

*Nana Asma'u Tradition: An Intellectual Movement and Symbol of Women Rights in Islam During the 19th Century Dan Fodio's Islamic Reform.*¹

By

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INTRODUCTION

Scholarship essentially pertains to the intellectual and moral nurturing of individual human beings, as well as positive transformation and development of society. The learned, the alim, is first of all the pattern of conduct to be emulated by the people. He is the 'master' who nurtures the individual to excellence, and for a society of social change, he serves as a focus, a pivot. The primary concern of the scholar in the Islamic intellectual tradition is to improve the intellectual and moral state of the individual, and safeguard the well-being of the community. The scholar in this tradition, and especially in the West African setting emerges with a distinct and unique personality. As we are already familiar with towering scholars such as Abd al-Karim al-Maghili, Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti, Mukhtar al-Kunti, Usman DanFodio (Suleiman; 1997:VII) and Nana Asma'u.

Nana Asma'u is a product of the 19th century Sokoto Jihad. She is a woman scholar, poet, community leader, political commentator, and socio-cultural engineer whose mountain of knowledge cannot be equaled to her contemporaries. She was active in politics, education and social reform, she was a prolific author, popular teacher and renowned scholar and intellectual (Mack & Boyd; 2000:1).

These qualities possessed by Nana Asma'u made her a distinguishable figure and a model for those who have the zeal for learning, and at the same time she is an answer to those who view women as exploited, oppressed and relegated to the rudiments of home management and service to the children in Islam.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NANA ASMA'U

Nana Asma'u Fodio, a twin, was born in about 1793 in Degel, a small settlement lying 25 miles north west of Sokoto, which was only an unimportant hamlet in the year of her birth (Boyd 1989:1). Asma'u's twin brother was named Hassan, but instead of the name Hussaina, the Shehu chose "Asma'u" for his daughter, a name that recalls the extraordinary seventh-century Asma bint Abubakar daughter of one of the early Muslims (Abubakar). The historical Asma became famous for unhesitatingly aiding her father and the Prophet Muhammad when they were being hunted by their enemies by taking food to them while they were hiding (Mack & Boyd; 2000:7).

A classical Islamic education shaped Asma'u's view of the world. This was not simply rote memorization of the Qur'an, although this approach is one by which

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children first assimilate the word of God, but it involved a rigorous programme of study beyond the initial phase. Tutored by her family, Asma'u studied Islamic philosophical text on prayer, mysticism, legal matters, fiqh (which regulates religious conducts), and tawhid (dogma) (Mack & Boyd; 2000).

Furthermore, women were familiar with both the battlefield and scholarly endeavours in which men were engaged. As was true in the seventh century for Aisha (RA), the Prophet Muhammad's [Peace be upon him] wife, so too the nineteenth century women of Sokoto were eye witnesses to battles during the Jihad. Principal among these was Nana Asma'u, the Shehu's daughter. Asma'u's scholarship was well respected because it actively supported the major tenets of the Jihad. The promotion of Islam, and the end of oppression of Muslims. She taught both men and women, was fluent in four languages, composed didactic and philosophical works in whatever language suited her intended audience. Asma'u was egalitarian in training non-Muslim refugees as she was comfortable communicating with revered Muslim scholars far across West Africa (Mack & Boyd; 1997:2). As listed in an outline chorology of her life by Boyd & Mack (1997:17-20) her life can be summarised as follows.

The history of Nana Asma'u is still a subject of research. To summarize everything, the following is the account of her life from the time she was born in 1793. Asma'u was brought up by Shehu's wives Aisha and Hauwa, Muhammed Bello's mother after the death of her mother in 1795. Asma'u married Usman Gidado in 1807, and moved to live in Sokoto, the town built by Muhammad Bello in 1809 and gave birth to her first son Abdulqadir in 1810.

She translated *Tabban Hakika* (be sure of God's truth) a poem written by Shehu in 1811 which was a plain guide to rights and responsibilities under Islamic Law. In 1820 Asma'u gave birth to her second son and wrote her book "The Way of the Pious", a book about morality and working for the community. Between 1824 to 1829 Nana Asma'u and her husband Gidado hosted Commander Hugh Clapperton; she wrote 'Give Us Victory', "Elegy for Abdullahi", wrote the Qur'an and received her first grandchild Halilu from her son Abdulqadir and at the same time gave birth to her third son Usman.

