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West African Manuscripts in Arabic and African Languages and Digital Preservation

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Abstract and Keywords

West African manuscripts are numerous and varied in forms and contents. There are thousands of them across West Africa. A significant portion of them are documents written in Arabic and Ajami (African languages written in Arabic script). They deal with both religious and nonreligious subjects. The development of these manuscript traditions dates back to the early days of Islam in West Africa, in the 11th century. In addition to these Arabic and Ajami manuscripts, there have been others written in indigenous scripts. These include those in the Vai script invented in Liberia; Tifinagh, the traditional writing system of the Amazigh (Berber) people; and the N'KO script invented in Guinea for Mande languages. While the writings in indigenous scripts are rare less numerous and widespread, they nonetheless constitute an important component of West Africa's written heritage. Though the efforts devoted to the preservation of West African manuscripts are limited compared to other world regions, interest in preserving them has increased. Some of the initial preservation efforts of West African manuscripts are the collections of colonial officers. Academics later supplemented these collections. These efforts resulted in important print and digital repositories of West African manuscripts in Africa, Europe, and America. Until recently, most of the cataloguing and digital preservation efforts of West African manuscripts have focused on those written in Arabic. However, there has been an increasing interest in West African manuscripts written in Ajami and indigenous scripts. Important West African manuscripts in Arabic, Ajami, and indigenous scripts have now been digitized and preserved, though the bulk remain uncatalogued and unknown beyond the communities of their owners.

Keywords: Ajami, Arabic, archive, digital, indigenous, Islamic, manuscript, preservation, script, West Africa

Without writers, the charted paths would fade away.

Without orators, knowledge would be less widespread.

Without lecturers, the masses would be snoring.

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And they would never wake up until it is too late.

—Muusaa Ka, Wolof Ajami poet, 1889–1963

Besides sources that result from the colonial encounter (those in European languages and African languages written in Roman script),¹ the overwhelming majority of West African manuscripts uncovered to date consist of documents written in Arabic and Ajami (African languages written with the modified Arabic script). The term “Ajami” comes from the Arabic word *‘ajam*, which initially denoted improper Arabic, foreign, or Persian. In the 21st century, the term references literary traditions in various languages spanning Africa but also including Persian, Pashto, and Urdu as well as the historical traditions of Islamic Spain (al-Andalus).²

West African Arabic and Ajami manuscripts resulted from the spread of Islam in West Africa. Arabic has served as the language of the Muslim intelligentsia since the advent of Islam in the continent. It served as “the Latin of Africa,” to borrow Hunwick’s words, over the past millennium as Latin did in Europe in the Medieval era.³ Thus, West African Muslims wrote most of their manuscripts in Arabic and Ajami scripts derived from it. Just like early Nabataean Arabs modified the ancient Aramaic script to write their Arabic tongue, African Muslims modified the Arabic script to devise Ajami orthographies for their own languages.⁴

Though the scripts used in many manuscripts from Mali, Senegal, and the Gambia show influences of the Maghribī script, some recent evidence suggests there are other distinct regional scripts such as the Kanawī and Barnāwī scripts used in northern Nigeria.⁵ Besides the rich corpus of Arabic manuscripts uncovered in West Africa, there is a large body of Ajami manuscripts in Dagbani (Dagomba), Fulfulde (the Eastern variety of Fula spoken in Nigeria), Fuuta Jalon (the Guinea variety referred to as “Pular”), Hausa, Kanuri, Mande languages (Eastern Maninka, Western Mandinka, Jula, Jakhanke, Soninke, Susu, and Bambanankan), Songhay, Tamasheq, Wolof, Yoruba, Zarma, and Zenaga.⁶ Ajami manuscripts complement Africa’s Arabic sources. Together they constitute the “Islamic Library of West Africa,” to borrow Ousmane Kane’s words.⁷ However, the phrase “Islamic Library of West Africa” should not be taken to mean that West African manuscripts only deal with Islamic religious subjects. The phrase is simply intended to reflect the West African Arabic and Ajami manuscripts’ authors’ Muslim identity, which they often highlight in their works with opening and closing Islamic doxologies.

West African manuscripts in Arabic and Ajami are not substantially different in form and content from those found in other parts of the Muslim world. While they flourished in religious contexts and contain significant religious materials in poetry and prose, they equally deal with various secular and intellectual matters relevant to the communities of the scholars who wrote them. The existing print and digital collections held in Africa, Europe, and the Americas offer unique insights into the secular and religious contents of West African manuscripts, the intellectual traditions that have produced them since the

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11th century, and their significance in the studies on sub-Saharan Africa across the humanities and social sciences.

West African manuscripts deal with a range of religious and nonreligious subjects. They deal with Islamic sciences and rituals, incantations, literature, poetry, Sufism, theology, translations and commentaries of the Quran, and jurisprudence. They include official correspondence, private letters, business records and discussions on labor and agriculture, slave trade and freedom, gold and currency, and divination and geomancy. Some deal with Arabic language and grammar, African languages, dialectology, logic, astrology, law, politics, pharmacology and medicine, alchemy, philosophy, ethics, sociology, history, diplomacy between European and African rulers in the pre-colonial era, political economy, chemistry, geography, government legislations, and astronomy.

Archives with West African Manuscripts in Africa

Important collections of manuscripts in Arabic and Ajami dating from the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial eras are found in many West African countries, including in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.⁸ Thus, though many examples are from Senegambia, there are rich and equally important manuscript collections in many other West African communities. Of all the manuscripts that bear testimony to the rich intellectual written traditions that emerged in West Africa, those in Timbuktu, Mali, are obviously the best known, thanks to the pioneering work of John Hunwick and other subsequent scholars, and the media coverage of both their significance and endangered nature. Some of the most significant Timbuktu manuscripts are kept in public and private libraries. These include the Institut de Hautes Études et de Recherches Islamiques Ahmed Baba (IHERIAB) and the Bibliothèque Mamma Haidara de Manuscripts led by Abdel Kader Haidara. Haidara leads the nongovernmental organization (NGO) called Association pour la Sauvegarde et la Valorisation des Manuscrits pour la Défense de la Culture Islamique (SAVAMA-DCI), which collects, catalogues, and preserves manuscripts from Malian libraries and private collections.⁹ Ségou, Gao, Kayes, Mopti, Kidal, and the city of Djenné in Mali have many Islamic manuscripts.¹⁰

In Niger, the Institut de Recherche en Sciences Sociales (IRSH) at the Université Abdou Moumouni in Niamey holds a collection of over three thousand manuscripts produced by local Muslim scholars. Some of them are written in Arabic and in Hausa and Tamasheq Ajami.¹¹ Nigeria is another West African country with rich collections of manuscripts. The University of Ibadan, the National Archives of Kaduna, the Lugard Hall Library in Kaduna, the Northern History Research Scheme of Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, the Arewa House in Kaduna, and the Jos Museum host collections of manuscripts.¹² These

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archives include Arabic, Hausa, and Fulfulde Ajami manuscripts in poetry and prose produced by local scholars. The manuscripts deal with a variety of subjects, including jurisprudence, logic, astrology, pharmacology, alchemy, grammar, philosophy, ethics, correspondence, sociology, political economy, Sufism, chemistry, history, geography, Islamic sciences, and government legislations and treaties.¹³ At the University of Ghana, there is a collection of photocopies of Islamic manuscripts written by local scholars.¹⁴



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Figure 1. An excerpt from a copy of an Arabic work of Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio digitized by Mohammed Salau from the National Archives of Kaduna, Nigeria.

