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THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF GWANI SALIHU DANZARGA TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUR'ANIC EDUCATION IN KANO

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ABSTRACT

Since the advent of Islam into Kano in the thirteenth century, or much earlier, teaching, recitation and memorization of the Qur'an had been accorded paramount importance. This, could be ascertained if one observes the number of indigenous Qur'anic schools (*makarantun allo*) in all parts of Kano. This system groomed, and is still grooming numerous Qur'anic reciters and even memorizers. However, the viable contributions of those "architects" behind these schools are not well appreciated; thus, not much has been studied and documented. This paper aims at surveying, recording and documenting the life and contributions of Gwani Salihu Danzarga, one of the famous Gwanis in Kano. The paper traces the origin, his birth place, his quest for Qur'anic education, and his general contributions in the traditional Qur'anic education. The methods applied in this research are library, historical and fieldwork through personal interviews. The paper, discovers among other things that Gwani Danzarga differed with most of his contemporaries by marrying Qur'anic education with trading, and that he encouraged and motivated his children and disciples to memorize the Qur'an through various incentives. The paper, recommends among other things that the life and contributions of other indigenous Qur'anic Scholars such as Gwani Danzarga should be studied and documented.

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the life and contributions of Gwani Salihu Danzarga, a scholar who contributed a lot to the development of Qur'anic education in Kano. He differed, to certain extent, with most of his contemporaries in the way he handled his Tsangaya, his disciples and more.

GWANI DANZARGA'S BACKGROUND

Gwani Salihu Danzarga's father, Malam Abdullahi came from Maiduguri and settled in Kano. Danzarga was born in 1916 in Kanoke village very close to Zarga village in the present Jahun Local Government Area of the present Jigawa State. His father died while he was a small child. As such, his mother took care of him. She enrolled him into the Qur'anic school of Malam Kabiru and to another expert Qur'anic teacher Malam Abdullahi Dan Ka-ga-dama at Zarga village under whom he memorized the Qur'an at the age of twelve. Danzarga had visited various towns and villages in Kano, Yobe, Gombe, Jigawa, Borno, and Bauchi on the search of advanced knowledge of the Qur'an. He also studied under Malam Jibril Isma'il at Zarga with the aim of consolidating his memorization. Gwani Danzarga died in 1990. He left behind fifteen children, eight sons and seven daughters. All the eight sons have memorized the Qur'an¹.

HIS QUEST FOR QUR'ANIC EDUCATION

Gwani Danzarga had studied under different expert Qur'anic teachers so as to make his memorization of the Qur'an up to standard. Firstly, he visited Kar-Gumaka village and settled at Magama area in Jahun, from there, he moved to Hadejia, then to Harbo and Taura. It was at Taura that he visited Shaykh Gwani Hamid and studied under him². He heard of the expertise of Gwani Ibrahim Nadudu at Koki in Kano and moved to him in the 1940's to study under him. Initially, Gwani Danzarga did not wish to stay with Gwani Na dudu at Kano for a long time, but the latter was very impressed with Danzarga's character and intelligence. Danzarga married the granddaughter of Gwani Na dudu, Malama Baraka (the daughter of his eldest son, Malam Turaki). Malama Baraka is the mother of Gwani Danzarga's first child Gwani Yahuza Danzarga. Gwani Danzarga first resided in Daurawa and later relocated to Sabuwar Kofa, where presently both his family house and the Tsangaya are situated³.

¹ Interveiw with Gwani Yahuza Gwani Salihu Danzarga at his residence, Koki Qtrs, Kano City on 1st July, 2018.

² Interview with Gwani Yahuza at Ma'ahad Gwani Danzarga.

³ Interview with Gwani Yahuza at Ma'ahad Gwani Danzarga.

