

The book in the Sokoto Caliphate

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Much has been written on the Fondo Ka'ti, the huge collection of old manuscripts in Arabic now preserved in a library built in Timbuktu with considerable aid from the government of Andalusia.¹ The collection's founder seems to have been a 'Goth' (*al-Quti*) from Granada, who left Spain circa 1468 AD.² It is an extraordinarily rich collection, only recently come to public notice. Its very presence in Timbuktu highlights the question not only of personal libraries but also of the way books were made and sold in West Africa's pre-colonial past. Some scholarly communities are relatively well researched: perhaps the most notable are the nomadic Shinqitti scholars of Mauritania, western neighbours of their Timbuktu colleagues; both looked to Morocco and to a lesser extent Algeria for their imports of paper as well as texts.³

The focus in this chapter is on manuscripts. Interesting and even more neglected though it is, I have omitted from discussion the trade in printed Arabic books. I do not know what the earliest printed Arabic book in West Africa is. In scholarly Mauritania Shaykh Sidiya's first printed book arrived as late as 1861, reports Charles Stewart.⁴ But elsewhere West African scholars in the eighteenth century owned what may have been printed copies of texts by Euclid (obtainable in Mecca), and perhaps also other technical or scientific works. The Sokoto builder, for example, who asked for and got from Clapperton a Gunter's scale, already had all the architectural papers which his father had acquired in Cairo.⁵ Similarly, on that second visit to Sokoto in 1826 Clapperton brought out for Muhammad Bello some suitable books printed in Arabic – Euclid's *Elements*, a work by Ibn Sina, and the *History of the Tartars*, along with a Holy Qur'an, the New and Old Testaments, and the Psalms.⁶ When 'Fellata' (Fulfulde speaking) scholars returned, from 'Mecca, ... the empires of Turkey and Morocco, ... Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, bringing back with them all the Arabic books they were able to beg or buy', no doubt amongst the texts that they brought back were some printed volumes.⁷ Bound printed books were presumably cheaper in North African markets and more immediately available than specially commissioned copies to be made by hand. Presses capable

Opposite: Examples of manuscripts enclosed in protective tooled leather wallets which enhanced their portability.

of publishing Arabic texts had been established in the Muslim world by the early sixteenth century (some of the skilled printers being émigrés from Spain), and printed Arabic books exported from Europe for use in the Middle East date from the same period. However, for ostensibly religious reasons no use was made of printing by Muslims till the eighteenth century.⁸ Ordinary religious texts could be set in movable type, but so sacred a text as the Holy Qur'an (or the Torah) had to be written by hand, though lithographs of a handwritten text were acceptable. Thus ancient libraries in West Africa are primarily composed of manuscripts.

I want here to look briefly at the problems of manuscript books further to the east of Timbuktu – the Muslim scholarly communities of Hausaland and Borno in modern-day Nigeria – and focus on the pre-colonial period, especially the nineteenth century when the Sokoto Caliphate had succeeded in uniting a larger region than any other independent state in Africa. The state was four months journey west to east, and two months north to south. It was run as a confederation of emirates under the *amir al-mu'minin* in Sokoto with a 'bureaucratic' staff who corresponded by letters written in Arabic in a Maghribi script.⁹ The Arabic used was 'classical', not the colloquial speech of North Africa or the Sudan. The language of everyday speech was Fulfulde or Hausa, but neither language was regularly used in writing prose (it was used for verse). Thus the 'common market' here for books was potentially huge, among shaykhs and students alike, and both moved freely around the caliphate.

Books, like letters, travelled too.¹⁰ Of course, many books moved not as a set of pages but as memories in the minds of those who had memorised them. And books were sometimes composed on the move. Scholars on a journey with their books, however, rarely unpacked them en route, it seems. The bibliophile Ahmad Baba, returning home to Timbuktu in 1607 after his release from detention as a hostage in Marrakesh, apologised to the reader of the book he was writing en route – *al-Lam'fi'l-ishara li-hukm tibgh* – for any errors in his quotations (he was writing on the legality of using tobacco, then a new import from the Americas). His books, he said, were all still on his camels as he crossed the wadi Dra'a and so he could not check the accuracy of the citations he was making 'off head'. One exceptional Middle Eastern scholar who was regularly on tour put his library on camelback but ensured his books (and his camels) were kept in alphabetical order.¹¹ West African scholars were not usually so peripatetic or so well stocked with books (or camels). Shaykh 'Uthman, making his *hijra* from Degel at the start of a risky *jihad* in the late dry season of 1804, packed up his books and had then to borrow a camel from a Tuareg colleague, Malam Agali, to carry his precious library.¹² It is interesting that he chose a camel for the purpose rather than the pack oxen his kinsmen, the pastoral Fulbe, regularly used. Fulbe scholars such as Shaykh 'Uthman had close links to the Berber world of Saharan scholarship, both as students and as copiers of texts only to be found in the Sahara, but he did not speak Tamacheq (his daughter Asma'u did), the common language between scholars being classical Arabic – as Latin could be for Europeans until the 1950s.

To the east of the Sokoto Caliphate was the autonomous state of Borno, for 400 years (c.1400–1800) the dominant Muslim ‘empire’ in the region. Its staff corresponded with, for example, the ruler of Egypt in such fine Arabic that one letter was preserved as a model in a collection of letters by al-Qalqashandi.¹³ Cities then under Borno’s hegemony, like Kano, Katsina, Kurmin Dan Ranko and Yandoto, produced scholars who achieved wide fame. Many merchants were also scholars, so travelling (say, to Cairo) was an ordinary part of their lives.¹⁴ The pilgrimage was a special extension of such journeys, especially if the scholar was accompanying his emir on a state visit to Mecca (as interpreter?). I suggest, then, that Borno and Hausaland, while on the margins of the Islamic world, were nonetheless part of it in the way that Scots or Irish or Scandinavian scholars were part of Christendom (for them, of course, Latin was the language of learning). For both Muslims and Christians, the Mediterranean, however distant it was, was central with so many vibrant, creative economies around its shores. While we know much about the book trade and the impact of print in far northern Europe, there is a dearth of knowledge about the far southern end of this single yet divided world. However, the characteristics of the contemporary European book culture were very different, perhaps because paper was introduced about the same time as printing, and together they transformed the European book trade.¹⁵ In West Africa, paper became available to students of Islam some 300 years before the printing press. Indeed, paper was already being widely used in the Muslim world some two or three centuries before Muslims entered West Africa – West African scholarship therefore never had to make and use vellum for its books.

Nonetheless, a recent study of the pre-paper ‘Anglo-Saxon Library’ is very interesting in that it shows, first, how large libraries in the remote north of Europe could be built up by ambitious abbots travelling down to Rome and bringing back books to their monastic libraries; and second, how easy it was for those same institutional libraries to be broken up and their books lost – this being due not just to raiders but also simply to the decline of learning and scholarship among the monks, not to mention the weeding out of ‘obsolete’ texts by overzealous librarians.¹⁶ By comparison, being without monasteries and their finances, West African scholars in the ‘remote south’, the Bilad al-Sudan, were on their own in building up personal libraries (which they might at least pass on to their sons), but they had one other advantage over monasteries: they were not rich, nor did they control treasure that could be looted. They did, however, have families, traditionally unarmed, who could be taken by non-Muslim raiders and sold off as slaves. The survival of book learning thus faced real hazards, both in the north and in the south.

The data on which this chapter is based were initially collected in the mid-1960s when, with the great encouragement of HFC Smith and John Hunwick, I worked for three years (1965–67) on the Northern History Research Scheme at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.¹⁷ In all, I catalogued some 10 000 manuscript books, including the entire Arabic manuscript collection (over 3 000 manuscripts) in the National Archives, Kaduna, and photographed rare books in private libraries around the country, among them 100 Fulfulde manuscripts. This was followed by a further period of work from 1978–80 at Bayero

The market for books in pre-colonial West Africa was potentially huge among scholars. Books were often carried around the region on camel back by Tuareg merchants, similar to these men who traverse the desert on camel-back to trade their wares.



University, Kano. Some of my understanding comes from having been in Sokoto as a student of a shaykh who was himself a great bibliophile, and from living among Islamic students (inside Birnin Zaria) within their traditional world of manuscripts at a time when the old 'culture of the book' was still just alive. Since then I have continued to work in northern Nigeria, though not on Arabic manuscripts specifically. No new major collections have come to light, but various researchers over the years have added to public collections and skilfully illuminated our understanding of key texts. However, much remains to be done and it is hoped that this chapter will stimulate students into taking up the subject. The situation is not nearly so dramatic as the Fondo Ka'ti, yet I suggest that it is of real significance to our wider picture of intellectual life in the West African savannah and Sahel.

