

# Types of Available Arabic and Islamic Information Resources in Private Collections of Borno Ulama in Maiduguri

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## Abstract

*This study examines the types of Arabic and Islamic information resources available in the private collections of Borno Ulama in Maiduguri Metropolis. The research aims to identify the nature and diversity of materials used by scholars for teaching, preaching, research, and public enlightenment. Using a quantitative survey design, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews from Ulama registered with the Borno State Ministry of Religious Affairs. The findings show that these private collections are largely composed of textbooks, with additional resources such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, periodicals, audio-visual materials, and internet tools. Despite the richness of these collections, none of them are managed by professional librarians. The study recommends training of the Ulama in modern library management. It also proposes periodic workshops led by trained personnel to build capacity in information resource management, especially in areas like non-print materials, manuscript conservation, and preservation of rare documents, to improve the information dissemination.*

**Keywords:** *Information Resources, Private Collection, Borno Ulama*

## Introduction

Islam is considered by the western world as the Religion of the Book (Trimingham,1959). The fact is that before the advent of Islam, the Arabs depended mainly on oral transmission. However, with the inception of the Islam, the oral transmission was replaced by written documents; thus, when the first Five verses of the Qur'an " *Iqra* " was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) Allah enjoined the Prophet and entire Muslim to read, learn, and write. Thus, Prophet Muhammad, though he had no formal knowledge of the skill of writing or reading, he dictated every part of the Qur'an to his companions who wrote them down on various available materials, and other companions committed them into memory. Later Abu-Bakr *Al-Siddiq*, the first *Caliph*, ordered the collection of the various materials into one volume of manuscript. Since the prophet's time therefore, some of his companions preserved all the Qur'anic verses and recorded all accounts of sayings, deeds and silent approvals of the prophet, which are called *al-Hadith* on various accessible materials. There was a large amount of *Hadeeth* literature which had been recorded on various religious injunctions during the lifetime of the Prophet (PBUH) .

As Islam expanded beyond the Arabian Peninsula, books became information resources and carriers of a unifying Islamic cultural consciousness, and these led to the creation of several categories of library which includes National, public, academic, school, special, Mosques, private libraries as well as personal/private collections all over the Islamic world (Khan, 2011). Apart from this, the noble Qur'an orders:

(وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ)

“Let there arise out of you a band of people Inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity” (Quran Chapter 3:104).

Thus, in the light of the above, the Messenger of Allah, (P.B.U.H.) said, "Anyone who calls other people to guidance will have the same reward as those who follow him, without that decreasing their reward in any way (Al-Jazairee,1984). The above-mentioned Qur'anic injunction and the *Hadeeth* (saying of the Prophet P.B.U.H.) have inspired the Borno Ulama to rise and preach the Islamic religion to their people. They enjoining good and forbidding evil. Thus, the appearance of these preachers' calls for different types of *Qur'anic tafaseer* (exegeses), and other information resources, and these led to the creation of personal/private collections in Maiduguri the Borno state capital to do their research, learning, teaching, preaching and generally spreading the Arabic and Islamic knowledge to the general public.

### Statement of the Problem

Enormous researches were conducted on Borno and its intellectual heritages by different scholars, but none of them thought what types of information resources that the Arabic and Islamic scholars' access, retrieve and utilize to enable them execute their duties as propagators of Arabic language and Islamic religion knowledge to the general public. Going by the above assertion, this research therefore, investigated the different types of Information resources that the Borno Ulama access and use for their teaching, learning and dissemination of the Islamic religion knowledge to the general public.

The objective of the study is to uncovered the types of available information resources use by the Borno 'Ulama before carrying out their research, teaching, learning and preaching to the general public in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria.

### Literature Review

Islamic religion demonstrated enviable part in changing the means of information transmission system from the verbal to well documented method within the Muslim and non-Muslim populous. (Adams, 2003) The concept of private Arabic and Islamic information resources can be traced back to the inception of Islam in 6<sup>th</sup> century (C.E). Thus, with the advent of Islam in 610 C.E, the creation of Arabic and Islamic information resources became a divine plan, as the commencement of the revelation of the Glorious *Qur'an* was the foundation of the private Arabic and Islamic Collections. The available information resources during that period were: the scribes, flat bones tablets, leaves of date, separate pieces of palm fibres, papyrus, hides, parchments and back of trees (Houtsha, etall. (1987)