By 1832 Asma'u was established as "Uwar gari" and gave birth to her fourth son Abdullahi Bayero". From 1834 to 1839, she wrote "A warning", "forgive me" gave birth to her fifth son Muhammad Laima, "Elegy for Bello", "Elegy for my sister Fadima" and translated the Qur'an and wrote *Elegy for Buhari*. Between 1840 to 1854 Asma'u authored the "Story of Shehu", "Remembrance of Prophet", "The path of Truth", "Elegy for Gidado" her husband after his death in 1874. She translated the Qur'an into Arabic and several other works such as "Islam, Sokoto and Wurno", "Destroy Mayaki" "Elegy for Na'Inna" and "Remembrance of the Shehu".

"Elegy for Aisha I & II", "Elegy for Mustapha". "The Battle of Gawakuke", "A warning", "Elegy for Zahratu", "Prayer Rain", "Elegy for Hauwa'u", "Reasons for seeking God", were written between 1855 to 1861. Nana Asma'u died in 1863 after writing "Elegy for my niece Fadima" and "Dan Yalli".

THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ISLAM

Before discussing the issue of Women Rights in Islam, there is the need to give a brief account on the principles of human rights in Islam, a concept that is viewed by many as a western creation. Whereas, the concept of human rights in Islam predates the 1948 universal declaration of human rights. A closer look at philosophy of the Sokoto Jihad portray nothing but the institutionalization of human rights which in essence was the foundation laid by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) during his twenty three years of preaching.

It is also important to understand that Islamic conception of human rights is based on the unity of God, and unlike the western conception of human rights which is based on materialism, and places the destiny of man in his own hands, Islamic conception of human rights is based on the commands of Allah as contained in the Qur'an and Sunna of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This principle makes adhering to the principles of human rights an Islam an Ibadah (worship) which attracts reward. The concept of human rights in Islam is regulated by the Qur'an and Sunna not by human desires. These differences are some of the issues that draw an ideological demarcation between the Islamic conception of human rights, as opposed to the western conception of human rights which is popular among many human right activists in our contemporary society.

According to Al Qardawi (1994); Human rights in their entirety have never been a byproduct of modern life nor an innovation of the West. Islam has the precedence in calling of human rights, their protection and the conception of the individual, society, and the state as the guardians of human rights in the sense that human rights are essentially religious duties. Whoever, performs these duties is rewarded and whoever neglects them gets punished (cited in Al-Hageel 2001:117).

Islam provided legislation on human rights fourteen centuries ago, and provided all assurances for protecting those human rights for the whole scheme of life. The provisions and principles guaranteeing the rights of humans were explicitly and thoroughly stipulated in the Holy Qur'an and the honourable Sunnah fourteen hundred years prior to their declaration by any secular system. (Al-Hageel; 2001:118).

Al-Hagheel stated further that the messenger of divine guidance, Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessing be upon Him) made his declaration for human rights in his last pilgrimage saying "O people! All of us belong to one father and one God, one father and one religion, you are all the sons of one father, Adam, and Adam was created from dust; you will all be buried under the earth soil. No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, nor is a non-Arab superior to an Arab, except by having a greater degree of God consciousness". This Prophet's declaration of human rights was made before the American and the French made their declarations of human rights... In this way Islam has succeeded in eradicating all forms and means of divisiveness, class and race discrimination on the basis of parental lineage. Allah Almighty says, "O Mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has at-Taqwa (i.e. one of the muttaqeen (pious one)) verily Allah is all-knowing, all aware"

Human rights in Islamic Sharee'ah can be summed up as follows beginning with the recognition of human dignity, as has been provided for in the Holy Qur'an "And indeed we have honoured the children of Adam" (Al-Isra' – 17:70).

