

A Historical Study on Friday Sermon Presentation in Arabic Language to Non-Arabic Speaking Congregations in Kano Metropolis, Kano State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the role of the Friday sermon in promoting understanding Islam among worshippers. It focuses attention on the impacts of reciting the sermon in Hausa speaking environment, such as the Kano Metropolis. The need and possibility of reciting the sermon in languages other than Arabic is highlighted as well as its position in Islam. A total of twenty-one mosques within the Kano metropolis were selected for the study. In the presentation of the statistical analysis, two sets of data were used. The first data was collected from the Imams while the second was selected from the congregation of listeners. A self-designed opinioned questionnaire was used to collect relevant data from the subjects. The data were subjected to frequencies and the X^2 statistical analysis. From the analysis of the data collected for this study, it was observed that the major problem related to the recitation of the Friday sermon in Arabic to non-Arabic speaking congregation, the inability for most members of the congregation to understand what is being said in the sermon. The findings that emerged were used to make recommendations, which include refresher courses for the Imams, the translation of the sermon before or after the Friday prayer and training and retraining of imams on the philosophy, objective and methodology of delivering sermons.

Keywords: Friday Sermon (Khutbah), Arabic Language, Non-Arabic Congregations, Mosques, Kano State.

Introduction

Sufi, (1977:141) explained that the Friday prayer was made obligatory in the early days of Islam when the Prophet (SAW) was in Makkah but Muslims could not observe it because they were under persecution by the leaders of Makkah. It was not until the first converts from Madinah accepted Islam that the Prophet ordered their leader, named As'ad bin Zurara to conduct the Friday prayer when they went back to Madinah and this was the first Friday prayer in Islam. But the Prophet (SAW) observed his first Friday prayer, when he migrated to Madinah. This prayer was conducted in the month of Rabi'ul Auwal of the first year of the Hijrah at an open ground belonging to the clan of Banu Saleem. Later, the people of the area built a mosque in the place. Shaukani, (2003: 2/291) explained that the first Friday prayer to be conducted outside Madinah after the first one in the mosque of the Prophet was that of the mosque of Abdul Qais in a town named Juwai in a region called Bahrain. This second Friday prayer was done via the second Khalifah, Umar Bin Al-Khattab. Muslims in Egypt also started to perform Friday prayer by the permission of Umar and Uthman, the second and third Khalifah, respectively. From that time on, Friday mosques continue to spread in Muslim countries.

History of Friday Mosques in Kano

The history of the Mosque in Kano can be traced back to the early days of introducing Islam to Hausaland before the Jihad of Shehu Uthman bin Fodio. The Wangarawa Muslim scholars who migrated from Mali were believed to introduce Islam to Kano in the fourteenth century C.E during the reign of the king of Kano, popularly known as Sarki Yaji (1349 – 1385 C.E) who embraced Islam from the Wangarawa Ulama. Having accepted Islam Sarki Yaji was advised by the Wangarawa Mallams to build a Mosque. This was the first official Mosque that was built in Kano. The Imam whose name was Gurdumus was appointed by the Wangarawa Mallams with the approval of Sarki Yaji (Wada, 1998:27-28). Later, more mosques were built in different parts of Kano with Wangarawa Mallams appointed as Imams. The increase in the number of Mosque, automatically led to the emergence of many Imams, which resulted in the appointment of a Wangarawa Mallam, known as Imam Mandawari, as the first-Chief Imam of Kano. But the most remarkable development of Mosques in the period of Hausa rulers was during the reign of Sarki Muhammadu Rumfa (1390/1463 C.E) who contributed immensely to the development of Islamic institutions in Kano. One of the factors that led to this development was the migration of foreign

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scholars such as the second batch of Wangarawa Mallams, scholars from Borno and Fulani scholars from the Mali empire as well as scholars from North Africa otherwise known as Sheriffs due to the belief that they were descendants of the Holy Prophet (SAW). The Sheriffs were led by Muhammad Ibn Abdulkarim al-Maghili, who came to Kano in 1492 C.E. Among the contributions of these scholars was the increase in the construction of Mosques as centres of learning. It was through the guidance of al-Maghili that Sarki Muhammadu Rumfa built the first official Friday Mosque near Kofar Nassarawa and later relocated to its present location near Emir's Palace in 1807 C.E after the Danfodio Jihad. The position of the Qibla of this Mosque was re-set by Sheikh Abdullahi bin Fodio who was in Kano in 1807. This Friday Mosque, which was a symbol of traditional Hausa architecture remains unchanged for about a century. When the Emir of Kano Alhaji Abdullahi Bayero (1926-1953) became the Emir of Kano, he demolished this Mosque and in its place a new, magnificent one was constructed in modern architecture. The building of this Mosque which was started in 1943 and completed in 1951, became the pride of Kano people and one of the centres of tourism up to the present day (Wada, 1998:85).

