Arabic-Afrikaans: A Vehicle for Identity Formation rather than Integration

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0. Introduction

South Africa's Muslims, though numerically small in number in relation to the total population, have made a lasting contribution in different sectors of society. Their footprints have been noted not only in the building arena as carpenters and bricklayers, the clothing industry as tailors and dressmakers, and the cuisine sector as great cooks and bakers, but also in the construction of a creolized Dutch, namely the Afrikaans language; a language that was claimed to have been the sole invention of the White Afrikaner 'Boers' at the Cape. Even though some mid 20th century Afrikaner scholars such as Adrianus van Selms and Pieter Muller had already observed and acknowledged the Cape Muslims' linguistic contribution by the 1950s, most of the Whites preferred to ignore this. In the opinion these Boers, they were the ones who socially engineered the creation and development of this language from Dutch. Overwhelming evidence produced by Achmat Davids and the mentioned Afrikaner scholars suggests that the slave community, of whom the Cape Muslims - whose origins have been traced to different parts of the Eastern world: Indonesian archipelago, Eastern part of the South Asian coast and the East African coast (Bradlow and Cairns 1978: 86-92) - formed an integral part during the 17th and 18th centuries, was equally responsible for bringing Afrikaans into life.

The Cape Muslims in particular creatively used their sacred script, namely Arabic, as a tool to mainly translate their religious texts into and occasionally write their grocery lists in Afrikaans; this was especially so after Melayu, the language of that was spoken and used by the early members of the slave community, slowly disappeared from the social scene and of which only remnants have been left behind. These translations came to form

the bulk of the literature that came to form what Van Selms aptly described as 'Arabic-Afrikaans;' a term that could not find an appropriate replacement. The late 19th century Boers were totally oblivious of the fact that members of the Cape Muslims creatively applied themselves to preserve their identity by further reinforcing it through the use of this important script; a script that was largely employed in the home-based and mosque based *madrasas* (Muslim schools) as well as in the growing number of *masjids* (mosques) that emerged throughout the 19th century. They ploughed their energies in this direction because they desired to remain loyal to their faith and re-affirm their religious identity amidst a predominantly hostile Christian environment in which their faith in Islam was scorned and considered 'evil.' Instead of using the Afrikaans language to integrate and assimilate, they employed it to maintain their distance from the colonial authorities so as not to be integrated and absorbed into the dominant and imposing White, secular culture that was effectively separated religion from public life.

This article recollects the story of the 'Arabic-Afrikaans' manuscripts and reaffirms the arguments that have been made by Adrianus van Selms and others that the Arabic-Afrikaans effectively contributed towards the shaping and the development of the Afrikaans language. It, however, goes further by stressing the fact that it not only unified the Cape Muslims, despite the theological disagreements that took place occasionally among them, but it also bolstered their identity and assisted them to remain at a relative distance from their colonial masters and their predominantly white culture; this attitude generally secured them from any form of assimilation into colonial culture. In fact, what the Cape Muslims attracted individuals from the colony to Islam and this consequently led to a steady increase in the number of adherents of Islam. Nonetheless, the article revisits the formation of Arabic-Afrikaans literature to show how the Cape Muslims added substantially to South African literary history and the available literature. The article, which makes use of the extant evidence, argues that – in spite of the process of re-writing of South Africa's literary history during the current period of democracy - no concerted effort has been made by South Africa's (White or Black) literary historians to insert this important literary genre into South African literary history. In the process of demonstrating these issues, it *en passant* mentions the efforts that are being made to

preserve the extant texts and energies that are being ploughed in to have it fully accepted and integrated into South Africa's literary history. The article begins its journey by sketching the socio-historical and linguistic context within which the Cape Muslim community emerged and within which some of the members created and developed the Arabic-Afrikaans literature. But before embarking on this journey it should be stated that 'identity' as a theoretical concept that frames the arguments in this article will not be unpacked and explained but should be kept in mind throughout as the story of the formation of Arabic-Afrikaans is being unfolded.