Apart from recording and preserving the *Qur'an*, the Prophet's companions also engaged themselves in memorising and recording all accounts of sayings, deeds and silent approvals of the Prophet (P.B.U.H), which later became known as "*Hadeeth* and *Sunnah*. More than twenty companions of the Prophet were said to have their private written documents, among them

were the two wives of the Prophet (P.B.U.H): Aisha and Hafsat (Denfer 1983). These formed the basis of all Arabic and Islamic information resources in Islamic education. It was from the *Qur'an* and the *Hadeeth* manuscripts that the later Muslims began to prepare their own individual copies, (Mas'ud, 1981) whereas those copies later gave birth to various Arabic and Islamic Books on various branches of Arabic and Islamic Education. Nevertheless, mosques were considered the first Islamic libraries, whereby the *Qur'an* was the first manuscript to be deposited in such mosques. This was followed by the book of *Ahadeeth* of the prophet (Adams, 2003). The duo documents are the parents of all Arabic and Islamic information resources.

### **Availability of Private Arabic and Islamic Collections**

When many people embraced Islam and the need for knowledge had increased immensely, about the new religion, the *Qur'an* and *Hadeeth*. Muslim scholars had to travelled far and wide, from town to town collecting information about *Tafseer* and *Hadeeth*, especially during the Umayyad period (661 -749/750 C.E.), and the early period of Abbasid Caliphate (749/750 C.E. up to the time of *Khalifah* Mu'tasim billaHi (Muhammad bin Ishaq) (d.847 C, E), which was regarded as golden age of the Muslim Civilization or Remarkable age of Islam (Alim, 2012).

A large number of private Arabic and Islamic libraries sprang-up all over the Islamic countries. "Since 736 C.E, a historian at Baghdad, Omar al-Waqidi had 20 camel loads of information resources in his Private Collection. Harun al-Rashid, the renowned Abbasid ruler (786-809 C.E), was known as a bibliographer, and Abu Ja'afar Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki, a renowned scholar during the Abbasid Khalifate was said to have had a collection of at least three manuscripts of each textbook of the time (Thomson, 1983). There were three great libraries in Islam which held an important place in the cultural life of Muslims which were not only seen as store houses for books collections, but also seen as centres for teaching and learning : the library of the Abbasid Caliphs (750/ 833 C.E) in Baghdad (The House of Wisdom also known as *Dar* or *Khizana al-Hikma*); the library of the Fatimide Caliphs in Cairo (The House of Science also known as *Daral-Ilm*) and the library of the Ummayyad Caliphs in Spain (The Library of Cordova). (Ajiri, 2000A.D/1421) These libraries gave considerable volumes of books and estimated that there were some 600, 000 of manuscript books therein. (Young, 1990) Al-Ma'mun son of Harun al-Rashid (813-833 C.E) was said to have established the *Khizanat al-Hikma* (Treasury of Wisdom) at Baghdad in 830 C.E, (Arnold, 2009) and brought in large information resources from different places (Adams, 2003). He was credited with having instigated the scholarly enterprises of translating master pieces of Greek, (Shalabee, 1982) eg: books of Plato, Aristotle, Syriac, ancient Persian works and other oriental literature into Arabic". (Rahim, 2001) Not only did individuals turn their private houses into social and library clubhouse, but they also kept open houses where they provide their guests with libraries stocked with books (Aman, 1975) ; such as that of Egypt, where there was a library of al-Mu'arrif which contains thousands of books. In Spain, there was a private library of *Ibn Abbas* which was enriched with 400,000 volumes of books. Furthermore, *Ibn Hazim* of Yemen had fine private collections of information resources used by itinerant scholars. There was such private collection of Malik Daud in Syria, which contained 100,000 volumes (Elayyan, 1990). Many literatures of such collections were cited. Such collections were included that of in Bukhara, Baghdad and al-Basra. The classical one was that of al-Jahiz of al-Basra who died having been crushed by his own collections of books. It is reported that in addition to his personal collection,

al-Jahiz composed not less than 2000 books. The renowned among al-Jāhiz's books are; book of: *Al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn fī al-Adab wa al-Inshā'ī- wa-al-Khiṭābatī, Mahāsin wa-al-adu-dād, Dīwān al-Rasā-il, Al-Bukhallā-U, and Kitāb al-Hayawaan.*

As North Africa has had contact with Arab nations prior to the advent of Islam in early part of the 7th century (C.E), and especially after the arrival of the nomadic Arabian tribes of *Banu Hilal* and *Banu Sulaim* during the eleventh century, the Berbers and the Tuaregs adopted Islam and made Arabic language to become their government and religious instruction. Consequently, they have become more Arabized and even claim Arabian descent. ( Abun-Nasr, 1978) Sequel to this, Saidu ( Saidu, 1974 ) notes that there were many private Arabic and Islamic collections in North Africa, such as the fine collection of *Ibn al-Jazzar* of Tunis who had owned 25 metrics weights of medical books written in Arabic.

