

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION: THE YANTARU SYSTEM'S LEGACY IN PROMOTING HADITH STUDIES AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

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Abstract

This study explores the Yantaru System, a 19th-century educational model established by Nana Asma'u, a prominent female scholar in the Sokoto Caliphate. The Yantaru System's innovative approaches, such as home-based learning, translation of texts, and mentorship, demonstrate the importance of adaptable and inclusive education for women. By examining the system's features and relevance to contemporary women's education, this research highlights the potential for promoting Hadith Studies and women's empowerment. The study draws on historical narratives and scholarly contributions to provide insights into the enduring impact of the Yantaru System on women's education and Islamic scholarship.

Keywords:

Sokoto Caliphate, Hadith studies, Yantaru, Nana Asma'u, women's right, Jaji

1. Introduction

The formation of Sokoto Caliphate was ensured in the initials of the 19th Century due to a jihad made by Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo in the Hausa States. This formation was peddled by scholastic interventions aimed at resolving issues of sheer injustice, corruption, and contamination (pollution) of the real Islamic religion by the majority or elite of the populace (Yusuf et al., 2021; Bashar, 2025). Actually, the Sokoto Caliphate started in 1804 when Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo and some of his adherents were forced to migrate to Gudu, therewith, they had to solemnly swear to him as the Commander of the Faithfuls to protect themselves against the impending attack to be launch by Sarkin Gobir and Sarkin Gummi. Shehu continued preaching, teaching, amidst wars raged on them by the polity; but by 1810, most of the parts of Northern Nigeria (of today), Chad, Cameroon, and Nigeria Republic, were under the banner of Sokoto Caliphate (Bashar, 2025).

Of the key aspects of Sokoto Caliphate are the education, literacy, and women's right (Kaura, 2009). The Caliphate considered education of the women as among the top priorities. This spurred Nana Asma'u to spring-up a system of education to women folk, popularly known as Yantaru. Hadith Studies or education on sciences, as the second source of Shariah, must be among the key aspects taught or learnt through the Yantaru women education (Maulidah et al., 2025).). By delivering the lessons from the Yantaru, contemporary women education systems, Hadith Studies, and other systems of education would have clues to resolving many of the current challenges (Dutsinma, 2022). This study explores the Yantaru System in Empowering Women through Education: The Yantaru System's Legacy in Promoting Hadith Studies and Women's Rights.

2. Hadith Studies and Challenges

Sunnah or Hadith is the first line of Islamic Shariah after the Holy Qur'an. Sunnah is the actual explanation of the Qur'an as displayed by the Holy Prophet Muhammad SAW. Hadith is the speech or conservation, or report of account, take or narration, message or utterance of Prophet Muhammad SAW. The Sunnah and Hadith are synonymously utilized, but some may define Sunnah as the approval of the Prophet Muhammad, what was related from the Prophet Muhammad SAW, or verbal statement opined by the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Dutsinma, 2022). According to Maihula, (2025) Hadith is a name given to anything to hat hails from the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Thus, Hadith Studies are fundamental to the development of any Islamic society. Hadith Studies are carried out in various forms depending on the environmental background. For instance, in the Sokoto Caliphate and Sokoto State (nowadays) Hadith Studies are undertook through formal and informal ways. Hadith is learnt in Tsangaya systems, Mass media, Islamiyya schools, colleges, and other higher institutions of learning (Maihula, 2025). Hadith Studies especially in women are impactful affecting the entire livelihood (be it religious or worldly) in a view to confirm to the ideal of Islam. Therein, Hadith Studies in Nigeria and relations are faced with two basic challenges, namely poor resources and poor manpower. In terms of resources, there is evidently poor funding, leading to poor teaching aids availability, and poor results outcomes; while, poor manpower include shortage of qualified teachers, and a declining attitude towards Hadith Studies in search for white collar jobs or due to lack of accessibility and widespread inequities (Maihula, 2025).

3. Yantaru System

The Sokoto Caliphate jihad paid great emphasis on women education, therewith, ensuring no store was left unturned to educate the women folk. Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo and other Caliphate scholars accorded great respect and emphasis by counseling the public (parents, and husband's) on the need of educating the girl child and the entire women folk (Bashar, 2019). In the same vein with this policy, the emergence of Yantaru System was elicited. Yantaru is a system of education and social work forked by Nana Asma'u the daughter of Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo (19th Century Islamic reformer) due to inspiration she got from the polity. Albeit, Nana Asma'u remained a great scholar who taught both men and women, she also ventured into forming educational system called Yantaru in 1830 consisting of network of women for the purpose of educating the public, especially the women. Here are some major features of Yantaru System:

