

On Language Contacts in the Mega-Chad Area: The Arabic Influence

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Abstract

La diffusion de l’Islam en Afrique a forcément introduit des mots nouveaux dans presque toutes les langues parlées dans les zones pénétrées par cette religion. Ces mots ont le plus souvent leurs équivalents dans les langues africaines, d’où le sens péjoratif qu’ils prennent chez les locuteurs: c’est le cas des mots concernant les parties du corps humain et leur connotation. Concernant ce sujet on s’est concentré sur les langues majoritaires dans la zone soudanaise, c.à.d. le hausa, kanuri, fulfulde, mais nous faisons aussi référence à des langues tchadiques minoritaires, comme le kwami et le kupto.

The spread of Islam in West Africa among different people through the past centuries, has had a deep impact on nearly all the people of the area. The languages, politics, religion and social lives of these people have been highly influenced by Islam.¹

Before the arrival of Islam, a great majority of languages in Africa were based on oral tradition. So literacy, introduced by Islamic studies, made Arabic – the language of the Quran – acquire a prestigious status. And consequently, local languages and cultures from then onwards tended to be considered backward.

The progression of Islam resulted in the change of traditional organization in terms of social and territorial system of government.

¹ “This can be best proved when comparing the Arabic words for “book”, “writing board” and “ink”. Compare Baldi (2008: 424-425, no. 2396; 450-451, no. 2567; 193-194, no. 968).

The long distance trade of Arabs influenced the local communities in creating new political and mercantile centers, along with a steady interethnic exchange. Those who converted to Islam were compelled to follow Islamic rules and customs, which in many cases contradicted their traditional culture – that might have disappeared anyway. For example, before the advent of Islam, the Hausa or Berber were matriarchal societies in which women were more emancipated, and enjoyed certain legal rights that were completely unfamiliar to Arabs. Islam started to pervade and grow in nearly all aspects of life, strongly influencing institutions like marriage, heritage etc. And in particular the “ precedence over all previous group loyalties, whether lineage or ethnic, social or political” (Low1972: 26).

The ways and persistence with which the Arabic influence affected some languages of the African Savanah zone can be outlined by different perceptions due to the difference in geographical backgrounds.

In Arabic the word “Arab” is a synonym of “Bedouin”, and the two roots (*‘arab* and *bdw*) have basically the same meaning. The language therefore reflects a typical desert environment, that differs from the places where Islam spread in sub-Saharan Africa. Here for example, many societies are prevalently sedentary. A characteristic reflected in their semantic perception of “house” or “compound”. Compare: Arabic *sūr* ‘wall; fence’ > Fulfulde *sōrowol* ‘rectangular, flat-roofed house’; Hausa *sōrō* ‘entrance room of compound’ (via Kanuri); Kanuri *shóró / sóró* ‘rectangular room’; Songhay *sooroo* ‘étage (supérieur); pont supérieur (de bateau)’ (via Hausa?) and Swahili *sera* ‘fort, castle’, serving as a good example for expressing different geographical ‘topoi’ according to cultural contexts.

A second factor observed is closely related to the fact that Arabic was (and still is) considered a language of prestige. So, in many cases words were borrowed as a fashion, even if there was no real necessity.

However, the rise of the Fulani empire in the beginning of the 19th century in the middle Sudan zone, created the real necessity to borrow Arabic terms or words to suite the new political situation.

This is clearly reflected in traditional titles which began to flourish with the Fulani conquest of the sub-Saharan Hausa states. After the

‘jihad’ of Usuman dan Fodiyo, the Fulani empire in its latter days stretched from Masina, west of Hausa land, to the east. Title holders in the empire with certain duties, functions, rights and privileges had to be created.

Following the *Kitāb al-Farq*, Usuman dan Fodiyo at beginning of his reign appointed only four state officers, i.e. *waziri* ‘chief state officer to the crown’, *alkali* ‘judge’, *wali* ‘chief of the police’ and *haraji* ‘tax collector’ (cf. Low 1972: 100).

Previously existing (Hausa-)titles mainly “composed of *ɗan* (son of) and the name of the tribe or place of which one is chief” (Palmer 1928: 55) – like ‘*ɗan Isa*, *ɗan Goriba*’, etc. – were forbidden at first, and later re-admitted. However new titles were necessarily created in order to establish a functioning hierarchic administration. In a political system based on feudalism like in the former Hausa emirates of Northern Nigeria – in which the *sultan* (< Ar. *sulṭān*) stood and still stands on top – an administrative staff was essential. Therefore we find the following titles originating from Arabic and directly lent to Hausa, e.g.

