

Proverbs as an educational factor in Hausa society¹

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Résumé

Les proverbes expriment une vérité familière à tout le monde et couvrent les différents aspects de la vie humaine. Ils ont, dans la société haoussa, un rôle fondamental surtout dans la formation des jeunes gens. Cette communication va examiner surtout certains proverbes rattachés à des animaux importants dans la culture de cette population : le chien, le poulet, l’âne, le singe, l’hyène, la souris, la chèvre, le lézard, le vautour, le lion et l’araignée.

Proverbs and sayings are short sentences expressing a well-known truth, or a common fact familiar to all. They cover many aspects of human life, and refer mostly to everyday facts. They are highly colloquial, and form an integral part of Hausa culture, as shown by the numerous collections published. Passed on from generation to generation, they are still in wide use today and are very much part of everyday speech.

This paper, through the analysis of some proverbs, tries to show how they function as an educational tool in the traditional Hausa society of Northern Nigeria. As a sub genre of oral tradition, the pedagogical value and its impact on the Hausa society is described.

Oral tradition plays an important role in the traditional education of African societies. They convey nearly all spiritual and moral values, and are worth observing an entire lifetime. Hundreds or even thousands of African myths, legends, fables, tales, riddles and proverbs are to be learned by all members of

¹ In this paper, the Standard Hausa Writing System is used. High tone is unmarked, low tone is marked; a short vowel is unmarked, a long vowel is marked by a macron.

society, with the main function of transmitting knowledge from the elders to the youth, in order to teach them how to become good members of society.

From a cultural viewpoint proverbs make large use of animals, domestic and not, to metaphorically represent the shortcomings and capabilities of human society. They symbolically rescue all human society. They highlight man's weaknesses and capabilities in everyday situation of life. Hence proverbs are presented in conversation to support, argue, or illustrate one's point of view, most often with the intention of influencing the listener, dismissing their point, convincing them or simply to cut off a conversation. Being aware that it is important to accept everything of a person. From a thematic point of view, proverbs cover all aspects of life:

- sometimes it could be a simple addition
à sō kārē hař jèlařsà
A dog should be loved up to its tail (*"Love me, love my dog"*)
Expl. You should love / like someone together with his defects
- temperamental intemperances
an san hālin kārē, kàn đaukō shì
The dog is chosen regardless of its intemperance
(*"One must take the good with the bad"*)

The difficulties in which you find yourself when:

- someone has to fight against his own nature
jākī bā yà wucè tōkā
A donkey does not pass by the ash.
Expl. Donkeys usually roll in ash to free themselves of parasites.
So the urge or temptation to roll in a heap of ash is too strong to resist
- or in case one should resist the temptation to do something.
àbin māmākì kārē dà tǎllàn tsìrē
It is amazing to see a dog selling skewered meat
Expl. It is like asking a hungry person to look after food without eating it

In any case the matters dealt with are innumerable and go far beyond the virtues and shortcomings of human nature:

- an exhortation to solve problems quickly, when they appear.
à yi maza dai, à fitaɗ dà jākī dàgà dumā
Be quick in getting the donkey out of the gourd.
- to be suspicious of someone without a good reputation.
bā à bâ kūrā àjijāɗ nāmā²
You do not give a hyena meat to look after
(“Do not set a wolf to look after the sheep”)
- never underestimate one’s own enemy
kō birī yā karyè, yâ hau runhū
Even if the monkey has broken a limb, it will climb the corn-bin
Expl. Do not underestimate your enemy even if he seems weak
- do not rejoice for other people’s misfortune
kadà kàzā tà yi muɗnā don tà ga anè jân hanjin ’yaɗ uwaɗtà
The hen should not rejoice because it has seen the entrails of its companion being drawn out
(“There, but for the Grace of God, go!”)

We could also find expressions that have a perfect correspondence in other African languages and even in Italian. For example:

- **in ka ga ɓeɗā yanè sakì, kyânwā bā tà gidā**
If you see a free mouse, the cat is not at home
(“When the cat’s away, the mice will play”)³
- **kō an kashè birī, yā rigā yā yi ɓaɗnā**
Even if you kill the monkey, the damage has already been done
(“It is useless to close the door of the stable after the horse has bolted”)⁴

² Litt. A deposit of meat.

³ Cf. Swahili *Paka akiondoka, panya hutawala*; Italian *Quando il gatto non c’è, i topi ballano*.

⁴ Cf. Italian *Chiudere la stalla, quando sono scappati i buoi*.

