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AN ANALYSIS OF THE ARGUMENTS AND COUNTER ARGUMENTS ON THE LANGUAGE OF DELIVERY OF *KHUTBATUL-JUMU'AH* (FRIDAY SERMON) IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

(Analisis Hujahan dan Hujahan Balas Terhadap Bahasa Penyampaian *Khutbatul-Jumu'ah* (khutbah Jumaat) dalam Masyarakat Islam)

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ABSTRACT

Friday sermon is seen as a veritable medium employed by Friday Imam to address various issues affecting Muslims and their communities on weekly basis. Observance of Friday prayer attracts large number of Muslim worshippers who listen to sermon that precedes the prayer. However, there have been arguments and counter arguments on the view of some Muslim jurists that Arabic language should be the appropriate language of the delivery of the Friday sermon. Adopting analytical method, the paper aims at examining the divergent opinions of the Muslims' jurists on the language of Friday sermon. The finding of this study reveals that there are arguments and counter arguments on the language of delivery of Friday sermon due to the fact that there is no Quran verse or authentic hadith that specifically makes delivery of Friday sermon in Arabic compulsory. The finding also shows that *Khutbatul-Jumu'ah* (Friday sermon) cannot be equated with *Salat* (ritual prayer) and for the Friday sermon to have positive impact on the life of the congregation, Friday Imam is expected to deliver his sermon in the language understood by the majority of the congregation.

Keywords: Friday sermon; Friday prayer; argument; Arabic language; Muslim world

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ABSTRAK

Khutbah Jumaat adalah medium yang digunakan oleh Imam untuk menyampaikan pelbagai isu yang memberi kesan kepada masyarakat Islam pada setiap minggu. Daripada pemerhatian, didapati solat Jumaat menarik minat banyak umat Islam untuk mendengar Khutbah Jumaat terlebih dahulu sebelum menunaikan solat. Walaubagaimanapun, terdapat hujahan dan hujahan balas berdasarkan pandangan beberapa ulama'/ulamak Islam yang menyatakan bahawa bahasa Arab merupakan bahasa yang sesuai untuk menyampaikan khutbah Jumaat. Dengan mengadaptasi kaedah analitikal, makalah ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji perbezaan pendapat ulama'/ulamak Islam berkaitan dengan bahasa penyampaian khutbah Jumaat. Hasil kajian ini mendapati bahawa terdapat hujahan dan hujahan balas terhadap penggunaan bahasa penyampaian khutbah Jumaat disebabkan oleh fakta yang tidak mengandungi ayat al-Quran atau hadis sahih yang khusus yang menyebabkan penyampaian Khutbah Jumaat wajib disampaikan dalam bahasa Arab. Dapatan ini juga menunjukkan Khutbatul-Jumu'ah (khutbah Jumaat) tidak boleh disamakan dengan solat lima waktu/solat biasa dan khutbah Jumaat juga memberi kesan positif terhadap kehidupan jemaah, penyampaian khutbah Jumaat yang disampaikan oleh Imam hendaklah menggunakan bahasa yang mudah difahami oleh majority jemaah.

Kata kunci: *Khutbah Jumaat; Solat Jumaat; perdebatan; Bahasa Arab; masyarakat Islam*

INTRODUCTION

Language is said to be a vehicle of communication among humankind. It consists of speech making body gestures and remarks. There are several thousands of languages across the world. Some are regarded as local, national and international languages. Among the international languages are English, French and Arabic which are being spoken at the international meetings and conferences of United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and Oil Producing Exporting Countries (OPEC). However, Arabic language is the original source and a vehicle that conveys Islam as a world religion and a comprehensive way of life. It has often been said that "language is a city, to the building of which every human being brought a stone" (Metacalfe and Astle C n.d).

Muslims across the globe observe *Jumu'ah* (Friday prayer) on weekly basis. The prayer attracts Muslims of diverse backgrounds including, colour, tribe and language. Importantly, one of the unique features of Friday service is its *Khutbah* (sermon) which precedes the Friday prayer. The observance of Friday service is so important in Islam to the extent that a chapter of the Quran is dedicated to it. It is

Suratul-Jumu'ah (Chapter of Gathering/Assembly), which is the chapter 62 of the Glorious Quran. Sermon is part of Friday prayer and its reward will be incomplete if it is omitted. In fact, some Muslim jurists opine that non-delivering of Friday sermon renders Friday prayer invalid, null and void (Nyazee 2006).