The context

Hausaland is on the cusp between the western Wangarawa trade system with its book base in Timbuktu and links to Moroccan scholarship, and the eastern Borno-centred system oriented more towards Tripoli and Cairo. Interleaved amidst these two systems were Fulbe scholars and their students. They had connections to the Berber scholars of the Sahel and the Sahara as well as to such a notably scholarly Wangara trade town as Yandoto. They were also connected to the stream of Fulfulde-speaking pilgrims from the far west (the 'Takruri') passing to and fro on the pilgrimage to Mecca, no doubt carrying books, news and ideas in their baggage. But Borno may have been their best source of books – distinguished Fulbe scholars were based there, as were the Tripoli merchants with a tradition of importing Italian paper. This might explain why the majority of texts cited by 'Uthman dan Fodio in his *Bayan wujub al-hijra'ala 'l-ibad*'¹⁸ are

post-1600 and Egyptian in origin. But the mid-seventeenth century does seem to have witnessed a major political shift in which the North African merchant houses settled in West Africa significantly lost power or influence – in Timbuktu, in Katsina, in Kano – to be replaced by more military-oriented governments. The shift may reflect the economics of the expanding Atlantic slave trade as much as changes in the balances of power in the Mediterranean.¹⁹

The scholarly community, in eighteenth-century Hausaland at least, was divided into two intellectual styles: one was a tradition that specialised in preaching (and therefore used local languages). Its skill in Arabic was not especially good, and its need for a range of Arabic books was relatively restricted, with expertise centred around a few key texts. The focus of its teaching was *kalam* (theology, and ‘the status of sinners’). Its politics was populist, recruiting runaway slaves to Islam and forming radically Muslim communities. The second tradition was book oriented, with a marked skill required in classical Arabic. Scholars of this tradition taught texts (some also preached) and sought out copies of new books. As exceptional Arabists, it would be they who might be employed as tutors at royal courts. The necessity to be a good Arabist made their circles (*daira*) exclusive, even elitist. The focus was more on jurisprudence (*fiqh*), legal studies requiring the use of a range of books and a greater degree of ‘international’ sophistication; in addition, Sufism, *tasawwuf*, especially the Qadiriyya, was an important new element for some. *Fiqh* was important for merchants and for the *qadis* who mediated trade disputes – scholars had a role in maintaining social peace²⁰ – but it also made students increasingly aware of how local Muslim governments were breaking Islamic law and practice. In this sense, this second tradition was potentially revolutionary. The emphasis on literacy meant that local-language poetry was composed and written in *ajami* (that is, local languages written in Arabic script); marginal notes on key texts such as the Holy Qur’an could be written in *ajami* too. This use of local languages gave rise to specific religious dialects, such as Kanembu, alongside the vernacular Kanuri.²¹ Religious poetry in *ajami* became a vehicle for popular education and piety, being easily memorable and sung while walking or working.

These two distinct styles of Islamic scholarship persisted into the twentieth century: students enlisted in either one or the other. One was identified with ‘Hausa’, the other with ‘Fulani’, but both used Hausa (and Arabic) as the language of instruction. The preaching tradition remains strong and diverse. The most notable now are perhaps the Yan Izala²² but small, radical groups can often be heard in the marketplaces or on the streets; the preachers also go into villages deep in the countryside.²³ Though the two styles of scholarship are complementary, it is the second tradition, with the importance it puts on books, that is the focus of this chapter. An underlying question, however, is what contribution this bookishness (its lifestyle, its learning) made to enabling a distinct political culture to arise in West Africa, a culture that led to *jihad* and the establishment in the nineteenth century of major Islamic states – those of Sokoto, Masina and Ségou. By contrast, was it the preachers who led to widespread conversion and personal piety but *not* to major

political change? Is there something special in an education system centred around rare, much-cherished books – a long apprenticeship with a shaykh to become fluent in Arabic and to read with him a long series of texts alongside his other students; travelling around to various other shaykhs to read further books, and in the process creating a wide network of scholars and student friends, all framed within the organising bond of the Qadiriyya brotherhood and the experience of its joint rituals and discipline? Was there in this long-drawn-out system of book learning and discussion, carried out in minimal comfort, the makings of an Islamic political radicalism? If this is going too far, then I think we can assert that the book trade has indirectly affected Nigerian Muslims' understanding of what a proper Muslim should be; and such key notions as *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* (the 'abode of peace' and the 'abode of war' traditionally understood as territories under Muslim and non-Muslim rule respectively) have acquired their significance in Nigeria because they proved very relevant within a distinct intellectual and legal milieu – and this milieu was at least in part formed by what books were available and widely read. In this context, then, the significance of books simply as material objects – the book trade over time – perhaps needs to be examined more closely.

The problem

Although the book trade should be considered regionally, the scale of the problem can be illustrated by taking northern Nigeria as an example. Here one might tentatively estimate that in 1900 (three years before the imposition of colonial rule) there was a book stock of a quarter of a million books, housed in the libraries of individuals with a few really large collections in emirs' palaces and scholarly households. Depending on what is counted as a 'book', the figure might well be closer to half a million. The vast majority of these books are copies, often incomplete, of school texts; almost all are 'religious' books. Locally composed books – 'original' or précis of classical texts – form a small percentage of the total, and are nineteenth century or later in origin. The calculation of the book stock is more of a guess than an estimate, since the crucial problem statistically is how many books were owned on average by each of the vast number of minor scholars, the *malamai*, and by the literate public generally. Paul Marty's figure of three or four each for the Ivory Coast in 1920 seems plausible.²⁴ Jack Goody quotes that 14 scholars in the important scholarly town of Salaga in the 1960s each had an average of 35 books, but they were almost all new printed texts.²⁵ In 1962, John Paden reported that the Kano scholar 'Umar Falke left some 1 600 manuscript books (the collection is now in Northwestern University Library). One clearly cannot read these 1960s figures back into the nineteenth century, particularly as it appears that a wealthy and important late nineteenth-century official like the Madakin Kano left on his death only six books;²⁶ Sokoto's Waziri Gidado in the 1820s had only 'a small collection' of books, of which one was on dreams.²⁷ Nonetheless, Ahmad Baba lost some 1600 books in Timbuktu in the invasion of 1591.²⁸ A collection like that in the National Archives in Kaduna was made up of manuscripts bought from *malamai* for very low prices and

comprises often rather battered 'school books'. The collection was largely made during the 1950s and early 1960s by touring employees of the National Archives (like Mallam Ilyasu Katsina), when modern paper had been available for 50 years and photocopying machines had not yet been invented. The collection is thus a better indication of the disposable stock of the 'ordinary *mallam*' than are the more selective collections in the Department of Antiquities, Jos (made more professionally by Dr ADH Bivar and Mallam Muntaka Coomassie), or in major emirate libraries such as the Sarkin Kano's library in the old Shahuci judicial school in Kano.

All these are male-owned books; how many women scholars there were, and how many books they owned, is simply an unknown. There were indeed famous women scholars, daughters of famous fathers, and they wrote much poetry. We know that there were, and still are, women Sufis organised into groups – the Yan Taru started by Nana Asma'u in the mid-nineteenth century are well known.²⁹ But we don't know how many there were or what books they possessed; they may not have had very many. We know, too, that in major scholarly houses the children were taught to read and write, and first learned the Holy Qur'an under the learned women of the house. How many such households there were can only be a matter of conjecture; so too is the number of books, if any, that women owned in their own right – my guess would be a Holy Qur'an (or parts of one), a small book or two of selected prayers (al-Jazuli's *Dala'il al-khairat*, for example), and perhaps some poetry in either Arabic or in *ajami* (Fulfulde or Hausa; perhaps Kanuri in Borno). Books inherited from a father's library would normally be divided up and go to the sons or, in the absence of sons, to male relatives. However, there must have been learned daughters who managed to secure a share and got – or in some way paid for – the texts they most wanted for themselves. No doubt women scholars could borrow books from father or uncle, brother or husband, and have them copied (or copy them themselves), but this is a dimension of scholarly life we as yet know very little about, either in relation to the recent past or the pre-colonial period. Today bookshops, for example in Kano, sell printed texts in Arabic, and many women have gone on the pilgrimage to Mecca, but what books (if any) they bring back with them has not been researched. Shops in cities like London and Paris also offer a range of printed books; it was from these that I bought each year the books I gave to my teacher, the Wazirin Sokoto, books he didn't have in his large collection. But I was never asked by a wife for a book – unsurprisingly.

In short, I suggest there was, around 1900, a potential book-using (and book-making?) clientele comprising 50 000 people who were 'well educated', plus some 35 000 teachers and 165 000 students. Although these figures (derived from the 1921 Nigerian census) are undoubtedly unreliable, it would seem safe to assume there were at least some 250 000 people literate in Arabic or *ajami*, with a much larger number who had had some experience of Qur'anic schools.³⁰ In addition, there will have been several thousand educated women. What we do not know is the size of the demand for books – for example, how much such students and scholars would be willing to pay for a copy of a book. Paper in the nineteenth century was relatively cheap and available, so a student

in need could copy for his own use a text he had borrowed. But did he? Or did he prefer to commit the text to memory, or only such parts of the text that he knew were relevant to him? Since he had probably memorised the Holy Qur'an as a child, his memory was already well trained. Standard, much-cited passages came to mind readily, to be quoted in debate or in court. But full recall requires regular reciting to oneself (the Qur'an takes a month to recite), and few books are so widely valued that they are kept memorised in full; hence, books remain necessary.

How, then, did this vast book stock get produced and distributed? And, given the size of this market, what was the demand for what sort of books, and how was it supplied? Did the book market 'work' and, if not, why not? Let me at the outset reverse normal scholarly procedure and outline for purposes of discussion the broad historical hypotheses I have to suggest.

A possible periodisation: 1400–1900

A schematic historical periodisation of the book trade in West Africa generally might be as follows:

The fifteenth to sixteenth centuries

Initially, books were imported at high prices; before then, books and paper had simply been scarce and unmarketed. The new imports included 'classical' texts (some in new copies?) and a few newly written books available in Cairo or Maghribi bookshops. The date of this importing boom and the particular composition of the stock of books then for sale in northern African bookshops will have largely determined the contents of West African libraries – and also, it could be argued, the shape of West African scholarship. The news of a new book in town was a notable event – for example, in the Kano of both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the *Kano Chronicle* reflects the excitement brought by the arrival of specific texts.³¹ In the more sophisticated market of early sixteenth-century Timbuktu, Leo Africanus refers to books being the most profitable import there.³² Fine letter-writing paper, and possibly fine inks, were also early imports for West African royal chanceries; and presumably merchants had some paper for accounts, legal documents and letters.

