

# An Archaic Form of Kanuri/Kanembu: A Translation Tool for Qur'anic Studies\*

Abu °Ubayda °Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Janāwnī, a 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century Ibādī scholar and ruler of Jabal Nefūza (a mountain area in Tripolitania, modern Libya) spoke, in addition to Arabic and Berber, the language of Kanem (*al-luḡha al-Kānīmīyya*).<sup>1</sup> This fact indicates that Kanem played an important role in North Africa at that time and the Ibādīs had close links to the Lake Chad area where Kanem imposed trade control. One of the earliest trans-Saharan trade routes led to this region, starting from Tripoli going further down through Waddān and Fezzan, and the earliest Islamic and Arabic influence entered the region by this path.<sup>2</sup> By the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century, Kanem had expanded its activity along three quarters of this Saharan corridor and Islam had already become established among the ruling Sayfuwa dynasty.<sup>3</sup> References to the early development of Islam in Kanem occur in the works of al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094), Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), Ibn Sa°id al-Maghribī (d. 685/1286–7), Abū'l-Fidā° (d. 732/1331) and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406).<sup>4</sup> These accounts are also backed by local tradition which shows the first Sayfuwa rulers as propagators of Islam and eager learners of the Qur'an.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the links to the Ibādīs and, later, the Ḥafṣids to the north, Kanem had cultural relations in the west – with the Almoravids (through Gao and Timbuktu) and the Almohads. The first known writer in Arabic of sub-Saharan origin was a scholar from Kanem, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Ya°qūb al-Kānemī, who was 'educated in Kanem and travelled to Marrakesh some time before 595/1198–9. There he was received by the Almohad Sultan Ya°qūb al-Manṣūr.'<sup>6</sup> These western links had various important and still apparent outcomes for the Islamic tradition in the Kanem area, such as adherence to the Mālikī school, the use of the archaic Qayrawān script, the considerable popularity of the *Kitāb al-shifā'* of the Almoravid scholar al-Qāḍī °Iyāḍ (d. 543–544/1149), and the Almohad Ibn Tūmart's (d. 524/1130) creed *al-Murshida*.<sup>7</sup>

The expansion of the Sayfuwa activities to the east of Lake Chad resulted in the gradual colonisation of Borno – an eastern province of Kanem, which was known to Muslim writers from as early as the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> According to the local chronicles, in 606/1210–646/1248 the Kanem court moved to Borno, keeping strong control over its lands in the east.<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding the later political perturbations that led the Sayfuwa to the decisive shift from Kanem to Borno in the 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century, the two provinces had political and cultural links for centuries, stronger at one time, weaker at another. For this reason, the early development of Qur'anic studies in Kanem and Borno in the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> centuries may be appropriately referred to as the Kanem-Borno phase.<sup>10</sup> At that time, together with the

dynasty shift and population displacement to Borno, the Sayfuwa political system, the developing Islamic tradition and Kanembu (the language of Kanem) were brought to the areas east of Lake Chad.

Starting from the late 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> centuries, Borno became a centre of Islamic studies in the central *bilād al-Sūdān*.<sup>11</sup> The foundation of the capital Birni Gazargamu in 884–885/1480 by Sultan °Alī ibn Dunama (Mai Ali Dunamami) was the beginning of a period of rapid growth in political development and economic prosperity. As was by now the norm for the Sayfuwa dynasty, the new royal capital became a centre for Islamic scholarship: ‘There were ... successful efforts at consolidating the indigenous stands of Islamic scholarship ... and a significant movement of scholars into the area from the other part of the Muslim world.’<sup>12</sup> For three centuries, until its destruction in 1808, Birni Gazargamu was renowned in *bilād al-Sūdān* for the extensive production of fine calligraphy copies of the Qur’an, from small size manuscripts to large royal-style volumes.<sup>13</sup>

Four such royal Qur’ans, dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> centuries, were found by A.D.H. Bivar in the late 1950s.<sup>14</sup> The margins of the Borno Qur’ans bear various *tafāsīr* in Arabic together with interlinear translations from Qur’anic Arabic into archaic Kanembu.<sup>15</sup> This makes the manuscripts unique in providing direct evidence for the intensive study of *tafāsīr* at a time when Borno was at the height of its political power in the region. The famous system of Qur’anic learning as practised today in Borno, north-east Nigeria, is inherited from that period. The readers of the *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* have already been introduced to the peculiarities of this method, unique in West Africa.<sup>16</sup> One of the advanced stages of Qur’anic learning is the study of *tafāsīr*. ‘The most important method of *tafāsīr* in Borno is the Tarjumo, a system of translating Qur’anic Arabic into precise and ‘technical’ Kanembu which dates back well into Sayfuwa times.’<sup>17</sup> From the above quote three (so far unanswered) questions arise. What kind of ‘technical’ Kanembu does the system use? How far back does this method go? What is the sociolinguistic function of this variety of Kanembu in modern Borno society?

