾān circulating in West Africa. According to the booksellers I could consult in the Kurmi market of Kano, there are two types of Nigerian Qurʾānic publications. The Kano variety is seen as more traditional and “Warsh.” The editions printed in Zaria are considered to be different and “Ḥafs.” The latter are based on the 1924 Cairo edition (“the Cairo Qurʾān”), which has long become a standard one throughout most of the Islamic world. The “Warsh” typeset editions in Maghribī script, which are common in North and West Africa, have also been printed in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Brigaglia, who noticed a similar interpretation of the Kano writing style, commented on this popular terminology in the following words:

Today northern Nigerians popularly identify this style with yet another name, i.e., Warshi, referring to the Qurʾānic reading of Warsh that is used in all the Qurʾāns that are printed locally in that script. There is no reason, of course, to retain this terminology. In principle, in fact, a Qurʾān in the reading of Warsh can be written in any possible calligraphic style and, conversely, the script that Nigerians popularly refer to as Warshi can be used to reproduce Qurʾāns in all canonical readings.⁵⁴

Brigaglia preferred to call this style “Kanawī.”⁵⁵ In order to achieve consistency with popular Nigerian terminology and the practice of printing, I would suggest a more specific term, e.g. “Qurʾānic Kanawī” or “Kanawī Warsh style.” Without such clarification, the Arabic word “Kanawī,” referring to the historic emirate and city of Kano, may be appropriate from the historical point of view, but the problem is that there have been several Arabic and ‘Ajāmī writing styles in Kano. One of them was strongly influenced by the Naskh, or Naskhi, style used in books imported from the Middle East and in most common Arabic fonts on computers. This variety of Arabic script seems to prevail in the market editions printed in Zaria since the 1950s; it can be termed a “Zakzakī” style.⁵⁶ There seems to be a correlation between the varieties of Arabic script and the Qurʾānic readings (Warsh, or more properly *Warsh ‘an Nāfi’* “Nāfi’ [as transmitted] through Warsh,” and Ḥafs, or *Ḥafs ‘an ‘Āṣim* “‘Āṣim [as transmitted] through Ḥafs”) found in today’s “market literature.”

54 Brigaglia, “Central Sudanic Arabic Scripts (part 1),” p. 57, footnote 8.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

56 The Arabic *nisba* name al-Zakzakī has been used in the Sudanic African writings in Arabic in order to indicate the origin or affiliation with the historic emirate of Zazzau (Zegzeg, Zakzak, Zaria) including the city of Zaria. Nowadays it is still found in Nigerian surnames.

During my visits to Nigeria in 2009 and 2010 I could see a variety of local and imported editions of the Qur'ān on the shelves of bookshops in Kano, Jimeta-Yola and Sokoto. Selected parts (*ḥizb, juz'*) or single sūras such as "Yāsīn" (Sūra 36) were also on sale. One of the complete copies I acquired in Kano was published in 2008.⁵⁷ The scribe was Al-Ḥājj 'Abbās ibn al-Mu'allim Mūsā Rijiyar Lēmū (Alhaji Abbas dan Malam Musa from the Rijiyar Lemu ward of Kano). Another copy of the Qur'ān was published in 1978 by Sharif Bala Press.⁵⁸ The calligrapher who prepared the manuscript for this edition was Alhaji Sharif Bala Gabari, also known as Sharif Bala Zaitawa.⁵⁹ His work has been highly valued both in Nigeria and abroad.⁶⁰

The copy of the Qur'ān published by Sharif Bala Press abounds in marginal glosses such as *fardī*, as well as longer commentaries on the properties of the sūras and quotations from the Hadith. The Arabic word *fardī* "single, solitary" is derived from *fard* "single; a single one."⁶¹ This gloss is used as a mnemonic device indicating the unique occurrence of a word in the Qur'ān. Curiously, there are no Hausa glosses in this publication. In contrast to the book published by Sharif Bala Press, the edition of the Qur'ān printed for al-Ḥājj Muḥy al-dīn ibn al-Ḥājj 'Abd-Allāh al-Yassār in 2008 is abundantly glossed in both Arabic and Hausa. The marginal glosses in Arabic are mainly intended for didactic purposes, with many traditional mnemonic remarks. In addition, each sūra is supplied with a commentary regarding the medicinal or other values of the text. The most common glosses in this edition are the already mentioned *fardī* and *kurī*. Hausa glosses used in this book represent an interesting example of bilingual *tajwīd* (pronunciation guide for reciting the Qur'ān). They are also intended for an easier memorization of the Qur'ānic text.