Source: British Library, EAP535/1/1/6/3: Kitab umdatul ubba-di by Sheikh Uthman Fodio (1365 AH/1946 AD).

In addition to these collections, other West African manuscripts gathered by European colonial officers such as Henri Gaden (1867–1939) and Gilbert Vieillard (1899–1940) are held at the Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire (IFAN) in Dakar, Senegal. The IFAN collections include the Fonds Gilbert Vieillard, Fonds Gaden, Fonds Shaykh Muusaa Kamara, Fonds Philip Curtin, and Fonds Amar Samb. These collections contain manuscripts written by some renowned West African scholars. The manuscripts encompass

works of Fuuta Jalon scholars from Guinea and those of their Senegambian colleagues.¹⁵ The IFAN archives hold manuscripts in Arabic and Ajami of the famous Fulani scholar, Shaykh Muusaa Kamara (1864–1945), and works of one of the most renowned Wolof scholars of the 19th century, Xaali Majaxate Kala (1835–1902, also known as Khaly or Cadi Madiakhaté Kala in French sources).¹⁶

Bibliothèque Cheikhoul Khadim in Touba, Senegal (locally known as Daaray Kaamil), founded by Abdul Ahad Mbakke (1914–1989), the third caliph of the Murīdiyya Sufi order, holds a large number of Arabic manuscripts, including numerous decorated copies of the Quran and poems of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba (1853–1927), the founder of the Murīdiyya. Many of the manuscripts were produced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the early days of the Murīdiyya. The manuscripts include colorful illuminations, calligraphies, and geometric decorative patterns, which Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba emphasized in his pedagogy (see Figure 2).¹⁷

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Figure 2. An excerpt from a copy of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba's Arabic poem entitled "Fulk al-Mashhūn" at the Bibliothèqhe Cheikhoul Khadim in Touba, Senegal.

Courtesy of Sam Niang.

The aesthetic tradition of producing handwritten copies of the Quran with colorful illuminations, geometric decorative figures, and calligraphies endures in some Murīd schools in Senegal. Many of the manuscripts at Bibliothèqhe Cheikhoul Khadim in Touba are kept in colorful decorated leather bookcases. The illuminations, decorative arts, and leather bookcases exemplify some aesthetic dimensions of the "Ajamization" of Islam in West Africa, that is, the blending of Islamic arts with local African

traditions. Ajamization of Islam transcends the orthographic modifications of the Arabic script made by Muslims who live beyond the geographical boundaries of Arabia. It extends to the various tangible and subtle enrichments of Islamic traditions by local ones reflected in the texts and practices of Muslims around the world, as the faith adapts to new aesthetic, epistemological, cultural, linguistic, political, and social ecologies. It does not assume a loss of value of a pristine Islamic faith and its traditions outside of Arabia that the concept of "syncretism" usually suggests. Naturally, when scrutinized, West African manuscripts in Arabic and Ajami reflect facets of Ajamization.¹⁸

In addition to the large corpus of Arabic manuscripts at the library written by Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba and his followers since the birth of the movement, there are plenty of other Arabic and Ajami manuscripts in the homes of the followers of the Murīdiyya. There are equally numerous manuscripts in the homes of members of the Tijāniyya and Qādiriyya followers in Senegambia. Some of the oldest and most precious collections of West African manuscripts are found in Boutilimit, Chinguetti, Nima, Wadan, Walata, and Tchitt in Mauritania. The oldest work found in the Mauritanian manuscripts dates back to the 10th century and is written in gazelle skin.¹⁹ The world's only known complete manuscript of a work on grammar by the Spanish-Arab physician and philosopher Ibn Rushd, known as Averroës, was found in Boutilimit in Mauritania.²⁰ Institut Mauritanien de Recherche Scientifique (IMRS) in Nouakchott, Mauritania, holds about seven thousand items in its collection.²¹

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While West African manuscripts in many public archives are generally accessible to scholars, access to some is restricted. For example, contrary to the intent of its founder, Abdul Ahad Mbakke, access to the manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Cheikhoul Khadim in Touba is restricted. The library is now treated as more of a “devotional library” open to the faithful, curious visitors, and individuals with networks within the community than a “didactic library” designed for study and research. Many learned West African Muslim families possess old and new manuscripts, which they sometimes guard jealously as part of their family heritages. Some of these West African manuscripts have circulated in the region for centuries because many Muslim scholars and their students have traveled throughout the region for family, peripatetic learning, or commercial reasons. Thus, Fuuta Jalon manuscripts produced in Guinea can be found in Senegambia, Mali, and in other West African countries. The circulation of manuscripts also results from the relocation of some scholars to new areas in the region. More recently, the manuscript collection efforts of organizations such as the Ahmad Baba Institute and the Mamma Haidara Library of Timbuktu brought together manuscripts from different parts of Mali and beyond, including from Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger, Senegal, and Mauritania.²²

Besides these West African manuscripts, the Arabic and Ajami works that Hunwick labeled “market editions” (i.e., works that have been reproduced by offsetting manuscripts in some way and enclosed in paper covers for sale in the market place) circulate in the region. As Hunwick notes, these market editions, which generally consist of lithographic, photographic, or xerographic reproductions of manuscript copies destined for sale in market places, form a half-way house between the manuscript tradition and printing proper.²³ Because these market editions circulate widely in the region, Fuuta Jalon market edition booklets in Arabic and Ajami produced by Guinean scholars can be purchased in Bamako, Mali, just as a colorful decorated Hausa copy of the Quran made in Kano, Nigeria, can be purchased in a local market in Bamako, Mali.²⁴

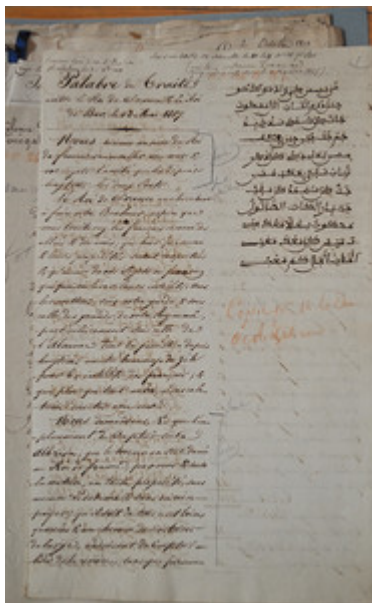
The bulk of West African manuscripts remain unidentified and uncatalogued. Due to their usual poor preservation conditions—the climate, fire, termites, water, mice, and other hazards—the oldest and most valuable ones in public and private collections are often in danger of being lost. Additionally, conflicts in the region have put some manuscripts in danger, as exemplified by those destroyed in 2013 in Timbuktu by members of the militant Islamist group Ansar Dine. Thus, the large-scale efforts of the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP), a joint initiative between the British Library and ARCADIA, must be commended for funding several West African manuscript digital preservation projects. The EAP’s recently published volume illustrates the significance and research potential of the manuscripts preserved through the program.²⁵

Archives with West African Manuscripts in Europe and the Americas

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Besides the collections of West African manuscripts held in archives in Africa, there are other important ones in a few European countries and America. Those in Europe include the manuscripts in the Fonds Archinard and Fonds Gironcourt. Louis Archinard (1850–1932) created the former. His collection contains documents of the Fuuta Tooro Tijāniyya leader, Al-Hāj Umar Taal (1797–1864), who led a jihad of the sword in West Africa. The manuscripts were confiscated during the takeover of Ségou, Mali, in 1890.²⁶ The French colonial civil agricultural engineer George de Gironcourt (1878–1960) created the latter. His collection contains 142 manuscripts he gathered in several West African countries at the beginning of the 20th century. It includes one of the oldest copies of the 17th-century *Tārīkh al-Sudān*.²⁷