Proliferation of Friday Mosques in Kano

With the overwhelming increase in the population of Kano, only one Friday Mosque could no more accommodate the large number of worshippers that were always on the increase. So the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero, after due consultation with the Kano Council of Ulama approved the construction of an additional Friday Mosque at Fagge Quarters in the Eastern part of Kano. The foundation of the Mosque was laid by the Emir in October 1967 and was commissioned in 1969 (Paden. 1973:205). The Mosque was later named Abdullahi Bayero, the ex-Emir of Kano who first initiated the idea of constructing an additional Friday Mosque in Kano. In 1971, some Muslim scholars from Bayero University Kano started to discuss the idea of building a Friday Mosque within the premises of the University. Some of these scholars included: Dr. Sani Zahraaddeen, Dr. Hassan Ibrahim Gwarzo, Dr. Umar Jah and others. The Mosque was built in 1978 by contribution from the Muslim community in and outside Kano including the Muslim lecturers from the University who contributed from their monthly salary. The mosque was officially opened by the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero on 9th March 1979 (Gambo. 1990). The opening of these two Friday Mosques paved the way for people who live in the outskirts of Kano city to seek the approval of the Emir to build Friday Mosque in their area with the plea that the existing Friday Mosques are far away from their areas. To ease this difficulty for them, the Emir always listens to their grievances. In this way, new Friday Mosques continue to spring up in Kano. Some of these new Friday Mosques are:

1. Kurnar Asabe Jumu'ah Mosque: Situated in the Northern part of Kano was built in 1975.
2. Fityat ad-Deen Jumu'ah Mosque: Built in 1976; this mosque was built by the Yoruba Muslim community in Kano.
3. Yar Akwa Jum'ah Mosque: This Mosque was constructed in 1979.
4. Murtala Muhammad Jumah Mosque: This Mosque was built in 1980 and was named after the former Nigerian Head of State, who was a Kano indigene

Weekly Friday Sermon

Majority of the Muslim jurists agreed that delivering the Friday sermon is obligatory. So, the Friday prayer cannot be conducted without the sermon. Their argument is based on a number of reasons, which include; The Holy Qur'an enjoins Muslims to listen to the sermon in the following verse: "O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to pray on Friday, hasten earnestly to the remembrance of Allah and leave off business and (traffic); that is best for you if ye but know" (Q. 62:9). Qurtubi (1993, 9/97-98) explains that the word 'dhikr' (remembrance in the verse refers to the sermon and the prayer. Sabiq (1998, 1/352) said that Muslim scholars told us that the Prophet (SAW) used to deliver a sermon every Friday. It is also reported from Abdullahi bin Umar who said; "The Prophet of Allah used to deliver the Friday sermon while standing, then sat down and then stood up (to deliver the second part of the sermon). (Muslim. n.d. 3/9) This Hadith indicates that the Prophet used to deliver a sermon every Friday. Ibn AlArabi commenting on this verse (Quran 62:11) says; "Majority of our scholars (Maliki scholars) said that this verse is an indication that, Allah would not have blamed the companions for leaving the Mosque while the sermon was being delivered, for people are only blamed when they reject a compulsory act" (Ibn AlArabi. 2002: 4/247).

Status of the Friday Sermon According to Jurists

There are different opinions among jurists with regard to the status of the Friday sermon as to whether it is part of the prayer or it is a condition for the validation of the prayer or not. If for instance, a Friday prayer is to be conducted without

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a sermon should the prayer serve as the Friday prayer or not? There are two legal opinions concerning this issue and these are:

1. The Sermon is Compulsory:

This is the view of the majority of the Muslim scholars, including the four schools of law.

Sabiq, (1998: 1/352) explains these views as follows: (i) Since the Quran commands the Muslims to listen to the sermon (Q. 62:9) delivering is compulsory. (ii) It is reported that the Prophet (SAW) used to deliver his sermons while standing. This shows that he never observed the Friday prayer without delivering the sermons. (iii) The scholars explain that since the Prophet ordered Muslims to pray the way he prayed and always delivered the sermon on Friday, so Muslim must do it the way he did it, and if the Prophet had never observed the Friday prayer without delivering the sermon, so it is compulsory for Muslims to deliver the sermon every Friday