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It is very important to note that though Danzarga's relocation from Daurawa to Koki was as a result of the residence and school complex erected to him by Alhaji Sanusi Dantata. In the 1950's, Alhaji Sunusi Dantata built a residence and school complex which he handed over to Gwani Danzarga, which made him to relocate from Daurawa Quarters to the new residence at Koki.⁴

Unlike some other scholars, Gwani Danzarga paid much attention to other Islamic disciplines. He had studied Islamic Jurisprudence, (Usul al-Fiqh), Qur'anic Exegesis (Tafsir), Hadith, Tauhid, Arabic Language and its branches like Nahw, Sarf and Balaghah under Malam Muhammad Yunus also at Koki quarters.⁵

GWANI DANZARGA'S UNIQUE TREND OF IMPARTING QUR'ANIC EDUCATION

As soon as Gwani Danzarga had settled in Kano, he then focused his mission of imparting Qur'anic education to the best of his ability. He applied a very unique approach by providing his pupils free accommodation, feeding, clothing, medical care and other facilities like slate (allo), the Qur'an (Mushaf), buntu, karo, holama, zuge to mention a few. In his *Tsangaya*, the pupils and even others who enjoyed his *Tsangaya* facilities did not use to beg for alms (bara)⁶.

Gwani Danzarga preferred to be self-reliant. As such, he embarked on trade missions to places like Ibadan and Lagos where he disposed some of the Qur'anic manuscripts he had written, and procured some items which were highly needed in Kano, such as *gwado* and cola nuts. Danzarga adopted this, because he believed that his engagement in trade will not deter him from discharging his role as a Qur'anic teacher⁷. In the opinion of his grandson, Gwani Danzarga also used to encourage his students to pursue trade and skills in order to be self-reliant in line with his own policy⁸.

Gwani Danzarga proved to be a psychologist as well as an expert educationist, who applied a strategy of reward and punishment to encourage his children and disciples

⁴Interview with Muhammad el-Auwalu Aliyu Dankumbotso at Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd October, 2019.

⁵ interview with Dr. Gwani Yahya Gwani Yahuza at Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd July, 2018.

⁶ interview with Gwani Yahya at Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd July, 2018.

⁷ Interview with Dr. Gwani Yahya Gwani Yahuza at Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd July, 2018.

⁸ Interview with Dr. Gwani Yahya at Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd July, 2018

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to memorise the Qur'an. According to his eldest son, Gwani Yahuza, his father promised his children with going for Hajj and marriage once they memorise the Qur'an. In this way, his children competed among themselves in order to memorise the Qur'an. The first to benefit from this was his eldest son, Gwani Yahuza, who after memorizing the Qur'an was sponsored for Hajj, and was married with two wives in 1979.⁹ In other instances, he would severely punish any of his children who failed to perform to his expectation.

GWANI SALIHU DANZARGA AS A QUINTESSENTIAL QUR'ANIC SCHOLAR

Gwani Danzarga imparted education from Saturdays to Wednesdays at his residence in the traditional method, after then, he moved to the *Tsangaya* of his teacher, Gwani Na-Dudu in the evenings. Gwani Danzarga became very close to his teacher, Gwani Na-Dudu. He handled the affairs of the *Tsangaya* with utmost care. He was very loyal, simple and always adopted "down to earth" approach in the affairs of the *Tsangaya*. He taught many disciples many of whom have become very influential figures on Qur'anic education, governance and administration, trade, investment and civil service. His students came from places such as Borno, Adamawa, Taraba, Gombe, and Bauchi. There were others from Zaria, Kaduna, Niger, and beyond the boundaries of Nigeria. Some of his students included: Malam Zakari Ya'u Sarari, Malam Haruna Koki, Malam Husain Umar Rijiyar Lemo and Malam Abubakar Umar Ungogo.¹⁰

When Gwani Na Dudu died, his Khalifah requested Danzarga that instead of coming every evening to the residence of his late teacher, he should remain in his residence for the students to come and meet him.¹¹

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE *TSANGAYA* OF GWANI SALIHU DANZARGA INTO *MA'AHAD*

The transformation of Ma'ahad Gwani Danzarga was undertaken by his son Gwani Yahuza, who had also carved a nitche for himself in the field of Qur'anic memorization and its teaching. It may not therefore be out of place to give a brief biography of Gwani Yahuza before discussing his contributions towards the development of the Ma'ahad.

⁹ Interview with Gwani Yahuza on 1st July, 2018.

