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Islamic learning in Arabic-Afrikaans between Malay model and Ottoman reform

KEES VERSTEEGH

ABSTRACT¹

Through the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century the Muslim community of Cape Town produced a large number of texts in various fields of Islamic learning, written in Afrikaans, a creolized variety of the language the Dutch traders had brought to South Africa. The Cape Muslim community had its origin in South Asia and Southeast Asia; most of its founding members had been transported by force by the Dutch colonial authorities. Malay was the language in which they had been educated, and for some time it remained in use as the written language. For oral instruction, the Cape Muslim community soon shifted to Afrikaans. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman scholar Abu Bakr Effendi introduced the use of Afrikaans in Arabic script, replacing Malay as written language. In this paper I deal with the shift from Malay to Afrikaans and the relationship between Malay heritage and Ottoman reform in the Cape community.

KEYWORDS

Arabic-Afrikaans, Kitab Malay, Jawi, *pesantren*, Islamic learning, Cape Town, Abu Bakr Effendi, Afrikaans, Cape Muslims.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Through the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century the Muslim community of Cape Town and a few other places in the Cape Colony produced a large number of manuscripts and printed books in various fields of Islamic learning. Many of these texts were written in Arabic script, but the language was Afrikaans, a creolized variety of the language the Dutch traders had brought to South Africa.

The initial Cape Muslim community had its origin in South and Southeast Asia. In the second half of the seventeenth century, most of its founding members had been expelled or transported by force by the Dutch authorities from the Dutch possessions in Asia (Ward 2009). Roughly a quarter of the 63,000 slaves shipped to the Cape Colony in the period 1652-1808 came from Southeast Asia (see Table 1).

Africa	26.4%
Madagascar	25.1%
Indonesian Archipelago	22.7%
Indian sub-continent	25.9%

Table 1. Provenance of slaves in the Cape Colony (1652-1808), after Shell (1994: 15).

Those slaves and deportees who came from Southeast Asia were predominantly Muslims and for many of them Malay was the language in which they had been educated, even when it was not their mother tongue. Malay had become a *lingua franca* in the Indonesian archipelago at the end of the eighth century (Lombard 1990 II: 24, 154) and it had been adopted by the Islamic traders and preachers in Southeast Asia as language of trading and of religious instruction (Steinhauer 2005: 66-67).

The language in which the newcomers in the Cape Colony were addressed was Afrikaans. In the first contacts between the Dutch colonists and the indigenous Khoe a Dutch pidgin had been developed, which subsequently was creolized and became the vernacular language of large parts of the colony. At that time, Afrikaans was not the standard language in the Cape Colony, where only Dutch was recognized as official written language, albeit in fierce competition with English. Afrikaans did not become an official language in the Cape Colony until 1925 (Uys 1983). Since the slaves and deportees from Southeast Asia constituted a multilingual community, speaking several Indonesian languages, such as Buginese, Javanese, Makassarese, they soon adopted Afrikaans as their language of everyday in-group communication. Malay was retained by the Muslims as their language of religious instruction, just like it had been in Southeast Asia, but at least from 1804 onwards, when Islamic schools were allowed by the colonial authorities, Afrikaans became the language of spoken religious instruction.

The early Muslim community grew exponentially through the conversion of predominantly Black slaves. The first teachers relied on Arabic texts with

Malay translation, just as this had been the custom in the tradition in which they had been raised (Rafudeen 2004, 2005). For the growing number of new converts, the use of Malay in education was never an option, but even for the descendants of the original immigrants Malay had become a traditional religious language, which they did not understand. Eventually, Afrikaans was adopted by the community, not only as the language of speaking and instruction, but also as a written language.² When they started to write in Afrikaans, they chose the Arabic script, just like Malay had always been written in Arabic script, the so-called Jawi script. The literature they produced in this variety and in this script is usually called Arabic-Afrikaans. Thus far, about eighty titles have become known.

The questions I shall address in this paper include the following: i) when did the Cape Muslims opt for Afrikaans and why did they adopt Arabic script to write it?; ii) what was the place of Arabic in their literary culture and their religious instruction?; and iii) what was the curriculum of Islamic instruction the authors wished to implement in the Muslim community?

2. THE CHOICE OF AFRIKAANS AND ARABIC SCRIPT

It is generally taken for granted that the variety of Afrikaans used in the Arabic-Afrikaans documents is “pure” Afrikaans, not contaminated by Standard Dutch, because, unlike other inhabitants of the colony, Muslims did not have a natural connection with that language. Dutch remained the language of the (White) schools and official publications until 1925, and Muslims are assumed to have been immune to its influence. Such a view may not be entirely accurate because a growing number of Muslims acquired at least some knowledge of Dutch. The fact remains, however, that the language in which they wrote was a non-standard variety at that time. The choice for Afrikaans as the main medium of instruction did not necessarily entail a choice for the Arabic script. Nonetheless, from the start Arabic script was the preferred choice. Roman-script publications did not appear until the end of the nineteenth century (Kähler 1971: 190-197; Davids 2011: 99-106) and they were definitely outnumbered by those in Arabic script.