ENGLISH	Hausa	Arabic
Emir	<i>amīru</i>	<i>amīr</i>
Prime Minister/Vizier	<i>wāzīri</i>	<i>wazīr</i>
Imam	<i>imāmī</i> , <i>līmān</i> [< Kanuri <i>limān</i>]	<i>imām</i>
Imam (substitute)	<i>nā’ibī</i>	<i>nā’ib</i>
Judge	<i>àlkālī</i> , <i>àlkālī</i>	<i>qāḍīn</i>
Scribe	<i>magàtakàrdā</i>	<i>qarṭas</i>
Officer	<i>àm(i)rbindigà</i>	<i>amīru</i> and <i>bunduqīya</i>
Tax collector	<i>ɗan zàkkā</i>	<i>zakāh</i>
Chief (village head)	<i>lāwānī</i> , [< Kanuri <i>lawān</i>]	^c <i>aun</i>
Treasurer	<i>àjjiyā</i>	---
Title holder (traditional)	<i>wālī</i>	<i>walīy</i>
Title holder (traditional)	<i>wākīlī</i>	<i>wakīl</i>
District head	<i>hākīmī</i>	<i>ḥākim</i>
Council (traditional)	<i>màjālīsā</i>	<i>majlis</i>
Responsible for patrolling the caravan routs	<i>ɗan tafarkī</i>	? <i>ṭarīq</i>

But apart from Arabic loan words there are Kanuri loans in Hausa dating back to that period when the influence of Kanuri on Hausa land was significant. This in particular took place during the period of Fulani domination (Newman 2000: 315). The loans also include among others a number of traditional titles which might be observed by the Kanuri suffix *-mà(a)* ‘person of’, e.g.

English	Hausa	Kanuri
Title holder (traditional)	<i>gàlādīmà</i>	<i>galadíma</i> ²
Title holder (traditional)	<i>ciròmà</i> ³	<i>círoma</i> ⁴
Title holder (traditional)	<i>yàrimà</i>	<i>yeríma</i> ⁵
Title holder (traditional)	<i>kàigamà</i>	<i>káigáma</i> ⁶
Title holder (traditional)	<i>kacalla</i>	<i>kacállà</i> ⁷
Title holder (traditional)	<i>bùlkàcimà</i>	
Title holder (traditional)	<i>dallatu</i>	<i>dalatú</i> ⁸
Title holder (traditional)	<i>barwā</i>	
Title holder (traditional)	<i>bardē</i>	
Title holder (traditional)	<i>turākū</i>	

It should briefly be mentioned that most of the titles are still in existence today, although the official function might have changed or become obsolete. Compare for ex. *Am(i)r* which as a title (or family name) still exist, although there is no political or administrative office connected to it.

² “title given to the official next in rank to the Shehu, traditionally in charge of the west and installed at Nguru” (Cyffer and Hutchinson 1990: 55a).

³ “a title given to a son of the king, sometimes applied to the heir to the throne” (Robinson 1925: 58b).

⁴ “traditional title of the Maghumi dynasty” (Cyffer and Hutchinson 1990: 27b).

⁵ “traditional title nowadays given to the senior prince of the ruling family” (Cyffer and Hutchinson 1990: 190b).

⁶ “title given to the son of the king (**māi**) during the Maghumi dynasty” (Cyffer 1994: 191b).

⁷ “high-ranking military officer” (Cyffer and Hutchinson 1990: 86a).

⁸ “traditional title given to a prince in the Maghumi dynasty” (Cyffer 1994: 191a).

Along with the founding and the consolidation of the newly conquered states or emirates (by the Fulani and their flag bearers) Islam started to spread in their territories.

This fact can clearly be observed in many words or expressions derived from Arabic in a majority of the languages in the Sudan zone. The transmitters in most cases were and are still in Northern Nigeria, like the Hausa language (the biggest lingua franca in the area) and Kanuri, whose speakers had already been islamized by the 13th century. Recently borrowed idioms regarding the religious sphere can be exemplified by two small Chadic languages, Kwami and Kupto- spoken in the wider Benue-Gongola basin.