1. Socio-Historical and Linguistic Context

South African Muslim scholarship associated with the production of Islamic literature took a while to emerge and mature. This may be attributed to numerous factors; one of the key factors was the fact that the socio-political and economic circumstances were totally hostile towards the Muslims since their arrival at the Cape shores in the mid 17th century until the first few years of the 19th century when religious freedom was granted in 1804. Living under unfavorable conditions the nascent Muslim community had to struggle to hold on to their religious identity. During the early years the slave community and political exiles were forced to abide by the rules and regulations of the colonial authorities as pointed out by Robert Shell (1993) in his article 'From Rites to Rebellion.' But even though they suffered and were disadvantaged in these circumstances they sought innovative ways of demonstrating their devotedness towards their religion.

Since the colonial authorities prohibited the slaves and their offspring from being educated in the colonial educational institutions, it was in fact an indirect advantage to the Muslim slaves. From among the latter there were those who possessed the skills to read and write; these skills they used in informal and secret surroundings to educate and empower their fellow slaves. The informal 'educational' circle was one of the many strategies used and from among the few methods that provided the necessary sustenance to survive and overcome the harsh colonial surroundings. What should also be borne in mind when reflecting upon these times is the fact that these slaves came from diverse

backgrounds and as a result they shared their cultures, languages and knowledge that formed part of a rich and an enduring acculturation process. Davids (1990: 30) stated that the slave population "….came to create a world of their own- a world that was distinct from their masters, with a cultural orientation which has its roots in Islam". Nonetheless, when religious freedom was eventually granted and many Muslims were freed, some of them immediately took advantage of these new conditions by establishing home-based and mosque-based *madrasas* (Muslim schools) to further educate the illiterate and equip them with basic reading and writing skills. In the process of empowering them with these skills the slaves, who were not permitted to enter the colonial administered schools, gladly attended the schools administered by the Cape Muslims and as a consequence they embraced Islam.

At the turn of the 19th century there were two schools and by the mid 19th century there were more than 12 such schools (Davids 1987: 47). And by then the Muslim population had grown threefold and this set off alarm bells among the colonial authorities and particularly the Christian missionaries who had been working hard to convert the Muslims (Shell 1993). In any event the *madrasas* became popular and attracted children from different ethnic and religious groups (Bradlow and Cairns 1978; Shell 1993); these institutions played a crucial educational role within the emerging Cape Muslim community. Out of these schools a few individuals 'graduated' and later contributed to the transformation of the Cape Muslim community. During the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century a coterie of individuals from within the Cape community came to the fore and they were joined by migrant shaykhs from the Muslim heartlands; together they made an invaluable input to the production of the Arabic-Afrikaans literature. For us to get a sense of the production of Arabic-Afrikaans literature in the 19th century we need to retrace our footsteps to the earlier period and recount the lives of two inspirational individuals whose presence had a profound psychological effect upon the minds of the nascent Cape Muslims and the subsequent generations; their contributions have been extolled in many works.

1.1 Two Prominent Exiled Muslim Shaykh-Scholars:

Both Shaykh Yusuf al-Khalwati (d. 1699) and Qadi Abdus-Salam (d.1807), who were brought as political prisoners by the Dutch from the Indonesian archipelago in 1694 and 1780 respectively, were highly revered shaykhs. Shaykh Yusuf was not only known for his heroic escapades against the Dutch but also for his deep knowledge of the Islamic Sciences. He traveled widely and studied under different shaykhs in the Muslim heartlands before he returned to the Indonesian archipelago to become the religious advisor of the Sultan in Bantem.

During Shaykh Yusuf's years of service to the Sultan he wrote a variety of works that reflected his erudition; he having been known as a Sufi Shaykh, for example, wrote more than 23 tracts of which *Zubdat al-Asrar,* a sufi tract, had been translated by Professor Suleman Dangor into English. By the time Shaykh Yusuf was brought to the Cape of Good Hope after he had been banished to Ceylon for a few years, he was isolated to an area named Makassar/Faure. According to the research of Suleiman Dangor, Azyumardi Azra, Abu Hamid and Nabila Lubis, there is ample evidence that strongly imples that he did not write any tracts whilst he was banished to and isolated at the Cape. After his death in 1699 there was no other person of his stature that attracted the attention of social historians. It was only about 80 years after Shaykh Yusuf's demise that the next noteworthy figure came onto the scene. He was Qadi 'Abdullah 'Abdus-Salam who was popularly known as Tuan Guru.

