



OUR AFRICAN AJAMI PROJECTS:

Our project *Ajami Literacy and the Expansion of Literacy and Islam: The Case of West Africa*, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, digitized a unique selection of manuscripts in Ajami (African language texts written with a modified Arabic script) in four major West African languages: Hausa, Mandinka, Fula, and Wolof. Our team of scholars transcribed and translated the texts into English and French, prepared commentaries, and created related multimedia resources. The Ajami literatures that have developed in sub-Saharan Africa hold a wealth of knowledge on the history, politics, cultures, and intellectual traditions of the region, but are generally unknown. The history of Ajami refutes the claims that Africa lacks written traditions. This project is the first systematic comparative approach of several major African languages written in Ajami, and marks the first time that such varied African Ajami documents have been translated into two major European languages and made accessible to communities globally. The project has a unique participatory quality—with the help of our field teams and Ajami experts in Africa and the United States, it aims to facilitate interpretive knowledge about the meaning and purpose of Ajami texts, and the voices of the people who have written, own, and use them. The collection can be accessed at <https://sites.bu.edu/nehajami/>

Our second project, *Readers in Ajami (RIA)*, is developing specialized Ajami Readers in Hausa, Wolof, and Mandinka with a multimedia companion website. It aims to provide students, language teachers, scholars, and professionals with the necessary linguistic and cultural skills to engage Ajami users of West Africa. The project resources cover a range of fields: business and economy, health and medicine, agriculture, human rights, politics, and diplomacy. The project will produce a methodology that can be replicated for other world languages with dual literacy systems.

Our project *Digital Preservation of Fuuta Jalon Scholars' Materials in Senegal and Guinea* received a research grant from the Endangered Archives Programme of the British Library. It will digitally preserve 50,000 pages of endangered Ajami and Arabic manuscripts produced by Fuuta Jalon scholars who lived between the 18th and 20th centuries in the Republic of Guinea. The collection will be the largest digital record of such materials in the world.

For more info, please contact Fallou Ngom (fngom@bu.edu) or Daivi Rodima-Taylor (rodima@bu.edu).