In the modern Muslim world, there have been arguments and counter arguments on delivering of Friday sermon in Arabic Language. Basing their arguments on Islamic scripture, some jurists insist that Arabic Language should be the language of delivery of Friday sermon, while other jurists, also resting their arguments on Islamic scripture (Quran and hadith) and *fatawa* (Islamic judgments) of some scholars, submit that Arabic language is not compulsory for the presentation of Friday sermon on pulpit and that language understood by the Imam and congregation should be used as language of the delivery of Friday sermon. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the arguments and counter arguments of Muslim jurists on the language of Friday sermon. The purpose of this paper is to analysis the arguments before taking its final position for the consideration of the Muslim world.

Friday prayer is one of the most distinguished acts of worship in Islam. It is the most stressed obligatory act and unique assembly of the Muslims. The majority of the Muslim jurists uphold the universal obligation of Friday prayer due to the fact that it is a substitute for another obligatory prayer which is *Salatuz-Zuhr* (noon prayer) (Nyazee 2006; Fawzani 2009). Friday prayer is said to be the only prayer prescribed by Allah to be performed in congregation. It cannot be performed individually like other ritual prayers. The obligation of Friday prayer is attested to by the Quran and hadith (prophetic sayings). The injunction commanding Muslims to observe Friday prayer is in the Quran, which means:

“O you who believe! When the call is proclaimed for prayer Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off all trade. That is better for you if only you know. And when the prayer has been completed, then you may disperse through the land and seek Allah’s bounty, but remember Allah frequently so that you may be successful” (al-Jumu’ah 62: 9-10).

The command, in the quoted Quranic passage, necessitates an obligation to observe Friday prayer. There are several prophetic statements that attest to the obligatory observance of Friday prayer. Deliberate abandonment or non observance of Friday prayer without valid excuse(s) by matured Muslims is condemnable and punishable. The Prophet is quoted by Khan (1985) as saying:

“Let my people be aware of neglecting the Friday prayer else, Allah will set a seal upon their hearts and they will be counted among the neglected ones”.

In another hadith narrated by Abu Sai'd al-Khudriy, the Prophet is reported by Ismail (1997) as saying:

“Indeed Allah has enjoined upon you (Muslims) Friday prayer in this place, hour, month, year till the day of Resurrection. Whoever abandons it without any valid excuse, with just Imam or a free born Imam, Allah will not bless him in his affairs, he will have no reward for his prayer, his hajj or any of his righteous deed or his charity will not be accepted”.

Abu al-Ja'd ad-Damari reported that the Prophet is reported by Dabbas and Zaraboso (1985) as saying:

“Whoever misses three Friday prayers in a row out of negligence will have a seal put over his heart by Allah”.

Ibn Masu'd reports that the Prophet noticed some people staying away from the Friday prayer and said as quoted by Dabbas and Zaraboso (1985):

“I had the notion to order someone to lead the people in prayer and then go and burn the houses of those who stayed away from the Friday prayer”.

Majority of the Muslim jurists unanimously agreed that Friday sermon is obligatory and that it is a condition for the validity of Friday prayer (*Salatul-Jumu'ah*). The evidence of its obligatory, according to the jurists, is based on the command of Allah in the Quran, (Suratul al-Jumu'ah) which means:

“O you who believe! When the call is proclaimed for Friday prayer, hasten unto the remembrance of Allah”.

The verse which contains an order to hasten unto remembrance of Allah, implies that Friday prayer is obligatory and the fact that scholars interpret “*Dhikr*” as remembrance of Allah to include Friday sermon also implies that Friday sermon is equally obligatory (Dabbas & Zaraboso 1985; Ismail 1997).

Besides the Quranic verse which legalizes Friday sermon, there are also some hadith (prophetic sayings) which confirm that Friday sermon is obligatory. The proponents of this opinion, among the jurists base their argument on the hadith of the Prophet which Ibrahim Musa and Uthman Abi Sheybah al-Mughin reported from Abi al-Ahwas that Samak heard Jabir bin Samarat saying in Abdul Wali (2010) and Dabbas and Zaraboso (1985) that:

“The Messenger of Allah used to have two sermons in the Friday prayer”.

The Prophet is also quoted by Dabbas and Zaraboso (1985) saying:

“Pray as you see me pray”.

However, some jurists maintain that Friday sermon is not obligatory. One of them is Ash-Shawkani who understood the Quranic verse on Friday prayer as simply as a command to be present at the Friday prayer as only obligatory and not that Friday sermon is obligatory. Al Shawkani as quoted by Dabbas and Zaraboso (1985) further says:

“Regarding their argument relating to the commandment to hasten unto the remembrance of Allah, it only refers to the prayer which is the real cause for making haste. There is, however, an agreement that Friday prayer is obligatory while there is a dispute over whether or not the *Khutbah* is obligatory. The correct view is that the *Khutbah* is only a highly recommended act”.