The French ethnographer and colonial administrator Maurice Delafosse (1870–1926) also documented Fuuta Tooro Arabic manuscripts.²⁸ The French colonial archives at Aix-en-Provence contain a few scattered but important pages of West African texts. Though most of the archives are in French, some documents in Arabic and Ajami are included. The archives contain a bilingual French-Wolof Ajami treaty negotiation of 1817 between the king of France, Louis XVIII, and his Senegambian counterpart, the king of Bar. The document begins with the common Muslim opening doxology in Arabic and continues in Wolofal, the name for the Wolof Ajami writing system. Though the document starts with an Islamic formula, the content is not religious but purely secular. It is a business negotiation between two sovereign rulers concerning the appropriate payment for a construction of a trading post in the northern bank of the Gambia River. This treaty negotiation is the oldest Wolof Ajami document uncovered in Senegambia to date. It shows that Wolof Ajami once served as a valid diplomatic language in pre-colonial Senegambia, though its practitioners have now been treated as illiterate in official literacy statistics subsequent to the colonial experience.²⁹



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Figure 3. Treaty palaver between the King of France, Louis XVIII, and the King of Bar, May 13, 1817 (page 1).

Source: Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer, Sen/ IV/ 1.



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Figure 4. Treaty palaver between the King of France, Louis XVIII, and the King of Bar, May 13, 1817 (page 2).

Source: Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer, Sen/ IV/ 1.

Besides the archives in France, a few European institutions in England, Germany, and Ireland hold some West African manuscripts. The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London maintains old Kanem Bornu manuscripts. Leipzig University Library; the Centre for Manuscript Cultures at Universität Hamburg in Germany; and Trinity College at the University of Durbin, Ireland, hold some West African manuscripts in their collections.

The largest print archive of West African manuscripts in North America is the Melville J. Herskovits Library of

African Studies at Northwestern University. It hosts manuscripts in four collections: the 'Umar Falke Collection, the John Paden Collection, the John Hunwick Collection, and the University of Ghana Collection. The manuscripts in these collections include original copies of the Quran, market editions, and other documents. Most of the manuscripts are in Arabic, though some are written in Hausa, Fulfulde, Wolof, Dagbani, and Gonja Ajami scripts, and in other unidentified languages. The manuscripts include works of authors from Northern Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal produced in the late 19th and early 20th century. The Paden Collection includes works by Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio (1754–1817) and some of his family members. The West African manuscripts at the Herskovits Library deal with a broad range of subjects, including poetry, Arabic grammar, history, theology, Sufism, law, astronomy, numerology, and medicine and healing. They include chronicles, lists of kings and imams, and letters that provide insights on the history of Northern Ghana.³⁰ Additionally, Yale University holds a collection of market editions of Hausa, Fulfulde, and Wolof Ajami materials. The collection includes *The Book of Genesis* in Fulfulde Ajami used by Christian missionaries for proselytizing purposes.³¹

The America's Islamic Heritage Museum and Cultural Center in Washington, DC, holds some important West African Islamic manuscripts written in Arabic. Selected pages of these manuscripts are exhibited at the America's Islamic Heritage Museum and Cultural Center. Some African American private collectors also hold important West African

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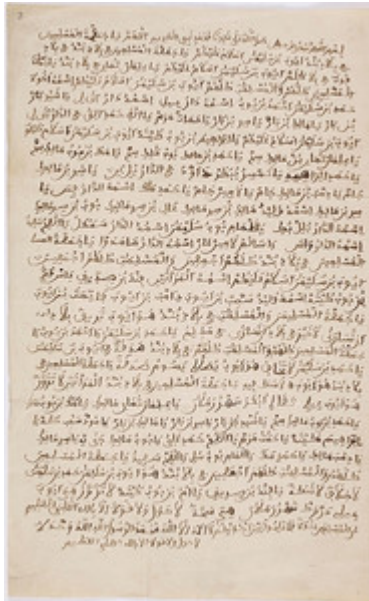
manuscripts. While enslaved Africans in America produced some of their manuscripts, they collected or purchased others from Africa. One African American private collector who holds significant West African manuscripts is Baba Kenya, the head of the Living History Heritage Project.³² West African manuscripts produced by slaves in Arabic and Ajami are attested in Brazil and Trinidad.³³ These manuscripts are primarily documents produced by enslaved Africans who acquired literacy skills in Africa prior to their enslavement. Some of these materials are held in educational institutions and in public and private collections (see Figures 5 and 6).³⁴



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Figure 5. An Arabic letter by the Fulani slave Ayuba Suleiman Diallo to his family in Bundu, Senegal (page 1). Ayub was captured on the coast of Senegal in 1731. The letter was possibly written between 1731 and 1733 while he was enslaved in Maryland.

Source: British Library, EAP387/1/5/12.



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Figure 6. An Arabic letter by the Fulani slave Ayuba Suleiman Diallo to his family in Bundu, Senegal (page 2). Ayub was captured on the coast of Senegal in 1731. The letter was possibly written between 1731 and 1733 while he was enslaved in Maryland.

Source: British Library, EAP387/1/5/12.

Digital Preservation of West African Manuscripts

Just as digital preservation has now become the optimal means to preserve and transmit West African manuscripts to future generations, microfilm was once regarded as the best method for the same purpose from the 1960s to the 1990s. The microfilm projects focused primarily on the preservation of West African manuscripts in Arabic. They include the project created at the Center of Arabic Documentation at the University of Ibadan, the Malian Arabic Manuscript Microfilm Project (MAMMP), the Oriental Manuscript Resource (OMAR) project, and the Arabic Manuscript Management System (AMMS).

The Centre of Arabic Documentation at the University of Ibadan that John Hunwick started in 1963, when he served as a lecturer in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, made microfilms of Arabic manuscripts in the 1960s. However, the microfilms are currently destroyed.³⁵ The MAMMP, which was created in the 1970s at Yale University, holds a collection of Arabic manuscripts. The microfilm consists of literary, religious, and historical manuscripts; genealogies; biographies; and local histories primarily dealing with Mali, but also related to Senegal.³⁶ OMAR is a digital repository that was created at the University of Freiburg in collaboration with the Information Technology Center of the University of Tübingen in Germany. It has in its database about 2,500 Arabic manuscripts from Mauritania in full text (totaling 134, 000 images), along

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with the corresponding bibliographical metadata. The images were based on microfilms made by Rainer Oßwald, Ulrich Rebstock, and Tobias Mayer in Mauritania between 1979 and 1997.³⁷

The AMMS, which has been expanded and renamed as the West African Arabic Manuscript Database (WAAMD), has been one of the most significant projects in the documentation and preservation of West African Arabic manuscripts. Charles Stewart created the project. He had produced important microfilms of manuscripts from Mauritania in the late 1980s. These microfilms, held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, contain, among other things, a copy of a text and commentary on the Quran and correspondence concerning the acquisition of the text, and over two thousand 19th-century Arabic manuscripts collected from several Mauritanian libraries. The manuscripts in the microfilms deal with a variety of subjects, including literature, law, religion, Arabic language, and history. Subsequently, the microfilms were digitized and placed online.³⁸ The WAAMD is now a unique Arabic-English bilingual database that provides descriptions of the collection of Arabic manuscripts in Mauritania, including descriptions of more than 19,000 manuscripts in eleven different collections. Its descriptions continue to expand with the collaboration of the Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation.³⁹ The WAAMD system has been used to catalogue several other West African collections, including the manuscripts at the IMRS and Northwestern University.⁴⁰