It is difficult to determine when the shift to the use of Afrikaans as a written language for Muslims took place. Presumably, from an early time onwards people started to experiment with the representation of their spoken language in Arabic script, although most of the written religious instruction continued to take place in Malay. There do not seem to be any certain examples of Arabic-Afrikaans before the arrival of Abu Bakr Effendi (1835-1880) to the Cape in 1863 (Van Bruinessen 2000). We shall see below that this scholar, who was sent by the Ottoman sultan to the Cape at the request of its Muslim community,

² For a survey of the linguistic situation in the Cape Colony in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries see Den Besten (1987), who emphasizes the fact that the Khoer population of the Cape had adopted a Dutch pidgin at an early date and may well have been instrumental in transmitting this pidgin to newly imported slaves. See also Den Besten (2000) for the role of Malay in the new communities in the Cape.

intended to reform education and from the start he used Afrikaans for his publications, even though he was not a native speaker of the language.

Influence of the standard written language, Dutch, had probably been minimal in the period before Abu Bakr's arrival and he himself did not know Dutch. It is sometimes proposed that the Muslim publications in Roman script which started to appear at the end of the nineteenth century, betray influence from the standard language (Davids 1992; compare Deumert 2004: 69, but see Stell 2007: 96-97). Some of the authors of these publications actually used both scripts, and it seems logical to assume that when they used Arabic script their target audience was primarily the Muslim community, whereas the documents in Roman script may have been intended for a wider audience. Some of the Arabic-Afrikaans writers must have had an excellent command of English or Dutch, which they occasionally used (Haron 2014: 342), but in their publications they persisted in using the Cape variety of Afrikaans. This means that the use of the non-standard language as an in-group language had become an identity marker.

For Abu Bakr, if he was indeed the one who introduced Afrikaans as the language of written religious instruction in the Cape, the choice of Arabic script for the representation of this language was quite natural, since Ottoman Turkish was written in Arabic script as well. The Muslim community at the Cape was already used to Arabic script for the representation of Malay, as well as other languages, such as Javanese or Acehnese (see, for instance, Haron 2014: 343-344). In some cases, the use of Arabic script to represent Afrikaans may have served as an identity marker, too, or even at times as a way of keeping certain matters of the community a secret, as Dick (2012) believes.

The adaptation of the Arabic script to the phonological structure of Afrikaans was relatively easy. Some of the consonants needed existed already in the Jawi alphabet that had been devised for Malay, such as *jīm* /j/ with three dots for /č/, but in most cases, the Ottoman Arabic alphabet was followed, for instance for /p/, for which a *bā* with three dots was used. In Jawi script this sound is represented with a *fā* with three dots, which in Arabic-Afrikaans denotes Afrikaans labiodental /w/. The indebtedness to the Ottoman scribal tradition once again underscores the important role of Abu Bakr Effendi in the process. The main problem confronting those who wished to write Afrikaans with Arabic script was that of the notation of the vowels, which were not encoded in Jawi script, nor for that matter in Ottoman Turkish in Arabic script. For Afrikaans with its richer vowel inventory this option was unattractive since it would make the written texts rather ambiguous. Therefore it is not surprising that almost all Arabic-Afrikaans texts are fully vowelised. The main feat of the inventors of the Arabic script for Afrikaans was the introduction of new signs for some of the vowels that did not exist in Arabic, in particular for the vowel /e/. After some experimenting, this vowel came to be indicated with a combination of the two Arabic vowel signs *fatha* /a/ and *kasra* /i/ (see Davids 1991, 2011: 180-197; Haron 2014: 355-360).

What was the position of the Arabic language in all of this? One tends

to think that in a Muslim community Arabic is automatically the language of writing, religion, and general learning. Yet, in the early centuries of Islam opinions were divided as to whether Arabic was required for religious purposes. Especially in the Islamic East there was a trend to use the vernacular language for the spreading of the faith and in some cases even for ritual purposes, for instance for the recitation of the Qurʾān. Vernaculars must have been used everywhere in the course of the Islamic *daʿwa*. There is, however, a difference of discourse between the four law schools of Islam about the desirability of using the vernacular, and they certainly disagreed about the permissibility of the use of other languages than Arabic in religious ritual. The Ḥanafī law school, more than the other three schools, had a tradition of allowing religious instruction, sometimes even Qurʾānic recitation, in the vernacular language (Zadeh 2012). In practice, it was often Persian which served as the language of the Muslim missionaries in Asia. In this connection, Sufism also played an important role; the *dāʿīs* of the Sufi brotherhoods attached a greater importance to conveying their message to the new converts in a language they could understand than to the sacred character of the language of the Qurʾān (see, for instance, Boivin 2008: 75; Penrad 2008: 34; Rahman 2008: 96).