Fawzani (2009) maintains that Friday sermon is considered a condition for the validity of Friday prayer. The reason is that the Prophet used to deliver two sermons before performing the Friday prayer. Ibn Umar said: The Prophet used to deliver two sermons while standing and sit in between them.

On divergent opinions on whether Friday sermon is obligatory or recommended for the validity of Friday prayer, Nyazee (2006) states that whoever maintains that Friday sermon represents two *rakaat* of the *Zuhr* (noon) prayer will conclude that Friday sermon is a condition for the validity of Friday prayer. On the other hand, whoever maintains that Friday sermon is an ordinary sermon or usual exhortation will conclude that Friday sermon is not obligatory but a recommended act.

The Muslim jurists have extensively discussed the main ingredients and components of Friday sermon. In other words, the basic features or contents of the sermon have been enumerated in Islamic literature books and *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). The Shafi'i and the Hanbali Schools of thought, for instance, maintain that Friday sermon should consist of praising Allah, salutations or prayers upon the Prophet Muhammad, admonition or preaching on piety, Quranic recitations (in each of the two *Khutbahs*) and in the last segment of the second *Khutbah* (sermon) supplications should be offered for the believers or the congregation. The Maliki and the majority of the Hanafi jurists opine that the contents of Friday sermon should include long remembrance of Allah, warning (exhortation) and giving glad tidings. To them, the least ingredient or component of Friday sermon is the pronouncement of *Kalimatush-Shahadah* (words of testimony) and the recitation of three verses from the Quran (Ismail 1997).

There are Prophetic traditions which the Muslim jurists use to support their views on the components of Friday sermon. One of such prophetic traditions is related by Ahmad, Abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi as quoted by Dabbas and Zaraboso (1985), which goes thus:

“The Friday sermon that does not contain the testimony (There is no god except Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger) is like the defective hand”.

In another tradition quoted by Dabbas and Zaroboso (1985), Jabir Samurah said:

“The Messenger of Allah would deliver sermon standing, would sit in between the two *Khutbah*, would recite some verses and would remind the people about Allah”.

There are divergent opinions on what should be the minimum length or content of Friday sermon. One of the Muslim jurists, Ibn al-Qasim opines that the least statement that can be called a sermon in the usage of the Arabs is to utter a word of praises i.e. *Alhamdulillah* at the beginning. Al-Shafi‘i, on the other hand, opines that what is considered to be the minimum components of Friday sermon is that the *Khutbah* should be in two parts during which the Imam or the *Khateeb* should be standing and that the sermon should be separated with a short sitting. Each of the *Khutbah* should begin with praises of Allah, blessings on Prophet Muhammad and admonition on piety. The Imam or the *Khateeb* should also recite a passage from the Quran in the first part of the sermon and pray for believers in the second part. According to Nyazee (2006), the reason for the divergent opinions among the jurists on what should be the components of Friday sermon is because sermon is viewed from literal and technical perspectives. Those (jurists) who view *Khutbah* in a literal sense will ignore the Prophetic arrangement of the *Khutbah* while those who view *Khutbah* in a technical sense will uphold its Prophetic organization (e.g. glorification, praises of Allah) and make it compulsory (Nyazee 2006).

Fawzani (2009) opines that Friday sermon must contain words of praise of Allah, declaring the two testimonies of faith, conferring blessing upon the Prophet, giving advice on the fear Allah as well as good instruction and the recitation of the Quran. While highlighting the basic features and components of Friday sermon, Fawzani (2009) quotes Ibn Qayyim as saying:

“Contemplating the sermons of the Prophet and those of his companions, one finds such lessons sufficient to make clear the guidance and oneness of Allah. These sermons also explain the attributes of the Lord, Exalted be He, and the comprehensive principles of faith, call to Allah, show Allah’s favour that draws His servant near to Him and mention His days. Those who listen to such sermons would leave the mosque while they love Allah and Allah loves them”.

Corroborating the submission of Ibn Qayyim on the components of the Prophet's Friday *Khutbah* and those of his companions, Dabbas and Zaraboso (1985) comment thus:

“If we study the *Khutbah* of the Prophet and his companions, we find them imbued with perspicuous guidance, *tauhid*, attributes of Allah, explaining the basic articles of faith, inviting people to Allah and drawing their attention to His providential care that makes Him so beloved to His slaves....”

However, there is contention over the purpose of Friday sermon. The fact that Friday *Khutbah* contains praising of Allah, saying prayers upon His Messenger or reciting a portion of the Quran does not mean that the Friday sermon has fulfilled its purpose. This is because such a proclamation is a tradition or usual practice among the speakers or orators. According to Dabbas and Zaraboso (1985), the main purpose of Friday sermon and which is considered as its main component is to exhort people to do good and warn them against the consequences of the evil. Therefore, confining the contents of Friday sermon to praising Allah, and saying prayers (salutations) on Prophet would not make the sermon acceptable. Dabbas and Zaraboso (1985) further explain:

“It is the admonitory aspect of the Friday sermon which the *ahadith* emphasize, and if a *Khateeb* (Imam) makes an admonition, he fulfills the purpose of *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) if he precedes his *Khutbah* with praises of Allah and prayers upon the Prophet and during his admonition, he uses Quranic verses then he does it in a complete and satisfactory manner”.