As early as 9th century, Northern Nigeria for instance, attracted the attention of the Arab geographers, travellers, and traders. They produced a corpus of literary works in Arabic. These Arabic writings cover a wide range of information concerning nations, economic data, social life, international trade as well as merchant routes, religious beliefs and customs. This implied that, Arabic and Islamic collections were well developed in Northern Nigeria cities such as Kano, Sokoto and Borno, which were directly connected with other West African cities such as Agades and Timbuktu through the caravan route even prior to colonial Era ( Nnaji, 1986 ). To this end, it was discerned from Mahram tradition that the creation of the first office of librarianship in Borno was realized since the Syfawa dynasty ( Ajiri, 2005 ). Hence, this work surveyed the types of private Arabic and Islamic information resources deposited by Borno 'Ulama in their private collections, for executing their day-to-day affairs in Maiduguri.

### **Types of Information Resources in Private Arabic and Islamic Collections**

The scope of one's knowledge, the limitations, the capability and the orientation of individual Islamic scholar determine the types of information resources he has in his private collection. In the early period of Islam, most of the information resources in private collections were manuscripts which were usually preserved on papyrus and parchments, while in the latter periods they were found in form of textbooks. At the *Nizamiyah* College Library of Baghdad, there were over 400,000 volumes of books all of which were manuscripts. Thus, the earliest Arabic and Islamic information resources were preserved on papyrus and parchment up until 704 C.E, when the Muslims went into Samarqand, present capital of Uzbekistan and learned to make paper from Chinese. Apart from the textbooks and manuscripts, Arabic and Islamic collectors/ libraries were providing free papers, pens and lamps for those who wished to develop their own collections of resources by copying works in their private collections (Mahmud, 1971).

The types of information resources acquired by any Arabic and Islamic scholar depend on his aims and objectives of erecting the personal collection. This can be determined by the needs of the scholar. Anyway, the main functions of any private Arabic and Islamic Collections are to build a collection that is well balanced with comprehensive information resources that would meet up the needs of the scholars. There is no any comprehensive standardization in personal/private collections, but their strength and weakness can be judge by the quality and size of the information resources within them. An inert moribund collection invariably means an inert moribund scholar. As any other subject, Islamic studies subject cannot teach successfully without utilizing any Information Resources. Information resources embrace wide

variety of formats and related equipment. Each format of information resource has specific use as conveyance of mandated meaning.

### **Classification of Information Resources**

There are three classes of information resources as categorized by Cable in (Yusuf, 2002) and (Olaniyan, 2005) as follows:

#### **Audio Materials**

These are information resources that convey meaning through productions of sound. They are teaching and learning materials that appeal to the sense of hearing only. They include: Radio, Tape recorder, Records player, Telephone, Microphone and rest.

#### **Audio-Visual Materials**

These types of Information resources are those appeal to both hearing and senses of sight simultaneously. These include Internet, Computer, Television and Motion-talking pictures.

#### **Visual Materials**

These types of materials involve the use of visual perception/ communicate through the eye or appeal to the sense of sight only. These include:

- i. Printed Resources-such as Textbooks, Dictionaries, Journals, Newspapers, Magazines etc.
- ii. None-print Resources-such as projected materials as slides, film strip, wall- charts, overhead projectors, etc

Nevertheless, central to the educational resources which play an important role in the achievement of educational objectives and goals by enhancing effective teaching and learning of Arabic and Islamic studies, nothing has ever replaced the printed work as the key element in the educational process and as a result textbooks are central to schooling at all levels (Muhammed, 2017). In some instances, textbooks provide the main source of information for the Ulama, students as well as the course of studies in the Arabic and Islamic Religion subjects. However, flat bones, stones, date-palm, leather and back of trees formed the earliest instructional materials for study and memorization of the Qur'an; instead of lap-tops, computers, radio, projected media which are currently available in the 21st century. These materials serve as supplement to the Manuscripts and printed resources.

