

The Management and Use of Arabic/Islamic Manuscripts in the Nigerian Universities: A Study of Kenneth Dike Library of University of Ibadan

Yaqub T. M., PhD¹

Onibon N. O., PhD²

Olagunju M. O., M.A, MLIS³

Abstract

Despite the historical significance and relevance of the Arabic and Islamic manuscript collections in the socio-political development of Nigeria, it has been largely neglected by researchers. Limited attention is paid to the fact that these valuable manuscript holdings are important cultural property that requires appropriate management, preservation and conservation. This study investigates the adequacy, management and factual condition of the collection of Arabic and Islamic materials in Kenneth Dike library of University of Ibadan. It identifies the contribution of the various individuals, groups, agencies, governmental and non-governmental organizations to the development of the Arabic and Islamic manuscripts section of the Library. It is discovered that various Arabic/Islamic manuscripts are sufficiently available at the Library and are accessed by the students and researchers. However, there are some challenges confronting the proper use and management of these manuscripts. These include inadequate seating space, irregular power supply, poor conservation and preservation of the manuscripts and inadequacy of professionals to man the Arabic/Islamic section of the library. The work concludes that Arabic and Islamic collection should be well preserved and conserved through adequate management strategies

Keywords: Arabic, Islamic, Manuscripts, Library, University, Nigeria.

Introduction

Knowledge is an important factor for development. Seeking knowledge is of two ways. The first is to seek knowledge about something in an informal way while the second, is seeking knowledge in a formal way through formal Education. Formal Education is said to be received in the classrooms or in an environment close to the classroom situation. Informal Education is acquired through daily routines and practices. We would not be far from the truth to say that the Library responds to both types of information gathering. The library can help those in schools, colleges or universities by providing them with information already written by others. It also helps other people who are not necessarily in institutions to answer some of their questions. In actual fact, library is an agency of the process of study or transferring information. The main objective of every Library, for whatever discipline or purpose, is to ensure that the user is served within the shortest possible time. That is why the Library acquires materials in various forms. With the stages of development, the library arranges its materials in such a way that can be located easily.

There are many categories of users of the Library. Some read to pursue a designed course such as the distant learning students. Others want some information to enlarge the horizon of their knowledge while others need information for trade or commerce and yet others need library for recreational purposes. Some even use the library to while away their time and to obtain relaxation through reading. You might have realized the importance of library to human development and the dire need for the study of the orientation and features of Arabic library. This work focuses on the study of development of Arabic/Islamic manuscripts in Nigerian Universities with particular reference to the Kenneth Dike Library of the University of Ibadan.

¹ Yaqub M. T. is a senior lecturer in the department of Foreign Languages, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria

² Onibon N. O. is a lecturer in the department of Foreign Languages, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria

³ Olagunju M. O. is a library staff in the Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria

The paper seeks to identify the contribution of the various individuals, groups, agencies, governmental and Non-governmental Organization to the development of the Arabic and Islamic manuscripts section of the Library. The work shall cover the following issues and concepts among others:-

- The historical origin of Arabic and Islamic section of the Keneth Dike Library.
- The features and stages of development of the section of the library.
- The way Arabic and Islamic materials are organized, preserved and consulted.
- The position of the Arabic/Islamic manuscripts in the teaching of Arabic and Islamic studies in our Universities.
- The problems facing the use and management of Arabic/Islamic manuscripts in the Library.
- Suggestion for improvement in the use and management of Arabic/Islamic manuscripts

Libraries and Tertiary Institutions

According to Okoye (2009) the academic library is described as the “heart” of the learning community, providing a place for students, Academic staff, and the institutions to do their research and advance in their knowledge. The librarians and library staff provide numerous services to the users; address their diverse needs and interests. Library is also regarded as the nerve center of educational institutions, a crucial center in the educational development of man at any academic pursuit (Oladokun & Salisu 1993).