Digital preservations of West African manuscripts have superseded microfilms since 2000. Recently, several digital projects have focused on the preservation of West African manuscripts. These include the projects at the Library of Congress (LOC), Hill Museum and Manuscripts Library (HMML), African Online Digital Library (AODL), and School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). The LOC's digital copies were made in 2003 from the Mamma Haidara Library in Timbuktu and Cheikh Zayni Baye Library in Boujbeha, Mali. Some of the manuscripts exhibited at the LOC date from the 16th to the 18th centuries. The digital copies at the HMML were made between 2013 and 2016 from the collection of SAVAMA-DCI. The manuscripts at the LOC and HMML's digital repositories deal with an array of subjects, including arithmetic, astrology, labor and agriculture, biographies and commerce, disease and cure, ethics and peace, genealogies, gold and currency, Islamic saints, laws of inheritance, literary works, local histories, philosophy, pillars of the Islamic faith, politics in the Songhay empire, slavery, and Sufism.⁴¹

The AODL-hosted projects entitled "Saint-Louis: Religious Pluralism in the Heart of Senegal" and "Failed Islamic States in Senegambia" contain some documents in French and Arabic produced by northern Senegalese Muslims, including a digital copy of an excerpt from the famous Fuuta Tooro Fula (Pulaar) Ajami poem of 1,200 verses written by a follower of Al-Hāj Umar Taal, Mohammadou Aliou Tyam. Tyam who lived in the Umanian capital of Ségou, Mali but returned to Fuuta Tooro, Senegal after the French conquest of Ségou in 1890, wrote the poem between 1890 and 1899.⁴² Additionally, the AODL holds digital copies made through project EAP 231 (Social History of the Gambia: Rescuing an Endangered Archive, Police and Court Records), which was funded by the EAP in 2010. This project digitized important manuscript collections in English and Arabic. The

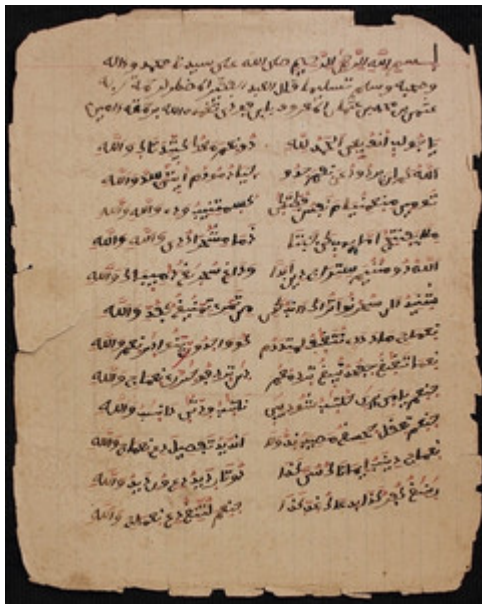
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collections include police records in English as well as records of the Gambian Muslim court in Arabic generated between 1927 and 1954. The court records reflect the struggles between elders and young people, elites and commoners, men and women. As the project leaders note, these court records are one of the few places where historians can hear Gambian women's voices.⁴³ At the SOAS, some scholars have created a digital repository that includes over three thousand folios from northern Nigeria, multiple copies of the Quran, and seven other bilingual Arabic and Old Kanembu texts. The SOAS collection spans a period of about five hundred years.⁴⁴

More recently, the British Library and ARCADIA have deployed remarkable efforts to digitally preserve West African manuscripts. The British Library currently holds the largest digital collection of West African manuscripts. The EAP has funded numerous digitization projects that have preserved a variety of colonial and noncolonial archives across Africa. These include the following West African digital preservation projects: (1) EAP 087: Northern Nigeria: Precolonial Documents Preservation Scheme; (2) EAP 231 (Social History of the Gambia: Rescuing an Endangered Archive, Police and Court Records; (3) EAP 334: Digital Preservation of Wolof Ajami Manuscripts of Senegal; (4) EAP 387: Safeguarding Fulfulde Ajami Manuscripts of Nigerian Jihad Poetry by Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio and Contemporaries; (5) EAP 488: Major Project to Digitise and Preserve the Manuscripts of Djenné, Mali; and (6) EAP 535: Northern Nigeria: Precolonial Documents Preservation Scheme.⁴⁵

These digital projects have preserved thousands of pages of West African manuscripts written in Arabic and in Fulfulde, Hausa, and Wolof Ajami scripts produced between the 18th and the 20th century. The Nigerian manuscripts include pre-colonial correspondence of the leaders of Kano and Katsina; poems of Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio and his daughter, Nana Asma'u (1793–1864); writings of Uthman Dan Fodio's main companions; local chronicles; legal documents; and religious literature. Some of the documents reflect the economic and political history of the Sokoto caliphate and British rule in Northern Nigeria (see Figure 7).⁴⁶

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Figure 7. A sample Fulfulde Ajami poem from the collection of the works of Uthman Dan Fodio and others.

Source: British Library, EAP387/1/5/12: "Wallaahi Wallaahi (Late 18th century, early 19th century)."

Because Ajami sources have traditionally been neglected in the studies on sub-Saharan Africa and in preservation efforts of West African manuscripts, despite the fact that many African Muslim scholars have been bilingual or multilingual and have produced works of equal importance in Arabic and their local Ajami writing systems, the African Ajami Library (AAL) was founded in 2011 at Boston University in order to focus on the digital preservation and the study of Africa's Ajami manuscripts. The goals set

by the AAL team include complementing the academic works on sub-Saharan Africa based on Arabic and colonial sources by studying, preserving digitally, and making freely available Ajami manuscripts from all the regions of the continent, so that Ajami documents are no longer treated as footnotes but as major African sources of knowledge. AAL currently holds a copy of the Wolof Ajami materials digitized through the EAP 334 project funded by the EAP in 2010.⁴⁷

The AAL's Wolof collection consists of Ajami manuscripts of the Murīdiyya Sufi order of Senegal. It holds 5,494 pages of Ajami materials written by members of the Sufi order (see Figure 8). The manuscripts encompass copies of works by four Ajami master poets: Moor Kayre (1869–1951), Samba Jaara Mbay (1870–1917), Mbay Jaxate (1875–1954), and Muusaa Ka (1889–1963). These four bilingual scholars initiated the Ajami poetic tradition of the Murīdiyya in order to disseminate among the masses the teachings of their leader, Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba (1853–1927).



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Figure 8. A devotional Wolof Ajami poem by Mbay Jaxate (1875–1954) with the customary Muslim opening and closing doxology in Arabic, “Mar naa te xiif naa . . .” (I am hungry and thirsty . . .).

Source: British Library, EAP334/4: Serigne Mbaye Diakhate Siradji Collection.

