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Author: Babagana Abubakar

E-mail: babaganabubakar2002@yahoo.com

PERMANENT ADDRESS: ALHAJI BUKAR KUYA HOUSE, FEZZAN WARD, MAIDUGURI, BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

Tel: +2348062220179 Skype: babagana.abubakar

Calabash Complete



Calabash also known by other names in many other languages such as **Kumo** in the Kanuri language, **Kwarya** in Hausa, **KURA** in Aramaic, **LAUKI** (लौकी / लौकी) or **DUDHI** in Hindu, **Horti** or **Tumbugel** in Fulani, **KADDU** [کدو] in Pakistan, **QARA** in Arabic, **Suraikkaai** in Tamil and **Evho** in Nupe , **Igba** in Yoruba language as well as **long melon**, **suzza melon**, **New Guinea bean** and **Tasmania bean** by some others **around the World** is a vine grown for its fruit, which can either be harvested young and used as a vegetable, or harvested matured, dried, and used as a water bottle , ladle, container, ink pot, utensil, musical instrument, fishing apparatus or pipe. Calabash in rural parts of Africa, are still in use as containers for carrying water, milk, grains, flours and also use in fishing, winnowing of grains, while the smaller size Calabash are use as bowls for serving food mostly Pap (Kunu/Bulum) /dining and some species use as ladles (spoon) for eating.

Historically Calabash was naturally grown plants in the wild, but because of its importance to man it was later domesticated some thousands of years back when it became mostly grown by direct sowing of seeds or through transplanting (15- to 20-day-old seedlings).

Generally, Calabash plants prefer well-drained, moist, rich soil, vast lands and requires plenty of moisture in the growing season and a warm sunshine as well as a position sheltered from the wind.

Unlike many other fruits or farm produce that have similar or common names in many other languages mostly in Africa such as Tomato, Mango, Guava etc for example Mango in English is called **Mangoro** in Hausa language, **Mangarow** in Fulani language and **Mangulo** in the Kanuri language or Guava in English is called Gwaiba in Hausa, Gwaba in Nupe and Goyba in Kanuri languages same applies with Tomato in English which is called Tumatur in Hausa, Tumatir in Fulani or Tumatkum in Kanguri languages, but Calabash has its own native names in many languages that doesn't sounds synonymous even among closely related languages for instance

Calabash called **Kumo** in Kanuri doesn't sound synonymous with its name **Kwarya** in Hausa or **Tumbugel/ Horti** in Fulani, **Ifah** in TIV, **QARA** in Arabic and **Evho** in Nupe languages .

Calabash is mostly cultivated in small places such as in a pot, spread on a trellis or roof of houses. It is common to find many houses in rural areas of Africa especially those with thatched roofs covered with the gourd vines. Bottle gourds grow very rapidly and their stems can reach a length of 9 m in the summer, so they need a solid support to climb by the pole or trellis along the stem. If planted under a tall tree, the vine can grow up to the top of the tree for effective photosynthesis to take place.

Fig. 1: Photo of a Calabash bearing Vine plant with its Calabash



To get more fruits, sometimes farmers cut off the tip of the vine when it has grown to 6–8 feet long. This forces the plant to produce side branches that produce fruit much sooner and more flowers that leads to yield more fruits. The plant produces white flowers. The male flowers have long peduncles and the females have short ones with an ovary of the shape of the fruit. Sometimes, the female flowers drop off without growing into a gourd due to the failure of pollination if no bee or cross pollination activities occurring in the garden area. To solve the problem, sometimes artificial or hand pollination can be used.

Fig.2: Some Calabash species (A & B) ready for harvest within two months:

A.



B.



Geo-Archaeological History of Calabash:

Many archaeologist and anthropologists believe that Calabash originated from Africa, but over the years they may have been carried from Africa to the other parts of the World like Asia, Europe, and the Americas in the course of human migration, or by seeds floating across the oceans or Seeds inside the gourd. Calabash has been proven to be in the New World (the Americas) even prior to the arrival of Christopher Columbus.

Considering the above definition, history and description of Calabash cultivation, it sounds like Calabash has no any other better place to thrive well than the tropical semi desert environments of Africa especially the southern edge of the Sahara –Desert, more specifically the areas referred to as the Southern Borno of today located in the present day “Borno state “of Nigeria, which was an area curved out of the ancient pre-colonial Kanem-Bornu Empire. The Southern Borno area is one of the very few places on Earth where almost all the different types of Calabash species in the World can be found or cultivated. In fact, a research is currently underway which tries to link the origin of Calabash to this part of Africa.

The historical relationship that exists between Calabash and the Kanem-Bornu justifies the reason for the emergence of streets, wards and even names of towns directly linked to Calabash or Calabash activities, so it’s not a surprise to hear names of places in the ancient Bornu Empire such as Kumozomari, Kumo-Kura, Kumo Kime , Damboa,Kumori etc. further explanations on this follows.