Besides, Hausa glosses are of certain interest for the study of non-Arabic terminology used by the calligrapher. A few terms are not attested in the dictionaries of the Hausa language. One of these terms, *fuska biyu*, literally, "two faces," indicates that two different variants of reading are possible, e.g. *tawassuṭ* (prolongation of *madd* in the reciting of the Qur'ān to the length of three to

57 *Al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, Kano, printed for al-Ḥājj Muḥy al-dīn ibn al-Ḥājj 'Abd-Allāh al-Yassār, 2008.

58 *Huwa Qur'ān majīd fī lawḥ maḥfūz*, Kano, [Sharif Bala Press], 1978.

59 Gabari and Zaitawa are the names of the wards in Kano City, close to the Kurmi market.

60 See for example Andrea Brigaglia, "Sharif Bala Gabari of Kano: From Scribe to Calligrapher," in *From Istanbul to Timbuktu: Ink Routes*, Cape Town, ed. Susana Molins Llitas, Cape Town, Tombouctou Manuscripts Project, University of Cape Town, 2009, pp. 7–9, with illustrations from the books in Arabic and 'Ajāmī.

61 Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1979, p. 823. The category *fard* refers to a hadith with one transmitter, see Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Schools of Qur'ānic Exegesis: Genesis and Development*, New York, Routledge, 2010, pp. 50–51.

five alifs) and *ṭūl* (maximal prolongation of *madd* to the length of four to six alifs), as in Sūra 3, 177.⁶² A marginal commentary in Arabic and Hausa is added, together with a decoration, to Sūra 7:

*⁶³ *Rabbi Mūsā* [7, 121]

**rabbi qad ataytanī* [12, 101]

**rabbanā 'kshif* [44, 12]

**rizqan li 'l-'ibādi* [50, 11]

**rasūlan yatlū* [65, 11]

*rā'*⁶⁴ 'a kan *kurī* *bajj*, "the *rā'* letter over the *kurī* [occurs] five [times]"; *rā'*⁶⁵ *da ta-tāshi* 'a kan *kurī* *bajj* 5 "the *rā'* letter that stood up above the *kurī* [occurs] five (5) [times]."⁶⁶

The term *kurī* refers to the verse-divider of the same name, a roundel written after every ten āyats. The Arabic adjective *kurī* "globular, ball-shaped, spherical"⁶⁷ was used in classical Islamic philosophy and technical terminology, e.g. in the Arabic phrase *jism kurī* "spherical body."⁶⁸ Nowadays, *kurī* is also used in Hausa as part of a letter name in Arabic and 'Ajāmī (*ha kurī*), when it is written as a circle, in the final or isolated position, in contrast to the "big" variant of the same letter (*ha babba*) in the initial and medial position.

According to the definition given by Aliyu Muhammad Bunza, "in Hausa, a closed circle is called *kuri*, like the mouth of quiver for bow arrows" (*Abin da yake rufaffe da'ira, kuri ake kiransa da Hausa kamar bakin kwari na baka*).⁶⁹ The word *kurī* was apparently borrowed into Hausa from Arabic via the Kanuri language. As early as 1854 Sigismund Wilhelm Koelle included Kanuri *kūrī* "circle, orb" in his "list of Bornu roots which are evidently cognate with either Indo-European or Semitic roots, or with both."⁷⁰ On the other hand, this term seems to be absent from the common vocabulary of Islamic calligraphy. Adam Gacek

62 *Al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, p. 26, 86, 160 (Sūras 2, 143; 3, 177; 6, 40).

63 Here the * symbol is used instead of the *kurī* sign.

64 With the *madda* sign above the *alif*, to be read as *rā'*.

65 With three dots above the *alif*, also be read as *rā'*.

66 *Al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, p. 201. The number is written as an Arabic/Western fraction: $\frac{5}{5}$.

67 Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, p. 964; the cognate word *kurawī* is also used in the same meaning.

68 See e.g. Damien Janos, *Method, Structure, and Development in Al-Fārābī's Cosmology*, Leiden, Brill, 2012, p. 117, 126.

69 Aliyu Muhammad Bunza, *Rubutun Hausa: yadda yake da yadda ake yin sa*, Lagos, Ibrash Islamic Publications Centre, 2002, p. 23.

70 Sigismund Wilhelm Koelle, *Grammar of the Bórnu or Kānūrī Language*, London, Church Missionary House, 1854, p. 3, 5.

FIGURE 4 "Qur'anic Kanawī" writing style. Al-Qur'ān al-karīm, Kano, printed for al-Ḥājj Muḥy al-dīn ibn al-Ḥājj 'Abd Allāh al-Yassār, 2008, p. 201.