The sixteenth to seventeenth centuries

In this period, the high prices of books made it profitable to import paper in bulk and to make copies of books locally in West Africa – particularly of books in great demand. Paper was not produced in West Africa owing to the lack of flax and the shortage of linen rags. Cotton was apparently unsuitable for paper and papyrus had gone out of use. The first mention of paper as a standard item of trade to Borno seems to be the précis of a letter sent from Tripoli to Borno (quoted by the late JE Lavers, from his translation of Girard).³³ At the same time, around 1635 AD, Takruri merchants returning from Egypt

included paper in their merchandise.³⁴ The shift to copying may partly explain the otherwise surprisingly wide distribution and popularity of al-Sanusi's *al-'Aqida al-sughra*. Copying was evidently cheap in Timbuktu – for example, supplied with paper, the copyist was paid merely a mithqal per volume for his work, whereas the proof-reader got half a mithqal per volume. Presumably as a consequence, book prices fell to four or five mithqals (or one-fifteenth the value of a slave) by the 1570s.³⁵ (A mithqal is a unit of weight, equivalent to a little over three-and-a-half grams, used with reference to gold or silver.)

Timbuktu, we know, was rich in books, but what of Borno? I suggest that there the relatively 'trivial' books about Mai Idris Alooma, in which his military campaigns are described, would otherwise stand out as an odd use of paper if paper had been scarce. Similar long, 'secular' texts, however, were being written in paper-rich Timbuktu at about this time – most notably the *Tarikh al-Sudan* and the *Tarikh al-fattash* – so that it is tempting to identify this period as a new phase in the book culture of West Africa, when quantities of paper could be devoted to original compositions on non-religious matters. A question remains why there aren't more such surviving secular texts: must we assume that there were no potential historians (or suitable kings for celebrating) in other states or, alternatively, that all other such 'trivial' texts have been lost without trace? Not being textbooks, were they not copied and re-copied? By contrast, the brief legal documents, the *mahrams* awarding grants to people or places, do survive in Borno; they had at least a monetary value to their owners and were far from 'trivial', so scarcely an extravagant use of paper.

The seventeenth to eighteenth centuries

In the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, to maintain the copying trade's control over the market, de facto restrictions may have been introduced on the borrowing of books for copying by strangers. As a result, there would have been informal networks of book owners, and these scholarly networks effectively constituted 'schools' noted perhaps as much for their texts (and their commentaries on them) as for their general teaching. Meanwhile, these partial monopolies helped to distort the book market and led to scholars compiling their own *précis*, with passages or quotations taken from authors considered particularly relevant to the scholar's own teaching. Was this a kind of 'reader' both for his students and, as an *aide-mémoire*, for himself? In short, the trade in rare and recent books was 'privatised', and this only increased the tendency for books to be treated as 'secrets' and for scholars to regard themselves as a closed 'craft'. This would explain the uneven distribution of books (for example, Jenne's riches contrasted with Hamdullahi's poverty nearby in Masina), or the reputation of the Kel el-Souk scholars. I have, however, no specific references to restrictions on book loans – only to those whose generosity in lending a book was notable enough to record. Thus 'Uthman dan Fodio had to travel to Tafadek, north of Agades in the Air mountains, to find a text of Firuzabadi's *al-Qamus al-muhit* which he could copy; presumably he took his supply of paper with him. It was a potentially valuable work: in sixteenth-century Timbuktu a copy had sold for 80 mithqals, more than a slave was worth.³⁶ But are we to assume that c.1800 there simply

was not another more accessible copy in the region, or that Uthman knew that the Tafadek text was 'open' to him? It does suggest that demand, at any rate, was unsatisfied. References to scholars failing to return books they had borrowed are easier to find: for example, my Sokoto colleague Professor Sambo Junaidu tells me Shaykh Uthman (c.1800) complained about this in a Fulfulde poem. Sokoto was not unique in this regard; there is a letter in the British Museum by a Sierra Leonean scholar trying to retrieve books he lent to a colleague. Tales about who could not be trusted with a book were commonplace in the twentieth century. Scholars also tended to keep the exact contents of their collections a secret, with good reason. For example, a very rare book, Ahmad Baba's early seventeenth-century text on using tobacco (*al-Lam'fi'l-ishara li-hukm tibgh*), was 'stolen' almost as soon as its location in a library became known in Sokoto. It was, however, eventually 'recovered' through networks of persuasion quite unknown to me. In this context, though scholars tended not to disclose what books they had, they might bring one or two out specially for a particular visitor. A notable instance of this was Alhaji Nasiru Kabara who suddenly one afternoon, after months of talk, showed Professor MA al-Hajj the only known copy of the important seventeenth-century text *Asl al-wangariyyin*. Similarly, I was never allowed direct access to the sultan's library in Sokoto; books from it were always brought out to me by the Alkalin Lardi Yahaya. Hence even the size of large personal libraries is rarely known until the owner's death requires an inventory to be made for the formal purpose of dividing up the inheritance.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

In reaction to these restrictions, the process of import substitution was extended further in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by scholars starting to write their own original compositions, sometimes in the local language. The vast majority of early texts were in Arabic. The three leading Sokoto scholars wrote over 300 prose works between them, while a contemporary, the erudite scholar Abd al-Qadir b. al-Mustafa, wrote on a distinct range of secular subjects among his total of 48 works.³⁷ Local compositions in poetry, some of it in *ajami*, were committed to paper; so too were marginal commentaries in *ajami*. Copying of poetry, especially the shorter poems, was apparently commonplace; it seems probable there was also some trade in at least the more devotional verse. In mid-nineteenth-century Sokoto, poems first written in Arabic were being translated into Fulfulde (and later into Hausa); a new audience, possibly women Yan Taru, would sing them as they walked (I have heard men singing them as they cycle; others while they drive). Fulfulde became increasingly the language of a small elite and of pastoralists. The domestic language of the vast majority was Hausa, the lingua franca used by the newly acquired slaves who might outnumber the free by 30 to 1, or more out on the isolated, slave-run farmsteads. These translations have sometimes survived when the Arabic originals have been lost. Prose in *ajami* Hausa is exceedingly rare; the earliest I know is dateable to around the 1870s or 1880s and is the product of a local, rural religious group. It was the early colonial period that saw the rise of Hausa prose in new compositions which Europeans and the new *boko* (book) school-

children and missionaries could read. By the 1950s Arabic prose texts were being translated into Hausa and printed, a process culminating in the rendering of the Holy Qur'an into Hausa in 1982 by Abubakar Gummi.³⁸

Other languages were more difficult to read in *ajami*. As already mentioned, Kanembu is found in marginal annotations and there is a body of Kanuri religious poetry in Borno, but I don't think its use was ever as common in Borno as Fulfulde or Hausa became in the Sokoto Caliphate. Heavily tonal languages like Nupe, for example, or Yoruba can be rendered in *ajami* but it is usually only the author that can re-read them; in this sense, such texts in *ajami* become an *aide-mémoire* only for the composer and are not sold. There is a short poem in Nupe *ajami* by the early nineteenth-century reformer Abd al-Rahman Chacha that remains unread; and there are letters in Yoruba *ajami* that date to the 1930s. Presumably other such 'secret' texts remain to be discovered. The language of *jinn* could be written in *ajami*; there is a brief passage in *jinni* prose in a book (*Ishara wa-i'lam*) of Muhammad Bello's, but it is presumably a transcription of spoken *jinni*, a metalanguage one could hear in spirit-possession (*bori*) séances – as one still can today. I have never found evidence of 'automatic writing' using *jinni* – or indeed any more ordinary – language under 'inspiration'.

This new literature, along with the new audiences created by the success of the *jihād* and the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, would appear to have stimulated the revival of a local book trade in the nineteenth century. As already mentioned, each of the three main leaders wrote some hundred prose works of varying length but many of these books, unlike others, were widely circulated as guidance to the new generation of emirs and to officials that governed the new state – matters of law as well as practical tips on good governance. Other texts of theirs were works of specialist scholarship. There were also texts on Sufi mysticism for members of the Qadiriyya *tariqa*, which by the mid-nineteenth century was being rivalled by the new Tijaniyya *tariqa* – its shaykhs then produced their own literature in both prose and verse. All these devotional writings needed to circulate among a much wider readership than had existed hitherto.

The late nineteenth century

Finally, in the late nineteenth century, frivolous books of local authorship were composed and committed to writing, as was the lengthy book of doctrine in *ajami* prose mentioned earlier. One such poem, in good classical Arabic and preserved in the Sarkin Kano's collection in the old Shahuci judicial school library (now burned), was strikingly erotic – pornographic even? – and amusing; I remember John Hunwick reading it aloud in December 1961 with much laughter. I don't think we have ever seen its like, but I presume scholars, more often than we now know, did write such *jeux d'esprit* for their own amusement and passed them around among their close friends in the pre-colonial period. The extent to which there was a market for either frivolous books and *ajami* prose is unclear, but as they are relatively rare, one must assume they did not 'catch on'. Certainly recent scholars, like the late Wazirin Sokoto and the late Wazirin

Gwandu, enjoyed composing Arabic poems as they listened to politicians' interminable speeches or were driven on long car journeys to meetings. These were written down later by friends or even by their drivers who heard them being composed and recited. The poems did not, however, enter the book trade at the time.

To sum up, the main centre for the importation of books during the boom period when prices and demand were highest appears to have been Timbuktu and related markets, with Wangarawa scholar-traders and Fulbe scholars en route to and from Mecca being the main distributors from there eastwards. It seems probable too that Timbuktu, along with Borno, then also pioneered the substitution of bulk paper imports in place of texts. Indeed, their role in the paper trade may have made it easy for scholars in the two places to keep records and write works of local history; elsewhere, the price and scarcity of paper may have inhibited using so much paper for such secular uses.