English	Arabic	Hausa	Fulfulde	Kanuri	Kwami	Kupto
God	<i>allāh</i>	<i>Allā, Allah</i>	<i>Allah</i>	<i>Ála</i>	<i>ʔAllāh</i>	<i>ʔAllāh</i>
Satan	<i>iblis</i>	<i>iblis</i>	<i>iblis</i>	<i>yulisa</i>	<i>ʔblis</i>	<i>ʔbilitisi</i>
Muslim	<i>muslim</i>	<i>mùsùlmī</i>	<i>alsilami</i>	<i>məsələm</i>	<i>mùsùlmì</i>	<i>mùsùlúm</i>
Liman	<i>imām</i>	<i>imāmī / līmān</i>	<i>limān, imāmu</i>	<i>limān</i>	<i>limán</i>	<i>limán</i>
Blessing	<i>baraka</i>	<i>àlbarkà</i>	<i>albarka / barka</i>	<i>bárga</i>	<i>bárkà</i>	<i>bàrká</i>
Paradise	<i>janna</i>	<i>àljannà</i>	<i>aljanna</i>	<i>zánnà</i>	<i>jánnà</i>	<i>jànnà</i>
Forbidden	<i>ḥarām</i>	<i>hàrām</i>	<i>harma v.</i>	<i>harām</i>	<i>hàrám</i>	<i>hàrà̀m</i>
Mosque ⁹	<i>masjid muṣallan</i>	<i>masallācī</i>	<i>miside</i>	<i>máshīdī</i>	<i>màshīdī</i>	<i>másàlācī</i>
Muslim law	<i>šarʿa</i>	<i>sharīʿà / sharīʿà</i>	<i>sarʿa / sariʿaji</i>	<i>sharâ</i>	<i>shàaríyà</i>	<i>shàríyà / shèríyà</i>

But there are also further domains where Arabic loans have influenced these languages. In this case the main areas that come to mind are

⁹ This noun can also be proved in many other languages of Sub-Saharan African, cf. Bambara *mìsirì*; Bore *misiri*; Bozo *misiri / misini*; Bòbo *mìsirí*; Dogon *mìsirè*; Kisi *mìsíló*; Kotoko *másígô*; Logone *másidi*; Mandingo *misiri / misidi*; Mandinka *mìsirì*; Maninka *mìsirí*; Mende *misii*; Moore *miisri*; Ngizim *màshīdì*; Samo *mìsirì*. In Hausa we have two forms for ‘mosque’: *masallācī* and *masīdī* only in Northern dialects.

‘(Koranic) education, wealth and values, time and space, as well as fauna and flora’. In the afore mentioned languages – Kwami and Kupto, Hausa – is the donor of the following items:

English	Arabic	Hausa	Fulfulde	Kanuri	Kwami	Kupto
News, story	<i>kabar</i>	<i>lābārī</i>	<i>habaru</i>	<i>lawâr</i>	<i>làbáari</i>	<i>làbàr</i>
Teacher	<i>mu^callim</i>	<i>mālāmī</i>	<i>mallum / mallumjo</i>	<i>máləm</i>	<i>máalüm</i>	<i>màllúm / [?]àlàrámmà</i>
Recite, read	<i>qara'a v.</i>	<i>karàntā v.</i>	<i>karandenjo n.</i>	<i>kóra</i>	<i>kàràntáy v.</i>	<i>kàràntéy v.</i>
Alms, tax	<i>zakāh</i>	<i>zàkkā / zakkā</i>	<i>jakka</i>	<i>zaká</i>	<i>zákkà</i>	<i>zàkká</i>
Habit, customs	<i>āda</i>	<i>àl'āda / āda</i>	<i>al'āda / ādi</i>	<i>ādā</i>	<i>[?]àlādà</i>	<i>[?]àl'āadà / [?]āadà</i>
Time Hour	<i>waqt sā'a</i>	<i>lōkàcī sā'ā</i>	<i>wakkati sā'a</i>	<i>lóktu sâ</i>	<i>lókòshì</i>	---
Friday	<i>jum'a</i>	<i>jumma'ā</i>	<i>'aljuma</i>	<i>àljimmà / àljummà</i>	<i>jùmá'ā</i>	<i>jùmmà</i>
Sunday	<i>al-aḥad</i>	<i>lādi</i>	<i>alad</i>	<i>lādi</i>	<i>lāadi</i>	<i>làadi</i>
Monday	<i>al-iṭṭinain</i>	<i>littinín</i>	<i>altine</i>	<i>lètəlín</i>	<i>littinín</i>	<i>littirín</i>
World	<i>duniyā</i>	<i>dūniyā</i>	<i>duniyāru</i>	<i>dinā / dūnyā</i>	<i>dúunyà</i>	<i>dūunyá</i>
Animal	<i>dābba</i>	<i>dabbā</i>	<i>ndabbawa</i>	<i>dábbà</i>	<i>dábbà</i>	<i>dàbbà</i>
Lemon	<i>laimūn</i>	<i>lēmō (?)</i>	<i>lēmu</i>	<i>lemún</i>	<i>léemùn</i>	<i>lèemún</i>