3. THE CURRICULUM OF ISLAMIC LEARNING

The earliest Muslims in the Cape were still connected with Indonesian Islam. Early exiles from the Dutch East Indies included several scholars, for instance those accompanying Shaykh Yūsuf al-Maqassārī (died 1699). Shaykh Yūsuf himself is reported to have instigated Sufi rituals among his followers and to have instructed them using Arabic texts (see Van Bruinessen 1990a: 158, note 25; Haron and Keraan 2008). The Sufi character of his teachings had a definite attraction for the new converts, who were desperately looking for the kind of spirituality they were not allowed to find in the Christian churches (Mason 2002). Possibly the attraction of magic also played a role, and from the perspective of the converts this may have been even more important than *fiqh* and theology. The elementary Islam they were taught remained restricted to reciting the Qurʾān and learning about the daily religious obligations.³ In the extant writings in Arabic-Afrikaans magic and amulets occupy an important place; in Kähler's (1971) list, five items (nos. 52, 61, 62, 63, 64) are concerned with this topic, and there are no doubt more magical texts that have not yet come to light (see Jappie 2011: 61-66).

When the Cape Muslims became disconnected from the living practice of learning in Indonesia, their isolation forced them to rely on remembered texts from their Indonesian past. Orakci (2007: 51) has a particularly apt observation in this connection:

³ Both Van den Berg (1886) and Van Bruinessen (1990a) mention the presence of a large number of extra-curricular treatises on (black) magic and incantations in Indonesia, which apparently were quite popular with the students in spite of the fact that they did not form part of the official curriculum.

When a community of believers begin to rely on knowledge of their religion from their forefathers and no longer referred to their original sources, a process of imitation manifested in the community.

A considerable amount of information is available about the learning system and the curriculum in the Dutch East Indies from a contemporary report by a Dutch Orientalist, L.W.C. van den Berg (1886), who was hired by the Dutch colonial authorities to inspect the teaching in the so-called *pesantren*. In his report, he gives detailed information about the methods and textbooks used in these schools. According to this report, at the elementary level children learnt to write in Arabic and had at their disposal small books containing at most one *juz'* of the Qur'ān (*kitab turutan*). At the next level, the main aim was to instill in the students the basic principles of Islam, focusing on the religious duties and the rituals. At this stage they memorized Arabic primers together with a Malay or Javanese translation.⁴

The highest level was that of the *pesantren*, some of which had a relatively high level of education. The curriculum always consisted of five topics, called in Malay *pekih* (Arabic *fiqh*), *nahu* (Arabic *naḥw*), *usul* (Arabic *'uṣūl*), *tasaup* (Arabic *taṣawwuf*), and *tapsir* (Arabic *tafsīr*). For each topic a limited number of titles was studied in the same manner as in elementary school, by memorizing the contents. Van den Berg (1886) identifies the most important books used for each of the five topics.⁵ From these books each *pesantren* made its own selection.

The canon of Islamic texts studied in the Indonesian *pesantren* is to a large extent similar to that in East African Islamic education, whose contents at the beginning of the twentieth century have been described extensively by Loimeier (2009: 149-213). This interrelatedness of Islamic learning, whether in East Africa, South India, or Indonesia, is typical of what O'Fahey (2004: 277) calls the universalist outlook of Muslim scholars. Students read the same texts, in the same progression, everywhere, particularly in those regions that followed the same *madḥab*, in the case of the countries around the Indian Ocean that of Šāfi'ī.⁶

The first formal instruction in Islamic theology in the Cape Muslim

⁴ For the translation process from Arabic into the so-called Kitab Malay, see Riddell (2012).

⁵ A considerable number of these treatises was registered in the Leiden University Library in the period between 1871 and 1883 (inventory in Witkam 2008). A similar list of textbooks for contemporary *pesantren* was compiled by Van Bruinessen (1990a); he describes the market of the *kitab kuning* 'yellow books', which students contrast with the *buku putih* 'white [Western] books'. When van Bruinessen's findings are compared with the list in Van den Berg's report, it turns out that while some things have changed in the curriculum, much has remained the same. One difference is that a century ago study of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīṭ as separate subjects was quite uncommon while today it has become a normal part of the curriculum in most *pesantren*. What has remained the same is the emphasis on the study of *fiqh*, in particular the religious duties (*fiqh al-'ubūdiyya*), and on the basic tenets of the faith in catechism form (*tawḥīd*). What is new is the study of the *'uṣūl al-fiqh*, which did not exist one century ago. On the topic of continuity and change in the *pesantren* see also Van Bruinessen (1994).