2. The Sermon is not compulsory:

The Muslim scholars who said that the sermon is not compulsory are in the minority. They disagree with the view of the majority in the following ways (Shaukani, 2003, 2/330): (i) To say that the sermon is compulsory simply because the Prophet used to deliver it every Friday is not a reason, for a normal action of the Prophet does not always make an act of worship compulsory. (ii) The Hadith that commanded Muslims to pray as the Prophet did has no relation with the sermon, it only refers to the prayer. (iii) The verse (Q6:9) that enjoins the Muslims to hasten to dhikr or remembrance of Allah also refers to the prayer and not the sermon which show that it is not compulsory. (iv) The sermon is not part of the Friday prayer, they said that if for instance, the Friday prayer is to be observed without delivering the sermon the prayer is valid. To support their argument, the scholars of this opinion, quoted a Hadith where the prophet said, "Whoever gets one raka'a (segment) of the Friday prayer has indeed got the whole Friday prayer" Nasai (197: 2/11)

Out of these two views, the best one can be said to be the view of the majority of scholars who said that delivering the Friday sermon is a must. This is because their argument is based on a clear text of the Quran and sunnah, unlike the other group who depend more on analogical analysis.

Conditions for the Friday Sermon

Muslim scholars like Qurtubi, (1993: 9/99-107) and Ahmad, (1996:111) have stated the conditions for the validity of Friday sermons as follows:

1. The Sermon has to be Recited in a Given Time: As reported by Anas bin Malik, 'The Prophet used to pray on Friday when the sun bends down' (Bukhari 2/12-13). It is also reported that the four pious caliphs and other companions of the Prophet used to pray when the sun declines.
2. Sermon is to be Delivered before the Prayer: Sufi, (1997:147) said that 'it is a consensus among the Muslim scholars that the sermon has to be delivered before the segments (Raka'a) prayer is conducted. If an Imam was to deliver the sermon after the prayer, the prayer has to be observed again. The reason for this is that; the Prophet (SAW) used to deliver the sermon before the prayer, and this is the tradition of his sahabah
3. The Sermon has to be recited in congregation: This is also a consensus among the Ulama that the Friday sermon must be delivered in a congregation, though they differ in the specific number of the people to be present when the sermon is delivered. But they all agree that it has to be delivered in congregation due to the command by the Prophet; As reported by Tariq bin Shihab, the Prophet (SAW) said; 'The Friday prayer is an obligatory right on every Muslim in a congregation. Abu Dawud. (n.d, 1/280).
4. The Sermon must be Recited Aloud: It is required for the Imam to deliver the sermon in a way that the congregation may hear it. This is because the Quran enjoins the congregation to listen to the sermon and to ponder over it. (Q 62:9). So it is compulsory for the Imam to raise his voice when delivering the sermon.
5. The Imam should be a Man: According to Ibn Qudama (2004), only a man can lead the Friday prayer because it is not obligatory for women, though they are allowed to attend the mosque, listen to the sermon and pray with their men counterparts. This is the Muslim tradition right from the time of the Prophet to the present time.

Statement of the Problem

Research Findings and observations indicate that there are a lot of Friday mosques in Kano with Imams of different qualifications. These Friday mosques are faced with one problem or another. Some of these problems include; some Imams are unqualified, so they find it difficult to deliver the sermon in standard Arabic, and most of them cannot prepare sermon

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of their own; they depend on sermons written by past scholars. This attitude often makes the sermon irrelevant to the needs of their society. Majority of the members of the Friday congregation do not understand Arabic. The sermon is expected to provide knowledge and awareness to the generality of Muslims with regard to current issues or events taking place in the Muslim world in general, and the local society in particular, with the aim of assisting Muslims to overcome their educational, social and political problems. Thus, delivering it in a language they do not understand will only result in the waste of human resources or misguided information. Lack of basic facilities or inadequate facilities, such as effective loudspeakers and electric generators also make it difficult for the congregation to listen to the sermon properly. It is due to the above problems that the researcher is prompted to carry out this study in order to compare the impact of delivering the sermon in Arabic to the Friday congregation and the possibility of delivering it in the local language of the community.

Objective of the Study

This research work titled: An assessment of reciting the Friday sermon in Arabic to non-Arabic speaking congregation in some selected mosques in the Kano metropolis, is carried out to discover;

1. the significance or otherwise the sermon in the day-to-day affairs of Muslims.
2. To investigate whether it is allowed by the primary sources of Islamic law to deliver the Friday sermon in languages other than Arabic.
3. discuss these opinions with the intention of finding solutions to the problem of reciting the sermon in Arabic to those who don't understand the language.

Research Methodology

The methodology used in gathering data for the problem under investigation is designed to investigate the impact of reciting the Friday Sermon in Arabic to non-Arabic speaking congregations in Kano metropolis. It discusses the research design, the population for the study, the sample and sampling instrument for data collection, the procedures for data collection and analysis.