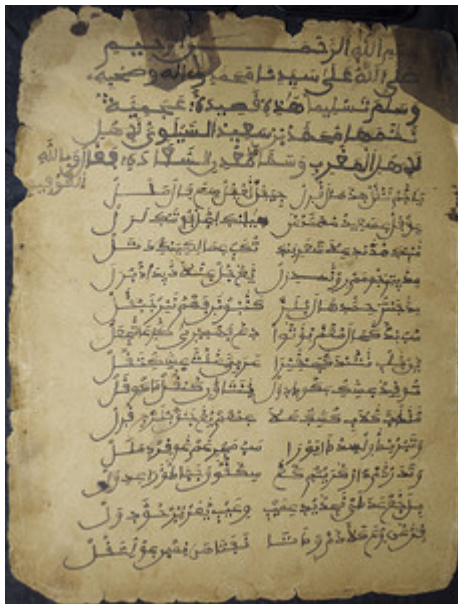
The four Ajami poets composed numerous poems in the lingua franca of Wolof. They were designed to be read, recited, and chanted as a mass communication strategy in order to convey to Wolof masses the ethos of the Murīdiyya. These works continue to be used in Murīd communities at home and abroad. The manuscripts in the collection include satirical, polemical, and protest poetry, as well as biographies, eulogies, genealogies, talismanic resources, therapeutic medical manuals, historical records,

speeches, instructions on codes of conduct, and a translation with commentaries of the Quran in Wolof Ajami script.⁴⁸

Additionally, AAL hosts 1,071 digital pages of Hausa Ajami texts (mostly market editions) currently in use in northern Nigeria. Besides the religious subjects in the Hausa collection, the documents include local recipes for wealth, bravery, popularity, good health, protection from evil spirits, reconciling disputing couples, enhancing women’s and men’s sexual performance, winning court cases, divination and geomancy, and diagnosis and medicinal treatments of various illnesses. Also included are the *Book of Genesis* in Hausa Ajami used by Reverend Dantine Garba Malumfashi and his congregation since 2006 and an Ajami version of Muammar Gaddafi’s *Green Book* in which he discusses his social and political vision and rejects capitalism and modern liberal democracy.⁴⁹

Another collection of 1,216 pages of Ajami materials in Fuuta Jalon Fula (Pular) collected from Guinean immigrant communities in Dakar, Senegal, has been added to the AAL repository. This Ajami collection contains manuscripts, excerpts from a notebook for freights and money transfers of Fuuta Jalon immigrants in Dakar to their relatives in different parts of Guinea, a shopkeeper’s notebook with the debts of his customers, a recipe for successful hunting, and a Fula dialectology treatise dealing with the dialects of the Fula language. These materials show that Ajami is a living tradition among the Fuuta Jalon Fula.⁵⁰

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Figure 9. An excerpt from a thirty-page poem copied by Sayku Salmaana Bassara in 1940 from the work of the great Fuuta Jalon Ajami scholar, Cerno Samba Mombeyaa (1755–1852). The poem begins with the customary Muslim opening doxology and defends the use of Fuuta Jalon Fula for proselytizing purposes.

Source: Fuuta Jalon Pular Ajami Manuscripts.

The AAL team is currently working on the preservation of Mandinka Ajami manuscripts of Senegambia. One fascinating Mandinka Ajami manuscript to be included in the AAL's upcoming Mandinka Ajami collection is a poem digitized from the private library of Imam Lamine Cissé. The poem reflects the belief in the binary potency of words in Senegambia. Because of World War II's negative consequences in his community in Sédhiou in southern Senegal, Mamadou Cissé (1897–1993), the father of Imam

Lamine Cissé, who was a revered Quranic teacher, wrote the Ajami poem in 1942 as an imprecation designed to cause the death of Adolf Hitler (whom he called *Ikileer*) and the destruction of his forces. The poem was Mamadou Cissé's war effort.

The poem was an act of *danko* (from the verb *dankaro*), the Mandinka word for unleashing of the negative power of words to bring misfortune to an opponent. The word contrasts with *duwa* ("supplication" from the Arabic *du'ā'*), which entails the release of the positive energy embedded in words in order to bring blessings or fortune to people. This belief in the binary potency of words is not specific to the Mandinka people. In the Wolof society, the same belief is reflected in the contrastive meaning between the words *ñaan* (invocation for blessings or fortune) and *móolu* (cursing for misfortune). Because of the belief in the positive and negative potency of words, children are socialized in many communities in Senegambia to be respectful and avoid offending parents, elders, strangers, and learned and religious people—who are all believed to have the power to use words for both constructive and destructive purposes.

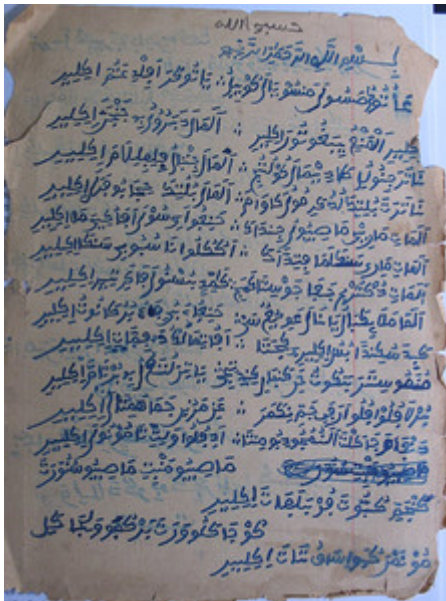
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Figure 10. Imam Lamine Cissé of Ziguinchor, Senegal, getting ready to read the excerpt of the Mandinka Ajami poem “Ikileer” (Cursing Hitler) written by his late father Mamadou Cissé.

Courtesy of Imam Lamine Cissé. Photo by Fallou Ngom, July 10, 2016.



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Figure 11. A copy of the Mandinka Ajami poem “Ikileer” (Cursing Hitler) written by Mamadou Cissé, Imam Lamine Cissé’s late father.

Courtesy of Imam Lamine Cissé. Photo by Fallou Ngom, July 10, 2016.

Beyond the West African Ajami manuscripts, an important set of sixty-eight Sorabe manuscripts (Malagasy Ajami) in PDF files (totaling 6,140 pages) dealing with traditional Malagasy Islamic medicine and other unstudied subjects donated by the French anthropologist, Phillip Beaujard, and digital images of Hausa Ajami texts collected by Nikolai Dobronravin will be added to the AAL repository.⁵¹

Africa’s Sources of Knowledge Digital Library (ASK-DL) at Harvard University has also contributed to the preservation of West African Ajami manuscripts. ASK-DL holds over four hundred pages of recently produced Ajami texts in Wolof, two varieties of Fula (Pular or the Guinean Fuuta Jalon variety and Pulaar/Tukulóor or the Senegalese Fuuta Tooro variety), and Mandinka. The Wolof materials in ASK-DL encompass a notebook with the business transactions of a Wolof shopkeeper and various other manuscripts produced by followers of the Murīdiyya, Tijāniyya,

and Laayeen Sufi orders of Senegal. They also include the Mbakke Madina family genealogy, which indicates the first member of Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba’s Fulani family

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who became fully Wolofized and spoke Wolof as a mother tongue. The manuscripts contain a speech that Sëriñ Abdul Ahad Mbakke delivered in 1976 and the last poignant letter a son received from his father before he passed away. The ASK-DL collections contain a manuscript that introduces Ajami users to Arabic grammar, a medicinal manual, and a tribute to the mother of Sëriñ Mustafaa Si, a major Senegalese Tijāniyya figure.⁵²

The Pular materials in ASK-DL include a letter sent by a Fuuta Jalon man who lived in the southern city of Ziguinchor, Senegal, to family members in Côte d'Ivoire to keep them updated about his life and the wedding of his sister.⁵³ These Ajami texts are excellent illustrations of the secular and transnational dimension of Ajami literacy in West Africa. The Fuuta Tooro Ajami materials in ASK-DL were collected in the northern city of Saint-Louis, Senegal. They include a poem in which the writer, a Quranic teacher who lives in Saint-Louis, recalls his Quranic school years and praises his former classmates. The Fuuta Tooro Pulaar Ajami materials include excerpts from a bookseller's record book, which contains an inventory of the books in his shop, their prices, and other financial transactions.⁵⁴