In his book, *The Language of the Friday Khutbah*, Usmani (2000) argues that Friday *Khutbah* must be delivered in Arabic and that it is not permissible to deliver it in any other language. He advances reasons for his argument on the following bases:

1. That Friday sermon is part of the Friday prayer and stands for two *rakahs*.
2. That Friday sermon is mentioned as *Dhikr* (remembrance) in al-Jumu'ah 62:9.
3. That the Holy Quran in al-'Araf 7: 204 refers to Friday sermon as the recitation of the Holy Quran.
4. That Friday sermon is a form of worship and not basically a method of preaching and education.
5. That the hadith of the Prophet forbids the audience to speak during Friday sermon
6. That most of the rules applicable to *Salat* (ritual prayer) are also applicable to Friday *Khutbah*
7. That the basic purpose of Friday *Khutbah* is *Dhikr* (remembrance) and not *Tadhkir* (admonition) (Usmani 2000)

While advancing reasons for his argument on delivering Friday sermon in Arabic language, Usmani (2000) further argues:

All these points (enumerated above) go a long way to prove that unlike normal lectures or sermons, certain rules peculiar to *Salah* (prayer) have been prescribed for the *Khutbah* of *Jumu'ah*. It is in this context that it has been held necessary that it should be delivered in Arabic only. Just as *Salah* cannot be performed in any language other than Arabic, the *Khutbah* of *Jumu'ah* too cannot be delivered in any other language. That is why the Holy Prophet never tried to direct his companions to deliver the *Khutbah* in the local language where the audience could not understand Arabic.

Furthermore, Usmani (2000) presents the opinions and rulings of the medieval jurists of the *sunni* schools of thought of Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali and Hanafi on the language of delivery of Friday *Khutbah*. The Maliki jurists are of the view that Friday *Khutbah* must be delivered in Arabic otherwise, the Friday prayer will be invalid and not binding on the congregation to observe it (Usmani 2000). One of the Maliki jurists, al-Dasuqi presents the view of the Maliki School of thought on the issue in Usmani (2000) as follows:

“And it is a condition for the validity of *Jumu'ah* (Friday prayer) that the *Khutbah* is delivered in Arabic, even though the people are non-Arabs and do not know the Arabic language. Therefore, if there is nobody who can deliver *Khutbah* in Arabic properly, the prayer of *Jumu'ah* is not obligatory on them (in which case they will offer the *Zuhr* prayer)”

The Shafi'i School of thought holds similar view to that of the Maliki but with modification. The Shafi'i jurists opine that Friday *Khutbah* should be delivered in Arabic but if it is not possible for the *Khateeb* to learn Arabic when the time of the Friday prayer is due, it is permissible for the *Khateeb* or Imam to deliver *Khutbah* in his own language. According to Usmani (2000), Al-Ramli, a famous Shafi'i jurist presents the view of the Shafi'i school on the language of Friday *Khutbah* in Usmani (2000) thus:

“And it is a condition (for the validity of *Khutbah*) that is delivered in Arabic. This is to follow the way of the *Sahabah* (companions) and their descendants. And to learn Arabic (for the purpose of delivering *Khutbah*) is *Fard al-Kifayah*, therefore it is sufficient that at least one man learns it.... But if no one learns it, all of them will be sinful and their *Jumu'ah* will not be acceptable. Instead, they will have to perform *Zuhr* prayer. However, if it is not at all possible (due to short time) that the Arabic is learnt, then it is permissible that the Imam delivers *Khutbah* in his own language, even though the people (audience) do not understand it.”

The legal ruling of the Hanbali school of thought is not different from that of Shafi'i jurists. The Hanbali's jurists too opine that Friday *Khutbah* must be delivered in Arabic but if nobody is found to deliver it in Arabic, it may be delivered in some other languages. As long as one person can speak Arabic among the congregation, it is necessary to deliver the *Khutbah* in Arabic even if the audience does not understand the Arabic (Usmani 2000). Al-Buhooti; one of the Hanbali jurists was quoted to have written in Usmani (2000) as follows:

“And the *Khutbah* is not valid if it is delivered in any language other than Arabic when somebody is able to deliver it in Arabic. It is like the recitation of the Holy Quran (in prayer) which cannot be done in a non-Arab language. However, the *Khutbah* in any other language is valid only if nobody can deliver it in Arabic. Nevertheless, the recitation of the Holy Quran (as a part of the *Khutbah*) is not valid except in Arabic. If somebody cannot recite in Arabic, it is obligatory on him to recite a *Dhikr* instead of a verse of the Holy Quran, like in *Salah* (the person who cannot recite the Quranic verses is required to make *Dhikr*”.

