

NOTE ON TRANSLATION, SPELLING, AND transliteration

This study draws on sources in several languages, including Arabic, Wolof, and French. The author translated all the French- and Arabic-language texts cited here, including the writings of Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké, unless otherwise indicated.

Determining unified criterion for spelling and transliteration of non-English terms and names has been difficult. The toponym “Touba” itself is indicative of the problems involved. The term is Arabic in origin. Literary Arabic is widely used among educated Mourides, and the term appears often in its Arabic form in Touba. Using the U.S. Library of Congress system, this term should properly be transliterated as “Tûbâ” in English. “Tuba,” the simplified form of Tûbâ, has been adopted in some English-language literature. Yet, like so much other religious vocabulary, the Arabic term *tûbâ* has long since passed into Wolof. Senegal’s official Wolof alphabet, adopted in 1974, would require that Touba be written “Tuubaa,” with long vowels indicated by duplication but without marking of the emphatic “t.” However, few in Senegal, including government officials, use this “official” system. The “old” Wolof alphabet, in use since the French colonial era, is still more common and “Touba” is effectively the colonial-era French spelling of the Arabic term. This is how it appears in the French-language sources, and, more importantly, it is still how it is spelled on modern topographical maps. This spelling has taken on a life of its own. “Touba” appears as such on countless documents: tracks, newspapers, websites, billboards, and store signs, not just in Senegal but the world over, wherever Mourides have settled. All these factors explain why Touba is the spelling preferred in this study. A similar analysis of the term “Mouride,” *murîd* in U.S. Library of Congress system, *murit* in official Wolof, would lead to a similar conclusion. “Mouride” is the French-Latinized form of the Arabic term. It is firmly established in the textual sources and is the most common and recognizable form of the term in current usage.

Under these conditions, where the Arabic, Wolof, and French languages overlap to a great extent, and where commonly written forms become embedded in every type of written expression, a commonsense approach to spelling and transliteration has been adopted in preference to a strict “purist” pursuit of correct transliteration. All proper names will be spelled according to common

Senegalese practice. Toponyms such as Touba and Darou Mousty (Dâr al-Mu‘tî in Arabic) will be spelled as they appear on official topographical maps. Thus *kër* (meaning “compound,” also “house of . . .” in Wolof) will be written “Keur” if it is part of an official toponym, for example: Keur Goumak, Keur Niang, but will be spelled *kër* if it relates to someone’s house. Homonyms such as Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké and Abdoulaye Niass will be spelled according to common practice in Senegal; i.e., colloquial Wolofized Abdoulaye rather than purist Arabic ‘Abd Allâh or the official Wolof Abdulahi. On the other hand, personal titles such as Shaykh and Al-Ḥājj will appear as transliterated Arabic rather than the more common Senegalese-French usage (Cheikh and El-Hadj), except when these titles are used as actual names, as in Cheikh Guèye; Cheikh Guèye is not a *shaykh* in the religious sense, Cheikh is his first name. In the case of Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké, on the contrary, *shaykh* is a religious title, not a proper name, and Mourides commonly refer to him in French as “le Cheikh.”

Common nouns and technical terms in Arabic and Wolof (but also a few terms in Mandinka and Pulaar), *italicized*, will be spelled according established norms of transliteration, slightly modified U.S. Library of Congress system in the case of Arabic, and the official Senegalese system in the case of Wolof. Exceptions to this rule occur when Arabic words, such as “Koran” and “Sufi,” are common enough in English that a strict transliteration, *al-Qur’ân*, *ṣūfī*, would constitute a distraction for the reader.

Arabic Transliteration

Long vowels appear accented: â, î, û, as opposed to short vowels without accents. The letter ‘ayn is written as an inverted apostrophe: ‘, followed by its vowelization. The *hamzah* is written as an apostrophe: ’, following the preceding vowelization. Emphatic consonants are underlined: ḍ, ḥ, ṣ, ṭ, ẓ.

The *ta marbûṭah*, or final silent “h” that often marks the feminine, will be written “ah,” or else “at” if in construct with the following word: *sidrah* (lote tree) and *sidrat al-muntahâ* (lote-tree of the extremity), respectively.

Though there are no uppercase letters in Arabic, proper nouns will appear in uppercase: *tûbâ!* (a blessing) and *Tûbâ* (the name of the Tree of Paradise).

Because Arabic plurals can be complicated and confusing to readers not familiar with them, the plural of Arabic terms is marked by the English “s”: *shaykhs* rather than *shuyûkh*.

Official Wolof Spelling

(Also used for Sereer, Pulaar, and Mandinka.)

Long vowels appear doubled: aa, oo, uu, etc.

Flat vowels appear with an *umlaut*: *kër*, *sëriñ*.

The vowel “ñ,” pronounced “ny” or “ni,” is similar to the identical Spanish vowel: *béntéñe* (kapok tree).

The vowel “c” represents a sound halfway between the English “ch” and a softer “ti” or “thi.” Thus, the old Franco-Wolof “tieddo” (slave-soldier) is spelled *ceddo*, but *pénc* (public square) corresponds to old-style “pentch” or “penthie.”

The vowel “x” represents the “kh” sound, similar to the Spanish “j.” The “Gouye Tékhé” (Touba’s “Baobab of Bliss”) is spelled *Guy Texe*. The Arabic term *khâtîm* (seal) has passed into Wolof as *xaatim*.