Adekanye (2006) claimed that academic library is a collection of resources and services for pure academic research while University is a tertiary institution which provides facilities for teaching and research. Some of these facilities are in form of recorded knowledge and experience kept and maintained in the university libraries where professional librarians are employed to organize and make such facilities available and accessible to the University Community. The University libraries derived their mission from that of the parent organization, the university. Thus, the historical development of University libraries has been influenced by the context in which the parent organizations operate. The vision, mission and strategies which are selected by Universities as a guide for meeting the core functions of teaching, learning, research and providing community services form the foundation on which the role of the university library is based.

Perceptions held by the university stake holders on the role of the library as a contributor to these core functions influence the environments within which the university library grafts its own mission and role. The commonly accepted perception is that “university education process values self-motivated discovery on the part of students and faculty and assumes that libraries and librarians play an important and essential role in education (Wolepart 1991). Academic libraries must be able to provide access to both print and electronic resources to serve users and to increase the visibility of their institutions, and as a measure of prestige.

Kenneth Dike Library

Kenneth dike Library is one of the academic libraries in Nigeria. It is also the first university library which was known as university of Ibadan library when established in 1948. The library inherited 18,000 volumes of Henry Carr’s collection. There was a donation of 15,000 volumes of scientific books from the Estate of Fredrick Montague Dyke, and 1,000 volumes of theological materials from Lead Clergy Library. All these volumes, in addition to the volumes from the Yaba Higher College, greatly enhanced the initial collection of the library. In all, this library had 40,000 – 50,000 books by 1948. By 1980, the collection had risen to 339,000 and by 2010 it had risen to 660,000 volumes (Rose, 1998).

Our discussion will focus more on the Arabic and Islamic materials section of this library, since it has been dynamic in the performance of their role of providing adequate materials to support research and teaching in the twin discipline in the academic sector. In all these aspects, the Kenneth Dike Library set the pace under the headship of Professor John Williams Harris, for other libraries and librarians in Nigeria to follow. Professor John Harris was a New Zealander who came to Nigeria in 1948 as librarian of the then university College Library. He built the library into a status of international repute. Under his leadership, the university library established a tradition of good and efficient Library services in higher educational Institutions in Nigeria.

One of the first achievements which he recorded for the library profession was that he founded a bibliography called the Nigerian Publications.

This became necessary when the 1950 publication ordinance was passed and it became mandatory for publishers to submit two copies of their publications to the chief secretary to the government and two copies to the University college library Ibadan. Under his leadership the library came out with an aggressive collection development policy. This was done because he observed that the needs of the library will not be adequately met by the local book sellers, book shop and the limited liability companies which became its major supplier of books. An aggressive drive was undertaken for the collection of Arabic manuscripts and Islamic material for the library. For instance, the librarian in charge of the Arabic manuscripts, MR W.E.W. Kensdale had the mandate to travel extensively and collect all available manuscripts in the Northern part of Nigeria and beyond. A list of some of the manuscripts collected is cited in this work. The Kenneth Dike library of the University of Ibadan was credited with the largest Arabic/Islamic collections in the South of the Sahara (Olagunju, 2008)

Relevance of Arabic and Islamic Manuscripts to National Development

Arabic language has been a vehicle influencing the culture of many nations. The influence of the language on the territory of the Federal Republic of Nigeria dated back to the emergence of Islam in the area towards the end of the eleventh century (Umar 2007). It is however pertinent to mention that it was during the eighteenth century that a cultural efflorescence occurred which Islamic revivalists (Balarable 1992) resulted in greater generation of Arabic literature in the early nineteenth century under the leadership of the Sokoto. Biras (1999) emphasized that towards the end of the century, the production of Arabic literature began to wane. But, by the beginning of the 20th century, the dominance of the British colonial rule, coupled with the influx of new printed Arabic books and manuscripts from Cairo, the Middle East and North Africa, tended to reduce the interest of the “Ulama” (Islamic Scholars) in writing original works. Mahmud (2000) claimed that Arabic /Islamic manuscripts collections contain a vast literature on a number of topics like theology, politics, law education, applied science, medicine, recreational arts, crafts and a host of others. As a result of such a variety of subject coverage, the works have, more than ever before, become indispensable reference source to scholars and researchers in different fields of learning, especially Arabic/Islamic studies, history, political science and administration, sociology and linguistics.