There is another important factor for using Arabic words or phrases which may go along with high personal esteem. It characterises a person as properly educated and learned in the Islamic context because he uses words or utterances which do not belong to the original/native vocabulary of one's mother-tongue. Especially in rural areas, it gives the speaker the image of a 'man of the world' when interspersing 'Arabism'. Examples from Kwami and Kupto may illustrate it:

[?]áywà -- múu-shàytàn-mè wànnà 'yes, this evil man has come'
(in 'pure' Kwami it runs: *[?]i – múu-mè [?]áyyèn wànnà*)

These sentences were recorded when a local trader came to the market of a Kwami village to sell kola nuts. The Kwami collaborator wanted – not only to prove his Islamic education but – to make the trader understand he wasn't welcome.

ʔajàlí-nì ʔattúbbà méccé Màkkà 'his fate was not to travel to Mekka'
(in 'pure' Kupto it goes: *kúrmá-nì ʔattúbbà méccé-nì Màkkà*)

When talking about the pilgrimage to Mekka the Kupto informant regretted that the Bulama of Kupto Gana (Lefe) who was a close friend of his did not get the chance of performing the 'Hadj'.

Further 'Arabism' which are freely interchangeable with native words are observed for the following items: (where the native words stand in brackets)

English	Arabic	Hausa	Fulfulde	Kanuri	Kwami	Kupto
Period	<i>zamān</i>	<i>zāmānī</i>	<i>jaamaano</i>	<i>zamân</i>	<i>zámáanì</i> (<i>zòwí</i>)	<i>zámán</i> (<i>sàrtí</i>)
Money	<i>ṣirf</i> ¹⁰	<i>azùrfā</i>	<i>azurfaari</i>	-----	<i>ʔazùrfá</i> (<i>kürbè</i>)	<i>ʔazùrbá</i> (<i>làfè</i>)
Witness	<i>šāhid</i>	<i>shāhīdì</i>	<i>sēda</i>	<i>šēada</i>	<i>shāydù</i> (<i>móotì</i> (<i>vs</i>))	-----
Embellish	<i>wašā</i> v.	<i>àlwāshī</i>	-----	-----	-----	<i>ʔalwāashì</i> ¹¹ (<i>kóllíyá</i>)
Fume, smell	<i>ḥamma</i> ¹² v.	-----	-----	-----	-----	<i>hāmham</i> (<i>dábà</i>)
Forbidden	<i>ḥarām</i>	<i>harāmī</i>	<i>harma</i>	<i>haram</i>	<i>haram</i> (<i>ʔillòm</i>)	<i>hàràam</i> (<i>gáahòy</i>)
Wheat	<i>qamḥ</i>	<i>àlkamā</i>	<i>alkamāri</i>	<i>algáma</i>	-----	<i>ʔalkámà</i> (<i>tèeri</i>)
Association	<i>jamʿíya</i>	<i>jāmʿíyyà</i>	-----	<i>jamíya</i>	-----	<i>jámíyyà</i> (<i>góntì</i> (<i>vs</i>))

¹⁰ In reality *ṣirf* 'pure, unadulterated' (Wehr 513a), via Tamacheq *âzref* 'argent (métal)' (Foucauld: 1989), voir Gouffé (1974: 372).

¹¹ Via? Hausa *àlwāshī*.

¹² Kupto seems to have received this item from Hausa *hāmāmī*, (*Kt.*) *hànàní* 'pungent smell' which has Arabic origin.