“Furthermore, here in Kanem-Bornu almost every aspect of human livelihood or activities including eating, washing, drinking, travelling, decorations, worshiping, medicine, cooking, playing, fishing, gaming mourning, marriage, solemnizing, singing, farming, music, writing, teaching, weaponry, hunting, securing, swimming, food processing and others not mentioned here have their specially dedicated calabash for facilitating those purpose/activities.”

All unprocessed Calabash produce regardless of species are generally referred to as “Kafeto” in the Kanuri language:

Fig.3: Photo of different types of Kafeto (unprocessed Calabash species):



Fig. 4: Photo of a Calabash(Kafeto) during processing: B) Photos of Calabash after processing:



Kanem-Bornu and Calabash farming:

The Kanem-Bornu Empire was once one of the world's most famous and the most powerful black nation (kingdom) on Earth. The Kanem-Bornu Empire at its peak of expansion under the leadership of ***His Royal Majesty Mai Idris Alauma*** (Idris Amsami), who was the King of Kanem-Bornu (1571–1603) and one of the World's greatest leaders in history as well as a Kanuri hero remembered for his military skills, administrative reforms, and Islamic piety.

Kanem-Bornu under Mai Alauma, was known to be historically important, politically mighty, economically viable, culturally respected and militarily ranked as Africa's most powerful Empire and globally forms part of the five known superpowers on Earth of the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries as they even had ambassadorial representatives at global decision makings involving the Othman and Roman Empires plus the Sultanate of Bagdad and the Kingdom of Egypt. This Empire once owned approximately 1/5 of the entire African land mass including Northern Nigeria, Eastern Niger republic, Northern Cameroon, Chad, Western Sudan and the entire Fezzan areas of the republic of Libya.

Fig.5: Showing the Armored Clothing of Mai Idris Alauma of Kanem-Bornu Empire



The above armored clothing belonging to Mai Alauma, is an indication that Mai Alauma himself is also an expert on climate especially when it comes to identifying better Climatic conditions for good reasons. For instance, his armored Clothing even in the medieval era was made of cloth, because you cannot wear metal armor under the dry hot season of the hot Sahara Desert sun - you'll literally bake. But enough layers of cloth, sewn together, can be quite strong, conducive and micro climatically okay.

The great successes and peace recorded under Alauma and his predecessors made the Empire to witness a record breaking traffic of human migrants mostly traders, scholars, students, people displaced by wars in other kingdoms including skilled labour forces and also other people

traveling on holy pilgrims passing through the Empire enroute the Red Sea to perform pilgrimages in the Holy cities of Makkah and Madina (Middle-East or the Arabian Peninsula). Economically the Bornu Empire was historically famous for exporting wax, cotton, ivory, perfume, ostrich, ostrich feathers, natron (sodium carbonate), feathers and hides to most parts of the World including Egypt, Rome, Spain (Andalusia), Portugal (city of Fatima), Turkey and Greece (**B. Abubakar, Kanuri Complete. 2017**). However not many history books reported the roles of the Bornu-Empire in the Calabash farming, trading and carving businesses that had influences in the global supply chain of Calabash, because the Commercial Calabash farming and export in the Empire came much more later and after unforeseen Calabash drought (shortage) in the Empire as a result of the accelerated growth in the human population in the Empire caused by the above earlier mentioned factors.

COMMERCIAL CALABASH FARMING IN THE KANEM-BORNU EMPIRE:

Though historically the Calabash plants for hundreds of years were naturally grown wild plants in most parts of the Kanem-Bornu, but the Empire later rapidly expanded and reaches a stage in both size and population that the wildy grown Calabash could no longer able to meet up with the increasing demands for Calabash in the Bornu Kingdom as a result of this Calabash farming became a necessity as such that the wild grown Calabash had to be domesticated through commercial Calabash farming in the entire Empire thereby making Calabash a new type of cash crop in the Empire.

Major Reasons for the shortage of Calabash in the Empire that pushed for the commercial Calabash farming are as listed below:

1. The victories gained by the Kanem-Bornu Empire at its peak of expansion in terms of gaining newer territories was a factor that lead to a sudden increase in the population of the Empire that pushed the demand for Calabash to go higher than its original average supply.
2. The historical long lasting peace that existed in the Empire was also directly correlated to the increases in growth rate of the Bornu population.
3. The influx of scholar and student migrants and immigrants' population coming from the bordering Kingdoms to seek for knowledge in Bornu also had additional influences on the growth rate of population in the Empire over this period. Generally, due to the increasing scholarship in the Empire apart from using the normal Calabash by these migrants under this Category they also pushed the demand for the Calabash ink-pot "Aduwaram" to go higher as they depend on this kind of Calabash in writing the Quran and their Arabic wooden slates for teaching and reading.
4. Unlike the present Aluminum, metal, steel or the alloyed dishes that replaces Calabash in our households now which has very long life spans, generally Calabash are very fragile and tends to break so easily before even they complete their average usage life spans, meaning that the more the Calabash breaks the more people keep buying it in the market and the more the population growth rate the higher the demands for these Calabash keeps growing too.