The Hanafi School of thought, according to Usmani (2000), agrees with the other three *Sunni* schools of Islamic jurisprudence that Friday *Khutbah* should be delivered in Arabic but with a slight difference of opinion. In view of Abu Yusuf and Muhammad, the followers of Imam Abu Hanifah, non-Arabic *Khutbah* is not acceptable except if there is no one from the Muslim Community that can deliver an Arabic *Khutbah*; only in that case non-Arabic *Khutbah* may fulfill the requirement based on the doctrine *Ad-Daruriyyah* (necessity). However, Imam Abu Hanifah is quoted by Usmani (2000) as saying:

“Although it is *makrooh* (impermissible) to deliver *Khutbah* in a non-Arab language yet if someone violates this principle and delivers it in any other language, then the requirement of *Khutbah* will be held as fulfilled and the *Jumu'ah* prayer offered after it will be valid”.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to harmonize the opinions of the four schools of thought on the language of the Friday *Khutbah*, Usmani (2000) concludes that all the *Sunni* schools of thought unanimously agreed that Friday *Khutbah* must be delivered in Arabic. However, a careful examination of the views of the Shafi'i, Hanbali and the Hanafi schools give an exception to the rule by permitting that Friday *Khutbah* can be delivered in other language besides Arabic provided the Imam or the *Khateeb* is unable to deliver the *Khutbah* in Arabic and that non-Arabic *Khutbah* renders Friday prayer valid.

On delivering Friday sermon in both Arabic and local languages, Usmani (2000) considers the practice acceptable. This is a situation whereby a lecture is given in a

local language on Friday before the second *adhan* (call to prayer), then followed by Arabic *Khutbah*, after which the Friday prayer is observed. According to Usmani, such practice is prevalent in some non-Arab countries such as India, Pakistan and China. The practice is said to be in consonant with the practice of Umar bin al-Khattab (the second caliph), who was reported to have permitted Tamim al-Dari to give a lecture sermon in the *masjid* (mosque) before he (Umar) came out to deliver the *Khutbah* of Friday. On this issue, Usmani (2000) further observes:

“I have seen that almost in every mosque in India, China, South Africa and in large number of the mosques in UK, USA and Canada, both the *Khutbah* and a preceding lecture are easily combined within the time officially allowed for the *Jumu'ah* prayer and it has created no difficulty”.

Afzal (2012) summarizes arguments of the proponents of Arabic language as the language of the delivery of Friday *Khutbah* as follows:

1. That *Khutbah* replaces two *Raka'at* of *Salatuz-Zuhr*. The prayers are valid only in Arabic. Hence, *Khutbah* should also be delivered in Arabic only.
2. That *Khutbah* is *Dhikr*, (remembrance of Allah) and an integral part of the *Jumu'ah* prayer. It can be only in Arabic as no part of the prayer is in any language other than Arabic is permissible.
3. That *Khutbah* in Arabic is a *Sunnah Muakkadah* (emphatic way of life of Prophet Muhammad). Disregarding a *Sunnah Muakkadah* is considered a sin.
4. That *Khutbah* in Arabic was the consensus of the *Ummah* for the last 1,400 years. The *Khulafa* (the four rightly guided caliphs), the companions, and the generations following them did not use any other language in *Khutbah* when they reached far off lands and Arabic was not spoken there. They might have felt the need for reaching out to non-Arabic speakers, but kept *Khutbah* in Arabic.
5. That Many Companions knew or later understood Roman, Persian, Armenian, Coptic, and other languages. But the *Khutbah* was always given in Arabic. They did not ask a native dialect speaker to translate their *Khutbah* for others.

However, some modern scholars and jurists opine that Friday sermon can be delivered in any other language besides Arabic. Usmani's argument that Friday sermon is part of the Friday prayer and that it stands for the two *rak'ah* of *salatuz-Zuhr* has been refuted. According to Kilani (2008), Ibn Baz is of the view that those who made *Khutbah* compulsory in Arabic only intended to keep Arabic language strong in the hearts of the Muslims. It is, therefore, permissible, according to Ibn Baz to deliver Friday sermon in whatever language the *Khateeb* (the Imam) and the congregation understand. Kilani (2008) citing Ibn Baz's *fatawa Islamiyyah* (1988) states that:

“The *Khutbah* is meant to guide and exhort the people and this would not be possible if it was stated in a language they did not understand. Therefore, it is more important to achieve the goals of the *Khutbah* rather than just the outward form handed down from the time of the Prophet. If some of the listeners know Arabic, then it would be best to give part of the *Khutbah* in Arabic and then translate it into the other language during the *Khutbah*..... Therefore, translation, especially today, is a necessity and *Da'wah* or calling others to the straight path cannot be made without it”.

