

Hausa Newspapers: An Historical Account, 1938-2015

Umar Aliyu Bunza* (Ph.D)¹, Muhammad Tahir Mallam (PhD)²

¹Department of Nigerian languages, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

²Department of Modern European Languages and Linguistics, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

*Corresponding author

Umar Aliyu Bunza

Article History

Received: 10.02.2018

Accepted: 19.02.2018

Published: 30.03.2018

DOI:

10.21276/sb.2018.4.3.6



Abstract: Hausa is a language of the people situated in Northern Nigeria, Niger, Ghana and as far as North Africa. The language was blessed with two writing systems: Ajami (with modified Arabic letters) and Boko (using Roman letters). The publication of Hausa Newspapers began in the year 1932 by the Translation Bureau in Zaria which was established in the year 1929. It was begun with a newspaper called *Jaridar Nijeriya Ta Arewa*. Since that time the Hausa newspaper has continued under different agencies and individuals up to the present time when over 130 newspapers are published in Hausa language. Out of this number, currently less than 40 are circulating and all the remaining ones have died. The aim of this paper is to assess the history of the publication of this newspaper starting from the background and finally suggest the way to empower them.

Keywords: Hausa, Ajami, newspaper, *Jaridar Nijeriya Ta Arewa*.

INTRODUCTION

The word 'Jarida' (newspaper) as it is in Hausa language is a loan word from Arabic language [1-3]. The word (jarida) came into Hausa language as a result of the contact between the Arabs and the Hausa people which was said to have started since before the 14th century. It was through the Trans-Saharan trade that the language as well as Islamic religion came to Hausa land and has spread across places such as Gobir, Kano and Katsina and since that time the land was Islamized [1, 4].

Ever since the contact has continued and Hausa language keeps on enriching itself with many words of Arabic origin such as *alkali*, *ilmi*, *jarida*, *mujalla*, *hajj*, etc as a result of these influences of religious and linguistic implication.

Though the word *Jarida* is Arabic by origin, the work on *jarida* was not started in Hausa language till the year 1932 after the establishment of the Translation Bureau in the year 1929. The aim of the Translation Bureau is to translate reading materials from other languages such as Arabic and English in to Hausa language for the benefit of schools and students of Hausa language. It is in line with this aim that the bureau started the publication of a newspaper in Hausa language and later the publication of different newspapers was continued by other government agencies, clubs, individuals etc. This led to the development of Hausa newspapers, but with time some of the newspapers failed.

The aim of this paper is to assess the history of the publication of Hausa newspapers from the beginning to other later developments and analyse the factors that brought about their failure in the present time. In the final analysis, the paper presents some suggestions for the empowerment of these newspapers.

Background of Hausa Newspapers

The publication of printed sheets within the boundary called Nigeria was started before the colonial takeover of the power and control of the land. It was said that, *Iwe Irohin* was the first of these kinds and was introduced in November, 1859 at Abeokuta by Reverend Henry Townsend, a Yoruba, and a member of the Church Missionary Society. The Sheet was bilingual with English and Yoruba languages. The focus of the paper is "Giving news of church and state from near and far, and educating the growing reading public through didactic essays on history and politics" [5]. This is how the print media started in Nigeria and using one of the Nigerian languages as a means of expression. However, the whole affairs seem to have taken place in phases.

The First Phase

In Hausa language the news sheet started in the year 1932 as a result of the establishment of the Translation Bureau in the year 1929 for the translation of various stories and books from Arabic and English languages into Hausa language.

The aim of the Translation Bureau is not the publication of any Hausa newspaper, but to translate stories from other languages such as Arabic and English

into Hausa language for use in schools [6]. In later time, 1932, the Hausa newspaper called *Jaridar Nijeriya Ta Arewa* was started. The paper was multilingual with Hausa, Arabic and English languages in arrangement.

In the view of this author, the arrangement of these languages in this way (i.e. Hausa, Arabic and English) is not just like that. The purpose of the arrangement of Hausa language that came first is because Hausa is the language of the land and people of the area and it serves as a lingua franca among many tribes of northern Nigeria where the bureau was established.

The Arabic language that came second in the arrangement is a language which exerts a great influence on the Hausa language and the entire people of the area, and it is the language of the religion of the majority of the Hausa people especially in the cities and palaces of the emirs.

Lastly, English language came last in the arrangement because it is the last language which came into contact with the Hausa people and was forced on to them. Moreover, English by then had little influence in the minds of Hausa people and the majority of them could not understand it or speak it. It is not supposed to be used in that newspaper since it is not readable and understandable by the majority of Hausa people for whom the paper was published.