¹⁰ Interview with Gwani Dr. Yahya

¹¹ Interview with Gwani Dr. Yahya at Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd July, 2018

Gwani Yahuza was born at Daurawa quarters of Kano in 1955. He grew up in Koki Quarters in the city of Kano. He started his elementary Qur'anic Education under his father where he memorised ten hizb. From there, he was sent to Shaikh Muhammad Ibrahim Dan Birni under whom he memorised the complete Qur'an while he was ten years old.¹²

He was then sent to the Khalwah (Tsangaya) of Gwani Sulaiman Mai Bakin Karfe of Hausari ward of Maiduguri where he consolidated his memorization from 1968- 1974. In 1975, Gwani Yahuza was admitted in the famous Al-Azhar University, Egypt where he studied Tajwid and obtained a Certificate in the discipline. In 1982, Gwani Yahuza attended a Daurah Course which was organized in Kano by the Islamic University of Madinah. In the same year, he was selected and turbaned as the Gwani in the Khalwah of Gwani Mukhtar at Kofar Litinin Quarters in Maiduguri. In 1989, Gwani Yahuza went back to Al-Azhar University for the second time where he attended the institution of Al-Qira'at and obtained a Certification of specialization in ten Qira'at al-Sugrah and al-Kubrah.¹³

In 1977, his father Gwani Salihu Danzarga bestowed on him all the affairs of his tsangaya. From that time to date, Gwani Yahuza is the Director of the tsangaya as well as the Ma'ahad Gwani Danzarga. From 1987 to 1989, he taught at the College for Qur'anic Studies, Kano which is situated adjacent to the famous School for Arabic Studies.¹⁴

From 1987 to date, he is the Chairman of judges of the Musabaqah from local government to the state level in Kano. It was also in 1987 that he was appointed as the National Chairman Committee of Musabaqah. At different times, Gwani Yahuza became a Consultant on the Qur'anic Education, Qur'anic Competition (Musabaqah) and so many related disciplines in Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Egypt, Morocco and Dubai. He is currently the Executive Chairman Kano State Qur'anic and Islamiyya Schools Management Board.¹⁵

Some of his disciples include: his eldest son, Dr. Yahya Gwani Yahuza Danzarga (a Lecturer at Bayero University, Kano) Gwani Mukhtar Abdullahi Zara (a Legal Practitioner and a Senior Lecturer at Aminu Kano College for Islamic and Legal Studies) Malam Sani Adam (Qira'ah), Malam Shafi'u Salisu and Gwani Ubale

¹² Interview with Gwani Dr. Aliyu Harun Muhammad, Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 14th June, 2018.

¹³ Interview with Gwani Dr. Aliyu

¹⁴ Interview with Gwani Dr. Yahya at Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd July, 2018

¹⁵ Interview with Gwani Dr. Aliyu Harun Muhammad, Centre for Quranic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 14th June, 2018.

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Idris of Dar Al-Arqam, Kano. Others include: Gwani Salihu Abdullahi, Malam Lawan Sauri, Malam Miftahu Muhammad Dan Birni, Gwani Ja'afar and Gwani Haruna Idris.¹⁶

According to Gwani Yahuza, his experiences at Al-Azhar University, Cairo motivated him to establish the Ma'ahad. He reflected that there was dire need to come up with a new curriculum of memorizing the Qur'an and to marry it with Arabic language, Islamic Studies, and Western Education. Therefore, he established the *Ma'ahad* with the following are the objectives;

- i. To enable students to memorise the Qur'an and understand Islam in its proper perspective.
- ii. To teach the Qur'anic Memorizers Arabic language for easy comprehension of the meanings of the Qur'an.
- iii. To introduce the Qur'anic memorizers to proper understanding of Basic of English language.
- iv. To facilitate the furtherance of education of Qur'anic memorisers up to tertiary institutions and universities.¹⁷

As far back as 1997, Gwani Yahuza has been teaching different recitations (Qira'at) of the Qur'an, its correct pronunciation (Tajwid) Qur'anic Sciences (Ulum Al-Qur'an) and awarding the ijazah of the recitation (Qira'ah) memorization (Hifz) of the Qur'an and other related Islamic/Qur'anic disciplines.