- **à baĩ kàzā cikin gāshintā**
The hen should be left in its feathers
(“*Let sleeping dogs lie*”)⁵

This enormous heritage of the Hausa society has a great value not only in the socio-cultural sphere, but also from a linguistic point of view. A linguistic analysis reveals some interesting features, like the ellipse:

- **àbin màmakì kàrè dà tàllàn tsìrè**
It is amazing to see a dog selling skewered meat
- **yanà (yî) kòkari yà fid dà jàki dàgà dumā**
Finish off that hard job and be clear of it once and for all!
- **àbokin damō guzà nē**
The friend of the land-monitor is the water-monitor
(“*Greek, stick together; Similis cum similibus*”)

Another element observed is the constant introduction of the proverbs by particles as conditionals *in*, locative *inā* and *indā*, or multivalent *ko*:

- **in ka ga bēřā, yanà kâiwā, yanà kâwôwā, kyânwā bā tã gidā**
If you see a mouse dashing to and fro, the cat is not at home
(“*When the cat’s away, the mice will play*”)
- **inā tukunyaĩ damō, inā ta guzà? Duk đaya nē**
Where is the iguana’s pot, where is the monitor’s? They are both the same
(“*What’s sause for the goose is sauce for the gander*”)
- **indā babban kàrè ya yi kâshī nan kàramīn mā yakàn yi**
Where the big dog has defecated, the little one will get used to doing it there.
- **kō an ci birnin kūrā bā à bā kàrè dillanci**
Even if the hyena’s town is conquered, the dog is not being put there as a trader [Fletcher, 12]
(“*The natural order of things cannot be subverted*”)

⁵ Cf. Italian *Non svegliare il can che dorme*.

We can also find the use of impersonal forms as *an*, *anā* and *à*:

- **à baĩ kàzā cikin gāshintā**
Leave the hen in its feathers
(“*Let sleeping dogs lie*”)
- **an kōri ùngùlu**
The vulture has been driven away
(“*The enemy has been driven out*”)
- **wurin bàrnaĩ gīwā bā à kulāwā dà bàrnaĩ birī**
The damage, done by an elephant, makes that of the monkey insignificant
(“*In face of a serious disaster, small woes pass unnoticed*”)

In this paper I chose to analyze a few proverbs dealing with some animals: *kàrē* ‘dog’, *kàzā* ‘chicken’, *jākī* ‘donkey’, *birī* ‘monkey’, *kūrā* ‘hyena’, *bēřā* ‘mouse’, *àkuyā* ‘goat’, *damō* ‘land-monitor’, *guzā* ‘water-monitor’, *ùngùlu* ‘vulture’, *zākī* ‘lion’ and *gizō* ‘spider’.

DOG - *kàrē*

In many mythologies the dog is associated with death or with the underworld. In ancient Egypt, Anubi the God of death was represented with a dog head. And in the pre-Islamic era there were people who considered the dog’s saliva a disinfectant, that was applied to injuries. As a result of this, many people died of tuberculosis and other communicable diseases dogs could transmit to man. Dogs in the past were not vaccinated, and fed on carrions, so this could be the reason why the animal’s saliva was considered impure, and not the animal itself.⁶

As regards the Muslim world, Islam sometimes considers this animal the symbol of impurity, and the *Jinn* often appears in the form

⁶ In Europe the dog is considered one of the man’s best friends, meanwhile according to Islamic law it is *naajis*, impure. So for a pious Muslim the mere contact with it creates *najasat*, i.e. a juridic-religious condition, that prevents him from having access to certain ritual acts.

of this animal in a raven-black coat. However, according to a tradition that goes back to the Prophet, the dog had a positive image.⁷

The dog is one of the principal character in some two thousand proverbs of my database. It is the animal most present. The reason could be that it adapts better to human life. It is the first animal as a companion of man in the village, and also has the function of guarding against thieves or other animals, and accompanies man in the woods, when he goes for hunting.