The second newspaper in Hausa language and in the view of the author the first real Hausa news paper was *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* which was started in the year 1939 by another bureau called Literature Bureau which was established in the year 1937 to take over the work of the defunct Translation Bureau. The aim of Literature Bureau is to provide reading materials in Hausa language for the benefit of schools and students of Hausa language. Due to this, the Hausa newspaper called *Gaskiya ta Fi Kwabo* was started. The language of this newspaper was entirely Hausa. This is the reason for regarding it the first real Hausa newspaper.

The newspaper *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* was a monthly newspaper and the first copy appeared in January of the year 1939. The editor was Mr. L. C. Giles and Malam Abubakar Kagara served as a sub-editor. The newspaper was successful because in January 1939, 5000 copies were sold, and in February, 8900 copies were sold and in March, 11200 were sold [7].

Above all, this newspaper showed an encouraging feature because of the ‘Enormous amount of correspondence which it has evoked from native readers. The Editor received at least 100 letters a month from private individuals, enclosing contribution, etc in addition to those sent by the official correspondents, and many more sending answers to competitions, and so forth’ [7]. This is how the Hausa newspaper successfully started.

The Development of Hausa Newspapers

The development of Hausa newspapers can be traced back to the year 1953 when the Northern Regional Literature Agency (NORLA) was established to succeed the former Literature Bureau.

The primary purpose of the creation of this agency (NORLA) was to facilitate the production and publication of books in different languages of Northern Nigeria; especially Hausa language. The agency achieved this aim because many books were published within its life span 1953-1959 [8, 1, 9].

The Second Phase

Apart from book publication, NORLA took over the publication of the newspaper *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* which was already started in the year 1939 by the former bureau; Literature Bureau. NORLA as well started the publication of some nine Hausa newspapers. Unlike *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, the Hausa newspapers NORLA published were published in different provinces of Hausa land or Northern Nigeria. Each province had its own paper written in the common dialect of the area. Below are papers and dialects of each:

Paper	Language	Province
Zaruma	Hausa	Sokoto
Himma	Hausa	Katsina
Gamzaki	Hausa	Plateau
Zumunta	Hausa	Bauchi
Bazazzaga	Hausa	Zazzau
Haske	Hausa	Neja
Ardo	Hausa and Fulfulde	Adamawa
Albishir	Hausa and Kanuri	Borno
Sodangi	Hausa	Kano

Since the collapse of NORLA in 1959 and the attainment of Nigerian independence in 1960, the Hausa newspapers disappeared. From that time [10] to the end

of 1970 only one Hausa newspaper remained active. The paper was named Dillaliya published by the Nigerian Information Bureau, Lagos in year 1960. This

might be because of unawareness of the benefit of these newspapers, lack of experience as well as inadequate equipment for the publication.

The Third Phase

By 1980, a group of some Hausa newspapers was published which brought the first phase of their development. These newspapers were published by some individuals and government bodies. The newspapers were:

Paper	Publishers	Year
Maganar Kano	Gaskiya Cooperation, Zaria	1980
'Yancin Dan Adam	Plateau State Publishing Company, Jos	1980
Amana	Concord Press, Zaria	1980
Maishela	Ministry of Information, Office of the President, Lagos	1981
Albishir	Triumph Publishing Company, Kano	1981
Zuma	Telex Publishing Company, Zaria	1981

The Fourth Phase

The period from 1990 to 1999, brought another phase of development of Hausa newspapers. This is because many newspapers were published. The factors behind this development include the engagement of various individuals, government bodies, as well as religious organizations in the publication of these newspapers. The series of publication was started by the Katsina State Government Printing Press which published *Fitilar Katsina* in the year 1990. In the year 1991, *Himma* was published by same company. In this same year (1991), I. M. Publications Zaria published *Al-Mizan*, and in the following year (1992) the same company published *Gwagwarmaya*. In this same year, Niger State Publication Company published *Tauraruwa*, likewise *Hantsi (tsohuwa)* was published in this year by an unknown company. Comeco Nigeria limited, Zaria, published *Lifidi* and I. M. Publication Zaria also published *Mujahida* all in 1993. In 1994, Department of Information and Culture, Bebeji Local Government Area, Kano published *Muryar Bebeji*, and At-Tajdid Publishing Agency, Kano published *At-Tajdid*. In 1995, *Al-Mujahid* and *Muryar 'Yan Kasuwa* were published from *Kwaleji Nazarin Addinin Musulunci ta Shaikh Abdullahi Fodiyo*, Sakkwato and *Kungiyar 'Yan Kasuwar Muhammadu Abubakar Rimi*, Kano respectively. In 1996, Sokoto State Government Printing Press, Sokoto published *Jagora*, and Today Communications Limited, Kaduna, published *A Yau*. *Al'ahram* was published in 1997 by an unknown company. A year later (1998) *Madrasatu at-Tatbiki At-ta'alimi A l-islamiyya*, Kaduna, published *Assunnah*, Department of Information and Mobilization NEPA office, Kano published *Haske Maganin Duhu* and *Almu'amalat* Kano published *Almu'amalat*.