Another important aspect to consider is the use or rather the preference of foreign words – in this case Arabic – to their local equivalents, in expressing nouns or describing actions related to the sexual sphere. Be it shameful or even a taboo, a corresponding terminology or a metaphorical expression is often used instead of the native – sometimes already extinct – word. The usage especially of sexual topics in a language may relate to various aspects like family, age, sex, ethnicity and social class. The use of a different language may also be a sign of a distinct religion, which here is Islam. Apart from the everyday language one may switch to Arabic – not so much to prove one's competence – but rather to disguise shameful expressions or phrases.

That is the case of Arabic *dakar* 'penis' which became *azakàrī* in Hausa and is used by educated men for *būṛā* 'cock' (Robinson 1925: 23b). This fact can easily be found in many languages of the world, i.e. borrowed words replacing previous ones, which from then onwards became associated with vulgarity. Compare the following examples: Fulfulde *mbasu*, Kanuri *ngāli*, Mandinka *fóto*, Wolof *kooy* for 'penis'. Another example is Arabic *dubr* 'buttocks' whose loan has taken precedence over the previous equivalent in Fulfulde (*gugu*), Kanuri (*ndôr*).

To switch away from the original 'native' words in favour of Arabism may mainly lie in social factors like proving to be part of a more educated group or turning away linguistically from ordinary speech.

This replacement also holds for Kwami and Kupto. The original word for "penis" in Kwami is *kúbó*, in Kupto *shīli*, although nobody – except in a vulgar speech of young people – will ever use these expressions. An educated person – even if speaking about it freely – will always return to the Hausa loan *azakàrī* / Kwami *nzàkàri* which fits for both languages. The same applies to the word 'vagina' which nobody may ever openly pronounce or say in public. The native word in Kwami is *dēmèn* and in Kupto *dēmìn*. Here either the Hausa word *dūrī* or *gatò* for Kwami is used. In Kupto *fáatù* a metaphorical expression borrowed from Fulfulde *faatuuuru* 'cat' is employed, which also has the semantic extension of a

‘free, liberal woman’. The same avoidance of using the native words *mánú làkkà* (‘woman of lust’) in Kwami and *mónú lèngé* (woman of several [men]) in Kupto for a ‘lecherous woman’ is observed. As a substitute the Hausa expression *zíná* and *zìnáàzìnááyò* (borrowed from Ar. *zinā*, with its literal meaning ‘adultery’) is used instead. In much the same way the word for clitoris is perceived. In Kwami the expression is *ngèndì* and in Kupto *ngìyèndèn*. Both languages, however, choose or rather prefer metaphorical descriptions, which in the first case is ‘seed of the vagina’ (*pòorìn duri*, a combination of Kwami *pòorì(n)* and Hausa *dūrī*) and in the second case ‘eye of shame’ (*ʔidó kúmà*).

Other recorded, but mainly avoided expressions concerning the sexual sphere are therefore expressed in a more polite metaphorical way. Examples in Kwami are:

būtràn ʔàshìr ‘touching secret – to have sexual intercourse’
(to avoid: *būtràn ʔàlì*, lit. ‘touching ground’)
ʔoppòn láymá ‘opening umbrella - to seduce a woman’
(to avoid: *ʔoppòn máná*, lit. ‘opening house’)
ʔúfàn ʔàshìr múndí ‘showing one secret - to express sexual desire’
(or *ʔúfàn ʔidò múndí*, lit. ‘showing one eye’),
which might have to do with the gesture to wink to a lady (with one eye).

In Kupto we equally find the following metaphorical expressions for nearly the same verbs:

*tàndò màkàs*¹³ ‘touching scissors – to have sexual intercourse’
(in order to avoid: *shòshòwéy* (int.) fearing s.o. [i.e. a woman])
*ʔàarò tùràaré*¹⁴ ‘looking for perfume - searching (sex.) for a woman’
Other metaphorical, but original Kupto expressions are:
ʔiyò ʔár ‘making hand - to seduce a woman’
gòntò ʔár ‘collecting hand - to seduce a woman’

¹³ From Ar. *miqa*, pl. *al-maqāṣṣ*.

¹⁴ From Ar. *ʕitr*, pl. *ʕūṭūr*.