### 1. Kanembu as used in the System of Qur’anic Interpretation

The vernacular language discovered in the MSS is an archaic form of Kanembu, a group of dialects spoken east of Lake Chad and linguistically classified as an eastern subdivision within the dialect continuum of the Kanuri language.<sup>18</sup> Historically, Kanuri emerged as the language of Borno during the gradual population shift of the former Kanembu speakers from the Kanem area to Borno between the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> centuries. These days, the Kanuri and Kanembu dialects have undergone significant change from that early period, but are still mutually intelligible. The language of the Borno Qur’ans’ glosses (henceforth LG) is, however, considerably distinct from modern Kanuri and Kanembu dialects, and is unintelligible to their

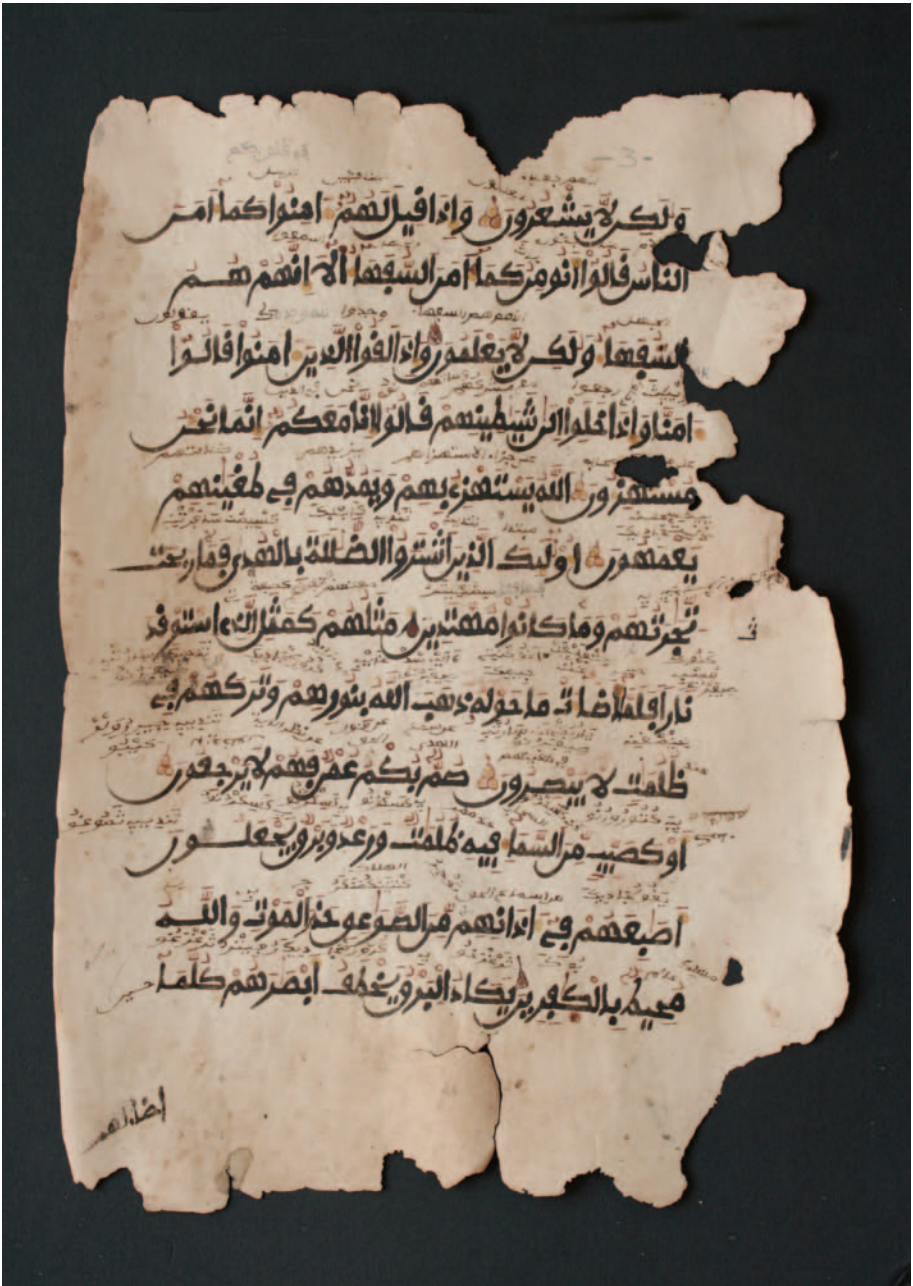


Fig. 2: Yerima Mustafa Qur'an, manuscript YM, 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century.

speakers due to many archaic features in its phonology, morphosyntax, and lexicon.<sup>19</sup> Surprisingly, the 'technical' Kanembu used in today's study of *tafsīr*, commonly referred to by *'ulamā'* as Tarjumo, is structurally very close to LG and almost as unintelligible to modern Kanuri and Kanembu speakers as LG is.<sup>20</sup>

Comparison of LG in the two early Borno manuscripts and its modern variety in the form of Tarjumo allows us to follow the development of archaic Kanembu used as a translation tool for Qur'anic Arabic. The first manuscript, 'Shetima Kawo Qur'an' (ShK), is dated back to the 