If, as seems likely, Borno's development later as a centre of the book trade (with Kano as a related market) was built less on importing books than on copying them, it is nonetheless probable that some of the earliest non-Maghribi texts came to Borno from Egypt, Tripoli or Tunis and went into West African circulation from there. But one can draw only very limited inferences of provenance, given the range of contacts available to West African scholars through such less conspicuous merchant networks as the Ibadis and through their own travels, undertaken sometimes in search of a specific book which they needed to copy.

Finally, in the nineteenth century, first the Sokoto Caliphate and then other *jihadi* centres evidently became foci for a regional trade in locally composed texts, and so helped to revive a general market for books which recently, it seems, had come to be found only in private circulation. We know that, once the *jihad* was successful, Sokoto thronged with Arab visitors seeking (and winning) favours; perhaps to gain a good reception these visitors had brought books as gifts. The import trade, however, appears not to have revived. It is for this reason, then, that 'Uthman dan Fodio and his family (especially Muhammad Bello as *amir al-mu'minin* in Sokoto) may have specifically sent out emissaries to buy books in North Africa and Egypt and bring them back. We have no *rihlat* recounting these book-buying expeditions, nor lists of what they brought back; all we know is that Fulbe scholars had indeed travelled for books before the *jihad*. The *jihad*, with all its hasty escapes and raids, may well have disrupted scholars' collections. We know that after at least three attacks pages of books were recorded as lying on the ground, blown about in storms (and presumably damaged drastically by damp). 'Books blowing around' became a figure of speech in recounting attacks ('wrongfully') made by *jihadi* fighters on learned Muslim settlements such as Yandoto or Kalembaina, or much earlier at Gimbana. Zamfara scholars much later said that Muhammad Bello had taken away, as booty, many if not all the books of the region (it was an area noted for its learning). Did Muslim scholars opposed to the *jihad* forfeit their libraries? Did victory hugely augment private collections in Sokoto, Katsina and Kano? If so, nothing is

mentioned of all this in the histories. Finally, we know that the loss at the disastrous Battle of Tsuntsua in 1805 of some 1 800 scholars and students who knew the Holy Qur'an by heart represented a huge loss of 'book stock', albeit in this instance kept in the head.³⁹ But what other books had they memorised? That, intellectually speaking, may have been the more crucial loss. However, books are vulnerable even when left behind in store. Boxes may keep out rain from a leaking roof or a flooded floor, but a worse danger comes from ants and termites whose destruction may continue unseen and unnoticed. Traditionally, books could be kept in a granary, a structure specifically designed to keep ants away from the unthreshed grain stored there as a reserve against famine, often for years on end. Indeed it could be that 'granary' became used colloquially as a metaphor for 'library'.⁴⁰ Granaries, however, can burn, and towns were regularly set alight by raiders; residents in panic emptied their rooms of precious items and looting was a problem in the few cases we have any data on.⁴¹ Indeed, Bello's first copy of Euclid had been destroyed in a house fire in 1827. Bound books are relatively hard to burn, but traditionally none of the pre-colonial copies were bound; they were kept as loose sheets between two boards tied with a leather strap. But once the sheets got loose from these boards and the wind caught them, the scattered pages would burn readily. We have no way of calculating the extent of book losses but the danger was real, as the 1960s burning of the emir of Kano's library in the Shahuci judicial school in Birnin Kano testifies. Similarly, there is considerable anxiety now over how the early nineteenth-century library of Muhammad Bello has fared since it was removed from the palace in Sokoto in 1988; the talk is of termites and ants spoiling some books.

Book merchandising

The hypothesis here is that book importing as a business died out at an early date, being replaced on the one hand by personal importing of single texts, and on the other by a local copying industry. Bookselling – if not the business of importing books – only revived in the nineteenth century, and such detail as we have on the local book trade refers to this and the early colonial period.

Apart from the smaller peripatetic dealers in books and pamphlets who had no formal shop, there were retailers who had their own area in the marketplace. Both the two main categories of purchaser, the professional student or scholar and the government official (with the latter being the bigger spender?) were habitually mobile, and this allowed the book trade to be unusually centralised; for example, within the Sokoto Caliphate, bookshops were largely confined to Kano, as indeed was the paper trade. The *waziri* of Sokoto, when he spoke to me about it in June 1983, could not offhand recall the names of any nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century booksellers or copyists in Sokoto. Indeed, the Sokoto caliphal correspondence, preserved in the *waziri*'s house in Sokoto and dating mainly to the 1880s and 1890s, includes a few letters in which paper is being purchased or obtained from Kano. The question remains: were there

no paper merchants in Sokoto, or was the *waziri*'s house de facto the source of paper for local scholars? There is no evidence of direct importation of paper into Sokoto on a regular basis, though Sokoto in the 1820s was a much larger centre than Kano. By contrast, Alhaji Mahmudu Koki (1894–1976) recalls his early life as a scholar and copyist in Kano, and gives details of the Kano paper and book trades in the early colonial period.⁴² The Tripoli merchants there kept stocks of paper in their houses, from where retailers from the market took their supplies. Writing paper was not, of course, the only type of paper in demand. In the mid-nineteenth century the 'common paper' that Heinrich Barth, the famous German explorer who visited the region in the 1850s, saw in markets was for wrapping the cloth that had been woven or dyed around Kano for export. The wrapping carried the name of the merchant, should the cloth prove faulty and need returning. The wrapping paper was the same brand (*tre lune*) as the better sort of writing paper.⁴³ The criterion of quality was the paper's degree of absorbency: too absorbent, and the ink spread, making the writing illegible. But if the clothmaker's name was written legibly on the wrapping paper, that quality of paper must not have been very absorbent – or else an area of it was 'sized' first. Almost all writing paper had a watermark, hence our knowledge of the brands used.⁴⁴ While writing paper was relatively stiff, it could be folded; it was not brittle like later paper. Letters from the *waziri*'s chancery had a distinct way of being folded, and were carried in pouches of indigo-dyed cloth. Letters were written on the same standard size of paper as books, but book pages were never folded. A torn page in a book could be mended by being carefully sewed along the tear with cotton; some quite ancient books have been repaired in this way, but I don't know of a way to date the repair without scientifically examining the thread to see if it is the old pre-colonial tree cotton. Errors in a text could be corrected by attaching to the page (with a thread) a small supplementary piece of paper. Charms (*laya*) were also a common use of paper; prayers were written upon it, sometimes with small twigs or leaves added. The whole packet was then folded and kept in a small leather pouch for hanging round the neck or waist, especially of young children. There were often many charms on a single cord.

Multiple copies of texts were probably not stocked in bookshops; instead, books were copied on demand and thus required time to organise. Similarly, no doubt because time was not the essence, specific books might have been ordered from Cairo. However, more often individuals returning from pilgrimage must have brought in single copies for their own and their friends' use, in which case copies of these books probably never reached a bookshop and therefore never attained a widespread circulation. Indeed, one suspects that to hand over for public sale a rare book from one's own collection was equivalent to distributing one's assets, just as today there is a clear reluctance on the part of scholars to divulge their total book stock. Nor is there evidence of the old Baghdadi practice of a scholar hiring a bookshop for a whole night to use as a temporary library.⁴⁵ To run a bookshop may have been rather trickier than one perhaps imagines. Bookshops presumably provided the 'classics', the local favourites and best-sellers, rather than rare or recently written works. They may have stocked, though, the

occasional fine 'presentation' copy, particularly of the Holy Qur'an. Similarly, small books apparently dominated the 'mass' market. Some of Shaykh 'Uthman dan Fodio's books were seemingly designed for this end of the trade. But the bulk of personal libraries (if the National Archives' collection is anything to go by; it is catalogued not by author but by bookseller – 'provenance') must have consisted of poetry, chapters excerpted from books, or simply fragments of larger texts. It seems that the resulting collections were perhaps not unlike students' own 'libraries' of xeroxes today. This then raises the question of what constitutes 'a book'.

From a reader's perspective, a 'book' may be simply the part of a longer work that he uses and needs to have a copy of – in this sense, it is the paper equivalent of the extensive quotation he may have in his head. From the author's perspective, such an excerpt is only part of what he wrote under that title. From the perspective of the executor of an inheritance, a book is not an indivisible whole – it can be divided up among the dead man's inheritors; a book, the executor would say, does not lose its value by being split up. Some scholars disagree and insist that a book is kept in its entirety (after all, no one divides up a horse or a gown), but I think the fact that people can countenance the division of a book into separable parts does suggest that a book need not be considered a single whole. After all, the Holy Qur'an is divided into *suras*, and it is *the* book par excellence. Similarly, many of the books by Shaykh 'Uthman and 'Abdullahi dan Fodio consist of quotations and citations, thus providing the student reader with a very useful selection of sentences to quote in a debate or in making a decision. In a single work, you have a précis of a whole library, many 'books' in one. It may well be that the original, whole book may not exist in any local library, the author having himself taken the quotation from an earlier précis. In short, one cannot tell, merely from the presence of a quotation, that the original work in its entirety was part of the local book stock. Since quite a few 'books' in a collection have no beginning or end, it is not always clear, except to the erudite, where the excerpt comes from. Classics and standard school texts are commonplace and obvious, but a proportion remains listed as 'anonymous' (Bani Ulama-i) in the National Archives in Kaduna. It is a common enough category that has confused researchers unused to the archives' codes: 'BU' has become the archives' most prolific author.