The Latest Phase

The latest phase in the development of these newspapers is the period 2000-date. It is within these years that many newspapers were published in Hausa language. This is due to the expansion in the activities of everyday life in Northern Nigeria. These include development of religious activities, films production, democratic activities and the development of games

such as foot ball etc. This assisted in the engagement of various individuals, government bodies, religious organizations, and other bodies in the publication of Hausa newspapers.

The Hausa newspapers published within these years include: *Dillaliya (sabuwa)* published by the *Dillaliya Communications*, Kaduna, *Haske (sabuwa)* from *Mega Communications Limited*, Kaduna all in the 2000. In 2001, *Ar-Risala* was published by *Farhan Islamic Centre*, Kaduna and a year later (2002) *Garkuwa Publications*, Kaduna published *Sawaba*, *Century Research and Communications Ltd*, Kano published *Adala*, and *Annahdha Foundation Zariya* started *Al-Ihsan*. *Qana'a Media Investment*, Zariya published *Magana* was brought by *Viewpoint Media*, Zariya.

In the year 2003, *Tambari Communication*, Kano published *Zabi-Sonka*, *Garkuwa Media Services*, Sokoto published *Hantsi (ta biyu)*, *Al-Hikima Communication* Kaduna published *Jakadiya (sabuwa)*, and *Bazawara* was published by an unknown company.

Alfurqan Publication Centre, Kaduna, published *Alfurqan and Alburhan* in the year 2004. In the same year *Madarasatu Tatbiqit Ta'alimil Islamiyya*, Kaduna, published *At-Tatbiq*, *Zamfo Publication*, Kaduna published *Sakon Zamfo/zamzam*, *Liberal Press Ltd*, Kaduna published *Manuniya*, *Halim Media Ltd*, Bauchi, published *A-Aqeedatus Sahiha*, *Thaqalayn Publication*, Kano published *Al-Mauzuun*, *Ministry of Information*, Kebbi State published *Adila*, and *Kajurawa Media Investment Zariya*, published *Taskira*.

In the year 2006, *Sadarwa* was published by *Sangar Printing and Communication Nigeria Int*. Zariya. In the same year *Media Trust Limited Abuja* published *Aminiya*, *Nasarawa Publishing Company Ltd*, Lafiya, published *Nasara* and *Leardeship newspapers Group*, Kaduna published *LeadershipHausa*. In year 2012, *Rariya Media Services Ltd*, Abuja, published *Rariya* and *SkyLIMIT Media Communications Limited*, Abuja,

published *Jamhuriya*. While in 2014 Dangida Multi-media published *Mahangar Arewa* and in the following year (2015) published *Jaridar Wasanni*.

In addition to the above Hausa newspapers, there were some that were published by unknown publishing companies. These include: *Bazamfara*, *Kakaki*, *Lokaci*, *A Yau* and *Muryar Kano*.

The Frequent Failure of Hausa Newspapers: Whither the Explanation?

Looking at the background of Hausa newspapers and their development, one can assert that, many Hausa newspapers were published to satisfy the need of Hausa readers, but the result was rarely achieved. This is because many Hausa newspapers are no more heard of or seen; some even die off within a short period of time. Our concern here is to look at the factors behind this failure.

One of the factors is lack of cooperation among the publishers of these newspapers. Cooperation which could serve as backbone to the achievement of many things is lacking among the publishers of Hausa newspapers. This is why many Hausa newspapers were published by individuals instead of collaboration by various publishers to start a very strong paper that can compete with papers of other languages, since newspaper publication is not a small task that can be handled easily by an individual.