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century (see Fig. 1). The second, 'Yerima Mustafa Qur'an' (YM), was created in the late 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> to early 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> centuries (see Fig. 2).<sup>21</sup> The material for modern Tarjumo has been taken from writings and audio records generously provided by Imam Habib Shetima of Maiduguri.<sup>22</sup>

Tables 1 to 3 show samples taken from these different periods, each taking consecutive phrases from the first half of Q. 2:20 as illustrative examples.<sup>23</sup>

a	Q. 2:20	<i>yakādu'l-barqu yakḥṭafu abṣārahum</i>		
b		be.near.3SG.IMPf the-lightning snatch.3SG.IMPf sight-their		
c		<i>The lightning almost snatches away their sight</i>		
	LG & T	(I) <b>ShK</b>	(II) <b>YM</b>	(III) <b>Tarjumo</b>
d		[]- <i>kō</i> [-]yih <i>rbit-ro</i> <i>ḥuru-sadī-ka</i>	<i>thargra-gō</i> [-]yih <i>kurūram-jādī-ka ruḥit-</i> <i>ro thargra-gō</i>	<i>thakara-ngō wulaktu-yeh</i> <i>wurit-thin ḥalan shimwa-</i> <i>ndhā-ka thakara-ngō</i>
e		[be.near]-? [lightning]-SJ snatch.VN-ADV sight-their-DO	be.near-? [lightning]- SJ sight-their-DO snatch.VN-ADV be.near-?	be.near-? lightning-SJ snatch-INSTR(?) ADV eyes-their-DO be.near-?
f		[ <i>the lightning</i> ] [ <i>nearly</i> ] <i>snatches</i> <i>away their sight</i>	<i>nearly</i> , [ <i>the lightning</i> ] <i>nearly snatches away</i> <i>their sight</i>	<i>nearly, the lightning</i> <i>snatches away their</i> <i>sight</i>
Commentary		<i>rbit</i> = Kanuri <i>wartə</i> (seize); <i>ḥuru</i> = Kanuri <i>ru</i> (sight);		