⁶ On the role of the networks of Islamic scholars in the Indian Ocean region and the relations between scholars in the Malay-Indonesian world and the Middle East, see Azra (2004).

community, which is connected with the name of Tuan Guru (‘Abdallāh ibn Qāḍī ibn ‘Abd as-Salām, 1712-1807), is a faithful copy of the learning process in the East Indies. Tuan Guru established the first *madrasa*, where he taught texts transcribed by himself from memory (Rafudeen 2004, 2005). These texts came straight from the Indonesian system of learning. The indebtedness of the Cape Town curriculum to the Indonesian tradition is clearly shown by Tuan Guru’s choice of texts. The main text he copied from memory was the *’Umm al-barāhīn* (Van den Berg 1886 no. 33; GAL II: 250) by ‘Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf as-Sanūsī al-Ḥasanī (died 892/1486), also called *ad-Durra* and *‘Aqā’id as-Sanūsī*⁷ (Rafudeen 2005; Davids 2011: 69-75). He also copied the commentary on this text, known in the *pesantren* tradition as *Tilimsani*, by ‘Abdallāh (ibn ‘Amr) ibn ‘Ibrāhīm al-Mallālī at-Tilimsānī (died circa 1000/1591; Van den Berg 1886 no. 35; GAL II: 251) and the *Dalā’il al-ḥayrāt* by ‘Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Juzūlī (died 870/1465; Van den Berg 1886 no. 36; English translation in Rafudeen 2004). All three texts were very popular in the Indonesian education system. South African Muslims probably memorized them in Arabic, together with the Malay translation.

On the whole, the translated treatises in the Cape Colony represent only a limited selection from the corpus of texts used in Indonesia and East Africa. From the list in Kähler (1971) with the additions by Davids (2011; see also Dangor 2008; Haron 2001) it becomes clear that the canon of religious education in Cape Town, though similar to that of the *pesantren* curriculum, was much more limited. What was missing was almost the entire section on grammar⁸ and, in general, the more advanced literature. From the texts identified by Van den Berg and Van Bruinessen at least ten are known to have been translated into Afrikaans (see Table 2).

Indonesian textbook	Author	Arabic title	Arabic-Afrikaans
<i>Sapinah</i> (Van den Berg 1886 no. 1)	Sālim ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Samīr/Sumayr al-Ḥaḍramī (died 1271/1854) (Hadhramaut, Singapore, Batavia)	<i>Safīnat an-najāt</i>	Kähler no. 38; translated 1893-1894 by ‘Abd ar-Raqīb ibn ‘Abd al-Qahhār

⁷ This text was also known in Afrikaans as *Twientagh siefaat* ‘Twenty attributes’, which is a calque of the Malay title *Sipat duapuluh*.

⁸ On the grammatical writings used in Indonesia see Drewes (1971).

Indonesian textbook	Author	Arabic title	Arabic-Afrikaans
<i>Bapadal</i> (Van den Berg 1886 no. 4; Van Bruinessen 1990: 247)	ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān Bāfaḍl (died 918/1512) (Hadhramaut) GAL S II: 555	<i>al-Muḥtaṣar al-laṭīf (al-Muqaddima al-ḥaḍramiyya)</i>	Kähler no. 27; translated by ʿIsmāʿīl ibn Muḥammad Ḥanīf (1928)
<i>Samarkandi</i> (Van den Berg 1886 no. 32)	ʾAbū l-Layṭ Muḥammad ibn ʾAbī Naṣr ibn ʾIbrāhīm as-Samarqandī (died between 373/983 and 393/1002)	ʿAqīdat al-ʾuṣūl	Kähler no. 23; translated by ʿAbdallāh ibn Ṭahā ibn Jamīl ad-Dīn (1909)
<i>Dorrat</i> (Van den Berg 1886 no. 33; Van Bruinessen 1990: 251)	ʾAbū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf as-Sanūsī al-Ḥasanī (died 895/1490) GAL II: 250; S II: 352-353	<i>ad-Durra (ʿUmm al-barāhīn)</i> also known as <i>Sīpat duapuluh</i>	Kähler no. 18 Roman script; translated by Abdurraḳieb bin Abdulkahaar (ʿAbd ar-Raqīb ibn ʿAbd al-Qaḥḥār) (1912)
<i>Kipayatulawam</i> (Van den Berg 1886 no. 38; Van Bruinessen 1990: 252)	Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad aš-Šāfiʿī al-Faḍḍālī (died 1236/1821) (Egypt) GAL II: 489	<i>Kifāyat al-ʿawāmm</i>	Kähler no. 39, translated by ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm ibn Muḥammad al-ʿIrāqī
<i>Daqaʿiq</i> (Van Bruinessen (1990: 253)	ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm al-Qāḍī (fifth/eleventh century?) GAL S I: 346	<i>Daqaʿiq al-ʾaḥbār fī ḍikr al-janna wa-n-nār</i>	Kähler nos. 3 and 4 Roman script; translated by Abdullah bin Taha bin Gamielien (ʿAbdallāh ibn Ṭahā ibn Jamīl ad-Dīn) (n.d.)
<i>Riyadlul Badia</i> (Van Bruinessen 1990: 249)	Muḥammad Ḥasballāh (thirteenth/nineteenth century) GAL II: 501; S II: 813)	<i>ar-Riyāḍ al-badīʿa fī ʾuṣūl ad-dīn wa-baʿḍ furūʿ aš-šarīʿa</i>	Kähler no. 17 Roman script; translated by ʿAbd ar-Raqīb ibn ʿAbd al-Qaḥḥār (1898)