Another factor is lack of daily publication. Among all the Hausa newspapers there is not a single one which is published daily, but most of them were either published weekly or monthly. As a result of this, majority of their news were often stale, as they have been read in the daily published newspapers in English.

Lack of competent journalists in the publication of Hausa newspapers is another factor. This failure is brought about due to the inadequate group work in the publication of the Hausa newspapers. As a result of that, every individual publisher is only after what they could get no matter what. That is why there were many errors both in the arrangement of the news and texts of the papers. Common mistakes of Hausa grammar and orthography were commonly found in many of these papers.

One important contributor to this failure from the side of the publishers of Hausa newspapers is lack of commitment to the publication of these newspapers. Some of the Hausa newspaper publishers are publishing these papers but not with full commitment to the service. As a result of that some Hausa newspapers are on-and-off: they will appear at one time, and disappear soon after. This is because the publishers lack one solid objective they want to achieve instead they often end up advertising politicians of their interest.

A part from lack of commitment, the problem of wider distribution of Hausa newspapers is one of the weak points of their publishers. The Hausa newspapers are not getting wider distribution across northern Nigeria where Hausa language serves as a major language and lingua – Franca among the many ethnic nationalities of the north. Majority of Hausa newspapers are seen and found mostly within the states of their publication or neighbouring states, but when going far from there, only few such as *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, *Aminiya*, *Leadership Hausa* and *Al-Mizan* are commonly found. That is why most of the people there, even those with humble interest in reading Hausa newspapers end up reading various English newspapers to satisfy their needs.

In looking at the side of the readers (the masses for whom these papers are published), one can assess some problems which facilitated the failure of these papers. These papers are published for the reading of these people, especially the Hausas who are supposed to care for their language, encourage it, empower it especially by reading its literature, but end-up otherwise. Majority of Hausas, especially the elites prefer to read newspapers in English than the Hausa ones.

On the other hand, those who were not capable of reading English language texts prefer to buy radio and listen to the news of the world from different stations that broadcast in Hausa language such as the BBC, VOA, etc, to buying a single copy of Hausa newspaper weekly and read it. That is why most Hausa newspapers even the known ones cannot sell copies of their production instead unsold copies of such papers could be seen kept in the offices of their vendors. Sometimes, some of these copies are used for wrapping cakes, meat and groceries.

Lack of good and strong advertisement is one of the problems from the side of the society. The newspapers of any language can survive if they can get frequent advertisement either from companies, banks or individuals so that they can cover up the loss of copies that are not sold in the market.

Hausa newspapers are left behind on this ground. Most of the Hausa newspapers cannot get such advertisements. Instead, majority of them rely on common and occasional advertisement such as wedding ceremony, naming ceremony, publicity - seeking politicians as well as advertising various politicians who want to contest for various public offices. The gains from these kinds of advertisements is very meagre.

Government which is responsible for the betterment of the lives of the citizens has also contributed to the failure of the Hausa newspapers. It is one of the responsibilities of good government to make

all efforts to energize the economy of its people. Hausa newspapers serve as one of the means of achieving that.

Hausa newspapers served as a means of providing employment for the teeming unemployed youth. The major problem of the government in this regard is lack of encouragement of whatever kind.

Hausa newspapers are not encouraged by the government including governments of Hausa dominated states such as Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Zamfara and Kebbi. In all of these states some Hausa newspapers were published before but currently most of them have disappeared. Examples include:

STATE	NEWSPAPER	YEAR OF PUBLISHING
Kano	<i>Albishir</i>	1981
Kano	<i>Alfijir</i>	1982
Katsina	<i>Fitilar Katsina</i>	1990
Katsina	<i>Himma</i>	1991
Bauchi	<i>Kakaki</i>	1988
Sokoto	<i>Jagora</i>	1996
Kebbi	<i>Adila</i>	2004
Zamfara	<i>Bazamfara</i>	Not traced

Suggestions for the Empowerment of Hausa Newspapers

The word power from which empowerment was derived was defined as strength, ability, authority, control, right, influence [11]. While the word empowerment simply means to energize something that will improve it and up lift it to a certain level better than it was previously.

Hausa newspapers can be energized if all sides: publishers, readers and government join hands together with unflinching resolve of empowering these papers.

The publishers should set a target for their publications. The target should be generous, sound and that which will always attract the attention of the people. They should be sincere and patient in the face of whatever hardship for the success of their aim. Already, behind every success there is hardship! A situation where they cannot afford to individually run a newspaper, they should join hands together and work as a group to create a very strong Hausa newspaper that can compete with others, especially those written in the English language. Here, there must be absolute trust and sincerity among members. In addition to that, they should do their best to start a daily Hausa newspaper so that the current world news could be read in Hausa instead of English alone.