We wish to argue at the outset that actual Muslim scholarship was initiated by Qadi Abdu-Salam whilst he was incarcerated on Robben Island by 1780 (Bradlow and Cairns 1978: 14). He was captured from the Indonesian island of Tidore in 1770 and exiled to the Cape. During his imprisonment on the infamous island Qadi Abdus-Salam wrote from memory the Quran; a copy which is apparently still extant. In addition, he also penned his famous compendium titled *Al-Ma'rifat al-Islami wa-l Imani*; the mentioned manuscript is an Arabic text with interlinear Melayu and Buganese translations. A local

scholar, Dr. Auwais Rafeeudin, ventured to produce the firs English translation of the text and he entitled it: *The 'Aqidah of Tuan Guru* (Cape Town 2004). Subsequent to his release in 1793 he went on to translate two more texts; the first was *Al-Thilmisani* in 1797 and the other *Talil ul-Ghayrah* in 1798. Both were written in Arabic with an interlinear Melayu translation (Davids 1987: 44). These writings therefore formed the nucleus of the earliest Muslim religious texts that had been written on Cape soil, and these texts acted as important stimuli for some of the later religious leaders who had an interest in advancing Muslim scholarship at the Cape.

These two shaykhs/scholars most definitely inspired later Muslim religious leaders to work in producing Islamic literature in order to empower the community and to provide them with a sense of identity. Although there is no evidence that Shaykh Yusuf's manuscripts circulated at the Cape, his heroic legacy and sufi shaykh activities that were orally transmitted were enough to motivate subsequent generations. It was, in fact, the circulated manuscripts of Qadi Abdus-Salam that were used during the early 19th century that spurred Imams and Shaykhs on to enter the area of Muslim scholarship. The reasons for this shaykh's influence and impact were further realized soon after his release in 1793; one of the first tasks he undertook was to establish a *madrasa* - an institution where his works were prescribed texts and the second was to – probably with the aid of Frans van Bengalen – petition the colonial government for grounds on which to build a *masjid* (mosque) at the Cape (Bradlow & Cairns 1978: 13, 27-29; Davids 1980: 96-98). Both the *madrasa* and the mosque were pivotal contributions towards affirming the identity of the emerging Cape Muslims; they laid the necessary foundations for the Cape Muslims throughout the 19th century. Even though after Qadi Abdus-Salam's death in 1807, three years after religious freedom was officially proclaimed by the British governor at the Cape, there was no significant Muslim leader who had been well-trained in the Islamic sciences in order to take up the challenge to translate any of the circulated manuscripts from Arabic/Melayu into the developing Cape (Creolized) Dutch that became known as Afrikaans, the Cape Muslim leaders employed the *madrasas* as vehicles for disseminating basic Islamic education not only to the Muslim community but also to others. Religious leaders such as Imam Achmat Bengal (d. 1843), who was married to

Saartjie van die Kaap (d. 1847), at no stage produced any theological works nor did he translate any of those Arabic works that had been in circulation (Davids 1980: 101-102). He, as a matter of information, was then known as the 'High Priest of the Malay' who took charge of the affairs of the growing Muslim community. It appears that since Qadi Abdus-Salam's works met the needs of the times, there was no urgent need for an array of tracts to be prepared or translated.