- The model tends to educate the women and girls at their homes, and home of Nana Asma'u bint Usmanu Danfodiyo
- The system might have followed a course of development in the 1840s-1850s
- The model performed the work of translating literatures from Arabic and Fulfulde languages to the majority language (Hausa)
- The system has a hierarchy and uniform or garment for recognition
- The system used to sing as a model of teaching or lecturing
- The system involved postmenopausal and young girls as active members
- The system uses lecture methods in delivering of interventions
- The system used field trip as a model of teaching
- The system involved visitors from nearby villages. Thus, it pays much emphasis on rural women education, thereby encouraging accessibility and equity to education
- Islamic sciences are taught through this system (Jean & Last, 1985).
- Teaching women folk concerning sanitation and hygiene is a heart of public health intervention and nutrition
- Women are taught the ideals of caring for the household, such as taking care of the sick, young ones, performing transactions to earn economic benefits, and animals domestication are encouraged (Bashar, 2025).
- The Yantaru system was a very organized facet of Sokoto Caliphate women educational intervention and emancipation. It comprises of some group of women trained by Nana Asma'u (or relations), they are dubbed traditionally as Jajis with the mandate to act as extension teachers delivering lectures and educational interventions to married or secluded women at their private homes (Shehu, 2015). The writings of Nana Asma'u, among other things, act as lesson plan or lesson note to guide the Jajis. Indeed, the interventions delivered through Yantaru are inexhaustible or bulk. They include economic empowerment initiatives such as soap making, spinning of silk, food preparations, and herbal materials. The Yantaru system also had their market that enable them to conduct transactions and acquire healthy foods and commodities (Shehu, 2025). The system also was supported by the leaders, women, and the then society. The dispatched Yantaru women agents resolve disputes, coach about childbirth, funeral, monotheism against the acts of Bori and the likes (polytheism) (Boyd & Mack, 2013; Solagberu, 2021).

4. Importance of Women's Education

Islam enjoined both men and women to seek for education without discrimination among the citizens. Therefore, Muslim women have the right and command to seek for education be it religious or secular. Allah SWT says

" But say, O My Lord! Advance me in knowledge." (Qur'an: 20:114).

The basic principles of knowledge or education to be earned by Muslims come from Qur'an, and the Sunnah (Hadith) of the Prophet SAW, apart from other sources of Islamic evidence. Thus, Sunnah (Hadith) is pivotal and the second pillar to Islamic education, that is why, the women in the early days of Islam during the life of Prophet Muhammad SAW sought his approval by saying

"Appoint a special day for us when we can learn from you, for the men have taken all your time and left nothing for us." He agreed and taught them in his home (Maccido, 2011).

Prophet Muhammad SAW also appreciated the zeal of the specific women for education. They are in tandem with the verse that follows:

"Allah is not ashamed of the truth." (Qur'an:38:53).

5. Contemporary Lessons

There are many pressing issues facing women's education and affecting women's right nowadays, hence scrambling for possible lessons or solutions. Therewith, Islamic and western or secular women education were not spared. However, by borrowing lessons from ideals of Yantaru in teaching and learning Hadith or relevant field, there is surely a great help to the current polity and in turn leading to prosperity in both western and Islamic sciences education (Ibrahim, 2016). The following lessons could be learnt:

- Use of translation is a basic need for education, because language serves as an impediment in many respects. The Yantaru acknowledged that and evolved the translation of Arabic and (or) Fulfulde languages-based literature into the Hausa language (which is spoken by many). This tip encourages acceptability and understanding especially for the beginners and youngsters, therefore neutralizing inequality.
- Use of Islamically structured garments was the order of the Yantaru, albeit involved identification for students and teachers. This confirms the saying of Allah " And stay quietly in your homes and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former times of ignorance." (Qur'an:33:33).
- Home based teaching is an order of Yantaru. The use of homes to teach women and girls by Nana Asma'u is an excellent ploy, that restricts interaction with men, and encourages socialization, and practical aspects. It surely also gives a very comfortable learning environment for the women folk.
- Exclusively for women is an order of Yantaru, because women are taught by their folk. This dismissed sources of evil and abhor among the population. The use of women as role models will surely reduce noncompliance to education and encourage accessibility.

- Specific women groups, particularly non married girls and old women are recruited and mass audience is perpetrated
- There is sense of accessibility and equality to all; considering the fact that the system was brought to serve directly to the underserved women and girls.
- Social works performed by the Yantaru included gathering and distribution of alms to the needy.
- Mentorship or capacity building (development) was championed by the Yantaru, because the experts teach the novice. Likewise, the system demonstrate how women in the Sokoto Caliphate are visionary, kind, sensitive, emancipating, charismatic, and risk taking to solve a problem (Bawa, 2019; Bashar, 2025).
- The Yantaru system acquired three branches of educational interventions that are applicable today; they are 1. Use of writings (or songs) to reach the absentees (married women and the populace, males) 2. Use of Jajis or women to reach the married women at their private homes, and 3. Use of practical teaching of present young girls and old women at the learning centers. The three branches are suitable for harnessing equity and accessibility, personalized learning and adaptive learning for the populace (Solagberu, 2021).

6. Conclusion

The Yantaru System's legacy offers valuable lessons for promoting women's education and empowerment. By embracing its principles of adaptability, inclusivity, and mentorship, we can work towards creating a more equitable and just society where women have access to quality education and opportunities for growth. The system's impact on women's education in the Sokoto Caliphate serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of education and the importance of honoring and building upon the achievements of pioneering women scholars like Nana Asma'u. By drawing on the Yantaru System's strengths, contemporary education systems can be designed to address the unique needs and challenges of women, particularly in underserved communities. Ultimately, the Yantaru System's legacy can inspire new generations of women leaders, scholars, and change-makers, contributing to a brighter future for all.

7. References

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