Regarding the subject covered by the collections, the Arabic and Islamic scholars gathered, copied and translated everything they could from any available language into Arabic. (Aman 1975) The information resources of most Arabic and Islamic collections are divided into ten major classes as listed by an Arab librarian (Ibn Nadim, 1971) as follows: "Al-Quran, Dogmatic, Philosophy, Arabic Grammar, Jurisprudence, Religion, History, Light literature, Poetry, and Al-chemy". (Khan, 1981) The content of any Arabic and Islamic information resources must fall into any of the above-mentioned subjects. However, this is only a picture of the types of Arabic and Islamic collections of that time. The tradition of Muslim scholars in West Africa, as elsewhere, used to involve other fields of knowledge outside the scope of defined Arabic and Islamic studies subjects. They produced a number of Arabic works relating to Medicine, Philosophy, Economic Studies, Political Thought, Geography, Architecture,

Town Planning and Public Administration. Some of these manuscripts are housed in the personal collectors in different forms for their use (Bunza, 2019).

Saleh's work discussed "*Information Seeking Behaviour of the Ulama in Relation to their Work Roles*" in preaching, counselling, administration, and leadership roles in Nigeria (Saleh, 2013). The work is the most relevant and similar to this research as it treats some parts of Islamic information resources as related to Ulama, however, the Arabic and Islamic collections as the contributions of the Ulama to Islamic information resources, which is the subject matter of this research work has not been given serious attention by the authors, so there arises the need to fill this gap.

### **Methodology**

For the purpose of this research, survey and descriptive research methods were adopted. These research designs were employed by the researcher for, they are more suitable methods while gathering data on present happening matters in any situation. This is agreed upon the fact that "to acquire current rather than historical information about the respondents themselves, their experience, their opinions, attitudes or their knowledge, the survey design serve as a useful method" (Busha and Harter, 1980). Furthermore, survey research has been used mainly to find out what exists in the social environment of a group, geographical or political areas, where all the available primary and secondary sources are going to be examined as well as analysed by descriptive statistic (Seltiz and Cook, 1981).

### **Population and Sample**

The target population for this study consists of all the forty (40) preaching Islamic scholars that registered with the Borno State Ministry of Religious Affairs and Special Education (Borno State 2019). The Borno State's Preaching Board of the Ministry confirmed and provided the names and address of the forty (40) scholars who are famous public preachers in Maiduguri town. The researcher therefore adopted all the entire known 40 Islamic public preachers presented by the Preaching Board as the population and are manageable size, so no sampling technique was involved.

### **Data Analysis, Major Findings and Discussion of Results**

Section 1 of the presentation shows the response rate. Section 2 discussed the demographic information about the respondents. Section 3: identified the types of available Arabic and Islamic information resources in private Arabic and Islamic collections of Borno Ulama in Maiduguri.

#### **Section 1: Response Rate**

Out of the 40 questionnaires directly administered to the target population, the researcher was able to retrieved only 33 (82.5%) copies, which were properly filled; while Seven (20 %) of the questionnaires were not returned to the researcher, and therefore, they were not been able to be retrieved.

#### **Section 2: Demographic Information of the respondents**

The data shows that, out of the 33 respondents, majority 28 (85. %) of them indicated that they acquired their education by attending both formally established Islamiyyah *Madrassa* (schools) and traditional Islamic schools' system (*Makarantan-Allo*). Only 5 (15%) observed that they

acquired their education by attending traditional (informal) Islamic schools system only, (*Makarantan-Allo / Tsanghaya*).

### **Section: 3.1: The Types of Available Information Resources in Private Arabic and Islamic Collection of Borno Ulama in Maiduguri**

From all indications, rich collections of information resources were abound in the private Arabic and Islamic Collections of Borno Ulama within Maiduguri Metropolis. Based on the data generated, the results revealed that 13 (39%) of the respondents have printed resources only, while 20 scholars (61%) have both printed and non- printed information resources.

The data further shows that 24 (73%) of the respondents have non-religious books in their collections, although, the researcher observed that much of the non-religious English and other resources in these collections are pupils' secondary schools' and University's students' books. The remaining nine (27%) of the respondents answered negatively that they don't have such resources in their collections.

When the researcher asked whether there are periodical resources in the Private Collections of the Borno Ulama, 17 (52%) of the respondents answered positively that they have periodical in their collections, while 16 (48%) of the respondents admitted that they do not have any kind of periodical resources in their collections.