Forgeries pose problems, too. They are mainly of two kinds: books probably composed in the nineteenth century but attributed (wrongly, or should one say 'optimistically?') to a well-known author; and books wholly concocted in the twentieth century and attributed to a nineteenth-century author. The first is more common, and open to dispute. Frequently the text is about a contested element of Muslim life – such as the Mahdiyya or the Tijaniyya – for which there is evidence that the purported author would not in fact have written in such a manner. This often applies to texts where any authorial name and the conventional opening sentences are absent. A common example is a poem (against the invading Christians) attributed to the last independent *amir al-mu'minin*, Attahiru, but internal evidence makes it clear it was not composed by

him personally; it reflects his sentiments, no doubt, but modern researchers seem unworried about accepting a conventional (but inaccurate) attribution. Similarly, some late translations of poems into Hausa are attributed to the author of the early original (Fulfulde) texts, even when we may know the name of the translator. Another important misattribution concerns the *wird* or *Lamma balagtu* which has been printed and widely circulated in a Hausa translation: it is usually said to be by Shaykh ‘Uthman, as it describes his vision of the Prophet and Shaykh Abd al-Qadir Jilani c.1794 by whom he was given the sword of truth (*sayf al-haqq*). The book is unlike any text that the shaykh ever wrote and has no conventional start. It could possibly be an anonymous disciple’s transcription of an oral account that he heard Shaykh ‘Uthman give in Sifawa (the shaykh would have been speaking in Fulfulde or Arabic originally), but the one account we do have of the shaykh’s oral teaching there has the author’s name on it. Again, modern scholars like the late Mervyn Hiskett use it as if it was unproblematic.⁴⁶ The text is indeed crucial to our understanding of how the *jihad* was, or could be, legitimated – but does that make it too crucial to dismiss as a possible invention? Should we simply leave it, saying that it may be that the *story* is true but not its status as a formally authored ‘book’?

There may well be more forgeries than we know of, but one of the better known is *Kanz al-awlad*, in part a history of the *jihad* purportedly written by Muhammad Sambo b. Ahmed around 1818–19 but actually produced by a scholar in Gusau in the early 1950s. I have seen only two copies (a private one in Kano; Kano has very close connections to Gusau); a copy of the book has now gone into the Bayero University Library. Wazirin Sokoto Alhaji Junaidu knew of the book’s existence and said it was fake; Professor MA al-Hajj knew of it too and dismissed it on internal evidence, but recently Professor John Hunwick has included it in his bibliography of Sokoto *jihadi* works as if it was authentic. He adds it ‘is not well regarded in Sokoto and has, for this reason, been neglected by scholars’;⁴⁷ he has not, however, studied the text himself. It may yet gain a life of its own and be cited in doctoral theses as a historical source. Otherwise, forgeries are apparently rare. I have heard the historian DJM Muffet firmly declare an early colonial text to be a forgery, but he had no serious evidence for saying so (except that it went against his general argument). In general, in a culture of hand-copying (as distinct from a bibliographer’s culture), a forgery has to be accepted as genuine if many copies are to be made. Might, therefore, wide distribution be one test of a text’s authenticity?

My only first-hand evidence for the culture of copying comes from the early to mid-1960s (before ‘xerox’ machines were available), when one could still ‘order’ copies of manuscripts from scribes, and the delivered manuscript would then be proof-read by another scholar. The sums paid were very small, but everyone knew whose handwriting was good and whose was not, and who was a really careful copyist. But the real problem lay in ensuring that the master text from which the copy was made was good. Certain scholars were known for never returning the manuscripts they had borrowed for copying. Hence, I took to photographing manuscripts in the house of the books’ owner;

it preserved accuracy as well as recorded the actual hand of the original copyist. Early 'classic' hands (that is, c.1830 or before) were recognisably different from later hands (c.1890 or today): paper was scarcer and handwriting was smaller, neater. I am not sure exactly when the model of good handwriting changed, let alone why – my guess is that it was as late as post-1875. It is indeed tempting to speculate whether the last two pre-colonial *waziris* instituted a regular chancery in their house in Sokoto, with a standardised style of script. Earlier correspondence of this 'standard' type has not been preserved, and one wonders why. Much earlier, more personal letters had been collected into a single book – but they are letters of advice, not short bureaucratic notes to or from an 'office'. A merchant's notebook from 1830s Katsina has survived (in the National Archives, Kaduna), but it is unique: it contains some references to loans and repayments written higgledy-piggledy (and almost illegibly) on pages of a bound journal; it belonged to one of the Wangarawa merchants based there at that time. Much later and more local is a surviving inventory of a recently deceased official's property in Kano,⁴⁸ and there is a list of grain brought in to Kano's Nasarawa palace from the emir's slave estates. These suggest an ordinary bureaucratic usage of paper, with texts written in classical Arabic. By contrast, judicial records of the emir's court in Kano were instituted only in the colonial period.⁴⁹ Thus only a limited amount of state material, it seems, was regularly committed to writing; the vast majority of paper was used for books. It is possible that an *allo*, a wooden, reusable writing board, was used previously for temporary records and calculations. Primarily made as 'exercise books' for teaching young children how to read and write the Arabic script, they were (and are) ubiquitous and cheap. They last well, too, even if they are bulky to store (and burn easily, it is said). But I have never seen them used as 'notepads'; as students, we used them to make *rubutu*, the tonic medicine people drink made of the ink in which sacred words have been written. Such boards may have been sanctified in a way that paper was not. In this context, stories of how a *mallam's* *allo* boards were allowed to burn were told to me to illustrate how deeply shocking was the behaviour of a certain notoriously violent district head. Nonetheless, some books are sanctified, most notably the Holy Qur'an – it cannot be placed on the ground, nor can another book be placed on top of it. An urban riot could be set off by a (stereotyped) rumour that a sheet of paper with Arabic on it had been found dirtied and lying on the ground, the suspicion being that some Christian had deliberately besmirched it and so the Christian community needed to be drastically punished. Whatever the case, traditional paper is rarely destroyed deliberately or even simply thrown away.

Although calligraphy was never the exquisite art form it had become in the Middle East (I know of no public 'sign' from nineteenth-century Nigeria, nor were the caliphal seals elegantly complex or beautifully inscribed), nonetheless a fine book-hand for writing was much admired. Borno hands have remained much the most distinguished in Nigeria: Holy Qur'ans copied there are the most prized, and young scholars were sent there to learn that hand (and the Qur'an copyists' trade) – their products were exported

in the 1820s to North Africa. Fine copying, with the use of two or three colours, was a source of income that persisted into the twentieth century. One of the most famous copyists, Shaykh Bala, was paid little for an act of skilled reverence (it is said he got £5, c.1959), yet the businessman who commissioned it then had it printed by photo-offset and made a fortune from selling the printed copies at an inflated price; the businessman kept the fortune to himself. The copyist was so disgusted that he never did any copying of texts again. *Mai belt*, as his copy is now called, may be a museum piece, but it stands also for the gross commercialisation of a traditional skill linked to the old-style piety of scholars. Certainly, in the 1960s copyists could be ‘bullied’ into working for low prices; it was considered not so much a commercial act as a dutiful work of piety. In that way, it resembles bookbinders in the past in Europe: a much underpaid expertise that required a wide range of skills. Bookbinding, I think, was never developed in West Africa, though bound books were clearly known. Books were also stored on their sides, not on shelves on end – this may reflect the relatively small size and personal nature of collections. Public libraries with huge stocks of manuscript books were a late-colonial innovation. As no *waqf* institutions existed in the Sokoto Caliphate – unlike in North Africa – large houses (‘lineages’) acted as centres of charity and knowledge.

Book production in the nineteenth century

The hypothesis here is that the importation of paper and the copying of (previously imported) books on a large scale date back to the sixteenth century, though the range of titles reproduced narrowed until the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the revival both in the local authorship and in the local marketing of books led to an increase in copying and book production generally. Again, much of what follows relates to this later period, when the structure of the industry and market conditions had radically altered; for it appears that the nineteenth-century book was relatively cheap to produce.

Paper

Quantities

Imported from Tripoli, the yearly supply in 1767 was some 2 000 reams, equivalent to 4 million folios or 80 camel loads.⁵⁰ In Senegambia, paper constituted 3 per cent of imports in 1718 but Curtin does not quote the actual quantities.⁵¹ At 230 folios to a Qur’an, the Tripoli trade was enough to provide paper for some 16 000 Qur’ans. But Tripoli was not, of course, the only North African source, nor was Senegambia the only south-western one. The overall quantity imported must have been substantially greater for West Africa taken as a whole.

Sources

Much of the nineteenth-century imported paper was of Italian manufacture, produced specifically for the Levantine market. The crescent watermark has been common since

at least 1320 but was increasingly to be found in North Africa and to the south (for example, Darfur) by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The *tre lune* (three crescents) paper with the names of the various Galvani⁵² has achieved a certain fame.⁵³ It was especially strong, relatively cheap, and of third to fourth quality. 'Crescent' papers were also manufactured in Turkey, but I have not seen figures for the quantities, if any, imported into northern Africa.⁵⁴ In short, it may be that 'crescent' paper has to be treated as a type – size and weight – rather than a brand name.

The size of page used for books was, I suggest, a quarter Mansuri (very close to a crown quarto).⁵⁵ Because books in West Africa were seldom written in the margins of other books, the folio size half Mansuri was not used as it was in North Africa. An octavo page (one-eighth Mansuri) was used for pocket prayer books. In these formats, no decorations were usually added, either as a border around a page or as part of the title page. Rarely was an ornamental frontispiece or tailpiece included.