- **â dâuki kârē ran fârautâ**
Will you take a dog on the day of the hunt?
(*“Do not leave things till the last minute”*)
- **àjìyè kàrenkà don kàren gidan wani**
Keep your dog because of the dog in another man’s house
(*“Meet a person with his own weapons!”*)
- **an fi cîn kârē, an kômō an ci kwikwiyò**
You have refused eating a dog, and ate a puppy
(*“Straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel”*)
- **àturè bā yà rabà kârē dà kūrā**
Pushing to separate the dog from the hyena [is useless]
(*“It is senseless trying to make peace between dog and hyena”*)

CHICKEN - **kāzā**

The hen represents the natural model of motherhood, fertility, family and is seen as the real model of love towards children. The eggs laid could sometimes be real treasures, a case made famous by La Fontaine in his *The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs*.⁸

⁷ In the four Muslim juridical schools there are different opinions about the dog’s impurity: for some of them it is only the saliva that is impure, while for others, neither the body nor the saliva is impure. But it is necessary to clean oneself because the Prophet has stated so. In the Malikite School, the dog is not an impure animal, but all objects touched by a dog should be cleaned by washing and disinfection.

⁸ La Fontaine: book V – tale 13: The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs.

- **in mūgùwaĩ kàzà tā shiga akurkī, kōwàccē ta zō, sai tā sàrē tà**
If a bad hen enters a pen, each one tries to peck(harm) her
(“No fellow-wife is welcomed by the others”)
- **in don à cī, bà à sayāĩ ba, kàzà tā fi dōkī⁹**
If it is for eating and not for sale, the chickens is better (more useful) than the horse
(“the Value of things depend on what they are to be used for”)
- **kadà à ɗaurà minì jàkaĩ tsābà, kàjī sù rikà bīna**
Do not tie the bag of corn on me, lest the chickens following me
(“Don’t falsely accuse me!”)
- **kwai à bakà yā fi kàzà à akurkī**
An egg in the mouth is better than a chicken in the pen
(“A bird in hand is better than a thousand in the bush”)
- **sābō dà kàzà bā yà hanà yankā tà**
Getting used to a chicken does not prevent it from being slaughtered (*Business is business! One thing is business, and another thing is friendship*)

DONKEY - jākī

The donkey has a strong symbolic significance. In ancient Egypt, where it was associated with Seth, the murderer of Osiri, and to the hieroglyphics of the murderer, the design of a knife was added to neutralize the harmful character of the sign. Therefore in ancient Egypt, the donkey was connected to hell. Instead in Greek and Roman mythology it was considered stupid and unreasonable. An example is found in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,¹⁰ where the unfortunate king Mida is punished by the god Apollo for his unfair verdict of a musical competition, in which he gives the victory to Apollo’s rival Pan. Apollo got angry for the judge’s clumsiness, and imposed the ears of a donkey on the unlucky king. Another way of seeing this could be:

⁹ Abraham (1962: 792b) and Yunusa (1977: 36) give this variant: à cī bà à sayāĩ ba, kwai yā fi dōkī.

¹⁰ Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Book XI.

the donkey's ears could have allowed Midas to hear better in the future, allegorically enabling him to distinguish Good from the Bad.

For the Greeks and the Romans, the donkey was the symbol of stubbornness, stupidity and lust. But with Christianity, the Fedro's archetype was completely overturned. It is seen as the prototype of the worker par excellence, being able to bear great burden.

- **an baĩ jākī anà dūkàn taikī**¹¹
They let go the donkey and beat the bag
(*"Blaming the innocent and acquitting the guilty"*)
- **haĩbì gà đān jākī, gādò nē**
The art of kicking is hereditary to a young donkey
(*"What's bred in the bone is born in the flesh. Talis pater, talis filius"*)
- **kasà-kasà yā fi kasà, wai mài jākī yā fi mài tākālmī**
Being dusty is better than walking, they say the donkey-rider is better off than the man with shoes (one who walks)
(*"Half a loaf is better than none"*)
- **tākarkārī kām đōrā, jākī yā sàbà dà kāyā**
Ox is used to pull (plough), donkey is accustomed to loads
(*"What's bred in the bone"*)

MONKEY - birì

In ancient Egypt monkeys were the object of deep respect. It seems the Nubian tribes sent them as a tribute to allied peoples and according to some belief, they understood human speech. In the shape of a white cynosephalus, the god Thot in ancient Egypt – sometimes represented by the ibis – was the protector of scholars and persons of letters.

It is the symbol of slyness and guile, but also of prudence in all circumstances where the game is not worth the risk.