Table 1

a	Q. 2:20	<i>kullamā adāʿa lahum mashaw fīhi</i>		
b		whenever gleam.3SG.PERF for-them walk.3PL.PERF in-it		
c		<i>whenever it flashes on them they walk on</i>		
	LG & T	(I) <b>ShK</b>	(II) <b>YM</b>	(III) <b>Tarjumo</b>
d		<i>sit-falfal-knh</i> [ <i>tandī</i> ]ro <i>tandīh</i> <i>sakotō</i>	<i>kita-falfal-gnnh</i> [ <i>tandī</i> ]ro <i>tandī-yih</i> <i>lejaynō ti-ginh</i>	<i>falfal-kiswasōgin tandī-</i> <i>ro tandi-yeh lejada ti-</i> <i>gin lejada</i>
e		it flashes-when [they]IO they run	it flashes-when [they]IO they-SJ they.go it-in	it.flashes-whenever they-IO they-SJ they.go it-in they.go
f		<i>when it flashes they</i> <i>run</i>	<i>when it flashes they</i> <i>walk</i>	<i>when it flashes to them</i> <i>they walk</i>
Commentary	The indirect object postposition <i>-ro</i> is written above Arabic <i>lahum</i> (for them) in both ShK and YM. In this phrase the postposition <i>-ro</i> , as occurred in ShK, YM, and Tarjumo, collocates with Arabic <i>la-</i> with the basic meaning 'for, to, in favour of'.			

Table 2

a	Q. 2:20	<i>wa-idhā aẓlama ʿalayhim qāmū</i>		
b		and if darken.3SG.PERF on-them stand.3PL.PERF		
c		<i>and when darkness falls around them they stand still</i>		
	LG & T	(I) <b>ShK</b>	(II) <b>YM</b>	(III) <b>Tarjumo</b>
d		<i>sīnimki-ya</i> [ <i>tandī</i> ]ro <i>tandīh</i> <i>sasikō</i>	<i>nmskjī-ya</i> [ <i>tandī</i> ]ro <i>tandī-</i> <i>yih dajāynō</i>	<i>yimji-ya tandī-lan yimji-ya</i> <i>tandi-yeh thijada</i>
e		it.darkens-DEP IO they they.stand	it.darkens-DEP IO they-SJ they.wait	it.darkens-DEP they-on it.darkens-DEP they-SJ they.stand
f		<i>when it darkens</i> <i>they stand</i>	<i>when it darkens</i> <i>they wait</i>	<i>when it darkens over them,</i> <i>when it darkens, they stand</i>
Commentary	The indirect object postposition <i>-ro</i> is written above Arabic <i>ʿalayhim</i> (on them) in both ShK and YM and collocates with the Arabic preposition <i>ʿalā</i> with the basic meaning 'on, upon, on top of'. In Tarjumo, for the same Arabic phrase, <i>ʿalayhim</i> (on them), a different postposition <i>-lan</i> is used. Unlike ShK and YM, Tarjumo shows the distribution of <i>-lan</i> and <i>-ro</i> between the two Arabic prepositions, <i>ʿalā</i> and <i>la</i> respectively (cf. Table 2, commentary).			

Table 3

ShK, the earliest of the manuscripts, represents a concise method of translation with: a) morpheme cuts to show grammatical relations, omitting lexical content (for example, the Kanembu subject, genitive, and direct object markers are solely written just above the nominative, genitive and accusative case markers in Arabic), and b) word for word translation.

YM exhibits a) morpheme cuts, b) word for word translation with recurrent use of lexemes and grammatical markers to avoid ambiguity, and c) phrase/sentence translation either delivering a verbatim representation of the Qur'anic text, or based on a *tafsīr*.<sup>24</sup>

Tarjumo uses methods b) and c), based on *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* only.

Since Arabic is a VSO language but Kanembu is a SOV language, it raises the problem of constituent order representation. In word for word translations, when taken as a string of glosses, a violation of the basic Kanembu SOV word order may be observed (Table 1d-II-III, 2d-II-III, 3d-II-III, where the verb occurs initially). As a solution, a correct word order is provided in the same line which leads to recurrent use of lexical and grammatical units (the same examples as above, where the verb repeats at the end of the phrase).<sup>25</sup>

Archaic Kanembu, as attested in the LG of ShK, YM, and Tarjumo also differs in the way it was influenced by spoken Kanuri. We observe consonant weakening (e.g. Table 1d, I-II-III: *b > f > w* in *rbit > rufit > wurit* (snatch) and reanalysis in verb morphology (e.g. Table 2d-II-III: *lejaynō > lejada* (they go)). The change in syntactic structure however, is less obvious and probably took place independently of the spoken language (e.g. Table 1d, I-II-III: *rbit-ro > rufit-ro > wurit-thin ḥalan*, where the adverbial function of the noun phrase *wurit-thin ḥalan* (snatching) is encoded by *ʔalan*, an extinct morpheme occurred in archaic Kanembu only. Also, cf. Table 3, commentary).