Arabic/Islamic materials collection in Nigeria have achieved not only national but also international importance because of their immense research volume and reference in the enrichment of knowledge and understanding of the historical, cultural and socio-economic development of the country. Frantic efforts have been made by a number of academic, researchers and public institutions, both within and outside Nigeria to collect, document and preserve the available materials for proper and effective utilization. It is also noted that the participation of Nigerian academic institutions in particular was stimulated further by two main factors. First, was the urgent need to collect document and preserve all indigenous historical source materials. Second, was the introduction of certain academic or research programs in these institution which necessitated the use of the materials for teaching and research purposes. Prominent amongst the Nigerian Institutions that engage in the collection of the materials are the National Museum, Jos in 1952; the Center for Arabic/Islamic Documentation of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan in 1953; National Archive Kaduna, 1960 – 70; Ahmadu Bello University in 1964; Sokoto State History Bureau in 1973; Bayero University in 1974, Center for Islamic studies of the Usman Danfodio University in 1982; and the Institute of Trans Sahara Studies, University of Maiduguri in 1983.

In other African countries also, there are many libraries, educational and archival institutions where numerous collection of Arabic works of Nigeria provinces are available. For instance, the Institute de researching on science Human (IRSH), Universite de Niamey in Niger Republic which has acquired, cataloged and preserved many Arabic works dealing with the intellectual activities of Hausa states from the 15th century onwards. Other centers include the Institute of African studies, University of Ghana; Ahamad Baba Center of Documentation Timbuktu; the Libyan Government Archives (Dar al-mahfu:za:t al-Farihiyya) and several other places like the Nigerian Transition, Egyptian and Sudanese Archives (Balarabe, 1992). British Museum Library contains most of the valuable Arabic works/documents that were removed from Nigeria by the British colonial administration. The above mentioned countries are, however, by no means the only place where such items are available. There are a good number of valuable Arabic / Islamic manuscripts documents in the libraries or museums of many other European and American countries. Arabic manuscripts of the Northern Nigeria can also be found scattered in repositories in African, American and European countries; notably the Bibliotheque National Paris, the Library of the school of Oriental and African studies, University of London and North-Western University, United states. It is important to note that many of the Arabic manuscripts collections at one institution complement and enrich resources at other institutions.

The Arabic manuscript heritage of Northern Nigeria is a vast treasure form of invaluable source materials on the period of Islamic revolution in the West Africa sub-region which show the contribution of African scholars to Islamic heritage and world civilization. These materials provide a written testimony to the skill of African Scientist in Anatomy, mathematics, chemistry, medicine and climatology in the middle ages. In Nigeria, aspect of the historical, social and economic life of various people are documented and preserved in the Arabic language or scripts. The greater percentage of these manuscripts is in Arabic form. Apart from the personal library of scholars and individual families, several collections of Arabic manuscripts of interest to researchers can be found in Academic libraries and research centers across the country.

The Arabic manuscripts collection in Nigeria constitutes works produced in centers of power and Islamic library, i.e. Bornu, Sokoto, Katsina and Kano. Parts of the materials also include works produced in Yorubaland. Some of these works are in other languages of Nigeria, such as Hausa Fulani Kanuri or Yoruba which are written in a version of the Arabic scripts known as Ajami (or Ajamiyyah). The Arabic /Islamic materials can be classified into three forms; namely: original (which can either be on parchment, paper), photographic reproductions and microfilms. Their content contains discourses on various area of scientific, religious, economic, cultural, philosophical and political interests. It also includes the Intellectual works of three valuable Islamic leaders and scholars of the 19th century Jihad in the Northern Region of Nigeria , Sheikh Uthman Dan- Fodio, his brother, Abdullah Dan Fudi and his son, Sultan Muhammad Bello of Sokoto and the works of Nana Asma'u, daughter of Uthman Dan-Fodio, a scholar, poet and scribe. Additionally, there are also works of scholars from West Africa, Timbuktu and Mauritania. Below, are some of the Arabic / Islamic manuscripts that are available in the Kenneth Dike Library.