Indonesian textbook	Author	Arabic title	Arabic-Afrikaans
<i>Ratib Haddad</i> (Van Bruinessen 1990: 259)	ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAlwī al-Ḥaddād (died 1132/1720) (Yemen) GAL II: 408, S II: 566	<i>Rātīb al-Ḥaddād</i>	Kähler no. 30; no. 13 Roman script; translated by ʿAbdallāh ibn Ṭāhā ibn Jamīl ad-Dīn (1910)
<i>Barzanji</i> (Van Bruinessen 1990: 260)	Jaʿfar ibn al-Ḥasan al-Barzanjī (died 1177/1764)	<i>Mawlid an-nabī</i>	Kähler no. 24; translated by ʾIsmāʿīl ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥanīf (n.d.)
<i>Isra</i> (Van Bruinessen 1990: 260, note 54)	Najm ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʾAḥmad al-Ġayṭī al-ʾIskandarī (died 984/1576) (Egypt) GAL II: 532	<i>al-Ibtihāj fī l-kalām ʿalā l-ʾisrāʾ wa-l-miʿrāj</i>	Kähler no. 19 Roman script; translated by Hassiem Ebene Soeabe (1908)

Table 2. Arabic-Afrikaans treatises known from the *pesantren* tradition.

What the two educational systems had in common was their reliance on a number of basic summaries and the commentaries on these, rather than the Classical Islamic sources. Neither in Indonesia, nor in South Africa, for instance, do we find any of the larger *ḥadīṭ* collections, but only shorter collections such as an-Nawawī's (died 676/1277) *al-ʾArbaʿīn an-nawawīyya*.⁹ The second point the two educational systems had in common was the emphasis on *fiqh al-ʿubūdiyya* and *tawḥīd*. Among the 64 items in Arabic-Afrikaans (with an additional 20 items in Roman script) in Kähler's list, 42 items deal with these topics (see Table 3).¹⁰

⁹ Apparently, this has changed in present-day Indonesian *pesantren*; according to Van Bruinessen (1994) more *ḥadīṭ* collections and *tafsīrs* are available nowadays and in actual use.

¹⁰ A major problem for the comparison of the two systems of education is the identification of the texts that served as sources for the translations. Almost all of the texts are translations rather than independent publications, even when they are presented as such. Tuan Guru's treatises have been mentioned above. According to Brandel-Syrier (1960), one of the key texts of the Arabic-Afrikaans tradition, Abu Bakr Effendi's *Bayān ad-dīn* (no. 1 in Kähler's list; see van Selms 1979) is to a great deal identical with a Ḥanafī compendium that was quite popular in the Ottoman empire, *Multaqā l-ʾabḥur* by ʾIbrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn ʾIbrāhīm al-Ḥalabī (died 956/1549; see GAL II: 432; S II: 642-643; Van Bruinessen 2000, note 13). To this text Abu Bakr added comments and quotations from other writers. For some items in Kähler's list the title is the only clue we have. His no. 2, the anonymous *Bidāyat al-mubtadiʾ* is probably the treatise of that name by ʿAbd al-Ġaniyy from Bima (on Sumbawa), who traveled to Mecca around 1830 and whose Malay primer on *ʿaqīda* and *fiqh* was one of the first books printed in Singapore in 1861 (Laffan 2008: 124). Even when books are presented as independent works, they may very well go back to a translation. A clear example is that of Ganief Edwards' Arabic grammar *Nayl al-ʾarab fī luġat al-ʿArab* and *al-Qawāʿid an-naḥwiyya li-tadrīs al-luġa al-ʿarabiyya* (circa 1957), which turns out to be a translation of an Egyptian schoolbook (Versteegh 2011).

Topic	Number of texts
<i>fiqh al-‘ubūdiyya</i>	24
<i>tawhīd</i>	18
<i>du‘ā’</i> (prayers)	12
magic	6
<i>tafsīr</i>	7
grammar	4
<i>tajwīd</i>	2
<i>‘aḥlāq</i> (behaviour)	2
<i>taṣawwuf</i>	2
eschatology (<i>‘alāmāt</i>)	6

Table 3. Distribution of topics in Afrikaans manuscripts in Kähler’s (1971) list.

As a result of the limited access scholars at the Cape had to the textual tradition of Islam, the general knowledge of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, let alone theology, must have been relatively low. Tuan Guru himself was no doubt an accomplished scholar, who had received his education in Indonesia, but his successors could no longer profit from this living tradition. When Islamic education in the Cape Colony was allowed by the colonial authorities at the beginning of the nineteenth century, religious authority in the community was already firmly in the hand of imams, whose eligibility did not depend on religious knowledge and scholarship, but on other factors, for instance on participation in the *ḥajj*, or sometimes even on their financial means (Jeppie 1996).¹¹

In this context, the arrival of Abu Bakr Effendi with his ideas about modern education was bound to bring about a revolution. In the literature, the doctrine of the Ḥanafī school he introduced is often quoted as one of the reasons why he clashed with the Šāfi‘ī establishment in the Cape. The most flagrant example mentioned is that of the consumption of crayfish, which he forbade in accordance with the teachings of the Ḥanafī school to the considerable annoyance of the local Muslims (Argun 2000: 7). But what was really at stake here was a confrontation between two different educational systems: on the one hand, the traditional system of learning in the Cape, based on the Malay example, and on the other hand, the intensive educational reforms in the Ottoman empire during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The impact of this confrontation on the Cape Muslim community must

On Ganief Edwards see Ebrahim (2004).