The publishers should also employ only the right people with qualifications in both Hausa language and journalism, and each should be assigned the right duty based on their qualification and competence. This will assist the papers to be free from grammatical and orthographical errors.

Governments, especially of the Northern states, where Hausa is the common language spoken by most people, should encourage these papers by giving them funds so that they can improve the quality of their

work. They should also insist that every sector (i.e. government and non-governmental) should give their advertisements to these newspapers. This will encourage them to provide qualitative equipment for publication and employ competent workers.

One important aspect is government should empower Nigerian languages by making them mandatory to be used actively in those vital areas of national development from where they had long been excluded such as science, technology and even in the administration of the three tiers of government etc. Such empowerment can make the Nigerian languages to be used formally both in offices, schools and other areas of national development. If this happens, the literatures of Nigerian languages can be improved through such patronage by many people. In this way, Hausa newspapers can be empowered financially

The society, especially the Hausa for whom these newspapers are produced, should put hands together in energizing these papers. They can do that through different ways. One of the ways is buying these papers to reduce loss to the publishers. If people would buy Hausa newspapers as they buy English ones, it could help the publishers to become powerful and encourage their publications.

Another way of encouraging these papers by the people in general is by reading them. Reading is generally important to every news paper of every language. They are published for the benefit of the people. By reading Hausa newspapers people will be able to see where to make their comments for the betterment of the publishers as well as society in general.

Through these ways, the society should encourage Hausa newspapers and make them improve to compete with those of other languages.

CONCLUSION

It is the contention of this paper that the publication of Hausa newspapers was started long time under the care of various agencies and individuals. That various newspapers published were no more in circulation. Majority of them have gone comatose.

The paper also examined the factors behind the failing of Hausa newspapers publication. The factors were divided into two; that is the in-house factors which were mainly by the side of the publishers. The factors include lack of daily publication, lack of competent journalist in the publication of Hausa newspapers as well as problem of wider distribution among others. The other causes emanate from the people, for whom the newspapers were published. Hausa people even the elites, are known for their low patronage of newspapers, particularly Hausa newspapers. Majority of the people prefer to listen to the Radio for the world news than to buy newspapers.

Another thing the paper reflected is that, the empowerment of Hausa newspapers is something very important since the language of these papers –Hausa is one of the three major languages of the nation and it serves as lingua franca in northern Nigeria and beyond. This empowerment is not a task to be carried out by an individual, but is a task that calls for collaboration among publishers, governments and individual masses.

REFERENCES

1. Yahaya, I.Y. (1988). *Hausa A Rubuce: Tarihin Rubuce-Rubuce Cikin Hausa*. Zariya: NNPC.
2. Rasheed, A. A. (2003). *Jaridu Da Mujallun Hausa: Me ke Jawo Mutuwarsu?* A paper presented at the conference for the celebration of two years of Garkuwa magazine publication. Kaduna: Arewa House.
3. Ma'aluf, L. (2005). *Al-Munjidu Fi Luggatil Wa'alamu*. Darun Masharuq Bairud: Shari Publishers.
4. Hair, P. E. (1994). *The Early Study of the Nigerian Languages: Essays and Bibliographies*. London: Cambridge University Press.
5. Ade-Ajayi, J. F. (1965). *Christian Missions In Nigeria 1841-1891: The Marking of A New Elite*. London: Longman Group Ltd.
6. Usman, L. R. (2011). 'Hukumar Talafi: Tsettsefe Tarihi Da Gudunmuwarta Wajen Habaka Rubutaccen Adabin Hausa. M. A. Dessertation. Sokoto: Usmanu Danfodiyo University.
7. East, R. M. (1939). *Literature Bureau Zaria. Subsidiary Report, January 1st –March 31st 1939*.
8. Skinner, N. (1980). *An Anthology Of Hausa Literature In Translation*. Zaria: NNPC.
9. Bello, S, and Augie, A. (1998), *Culture and the Book Industry in Nigeria*. Lagos: Research in African Literatures.
10. Ekeh, P. (2010, December). *Military Rule and Damage to the Spirit of the Nigerian Constitution*.

In Lecture delivered at a forum organized by Lagos State, Nigeria, at Eko City Hall.

11. Procter, P. (1995). *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*. Cambridge University Press.