Table 1: Some Arabic / Islamic manuscripts in Kenneth Dike Library

	Author	Title	Meaning
1.	Uthman ibn Fudi	Haqiqat Iman(sic)	The importance of Faith
2.	“	Bayan wujub Hijrah(sic)	Detail explanation of what necessitate Hijrah.
3.	Muhammad Bello	Kitab Kaff Ikhwan min itiba ^c khutwat al-shaytan(sic)	Forbidden Muslim ummah from the foot step of shaytan
4.	Muhammad Bello	Jala Sammam fi marad(sic)	Effects of various diseases
5.	Al-Sayuti	kawkab al-satii(sic)	knowledge about superstition; consultation of stars. (From sheikh Nasir Kabara)
6.	Musa b. Abdullahi Jibril	Mustawahab sulam al-Talil ala Kawkab al-Sati.(sic)	knowledge about superstition
7.	Muhammad Mansur	No title	Islamic theology.
8.			
9.	Abd Razaq	Tariq al-Jannah Nafi(sic)	A benefit work to Paradise on Islamic Jurisprudence, (Fiqh)
10.	Add Salam b. Muhammad b. Hasan	Tariq al-Janah	A way to paradise
11.	Abu Hassan, Al-Maliki al-Sahdhili	Fiqh	Islamic Jurisprudence
12.	Sjilmasi Abu Wangari	Duurul Ula	Problem faced by those on top
13.	Muhammad Mustapha bn. Yusuf (Bere Ibadan)	No title	Encourage brothers to seek for knowledge
14.	Alhaji Umar Gwandu (Sokoto)	Poems (1984)	
15.	Abdul Qadir Babatunde (Ilorin)	A story of three brothers (1904)	
16.	Ahmad Abu	Tarikh Akhbar al-quruun	Information about some generations and centuries.

Source: Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan.(The list above is left unedited, in order to show the level of knowledge possessed by the staff assigned to this section. The materials are not processed in accordance with the library profession; this also resulted to our inability to indicate the call mark and accession number of the sample list provided above).

Processing of Arabic/Islamic Materials

Arabic/Islamic library plays a vital role in the University. The library is to dig out the relevance and genesis of management of Arabic and Islamic education, scholarship and information sciences. It permeates the lives of mankind academically and religiously. Therefore, libraries are deserved to be patronized and studied in order to widen the scope of researchers, students of higher learning and to enhance the horizon of academic scholars in their various research disciplines.

The Arabic/Islamic library acquires the following materials: Arabic grammar, etymology, semantics, rhetoric, Arabic literature, Arabic prose, Arabic poems, Arabic play, Arabic drama and stories. In the area of Islamic education, it acquires materials on Islamic theology, Islamic religious knowledge, Islamic philosophy, Islamic history, Islam and politics, Islam and science, Islamic literature, Quranic commentaries, Tafsir and Islamic laws . There are also journals on Arabic and Islamic studies acquired from various academic societies, Islamic scholars and reputable academic organizations. The journals cover Encyclopedia of Islam, Encyclopedia of Arabic literature and Encyclopedia of Quranic studies. These materials are usually in volumes. These collections have their own cataloging box shelf list, and entries which are stipulated in the book of National Union Catalogue published by Library of Congress. Arabic Scheme is coded as PJ while Islamic is BP in accordance with the library of congress classification schemes.

Subject headings usually follow a dictionary plan arranged in an alphabetical classed plan. Arabic and Islamic subject headings fall into the following subject volume A-C, Vol 3 and I-M vol 3 respectively. The subject headings contain volume one to five which comprise of Arabic language, Arabic literature, Arabic phonetics, Arabic philosophy, stipulated as headings and also sub- heading. Islamic studies also cover the following subject headings and sub headings: Islam, Islam and State, Islam and Politics, Islam and Culture, Islam and Philosophy, Philosophy—Islam etc.

The Arabic/Islamic collections have some peculiar characteristics of language philology and sociolinguistic and semantic pronunciation which are different from the convectional collections of the library. Hence, there are two types of Arabic and Islamic materials that are acquired, processed and preserved in any Arabic /Islamic libraries.

1. Materials that are purely written in Arabic e.g. Qawaidu-al-lugah al-arabiyyah(Principles of Arabic grammar), Kitabu al –tarikh wa al-mamalik(Book on history and socio-political administration).
2. Materials that are written in English but discussing Arabic e.g. History of the Arabs by R.A. Nichoson, Modern Arabic Literature by David Cowan.