In 1987, Gwani Yahuza established *Ma'ahad Gwani Danzarga Li Tahfiz al-Qur'an Wa al-Dirasat al-Ammah*. This Ma'ahad (Institute) has different sections, such as: Special Class for Elders in the Community (Halqah) Nursery School (Al-Raudah) Primary School (al-Ibtida'iyyah), Junior Secondary School (al-I'dadiyyah) Senior Secondary School (al-Thanawiyyah) Special Evening Section (Qism al-Masa Al Khass) and Women Section (Qism al-Sayyidat).¹⁸

In Al-Halqah Section which is referred to as Halqat Al-Murattilin, lessons are offered after Maghrib prayers. This section is for the elderly members of the community who want to improve their recitation and strengthen their memorization of the Qur'an. This Section was created in 1986. It started initially at the residence

¹⁶Interview with Gwani Auwalu Ali Dankumbotso, Centre for Quranic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd October, 2019

¹⁷ Interview with Gwani Dr. Yahya at Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd July, 2018

¹⁸ Interview with Gwani Dr. Yahya at Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd July, 2018

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of Gwani Yahuza at Koki but later on it moved to the compound of the *Ma'ahad* at Kofar Waika Waje. Lessons are conducted after *Maghrib* prayers from Saturdays to Wednesdays. Lessons on Qur'an and *Tajwid* were initially taught by Gwani Yahuza. Later on, Gwani Yahuza's son, Dr. Yahya teaches these disciplines. *Tafsir* is taught also by Dr. Yahya, while Imam Kasim Ramadan teaches *Hadith*.¹⁹ (In *Al-Raudah* Section, children between the ages of three to five are admitted and groomed to have interest in the recitation and memorization of the Qur'an. It is what I describe as "catch them very young". Attractive educational programs are accorded paramount importance. The lessons are offered from 8.00 am to 12.00 noon.²⁰

In *Al-Ibtida'iyah* Section, the pupils are supposed to study for six years. They are also expected to memorise thirty *hizbs*, from *Surat al-Nas* to *Suratu Maryam*. Subjects like: *Tauhid*, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, *Sirah*, and *Tarikh*, Physical Education, English, General Knowledge and many more are taught. In this Section, lessons are offered between 8.00 am to 5.00 pm, while on Fridays, lessons end at 12.00 noon.²¹

In *Al-I'idadiyah* Section, the students are equipped to complete Qur'anic memorization. For, they have already memorized thirty *hizbs* in the Primary School, and they now begin their memorization from *Surat Maryam* to *Surat Al-Baqarah*. Other subjects like English, Mathematics, Social Studies are also taught. Time for offering lessons is the same with the Primary School Section, except that on Fridays lessons end by 12.15 pm.²²

In *Al-Thanawiyah* Section, students intensify lessons on recitation and memorisation of the Qur'an and Arabic Language. Beside, students offer lessons which are very similar to the conventional Senior Secondary Schools. These include: English, Mathematics, Economics, History, Biology and Computer Studies. Time for offering lessons is the same with the Junior Secondary School Section.²³

In *Qism Al-Masa Al-Khass*, the Section deals with members of the society who are not versed in Qur'anic Education. Most of these people are products of Western Education. As such, the *Ma'ahad* organises classes for these calibre of people where they study Qur'an, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, *Tauhid*, *Sirah*, *Tahdhib* and Basic

¹⁹ Interview with Gwani Yahuza at his residence on 1st July, 2018

²⁰ Interview with Gwani Yahuza

²¹ Interview with Gwani Yahuza

²² Interview with Gwani Dr. Shu'aibu Mukhtar Shu'aibu at Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 15th November, 2019.