Prices

Paper

In 1805 at Sansanding on the Niger River, a ream cost 20 000 cowries. In 1861 at Tripoli it was 12 000 a ream which, given a 100 per cent mark-up (for the costs of transport across the Sahara, etc.), in Kano would come to 24 000 a ream. By 1910 the price in Kano was 26 000 a ream.⁵⁶ Sold by the sheet, the profit margin was considerable: 60 cowries bought a sheet of paper, the same price as half a pound in weight of honey. A page was 10 to 15 cowries.⁵⁷ In the 1820s, 'writing paper, on which the profit is enormous' was the first item in a list of articles most in demand in Borno⁵⁸ – no doubt to be used in the export trade in Qur'ans. Contrary to expectations, therefore, paper seems to have been relatively cheap throughout the nineteenth century, though because of inflation it was even cheaper by the century's end. Yet with a sheet of paper to sell, reported Tomas Edward Bowdich in 1819, an 'inferior Moor' could live a month in Kumasi.⁵⁹

Books

Valuations are found in documents relating to the disposal of property at a person's death. Thus the Madakin Kano's six books were worth only 8 000 cowries, but they were, it seems, only part-books and common ones at that.⁶⁰ How these valuations were arrived at in the nineteenth century is not stated, but the values given for books are unlikely to reflect very closely the current price of a new copy. If these old books were disposed of to book dealers, or even to students, they must have undercut the market price. Indeed, the price of books seems to have been relatively low – perhaps 4 000 or 5 000 cowries was average for a standard text (or excerpt?). But a Qur'an might be worth 20 000 – in 1820s Borno, fine Qur'ans were being exported to 'Barbary or Egypt' and selling there 'for 40 or 50 dollars each'.⁶¹ As letter writers, scribes were paid some three or four times the wage of an unskilled labourer. Copyists' labour must have been rewarded in other ways.

Labour

Students

A student's graduation was signalled by his completing a copy of the Qur'an. This was traditionally given to his teacher, who in turn presumably sold it – but not always so: a student might buy himself a big gown and turban from the proceeds of his first Qur'an, says Mahmudu Koki.⁶² If we assume 1 per cent of all students in any one year actually finished copying the Qur'an, that implies a production of some 1 600 Qur'ans a year (on my student population estimates given earlier). Borno Qur'ans were of a notably high quality and were exported, and it is possible that demand for Qur'ans was satisfied by Borno's production. Borno attracted students (and therefore cheap copyists?) by its specialisation in Qur'anic studies. Perhaps, then, one should speak of a Borno 'school of calligraphy', since handwriting was the other economic skill which students went there to learn. It is not known which speciality started first – Qur'anic studies or calligraphic copying.

Professional copyists

The value of a book for sale will have depended in part on the quality of the copyist's handwriting. A scholar like 'Abdullahi dan Fodio – so Dr ADH Bivar was told – kept his hand in by doing some copying by the light of a small oil lamp, every single evening, whatever the circumstances. But personal copies, made by less conscientious scholars in their own hand, will have had less resale value. The size of the standard script grew larger as the nineteenth century wore on; the early, *jihadi* hands are much smaller and neater, maybe reflecting personal, rather than professional, styles. Similarly, the various scribes' hands in the Sokoto chancery suggest that an individual's handwriting was more fluid, less formal. But a professional script, let alone the identities of the professional copyists, remains to be established. Nor do we even know if it was always merely a part-time occupation. As in other trades, student labour will presumably have undercut prices for all but the finest work.⁶³

The book trade, like religious learning, was probably also subject to certain culturally imposed restraints. Despite being bought and sold in the marketplace, books, by virtue of their also being religious texts, may on occasion have been less liable to direct market forces, with 'alms' replacing price and labour an act of piety. Indeed it seems likely that the writing of charms subsidised scholarly work, in effect paying for the labour expended in book production.

Other costs

Apart from paper, none of the other materials used had to be imported; some were made by the copyists themselves. But books were not usually finished externally with any lavishness, however lovingly the pages might be repaired inside. In short, books were not made specifically to attract the collector.

Inks and pens

All supplies of black, red and yellow inks were manufactured locally, though certain

ingredients might be imported for special inks. Inks made from carbon or vegetable tannin (for example, vitex) were used on wooden 'slates', while ferro-tannic inks were used on paper. The carbon and vegetable inks did not stain the wooden writing boards, and could be safely drunk as medicine. Pens, made from cornstalks, were readily available locally, as were erasing materials.

Bindings

The finished book was not usually sewn, though the pages were enclosed within a cover or box of two boards, usually made of goatskin stiffened by cardboard or membrane, and tied together with a thong, as were the earliest Muslim texts. I have seen no reference to why books were not bound in the later Middle Eastern manner, but there seems never to have developed in West Africa a specific craft of elaborate bookbinding such as is found in North African cities. One consequence is that a large number of texts are incomplete, either through loss or through deliberate division of the book when apportioning an inheritance among heirs.⁶⁴

Storage

As with the bindings, so too with storage – the costs were kept low. Books were packed in specially designed goatskin leather bags (*gafaka*) which were sewn smooth side in to a standard format. They could hold more than one book at a time. A special storeroom held the bags of books, and in these conditions books deteriorated little; even dampness does not affect the ferro-tannic inks. Furthermore, as religious books date less rapidly than most commercial items, there was probably little problem over old stock, especially if a common source for the market in books was old texts unwanted by the inheritors of a dead scholar.

Substitute materials

There was apparently no suitable local material to use as a substitute for imported good-quality white paper.

Boards

The most widely used 'substitute' for ordinary paper was the wooden 'slate' or board, used as a school exercise book and no doubt also as 'scrap paper' for trying out compositions. Although there is no fixed size for these boards, the majority take a quarto Mansuri page of text. The width of the board is of course limited by the girth of the tree used, and it is possible this was one factor in helping to determine which page size became standard.

Leather

As far as I know, neither vellum nor parchment was used for books or documents, though there were both sufficient hides and the technology available, at least in the earlier periods, to manufacture either. (A Holy Qur'an written on vellum in Ceuta in northern Morocco, however, is the oldest book in Fondo Ka'ti and dates to AD 1198.⁶⁵) Paper made of bark was not used either, though bark cloth was available locally, if not to an adequately high quality to compete with paper. One characteristic of paper is that

it cannot be rubbed down (as vellum can) and reused as a palimpsest; this means we have not lost books due to reuse. Vellum would have been the longer-lasting material, had it not been wholly replaced by paper in the Muslim world at a very early date.⁶⁶

Other papers

Not all paper imported was for writing; wrapping paper was relatively common, especially for the cloth trade in which high-value items like turbans and gowns of beaten indigo might justify the cost of wrapping. Presumably some of this paper was later used by *mallams* to make charms which did not have to be easily legible. Similarly, such paper was used occasionally for some of the early colonial ‘treaties’.

Other materials

Small prayers were written on the edges of the large white cotton flags used in *jihad*, but no large-scale inscriptions were put on them or on the later flags made of damask; no stencils were used, either. Nor were there texts on, say, glazed tiles, as used in Middle Eastern buildings. The public display of texts, on walls for example, inside or on the outside of buildings, was not a feature, either. Walls were made of clay (unlike in Timbuktu, no cut stone was ever used) and sometimes plastered, the materials for which could contain impurities like animal urine or dung. Oil-based paint was not readily available and only indigo-blue and white-earth washes were used on walls.⁶⁷ Hence in the nineteenth century the paper page was the main medium for decorative work (if any), with coloured inks rather than paint. The calculations done for divination were drawn in sand held within a wooden tray (if in a marketplace) or simply on the ground; the finished squares, however, might be committed to paper. I have never seen pre-colonial maps or diagrams drawn on large sheets of paper except as reproductions of those made specifically for European visitors; again, for simple geographical diagrams, the sand where the discussants sat was used.⁶⁸

Conclusion

This chapter shows how relatively little detailed knowledge we have of Sokoto’s book culture – as yet. But by writing about it here not only have I suggested how significant a subject it is, but I trust I might also have persuaded some reader to pursue the whole topic in depth and consider the implications of bookishness. There clearly were boom periods – first the sixteenth then the nineteenth centuries – with different texts coming to hand; different interests too. But I think overall the book trade did not ‘work’ in West Africa. For example, in 1900 there were, it seems, few if any ‘modern’ books either available to buy or in circulation in Kano – books on the key Islamist themes that were current in, say, Egypt and causing great debate amongst the scholars of the day as they faced the new Christian colonialism. There was no *waqf*-financed library buying books systematically, no bookseller importing contentious texts for an avid reading public. There undoubtedly were well-read scholars in Sokoto and Kano, but their needs seem

not to have been met by the book trade. They relied more on a 'classical' book stock, not a contemporary one. For precedents on how to handle barbarian invaders, they turned to learned discussions that took place at the Mongols' horrific sacking of Baghdad in 1258, when the Tigris was blocked with books and its water was black with ink (and blood). Scholars newly returned from Egypt (like Hamman Joda, the *qadi* at Yola) spoke about the threat from Europeans and must have heard the intellectual ferment in Cairo, but the relevant books did not come back with them, it seems (or, if they did, they remained wholly private copies). One explanation could be that, as people seriously thought the world was nearing its end, it was the core texts of Islam, not modern speculations from abroad, that had priority.

If there was no systematic importation of books (but remember, there was a big book export from 1820s Borno), then the intellectual milieu depended on individual bibliophiles or networks. But it may have been that local scholars, in the main, saw themselves as self-sufficient, and their book stock adequate for their needs. The intellectually curious among them went off to North Africa or towards Mecca, abandoning West Africa as an academic backwater, however good a site it was for *jihad*. It was, after all, a long-standing tradition to seek further education in Cairo, where a place (*riwaq*) had once been maintained for students from Borno (Sokoto seems never to have established such places). Did the local shortage of books lead to a pre-colonial version of the 'brain drain'?