¹¹ Cf.: *gà macjĩ kwànce, anà bugùn dārārĩ.*

- **bā nà àbùtā dà birì, sàndānā yà kwan bisà**
I will not be friends with the monkey and my club will remain up on the tree
(“What is the good of being a king’s favourite if I can’t get what I want?”)
Expl. A friend should be able to help you, if what you need is within his capabilities
- **birì bàì kī mùrūcī ba, sai dai wùyaĩ hakà**
The monkey does not dislike palm shoots but can’t extract them
(“All seek success, but it’s hard to attain”)
- **birì yā san jibàd dà yakè (yī) wà kāshī**
The monkey knows the small anthill where it can defecate
(“Everyone knows his own limitations”)
- **in Allāh yā kī àddu’āĩ birì, sai yà mutù à gōnaĩ aĩnā**
If God refuses (to hear) the monkey’s prayer, it will die on a pagan’s farm (pagans eat monkeys, while the Hausas do not)
(“One can not fight against ill fortune”)
- **sai birì yā zō hannun mālām yakàn yi gūdā, in yā zō hannun Māguzāwā, sai yā yi kūkā**
If the monkey ends up in the hands of a Hausa gentleman, it will ululate (in sign of joy), if it ends up in the hands of Pagans¹² it will weep

HYENA - kūrā

In the past, the hyena had been considered in different ways. But always in a derogatory manner: sometimes as a bastard of a dog and a wolf and, according to Sir Walter Raleigh,¹³ as a hybrid of a dog and a cat. This supposed hybrid nature might have been due to Noah’s refusal to include it in the ark. Magical power and special skills have always been conferred on this animal, including its ability to reproduce the human voice. Saint John in his Apocalypse speaks of a creature with seven heads, each representing the seven capital vices: one of this head is that of a hyena, symbolizing avarice.

¹² Pagans eat monkeys, Moslems don’t.

¹³ Seafarer, corsair, poet and courtier of Elisabeth I. In his *History of the World* he affirms that its existence would have begun after the deluge, because it would not have been tolerated in the ark.

The hyena is a grotesque and famous character in fairy tales, as well as in proverbs. Because of its insatiable appetite, it eats anything it comes upon, without considering the possible consequences. It is the personification of thievery and of less magnanimous aspects of human nature.

- **bā à bā kūrā àjjiyāŋ nāmà**
You do not give a hyena meat to look after
(*“Do not set a wolf to look after the sheep”*)
- **bā rīkidā kūrā kē dà wùyā ba, à yi wutsiyà**
It is not changing into a hyena that is difficult, but getting the tail
(*“Acquisition of knowledge is easier than passing it on”*)
- **dà ganin kūrā, an san tā ci àkuyà**
If you see a hyena, you should know it has already eaten a goat
(*“If your enemy is able to get into your territory, then he/she has already done some harm”*)
- **dà kūrā dà kārē bā sà gamà mazaunī**
A hyena and a dog cannot live together
(*“Oil and water don’t mix”*)
- **kūrā tā cīnyè òrāwò**
The hyena has eaten the thief
(*“A thief has stolen the thief”*)

MOUSE - **òrā**

In spite of, or maybe exactly for its littleness, the mouse has a special role in people’s beliefs and the connected symbolism. On the whole, it has a positive representation, even if it is one of the animals that arouses the most irrational of phobias. In the Old Testament, the mouse was considered an unclean animal and Christianity considered it as devillish because it was thought of as being ghoul. A positive observation comes from the study of Aesop’s fable on the lion and the little mouse.¹⁴ A metaphorical representation of strength hidden within

¹⁴ Aesop: <http://www.lefiabe.com/esopo/leoneetopo.htm>

someone apparently weak, who is able to defeat the powerful, as in the case of David who defeated the giant Goliath.¹⁵

- **àbîn dà ya kōrā bēřā cikin wutā, yā fi wutař zāfi**¹⁶
What chases the mouse into fire is hotter than fire
(“Critical situations call for drastic measures”)
- **bēřā (ya)nā ganin rāmīnsà, bā yā yāřdā wutā tà cī shi**¹⁷
The mouse in sight of its hole will not let the fire burn it
(“Home sweet home”. The home will always provide protection from external dangers)
- **in kā ga bēřā yanā sakì, kyānwā bā tà gidā**¹⁸
If you see a mouse weaving, the cat is not at home
(“When the cat’s away the mice will play”)
- **tsiyā gārē shì kāmāř bēřan masallācī**
He is poor as the mouse of the mosque
(“He’s as poor as a church mouse”)

GOAT - àkuyā

The goat has been one of the first animal species to be domesticated by man in the Middle East around 10.000 and 8.000 B.C. to obtain milk, cheese and skin. In Greek mythology the goat Amantea nourishes Zeus, who from its skin made Aegis, the shield that helped him to triumph over the Titans. Meanwhile in antiquity it was considered a divinity, while in Christianity it has always been

¹⁵ Bible: O.T., first book of Samuel - 17.

http://www.liberliber.it/biblioteca/b/bibbia/la_sacra_bibbia/html/02_04.html

¹⁶ Variant: *àbîn dà ya kōrō bēřā hař yā sâ yā fādā wutā, tō, yā kùwā fi wutāř zāfi* - Abraham: 96a.