²³ Interview with Gwani Dr. Shu'aibu

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Arabic. Lessons are conducted on Saturdays and Sundays between 9.00 am to 4.00 pm, while on Mondays Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 2.30 pm to 5.30 pm. ²⁴

In *Qism Al-Sayyidat*, the Section is specially established to offer lessons on Qur'anic Education, i.e, recitation and memorisation of the Qur'an, Islamic Studies and Arabic Language to married women, widows and divorcees. Lessons are conducted on Saturdays and Sundays between 9.00 am to 12.00 noon. ²⁵

It is worth mentioning that in 1986, Malam Sham'un Gwani Danzarga, one of the students of *Ma'ahad Gwani Danzarga* received President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida prize during the International Qur'anic Competition held at Saudi Arabia. Malam Sham'un had represented Nigeria very well in that *Musabaqah*. His composure, eloquent pronunciation of the letters of the Qur'an and intonation among other things attracted attention of the audience. Moreover, during 1995 competition at national level at Kaduna, the graduates of Gwani Danzarga performed excellently so much so that they received prizes in various categories of the *Musabaqah*.²⁶

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper presented the life of Gwani Salihu Danzarga and his movements to different places on the search of Qur'anic Education before his association with his later teacher, mentor and of course Grand father-in-law Gwani Na Dudu in Kano. The paper spelt out that Gwani Danzarga was not only versed in Qur'anic Education, he was also a scholar of other Islamic disciplines like Usul al-Fiqh, Hadith, Tauhid, and Lugah. The paper highlighted Gwani Danzarga's method of Qur'anic teaching which to certain extent differed from those of his contemporaries. For instance, his disciples never go asking for alms. He provided all their basic needs like shelter, food, cloth, medical care and materials. Not only that, Gwani Danzarga had been known for his wonderful gifts to any among his disciples who performed excellently.

Moreover, Gwani Danzarga differed with other Qur'anic teachers, this is because while some of them were very lackadaisical on anything to do with occupation or trade, on the contrary, Danzarga engaged in trade. Thus, he combined scholarship with trading.

²⁴ Interview with Gwani Dr. Shu'aibu

²⁵ Interview with Gwani Dr. Yahya at Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd July, 2018

²⁶ Interview with Gwani Auwalu Ali Dankumbotso Centre for Qur'anic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 3rd October, 2019, and Malam Husain Isa Bello of Gwani Daudu Tsangaya, Gwale respectively.

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The paper went further to point out the biography of Gwani Danzarga's senior son, Gwani Yahuza, for he is the driving force behind the establishment of Ma'ahad Gwani Danzarga in 1987. It then discussed the Ma'ahad Gwani Danzarga where it spelt out that there are different sections. For instance, Special Class for Elders in the Community, Nursery, Primary, Junior and Senior Secondary Schools, Special Evening Section as well as Women Sections.

The paper, therefore recommends that postgraduate research should be conducted on the indigenous Qur'anic Scholars in Nigeria. Moreover, research Centres should be established and fund be available in Nigerian Universities in order to encourage and facilitate research on numerous aspects of the Qur'an including very rich documentation on the Qur'anic Scholars.

Prior to the evolution of the National Qur'anic Competition (Musabaqah) in Nigeria in 1986, the Danzarga Qur'anic School was like most of the Qur'anic schools in Kano; it operated, through the traditional system of Qur'anic education.

With the emergence of the Musabaqah, in 1986 at Sokoto through the efforts of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto and the request made to each State in Nigeria to send contestants to the Musabaqah, and the later decision that the Musabaqah should be a yearly event to be rotated among states of the federation, the syllabus of teaching in the Qur'anic schools was restructured especially in Kano to cope with the new development²⁷.

In view of the development, the Centre for Islamic Education under Kano State Ministry of Education requested Gwani Danzarga to allow his son, Gwani Yahuza be co-opted as a member of the Centre. The former succumbed to the request. Hence, the appointment of Gwani Yahuza as the first Kano State Chief Judge of the Musabaqah Committee, and later the Chief Judge of the National Musabaqah. This, by extension facilitated the development of Qur'anic Education in Nigeria. It also promoted the good will of the Danzarga family and their *Tsangaya*.²⁸

²⁷ Interview with Gwani Dr. Aliyu Harun Muhammad Centre for Quranic Studies, Bayero University, Kano on 14th June, 2018.

²⁸ Interview with Gwani Dr. Aliyu Haruna Muhammad

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