¹¹ In Natal, the organization of the mosques was different because of the composition of the community, which included tradesmen with enough finances to found mosques and *madrassa*. They established mosque committees that were responsible for all practical and financial matters, leaving to the imams the management of internal religious affairs (Tayob 1999).

have been considerable. We know from the eyewitness account of Abu Bakr's arrival by his nephew Ömer Lütfi (Luffin 2010) that they both regarded the Muslim community in the Cape as somewhat backward: people who quarreled about details but did not have access to a living tradition of Islamic scholarship (see also Van Bruinessen 2000). This was exactly what Abu Bakr was sent to remedy, although his Ḥanafī background made him a less than ideal emissary in the eyes of the Šāfi'ī imams of Cape Town. He himself saw his approach as a modern way of looking at things, against what he regarded as the old-fashioned Malay way of learning.¹²

The educational reforms in the Ottoman empire in the second half of the nineteenth century were not purely religious, but had an ideological background as well, since their aim was to educate the students as obedient subjects of the Ottoman sultan and as true Turks (Germain 1999). This is also reflected in the educational policy of the Ottoman government: all textbooks used in public schools had to be submitted for official approval and the government even commissioned the writing of new textbooks. Abu Bakr's *Bayān ad-dīn*, which was intended for use in the school he founded in Cape Town, could not be printed in Istanbul before it had obtained the *nihil obstat* by the authorities. Other books from the Ottoman curriculum were translated by one of Abu Bakr Effendi's sons, Hisham Ni'matullah (died 1947). His *Sirāj al-ʿiḍāh* was printed in Constantinople in 1894.¹³ According to the title page, this is the treatise *Marāqī l-falāh* by the Egyptian scholar ʿAbū l-ʾIḥlās Ḥasan ibn ʿAmmār aš-Šurunbulālī al-Wafāʿī (died 1069/1659), which is a commentary on the *Nūr al-ʿiḍāh* by the same author. Ni'matullah also published an *ʿilm al-ḥāl* primer for *šibyān* (Davids 2011: 141). The genre of the *ʿilm al-ḥāl* did not exist in the Arab world, but was quite popular in Ottoman education (Terzioğlu 2013). The primer translated by Ni'matullah may be identical with a treatise with the same title written by Rifat Paşa, which was widely used in Ottoman schools at the time. The title page mentions that the book was "translated from the government's book" (*hataranslayt fandi hūvernminṭ sayn kitāp*).

In the Ottoman school system students only learned a limited amount of Arabic so that they could read the Qurʾān, but the main language of both instruction and writing was Ottoman Turkish. One may surmise that the conflict between Abu Bakr Effendi and the Muslim community who received him in Cape Town was not about the use of Arabic vs. Afrikaans, but about Afrikaans vs. Malay as the traditional language of religious instruction. As a Ḥanafī scholar, Abu Bakr must have felt a natural inclination toward the use of the local vernacular for religious instruction.

Arabic did not play any role in the language debate. The general level of knowledge of Arabic in the Cape cannot have been very high. It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that efforts were made to modernize the

¹² This is even evident in the headgear. The cover of Davids (2011) shows students wearing traditional Malay headgear. Abu Bakr imposed on his students the wearing of the Ottoman fez as a sign of their modernity.

¹³ Kähler (1971 no. 41); Davids (2011: 141) gives the title as *Sirāj al-ʿiḍāh*.

teaching of Arabic for instance in Ganief Edwards' Arabic grammar (see above, note 7), which testifies to a desire to learn the language itself and not just for ritual purposes. The example sentences in his grammar and the accompanying word list show that he was aiming at a modern form of the language rather than just a rehash of the Classical texts (Versteegh 2011).¹⁴

Meanwhile, in Southeast Asia, a new development had taken place, connected with the introduction of printed books. The old *pesantren* education involved the memorization of a limited number of texts, which were provided with an interlinear translation in Malay (*jawi*) or Javanese (called *jenggotan* 'bearded' after the pattern of comments which were written perpendicular to the main text), both in Arabic script. Van den Berg (1886: 521) mentions explicitly the presence of Arabic texts in some of the school libraries, but adds that these were seldom consulted, let alone included in the curriculum. In most *pesantren* hardly anybody knew enough Arabic to use these books. This started to change when printed books became generally available in the 1880s and 1890s, at first through printers in Bombay, but after the foundation of the first government press in Mecca (1884), the distribution of printed books took off in earnest. Soon, printing houses in Istanbul and Cairo joined those in India and the Hijaz, and this example was followed by printers in Singapore and Indonesia (Green 2007). The printing houses also published books in Malay and Javanese in Arabic script. Their catalogues, from which one could order by mail, provide crucial information on the books available (Proudfoot 1987; Sugahara 2009).