The word *ʔár* ‘hand’ is peculiar because it also means ‘menstruation’ in the language, for which another Arabic loan word *ʔáadà* (or *ʔàlʔáadà*) can be applied too. Its primary meaning is ‘culture’ and ‘custom’. The Arabic word *ḥaiḍ* ‘menstruation’, with its euphemism, took over Fulfulde *lotgol*, *tuundi*, Kanuri *bû*.¹⁵

ḥaiḍ *menstruation* (Wehr 222b)

<i>bambara</i>	hayida
<i>fulfulde</i>	haila
<i>hausa</i>	hailā
<i>kanuri</i>	háila
<i>songhay</i>	alhidiya, alhidda, alhida

Some further examples based on the ‘puritan’ spirit of the Muslim religion, which modified the more liberal customs of West African peoples, could be found in words related to parts of the human body which are avoided in speech because of the sexual phobia of the Muslim preachers.

Arabic *farj* ‘pudendum of the female, vulva’ replaced Fulfulde’s *kuttu*, Hausa *dūrī*, but it seemed not to have had any negative effect on Kanuri words, such as *kamurám*¹⁶ or *kəshiganarám*,¹⁷ which are still marked as *polite* in the dictionary. In contrast to it, stands *fárgi* which has a bad connotation: in this case it functions as a good example. In Bargery’s Hausa dictionary we find *bahārā* ‘a notorious prostitute’, which is considered an interesting semantic specialization coming from Arabic *baḥr* ‘sea; large river’.

Some other expressions concerning words of shameful avoidance where Kwami and Kupto dodge to Hausa or Fulfulde loans are the following:

¹⁵ See Baldi 2008: 159.

¹⁶ Cyffer (1994: 78a).

¹⁷ Cyffer (1994: 95b).

English	Arabic	Hausa	Fulfulde	Kanuri	Kwami	Kupto
prostitute	^c <i>azab</i>	<i>kāñūwà</i>	<i>ajabaajo</i>	<i>kárwa</i>	<i>kùríwà</i>	[?] <i>ájábà</i>
harlot		<i>kiláki</i> ¹⁸	<i>kortooru</i>		<i>kiláki</i>	
homosexual	<i>lūt</i>	<i>lūdū</i>	<i>luudoowo</i>	<i>lúlu</i>	<i>lùudù</i>	<i>lùudù</i>

It may be presumed that in their traditional culture and society either these words didn't exist or their original words became considered obscene or shameful.

In Fulfulde and here in particular in Pular (of Guinea) we may observe the same phenomenon, i.e. a word of the intimate sphere may often be replaced by an Arabic (partly also by a Mande or French) equivalent. (The following examples - we gratefully owe Dr. A. Diallo - may demonstrate it):

Sex	<i>awra</i> pl. <i>awraji</i> (<Ar. ^c <i>āura</i>)
Vagina	<i>awra debbo</i> or <i>sutura debbo</i> (< Ar. ^c <i>āura</i>) (although there exists a parallel native word <i>poobe</i>)
Sperm	<i>maniyyu</i> (< Ar. <i>madiyy</i>)
Friend (sex.)	<i>kele</i> or <i>kerirawo</i> (< Mande <i>vulg.</i>) <i>kopen</i> or <i>kopin</i> (< French <i>copine</i>)
To harass (sex.)	<i>njaatagol</i> (< Mande) or <i>kuurugol</i> (< French)
To have sex	<i>jino/jina</i> (< Ar. <i>zinā'</i>)
Prostitute	<i>caga</i> (< Wolof <i>caga</i>)
Hermaphrodite	<i>musumaakaymaajo</i> (< Mande: <i>musu/muso</i> 'woman' + <i>maa</i> 'derivative morpheme' + <i>kee</i> 'man' + <i>joo</i> (Fu.))

Concluding remarks

The spread of Islam was doubtlessly the (!) ultimate responsible factor of introducing and imposing specific Arabic words in the local languages of sub-Saharan Africa. The reasons were manifold, although two main reasons were of decisive importance. It was first the enormous prestige of Arabic, having a Holy Script admired and highly esteemed by the local people -- and second the emergency of a large Fulani

¹⁸ From English *clerk* (for progression of semantic shifts, see Bargery (1934: 602a).

empire which imposed a Muslim culture on the autochthonous people. Several factors may support our statements. There are traditional titles in autochthonous languages (still existing today) which directly can be traced to Arabic sources (although some of them may now be obsolete). Furthermore there are religious expressions, words or phrases of daily life used in local African languages which also can be clearly traced back to Arabic. And finally there are expressions within the domain of sex, which may be rendered by lexemes of Arabic origin. Concerning the indirect borrowings by the dominating 'linguae francae' Hausa and Kanuri, which also plays an important role, we have to discuss it in another paper.

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