All these changes notwithstanding, the LG of ShK and YM and Tarjumo have a lot of shared lexical and morphosyntactic features which allow us to postulate that these diachronic varieties represent a language distinct from modern Kanuri and Kanembu.

## 2. The Origin of Qur'anic Commentaries in Kanembu

The origin of Qur'anic commentaries in Kanembu goes back to the Kanem-Borno period, if not earlier. This conclusion is based on linguistic, palaeographic, and historical evidence discussed below:

a) The Borno Qur'anic manuscripts were written between the 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> to the early 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is unlikely that the LG used in the manuscripts was contemporaneous with Kanuri/Kanembu as spoken at that time in Borno, as is

confirmed by a Kanuri dialect of Gazar, documented by S.W. Koelle in the late 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup> LG and Gazar are very different. Linguistically, Gazar is much closer to Kanuri/Kanembu than to LG, and several centuries would be needed for a hypothetical change from LG to Gazar to be realistic. A plausible explanation of the considerable difference between LG and Gazar is that by the Borno period LG was already a written language, probably as incomprehensible to the people of ancient Borno as Tarjumo is to speakers of modern Kanuri/Kanembu. If this is the case, the variant of the language represented in LG should have originated from an earlier period. Also, taking into consideration the degree of unintelligibility of LG to modern Kanuri speakers, we may assume that the chronological span between them is up to 1000 years and that LG goes back to the Kanem period.

b) The manuscripts, including the earliest, ShK, represent a high level of orthographic standardisation, indirectly attesting to a protographic tradition in early Borno (the 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century) or Kanem-Borno (the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> centuries).<sup>27</sup>

c) The calligrapher of the only dated manuscript (1080/1669), traces his descent to the famous scholarly family of Masbarma, also of the early Borno period.<sup>28</sup>

d) The language of Tarjumo has a secondary name, Kanembu, which reveals its linguistic and historical origin from Kanem. Sometimes Tarjumo is said to originate from Bulala.<sup>29</sup> Linguistically irrelevant (Bulala, or Bilala, is a language of the Sara-Bagirmi family while Kanuri/Kanembu is of the Saharan family), this oral tradition gives a precise benchmark for the time when the language of Kanem was brought to Borno. It points to the so called ‘Bulala wars’, which forced the Sayfuwa dynasty and their subjects to leave Kanem for Borno in the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>30</sup>

Given these arguments, the language of Kanem in its pre-Borno stage may be considered as the basis for the early tradition of the Qur’anic commentaries, this tradition originating long before the Borno era. One may reasonably speculate that LG is close to the language of Kanem as spoken by Abu ‘Ubayda in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century or by al-Kānemī in the 9<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3. The Sociolinguistic Function of Tarjumo

It is sometimes believed that Tarjumo, as a language intended for Qur’anic translation, ‘allows easy comprehension of the Qur’an for the *‘ilm* student as well as *for the interested Muslim public*’, and that the duty of such a student is ‘to render the meaning of the exegete’s work into vernacular *so that people can understand* the message of the Qur’an’ (both my emphasis).<sup>31</sup> As pointed out earlier, Tarjumo is, however, unintelligible to the speakers of Kanuri and Kanembu and can only be understood by people who have received special education. Hence its restricted group of users which comprises the *‘ulamā’* and students of *‘ilm*. The Muslim public, for which Tarjumo is a venerated sacred language, may hear it in open