FIGURE 5 The cover. *Huwa Qur'an majid fi lawh mahfuz*, Kano, [Sharif Bala Press], 1978.

mentions in his glossary the varieties *‘ashr*, *‘ashira* and *‘ashiriyya* “mark, decorative disc or rosette indicating the end of a group of 10 verses of the Qur’ān.”⁷¹ The numerals *‘ashar* and *‘ashara* “ten” are also used in the same context. The “word” *bajj* is a good example of chronogram (*ramz*), which was mentioned above: *bā* “two” plus *jīm* “three” means “five”. On one more occasion, the Hausa gloss is also used in order to explain the numbers written with Arabic letters (Arabic *abjad*, Hausa *hisabi*), written as follows: *fā’i*ⁿ (81) = *tamanin da d[a]y[a]* “eighty-one.”⁷²

Besides the copies of the Qur’ān mentioned above (in the “Qur’ānic Kanawī” or “Kanawī Warsh” writing style), there are other types of calligraphic market editions which have not been subject of study until now. A number of books have been prepared for printing by Ja’far ibn al-Ḥājj al-Ḥassan Alkammāwā from Sokoto, usually with his name on the front cover, title page and next to the colophons on the last page. These works are easily recognizable and fairly different in style from the editions in Qur’ānic Kanawī. The published masterpieces by this Sokoto calligrapher include his copies of the works of the Fodio family. The pages are, with few exceptions decorated. In all the cases, a certain artistic tendency is discernible. Professor Mukhtar Umar Bunza from Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, wrote to me about Malam Ja’afaru Hassan Alkammawa the following: “In terms of writing style, he is accustomed to two different styles namely: African (referred to as Maghrebian, Zarian, and Misiran – Egyptian – styles.”⁷³ So it is not surprising that on the margins one can also see examples of modern Naskh writing. A few market editions prepared by this copyist were commissioned and printed in Kano. There are some other Sokoto and Zamfara publications, where the copyists make use of a visually rough “cursive” writing style, which exhibits few artistic elements. The language of these “unsophisticated” books is mostly Hausa, with a number of salient dialectal or archaic features.

Conclusion: Further Development of “Market Literature” and Book Art in Nigeria

Nigerian “market literature” in Arabic and ‘Ajāmī has grown into a particular variety of West African book culture. This culture is at first sight reminiscent

71 Adam Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition: A Glossary of Technical Terms and Bibliography*, Leiden, Brill, 2001, p. 99.

72 *Al-Qur’ān al-karīm*, p. 44. See also the notes on *hisāb* (numerology) and *ramz* above.

73 Mukhtar Umar Bunza, *Profile of Malam Ja’afaru Hassan Alkammawa*, April 21, 2016 (personal communication). I am thankful to Professor Mukhtar Umar Bunza for details about the biography and work of this Sokoto calligrapher.

of the nineteenth-century lithography in the Islamic world. At the same time, there are some important differences between the history of lithographic books, e.g. in the Middle East, and that of the “market literature” production in Nigeria. Arabic and ‘Ajami “Nithography” is unique, not least as it did not wane with the growth of typeset. On the contrary, Nigerian typeset printing in Arabic and ‘Ajami largely preceded the era of offset, e.g. in Kano; both printing techniques have co-existed down to the present. In the offset publications, several types of Arabic writing and book design have been used. Some of them have followed the pre-colonial manuscript tradition of Central Sudanic Africa, with catchwords, colophons and peculiar writing styles. A number of authors and copyists have preferred to adopt Middle Eastern book design. The influence of Nigerian publications in Roman script has also been visible. In today’s “market literature” it is not rare to see a combination of Sudanic and Western elements of book design, e.g. in the parallel use of catchwords and page numbers.

There are different possible ways of development for Nigerian “market literature” in Arabic and ‘Ajami. Such publications may be seen as a part of grey literature (so called “pamphlets,” etc.), together with similar editions in Roman script. Today’s grey literature tends to go online. The Internet provides the necessary speed of publication (posting) and the easy means of distribution for the works which do not require exquisite illustrations or calligraphic handwriting. A book in Arabic or ‘Ajami may also be produced in typeset, with a table of content, indexes, bibliography, etc. When ‘Ajami is used in typeset, e.g. in a Hausa publication, a standardized orthography is expected to be applied. If the number of such ‘Ajami editions grows substantially, it will be possible to reach a new stage of ‘Ajamization, when the negative effect of the colonial script reform could be overcome. Besides, Nigerian “market literature” may develop as a new genre of African Islamic art. This perspective, exemplified by the work of Alhaji Sharif Bala Gabari, is most visible in the post-colonial editions of the Qur’ān. The aesthetic beauty of these publications will continue to attract the readers and book art collectors.