Research Design

The survey method was employed for this paper. It is a method usually adopted when handling a large population, especially on issues of the moment that involve the systematic collection of data from the population of the study through the use of questionnaires, interviews, observation e.t.c (Razaq and Ajayi. 2000:16). This method is used because the survey involves collecting information from a large population located in different areas in a natural setting. Information from records of Jumu'ah Mosques and questionnaire was designed to investigate the impact of reciting the Friday Khutbah in Arabic to non-Arabic speaking congregation in Kano metropolis. Research design is important so as to determine the type of data required, and how to collect and collate them, as well as how to analyze and measure them (Razaq and Ajayi 2000:16). It is a method that has to be done in the field. The data are derived from a questionnaire and the attempts to document current condition or attitudes to describe what existed.

Data Collection

The sources of the data collected in this research were divided into two categories. The primary sources and the secondary sources were basically used. The primary sources constitute the use of the interview and physical observation by the researcher himself after a visit to some of the Friday Mosques and during the Friday prayer sessions. The researcher was able to see by himself some of the relevant aspects of Muslim life that are not attaining justice by the mode of the (Khutbah) sermons delivery in most of the mosques visited. The secondary sources of that data collected during this research work involved the use of the original and readily made available information on the problem under consideration. The secondary methods were derived from pamphlets, textbooks and papers presented during sermons and lectures on the problems and solutions to the problems of the delivery of the sermon in Arabic. Data collected under this research work were meant to educate Muslims on the relevance of Khutbah (sermons) in their lives. Data were collected together for the purpose of analysis. At the end, the information provided in this research work was analysed. Collection of the data during this research work was faster because the research was carried out in an Islamic society highly dominated with many resource persons and mosques from which valuable information can be gathered. Likewise, the researcher restricted himself to Friday Mosques where most people are considered to be non-Arabic literate.

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Population of The Study

The population used in the conduct of this study comprised the Imams and some members of the congregations of some selected Friday mosques within the seven local governments in the Kano metropolis.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The purposive sampling technique was adopted to arrive at the sample that was used in this study. Out of 44 local government areas in Kano state seven are located within the metropolis. From each of the seven local government areas three Friday mosques were selected. The Imams of the Friday mosques and some selected followers were given the questionnaire.

The following are the stratification of the Friday mosques in Kano metropolis in their respective local government areas. Kano Municipal Local Government Area; (i) Kano Central Mosque, (ii) Sharada Friday Mosque, (iii) Sheikh Ahmad Tijjani Friday Mosque; Dala Local Government Area (i) Kurna Friday Mosque (ii) Alhassan Dantata Friday Mosque (iii) Taibah Friday Mosque (iv) Muhammad Rabiu Friday Mosque; Gwale Local Government Area; (i) BUK Friday Mosque (ii) Ado Bayero Friday Mosque (iii) Almunata al-Islamy Friday Mosque (iv) Usman bin Affan Friday Mosque; Kumbotso Local Government Area; (i) Kumbotso Central Mosque (ii) Zawaciki Friday Mosque (iii) Ibrahim Mijinyawa Friday Mosque; Tarauni Local Government Area; (i) Tarauni Central Mosque (ii) Sahabah Friday Mosque (iii) Yar'akwa Friday Mosque (iv) Naibawa Friday Mosque; Fagge Local Government Area; (i) Abdullahi Bayero Friday Mosque (ii) Abdullahi bin Abbas Friday Mosque (iii) Ansaruddeen Friday Mosque (iv) Bokavu Barrack Friday Mosque; Nassarawa Local Government Area; (i) Da'awa Friday Mosque (ii) Hotoro Friday Mosque (iii) Tudun Wada Friday Mosque (iv) Tudun Murtala Friday Mosque

Three Friday mosques were selected from each local government area using the purposive sampling technique, on the basis that they cover the seven local government areas in Kano metropolis.

Instrumentation

The researcher described here the various instruments used in collecting the data, how the instruments were developed and their features. Self-developed questionnaire were used to gather information. Copies were given to the Imams of Friday mosques on one hand and the members of the congregations on the other. The questionnaire so designed was divided into two parts with either question or statement regarding the opinion of the Imams and the listeners on the impact of reciting the Friday sermon in Arabic to non-Arabic speaking congregation. The first part of the questionnaire contains questions on personal information about age, the highest academic qualification, working experience and the history of the establishment of the mosque. The second part contains question and statement on the method of delivering the sermon, how it facilitates learning, the language is supposed to be delivered and whether listening to the sermon influence understanding of the congregation. The instruments comprised items to which the subjects were required to respond to with a tick [✓] in the appropriate column. The instrument is a four (4points) like-scale comprising Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree and Disagree.

