

VOCABULARY OF WATER AND FISHING IN SOME HAUSA DIALECTS

Nikolai A. DOBRONRAVINE

University of St. Petersburg

During my study of the Western and Northern Hausa dialects I have found that much of their specific vocabulary belongs to the semantic field which could be described as "water and water-related activities". One of such lexical items, *gulbii* "river, stream", corresponding to Standard Hausa *kòogii*, was included into the Hausa Dialectological Questionnaire (1991). Some dialectal data were recorded by me during a short stay in Kebbi State, Nigeria, in 1993, or with Hausa informants in St. Petersburg. Hausa-speaking people whom I interviewed there came from Keita (Ader), Illéla (Konni, linguistically close to the Arewa Hausa dialect), and Gouré (to the east of Zinder). Local Niger Hausa newspapers (mainly from the UNESCO collection in Hamburg) were also an important source of lexical data.

In some cases, however, it was rather difficult to decide whether a lexical item found in a Hausa newspaper was typical for the author's local form of Hausa or simply an occasional borrowing from the Hausa koiné. This was also the case with some informants in Nigeria. There also exist several publications where almost no dialectal marking was made, e.g. those of DONAINT (1975) or MLJINGUINI (1977, 1983).

I must also express my thanks to Malam Bello Alhassan (Birnin Kebbi, Nigeria) who kindly assisted me in verifying all data collected and gave me valuable comments on water-related activities among the Hausa people.

A classification of water-related dialectal variations in Hausa is presented below:

1. phonological correspondences, like in *tafkii* – Western Hausa *tabkii* – Kyanga Hausa *taukii* "lake, pond";
2. morphological or morphonological changes, e.g. *kwàlekwàle* – *kwàlookwàloo* (Keita, Ader Hausa) or *kwàlakwàlo* (Ader, according to CARON 1991) "canoe";
3. different words or syntagmas for the same meaning, like *kòoramàa* – *idòn ruwaa* (Magaria, to the south of Zinder) "small river, stream";
4. semantic variations, e.g., the word *kòogii* does exist even in several Hausa dialects which prefer to use *gulbii* for "river", but it is likely to become a substitute for Standard Hausa *tafkii*: *kòogin* Caadi "lake Chad", *kòogin gishirii* "Bilma salt-marsh" (in an Agadez Hausa newspaper), cf. also *kòogii*

= "*dutsi da akwai rame*", heard from an informant coming from Maƙera near Birnin Kebbi;

5. lack of a term or its conversion into a hydronym, e.g. *ràahi* westwards of Illéla in Ader or *ƙòoramà* in Eastern Niger; in several Niger dialects *sùù* "fishing" or its derivatives are not used, and the only expression for "fishing" is a descriptive one, i.e. *kaamùn kiihi*.

The first group of correspondences is not so numerous and mainly consists of plurals, if we do not mention the Hausa dialects in diaspora where strong phonological variations can appear, such as the lack of glottalized consonants in most of them, etc. Some of such correspondences are listed below:

- Standard Hausa *koomaa* "fishing-net" – Kebbi Hausa *hoomaa* (and *foomaa* is also heard in Argungu), at Madarunfa Lake in Niger both *koomaa* and *hoomaa* are used by the fishermen (LEVY-LUXEREAU 1972);
- *ràafii* "stream" (other meanings are attested in Western Hausa) – Bauchi Hausa *ràapii/ràafii* – Katsina Hausa *ràahii/rwàahii*, varying from speaker to speaker (Ahmadu Bello ; Zaria, 1982) – *rwàahii* in most Western Hausa dialects.
- *tàboo* "mud" – Western Hausa *càboo* "la boue" (Caron 1991), "marshy ground" (Birnin Kebbi), cf. also Standard Hausa *càfi* "mud, muddy water, slush";
- *kwaarà* "the River Niger" – *kuwàara* in Birnin Kebbi;
- *ƙurumrumniyaa* "a well, from which one can dip up the water by stooping" (TAYLOR 1929, presumably Daura Hausa) – *ƙururumniyaa* "puits peu profond" (MJIINGUINI 1977);
- pl. *ƙòoràmmuu* "streams" – *ƙòràmmuu* in Western Hausa;
- pl. *riijiyooyii* "wells" – *riyooyii* (as well as the Standard Hausa form) in Birnin Kebbi – *riyooyii* in Ader Hausa (CARON 1991);
- pl. *taƙunàa* "lakes"(or *tafukkàa*) – Western Hausa *tahukkàa* – *tabukkàa* in Ader – and even *tafaakuna* (MJIINGUINI 1977);
- pl. *gyàbbaa* "streams" (Birnin Kebbi) – *gèbbuu* (Alléla) – *gabuu* (in MISCHLICH's Dictionary) – *geebina* (? *geebinàa*, MJIINGUINI 1977).