The Mandinka materials in ASK-DL include a list of customers who sought Islamic divination services (Arabic: *Istikhāra*) from late Imam Nimbaly Thiam of Casamance, Senegal, who died in the 2015 Mina stampede in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The material documents the names of his male and female customers for a period of over forty years. The list of customers reflects the religious and ethnic diversity of his community. His clients included Muslims, Christians, and followers of indigenous religions from the ethnic groups of the southern Casamance region of Senegal. The Ajami manuscripts from Mandinka scholars in the ASK-DL repository include excerpts from an anthology of devotional poems with commentaries in Arabic.⁵⁵

Besides the digital preservation efforts discussed above, some West African religious organizations have recently begun to digitize some of the Arabic and Ajami works of their religious leaders (especially works in market editions) for proselytizing purposes. The creators of these digital archives use the Internet for wider dissemination of the teachings of their religious leaders and movements. Such websites include two digital repositories created by the followers of Murīdiyya. Joseph Hill compiled the texts in the digital repository of the Senegalese Tijāniyya branch of Shaykh Ibrahima Ñas (1900–1975). These digital repositories include market edition copies of devotional materials in Arabic and Ajami, published translations in French of some of the Arabic works of religious leaders, and some Latin script transcriptions of some Ajami texts.⁵⁶

Finally, though the traditions that generated Islamic manuscripts in Arabic and Ajami are older and more extensive, there are other manuscripts written in indigenous scripts in the Western region of Africa. With support from the EAP, Konrad Tuchscherer digitized thousands of manuscripts written in the Bamum script invented in Cameroon. The Bamum manuscripts were produced between 1896 and 1975. Their contents include chronicles of the arrival of the first German military officer and trader, the founding of the Bamum kingdom, the invention of the Bamum religion (which blends Christian,

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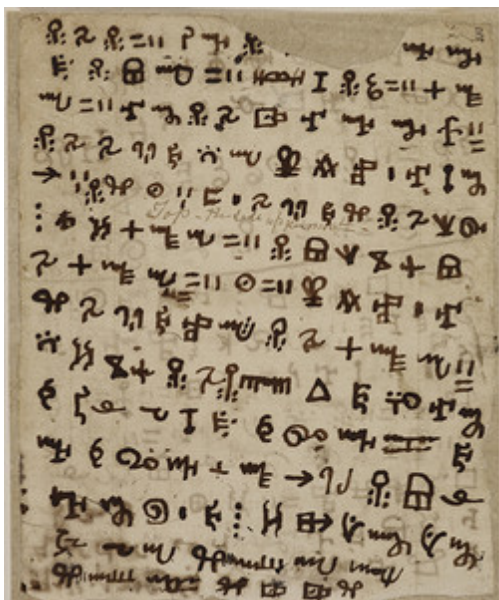
Islamic, and indigenous religious practices), traditional medicine, and even the art of love.⁵⁷ There are a few other digital archives with manuscripts written in Vai script (invented in Liberia likely in the 1830s to write the Vai language) and Garay script (invented in Senegal in the 1960s to write Wolof).⁵⁸



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Figure 12. Sample Bamum texts digitized by Konrad Tuchscherer in Cameroon.

Source: British Library, EAP051/1/1/1/3, "Bamum Manuscript Collection of the Archives du Palais des Rois Bamoun (APRB) in the Royal Palace of Bamum Kings in Foumba, Cameroon (c. 1896-1975)."



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Figure 13. A sample Vai text produced in the 1840s. British naval officer Lieutenant Frederick Forbes

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collected the text in 1849 in Liberia and sent it to the British Museum.

Source: British Library, MS 17817A, B.

Besides these, there are other indigenous scripts in West Africa, including N'KO (invented in Guinea

in the late 1940s for Mande languages) and Tifinagh (the traditional writing system of the Amazigh [Berber] people). Though manuscripts written in these scripts are difficult to find, the African Language Materials Archive (ALMA) and ASK-DL hold a few digital copies of published texts in these scripts.⁵⁹

Conclusion: West African Manuscripts as Key Sources of Knowledge

This non-exhaustive discussion of West African manuscripts illustrates the breadth and depth of the written intellectual traditions that emerged in West Africa prior to the colonial encounter and endure to this day. Beyond tangible corrections to common stereotypes on sub-Saharan Africa, as a land devoid of written intellectual traditions, these manuscripts offer unique opportunities to access the rich sources of knowledge hitherto neglected in the studies on Africa. If they are carefully studied, these manuscripts will enrich the works of many scholars of Africa in the humanities and social sciences, and force revisions of many previously held beliefs and assumptions about sub-Saharan Africa.

While the West African manuscripts archives are varied, they constitute a drop in the ocean of documents that remain unknown outside the communities of their owners. While many Kanuri, Fulfulde, Hausa, and Wolof manuscripts have been preserved and made available to scholars, Ajami manuscripts in Yoruba and Mande languages (including Eastern Maninka of Guinea, Western Mandinka of Senegambia, Jakhanke, Jula, Susu, and Soninke), for example, remain some of the least preserved and least accessible to scholars. Yet as Sanni, Ogunbiyi, Jawondo, Coleman, Giesing and Vydrin, Schaffer, and Tamari show, manuscripts written in Yoruba and Mande languages are key sources of knowledge on the Yoruba and different Mande communities spread across West Africa.⁶⁰ Because the Yoruba and Mande people are two of the largest West African ethnolinguistic groups with important histories and polities, collecting, cataloguing, and digitally preserving their documents are urgent matters. The Yoruba and Mande written sources are laden with insights that will undoubtedly enrich the works of many anthropologists, historians, Islamicists, linguists, and literary scholars who specialize on West Africa.

However, the digitization efforts must not be restricted to Islamic sources in Arabic and Ajami, colonial sources, and African language sources in Roman script. They should be extended to the manuscripts in indigenous scripts, including those written by the Edo people of Nigeria and Benin's traditional chromatographic system, one of the world's unique and little known color-based writing systems. Though Islamic sources are more

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widespread and numerous, they are not the only useful sources of African knowledge. As the Bamum manuscripts demonstrate, indigenous scripts form an equally important component of Africa's sources of knowledge. Therefore, whether in current use or not, they must be catalogued, preserved, and cross-pollinated with (1) Islamic sources in Arabic and Ajami, (2) colonial sources and African language sources in Roman script, and (3) oral sources. The cross-pollination of these sources will open access to local knowledge systems and frameworks. African scholars like Muusaa Ka and many of his counterparts emerged from epistemological traditions that appreciate both written and oral traditions, which they treat as complementary, not mutually exclusive or neatly separated dichotomies. Thus, digital technology offers unique opportunities to preserve sub-Saharan Africa's precious manuscripts that bear witness to its age-old and enduring vibrant written traditions. It makes broadly available the primary data needed for a better understanding of African knowledge systems, preoccupations, societies, cultures, and histories in the 21st century.

Acknowledgments

The author is indebted to Karen Barton (Northern Colorado University, USA), Babacar Dieng (Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis, Senegal), and Sam Niang (Bibliothèque Cheikhoul Khadim, Touba, Senegal) for their invaluable assistance.