1. The equal treatment of all people in determining their fundamental rights with no discrimination on the basis of race, origin, colour, gender, parental, lineage, or financial position. The Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) says "An Arab has no superiority over non-Arab except by having a higher degree of piety or righteousness". He also says "Women are co-equal to men".
2. The call to unity of one whole community of mankind are those who do the utmost good for the welfare and interest of family of Muslims. The Prophet says: "All men and women are the creatures of Allah; they all are one family of nations that believe in his oneness. The most favoured by Allah are the most charitable to his creatures".
3. The call (Da'awah) to cooperating in good deeds, and the doing of all kinds of benevolent deeds for all mankind irrespective of their nationality and religion. Allah, Almighty says, "O mankind we have created you from a male and a female, made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has Attaqwa (i.e. one of the muttaqeen {pious ones}). Also Allah in this regard says, "Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal in equity" (Hujurat 49:13 & Almumtahinah 60:8).
4. Man's right to freedom of creed and the prohibition of religious compulsion. Allah says "There is no compulsion in religion. Verily right path has become distinct from the wrong path. Whoever, disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allah is all-hearer, All-knower". And "And had your lord willed, those on earth would have believed, all of them together, so will you (O Muhammad) then compel mankind until they become believers". (Al-Baqarah 2:256 & Yunus 10:99).
5. Prohibiting the assault on other's wealth and blood. The Prophet says, "The Muslims life, wealth and honour are forbidden to all other Muslims". (Prophets farewell address).
6. The right to the sanctity of one's home and the protection on one's own freedom. Allah says, "O you who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and greeted those in them, that is better for you, in order that you may remember" (An-Nor 24:27).
7. Solidarity among all members of a community concerning their right to a life of dignity and freedom from poverty is achieved through alms-giving (Zakat) from wealthy to those in need. Allah says, "And those in whose wealth there is a known right, for the beggar who asks, and for the unlucky who has lost his property and wealth (and his means of living has been straitened)" (AlMa'arij 70:24-25).
8. The right of learning and education as a duty required from each person to eradicate ignorance. The Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) says, "seeking knowledge is an obligatory duty on all Muslims" (Narrated by Ibn Majah).

9. The right to inflict punishment upon those who decline to learn or educate themselves. This right, covered by Islamic sharee'ah provisions, has not been grasped by other systems of human rights in non-Islamic states. In this respect, the Prophet (May peace and blessing be upon Him) says, "O ye nations of Islam thou shall learn from neighbours and thou shall educate your neighbours should you decline to do so, I shall promptly punish you.
10. The right to impose quarantine on cases of infectious diseases. This right was established in Islam fourteen centuries ago. Islam secured this right before it was included in the human rights system of all countries. This measure of excessive care about general health in an Islamic state was paralleled with strong emphasis on the right of learning and education to combat poverty and ignorance. This is in compliance with the teachings of the Prophet (May peace and blessings be upon him), "If you heard about plague spreading in a certain area, do not go there and if it occurs where you are do not leave the place to escape therefrom". (Narrated by Ahmad) (Cited in al-Hageel; 2001:126-128).

ISLAM AND WOMEN RIGHTS

To understand what Nana Asma'u symbolizes and the rights accorded to women by Islam within whose context Nana Asma'u was able to establish an intellectual kingdom there is the need to understand the rights given to women by Islam.

One who studies the history of the ancient nations prior to Islam will find that the woman in such societies was not recognized as having any rights whatsoever, she could be bought and sold like livestock and property. She had no inheritance rights and she was owned rather than an owner. However, most of those who prevented them from disposing of the little they might have in their possession. The husband was viewed as possessing the right to dispose of his wife's property without her consent, and there were differences of opinion among men in some countries as to whether a woman is a human being with a soul and an eternal spirit like those of the man, whether she should be instructed in religion, whether it was valid for her to engage in acts of worship, or whether she could enter paradise in the after life or not. One of the Byzantine council is reported to have decreed that the woman is an unclean animal devoid of a spirit of rights, but that she is obliged to serve and that her mouth should be muzzled to prevent her from laughing or speaking because she is "the snare of satan". The greatest of the secular legal codes known to have existed among the ancient nations prior to Islam allowed a father to sell his daughter, and even to bury her alive. There were also those among them who believed that a man who killed a woman was not liable for punishment or even the payment of blood wit (Al-Hageel; 2001:188).