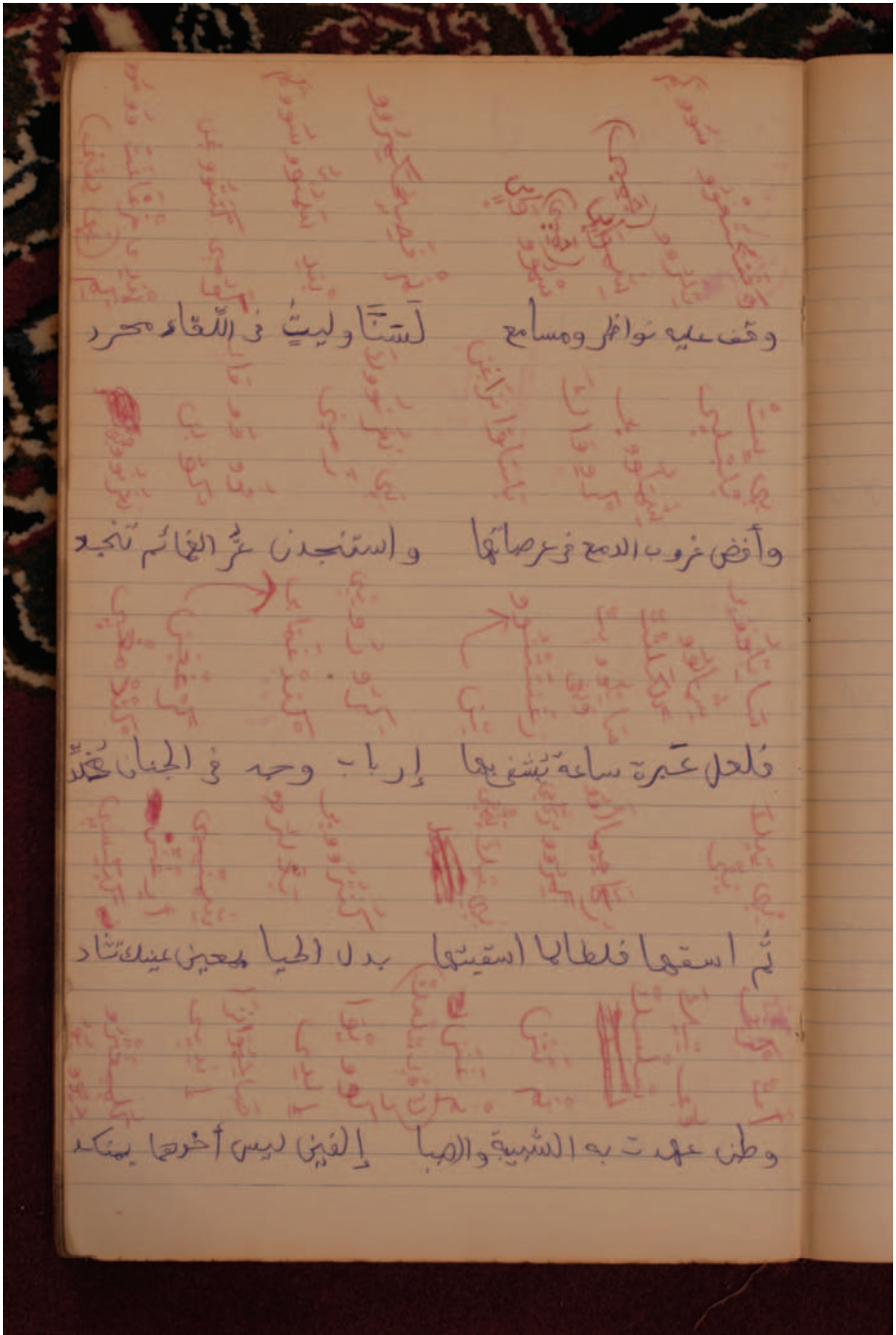


Fig. 3: Translation of mu'allaqāt into Tarjumo, made by Prof. Tijani El-Miskin in the 1980s.



recitation together with the Qur'an, or, for example, *Kitāb al-shifā*, or *qaṣīda* poetry written in Arabic. The written form of Tarjumo is also used for educational purposes, and for the translation of various religious and even secular Arabic texts (see Fig. 3).

The most peculiar characteristic of Tarjumo is that it is uniquely used for translation from Arabic. Never used for independent composition, Tarjumo is always linked to and recited from a particular Arabic source. Therefore, the Borno *'ulamā'* deal with a multilayered system. For example, when a recitation of the Qur'an is performed together with recitation in Tarjumo, the latter is not based on the Qur'anic text but rather on a *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. In practice it means that the reciter works with three texts simultaneously (the Qur'an, the *Tafsīr*, and the Tarjumo translation), delivering to the audience only the Qur'an and Tarjumo. With such a strict adherence to Arabic it is not surprising that Tarjumo has no communicative function, even between the most educated scholars.

In summary, Tarjumo, which developed from archaic Kanembu into a highly technical translation tool, exhibits features of a 'classical language' typical of diglossia, and is functionally restricted to use only with the source language (Arabic): it is this combination which makes Tarjumo unique among the languages written in Arabic script.