These collections are beneficial to the academic community where Arabic and Islamic curriculum are entrenched in the institution curriculum

The state of Arabic/Islamic Manuscripts collection in Kenneth Dike Library

There are abundant Arabic/Islamic materials in the library. Among them are materials on Quran exegesis, Hadith, Islamic History, Islamic theology, Arabic literature, Islamic Religious knowledge, Islamic jurisprudence, Islam and politics, Arabic language, Arabic linguistics. Most of these materials are acquired through purchase by the library. Balarabe (1992) notes that the management of Arabic/Islamic manuscripts collection has to do with the availability of space, conducive environment, installation of facilities like air conditioners fans, chairs, tables, training of the personnel, staff welfare package, trust and cordial relationship of a teamwork. Our recent visit to the Arabic and Islamic manuscript section of the Library shows that, the materials are neither organized nor structured. There is no standard framework of codification and classification.

The basic library routine does not allow easy access to these materials. The manuscripts are dumped on a section of the library. The content pages of the materials written by Nigerians are faded. Two to three manuscripts of different topics are joined together while some of the content of these manuscripts are no more readable. Though, these materials are shelved, and secured from rain, termites, cockroaches, humidity, temperature; theft and misplacement, the students of the University find it very difficult to have access to them. The space allocated for these materials is sited at the last floor of the building. This hinders or serves as impediments for student to go and consult them. The space for Arabic and Islamic manuscripts is restricted to few staff users. The section also lack competent personnel to man it. The personnel require library techniques with a sound background of Arabic language. There is no expertise to handle these collections professionally.

The relevance of knowledge of Arabic enables the person to interpret, translate and assimilate the content message from the Arabic language to English language, so that any researcher can easily read and understand the content of the materials. Lack of knowledge of Arabic will create problem of identification of titles and lack of library techniques results into problem being faced in arranging, classifying and restructuring the materials. To say the least, the management of the manuscripts is very poor. The library tools like the subject heading of Library of congress AACR II Anglon American Catalogue Rules of 1967 are not employed to classify these materials. Apart from these problems mentioned above there are other failures that tend to undermine the effective and uniform bibliographic treatment of Arabic Archive in the library. There is a fundamental problem of identifying and recovering most of the materials that exist in individual private custodies. This is as a result of absence of a specific national depositories/centers where the archives could voluntarily be deposited by their owners or a center to be charged with the responsibilities of discovering and recovery the materials as well as monitoring and coordinating the bibliographic activities of the other existing branches in the country.

The problem of poor maintenance culture of the Arabic/Islamic manuscripts do not allow for a comprehensive and up to date biography of the holdings. This does not only hinders the preparation of a national union catalogues but also the successful realization of an effective cooperative scheme especially in the area of acquisition, cataloguing, photocopying and exchange of the archival documents. Another serious problem facing the Arabic/Islamic manuscripts collections in this library is the lack of common survey or subject headings list, non existence of any standard or nationally acceptable cataloguing code in the country. The none existing conventional bibliographic/classification scheme for printed materials affects the collection and organization of these materials due to the inadequacies of Arabic archives; hence, the reason for some variation, contradiction and unnecessary complication both in the entire bibliographic undertaking and approach to information/document retrieval.

The way forward

Despite the historical significance of the Arabic manuscript collection in Nigeria, it has been largely neglected. Limited attention is paid to the fact that these valuable manuscript holdings are important cultural property that requires appropriate management, preservation and conservation. The government also needs to strengthen the country's laws and regulations to facilitate the protection of the intellectual and cultural heritage. Arabic manuscripts collections in Nigeria are priceless. The manuscripts, though, generated by Nigerians indigenous scholars, greatly aid the ability to understand local indigenous knowledge system and the dynamic of intellectual discourse in the sphere of religion ,politics, economics, and the culture of the West Africa sub-region from earliest times to the present day. There is serious need for the trained personnel to be employed to handle the Arabic and Islamic manuscripts collections properly. The personnel should be trained to know various fields of disciplines within the collections. Such trained personnel should be occasionally sent to workshop, seminars and conferences to update their knowledge on the Library information materials. The staff and the students should have the full knowledge of Arabic and Islamic collection available in the Library. There is also need for the edition of Arabic/Islamic manuscripts for easy understanding and proper documentation.