¹⁷ Variant: *bēřā yanā ganin rāmī, wutā bā tà kōnā shi* - Karin Magana: 63.

¹⁸ Variants:

a) *in kā ga bēřā, yanā káiwā, yanā kāwōwā, kyānwā bā tà gidā* - Abraham: 95b.

b) *in mǎgē bā tà nan, bēřā sai yā sakē* - Abraham: 635a.

linked to the devil,¹⁹ the billy-goat especially is considered the personification of the devil and wretches.²⁰

- **àkuyà t̄a yi w̄ayō dà yànkakken k̄unnē**
The goat learns wisdom from a cropped ear
(“A burnt child fears the fire”)
- **àkuyà yànkakkiyā, f̄idā bā t̄a s̄ā t̄a ji c̄iwò**
Flaying cannot hurt a goat that has already been slaughtered
(“You are flogging a dead horse”)
- **dà k̄ukan k̄urā dà ɸac̄ēwaɹ àkuyà dukà ɸaya n̄ē**
The howl of the hyena and the killing of the goat are the same thing
(“Give a dog a bad name and hang him”)
- **in z̄ā kà ɸaur̄ē àkuyàɸkà, kà ɸaur̄ē ta à magaryā**
If you intend tying your goat, tie it to a Jujube tree²¹
(“When you speak, say the truth!”)
- **kàràmbànin àkuyà gai dà k̄urā**
The stupidity of a goat makes it greet the hyena
(“Do not tempt the monster”) or let sleeping dogs lie

LIZARD - **damō, guzà**

In Greek and Egyptian mythology the lizard represented wisdom and luck: it was the symbol of Hermes and Serapide. On the contrary, in Zoroastrism it was the personification of badness. Instead, in Roman times they thought that the lizard holed up during winter and emerged from hibernation only in the spring. For this reason it was the personification of death and rebirth.

According to a myth from Ivory Coast, God sent two messengers to the earth: the chameleon, charged with the task of informing men about their resurrection after death, and the lizard, with the duty of announcing

¹⁹ Symbolized not by chance with horns and caprine paws.

²⁰ While the blessed people would be represented by sheep, an emblem of innocence and naivety.

²¹ The *Zizyphus jujuba* is a particularly robust tree.

death without the possibility of resurrection. God decided that the messenger, who was to arrive first will prevail, marking the destiny of humanity. The lizard, however, by skilful words, succeeded in cheating the chameleon and, arriving first at the finish line, condemned humanity to a finite destiny.²²

The lizard is the animal that, in its apparent docility, represents a problematic event, a situation which needs to be controlled as best as possible to avoid degeneration.

- **àbōkin damō guzà**
The land monitor is a friend of the water monitor
(“Birds of a feather flock together”)
- **inā tukunyař damō, inā ta guzà? Duk đaya nè**
Where is the iguana’s pot, where is the monitor’s? They are both the same
(“What’s sause for the goose is sauce for the gander; dogs of the same street bark alike; pares cum paribus maxime congregantur”)²³
- **kā fi cîn damō, kā ci kiskī**²⁴
You have refused eating the lizard and ate the orange-headed male lizard
(“From frying pan to fire”)
- **kunà barin damō, yanà zamā guzà**
You leave the land monitor, and it becomes a water monitor
(“Check him while there’s yet time”, “Nip the enemy in the bud”)
- **rab dà rab: tsàràncen damō dà kaskà**
Exactly matched: the monitor having a cuddle with the tick
(“Fitting like a pair of gloves”)

VULTURE - ùngùlū

The vulture is connected to death, its symbolism is however ambivalent. Its role of eating dead animals assumes different

²² Ries, Julien (2009: 141).

²³ From Cicero’s *De senectute*.

²⁴ a) kiskī: lit. “orange-headed male lizard”

b) Cf.: *an fi cîn kàrē, an kōmō an ci kwīkwiyō* - Abraham: 598a.

meanings in the folklore of some cultures. Its negative connotation is completely absent in ancient Egypt, where it was the object of veneration. The deities associated with it are numerous: Mat, goddess of maternity is often represented by the head of a vulture. And also Hathor and Nekhebet. For Romans the vulture was holy to the god of war, and to kill it was considered an act of sacrilege.