Ibn Uthaymeen, one of the modern Muslim jurists, is said to have corroborated Ibn Baz's view on the permissibility to deliver Friday *Khutbah* in other language apart from Arabic. Ibn Uthaymeen, in *Fatawa Nurual al-Darb* is quoted by Munajjid (2008) as saying:

“The correct view with regard to this matter is that it is permissible for the *khateeb* to deliver the *khutbah* in a language that the people present understand, if the people present are not Arabs and do not know Arabic. He may deliver the *khutbah* in their language, because that is the means of explaining to them, and the purpose of the *khutbah* is to explain the sacred limits of Allah to His slaves, and exhort them, and guide them. But the verses of Quran should be recited in Arabic, then explained in the language of the people”.

The *fataawa* (Islamic rulings) of some modern jurists including Ibn Baz and Ibn Uthaymeen on permissibility of delivering Friday *Khutbah* in a local language besides Arabic has been supported by a Quranic verse in Suratul Ibrahim 14: 4 which means:

“We have not sent any messenger except that he preached in the language of his people in order to clarify to them...”

Besides the Quranic evidence, majority of the modern scholars opine that Friday *Khutbah* cannot be equated with *Salat* (ritual prayer). Scholars differ in their opinion that Friday *Khutbah* takes the place (or substitutes) the first two *rak'ah* of *Salatuz-Zuhr* (noon prayer). The fact that Maliki and Hanafi schools of thought hold the view that Friday *Khutbah* can be delivered without sitting in between it implies that Friday *Khutbah* does not stand for the first two *rak'ah* of *Salatuz-Zuhr* (noon prayer). In his book, *al-Jawaahir al-Minbariyyah*, Taha (2006) categorically states that:

“It is a wrong notion to say that the two sermons (of the Friday prayer) are substitute or replacement of the two *rakah* of the *Zuhr* prayer because *Jumu'ah* (Friday prayer) is not a substitute for *Zuhr* (noon prayer) but *Zuhr* is a substitute for Friday prayer if one could not observe *Jumu'ah* (Friday prayer), he would observe four *rakahs* of *Zuhr*”.

Furthermore, the two sermons of the Friday prayer are not exactly the two *rakahs* of *Salatuz-Zuhr* because of the fact that the Prophet would not recite a *surah* after *fatihah* in the last two *rakah* of *Salatuz-Zuhr*, yet in Friday prayer, the Prophet always recited loudly another *surah* after *fatihah* (Abu Majeed 2010). The Hadith, which Umar bin al-Khattab is reported to have said that the other two *rakahs* of *Salatuz-Zuhr* were replaced by the Friday *Khutbah* has been considered weak and unreliable by Nasirudeen al-Bani in his “*al-Irwaa* hadith no. 605 (AnasHlayat 2010). The above explanation and illustration refute Usmani’s argument that Friday *Khutbah* stands for two *rakahs* of *Salatuz-Zuhr* and that it should be treated like a prayer.

According to Usmani (2000), the practice of translating Friday *Khutbah* into a local language (which the congregation understands) contradicts the basic purpose of Friday *Khutbah*. The purpose of Friday *Khutbah* in Usmani’s view is *Dhikr* (remembrance or recitation of the names of Allah) and not *tadhkir* (admonition or education). Some Muslim scholars have also refuted this Usmani’s argument, which to them, defeats the purpose of the Friday *Khutbah*. On the purpose of the Friday *Khutbah*, Ali (1986) writes:

“Friday sermon is meant to exhort the people to give them information as to what to do under certain circumstances and what not to do. It is meant, in fact, to know light on all questions of life”.

The purpose of Friday *Khutbah* is to remind the Muslims or the congregation about their responsibilities and to motivate them to stop evil and promote good in their lives, families and communities. It is also the purpose of the Friday *Khutbah* to inform the congregation about the conditions of the *Ummah* and the world.

METHODOLOGY

Research was carried out through content analysis of existing works on the language of Friday sermon. This document analysis is a systematic procedure to evaluate relevant documents which related with the research objectives and research questions (Bowen 2009). It is a social research method and an invaluable part of most scheme of triangulation method purposely to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility (Bowen 2009).