### **Section 4: The Major Findings of the Study**

There are many types of information resources abound in Borno Ulama Private Arabic and Islamic Collections in Maiduguri. The information resources present in the Borno Ulama private collections are mainly textbooks and pamphlets. However, other types of information resources such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias, periodicals and non-print materials such as radios, tape recorders, video-tapes, televisions and Internets are also found in some of the Borno Ulama Private collections.

### **Section 4: Discussion of the Results**

As Arabic and Islamic information resources, the finding agreed with (Aman, 1975) statement who says that the Prophet Muhammad's followers consider books as their faithful companions and good guide. It also agreed with the Kensdele' in (Aguolu, 1977) study who claimed that in Northern Nigeria, the prominent Islamic scholars, emirs and judicial officers have massive Arabic and Islamic studies information resources.

The findings revealed that the types of information resources of the Borno Ulama Private Collections cannot be discussed in a nutshell. In general, the contents of such resources are comprised of reference books like encyclopaedias and other textbooks, periodicals, pamphlets and non-print materials. Because of the variety of subjects covered by these resources, they can be grouped into three main fields. These are: Islamic Study resources, Arabic language resources, other secular educational and recreational resources, Periodical Resources and Non-print resources. A periodical is a publication with a distinctive title which appears at regular intervals (Adomi, 2009). It is published *periodically*. It contains articles, columns, stories or other writings by several contributors. Periodicals are referred to as serials: thus; they include daily newspapers, weekly news magazines, monthly magazines, trade publications, and academic journals, which may be published at regular or irregular interval such as weekly, monthly, bimonthly, quarterly, annually, biannually, etc. Periodical resources either written in

Arabic or English language are available in some of the private collections of Borno Ulama in Maiduguri. They aid the Ulama in their quest for knowledge and are important sources for current information on any subject. The latest or current information is provided to the Ulama through them. Different types of periodicals have different purposes and features, which affects their articles. They are classified in to three: Newspapers, Magazines and Journals.

In all, the collections covered the following Arabic and Islamic literature such as on the *al-Qur'an* and its related literature, *al-Hadith* and its related literature, Jurisprudence: (*al-Fiqhu*; Islamic law) and its related literature, *Al-Tawheed*; Islamic Theology and its related literature. Islamic History, Islamic thought and philosophy, Biography, Islam and politics, Islam and science, charms, poetry and others...

In the field of Arabic, the Borno Ulama, acquire the following materials: Arabic grammar; etymology, semantics, rhetoric. In the field of language drill and their related Literature, they acquire Arabic prose, poems, drama, stories and others... Apart from the religious information resources, other secular information resources such as on English language, mathematics, Hausa books, some newspapers, journals and magazines on diverse Arabic and Islamic studies are acquired by some of the Borno Ulama from different academic societies and reputable academic organisations and publishers. These are the basis of most private Arabic and Islamic collections in the State.

The researcher however, observed that the information resources on the Arabic and the Islamic education are growing organism. The range of their subjects became wider and wider over the years and years to come. More subjects are therefore, will be identified within the near future.

### **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation**

The main aim of this study is to explore the types of available information resources impounded in Private Arabic and Islamic Collections of Borno 'Ulama in Maiduguri Metropolis. The review of past studies on types of information resources and utilization of Arabic and Islamic library/collections were used as model for conceptual framework of the study.

Survey method was chosen as research design. The target population of this research comprises of all the teaching and Preaching Ulama of Borno State. However, the researcher used those 'Ulama who are preaching and live in Maiduguri and registered with Borno State Ministry of Religious Affairs as sample of the study. For the data collection instruments, structured questionnaires and direct observation were used. The generated data were systematically analysed and presented in table forms, using frequencies distribution tables and percentages. The findings of the research show that there are many types of Information resources within the Private collections of Borno Ulama on variety of subjects. They are made up of reference resources, textbooks, journals, periodicals and non-print resources on different Arabic and Islamic religious subjects. The non-print resources found in the Collections include audio and video compact discs (CD) players. Satellite dishes, computers and Internet gadgets are also available in some of the private collections.

Collectively, rich collections of different types of information resources have been identified in different Private Arabic and Islamic collections in Maiduguri town. Most of the information resources found there comprise of print and non-printed materials. Lack of funds made many Private collections to be under ramshackle conditions. Lack of extensive non-print media in

most of the private collections can be partially attributed to several factors that the Ulama cited lack of time and lack of knowledge or ability as reasons for not using non-print materials.

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