- **dòmin nāmàn sarkī nà bisà kàragà, bā à hanà ùngùlū gèwayà**
Because the chief's meat is on top of a couch of sticks, it does not stop the vulture from circling around
(*"A cat may look at a king"*)
- **haĩ à nadè kasà ùngùlū bā tà rāmà gàyyaĩ zābī**
Until the end of time, the vulture will never equal the guinea-fowl
(*"Someone useless can never equal someone of value"*)
- **kafāĩ ùngùlū mài bātà miyā²⁵**
The vulture's foot spoiled the soup
(*"An enviable person will sabotage your efforts"*)
- **ùngùlū bā kàzaĩ kōwā ba²⁶**
The vulture is nobody's chicken
(*"Nobody needs something of no value"*)
- **ùngùlū bā tà sàukā banzā**
The vulture doesn't descend without reason
(*"An effect does not come about without a cause"*)

LION - zākī

From time immemorial the lion has been associated with the sun for the colour of its coat and mane. Symbol of lordship and of majesty, it is identified in tales as 'the king of animals'. The symbolism of the lion is present in Egyptian, Greek and Hindu

²⁵ *ùngùlū bātà miyā*: expression used in Ghana to describe a person able to damage his neighbors just for fun. Sometimes used as a proper adjective to describe the character of someone.

²⁶ Used to designate a woman not married any more, so able to remarry.

mythology and often ascribed to femininity. In fact in Egypt Sekhmet,²⁷ the goddess of war, is symbolized by a wild lioness. In the Greek pantheon there are a few examples that connects the lion with this goddess: Ecate,²⁸ the goddess of magic, had a triple head, made up of a lioness, a bitch and a mare. The carts of Demetra and Rea, both deities of the Earth Mother, were dragged by lions.

- **bàri muñnà sai kàrenkà yā kāmà zākì**
Suspend your joy until your dog catches the lion
(“Don’t count your chickens before they are hatched”)
- **harshèn mùtùm zākìnsà**
A man’s tongue is his lion
(A man’s tongue can be a powerful weapon)
- **in dà zākì yā san zāi sàmi àbinci cikin sarkakiyā dà bàì fitō sararī ba²⁹**
If the lion had known it could find food in a dense thicket, it would not have bothered coming out into the open (if your needs can be satisfied at home, no need looking elsewhere)
(“Necessity is the mother of invention”)
- **inà dà zākì kuncè mì nī kè tsòrō?**
I possess a free lion, what should I fear?
(“I have a lion at my disposal. I fear no enemy”)
- **kō zākì yā lālācē, yā fi karfin àlhànzĩ**
Even a weak lion is stronger than a hog
(“The powerful will remain powerful to the end”)

SPIDER - gizò

The spider is often the principal hero in tales, personifying skill and initiative. It is an animal which, for its characteristics, has

²⁷ For more information about the myth of ‘Ra’s eye’, that is the goddess Sekhmet, see: <http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/Sekhmet.html>

²⁸ Stoll, Heinrich W. (1928: 169 - 170).

²⁹ Variant: *in zākì yā san zāi sàmi nāmà yanà cikin sarkakkiyā, bā yā fitā wàje* - Abraham: 962b.

affected and inspired human unconsciousness, being present (sometimes as a mythical creature) in the folklore and in the mythology of various peoples. Among the numerous testimonies, the myth of *Arachne* and the phenomenon of tarantism stand out particularly. Its ability to clear houses of insects, helped it develop a positive reputation in many European cultural contexts. We find a proof of this ability in the English proverb: “If you wish to love and thrive let a spider run alive.”

In the Islamic religion, the spider has a certain important significance for two reasons:

1) it gives the name to 29th Surah (*‘ankabūt* ‘spider’);

2) according to a tradition, when Muhammad and Abū Bakr were escaping from Mecca, they hid in a cave to escape from enemies on their heels. To conceal their hideout, a spider miraculously built its web in a few instants to cover the entrance of the cave. On arrival, the enemies did not believe someone could have been in the cave, so they went away.

- **bà nan gizò yakè sākàĩ ba, sāmùn kudfīn**
It’s not where the spider makes its web, (it’s a question of) making it
(“*It’s not a question of what you do; the important thing is obtaining the results*”)
- **yā bātā mà gizò yānā**
He has spoiled the spider’s web
(“*He took to his heels*”)

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