Since religious freedom was granted just before Qadi 'Abdus-Salam's demise, the Cape Muslims took immediate advantage of the situation by no more concealing their faith and practices (Bradlow and Cairns 1978: 19; Davids 1980: 46-47). The religious leaders such as Imam Achmat and others went on to establish and coordinate the formation of *madrasas* in different parts of the expanding Cape of Good Hope and Qadi Abdus-Salam's ideas were thus kept alive in these institutions. These Imams and Khalifas - as the teachers were called - circulated his writings and shared his thoughts on the concept of God as understood within Muslim orthodoxy. Concrete evidence may be culled from various "koples" (note-books used for the purpose of memorizing the basic teachings of Islam) books that Davids' (1987: 45) mentioned and when scanning the trends of Muslim thought throughout the 19th century. Achmat Davids' seminal 1990 article 'Words the Cape slaves made' captured the salient ideas of this remarkable Muslim leader and scholar and demonstrated to what extent Qadi Abdus-Salam influenced the religious thinking during the last two centuries. Davids' comments have been further borne out by Rafudeen's recent translation (2004) as well as his analysis of the Qadi's work (2005).

1.2 Cape Muslims in the 19th century: Socio-Educational Developments

As previously stated, the religious freedom provided the Cape Muslims the necessary impetus to openly identify themselves with Islam and also afforded them the chance to open up more *madrasas* that would act as crucial vehicles for the formation of their Islamic identity. Whilst it has been acknowledged that these institutions flourished and were generally coordinated by Imam Achmat van Bengalen, throughout the 19th century the drive was intense to establish (rival) mosques. This, however, came about because of

the variety of – at times trivial - theological disputes that arose such as who is qualified to be an imam and whether a Shafi'i can perform the ritual prayer behind a Hanafi. As a consequence of these and numerous other disputes many mosques were built within a radius of about 20 km in the Bo-Kaap also known as the Malay Quarters (cf. du Plessies 1950). Since Davids (1980) demonstrated these developments in his *The Mosques of the Bo-Kaap*, it is not our intention to repeat the whole story and nor is it entirely relevant to the theme and focus of this article. In any event, whilst this might appear to have been a negative development within the growing Cape Muslim community, they also had positive outcomes for them in that the different mosques that were built and the *madrasas* that came into existence reflected the vibrancy of the Cape Muslim community.

Towards the end of the 19th century the Cape Colony government mooted the idea of bringing about some educational reform. Between 1860 and 1900 the Colony's Department of Education consolidated itself by bringing the diverse schooling system under its care. It therefore implied that the Christian missionary schools could no more exercise their freedom to take charge of their schools and curriculum; from that period they had to conform to the new educational policies of the Colonial government. The colonial authorities undoubtedly manifested their powers and influence through the educational institutions that existed and that came under their management. Since they were aware of the plethora of *madrasas*, there was an attempt made by the Department to attract the Muslim children to the predominantly Christian schools. The Cape Muslims were, of course, suspicious of the government's intentions; they realized that if they should allow their children to attend the government schools then their ideas and practices would gradually be influenced and merged with Western culture; a culture that was seeped in Protestant Christianity (cf. Davids 1987: 49) and one that has a rich heritage from a variety of geographical regions. In fact, the Cape Muslims throughout the19th and early 20th centuries have faced many Christian missionaries and thus were very wary of the relationship between the Cape government and these missionaries (Haron 1988: 42).

Be that as it may, one of the significant and well-organized *madrasas* that was established in the late 19th century was the one that was created by Shaykh Abu Bakr Effendi, the Turkish-Kurdish scholar. After he came to the Cape in 1860, he brought about some innovative changes that had an indelible - but not necessarily an agreeable – impact on the Cape Muslim community in general and Cape Muslim scholarship in particular. With Effendi's presence at the Cape, Muslim religious scholarship seemed to have been ignited through the socio-theological disagreements that developed as a result of his inputs and via the changing socio-historical circumstances. Bearing these points in mind and even though it was stated earlier that Qadi 'Abdus Salam initiated Muslim scholarship, we therefore cannot talk about an established Muslim scholarly tradition at the Cape during the 18th or for that matter the first half of the 19th century. During this period oral tradition was still very much the custom and the reproduction of the earlier extant religious texts – as noted in the extant "koples" books - was the norm. Once again Achmat Davids' valuable outputs of 1990 and 1994 respectively have shown that many "koples" books were in circulation and these reflected the religious ideas that were being taught and disseminated. And these, in effect, were also used as partial proof to show the types of Islamic literature that were available.