Anyone who has worked in the Nigerian university system over the last 40 years will find echoes of this past history in the state of today's book stock. University libraries no longer systematically buy the latest works, university bookshops have mainly closed down, and such bookstores as do still function stock primarily school books, not the latest monographs or even advanced textbooks. This means that scholars, if they are to be 'up to date', have to have collections of their own, getting books sent out to them or making trips themselves. This results in the average author of an academic article having to write without having first seen the latest research. These authors are stuck in an intellectual time warp dating back to when they last had long-term access to a good library. 'Open access' and the internet now offer to release scholars from their time warps. When that happens, there could be the same excitement over the latest book as Kano intellectuals experienced some 500 years ago. But bookishness needs to be more than an elite obsession. This was realised, I think, by Muhammad Bello and his colleagues in 1820s Sokoto, as they sought to 'modernise' a Bilad al-Sudan that was now more overtly Muslim, and bring it closer to the rest of the Muslim world. Similarly, a century later in the 1930s, young Muslims read avidly in the new literature and sciences now open to them through books (albeit in English) which were readily available in libraries or on loan from teachers and friends. In the last few decades, that window has half closed again as the book market withered. Inevitably in this context, bookishness has also wilted.

Finally, my argument is that our understanding is distorted by focusing just upon 'literacy', as earlier historians have done, let alone by simply contrasting 'oral' with 'the

written'. Indeed, studies of the paper trade and even lists of local authors and their works skirt the central problem of 'the book' and the simple facts and consequences of the availability of texts: who had access to what, and when? The size of libraries, the range of texts and their up-to-dateness, the quality of scholars' and students' command of Arabic, are all significant if we are to understand the actual intellectual history of a particular period. Of course, books may not be the only source of ideas, and today there are other media. Admittedly, long conversations with colleagues with excellent memories can be a good substitute. As historians, however, we lack all access to such conversations, unless they were subsequently referred to in a book or a letter. So our intellectual history of a place like Sokoto, so far from the Mediterranean bookstores, can only be very partial. But it does make a proper history of books and the book trade far out on the Islamic frontier especially worth researching. Bookishness in this context required much more toil than in Cairo or Fez – or even Timbuktu – as indeed it still does today. A book 'drought' we know can be devastating; it is essential that we learn to mitigate its effects, and not rely on an imperfect book trade.

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NOTES

- 1 Hofheinz (2004).
- 2 Hofheinz (2004: 156).
- 3 Lydon (2004).
- 4 Stewart (1970: 243).
- 5 Denham et al. (1828, 2: 364 [1st journey]); Clapperton (1829: 198 [2nd journey]).
- 6 These books were chosen with care. Bello had asked for books when Clapperton said goodbye to him in 1824, but we do not know what he wanted. *The History of the Tartars under Tamerlane* may have been the *Shajara-i Turk* by Abu 'l-Ghazi Bahadur, which in a French translation was much used, some 50 years earlier, by Edward Gibbon for Chapter 54 of his *Decline and Fall*. Who printed the Arabic translation is not clear, but it would have been a suitable present after Clapperton's conversations on early Middle Eastern history with Bello during his previous visit. So too would a copy of Ibn Sina's *al-Qanun*, given how actively involved Bello was in medicine and his interest in new approaches – he wanted the British government to post a doctor in Sokoto. Muhammad Bello was, anyway, very widely read: my Sokoto colleague, Professor Sambo Junaidu, reminds me that Bello said he once counted the number of books he had read – they came to 20 300.
- 7 Clapperton (1829: 206).
- 8 Krek (1971). The sixteenth-century traveller Leo Africanus reported on the book trade in Morocco and Timbuktu. However, his interest in Arabic book production in Rome, his involvement in the papacy's plans for exporting Arabic books or any other possible links of his with paper makers and printers with connections in the North African trade are more ambiguous – see the new study of him by Natalie Zemon Davis (2006). Ottoman edicts on printing are given in Atiyeh (1995), while comments on early Italian efforts at typesetting the Qur'an are in Mahdi (1995); for a thorough listing, see Abi Farès (2001). In the 1590s, the works of al-Idrisi and Euclid, for example, were printed by the Medicis for export (the Porte having issued import licences). But Arabic translations of Euclid long preceded the advent of printing, and it is

possible that the copy of Euclid Bello first had from Mecca was the Arabic manuscript text, not a printed book. Clapperton found Bello looking at his new Euclid's *Elements*, but tells us nothing more. Why Muhammad Bello was so interested in Euclid is not clear to me; if anything, his uncle 'Abdullah was more of a mathematician – he determined the orientation of new mosques, for example.

- 9 Last (1967b).
- 10 There was no formal postal system, but special, professional runners carried the state's letters. Nor were there carts, which meant that any small path was potentially a 'road'. In practice, there were main routes used by caravans between cities, with facilities every 15 miles or so for their beasts (donkeys, camels, oxen, mules, horses) and the porters to feed and rest overnight. So Fulani scholars with a school (*tsangaya*) off the beaten track – as many were, by choice – missed out on the caravan-borne book trade, unless they made a serious effort to keep good relations with colleagues (or rival groups such as the Wangarawa) in the big cities. Isolated groups of scholars deep in the countryside acquired a reputation for serious learning and represented an intellectual life different from the schools in the city, with all its distractions. Professor Sambo Junaidu (2007) has pointed out how many multi-volume books Shaykh 'Uthman and his fellow scholars had memorised by heart before the *jihad*, for some their memory was visual, enabling them to run through the pages of a book to check for a reference.
- 11 My source for this is Alberto Manguel's *A History of Reading* (1996), where he cites the four volumes of EG Browne's *A Literary History of Persia* (1928–29) (and misspells the scholar–patron's name). Neither Browne nor Browne's main source, Ibn Khallikan (1842–71, 1), quotes this particular story about the alphabetised camels whose owner's proper name is the Sahib Abu 'l-Qasim Isma'il ibn Abi 'l-Hasan Abbad al-Talakani (he died in Rayy in AD 995). Elsewhere, Ibn Khallikan (1842–71, 2: 250) says the *sahib* used to go round with 30 camels (not 400), but later only needed the *Kitab al-Aghani* (of Abu 'l-Faraj 'Ali b. al-Husain al-Isfahani) once he had a copy of it. If the story is not apocryphal, then 30 camels in alphabetical order at least sounds feasible! The 400 camels refer to the number he said he would need to move his library were he to take up the post an emir offered him. At some 300 books per camel, he was overloading his beasts (unless the volumes carried were mainly short books of poetry)! Pedersen (1984: 123) gives the number of camels needed as 100, while the library's catalogue itself took up 10 volumes. The library was finally burned by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (Kraemer 1992).
- 12 A single camel's load would suggest that the Shaykh 'Uthman's library at this time totalled perhaps 100 to 150 books. The number of books a camel can carry depends, of course, on what constitutes a 'book' – a poem would be light compared, say, to the Holy Qur'an (my 'modern' manuscript copy weighs 4.5 pounds), whereas an ordinary nineteenth-century manuscript book I have from northern Nigeria weighs some 2 pounds, including the boards that act as binding (8 sheets = 1 ounce; 128 sheets = 1 pound). A camel can carry a total load of some 300 pounds (more than twice an ox load), divided into two panniers or nets; four boxes containing 50 pounds of books each would allow for a driver or other equipment. Dr Baz Lecocq tells me that, near Timbuktu, the great Kunta Cheikh Baye (d.1927) reportedly carried his 450 books on two camels. In texts like Ibn Khallikan's, it was common to estimate the size of a person's library by the number of camel loads it took to transport it. If, perhaps, Shaykh 'Uthman (and the Kunta) were consciously following this classical, scholarly trope, then the Shaykh's was a modest one-camel collection. My Sokoto colleague, Ibrahim Gandi, suggests however that probably more than one camel was used to carry the Shaykh's books.
- 13 Al-Hajj (1983).
- 14 A notable figure in eighteenth-century Cairo, for example, was Muhammad al-Kashnawi al-Danrankawi who lodged with al-Jabarti's father and earned a mention in his history for his powers of magic. Dan Ranko no longer exists as a town. It was a base used by Wangarawa merchants on the kola caravan route between Kano and Gonja (in what is Ghana today), and was sacked by Muhammad Bello shortly after he sacked another, more famous scholarly town, Yandoto. Neither town had been inclined to join the *jihad*. After the sacking of Yandoto, pages of broken books were seen blowing in the wind. The Wangarawa merchants here were serious book owners in the 'western' tradition of Timbuktu (which was their home area), as Ivor Wilks's (1968) work on their kin in Gonja confirms.
- 15 Eisenstein (1979).
- 16 Lapidge (2006).
- 17 Last (1966–67).
- 18 Uthman b. Fudi (1978).
- 19 The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw in the Mediterranean the 'first world war' in which the states of the eastern end of the sea fought the western states; this conflict also involved states in the West African savannah, where it introduced the use of guns. Echoes of the West African conflict are heard even in the contemporary plays of Shakespeare and Marlowe; presumably London audiences recognised the references, which implies that news from Muslim West Africa circulated quite widely.
- 20 See Brett (1983).
- 21 Bivar (1960).
- 22 The Yan Izala or the 'Society for Removal of Innovation and the Reinstatement of Tradition' was the largest Wahhabi Islamic reform movement in West Africa.

