

Role of Fodio Family in Developing Arabic Syntax and Morphology Studies in West Africa

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Abstract: This article is an attempt to highlight the role played by the family known as Fodiyo family and their contributions toward the study of Arabic syntax and morphology in West Africa with particular references to Sheikh Abdullahi bin Fodiyo and Sultan Muhammad Bello. The two personalities played crucial role in these two fields and wrote important books for the study of such discipline, this is what this paper is going to discuss. And it will outline the followings:- Biography of the two personalities; Effort of Sheikh Abdullahion the studies of syntax and morphology in West Africa; Effort of Sultan Muhammad Bello on the studies of syntax and morphology in west Africa; Conclusion.

Keywords: Arabic Syntax, Morphology, Fodiyo family, Studies, West Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Sheikh Abdullahi bin Fodiyo: Is the son of Muhammad; known with nickname as “Fodiyo” hich means a learned someone in “Fulfulde language“ Abdullahi is the younger brother to Sheikh Usman Danfodiyo; the reformer of Islamic religion in west Africa in 19thCentury [1].

Abdullahi was born in 1766 at Degel; a province of Gobir. He grow up in a family well known with virtue, god fearing and spontaneous. And he learned religious studies and Arabic language within his relatives and outside the family where he became popular and famous with knowledge in the area known as Tukurur or Sudan now Nigeria in West Africa.

Abdullahi was close assistance to his elder brother during the reformation of Islamic religion in 1804. He pass away in the year1831 at a place known as Gwandu now in Kebbi State of Nigeria² Sultan Muhammad Bello

He is a biological son to Sheikh Usmanu bin Danfodiyo. Bello was born in the year 1779. He also grow up in same popular family with good background, he acquired knowledge from his uncle Abdullahi bin Fodiyoto the extent that made him became popular among the family in his period, and he succeeded his father as Amirul Mumunin after his dead. He made his last life at Rabah now in Sokoto State of Nigeria where he passed away in 1837 [2]. Effort of Sheikh Abdullahi for the studies of syntax and morphology in West Africa.

Its not just a claim or exaggeration if one is to state that Sheikh Abdullahi is one of those on top of the list of incomparable scholars at West Africa those who show effort enough for assisting researchers with important references in the field of Arabic syntax and morphology. Particularly, he described the two fields as a civilized city where a visitor can enter and learn many issues from it, he highlight on that in his literature [3].

This, he came to discover that, those two fields are sources of learning any language especially Arabic. For this, he put much effort for writing valuable books on them that facilitated him a position as front liner among the scholars in his period.

As a result of the concern put by Sheikh Abdullahi on these two fields and continued with attention on them, he became popular in producing different books, handouts and instructional pamphlets to simplify the studies of grammatical and morphological studies in the area known today as Nigeria.

Sheikh Abdullahi wrote many books in these fields, but there are four important ones that spread in West Africa namely “Albahrul Muheet”, “ Lam’ul Barq, Alhisnu Arrasin” and Talhisul Hisni”. The first and second books are for syntax studies, while third and fourth are for studies of morphology.

In fact if we considered only the first and third books as only what Sheikh could produce in his life on the studies of syntax and morphology they will be enough and satisfy for learning of up to the higher level in these fields as the first book for examples its contents

consists more than four thousand lines of poems on grammatical rules while the second book consists more than thousand lines with many morphological topics and explanations of different views on such field, as the author affirmed in the conclusion of his book on syntax, [4] as well as he declared in conclusion of the book of morphological [5].

These two books became popular in West Africa in particular and Africa as whole in libraries for the use of research and advanced studies for academicians in higher learning institutions in the continent. Among the factors that spread these books are writing them in rhythmical form that simplifies preservation of their contents in singing in quotations as dramatic method of teaching and points out while giving references in them.

Due to the much interest with Sheikh Abdullahi to upgrade scholars and researchers to utilize these fields; syntax and morphology, he illustrated his books with wide contents and explanations by the way that who pay hid on them will poses ability assimilating the fields from their roots as well as different opinion of the early scholars in Basra and Kufa who produce books on that example, as he stated in the first book "Albahr Al-muheet" [6].

The author at this juncture analyses issues and characteristics of syntax in almost ten lines of his poem and he at last drew attention to an important views of the scholars relating to some words and their plural forms by quoting it in the two lines in the earlier mentioned book [7].

In such quotation Sheikh use to proof the major view out from all differences that may occur [8]. He pointed out the major view by analogical discussion on the particular issue. In this respect, he use to came with the strong and clear proof as he did in his poems on morphology contains the regular forms of certain words in Arabic language [9].

He brought the above analysis to testify vowels that are always suitable with some words with gutter letters in Arabic language by pointing out some differences among Arabs themselves commonly rose through dialect but not in regular morphologically.

That is how Sheikh Abdullah sacrifices his humble self devotedly in developing the studies of these fields by writing such marvelous and valuable books.

If one is desire with Arabic syntax he may come to consider the importance of one of Sheik`s book known as "Almiftahu" for tafsir of Qur`an "commentary". Although, this book was written by him specifically for tafsir, but it deals with important

characteristics that any good commentator must be familiar with during his task, because of the importance of grammar in comprehending meanings in different approaches as he stated in that book [10].

And he paid a specific attention to some "conditional articles" that confuses some commentators grammatically, and that are "IN" and "ITHA" where he discussed these two words in details in the last mentioned book [11]. For these examples and many of that mention for past, Sheikh Abdullahi Fodiyo was described by people of his period as Arabyus Sudan "means an Arabian of the of the area known as Sudan.

The effort of Muhammad Bello Fodiyo for the studies of Arabic Syntax in West Africa. Obviously, Sultan Bello`s record of Arabic morphological studies is not popular as that of his uncle Abdullahi bin Fodiyo.

What Sultan Bello pay much concern on was Arabic syntax, it was on that he wrote his popular book "Alawamiun Nahwiyya" This book was originally written by Imam Muhyudeen Albarkukiyyu, but due to the importance of its contents with many units about of Arabic grammar, widely written in prose, but when Sultan extensively observed it, and how difficult student will fine it to grasp the contents of the book, he changed its style of writing it from prose and abbreviate all the contents of it into poetry form and then named it "Nazmul Al-amamil Annahuliyya" which became popular to academicians in West African and Asian countries among those that are much concern with Arabic studies.

The book spread widely to all Muslim communities in west Africa. For who comprehends Arabic to witness that Sultan really show effort and improved the studies of Arabic syntax to the learners with his ability one should carefully observe what he said in opening unit of the book [12].

The Sultan in the introduction of the book abbreviated all the four syntax rules and characteristics in Arabic grammar as well as their conditions of changes according to their rules in the language.

Through this form Sultan could illustrated his book for Arabic readers especially at higher institutions in their research.

Among popular researchers who undergone their work on this book is Professor Abdullahi Muhammad Adam well known as Abu Nazeefa of Imam Muhammad bin Saudi Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He edited original manuscript of this book and made commentary on it in early eighties, his work increased the popularity of the book as a

contribution of Fodi family toward the study of Arabic syntax in West Africa.

CONCLUSION

We came to agree by what this paper discussed and highlight on that members of Fodiyo family played crucial role in the studies of Arabic language in west Africa. With particular reference to Sheikh Abdullahi Fodiyo and Sultan Muhammad Bello Fodiyo; the two personalities, put effort on developing studies of Arabic syntax and morphology in 19th century in west Africa and wrote important books on these two fields. Their books on this studies widely accepted in West Africa this shows that their family are not just leaders but teachers and guidance to the people of the area known as Nigeria today.

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