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Notes:

(1.) The large corpus of West African manuscripts written in English, French, and Portuguese, as well as African language materials written in Roman script, deserve an article. The Endangered Archives Programme has preserved some of these collections.

(2.) For more on the etymology of the word "Ajami," see Fallou Ngom and Alex Zito, "Sub-Saharan African Literature: 'Ajami,'" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam III*, ed. Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 145-152.

(3.) John O. Hunwick, *West Africa, Islam, and the Arab World* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), 53-62.

(4.) For more insights on the origins of the Arabic script, see Peter T. Daniels, "The Type and Spread of Arabic Script," in *The Arabic Script in Africa: Studies in the Use of a Writing System*, ed. Meikal Mumin and Kees Versteegh (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 25-39.

(5.) See Andrea Brigaglia, "Central Sudanic Arabic Scripts (part 1): The Popularization of Kanawī Script," *Islamic Africa* 2.2 (2011): 51-85; Andrea Brigaglia and Mauro Nobili, "Central Sudanic Arabic Script (part 2): Barnāwi," *Islamic Africa* 4.2 (2013): 195-223; and Dmitry Bondarev, "Multiglossia in West African Manuscripts: The Case of Borno, Nigeria," in *Manuscript Cultures: Mapping the Field*, ed. Jörg B. Quenzer, Dmitry Bondarev, and Jan-Ulrich Sobisch (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 113-155.

(6.) For a list of over eighty African languages with attested use of Ajami, see Meikal Mumin, "The Arabic Script in Africa: Understudied Literacy," in *The Arabic Script in Africa: Studies in the Use of a Writing System*, ed. Meikal Mumin and Kees Versteegh (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 63-76.

(7.) Ousmane Oumar Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 25.

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(8.) See Mauro Nobili, "Manuscript Culture of West Africa," *Manuscript Culture* 5 (2012–2015): 42–51. Nobili provides in his article a comprehensive assessment of the works of individuals and organizations involved in the preservation and study of West African Islamic manuscripts along with the collections, published handlists, inventories, surveys, and catalogues. For more on the production of authors from Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Niger, and Ghana, see John O. Hunwick et al., *Writings of Western Sudanic Africa, Vol.4* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2003).

(9.) For a fascinating read on Haidara's role in saving some of the Timbuktu manuscripts from al-Qaida in 2012, see Joshua Hammer, *The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu and Their Race to Save the World's Most Precious Manuscripts* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016).

(10.) See Nobili, "Manuscript Culture of West Africa," 43; and Sophie Sarin, "In the Shadow of Timbuktu: The Manuscripts of Djenné," in *From Dust to Digital: Ten Years of the Endangered Archives Programme*, ed. Maja Kominko (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), 173–188. For an electronic copy, see "In the Shadow of Timbuktu: The Manuscripts of Djenné."

(11.) See David Gutelius, "Newly Discovered 10th/16th Century Ajami Manuscript in Niger and Kel Tamasheq History," *Saharan Studies Association Newsletter* 8 (2000): 6; and Seyni Moumouni and Viera Pawlikova-Vilhanova, eds., *Le Temps des Oulèmas: Les Manuscrits Africains comme Sources Historiques* (Niamey: Université Abdou Moumouni-Collection Études Nigériennes, Numéro 61, 2009).

(12.) Nobili, "Manuscript Culture of West Africa," 44–45. For a survey of manuscript repositories in Nigeria, see "Report of a Survey Tour to Northern Nigeria, May 3–19, 2007."

(13.) See "Arewa House Arabic Manuscript Collections."

(14.) Ivor Wilks copied 485 items from the University of Ghana's collection that he donated to the Herskovits Library at Northwestern University. See "The University of Ghana Collection."

(15.) For the catalogues of IFAN, see Thierno Diallo, Mame Bara Mbacké, Mirjana Trifkovic, and Boubacar Barry, *Catalogue des manuscrits de l'IFAN* (Dakar: Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire, 1966); El Hadji Ravane Mbaye and Babacar Mbaye, "Supplément au catalogue des manuscrits de l'IFAN," *Bulletin de l'IFAN* 37.4 (1975): 878–896; and Khadim Mbacké and Thierno Ka, "Nouveau catalogue des manuscrits de l'IFAN," *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara* 8 (1994): 165–199. For extensive resources on the lives, cultures, histories, and Ajami works of key Fuuta Jalon pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial scholars, see "WebFuuta/Islam/Pular Ajami."

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(16.) For insights on the work of Shaykh Muusaa Kamara and Xaali Majaxte Kala, see David Robinson, “Un Historien et Anthropologue Sénégalais: Shaikh Musa Kamara,” *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 28.109 (1998): 89–116; and Claudine Guerresh, “Le Livre Métrique Mubayyin al-Ishkāl du Cadi Madiakhaté Kala,” *Bulletin de l’Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire* 36 (1974): 714–832.

(17.) See *Perspective Hagiographique de l’Art en Islam et sa Réhabilitation par le Cheikh*, (Dakar: Comité Scientifique du Dahira des Étudiants Mourides de l’Université de Dakar, 1991).

(18.) For more on the Ajamization framework and processes, see Fallou Ngom, *Muslims beyond the Arab World: The Odyssey of Ajami and the Muridiyya* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 19–20 and 247–250.

(19.) See Louis Verner, “Mauritania’s Manuscripts.”

(20.) Ibid.

(21.) See Louis Verner, “Mauritania’s Manuscripts.” For more on major Senegambian scholars and their works, see Ousmane O. Kane and John O. Hunwick, “Senegambia II: Other Tijani Writers,” in *Arabic Literature of Africa, Vol. 4: The Writings of Western Sudanic Africa*, compiled by John O. Hunwick et al. (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 308–395; Ousmane O. Kane, “Senegambia III: Writers of the Murīd Ṭarīqa,” in *Arabic Literature of Africa, Vol. 4*, 396–462.

(22.) See “Tombouctou Manuscript Project.”

(23.) See John O. Hunwick, “Catalog of Arabic Script Manuscripts at Northwestern University,” *Sudanic Africa* 4 (1993): 210–211; and John O. Hunwick and R. S. O’Fahey, *Arabic Literature of Africa, Vol. 2: Writings of Central Sudanic Africa*, ed. John O. Hunwick (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1995), 7–8.

(24.) In July 2014, I purchased in a market in Bamako, Mali, several Fuuta Jalon Ajami market edition texts from Guinea and a colorful copy of the Quran made in Kano, Nigeria.

(25.) See Maja Kominko, ed., *Dust to Digital: Ten Years of the Endangered Archives Programme* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2015).

(26.) See “Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF)—Fonds Archinard.” Also for the so-called *Petit Fonds Archinard*, which is different from the *Fonds Archinard* at the BnF, see Nobili, “Manuscript Culture of West Africa,” 47. For more on Al-Hāj Umar’s holy war, see David Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal: The Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford Studies in African Affairs, 1985).

(27.) For more on the Gironcourt collection, see Mauro Nobili, *Catalogue des Manuscrits Arabes du Fonds de Gironcourt (Afrique de l’Ouest) de l’Institut de France* (Roma: Istituto

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per l'Oriente C. A. Nallino, 2013); and Mauro Nobili, "Arabic Scripts in West African Manuscripts: A Tentative Classification from the de Gironcourt Manuscript Collection," *Islamic Africa* 2.1 (2011): 105–133.