Fig.6: A) Photos of various sizes of Kanem-Bornu Calabash before Carving. B) After carving:



5. The Emergence of Calabash craftsmen (Calabash decorators) in the Empire between the 15th to 17th centuries made the Calabash from the Kanem-Bornu to be admired and traded internationally. This explains the reason why today in many parts of the modern day European, middle Eastern and the Caucasian Museums like the “Stockholm World Cultures Museum”, the London Museum as well as the Museum of Natural History in New York U.S.A. one can still find the Bornu Calabash as part of their Antiquity collections.

Additionally, this international trading of Calabash opened the doors for the made in Kanem-Bornu Calabash to travel far distances and earn international admiration and special demands for it. Literally this high demands for the Bornu Calabash in the international market of the time also contributed to the shortage of Calabash in the Empire, as many of the carved Calabash are exported out instead of using them locally in Bornu.

Fig.7: A photo of a Kanem-Bornu Calabash with the carving marks of the 1950s:

(Courtesy of David Spain)



THE COMMERCIAL CALABASH FARMING IN KANEM-BORNU:

Following the Calabash drought in Bornu and after much trials and failures in trying to domesticate Calabash farming in commercial quantities by the locals of Bornu, they succeeded in discovering that the Calabash plant best thrives well under the climatic conditions of between 5.5 to 6.5 months of rainfall with a sliding 31-day rainfall of at least 0.5 inches, plus a brighter sun shine with occasional partly clouding condition as well as average temperature of between 58°F to 104°F or 14°C to 40°C (though this condition wasn't scientifically expressed like this then, but this is the exact condition when expressed scientifically today).

So the only place in the Empire that climatically matches this description is none other than the plane lands of the present day Southern Bornu and the lands of Damboa and its surrounding environment to be specific.

Map 1: Map of Nigeria showing the location of Damboa (Red indicator)



This was the reason that led to the establishment of the main town of Damboa which was known as Bulabulin to the Kanuri people then, Bulabulin (Bulabirin) was a settlement characterized with groups of smaller scattered clustered mostly hamlet settlements in to a new single mega town or city later to be known as Damboa.

Table 1: Despite variations in Climate conditions over centuries, but yet the present climatic condition of Damboa tabulated below still shows resemblance with the historical climatic description given above:

MONTHLY - WEATHER AVERAGES SUMMARY OF DAMBOA:

Average Temperature

Years on Record: 112

	ANNUAL	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
C	27.4	22.8	25.7	29.5	31.9	31.5	29.4	27.2	26.4	27.2	28	25.6	23.4

Average Precipitation

Years on Record: 112

	ANNUAL	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
mm	710.4	---	---	0.7	20	51.1	93.1	176.2	220.5	129.1	19.6	0.1	---

Average Number of Days With Precipitation

Years on Record: 112

	ANNUAL	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Days	53.3	---	---	0.7	2.5	5.6	8.1	11.8	12.9	9.5	2.2	---	---

Average Relative Humidity

Years on Record: 112

	ANNUAL	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
%	44.9	26	21.3	22.2	32.8	46.9	58.5	69.7	75.9	71.7	52.3	32.7	28.8

Following this development most wild calabash gatherers and calabash traders from elsewhere within Bornu all turn to Damboa for the sourcing of these Calabash.

However, at this point it is also good to know that even before the farming of Calabash started in commercial quantities in Damboa, Damboa was well blessed and her territories were dominated with naturally grown wild Calabash plants because of her very good climatic condition for Calabash growing. Historically the Damboa locals harvest the wild Calabash when sourcing for Calabash, but with the arrival of the Calabash traders mostly Kanuri people who dominated and govern the Kanem-Bornu Empire the wild Calabash were exhausted and the originally planned Commercial Calabash farming started.

The above-mentioned factor plus the favorable climatic condition for Calabash farming in Damboa together with the welcoming attitude of the Damboan indigents created conducive room for a successful Calabash domestication project in Damboa, which later made Damboa

as one of the richest towns of the Kanem-Bornu. As result after a decade Damboa population geometrically multiplied and Kanuri became near majority in Damboa. The Kanuri population grew so much that Kanuri became the official language spoken in Damboa instead of the native Marghi language. This is the reason why till today people still speaks Kanuri in Damboa.

At the start of the Calabash domestication project in Damboa most of the Kanuri Calabash traders coming for the Calabash business in Damboa, were coming on a short time business trip to purchase the Calabash in Damboa, they probably stay for a week or two, but later some of these Calabash traders chooses to establish second matrimonial homes in Damboa. The offspring from these polygamous families of the Kanuris in Damboa formed the foundation of the first Kanuri people of Damboa.