Validity

To ensure the context validity of the instruments, it was scrutinized by the experts after which some items were either retained, eliminated or new ones added.

Data Analysis

The responses were collated by initially using percentages which were later subjected to χ^2 chi-square statistics. Although all the questionnaire may not be returned; the few returned were analysed.

Administration

In administering the instrument, the researcher employed the services of colleagues and students. A total of 140 questionnaires were distributed and 125 were returned, and thereafter analysed for the study.

Findings and Discussion

1. The major problem of reciting the sermon in Arabic is that most members of the congregation do not understand what is being preached.
2. There is a significant difference between the Imams and the congregation on the preferred use of Arabic in reciting the Friday Sermon within the metropolis. While the Imams have a high preference for the use of the Arabic language, the congregation were less enthusiastic.



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3. Both Imams and the congregation agreed that using the Arabic language in the recitation of the Friday Sermon has significant impact on the listeners.
4. If given the option, the congregation would have preferred the sermon to be delivered in Hausa.
5. The Imams acknowledge the fact that their sermon in Arabic was not understood by most of their listeners.
6. The Imams would also prefer the use of Hausa in the recitation of the Friday Sermon if they have the alternative.

From the analysis of the data collected for this study, it was observed that the major problems related to reciting the Friday Sermon in Arabic to non-Arabic speaking congregations is their inability to understand what was being said. From the observations, the Imams preferred the recitation of the sermon in Arabic though they are aware that most of the congregation did not understand the language. This preference on the part of the Imams is in line with Jazari (1972:391), where it was observed that it is better to recite the sermon in Arabic. However, it was not categorically clear whether the use of the Arabic language is necessarily a compulsion. This stance is also in line with Imam Sufi (1977:147), where it was observed that one of the conditions of the sermon is that it must be recited in Arabic and that to deliver it in any other language makes it invalid. It was pointed out that where the congregation does not understand Arabic, the Imam should still deliver his sermon in it. From his observation, delivering the sermon in Arabic was so important that he suggested that if in a Muslim town no one can deliver the sermon in Arabic, the Friday prayer should not be observed. Sufi (1977:147) quoting from the Hanbali scholars, said that it is compulsory to read the sermon in Arabic, that if the Imam is fluent in Arabic and majority of the people will understand the language. This was a condition attached to using the Arabic language in the recitation of the sermon. In the observation, it was opined that if all the people do not understand Arabic, the Imam should deliver the sermon in their local language. This, thus makes the use of Arabic for the Friday sermon optional. This follows the Hanafi and Shafi'i scholars who explained that if the Imam is able to deliver the sermon in Arabic, he should do so but if he cannot, he should deliver it in the local language of the congregation (Ahmad 1996:112). It was however observed that it was not only the Imams that prefer the use of the Arabic language in the recitation of the sermon. It was observed that even the members of the congregation were of the opinion that reciting the sermon in Arabic has a significant impact on the listeners. Apart from this expressed opinion, the congregations also were of the opinion that the sermon should be recited in Arabic. This observation is in line with the Malik and Shafi'i schools where it was observed that the Friday Sermon must be delivered in Arabic regardless of whether the congregation understands it or not. The reason adduced for this was that the Prophet (SAW) and his Sahaba (RA) used to deliver their sermons in Arabic. In the opinion of the two groups involved in this study, if an option is to be made available with regard to the language of preference, they would rather have the Hausa language for the recitation of the sermon.

Conclusion

The major problem identified with the recitation of the sermon in Arabic to non-Arabic speaking group in the metropolis was mainly that of understanding. The congregation in most of the mosques within the metropolis did not really understand the Arabic language in which the Friday Sermon is delivered. However, the two groups agreed that delivering the Friday Sermon in Arabic has a significant impact on the listeners and the Imams were of the opinion that it enhanced learning in the religion.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

1. The validity of reciting the Friday Sermon in a Non-Arabic language should be looked into since there does not seem to be a categorical prohibition to it.
2. An in-depth study of Islamic jurisprudence should be encouraged among the Imams, so that areas of disagreements by the various schools of law can be resolved without undue acrimony.
3. Workshops and seminars should be organized for public enlightenment among the Imams to prepare the sermon that will improve the understanding of the listeners.
4. Training and retraining Imams on the philosophy, objectives and methodology of the sermon.
5. There is the need for continued emphasis on the use of community centred sermon. This no doubt, would promote greater understanding of the religion.

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