- 23 Kane (2003).
- 24 Marty (1922: 274–275).
- 25 Goody (1968: 217).
- 26 Hiskett (1996: 139)
- 27 Denham et al. (1828: 365)
- 28 Saad (1983: 79).
- 29 Boyd (1989); Boyd & Mack (1997, 2000).
- 30 Meek (1925). Pre-colonial demography is an even more hazardous topic, but two points should be kept in mind. First, the numbers involved might be relatively small. For example, in the 1820s the population of Kano city was estimated at about 30 000, with Sokoto then about 120 000. But the ratio of slave to free was estimated, by locally resident Arabs at the time, to be 30:1 (Clapperton 1929: 171); and the proportion of 'Fellata' who could read and write was said (snidely?) to be only 10 per cent. In which case, in Kano city there might be as few as 1 000 free-born men, women and children, which means perhaps 250 free adult males and the equivalent number of free adult women – with only 25 to 50 of them seriously literate? Second, this initial population grew hugely in the course of the century as the free men fathered large numbers of children by their concubines; and these children were, of course, born free. Such children from important families were often brought up primarily by slaves, whose interest in Islamic scholarship might be minimal. Hence, scholarly children – boys and girls – of scholarly parents were (and still are) something of an elite. But becoming a 'scholar' could be a way out of lowly slave status, at least in the twentieth century. I have found in villages learned men whose families were once 'royal' slaves – after the end of slavery, they retained an enhanced status by becoming scholars instead. Colonial ('Christian') rule witnessed a boom in Muslim religious education and scholarship.
- 31 Palmer (1928). In the reign of Yakubu b. 'Abdullahi (c.1452–63), the *Kano Chronicler* reports that 'the Fulani came to Hausaland from Melle, bringing with them books on Divinity [*tauhid*] and Etymology [*lughah*]. Formerly, our doctors had, in addition to the Koran, only the books of the Law [*fiqh*] and the Traditions [*hadith*]'. Then, in 1565–73 it says that the ruler Abu Bakr b. Muhammad Rumfa was the first emir to read *al-Shifa'* of al-Qadi Iyad (d.1149) – it had been brought to Kano by Shaykh al-Tunisi in the previous reign. The emir Abu Bakr also inaugurated the reading of *Jami' al-saghir*, then a relatively new book by al-Suyuti (d.1505) which was brought to Kano, also in the previous reign, by Shaykh 'Abd al-Salam along with copies of 'classics': *Mudawwana* by Sahnun (d.855) and a work by al-Samarkandi (d.983) – probably his major work of *tafsir, Bahr al-'ulum*. At the end of the fifteenth century al-Maghili had 'brought many books' but they are not specified. At the same time, the Wangara scholar–merchant al-Zagaiti initiated the teaching in Kano of the *Mukhtasar* of Khalil ibn Ishaq (he also taught the *Mudawwana* but he did not need a copy – 'he knew it by heart', says the *Asl al-wangariyyin* [al-Hajj 1968: 10]).
- 32 Africanus (1956: 468–469).
- 33 Lavers (1979); Girard (1685).
- 34 Walz (1985).
- 35 Saad (1983: 80).
- 36 Saad (1983: 80).
- 37 Hunwick & O'Fahey (1995).
- 38 Brenner & Last (1985).
- 39 Last (1967a: 31).
- 40 Ba & Daget (1962).
- 41 Clapperton (1829: 224).
- 42 Skinner (1977).
- 43 Kirk-Greene (1962).
- 44 See Walz (1985).
- 45 Toorawa (2005).
- 46 Hiskett (1973).
- 47 Hunwick & O'Fahey (1995: 231).
- 48 Hiskett (1966).
- 49 Christelow (1994).
- 50 Lavers (1979); he is quoting consul Frazer's report in FO 76/21.
- 51 Curtin (1975: 246).
- 52 Valentine Galvani, d.1810 ; Fratelli Galvani, for example Anton, d.1824; Andrea Galvani, d.1855.
- 53 Eineder (1960); Fedrigoni (1966); Walz (1985).

- 54 Ersoy (1963). I am indebted to Professor Menage for lending me this book with its reproductions of both Turkish and imported watermarks.
- 55 The quarter Mansuri was 213 mm by 142 mm. It was, according to al-Qalqashandi in 1412, the 'familiar' size of paper. The variation in page size, and the limited data available on Islamic paper sizes at varying periods, make mine only a speculative suggestion.
- 56 Park (1816, 1: 464, 2: 218–221); Koki (1977: 32–33). The ream was 500 sheets from which 4 pages were cut per sheet. Usually the number of sheets per ream varied somewhat but data other than for Kano are not available to me (see Walz 1985: 46, notes 40, 43).
- 57 Koki (1977: 34).
- 58 Denham et al. (1828 [1st journey]: 189).
- 59 Goody (1968: 203). Bowdich was a British traveller and scientific writer who, in 1817, completed peace negotiations with the Asante Empire (now part of Ghana) on behalf of the African Company of Merchants.
- 60 Hiskett (1966: 139). The books were two volumes of the *Sahih* of Bukhari, two volumes of *Dala'il ashfa* (of al-Qadi Iyad?), a part of *Ashfa* again and a part of the *Mukhtasar* (of Khalil) with the *Risala* (of Ibn Abi Zayd?). In the inventory they come low down on the list, alongside 'ten dollars'.
- 61 Denham et al. (1828 (1st journey), 2: 162). The cost of Qur'ans of course varies with the quality of copying, binding, etc. Compare with the range of values given in inheritance documents from fifteenth-century Turkey (Brusa), quoted by Sahilliogiu (1977). It is hard to estimate what proportion of a book's sale price went to the copyist – perhaps as low as 40 per cent? Five-thousand cowries (or the cost of paper for a Qur'an) is about one-twentieth the value of a slave at this time. Apparently, then, book prices in late sixteenth-century Timbuktu and late nineteenth-century Kano were roughly comparable.
- 62 Koki (1977).
- 63 The switch to copying in Timbuktu is a reflection perhaps of the attraction Islamic schooling had for local children. Were the schools 'overproducing' then? The time if not the labour or cost of copying could be reduced either by putting out different sections of the book simultaneously to different scribes for copying (a practice known in medieval Europe as the *pecia*, or quire, system), or by one reader dictating the text to a group of copyists (the scriptorium system). Both systems were used in Sokoto, but apparently it was more usual for a copyist to transcribe an entire book. In Borno, a separate copyist put in the vowelings in coloured ink. The copy would then be proof-read and corrected. How far there was a division of labour in West African book production is not clear – nor, even, what terminology was used, in Arabic or *ajami*. In Sokoto, terms like *warraq* were apparently not used; *k.t.b.* and *n.s.kh.* are both used for copying, while the *katib* was more a scribe than a secretary.
- 64 'Broken' books, excerpts or parts of a long work, commonly occur in collections elsewhere in the Muslim world. A third of what Shaykh Sidiya bought in Marrakesh was only parts of books (Stewart 1970), and 'volumes' might contain parts of two or three books. The prevalence of 'broken' books, I suspect, was particularly high among 'classics' in private collections and bookshops. In this context, then, will the largest category of complete books have been those locally composed – indeed, perhaps specifically composed to overcome the problems of students having to otherwise work only with scattered excerpts from 'classics'? The commonness of excerpts raises the question again: what constitutes a 'book'? If these excerpts were used, borrowed, re-copied and sold just like books, perhaps we should consider them as books, reissued in effect like part-works, serials and other episodic literature. If so, should we stop referring to them as 'fragments' or 'incomplete'? Was bookbinding therefore unpopular because it made it impossible to split a book up into parts? Even in the first half of the twentieth century, printed classical Arabic books in personal libraries might be kept unbound between boards. One I have seen, a *Mukhtasar* printed in Cairo, was numbered '90' by the owner who was a Native Authority official in Kano, and not a professional scholar.
- 65 Hofheinz (2004: 165).
- 66 Bloom (2001); Bosch et al. (1981).
- 67 Denham et al. (1828: 2).
- 68 Denham et al. (1828: 2).

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ الطَّيِّبِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ
تَمَامًا بِعَدَدِ الشَّيْخِ عَشْرًا مِنْ قَدَمَيْهِ لِمَا تَضَرَّعَتْ فِيهِ الْوَلَادَةُ الرَّامِيَّةُ
ثَلَاثًا عَشْرَةً أَوْ سَبْعَةَ عَشْرَ لَمُنَّةً بِمَا وَلَدَ لِقَدَمَيْكَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِهَذَا الْجَمْعِ كَمَا

بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَعَدَ نَوْمَ قَدْرًا
أَطْلَانِي أَعْلَمْتُ أَبَوَيْكَ
بَعْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ كَلْبًا
مَوْتِي نَسْتَعِينُكَ اللَّهُ وَوَلَدًا
مَنْ تَضَرَّعْتُ بِدَعْوَةِ اللَّهِ بِهِ
اللَّهُ تَرَامِ أَتَيْتُكَ بِهَذَا
لَا مِيَّةَ نَيْبًا مَعِي كَيْتِي
أَرْكَضُ تَمْرًا بِعَيْنَيْكَ
سَيِّئًا بِمَقَارِقِهِ نَصْرًا مَقَارِبًا
أَزِيدُكَ بِمَقَارِفِ مَجْمُوعًا
يَعْنِي أَيْدِي اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ لَمْ يَدْرِكْ
أَرْكَضُ مَجْمُوعًا تَوَادُّعًا
أَرْكَضُ بِشَيْبَةٍ بِسَلْمِيْلٍ

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تَبَارَكُ اللَّهُ بِمُحَمَّدٍ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ
الطَّيِّبِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِعَدَدِ
أَسْمَاءِ ثَلَاثًا عَشْرَةً
زَوْجَةِ النَّبِيِّ مُحَمَّدٍ
بِعَدَدِ عَدَدِ
رَجُلِ اللَّهِ الْجَمِيعِ
أَمِينَ