Reasons that made the Kanuris to settle and marry in Damboa:

It was difficult to travel with families then on a long term business trips and yet the average distance of Damboa from most of the Kanuri ancient cities like Kukawa, Ngazargamu, Dikwa, Monguno, Nguru etc was more than 100 km (Three days' journey by foot and one-and-a-half-day journey with Donkeys and Horses) in some instances even above 200 km, so the distance was much.

- i) The cultures of the Kanem-Bornu societies more specifically the Kanuri culture shows that the prestige of a man in Bornu society relies on his ability of keeping a family in his society or in a society that one spends more time in. In fact, marriage is so important here that an unmarried person is not allowed to take part in some decision makings of their communities.
- ii) Lack of faster and more comforting transportation systems then like cars and railways that can enable traveling with families.
- iii) Damboa people were very accommodating.
- iv) Some calabash traders bought farmlands in Damboa, this made them to stay longer in Damboa (Staying may be throughout the Calabash farming season) so that they can stay and monitor their farms/investments in Damboa.

As a result of the above development and in the cause of time this scenario resulted in making many Damboa families becoming of mixed-blood descendants of the Kanuris and the Marghis, though there are fewer pure Kanuri descendants than the pure Marghi descendants. But yet it is almost impossible to meet a family from Damboa town of even today that has no any family member that do not speaks the Kanuri language or carries any of Kanuri cultural heritage on them.

The Kanuri language was so assimilated in Damboa since the great Calabash era that the majority of the people of Damboa have the Kanuri tribal marks, have same mode of dressing with the Kanuris, have same religion and even have common names with the Kanuris like Yakaka, Kyallu , Bana, Yana, Abba, Bulama, Maira, Gumsu, Zarami, Butari, Modu, Borr, Ari ,Konto etc.

In terms of the tribal marks, it would take the expertise of an expert to be able to differentiate the differences between the tribal marks of the Marghis from Damboa from with that of the Kanuri people, because they are all the same.

Finally, the name Damboa itself is a name coined out of a Kanuri word:

The name “Damboa” was from the name “Dambuwa “the name Dambuwa was from the name Dumbawa (D3mbua), while the name D3mbua was coined out from the Kanuri word Dumba’a (D3mba’a) which is referring to a big size calabash that can contain at least five (5) kilograms and above of foodstuffs or grains like Millet, Guinea Corn, Beans, Wheat, Rice, Ndallayi (local flour), Dawude (local spaghetti) as well as liquids such as Milk, Water and others.

Reasons for calling Damboa as Dumba’a:

During the pre-colonial, colonial and some decades into the post-colonial eras in the Kanem-Bornu history, Dumba’a remains the major dish, container or bucket used for many domestic activities ranging from storing of foodstuffs, to washing of cloth and bathing. Though the Dumba’as were later replaced by stronger and less fragile aluminum, metal and alloyed dishes of same sizes, but they also still carry the name Dumba’a just like the big size Calabash they replaced.

Fig.9: A Photo of a Typical Dumba’a Containing Millet and Baobab Fruits



So literally Damboa was referred to as the Damboa because it was dominated by naturally grown Calabash vines that produces the Dumbaas' from the beginning and before the Calabash farming project came-onboard.

Fig.8: A) Showing sets of the local Dumba'as



B. Showing sets of the Modern Dumba'as



SYSTEM OF CALABASH FARMING IN DAMBOA:

The Marghi people who are regarded as the main indigents of Damboa directly participates in the farming and cultivating of the Calabash, while the Kanuri people were engaged in the trading, distribution as well as in the artistic carving of the Calabash cultivated here. However, years later in to the project the Kanuri people became the owners of the farms, while the Marghi people still keeps providing the labour needed for the farming.

The Position of Calabash farming in other towns of the Ancient Kanem-Bornu:

Though Damboa stands as the King of Calabash farming in the Kanem-Bornu and even in the entire Sub-Saharan African region, but apart from Damboa other towns of the Kanem-Bornu also domestically and naturally grown their Calabash, but not as much as that of Damboa. Amazingly many of the towns of the Empire like Kukawa, Dikwa, Monguno, Old Maiduguri, Ngarganmu, Marte, Mao, Geidam, Nguru, Potiskum, Ngala, Konduga and others have some unique species of Calabash native to their towns that cannot found elsewhere even in Damboa.

Peak of Calabash Farming in the Kanem-Bornu:

When the domesticated Calabash started yielding good result, few years in to the project, Bornu became blessed greater quantities of Calabash and Calabash of all species. This stimulated Calabash trading to peak up beyond imagination resulting in multiplying effect of the numbers of Calabash craftsmen, whose works were that of decorating and carving of the

Calabash. This technique of Calabash decorating/carving evolved over time and came up with more attractive artistic innovations on Calabash decorations or carving. This led to an increase in the demand for the made in Bornu Calabash even outside the Bornu Empire. In fact, the Calabash business within few decades became so influential and flourishing as such that even streets, lanes and places in major Bornu towns and cities were named with a name of Calabash or related to Calabash for instance “Kumozomari street or ward” the name Kumozomari in the Kanuri language is referring to the place of the Calabash trading, carving or a place dominated by Calabash activities.