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#### NOTES

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1 N. Levtzion, 'The Sahara and Sudan from the Arab Conquest of the Maghrib to the Rise of the Almoravids' in J.D. Fage (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa* (8 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), vol. 2, pp. 637–84, p. 643.

2 J.O. Hunwick and R.S. O'Fahey (eds), *Arabic Literature of Africa: The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa* (Leiden-New York-Köln: E.J. Brill, 1995), vol. 2, p. 2.

3 J. Wright, art. 'Kanem: Slavery and Trans-Saharan Trade' in *Encyclopedia of African History*, vol. 2, pp. 734–5; N. Levtzion, 'Islam in the Bilad al-Sudan to 1800' in N. Levtzion and R.L. Pouwels (eds), *The History of Islam in West Africa* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2000), pp. 63–91.

4 N. Levtzion and J. Hopkins, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 64, p. 173, pp. 186–7, p. 203, p. 337. Other early Muslim writers who mention Kanem are al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897), al-Idrīsī (d. 562/1166) and al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442). See Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, p. 21, p. 112, pp. 353–5.

5 H. Bobboyi, 'The 'Ulamā' of Borno: A Study of the Relations Between Scholars and State under the Sayfuwa, 1470–1808' (Evanston, Northwestern University: unpublished PhD thesis, 1992), p. 5, pp. 116–17; S. Reichmuth, 'Islamic Education and Scholarship in Sub-Saharan Africa' in N. Levtzion and R.L. Pouwels (eds), *The History of Islam in West Africa*, pp. 419–40, p. 423; Y.O. Imam 'The Tradition of Qur'anic Learning in Borno', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 6:2 (2004), pp. 98–102, p. 98.

6 Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, p. 163, p. 173, p. 260; Hunwick and O'Fahey, *Arabic Literature in Africa*, pp. 17–19; Reichmuth, 'Islamic Education', p. 427.

7 Reichmuth, 'Islamic Education', pp. 426–7.

8 Among them are al-°Umarī, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Ibn Khaldūn, al-Qalqashandī. See Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, pp. 276–7, p. 302, p. 337, pp. 344–7.

9 D. Bondarev, art. 'Borno (Bornu), Sultanate of: Origin and Rise, Fifteenth Century' in *Encyclopedia of African History*, vol. 1, pp. 156–7.

10 For the same reason the term 'Kanem-Borno' is commonly used in literature when describing both this particular historical period and the entire history of this kingdom from early Kanem (the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century) to the late Borno phase (1223/1808). Cf. <http://countrystudies.us/chad/6.htm>; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanem-Bornu\\_Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanem-Bornu_Empire).

11 Bobboyi, *The 'Ulamā' of Borno*, p. 12. The term *bilād al-Sūdān*, 'the land of the black people' was applied by early Muslim writers to the territories of sub-Saharan Africa which are now known as West Africa (from the Atlantic coast to Lake Chad).

12 Bobboyi, *The 'Ulamā' of Borno*, p. 13; see also T. Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives: An Historical Anthology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 80–1.

13 A.D.H. Bivar, 'A Dated Kuran from Bornu', *Nigeria Magazine* 65 (1960), pp. 199–205, p. 199; Hunwick, *Arabic Literature of Africa*, p. 3; I have also been shown a relatively small copy of the Qur'an, written, according to the colophon, in Birni Gazargamu. I am grateful for this opportunity to Alhaji Bukar Kulloma of Maiduguri, Nigeria.

14 Bivar, 'A Dated Kuran from Bornu'; A.D.H. Bivar, 'The Arabic Calligraphy of West Africa', *African Language Review* 7 (1968), pp. 3–15, pp. i–viii.