Every instruction given to Muslims in the Qur'an refers to both male and female believers alike. They have been given the same religious duties and will be judged according exactly the same criteria (Maqsood; 2003:174).

According to Al-Hageel (2001); the enlightened principles brought by Islam in connection with women's position and rights may be summarized as follows: -

1. The teachings of Islam recognize the woman as equal to the man in humanity; as Allah Almighty says “O mankind! Reverence your guardian lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women” (Al-Nisa 4:1).
2. Islam recognizes the woman as qualified to pursue piety and worship to enter paradise if she does good and receive punishment if she does wrong, exactly as man, Allah Almighty states, “whoever, works righteous, man or woman, and has faith, verily, to him will we give a new life, a life that is good and pure and we will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions”. (Al-Nahl 16:97).

The Holy Qur’an tells us that in terms of reward on the day of resurrection, women have equal standing before Allah with men:

“For Muslim men and women

For believing men and women

For devout men and women

For true men and women

For men and women who are patient and constant

For men and women who give in charity

For men and women who fast (and deny themselves)

For men and women who guard their chastity

For men and women who engage much in Allah’s praise

For them has Allah prepared forgiveness and a great reward” (Al-Ahzab 33:35)

These then are ten qualities which the Qur’an describes both women and men share equally, and the reward which they share together namely, “forgiveness and a great reward”.

3. Islam waged war on the tendency in many cultures to view the birth of a female as bad omen and a cause for grief. Condemning this pernicious custom, Allah Almighty says, “When news is brought to one of them of (the birth of) a female (child) his face darkens and he is filled with inward grief! With shame does he hide himself from his people because of the bad news he has had! Shall he retain it on (sufferance and) contempt or bury it in the dust? Ah! What an evil (choice) they decide on” (Al-Nahl 16:58-59).
4. Islam forbade the practice of burying female infants alive and rebuked those who engaged in it, warning them of severe punishment from Allah on the Day of Resurrection, “When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned for what crime she was killed” (Al-Takhir 81:8-9).
5. Islam urged people to honour the female, be she mother, daughter, or wife in all spheres of life.
6. The teachings of Islam gave the woman, the right to inherit whether she was a daughter, a sister, a mother, or a wife.
7. The teachings of Islam systematized marriage rights, giving both the man and the woman certain rights, while it reserved for the man the role of leader in the family within his sphere of jurisdiction, it similarly reserved for the woman a leadership within her sphere of jurisdiction. However, this leadership is not

based on tyranny, or the desire to dominate over others; rather it is only organizational in nature. If a dispute arises among the members of the family, appeal is primarily made to a man, however, there is nothing to prevent the wife from taking part in solving the dispute.

8. The teachings of Islam regulated the matter of divorce in such a way as to prevent the man from acting in an arbitrary or tyrannical way; it set a limit, for example, on the number of times a man could utter the statement, "I divorce you" to maximum of three, where as among the Arabs of pre-Islamic times, there was no such limit. In addition, Islam set a specific time frame during which a legitimate divorce must take place, thus assuring the soundness of the decision to divorce if it becomes an unavoidable necessity.
9. The teachings of Islam introduced regulations into the practice of polygamy, setting the maximum number of wives to a man may be married to four, on condition that he is able to provide all of them with equal support. It must be noted of course, that the pre-Islamic nations, including the Arabs, used to allow polygamy without setting any limit on the number of wives a man could have.