The introduction of printed books in Indonesia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was accompanied by a change in the approach towards the Arabic language. While many treatises had been translated into Malay, the bulk of religious literature was available in Arabic only. With the distribution of printed books in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the manuscripts and those *ṭarīqas* which used them in education became less important, while other *ṭarīqas*, such as the Naqšbandiyya, which used printed books, became more influential (on this *ṭarīqa* see Van Bruinessen 1990b). This also meant a renewed emphasis on the study of the Arabic language because knowledge of Arabic meant having access to books and to the debates that were held

¹⁴ In this respect, his work resembles that of the initiatives in the Arabic Study Circle in Durban, founded around 1950. In Natal, Indian Muslims had established a Muslim community, inspired by Ghulam Muhammad (died 1911), an Indian Sufi who set up a chain of *madrasa* and mosques, first in Durban and then in the rest of South Africa, including Cape Town. In line with developments in India and Pakistan (see Rahman 2008), Ghulam Muhammad had promoted the use of Urdu as the language of Islam, which was to serve as a new identity and community marker for the growing community of Indian indentured labourers and the growing class of merchants (Green 2007, 2008). The Arabic Study Circle was founded by reformers who were keen to use modern methods in language teaching. They introduced a new trend to study Arabic through the medium of English in order to connect with Islamic modernity (Jeppie 2007: 11-12). Jeppie analyses this development in the Indian Muslim community in the twentieth century and describes how the members of the Arabic Study Circle opposed the established *'ulamā'* elite who clung to Urdu as the language of religious instruction, while speaking Gujarati at home.

in the Middle East (Laffan 2008: 129). Laffan sees in this process a trend towards modernity, which he calls “the Meccan turn”. It is likely that there is a connection with the increase in pilgrimage: more and more people from Southeast Asia were able to go on pilgrimage, and even to study in Mecca, in order to improve their proficiency in Arabic. Being proficient in Arabic meant that they could consult all available sources and were no longer bound by the old canon of texts. The focus on the intimate relationship between teacher and student that characterized teaching in Indonesia disappeared. This development also led to a change in the curriculum of the *pesantren*. Around the turn of the century a number of new texts by new authors appeared on the market and in the schools, often by authors from the late nineteenth century who lived and worked in Mecca. In this way, education in Indonesia profited from recent developments in the Hijaz and in Egypt.¹⁵

For the teachers in the first *madrasa* in South Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century it had been well-nigh impossible to procure manuscripts or books. Printing in Arabic script at the Cape was introduced rather late, compared to other centres of Islamic learning (Rochlin 1933). At the end of the nineteenth century, when it became easier to order books from India or Singapore (Green 2007), the selection of books translated into Afrikaans became wider. In some cases, mention is made of books translated from Arabic into Hindi and then translated into Afrikaans. One such case is that of the *Kitāb ‘alāmāt kubrā wa-‘alamāt ṣuġrā* translated by Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh (Kähler 1971 no. 14), who states that it was originally translated from Persian into Hindi by Mawlānā Šāh Rafī‘ ad-Dīn (‘Abd al-Wahhāb) ad-Dihlawī from Dilli (died 1233/1818), the son of Shah Waliullah. Another example is that of the *Nūr al-‘Islām*, translated by ‘Abd al-Qahhār ibn ‘Abd al-Malik in 1910 (Kähler 1971 no. 29), which had been translated from Arabic into Hindi by ‘Aḥmad al-‘Asqalānī.¹⁶

In the Cape Colony, too, a reorientation on the Middle East took place, but it came at a later date, and was not directly connected with the reform movement described by Laffan (2008). Mandivenga (2000) situates the beginning of the Islamic revival at the Cape around 1850. He connects this with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which made it easier to perform the *ḥajj* (2000: 348). Yet, it is doubtful that at this time any appreciable number of Cape Muslims

¹⁵ To mention one example, the Egyptian schoolbooks that Ganief Edwards found in the Hijaz and translated into Arabic around 1957 were already in use in West Sumatra in the 1930s (Van Bruinessen 1990a: 242-243).

¹⁶ Some of the *‘ad‘iya* contained in the collection of Arabic-Afrikaans works, for example, the *Du‘ā’ kanz al-‘arš* translated in 1949 by Gamielien (Kähler, 1971, no. 2 Roman script), or the *Risāla fī bayān faḍl il layla nisf Ša‘bān wa-d-du‘ā’ al-wārid fīhi* translated by ‘Abd ar-Raḥīm ibn Muḥammad al-‘Irāqī in 1909 (Kähler 1971 no. 33), may well belong to this tradition. Such traditional supplications were heavily criticized by some Deobandi imams in India, but within the Sufi brotherhoods they remained quite popular. There may well have been an increase in works translated from Hindi or deriving from South Asia around the time that Ghulam Muhammad (see above, note 11) expanded his empire of mosques and *madrasa* to the Cape (Green 2008), which led to an intensification of contacts between Natal and Cape Muslims (compare Tayob 1999).