In view of the above it is therefore very common even in the present time to see existing areas named Kumozomari in almost all of Kanuri major cities in Borno and Yobe states of Nigeria including Maiduguri.

In the Farmlands of Damboa came a time that the Calabash were cultivated in mass quantities and in the Kanem-Bornu markets and the international market the values of Calabash were sky rocketing as such that Calabash assumes the form of the present day liquid Gold (Petroleum) or cash crops like Cocoa and Coffee that made farmers in Damboa to replace other crops in their farms with Calabash.

At one time the whole of the Damboa town including the backyard of houses, surrounding farmlands, open fields and the wild open spaces or surrounding bushlands of Damboa became an agricultural island for the Calabash plants/vines.

SOME NATIVE SPECIES OF the KANEM-BORNU CALABASH AND THEIR NAMES:

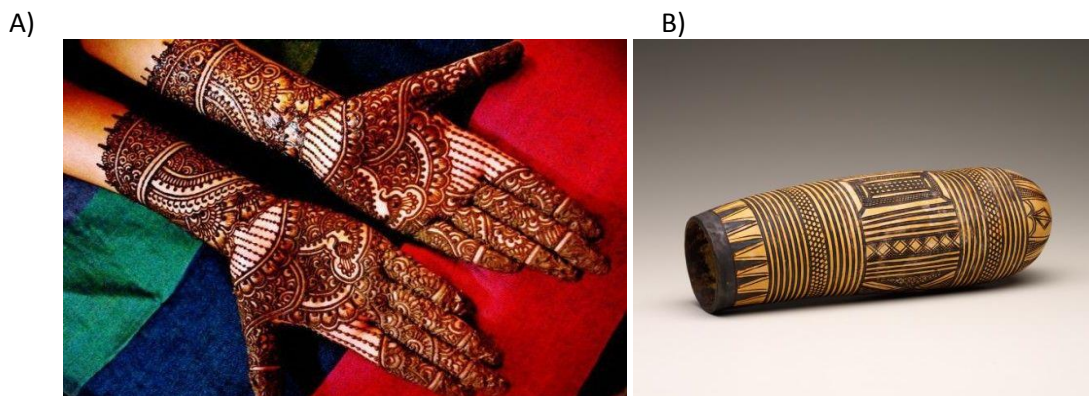
1. **Fofio:** the name “FOFIO” is from the Kanuri language. It is a particular type of calabash cultivated in the Kanem-Bornu use as a Pen Quiver for the holding of local Pens (Alkalam).
2. **Zawu:** the name “Zawu” is also in the Kanuri language referring to an Arrow Calabash quiver for keeping or holding Arrows.
3. **Dulom:** the name “Dulom” is in Kanuri language referring to special ladles use in serving milk only.
4. **Karwe:** the name “Karwe” is in Kanuri language referring to a broken part of a Calabash use in serving food in to plates and dishes.
5. **Aduwaram:** the name “Aduwaram” is in Kanuri language referring to a Calabash Ink pot use for keeping Inks use in writing on skins, Arabic wooden slates and later papers (Books):

Fig.10: A) Showing a Calabash Ink-pot and B) Ink-pot, wooden slates and a copy of a Qur'an:



6. **Ibrit:** the name “Ibrit” is from the Kanuri language referring to a Calabash use in holding little water to perform ablution or washing face and parts of the body.
7. **Dumba:** the name “Dumba” is in Kanuri language referring to a type of a big Calabash that can contain at least 5 kg or more of food substances such as millet, wheat, rice, beans or even water or any other food stuffs or substances use locally.
8. **Zunguru:** the name “Zunguru” is from the Kanuri language referring to a particular type of Calabash use in dressing or making of Henan by Kanuri women and even women in the other parts of the World on their palms and feet. Women mostly in Africa, the middle east and even some parts of the ancient India use the Kanem-Bornu Calabash for self-beatification (Making some Impressive expressions of artistic flower like decorations on their palms and feet mostly during ceremonies. The process involves using the Calabash pipes known locally in the Kanuri language as “ZUNGURU”. This act of Henan dressing act is known as “Nalle or Nalle kirta” in the Kanuri language and in English it is known as Henan dressing.

Fig.11: (A) Woman palms HENEN dressed using Calabash (B) The Calabash Pipe use in the dressing:



9. **Jayen:** the name “Jayen” is in Kanuri language referring to a normal Calabash ladle use in drinking of pap’s or liquid food.