(28.) Maurice Delafosse, *Chronique du Fouta Sénégalais, Translated from Two Arabic Manuscripts by Siré Abbâs Soh with Assistance of Henri Gaden* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1913). For many other works from West Africa that have been edited and translated, see Bernard Salvaing, "À propos d'un projet en cours d'édition de manuscrits arabes de Tombouctou et d'ailleurs."

(29.) See *Palabre de Traité entre le Roi de France et le Roi de Bar*, May 13, 1817, Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer, Sen/IV/1. Also see, Ngom, *Muslims beyond the Arab World*, 10 and 255; and Fallou Ngom, "Murid Ajami Sources of Knowledge: The Myth and the Reality," in *From Dust to Digital: Ten Years of the Endangered Archives Programme*, ed. Maja Kominko (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), 123.

(30.) See "Arabic Manuscripts from West Africa: A Catalog of the Herskovits Library Collection," 2016.

(31.) See *Deftere Futturde—The Book of Genesis in Fulfulde Ajami* (New Haven, CT: Yale Ajami Collection, n.d.). See also a reference to Saint John's Gospel in Hausa Ajami created in 1899.

(32.) "The Living History Heritage Project."

(33.) See Nikolai Dobronravin, "Literacy among Muslims in the Nineteenth Century Trinidad and Brazil," in *Slavery, Islam and Diaspora*, ed. Behnaz A. Mirzai, Ismael Musah Montana, and Paul E. Lovejoy (Trenton: African World Press, 2009), 217–236.

(34.) See a non-exhaustive list of works on literate West African Muslim slaves in the Americas and their writings: Allen Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1988); Michael A. Gomez, "Muslims in Early America," *Journal of Southern History* 60.4 (1994): 671–710; and Ivor Wilks, "Abu Bakr al-Siddiq of Timbuktu," in *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*, ed. Philip. D. Curtin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 152–169.

(35.) See Graziano Krätli, "West African Arabic Manuscript Heritage at the Crossroads: Dust to Digital or Digital Dust," *Anuari de Filologia Antiqua et Mediaevalia* 5 (2015): 46; Nobili, "Manuscript Culture of West Africa," 44–45; and "Report of a Survey Tour to Northern Nigeria, May 3–19, 2007."

(36.) See <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001843291>.

(37.) See "Oriental Manuscript Resource (OMAR)."

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(38.) See “Charles C. Stewart Papers, ca. 1800–ca.1910, 1946–53, 1988.”

(39.) See Nobili, 44–45. For complete references to the handlists and catalogues of manuscripts in many libraries in Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal published by the Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, see Nobili, 48–51.

(40.) See “West African Arabic Manuscript Project.”

(41.) See <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/mali/mali-exhibit.html> and <http://www.hmml.org/the-timbuktu-manuscripts.html>; and <http://www.hmml.org/the-timbuktu-manuscripts.html>. The following collection was brought to my attention, but the link is not working: http://ecollections.crl.edu/cdm4/index_timbuktu.php?CISOROOT=/timbuktu.

(42.) See “Saint-Louis: Religious Pluralism in the Heart of Senegal,” and “Failed Islamic States in Senegambia.”

(43.) See “Banjul Muslims and Islamic Court,” and “EAP 231: Social History of the Gambia: Rescuing an Endangered Archive, Police and Court Records.”

(44.) See “Early Nigerian Quranic Manuscripts.”

(45.) For the list of digital archives collected from around the world funded by British Library and ARCADIA Endangered Archives Programme, see “View Collections: Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe, Oceania,” See also Djenné.

(46.) See “EAP535: Northern Nigeria: Precolonial Documents Preservation Scheme-Major Project.”. Besides the Ajami works of Nana Asma’u, which are widely known thanks to the work of Beverly Mack and Jean Boyd (see the further reading list), there is a limited body of Ajami works by female writers in the Murīdiyya. These include the poetry of the following daughters of Shaykh Amadu Bamba: Soxna Maimuna Kubra Mbakke, Soxna Maimuna Sakhir Mbakke, and Soxna Muslimatu Mbakke. Their manuscripts remain unpreserved and largely unknown to academics.

(47.) See “African Ajami Library” and “EAP 334: Digital Preservation of Wolof Ajami Manuscripts of Senegal.”

(48.) For more on the Murid Ajami tradition and the works of the four master poets, see “EAP 334: Digital Preservation of Wolof Ajami Manuscripts of Senegal” and Ngom, *Muslims beyond the Arab World*, 19–34.

(49.) See “Hausa Manuscripts.”. With support from Boston University’s African Studies Center, Mustapha Kurfi collected the Hausa materials under the supervision of Fallou Ngom.

(50.) See “Fuuta Jalon Pular Ajami Manuscripts.”. With support from Boston University’s African Studies Center, Mouhamadou Lamine Diallo collected the Fuuta Jalon Ajami materials under the supervision of Fallou Ngom.

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(51.) Thanks to Philip Beaujard and Nikolai Dobronravin for their contribution to the African Ajami Library at Boston University.

(52.) See “Wolof Documents.”

(53.) “Personal Letters of Mamadou Korcka Diallo.”

(54.) See “Personal Poems in Pulaar Ajami” and “Business Records of a Pulaar Bookseller.”

(55.) “Mandinka Collection.”

(56.) Peter Limb, “Islamic Africa: A Selected, Annotated Webography,” *Islamic Africa* 5.1 (2014): 98; “Khassida en PDF”; “Drouss.org”; and “Medina Baay Research Association.” This last website was down at author’s last review.

(57.) See “EAP051: Bamum Script and Archives Project: Saving Africa’s Written Heritage.”

(58.) For sample Garay and Vai manuscripts digitized by Charles Riley, see <https://catalogingafricana.wordpress.com/author/clriley/>.

(59.) See <http://alma.matrix.msu.edu/alma-authors#indigenous> and <http://www.ask-dl.fas.harvard.edu/collection>. For more on indigenous African writing systems, see Helma Pasch, “Competing Scripts: The Introduction of Roman Alphabet in Africa,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 191 (2008): 65-109; and Tal Tamari, “Literacy and Indigenous Scripts: Precolonial West Africa,” in *Encyclopedia of African History: Volumes 1-3*, ed. Kevin Shillington (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2005), 839-841.

(60.) See Amidu Sanni, “The Indigenization of an Intellectual Tradition: A New Tradition in Contemporary Islam in Yorubaland (Nigeria),” *Contemporary Islam* 3.2 (Fall 2001): 31-487; Isaac Adejoju Ogunbiyi, “The Search for Yoruba Orthography since the 1840s: Obstacles to the Choice of the Arabic Script,” *Sudanic Africa* 14 (2003): 77-102; Jawondo Ibrahim Abdul Ganiy, “The Role of Ajami Script in the Production of Knowledge in Ilorin Emirate since the 19th Century,” *Ilorin Journal of History and International Studies* 1 (2010): 36-51; Coleman Donaldson, “Jula Ajami in Burkina Faso: A Grassroots Literacy in the Former Kong Empire,” *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* 28.2 (2013): 18-35; Cornelia Giesing and Valentin Vydrine, *Ta:rikh Mandinka de Bijini (Guinée-Bissau): La Mémoire des Mandinka et des Sòninkee du Kaabu* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2007); Matt Schaffer, “‘Pakao Book’: Expansion and Social Structure by Virtue of an Indigenous Manuscript,” *African Languages* 1 (1975): 96-115; and Tal Tamari, “Cinq Textes Bambara en Caractères Arabes: Présentation, Traduction, Analyse du Système Graphémique,” *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara* 8 (1994): 97-121.

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