Even some western scholars have acknowledged the right Islam accorded to a woman. Al-Hageel quoted the comment made by Evelyn Koon in his book "The search for God" where he states that:

When Islam came, it restored the woman's freedom, causing her to become a partner to the man, with the same rights as he enjoys and the same responsibilities. The man has no basis for claiming superiority over the woman, except in so far as he possesses greater physical strength or practical resources. When he acts in the role of leader toward(s) her, he does so in the capacity of a guardian, enfolding her in his powerful arms, defending her with his life, and supporting her with what his hands have earned; beyond this, however, the two of them are equals both in good times and in bad. This truth is what God expresses in the words, 'And woman shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable, but men have a degree (of advantage) over them (Al-Baqrah 2:228)

Similarly, Al-Hagheel referred to Roger Carodet where Carodet argued that:

According to the Qur'an, the woman has the right to dispose of what she owns, which is a right that most western laws did not grant her, and those of France in particular, until 19th century. With regard to inheritance, it is true that the female inherits half the share

inherited by the male; however, this is compensated for by the fact that all financial obligations, especially the burden entailed in the family's assistance of others, fall on the male's shoulders, while the woman is exempted from all such responsibilities. The Qur'an also gives the woman the right to ask for divorce, a right which the woman did not obtain in the west until thirteen centuries later. (Cited in Al-Hagheel, 2001).

NANA ASMA'U TRADITON AS AN INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT

The view of Islam as a purgatory for women underlies most works written on Muslim women. They are commonly depicted as isolated from men, passive actors in the so-called public domain, confined to their kin groups, and so on. Such views have limited the discussion of women to the ... topics of veils, honour and shame, patriarchy, kinship and polygamy. [Though this does not underestimate the value of such topics, but the position of woman in Islam is an all encompassing phenomenon] (Abdalati 1997; Alhibri 1982, Izzedin 1953 cited in Arebi 1991:99-100).

How do we know whether a person is included or discriminated in a given community? For indeed there is the need for a criteria in which we can use to evaluate the contributions made by Nana Asma'u that later translates into a movement.

According to Bullock (2002:68-69); the three main criteria for a person to be fully included in a community are:

1. Being an equal partner (have equal access to power) in dialogue and decisions that shape the community (e.g., political, social, economic and spiritual decisions);
2. Being a respected partner in dialogue and decision-making, and;
3. Having a private life free of extra-ordinary difficulties (e.g. illiteracy, poverty and domestic violence) that hamper his or her ability to be involved in community.

For a person to fit into any of the criteria mentioned by Bullock, he must possess extraordinary qualities capable of incorporating the people, moving them as partners in progress and standing firmly in defense of their interest and general well-being. Therefore, Asma'u's responsibilities went beyond those involved with teaching. She was a highly educated scholar, upon whom the best scholar in the community could depend, an efficient manager, and a consummate mediator. One of her first state duties, at the age of twenty seven, was to facilitate the organization of the Shehu's works after his death. This was a task so important that the 'Ulama in Sokoto today draw a parallel between it and the compilation of the Qur'an after the Prophet Muhammad's death (pbuh). Such a task required her quadri-lingual skills and intimate knowledge, which were extensive, since he had been writing since the time he was twelve. Furthermore, this project would have required an extraordinary

memory to allow her to catalogue innumerable pages of unbound texts that had suffered decades of use and transportation from one encampment to another during the Jihad years. Only someone who was of unquestionable trust, and whose ability was revered would be equal to the job (Boyd & Mack; 1997:8).

Using Bullocks first criteria of inclusion, we can see that Asma'u was the woman chosen by Bello to lead the caliphate women in the paths of ordoxy, to turn them if necessary from the slippery slopes leading to what she herself called 'The Satan named bori'. Asma'u was identified as Sarkin Mata duka (Chief of all women) by captive women, as an uwar-gari figure by the general populace as a mother of the faithful' by her peer group; and as a Shaikha (scholar) whose writings transcended gender by the intelligentsia. She functioned as one of Bello's aides to integrate women into a society whose ideology was rooted in Islam. A woman was able to earn herself a living by spinning an occupation over which woman had a monopoly to the extent that they organized the marketing of spun thread either through direct purchase or through commission agents. There was also a market fun by women for women near Gidado's house which, in a much attenuated form, existed until the 1970s (Boyd; 1989:44).

Bullock's second criterion of inclusion was being "a respected partner in dialogue and decision making". This can be seen when Nana Asma'u involves her concern in the same year as the 'miracle' at Alkalawa; Asma'u talked to the Shehu when men were getting their share-out of official appointments. Asma'u asked him, "what about us, the women?" and he replied "you will be over all the women. The women of the caliphate belong to the women and the men belong to the men" (Boyd & Mack: 1997:12).