According to O Leary (2014), a researcher can use a huge plethora texts for research though the commonly use is the written documents for content analysis. In this case, the researcher quantifies the use of particular words, phrases and concept. In this study, the document analysis was done using “the Language of Friday *Khutbah*” written by Usmani (2000). While going through the content of the document, the

researcher read thoroughly the book purposely to understand and analysis the views and opinions of Muslim jurists in the Sunni schools of thought on the language of Friday sermon.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Contrary to the arguments advanced by Usmani (2000), the result shows that Friday sermon is not analogous or identical with ritual prayer in the sense that the *Khateeb* (the Imam) can speak of unrelated subjects during the sermon or the sermon can be interrupted for some reasons. For instance, the Prophet once prayed for rain during the Friday sermon after a companion called the Prophet's attention to the fact that there was a drought in the community. In another instance, the Prophet, during his Friday sermon was questioned about faith by a companion. The Prophet (digressed from his sermon) explained to the man what faith was all about and thereafter resumed his sermon (Ali 1986). There are some Prophetic traditions which support the above submission. For instance, Abu Hurairah is quoted by Dabbas and Zaraboso (1985) saying:

“The Prophet was delivering a *Khutbah* and al-Hassan and al-Hussain came and they were wearing red shirts and they were tripping while walking. The Prophet came down from the pulpit and picked them up and placed them in front of himself and then said: Allah and His Messenger have told the truth: Verily, your wealth and children are a trial. I looked to those two children walking and tripping and I could not be patient, so, I cut off my *Khutbah* and went to pick them up”.

Ibn Qayyim is quoted by Dabbas and Zaraboso (1985) to have corroborated the above tradition when he states that:

“The Prophet would interrupt his *Khutbah* due to some reasons or to respond to a question from some of his companions, sometimes, he would descend from the pulpit due to some needs and then return and complete his *Khutbah*”.

All these actions of the Prophet during the Friday sermon prove that Friday sermon is not identical with *Salat* (ritual prayer). Moving from one place to another, attending to other issues or distractions, all which are permissible during Friday sermon are not permissible during the *Salat* (ritual prayer). Similarly, Friday sermon cannot be equated with the Quran and *adhan* because the Quran is the divine word of Allah, *adhan* is the Prophetic tradition (*sunnah*), while *Khutbah* (sermon) is the words or speech of a person (i.e. Imam or *Khateeb*). Whether the *Khutbah* is made in Arabic or in another language has no holy textual value like the Quran, *adhan* (call to prayer) or *Salat* (prayer) because the *Khutbah* is the *Khateeb*'s own invention (Abu Majeed 2010).

While distinguishing *salat* (ritual prayer) from *khutbatul-Jumu'ah* (Friday sermon), Afzal (2012) writes *inter alia*:

Prayer is valid only if facing towards the *Qiblah*, but *Khutbah* is just the opposite. *Khutbah* is valid without ablution, even in the condition of uncleanliness, if inadvertent, and has not to be repeated. A prayer is invalid in both situations, and must be repeated. If Friday prayer becomes invalid, then only the prayer is repeated and not the *khutbah*.

Meanwhile, majority of the modern jurists are of the view that only the pillars or components of the *Khutbah* should be rendered in Arabic, while the rest part of the *Khutbah* can be rendered in any local language. What the four *sunni* schools of thought consider to be pillars or components of the Friday *Khutbah* vary. The pillars of the Friday *Khutbah*, according to Hanafi School of thought, for instance, are the sayings of *Alhamdulillah* (words of praise), *Subhanallah* (words of glorification) or *Lailaahaila Allah* (words of testimony). The Maliki, on the other hand opines that anything, however small it may be is *Khutbah* in the Arabic language. The Shafi'i School opines that pillars of Friday *Khutbah* are five, namely praising Allah, prayers upon the Prophet, admonition on piety, praying for the congregation and a recitation of at least a verse of the Quran. These pillars are the obligatory parts of the Friday *Khutbah* which must be delivered in Arabic even if the audience does not speak Arabic (Abu Majeed 2010). Kilani (2008) states that the Maliki School of thought is of the view that the pillar of Friday *Khutbah* which must be rendered in Arabic is "some warnings concerning hell-fire or some glad tidings concerning paradise". On the rigid position of the Maliki's school of thought that Friday *Khutbah* must be rendered in Arabic, Kilani (2008) comments thus:

The *Khutbah* is not wholly verses of the Quran but Quran messages including hadith of the Prophet meant to admonish Muslims with explanation on current issues and other related matters affecting the Muslims. The purpose of the *Khutbah* is to benefit those present through exhortation and admonition. How could one give glad tidings of Paradise or warning of Hell in Arabic to people who do not understand Arabic?