The introduction of the ICT technology and equipments are highly needed to be introduced to accelerate and propel Arabic/Islamic information. This should be digitalized electronically. The manuscripts should be packaged from paper forms to electronic format in the main faculty and departmental library. Adequate seating space should be provided in the library for the clientele to have a better access to the collections. Uninterrupted power supply needs to be provided, even though, standard generating set is available, solar energy can also be introduced as a substitute. The Arabic and Islamic collection should be well preserved and conserved through adequate management strategies.

Conclusion

This work assessed the state and management of Arabic/Islamic manuscripts in Kenneth Dike Library of the University of Ibadan. The study recorded that various Arabic/Islamic manuscripts are sufficiently available at the Library. The purchase of these materials is the prominent means of acquiring them. These materials are accessed by the students and researchers. However, there are some challenges confronting the proper use and management of the Arabic/Islamic manuscripts in the library. These include inadequate seating space, irregular power supply, poor conservation and preservation of the manuscripts and inadequate of professionals to man the section of the library. The ways forward are also enumerated.

References

- Balarabe, A.A. (1992). "The administration of Arabic archives in Nigeria" *Ibadan African Journal Library Archives and Information Science*, Vol. 2 No. 2, University of Ibadan press, page 133 - 139.
- Bivar A.D. (2005). "Arabic Calligraphy of Nigeria" *African Language Review*, Vol. 17, page 3-15
- Barton M and Waters, M (2004). *Creating an Institutional Repository: Leaders Workbook*, London Boston, MIT Libraries, Retrieved 23 March 2010.
- Fudi, A. (2004). "The problem facing the use of manuscripts in Nigerian libraries", *African Journal of Library Archives and Information Science*, Vol. 10, No 6, Ibadan university of Ibadan press, page 20.
- Gerorge V. (2003). *Maintenance Problem Affecting the Arabic/Islamic Manuscript Collection*, Editions du centre National de la rescherch scientifique, London. page 743.. <http://digital.library.northwestern.edu/arbms/historical.html>. Accessed on April 23rd 2010.
- Lawal, A.I. (2006). *Of a tongue and its numerous faces, the story of Arabic in Nigeria*. An Inaugural lecture, Lagos State University, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Mahmud, Khalil, (1964). *The Arabic Collection of Ibadan University Library*, Libri 14, 2, pp. 97 – 107.
- Olalokun and Salisu (1993). *Understanding the Library: A Handbook on Library Use*, University of Lagos Press, Lagos.
- Okoye, James (2009). *The Roles of Academic Libraries in the Teritiary Institutions*. Oxford Press , London.
- Rose B, O (1998). *History of Libraries*. JJBV Press, Nigeria.
- Umar M.A., (2007). *Framework for Processing of Arabic Manuscripts and Cultural Property Heritage in Nigeria*, Kaduna, Nigeria. International Conference on Preserving Nigeria's Scholarly and Library Traditions; and Arabic Manuscripts Heritage, Arewa House Kaduna. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna. March 17 – 18.
- Alegbeleye Bunmi (2007). *The role of Arabic Manuscripts Collection in Nigeria*, Report of a Survey Tour in Northern Nigeria Between March 3rd – 19th.
- Olagunju Misbaudeen (2008). *A general Survey of role played by Arabic and Islamic collection in Lagos State University, 1984 – 2008*, pp. 2 – 30.
- Imamuddin, Z. (1981). *Arabic Working and Arab Library*, Taha Publications Limited, London, pp 32 – 40.
- American Library Association (2005). *Anglon American Cataloguing Rules*, 2nd Edition.
- Classification Class BReligion **BP** for Islamic Studies Materials.
- Classification: Class **PJ** ... Oriented Philology and Literature.
- Cataloguing Policy and Support Offices, Library Services, (2005). *Subject Headings of the Library of Congress*, American Library Association, 28th Edition, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.