However, Asma'u was by far the most prolific writer and influential woman to have emerged in the western Sudan during the nineteenth century; what is more, her influence carried over into the world of men. So kind ... her charity was a thousand fold. But she carried it to the places where decisions were made. She was not a surrogate man; she led no troops on the battlefield like Queen Amina, was in charge of nor tax collectors like the Inna, in her role as the Sarki's aide, and headed no religious cult like the Inna, In her role as the head of bori, she made stringent and apt observations in her political verse as a wearer of the Shehu's mantle, but remained decorously within the confines of her home. (Boyd; 1989:99).

The third and final criterion provided by Bulluck was having a free private life devoid of extraordinary difficulties (e.g. illiteracy, poverty and domestic violence) that hamper his or her ability to be involved in community. According to Boyd (1989:45):

Quite separate from the legal cases were the problems associated with the rivalries present in polygamous households. Gidado himself had five sons by Asma'u and 21 sons plus 21 daughters by other wives and concubines. There were jealousies and stresses in such situations. Each wife tried to secure the affection of her husband and promote the interests of her own children,

activities which stirred competitive feelings in her co-wives. The use of kwarce (charms) to overcome rivals was only one way of upsetting the peace; back biting gossip was another. These were condemned by Asma'u who taught her students to be patient. She instructed them to distance themselves from prohibited sins such as lying, avarice, hatred and envy, and she advocated as an alternative to Kwarce resource to Qur'an.

Boyd stated that Asma'u's main work was in the education of women in order to equip them to bring up the next generation of children within the desired ideological framework.

The greatest of Asma'u's contribution which signifies her political and intellectual sophistication, is the 'Yan taru movement. A movement which was the backbone of her teaching philosophy and the soul of her reform strategy, hence the genesis of the Nana Asma'u tradition.

Asma'u established a cadre of literate, itinerant women teachers (Jajis) who disseminated her instructive poetic works among the masses. Trained by Asma'u, these women were extension teachers using Asma'u's works as lesson plans and mnemonic devices through which they instructed secluded women in the privacy of their homes... Nana Asma'u's training of Jajis and the 'Yan taru was community work whose primary tool was the spoken word (Mack & Boyd; 2000:76).

Asma'u relied on each Jaji to act as a mentor and to bring groups of women to her. To each she gave a large malfa hat made of fine silky grasses. Usually worn by men, the hats have a distinctive balloon shape because they are intended to be worn over turbans. A Malfa was also (and remains) one of the marks of the office used by the Inna of Gobir, the chief of women devotees of bori. Asma'u deliberately took up the symbol, and by giving each Jaji a Malfa, she at once devalued its uniqueness and transformed what it stood for. From being symbolic of bori, it turned into an emblem of Islam (Mack & Boyd:2000:89).

When a Jaji left Asma'u to return to her home village, she walked in the midst of her group of women students, her distinguishing headgear lending utmost respectability to the group. She probably carried a copy of Asma'u's latest work (Mack & Boyd: 2000: 79). The women came to seek for knowledge from Asma'u because those who wished to pursue their studies had to seek out to the recognized masters, wherever they might be found and enroll themselves as their pupils (Johnston; 1967:27).

But why have the Muslim women come across in orientalist literature as isolated strangers and as individuals alienated from their society, while on the other hand, they are used as a vehicle for constructing an image of the whole culture. (Arebi, 1991:100) and feminists who believe that [Muslim] women are disadvantaged because of their sex; and that this disadvantage should be overthrown (Heywood; 1998:238).

According to Arebi (1991:104):

My contention is that Muslim women have been unable to adopt the western model of feminism for three reasons: The first reason has to do with the insistence of the liberation movement on wages as a liberating force... women realize that work, as it relates to them, is a created need deliberately built into economic system so as to “push” them to it, causing them to work out of deprivation, not to achieve any self-realization... The second reason why Muslim women do not relate to the western model is the insistence of western movements that family and kinship ties are a hindrance to women’s liberation. The third reason is connected with west’s identification of “the problem” of Muslim women as a religious problem.