2. Arabic-Afrikaans Literature – a forgotten genre of literature?

Since contacts between the Cape Muslims and the Middle East were gradually being developed, Islamic literature from this region particularly Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula as well as those that migrated from Souteast Asia via Muslim (travel) networks were brought to the Cape. According to Hans Kahler's (1959/1960: 7-8) survey, he observed that the works of famous Southeast Asian scholars, Abdus-Samad Palembani (d. 1789) and Muhammad Arshad al-Banjuri (d. 1812) had found their way to the Cape. For example, in the case of the former his *Sayr as-Salikin ila 'Ibadat Rabbi 'i-'alamin* (Azra 2004: 114) and in the case of the latter his *Sabil al-Muhtadin li-'l-tafaqquh fi-amr ad-Din* were circulated and read by some of the Cape Muslim religious leaders (Azra 2004: 118). This was an indication of a strong Southeast Asian presence via the mentioned literature and also a firm clue that whilst Qadi 'Abdus-Salam's works were

useful, there was a need to be exposed to more such theological and jurisprudential literature and particularly those that had been penned by Southeast Asian scholars who, had since, resided in the Hijaz (i.e. in Mecca and Medina). We can therefore argue along the lines that the importation of these literatures not only added to the Cape Islamic collection but also gave the local Imams additional material to extract their ideas from for their own 'Arabic-Afrikaans' translation projects.

At this juncture we turn our attention to what Adrianus van Selms (1951: 7) termed 'Arabic-Afrikaans' literature and not 'Kaapse Hollands'; a genre of literature that was used as a vehicle for religious identify formation at the Cape. This type of literature is in essence works of translation of Islamic jurisprudential and theological texts; they have generally been translated from Arabic into Afrikaans (i.e. the Cape Creolized Dutch) – between circa 1860 and 1957 – and written in the Arabic script (Davids 1987: 49). Afrikaans, which became the written language medium of that period, was employed by the religiously educated Muslim leadership (i.e. Shaykhs and Imams) and at Muslim religious schools in the Cape Town and surrounding areas since the 1830s. Mention should be made of the fact that this genre of literature has deliberately been ignored by South African literary historians throughout the era of apartheid. Post-apartheid literary historians are, however, slowly giving it some form of recognition. In fact, the Afrikaner community, who established the 'Afrikaans Taal Monument' in the town of Paarl - a town outside greater Cape Town, have acknowledged the Cape Muslims' crucial contribution; they earmarked a specific wall on the main steps of the monument that connects 'Western Europe' and 'Africa;' the wall is structured in such a manner that "it unites with these two powers that join the bridge that makes up the base of Afrikaans." Their acknowledgement only appears to have been concretized after Davids intensely debated with them in the late 1980s about the remarkable and unique inputs of the Cape Muslims.

Since there is long list of extant but scattered 74 Arabic-Afrikaans manuscripts that had been prepared and commented upon by individuals such as Hans Kähler and Achmat Davids in 1971 and 1990 respectively, this short essay will not name each and everyone

but only select a few that have been the subject of debates and studies. The paper, however, only provides a cursory overview of these selected manuscripts as well as the lithographic texts in order to offer some idea of the contents and themes that have been tackled. Despite Davids' extensive research on the development and use of the Afrikaans language by the Cape Muslim community from 1815 onwards, his comments on the circulation of numerous "koples" books do not provide tangible proof as to the first Arabic-Afrikaans extant manuscript (Davids 1987: 47); an issue that he and others disputed in scholarly journals (Weiss 1988; Davids 1989). Although this dispute was in the end resolved, it is perhaps a good idea to re-visit the critical text that had solicited much controversy; doing this would help to set the scene for proving an the overview of the Arabic-Afrikaans literature collection in general and the religious developments in particular. It will also assist in giving us an idea as to when and why this unique process of translation started.