Fig.12: A photo of a (Pap) served in its Calabash bowl and a Calabash Ladle in it:



10. **Juyi:** the name “Juyi” is in Kanuri and it is referring to a Milk processor use in processing milk. It is use in separating “Cow butter ghee” and cheese from the Milk as well as in the making of a milk type known as “Ngoin” in the Kanuri language. Ngoin is a type of a sour yoghurt.

FIG.13: SHOWING A PHOTO OF A “JUJI” CALABASH:



11. **Jentu:** the name “Jentu” is in Kanuri language referring to a Calabash musical instrument that makes musical sounds using the palms and the leg while technically creating vacuum & air inside the pipe to blow the musical sound.

Fig.14: Photos of Jentu (Local calabash musical instrument native to Kanem-Bornu)



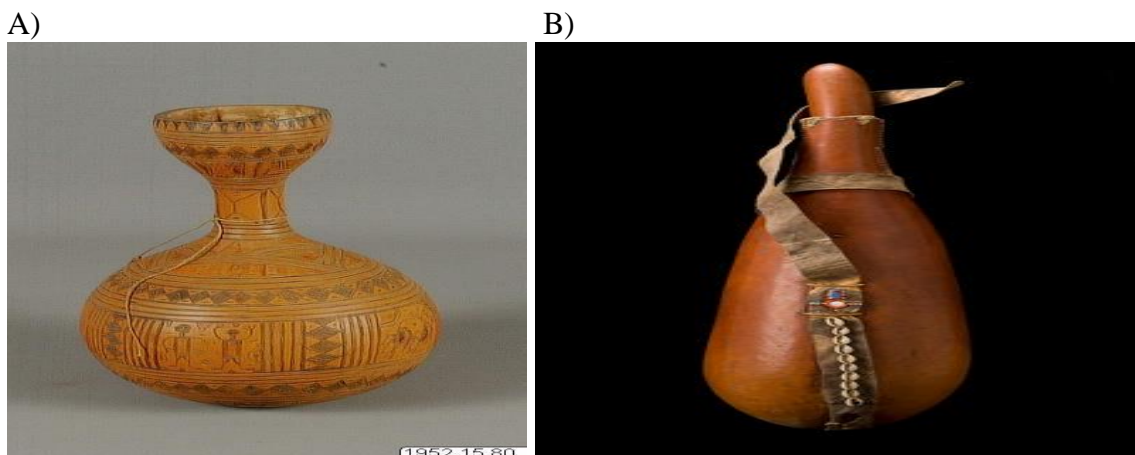
USES OF THE KANEM-BORNU CALABASH:

1. **History preservation:** Some carved marks on Calabash in the ancient Kanem-Bornu are not just carved marks for decoration purposes only, but they are also written histories. Some of the marks on such calabash are easily readable by anyone, but some others needed experts or the owner to decode.
2. **Winnowing:** During local harvest of Beans, Rice, Millet or Corn in the Kanem-Bornu, Calabash are often use in separating the crushed dried husks from its mixed crushed seeds through pouring of the mixtures from a Calabash positioned up in to a Calabash positioned directly down in a windy position while the wind blows to separates the

lighter husks from the grains/seeds midair and the seeds falls directly into the Calabash below, the process is continuously repeated nonstop until the seeds are clearly separated from the husks completely.

3. Calabash are use as Safes for precious items such as Gold, Silver and other precious belongings. Precious items are normally wrapped in cotton wools before keeping them inside the Calabash for safe keeping and for protection from steins and dusts. It is not every calabash that is used for such purposes, but such calabash use under this circumstance includes some special Calabash species under the “Zunguru” and the “Zawu” families of the Calabash. Amazingly items kept inside such Calabash remains fresher for centuries.
4. HENAN: Women mostly in Africa, the middle east and even some parts of the ancient India use the Kanem-Bornu Calabash for self-beatification (Making some Impressive expressions of artistic flower like decorations on their palms and feet mostly during ceremonies. The process involves using the Calabash pipes known locally in the Kanuri language as “ZUNGURU”. This act of Henan dressing act is known as “Nalle or Nalle kirta” in the Kanuri language and in English it is known as Henan dressing.
5. **Drinking:** People use Calabash for drinking, storage and in preserving of water, milk, pap, medicines and other liquids as desired:

Fig. 15: A & B showing different types of Calabash bottles:



6. **Food Server:** Broken Calabash are shaped to assume semi-triangular shapes to be use as food servers in the African local kitchens. They are used to serve foods in to dishes, trays and plates from the cooking pots.
7. **Storage container:** Calabash is often used as container for storing foodstuffs in many African households. Foods such as milk, grains, flours, water, oil and cottons among many others are often stored inside it, sometimes for a very long period.