could afford to travel to Mecca (see Ebrahim 2009). The number of *hajjīs* did not grow significantly until the beginning of the twentieth century. When more and more students from the Cape went to Mecca and other places in the Middle East, their stay in the heartlands of Islam acquainted them with the living tradition, just as Indonesian Muslims had been reconnected with this tradition during the Meccan turn identified by Laffan.¹⁷

Through the increased contact with the Middle East at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Cape Muslims became acquainted with the educational changes in the Middle East, where reformers like Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905) advocated the replacement of traditional teaching by modern methods. We have seen above that Ganief Edwards borrowed extensively from Egyptian schoolbooks that had recently been introduced in Egypt and the Hijaz, when he wrote his grammar of Arabic. It is highly probable that among the publications in Arabic-Afrikaans during the first decades of the twentieth century there are more examples of this new trend, but it is difficult to reach definitive conclusions as long as many of the treatises remain unidentified.

4. CONCLUSION

What all currents and trends in the system of Islamic learning at the Cape have in common is that they served as a “conduit to modernity”, as Jeppie (2007: 50) calls it. Even in those cases where the authors do not mention their source, most of what they write is indeed a translation of an Arabic original, although it is not always clear where they found their books and why they chose these in particular. Presumably, they profited from the existence of Sufi networks in this region (Bang 2014). Throughout its existence, the Cape Muslim community was involved in a vibrant process of connecting with a global Muslim world that had gone through a development on which they had missed out.

At least four different strands can be distinguished in the development of Islamic scholarship in the Cape: the early copying of texts from memory; the Ottoman educational reforms; the Meccan turn; and the Egyptian reforms at the beginning of the twentieth century. What these different strands had in common is that they shared a discourse of modernity. Such a discourse implies opposition to customs and practices that are perceived as traditional, or even backwards. In the successive stages of the introduction of Islamic learning in the Cape this opposition is quite manifest. At the earliest stage, the imported learning from Southeast Asia was the only source of knowledge for slaves and free men alike. Abu Bakr’s reforms were introduced with the explicit purpose to put an end to the old system of learning and introduce modern education in newly founded schools. When printed books became available

¹⁷ For the Indian Muslims in Natal this process was different: they never lost the connection with their country of origin and thus had earlier access to printed literature from India. They did not abandon, however, their language of religious instruction, Urdu, and did not feel the need to either translate into Afrikaans/English or to learn Arabic, until the founding of the Arabic Study Circle in the 1950s (see above, note 11).

in the Cape Colony at the end of the nineteenth century, they were greeted as a gateway to new knowledge. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, students turned to Egypt and the Hijaz in order to learn Arabic and study the written treasures of Islamic learning in the Middle East.

A discourse of modernity in the development of Islamic learning is not a new phenomenon: it is found in many different periods and places throughout the Islamic world. In contemporary Mali, for instance, young arabisants come together to have conversations in Modern Standard Arabic in order to improve their knowledge of the language. They believe that their knowledge of Arabic and their access to many more books than the traditional canon in the *madrassa* give them the right to challenge the traditional imams and teachers, who have only standard answers on the basis of a small number of texts (Bouwman 2005). Whether or not this feeling of superiority is justified and whether or not the actual level of knowledge of the traditional teachers is underestimated by these youngsters, is immaterial here.¹⁸ The strategy of the arabisants has certainly been successful in the modern media.

Judging by the total amount of works in Arabic-Afrikaans one imagines that the level of Islamic scholarship in the Cape was relatively low compared to other centres of Islamic learning. The list of Arabic-Afrikaans works is probably more or less exhaustive by now. Admittedly, a considerable number of works is of unknown provenance, both physically (where were they printed, ordered, bought?), and spiritually (what were the main influences the writers of Arabic-Afrikaans underwent?). Many of the texts still await identification because their authors are not exactly generous with information about their provenance or even dissimulate it by assuming primary authorship for works that are actually translations of Arabic originals.

It is ironic that once the Cape Muslims had found their connection with the larger Islamic world and books produced in Arabic, they no longer needed it, because in the meantime the Muslim community had found a new connection with learning. Those who had the means to attend Western-type schools, tended to regard the *madrassa* as something of the past, as an example of traditional learning. Apartheid in South Africa slowed down this development because it prevented many Muslim children from receiving education in modern schools, but eventually, the entire community was introduced to Western-style secular learning. This confronted them with a new challenge of combining the two systems, the secular learning that pervaded society, and the Islamic learning that was perceived as necessary for the religious instruction of their children (Tayob 1999). Meanwhile, the Arabic-Afrikaans manuscripts themselves had become treasured heirlooms that were kept jealously from the outside world (Jappie 2011), but were no longer comprehensible to anyone but a few specialists.

¹⁸ The examples of scholarly work in Bambara, such as a translation of one of al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* (Tamari 2005) and a translation of Imru' al-Qays' *Mu'allaqa* (Tamari 2013), both with comments and commentary are certainly impressive and attest to a high level of scholarship. But it is difficult to assess to what extent these are exceptional or representative of the general state of the art.

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