2.1 Al-Ismuni's *Al-Qawl al-Matin*

Before we discuss this work, two points should be stressed: the first is that the "koples" books referred to earlier cannot be regarded as manuscripts; they were books in which the learners penned down the lessons of their religious master and therefore do not fall into the scope of being described as 'manuscripts' (Davids 1987: 45). And the second is that though it had been pointed out that *Hidayat ul-Islam* (A Guide to Faith and Practice, being the Book of Common Prayer of the Moohummudans [sic]) (Van Selms 1951: 16-17; Davids 1987: 47) is said to have been the first; this was definitely not the case because W. T. Robertson, a British born and Bengal based colonial civil servant who possessed the manuscript with an English translation, was searching for a Cape printer in order to produce an Afrikaans version of it (Van Selms 1950: 16). Notwithstanding this, another manuscript came into the hands of Mr. J. Schonegevel, the artist/lithographer in 1856 that sparked off a great deal of interest and after some investigation was said to have been the first Arabic-Afrikaans text.

Van Selms (1951: 17) expressed his thanks to Rochlin who made reference to the *South African Commercial Advertiser* of the 26th of July 1856 in which was mentioned the existence of the *Gablomalien* (sic); a Malay Catechism. Van Selms thus questioned and mulled over the fact as to whether it was an Arabic text or one that was accompanied by a Melayu translation as was the case with other extant manuscripts.

Van Selms' curiosity and desire to obtain this text caused him to search more widely and in the end he succeeded when he came across the lithographic text that was issued in 1910; a text that appeared in Arabic with an interlinear Afrikaans translation. The work was in actual fact titled *Kitab Al-Qawl Al-Matin fi Umur Ud-din* and it was attributed to Shaykh Ahmad al-Ismuni, a 16th or 17th century scholar. The work was, however, translated into Afrikaans by Imam Abu Bakr ibn Abdullah `Abdur-Rauf. After doing his scholarly inspection, Van Selms concluded that this was the first such publication and titled his lengthy article: 'Die Oudste Boek in Afrikaans: Isjmoeni se 'Betroubare Woord' (pp. 61-103 The Oldest Book in Afrikaans: Isjmoenie's 'Trusted Word'). It was published in the *Hertzog-Annale* van die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns in November 1953. When Davids (1987: 47) came across this article, he initially had nothing to quibble about for he accepted Van Selms' conclusions; this automatically changed when Weiss raised a few critical questions.

Despite Van Selms' conclusive arguments, Professor P. D. Weiss was unsatisfied with these and opted to critically investigate these issues in a 1988 article that appeared in the *Journal for Islamic Studies* published by Rand Afrikaans University' Centre for Islamic Studies. And in the following year Achmat Davids responded to it agreeing with some points and rejecting others that had been raised by Weiss. In any case, the conclusion that the book that was identified as the oldest Afrikaans text by Van Selms was rejected, and this argument was based on the fact that the Afrikaans translation that was undertaken by Shaykh Abu Bakr ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdur-Rauf was completed and appeared in 1910 and it was erroneous to identify the Arabic text of 1856 as the one that was the oldest at the Cape. The Weiss-Davids' debate was therefore able to put the 'Arabic-Afrikaans' case to rest.

2.2. The Arabic-Afrikaans Manuscript: Its Beginning and End

In the afore-mentioned section it was categorically concluded that Ismuni's *Al-Qawl Al-Matin* - as discussed by Van Selms - was not the earliest manuscript or lithographic text in Arabic-Afrikaans; it was - as stated - a fresh 1910 Afrikaans translation in the Arabic script of a text that was lithographically produced in 1856. This having been agreed upon by contemporary scholarship and advanced by Achmat Davids, who himself had to make an about turn when he realized it was not the case; they were all then compelled them to look elsewhere.

