

Arabic Across Yoruba Language and Culture

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ABSTRACT

This paper intends to trace the origin of Yoruba people and their relationship with Arab. Furthermore, it emphasises Arabic as a universal language and explores its contact; and influence on Yoruba Language and culture. Since this study is historic in nature. Therefore, historical method is used to trace Yoruba Language and culture to Arab. Consequently, it is established that Yoruba people benefit immensely from Arabic language and culture. Therefore, it is recommended that more emphasis should be laid on learning of Arabic language in the community. Nigeria Government should also reposition Arabic as a learning subject of Basic and Post-Basic education from an alternative subject to core-subject.

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini bermaksud untuk melacak asal-usul orang Yoruba dan hubungan mereka dengan Arab. Selain itu, ini menekankan bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa universal dan mengeksplorasi kontak serta pengaruhnya terhadap bahasa dan budaya Yoruba. Karena studi ini bersifat historis. Oleh karena itu, metode sejarah digunakan untuk menelusuri bahasa dan budaya Yoruba ke Arab. Akibatnya, telah ditetapkan bahwa orang Yoruba sangat diuntungkan dari bahasa dan budaya Arab. Oleh karena itu, disarankan agar lebih banyak penekanan diberikan pada pembelajaran bahasa Arab di komunitas. Pemerintah Nigeria juga harus memposisikan kembali bahasa Arab sebagai mata pelajaran dalam pendidikan Dasar dan Pasca-Dasar dari mata pelajaran alternatif menjadi mata pelajaran inti. Makalah ini bermaksud untuk menelusuri asal-usul orang Yoruba dan hubungan mereka dengan Arab. Selain itu, ini menekankan bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa universal dan mengeksplorasi kontak serta pengaruhnya terhadap bahasa dan budaya Yoruba. Karena studi ini bersifat historis. Oleh karena itu, metode sejarah digunakan untuk menelusuri bahasa dan budaya Yoruba ke Arab. Akibatnya, telah ditetapkan bahwa orang Yoruba sangat diuntungkan dari bahasa dan budaya Arab. Oleh karena itu, disarankan agar lebih banyak penekanan diberikan pada pembelajaran bahasa Arab di komunitas. Pemerintah Nigeria juga harus memposisikan kembali bahasa Arab sebagai mata pelajaran dalam pendidikan Dasar dan Pasca-Dasar dari mata pelajaran alternatif menjadi mata pelajaran inti.

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INTRODUCTION

An interaction of people of different languages and the effect of one language on the other result to what is known as language KONTAK in Linguistics. The example of this is the linguistic and cultural interaction of Arab and Yoruba-people.

Arabic has been a term used to described a cultural and linguistic group of a human nation in the south-west of Asian continent. It is the language of Arabs, linguistically classified as a member of the family of Hamito Semitic languages consisting of Hebrew, Ugaritic and Aramic (Oladosu, 2020). Arabs are different tribes with various dialects base on the nomenclature and the areas where the language is spoken. Also, Yoruba is used as a term to describe cultural and linguistic group of people in the South-western Nigeria such as the indigenes of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo and parts of Kwara States (Abubakre, 2004). It has been agreed upon by many previous researchers that the origin of Yoruba is controversial and that it seems to be more connected to Arabic than any other languages in terms of linguistic similarities cultural interferences (Al-Iloriy, 2012; Abubakre, 2004). It is on the record that Yoruba ancestors migrated from Makkah of Arabian peninsula to Ile Ife (Abubakre, 2004) and that the term Yoruba, etymologically emanates from the word 'Ya'rab' or 'Ya'rub' bn Kahtan the great grandfather of Arabs. It is evident that Yoruba people refer to themselves as children of Yoruba indicating that somebody beard the name, which is Ya'rub Bn Kahtan. In view of this, Abubakre (2004) quoted Al-Iloriy to have said that:

"لذالك جز منا القول بان يوربا من العرب، من اعقاب يعرب بن قحطان لانهم كانوا ولا يزلون يقولون نحن ابنا يوربا ويعني

ذلك نحن ابنا يعرب لعل يعرب من نرية هذا هو يعرب بن قحطان مؤسس الدولة العربية الاولى او يعرب اخر من يعرب الاول العرب"

"In view of this we make bold to say that the Yoruba are from the Arab; from the offshoots of Ya'rab bn Kahtan.

That was because they use to say: "we are children of Yoruba" that means we are children of Ya'rab....." (p. 287).

Up till today, Abubakre (2004) is still relevant in investigating the initial KONTAK of Arab people with Yoruba. According to him, Muslim writers and other scholars were aware of Yoruba people since 16th century. This time Yoruba were regarded as pagans as found in the book of Ahmad Baba at-Timbuktu: *al-Kashf wal-Bayan li Asnaf Majlub Al-Sudan*. Abubakre (2004) critically faulted this belief and established that it was only the majority of the kings that were pagans that time. He cited Al-Iloriy (1971) that this was to rather mean that the Yoruba rulers were not Muslims at that time. Abubakre (2004) explains this in Al-Iloriy's words:

"Considering the report credited to Ahmad Baba above, it does not confirm the theory that Yorubaland was necessarily a Muslim country at the time of his writing, does it rule out completely the possibility of finding a segment of indigenous Muslims, no matter how few, in the area. Of particular interestis that the area was mentioned by this Arabic scholar at a time when its existence was hardly known to European."