On the language of the Friday *Khutbah*, the *Fiqh* Council of the Muslim World League, in its fifth resolution of the fifth session, is quoted by Munajjid (2008) as resolved that:

"The fairest opinion is that using Arabic when giving the *khutbah* on Friday and at Eid in countries where it is not spoken is not a condition of it being valid, but it is better to say the preliminaries of the *khutbah* and any Quranic verses quoted in Arabic, so as to get non-Arabs used to hearing Arabic and the Quran, which will make it easier to learn it and read the Quran in the language

in which it was revealed. Then the *khateeb* can follow that with exhortation in their language which they understand”.

In the contemporary Muslim world, Friday *Khutbah* is officially delivered in native languages in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran, Turkey, North America, Arab countries, South Africa and African countries including Nigeria. While making reference to the delivery of Friday *Khutbah* in the Arab world, Hussain (2012) observes thus:

“In all Arab countries, Friday *Khutbah* is delivered in local dialect known as “*Amiyya*”- this is a colloquial Arabic that is considerably different from “*Fusha*” the classical Quranic and Prophetic Arabic. Anyone who has travelled in the Arab world cannot fail to notice this. During my two years of study at al-Azhar, I used to pray the Friday prayer in various *masjids* and it was rarity to find a *khateeb* who would deliver the *khutbah* in “*Fusha*”- it was mostly in “*Amiyya*”. If the *sahabah* (companions) were to present (in those mosques), they would not understand a word”.

From the above quotation, it is understandable that colloquial Arabic is the local dialect of Arabic language which is quite different from the classical Arabic language spoken and understood by the Prophet and his companions. This implies that Friday *Khutbah* is not being delivered (in some Arab countries) in classical Arabic, which the Maliki and other *sunni* Imams considered to be the language of the Friday *Khutbah*. In his own contribution to the debate on the language of *Khutbatul-Jumu'ah*, Afzal (2012) submits that Friday *Khutbah* (sermon) may be delivered in any of the following ways:

1. Both parts of the *Khutbah* may be delivered only in Arabic.
2. The first part of the *Khutbah* may be delivered partly in Arabic and partly in another language but the second *Khutbah* may be delivered only in Arabic.
3. Both the first and second *Khutbah* may be delivered partly in Arabic and partly in other language.
4. Both the *Khutbah* may be delivered in another language after the essential *Tashhahud* (words of testimony) in Arabic.
5. Both parts of the *Khutbah* may be delivered in other language with no Arabic.

The above enumerated submissions on the language of the Friday *Khutbah* can further be analyzed. In a purely Arabic speaking community, Friday sermon is to be rendered in Arabic language, while in a non-Arabic speaking environment but whose members understand Arabic to some extent, Friday can be delivered in both Arabic and the language of the community. In a Muslim country/community where Arabic is not spoken and understood, Imam is expected to deliver some important components of sermon in Arabic (provided he knows it) and explain the contents

of the sermon in the language understood by the congregation. However, if Imam can only read Arabic Quran but cannot speak or understand Arabic as well as his congregation especially in a rural area, Friday sermon can be delivered in the local language understood by the people. We need to understand the fact that it is Allah that creates and understands all languages and tribes of the world (al-Rum 30: 22, al-Hujurat 49: 13). Therefore, any language spoken to deliver Friday sermon is understood by Allah whom the worship (Friday prayer) is directed to.

CONCLUSION

Going by the arguments and counter arguments of the medieval and contemporary Muslim scholars on the preferred language of delivery of Friday sermon, my submission, therefore, is that Friday sermon can be delivered or rendered in Arabic language if the Imam and the congregation (of the Friday prayer) understand Arabic properly. Friday sermon can also be delivered in Arabic language, and then, translated into local language (of the audience) if the audience does not understand Arabic. Furthermore, if the Imam or *Khateeb* and the congregation do not understand Arabic, the main pillars or components (earlier identified) can be rendered in Arabic while the admonition aspect is rendered in the local language of the audience so that the impact of the Friday sermon can be felt by the congregation in particular and the Muslims in general. By so doing, the *Khateeb* or Imam will have complied with Allah's injunction in Suratul Ibrahim 14: 4 and, at the same time, complied with the Prophetic practice (*sunnah*) of delivering *Khutbah* in *fusha* or classical Arabic and not *Amiyyah* Arabic or colloquial Arabic.

Considering the fact that Arabic is the language that facilitates proper understanding of Islam as a religion and a way of life, it is imperative for Friday Imam and Muslims in general to strive to learn and understand Arabic language. The Muslims, belonging to different schools of thought and views on the language of the Friday sermon, ought to appreciate and respect the views and opinions of the medieval jurists of the four *Sunni* schools of thought and other scholars, who gave their *fataawa* (rulings) based on their understanding of the Quran, *hadith/sunnah* and their immediate environments.

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