15 The *tafāsīr* so far identified are *al-Tashīl li-°ulūm al-tanzīl* of Ibn Juzzay al-Kalbī; *al-Jalālayn*; *al-Jāmi° li-ahkām al-Qur°ān* of al-Qurtubī; *Jāmi° al-bayān fī tafsīr āy al-Qur°ān* of Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī; *Bahr al-°ulūm* of Abū'l-Layth al-Samarqandī; *al-Kashf wa'l-bayān °an tafsīr al-Qur°ān* of Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tha°labī al-Nisābūrī; *Tafsīr al-Qur°ān al-°azīm* of Ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī; *al-Wajīz fī tafsīr al-Qur°ān al-°azīz* of al-Wā°idī. See Abubakar Mustapha, *The Contribution of Sayfawa 'Ulamā' to the Study of Islam 1086–1846 CE* (Bayero University: Unpublished PhD thesis, 1987), p. 179 cited in Bobboyi, *The 'Ulamā' of Borno*, p. 58. I am much indebted to Daniel Vazquez-Paluch and Lameen Souag for their assistance in the identification of the *tafāsīr*. For description of Bivar's collection and preliminary discussion on the vernacular language used in the manuscripts see D. Bondarev, 'The Language of the Glosses in the Bornu Quranic Manuscripts', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69:1 (2006), pp. 113–40; D. Bondarev, 'Archaic Kanembu in the Borno Qur'anic Manuscripts' (forthcoming).

16 Imam, 'The Tradition of Qur'anic Learning in Borno', p. 99; see also A. Mustapha, 'The Contribution of Sayfawa 'Ulamā' to the Study and Administration of Jurisprudence' in A. Mustapha and A. Garba (eds), *Proceedings of the Conference on the Impact of the 'Ulamā' in the Central al-Sudan* (Maiduguri: Centre for Trans-Saharan Studies, 1991), pp. 115–29, p. 117; Bobboyi, *The 'Ulamā' of Borno*, pp. 47–8.

17 Bobboyi, *The 'Ulamā' of Borno*, p. 58.

18 Kanuri/Kanembu is a major Nilo-Saharan language of the Saharan linguistic family, spoken in north-east Nigeria, south-east Niger, north-west Chad, and north Cameroon.

19 See Bondarev, 'Archaic Kanembu in the Borno Qur'anic Manuscripts'.

20 Tarjumo is also called 'Turjiman' or 'Turjiman Kanembu'. These terms, which bear the concept of 'interpretation', reflect the function of this specific language as an explanatory medium applied to the Qur'an and exegetic literature. The Kanuri word *turjimân* (interpreting) originates from the Arabic *turjumān* (interpreter), a noun derivation from the verb *tarjama* (to translate, interpret).

21 See Bivar, 'A Dated Kuran from Bornu'; Bivar, 'The Arabic Calligraphy of West Africa'; Bondarev, 'The Language of the Glosses in the Bornu Quranic Manuscripts'.

22 I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for his invaluable assistance.

23 Key to the tables: row *a* = Qur'anic text; *b* = Arabic morphological gloss; *c* = English equivalent; *d* = archaic Kanembu gloss; *e* = Kanembu morphological gloss; *f* = English translation, I = ShK, II = YM, III = Tarjumo. Abbreviations used: ADV – adverbial marker; DEP – dependent clause marker; DO – direct object; IMPF – imperfective; INSTR – instrumental marker; IO – indirect object; PERF – perfective; SJ – subject marker; VN – verb noun. All English translations of the Qur'anic text are from M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

24 So far the two *tafāsīr* were identified in YM: *al-Wajīz fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-‘azīz* of al-Wāʿidī and *al-Jalālayn*.

25 At the same time, the redundancy compensates for the possible ambiguity of grammatical relations between the arguments of the transitive verbs. Such clarifications of arguments' relations are very frequent in both YM and Tarjumo. For the reason of space though, they are not shown in this article.

26 S.W. Koelle, *Grammar of the Bornu or Kanuri Language* (London: Church Missionary House, 1854).

27 See Bondarev, 'The Language of the Glosses in the Bornu Quranic Manuscripts', p. 139; Bondarev 'Archaic Kanembu in the Borno Qur'anic Manuscripts'. One of the striking orthographic features is a spelling convention for high tone vowels, the earliest known case of high tone encoding in the Arabic script languages.

28 Bivar, 'A Dated Kuran from Bornu', p. 204; Bobboyi, *The 'Ulamā' of Borno*, p. 13.

29 Chief Imam of Borno, personal communication.

30 L. Brenner, *The Shehus of Kukawa: A History of the Al-Kanemī Dynasty of Borno* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), pp. 9-10.

31 Bobboyi, *The 'Ulamā' of Borno*, p. 58; Imam, 'The Tradition of Qur'anic Learning in Borno', p. 98, both citing Abubakar Mustapha, *The Contribution of Sayfawa 'Ulamā'*, p. 176.