Arab and Yoruba in KONTAK

The early KONTAK of Yoruba with Arab is associated with either or business factor or religion factor. In the realm of business, Arabic language and culture came into Yoruba land through the Muslim/Arab merchants who took their trade movements from Arabian peninsula. They took different routes from Fez to Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal basin. They also took a route from Sijilmasa in Morocco to Taghaza through Taodeni to the Niger. Another alternative route they availed was from Tunis through Ghadames to Katsina and Kano and later to Ife/Oyo-Ile. The implication of trade KONTAK appears in some Arabic loan-words in Arabic. Some of the words include: *'taja'* which means *tajara* in Arabic (to sell); *'ojooro'* which means *Al-jawr* (cheating) and *'arubo'* which means *ar-rubb* (to buy and sell for gain making). In the respect of religion, there is a mouth to mouth story that the origin of Yoruba people was Makkah and that their ancestors migrated from there to Ile-Ife due to religious crisis. This story was proclaimed by some earliest writers about Yoruba people as mentioned by Abubakre (2004). Although this story was refuted, the word Yoruba which looks like *ya'rub*, the name of the great grand father of Arab remains an issue of deliberation as it always shows a connection between Arab and Yoruba people (Abubakre, 2004). It indicated Yoruba people may originate from the remnants of the children of *Kan'an* (Canaan), who were of the tribe of *Namrud* (Nimrod) (popularly called *Lamurudu* in Yoruba) and settled at Ile-Ife as a consequence of their being driven out of Arabia by Ya'ruba, son of Qahtan to the Abyssinia. These reports and other related assertions to the origin of Yoruba to descending from the heaven to Ile-Ife or relating them to other ethnics or languages apart from Arabs were considered fables and refuted by Al-Iloriy (2012). Apart from Yoruba's origin of Arabic, Another KONTAK of Yoruba people with Arabic could be traced back to the period of advent of Islam in Yorubaland, in the thirteenth century, during the reign of Mansa Musa of Mali through the Arab traders and Mali's preachers. This is the reason they tagged the new religion as Mali's Religion up to date to indicate where its preachers came from (Al-Iloriy, 2012). Al-Iloriy also opines that:

"ولقد ثبت في تاريخ يوربا ان اهل مدينة اويولي عرفوا الملح من ايد البيضان, الذين دخلوا اويولي في عهد الملك اللان المسمي اوبالوكن", و اذا علمت ان العرب هم اولئك البيضان المذكورين"

It is certain that the people of Oyo-Ile knew salt through the white men that entered Oyo-Ile during the reign of the king known as Obalokun. If you know that the Arabs from North Africa were those who engaged in trade of salt with this town, then the white men were Arabs. (p. 33)

Arabic as a Universal Language

The term universal is used in language to mean the common trait and use of the language (Moravsik, 2011). In this paper, it is used to conceptualized a situation when a language is accepted and commonly used for communication. Arabic Language enjoys universal quality in the word because it is used to create meanings in the contexts of trade, religion, politics, education, law, international relations and other area of social activities. Its words enrich many language dictionaries and its culture has effect on other people's various culture.

Influence of Arabic on Yoruba Culture and Language

Culturally, Arabs share some elements of living characteristics with Yoruba people signify their closeness of origin. For example, it is a norm among Arabs and Yoruba to practice a polygamous marriage, demonstrate family lineage and feel honoured with it. In Yoruba culture, marriage is an essential aspect of life. It leads to official constitution a family and serves as the basis to the society development. A Yoruba child always lives on the tread

of his parents' style of life. He practices their craft and behaviour. This could be more understood in their statement "Omo Ajanako kii yara, omo teya babi eerin niijo" which means "an elephant will never give birth to dwarf, a descendant of sharpness must be sharp". Yoruba tribe is an epitome of good behaviours such as honour and respect for visitors, love for male child than female, farming, hunting, polygamy marriage, inheritance of widows, waging wars against enemies, and respect for elders. There is also a resemblance between Arabs and Yoruba in terms of cherish for singing, drumming and dancing, idol worshipping before Islam, marketing system and leadership system, which was monarchy and dictatorship in nature (Al-Ilory, 2012).

Linguistically, Arabic has influenced Yoruba Language as a major donor by enriching its dictionary with many vocabularies. The numbers of Arabic loan words in Yoruba cannot be quantified, as they have been identified by Oladosu, 2020; Abubakre, 2004). For example, words like الحرور (*Al-Harur*) 'Oorn', that means 'Heat'; الخير (*Al-Khayr*) 'Oore' which means 'goodness'; اللص (*Al-liss*) which means 'Olosa'; العادة (*Al-'âdab*) 'Costom' and other hundreds of similitude expose some striking similarity in both Arabic and Yoruba (Oloadosu, 2020). The above discussions indicate that there are cultural and linguistic relationships between Arabic and Yoruba which serve as basis Arabic teaching and learning in Yorubaland of Nigeria.

CONCLUSIONS

Yoruba people benefit so much from Arabic language and culture. This is noticed from their everyday social communication and some cultural practices. Therefore, it is recommended that more emphasis should be laid on learning of Arabic language in the community. Nigeria Government should also reposition Arabic as a learning subject of Basic and Post-Basic education from an alternative subject to core-subject.

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