The second group of dialectal variations is mainly characterized by final vowel changes, e.g.:

- *kwàzazzabòo* "ravine, water-gorge" – *kwàzazzabèe*, in Katsina and some adjacent Kano areas;
- *kwari* "valley" – *kwarèe* "la vallée" (Ader, CARON 1991), cf. also *kwaren Gezo*, a place-name in Sokoto State. Morphological changes may be more complex, e.g.:
- *bùngubùngu* in Sokoto Hausa – *bùngulii* "a *giginya*-made canoe";
- *idòn ruwaa* – *ijjiyàr ruwaa* "spring of water" (Birnin Kebbi);
- *ruwaa* "water" – *wurua* (Northern Togo Hausa, according to GROH 1911).

The third group of isoglosses can be exemplified by the following words and syntagmas:

- *kururrubai* "a kind of well" – Katsina Hausa *huudàg gizò*;
- *tafkin dàaminaa* "rainy season pool" (in Kyanga Hausa *taukin dàamanaa* is used)
- *jèebaa* (Makera near Birnin Kebbi);
- *bùlungàa* (Makera) – *gwàloo* (Kyanga Hausa) – *gulumbùuji* (Arewa) "a pool drying up shortly after the rain". I could not find out any Standard Hausa word for this meaning (only one expression, *bùulaakà!* "look out for holes" in ABRAHAM's Dictionary can be mentioned here, though I am not sure whether it is Standard Hausa or not);
- *zàren fatsa* "fishing-string" – *kistaanii* (Birnin Kebbi) – *labbèe* (Keita, Ader Hausa; in Birnin Kebbi this word is a generic term for "string").

As to semantic variations, they can be attested throughout the whole Hausa linguistic area, especially because of differences in the landscape between, for instance, Arewa which is the real "Tudu" as the Hausa people call it and the Argungu/Birnin Kebbi plains. Some examples of such semantic changes can be given here:

- *ràafii* "stream" – Western Hausa *ràahii/rwàahii* "a place where one can expect to find water" (Birnin Kebbi), "la vallée" (Ader, CARON 1991), "source d'approvisionnement d'eau" (MIJINGUINI 1977);
- *fatsa/hwatsa* "fish-hook": in Keita it is substituted by *maamàri*, and "fishing" is *kaamùn kiihii*; but in Birnin Kebbi *hwatsa* is used for the meaning "fishing with a fish-hook" (*maamàri*);

Some water-related words are only used in a dialect but not in Standard Hausa which does not have any expression for such a meaning, e.g.:

- *ingilma* (MJIINGUINI 1983) "guelta" (a loan from Tamajaq);
- *yaamaa* (Illéla, Konni Hausa) "small pool appearing near a well".

Special Hausa attitude to several hydronyms must also be mentioned here. Many rivers are seen by the people as a complex of different *gulbii* and not as one single river (as the geographers do it), e.g. the River Sokoto (or Rima) on our maps is actually separated into many smaller streams, such as *maatanhwaadà*, *gamdì*, *bàamàaki* (or *bàamàake*), *dùkku*, *gyàndigyàndi*, *zàmaarà*, *madoobiyaa* and others in Argungu/Birnin Kebbi area. Some people in Argungu also use *gulbin kabi* as a generic term, whereas in Kano or Sokoto it can be mentioned as *kogin rima*. The Kyanga call the river *gulbin bünza* (after a place-name).

Some dialectal isoglosses find their counterparts in Gwandara. Very interesting could also be a comparison with the Kabawa Hausa language to the south of the Lake Chad where some Hausa fishermen live among the Mundang and the Fulbe near the Lake Léré.