After close inspection scholars identified the first extant Arabic-Afrikaans manuscript to be *Tuhfat ul-A'wam*, which dealt with the basic Islamic creed. This manuscript was written by Imam Abdul-Kahhar ibn Abdul-Malik (d. 1884) in 1868. Almost a year after it appeared its status was challenged by the work of Shaykh Abu Bakr Effendi; the latter titled his 1869 manuscript *Bayan ud-Din*. Since this was a Hanafite jurisprudential text, it was initially circulated in manuscript form; the basic idea, it appears, was to test whether the manuscript would make the grade in the theological circles and in the manuscript market where there was an absence of suitable and well-prepared texts for educational purposes. When it passed the experimentation stage, the manuscript was eventually transformed into a book in 1877; it was printed in Istanbul. This printing exercise meant that the position of the manuscript was dethroned and that the days of the manuscripts were gradually drawing to a close.

The book, as recorded by Davids and others, sparked off a jurisprudential controversy between the minority Hanafites and the majority Shafi'ites; the controversy raged on at the Cape for a number of years. But despite the negative developments, the book stimulated other local shaykhs to produce – as counter measure - a spate of similar material from the Shafi'i perspective. Many of these appeared in manuscript form and some were printed in lithographic form from 1890 onwards. In 1890 Imam 'Abdullah ibn 'Abderouf produced *Die Boek van Tougeed*, and in 1894 Hisham Ni'matullah Effendi

prepared *Siraj ul-Idahi*, which was a simple text on Islamic practices from the Hanafite perspective, as well as *Hadha `Ilm ul-Hal li As-Sibyan*, which emphasized the elementary aspects of the ritual prayer (*salat*) and the annual purificatory tax (*zakat*). In the same year Imam Abdur-Raqib ibn Abdul-Kahhar published an Afrikaans version of *Safinat un-Naja* written by Salim ibn Samir Al-Hadrami. Imam Abdur-Raqib also printed lithographically his *Kitab ur-Riyadh ul-Badi`a fi Usul ud-Din wa ba`d Furu ash-Shari`a* in 1899; it covered aspects of the Islamic creed, and issues pertaining to the ritual prayers etc.

This was followed in 1900 by Shaykh Abdur-Rahman ibn Muhammad Al-`Iraqi's - who wrote about ten Arabic-Afrikaans texts between 1898 and 1913 - translation of *Tuhfat ul-Atfal* by Shaykh Nurud-Din which was a simplified version of the pronunciation of the Arabic alphabet. In 1907 Imam `Abdur-Rahman ibn Qasim Gamieldien prepared *Tartib Us-Salat* and *Kitab Mutal`ah li at-Tadris talamithati madrasat Habibiya*; the latter focused upon moral behavior and the former on the ritual prayer. In 1909 Shaykh `Abdullah Taha Gamieldien translated *Masa`il Abi-Layth As-Samarqandi*, a 10th century Maturidite creedal text (Haron 1999: 73-88). And in 1910 Shaykh Abdur-Rahim ibn Muhammad al-`Iraqi wrote *Kitab `Ilm ul-Fara`id*, which discussed issues on inheritance, marriage and the pilgrimage. During the same year *Kitab Al-Qawl Al-Matin fi Umur Ud-din* – the text discussed earlier - was translated and produced by Imam Abu Bakr ibn Abdullah `Abdur-Rauf (see 2.1).

By the mid 1910s, a period when the Cape Muslims witnessed the formation of a string of Muslim Mission Schools under the leadership of Dr. 'Abdullah 'Abdurahman (d. 1940), there seem to have been a lull in the production of Arabic-Afrikaans manuscripts but a spurge of texts on Islam that were prepared in the Latin script (Davids 1987: 49). This was a sign that the Arabic script's presence as an alternative method was slowly coming to an end. The script, however, only ended its life with the death of Shaykh Isma'il Ganief, the Azharite graduate, in 1958; the latter was undoubtedly one of the most prolific Cape Muslim writers who, since the end of the 1910s, produced a sizeable number of translated and interpreted texts - more than 20 texts in the Arabic-Afrikaans

format. In 1919 Shaykh Isma`il Ganief translated *Ar-Rawd al-Azhar fi Fiqh al-Akbar* and by 1928 he finalized and published in Cairo his translation of *Al-Muqaddimat al-Hadramiyyah* that was written by Shaykh `Abdullah ibn Ash-Shaykh Abdur-Rahman Bafadl Al-Hadrami; it dealt with ablution and other Islamic rituals (Ebrahim 2006: 106-110). And the Shaykh also translated numerous others such as Ja'far ibn Hasan al-Barzanji's famous epic Sufi liturgy poem, *Mawlud al-Barzanji* in 1939. The era of the production of Arabic-Afrikaans literature ended after his enormous contribution and his tragic demise in a car accident (cf. Ebrahim 2006: 104-127).