Fig.16: A Photo Showing a Calabash in Use During Food Processing:



8. **Food processor:** In the Kanem-Bornu a specie of Calabash known locally in the Kanuri language as “Juyi” is use in processing milk to extract “Cow butter ghee” and cheese from the Milk as well as in the making of a milk type known as “Ngoin” in the Kanuri language. Ngoin is a type of a sour yoghurt.
9. **Fishing:** Due to the floaty nature of Calabash it is generally used in the Kanem Borno and elsewhere in Africa for fishing. A fisherman can as well float on it while fishing and also store his catch inside it while fishing.

Fig.17: A & B Showing different ways of using fishing Calabash at fishing:

A)



B)



10. **Decorations:** Carved Calabash are so beautiful that many people hang them on their walls at home, shops and even in the modern day offices displaying the beauty carved on them.

Fig. 18: A, B & C Showing Calabash before, during and after carving:



- 11. Ink pot:** Calabash bottles (smaller calabash bottle pots with rough surface) mostly circular in nature if viewed vertically from above, are used as ink Pots for storing inks use for writing on skins, woods and later papers (Books). Till today copies of most Holy Qurans written in Kanem-Bornu were written using type of Calabash bottle pots.
- 12. Medicine/Washing/Bathing:** Calabash in the Kanem-Bornu are used for medicinal purposes, washing of cloth as well as for bathing.
- 13. Ceremonies:** The Bornu Calabash are used in many ceremonies including wedding ceremonies, fishing festivals, naming ceremonies among others:

Fig.19: Photo showing many floating Calabash at a fishing festival in Africa:



14. Calabash & Architecture: Calabash designs are sometimes adopted as an architectural design to build houses and places. For instance, the design of the famous FNB Stadium located at Stadium Avenue, Nasrec, Johannesburg in the republic of South Africa, was from the Calabash and that was the reason why the stadium is also known as the Calabash.

Fig. 20: A photo of the FNB Stadium (Calabash stadium) in the republic of South Africa:



15. **Musical Instruments:** Calabash pipes of different types are use as musical instruments ranging from trumpets, drums, calabash pianos to the local Kanem-Bornu musical instrument called the “Jentu”. Some Calabash are place on water upside down, beaten like a Drum to make sounds in musical plays often by women.

Fig.21: Showing a photo of a local Calabash trumpet and a Calabash Piano:



Generally, almost all modern day musical instruments like pianos, guitars, trumpets, drums and flutes among others they all have their Calabash versions which they originally came from.

THE POWERS OF CALABASH:

1. **Culture & History:** Calabash has the ability to store, transmit and even help in cultural preservation. Over the years many aspects of culture had been preserved and promoted with the aid of Calabash. For instance, a well carved or decorated Calabash can tell the history and place of its origin in addition to given the thoughts of the people producing it, trading it and even give some insights in to their activities including their culture and history. For example, a well carved calabash from the Fulani culture in Africa can always be clearly distinguished from a carved Calabash of the same nature but from the Kanem-Bornu Empire.

Fig.22: (A) Calabash from the Fulani culture: (B) Calabash from the Kanem-Bornu:



2. **Life Saver:** When it comes to preserving life through food & water, raw Calabash can serve as food while the Calabash bowl can serve as plate for the food, squeezed juice out of the raw Calabash can serve as water while the Calabash bottle can contain the water.
Literally FOOD + WATER = LIFE PRESERVING.
3. **Calabash blessings:** In the Yoruba culture of South –Western Nigeria, Calabash are used to predict marriage blessings. It said here when the bride is given a calabash (igba) and is then asked to break it. When it breaks, the number of pieces it is broken into is believed to be the number of children she will give birth to.
4. **Determinants of Power:** Before the advent of the British in Nigeria more specifically in the Yoruba land. Some Yoruba Kings faith were determined in their respective kingdoms by Calabash ... for example when presented an empty calabash to Alaaifin Aole (King) its signifying his rejection on the throne. Additionally, when some Yoruba Kings becomes brutal (dictator) and their subjects want to get rid of them they open Calabash containing Parrot's eggs in front of the king and that action automatically ends the brutal era of such king.

Apart from breaking or ending powers of some African Kings and leaders by Calabash, Calabash is also used to empower and or show respect to African Kings and leaders. In Nigerian for example when a leader is welcome by his subjects with a Calabash full of Kola-

nuts while on visitation or coming back from journeys marks a kind of warmly welcoming reception and acceptance by his subjects presenting such Calabash.

Fig.23: A Photo of President Muhammadu Buhari (Nigeria) welcomed with a Calabash full of Kolanuts:



5. **No Calabash no Marriage:** In some communities in Nigeria, till today despite modernization all necessary food and beverage local items to be shared by participants in weddings most be presented in Calabash unless where Calabash is not obtainable, for instance in the Igbo culture the bride is expected to give her bridegroom drink in a Calabash bottle in the present of all the wedding participants, while in the Fulani, Hausa and Kanuri cultures the Wedding Kolanuts to be shared comes in a Calabash.
6. **Culture Transformarr:** Apart from Calabash serving as a medium of cultural expression, it also serves as an element of cultural transformation . For intance in the ancient Kanem-Bornu Empire the original settlers of Damboa town who occupied the pre Damboa historical scattered clustered settlements were the Marghi people speaking the Marghi language as their native official language, but Calabash farming activities attracted the Kanuri people to dominate Damboa and made Kanuri became and still remains the official language in greater part of Damboa, because Calabash made Damboa a melting point to the Kanuri and the Marghi cultures.