Islam aims at the perfection of human personality irrespective of gender, class, race or ethnic affiliation. This is achieved through knowledge. Three things constitute human perfection; will, knowledge and work. Nana Asma’u had the will, she possessed the knowledge and worked for the common good of all. According to Ibn Badis “Man’s life from its beginning to its end, is based on these three elements: will, knowledge and work. These three are in their turn dependent on another three: work is dependent on the body, knowledge on the mind, and will on the behaviour. Sound knowledge and strong will are the products of wise behaviour, useful work and robust body. Therefore, mankind must care for and look after these three; the mind, behaviour and body. The mind should be fed on knowledge, the behaviour of the Holy Prophet should be approximated, and strength should be given to the body by balancing diet, avoiding injury and working”. (El-Tayeb; 1989:271).

The main achievement of Nana Asma’u and the entire Jihad movement is on scholarship. This notable achievement of the Sokoto Jihad movement in the field of Islamic scholarship informed the perception of the historian of the Sokoto caliphate such as Smith (1979), who describes the movement and by extension the caliphate, as an intellectual movement. (Usman: 2003:21).

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The entire Jihad movement and the principal actors still remain unsung heroes especially in our schools. If you ask a primary school pupil in *Madabo*, who is Mungo Park or Lord Lugard? He will quickly tell you the answer in order to show you that he is a good student of Social Studies. But ask him who is Nana Asma’u? He will ask you “wacece Nana Asma’u” (Who is Nana Asma’u?).

For this reasons, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Incorporating in our primary and secondary school curriculum the history of the Jihad movement.
2. The revival of ajami script, because all the works during the Jihad movement were written either in Arabic or the Ajami script. This is because the system sustained itself effectively throughout the Muslim Northern Nigeria right through to the Islamic and intellectual Jihad reforms of Shehu Usman Danfodio (Adamu 2004:21).
3. Introducing a modified version of the ‘Yan taru movement using the modern Islamiyya schools, so that more women scholars could be produced. This could be achieved by establishing Women Islamic Education Centers at least in every ward via government and community effort.
4. Commissioning Research Projects on the history of Islamic Reform and the principal actors of the reform movements in our universities and other research institutes.
5. Launching a strong campaign on the promotion of reading culture in the entire community, so that people could develop reading habit and put to use the literature provided on the Jihad Movement.
6. Organizing seminars, symposia and conferences on the role of Muslim woman in education.
7. Re-designing our educational curriculum to suit local and indigenous needs.
8. Providing grants and scholarship in support of women so as to produce enough women Islamic scholars that will cater for the needs of the community.
9. Utilizing the current revolution of information and communication technologies by creating Internet newsgroups that center on the issues of Muslim women.
10. Individual commitment by exploring all frontiers of knowledge as exemplified by Nana Asma’u.

CONCLUSION

The Muslim woman is given every opportunity in Islam. She is a mother, a guardian and an eye for the community. Those who claim that Islam discriminates against women are either ignorant of the Islamic provisions regarding women, or they are set to achieve certain objectives.

Finally, the advice given by Al-Mahmoud (2001:34) is very useful to the sisters in particular and the Ummah at large, according to him:

Sister in Islam, by following the Right path and by your good behaviour, you will provide society with a good and a respectable generation, which knows its obligations towards Allah and society. Sister, you are the only one capable of making your home a school, in which your children will learn everything that is good and beautiful. You should strive to bring up a generation based on moral values and ethics. Do not hand your kids to a non-Muslim nursemaid or send them to a non-Islamic school. If you

do so, you will contribute, intentionally or unintentionally, in guiding them to a religion and faith other than theirs. Sister, do not be responsible for your children's deviation and misguidance, because Allah (SWT) accepts no other religion except Islam.

The advise by Al-Mahmoud should serve as guiding principle for all Muslim communities, especially those living in non Muslim societies where the pressure of work, an environment that is hostile to the Islamic approach to the up-bringing of children and other issues of concern are the order of the day.

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