This select and brief chronological survey of some of the extant manuscripts provides a bird's eye-view of the Arabic-Afrikaans literature that was produced over a period of approximately 100 years. It also highlighted the fact that all of these scholars were part of a group of religious leaders who were seriously involved in "the process of translation" rather than "the process of interpretation." A close look at the translations in Afrikaans shows that most of them adopted the literal method in the translation project; in other words, they tried not to interpret the word, nor to add any form of commentary from their own; they steered clear of veering off into an innovative mode and instead remained faithfully to their forebears by following the imitative spirit. The only person who seemed to have challenged this 'imitative spirit' was Shaykh Ismail Ganief whose left a rich legacy that still needs further exploration by local scholars.

3. Towards a Conclusion

In this short essay an attempt was made to give an overview of process of the production of the Arabic-Afrikaans literature. The article demonstrated that subsequent to the presence of certain key religious personalities as well as the production and circulation of their writings, they inspired and motivated a chain of Imams and Shaykhs to make some significant and noteworthy contributions. It went on to highlight selected Arabic-Afrikaans manuscripts that formed the core of this genre of literature and via this demonstrated that the Cape Muslims used this genre of literature as a vehicle for identity formation. And the article argued that their efforts to construct their identity within an

unfriendly colonial environment also meant that the Cape Muslims exploited the situation so as not to be integrated into the colonial cultural system; the production of these manuscripts was in effect also a unifying agent and also complemented the other communal Muslim institutions.

At an earlier point in this article reference was made to the fact that South African literary historians have inadvertently overlooked the fact that this genre forms an integral part of the South African literary heritage and landscape. Their oversight has compelled Muslim social historians such as Davids to argue for its preservation and for it to be given full recognition within the body of South Africa's literature.

In addition, even though he and others tried to make a concerted effort to salvage the extant manuscripts so that it can be safely housed in good conditions at the National Library of South Africa (www.nlsa.ac.za) or at one of the local academic institutions such as the University of Cape Town (www.uct.ac.za) or the University of the Western Cape (www.uwc.ac.za) that have the facilities to store these manuscripts, their efforts have thus far yielded no positive results (cf. Haron 2001). An effort was initiated to start with a modest catalogue that would contain or refer to the various collections; this was begun by Haron (1997) and later taken up by Hajjah Munazzah (1999) from the National Library of Malaysia.

Unfortunately, many individuals and families have shown no interest to part with their heirlooms and as a result researchers and collectors have found it problematic to convince them about this unique South African heritage. It has also been puzzling to say the least that the South Africa's national government as well as the regional government has not proactively campaigned for the preservation of these manuscripts the way they have thus far done for the Timbucktu manuscripts (cf. Jeppie 2006). Although discussions have taken place and some interest shown, there is no tangible evidence that suggests a way forward. And we surmise that the government's general inaction has also rubbed off on the South African literary historians - as well as linguists - who have not demonstrated much interest in giving ample space in their assessments to this genre of literature; if this

is taken seriously and if the Cape Muslims' contribution is penciled in – as it should be – it would also shed additional light onto the nature of the Cape Muslims' contribution to developments in shaping the Afrikaans language at the Cape in particular and South Africa in general. It behooves the South Africa's Department of Education to expose South African pupils in schools as well as the populace to the extant and unique literature. The present generation of learners should be informed about the important historical developments and linguistic contributions that have been made by the Cape Muslims, and they should be educated about the offerings of diverse religious and cultural communities to South Africa's past.

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