POST CALABASH PROJECT ERA IN DAMBOA:

With the arrival of the Colonial administrations in Africa and in most parts of the Kanem-Bornu around the year 1900 when Rabih az-Zubayr ibn Fadl Allah or Rabih Fadlallah usually known as Rabah in French (c. 1842 – April 22, 1900), who was a Sudanese war lord that terrorized the Kanem-Bornu Lands for almost 7 years. The colonial societies especially the British and French started introducing industrial metal dishes that later almost completely wiped out the dominance powers of Calabash usage in the Kanem-Bornu Households. The Calabash value also fell so as its cultivations where for the first time Calabash farms were replaced by even common food crops such as millet, corn, beans and others.

This development made Damboa to lose her prestige as one of the richest economy of the Bornu Empire which resulted in triggering massive migrations of Damboa indigents to closer towns with richer economy such as Yerwa (Maiduguri), Konduga and some relocated as far as Kukawa where they believed their ancestors came from.

The disappearance of the mighty Calabash farms in Damboa made Damboa to lose more than half of its population to the richer economy cities mostly owned by the Kanuri people, this explains the fact that one finds many people of the Marghi tribes in Maiduguri since inception in 1907.

Despite their richness later life changed for many of the migrants making them work in White-collar jobs available in Maiduguri, though later many went to school to change the situation. While the cultural heritage inherited from the Kanuri people during the Calabash boom era still remains like speaking the Kanuri language very fluently, sharing the Kanuri tribal Marks, Kanuri Names and many others. In addition, the Kanuri name Dumba'a (Calabash) for Damboa is still in use to refer to the Damboa town, however in the year 1991 when Damboa Local Government Area was created by the government the name Damboa was also later used to refer to the entire Damboa Local Government Area (LGA), while the town of Damboa remains its administrative Headquarters. The town of Chibok was also once part of the Damboa LGA.

Fig.9: A & B) Different Photos of modern day Damboa town as if Calabash had never ruled here



CALABASH AND THE FUTURE:

Considering industrialization and the rate of Urbanization in Africa, most parts of underdeveloped Asia and the Latin American regions it is obvious that the future for Calabash looks oblique, as stronger metal and alloyed dishes are fast replacing Calabash as major domestic food containers, water bottles even as instruments (including musical instruments). These made Calabash to have hopes only in the world of antiquity, arts, galleries and museums where Calabash are only use in beautification, transmission of history and or information and for ceremonial usages rather than its original value of serving as food and water containers which gave it more value and respect historically.

Fig.24: Photo Showing Modern Artistic Carvings on Calabash:



Conclusion:

This presentation shows how Calabash is wild/naturally collected and later domestically cultivated in the Kanem-Bornu Empire. It also shows how it was used historically to ease the livelihood of persons using it as bowls, bottles, instruments or using it for economic and social activities such as fishing, musical instruments as well as for spiritual and medicinal purposes. Amazingly the Kanem-Bornu Empire used it to promote its economy through domesticating its cultivation on a larger scale as such that it enabled Calabash produce join the lists of produce made for exports from the Bornu Empire like perfume, wax, cotton, ivory, ostrich, natron (sodium carbonate), feathers and hides.


Over the years Calabash created many job opportunities, helped in founding new settlements and carried civilizations of Kanem-Bornu to beyond the Shores of Africa to as far as Europe and some parts of Asia, modern day evidence proved this through show casing the Bornu Calabash across Europe including Scandinavia and even in the American Museums.

Despite the fact that industrialization has drastically brought down the rate at which Calabash is utilize domestically in many parts of the World including rural parts of Africa, but yet some socio-cultural activities across Africa and even some parts of Asia and Latin Americas would still preserve the usage of Calabash for many more years to come.

Though the visibility of Calabash remains poor in many aspects of our modern lifestyle, but the carvings on them especially those of the Kanem-Bornu origin and the emergence of new artistic works on Calabash as well as the global efforts in creating environmental friendly and more ecological responsible lifestyles, intended for creating viable environments for the future generations entitled "**Going green**" might likely bring back the visibility of Calabash in to our modern lifestyles as humans in the near future, probably going even beyond today and even yesterday as the global human population is at its highest peak ever in human history (7 Billion people).

Thank you for reading this piece.

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Author-BABAGANA ABUBAKAR



UNCCPP, Masters, BSc, Fellow African Scientific Institute and Alumnus United Nations Institute for Training and Research Geneva-Switzerland

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