

September 2007

The Wienecke Wire



Rewrite the *Entire* New Testament?

The young man tried to write to his father whenever he traveled. Family relationships are important in this part of West Africa, and the old man was always grateful to hear from his son. Sadly, however, though written in Tadaksahak, the language the father and son shared, the precious letters were simply unintelligible to the old man. The script wrapped around his familiar language was foreign to him. The boxy separated characters were so different from the flowing Arabic script the old man knew well. He always needed someone who knew how to read the French style script to decipher his son's letters for him.

Then, the October '06 letter arrived...

The Bible translation process is filled with different decisions. Which groups need a translation? Which dialect to use? What sounds need to be written? Which words to use for “God,” “faith” and “love”?

One major decision concerns the script in which the language will be written. Script is to a language what clothes are to a person. A language can be “dressed” in any number of scripts.

The choice becomes quite complicated in areas of West Africa where the national language (spoken in government and schools) is French (written in a Roman script), but much of the religious influence is Islamic which uses the Arabic script.

A number of Scripture translations in West Africa were originally rendered in a Roman script to match French, the national language. However, new feedback from African colleagues reveals that many of these people groups would be much more receptive to an Arabic-style script.

Rewrite entire New Testaments in a different script?! What a massive undertaking! Is it even *possible*!?

Yes! Changing entire completed translations from Roman script to Arabic-style script IS possible—AND HAPPENING—thanks to software written by the NRSI* team!

The Ajami Conversion Workshop

For two weeks in October 2006, a number of Wycliffe linguists and national translators from several countries met at the Wycliffe center in Niamey (Niger) to discuss using this software to convert Scripture in their languages from Roman to Arabic-style script (a concept called Ajami). The language groups represented at the meetings included three regional varieties of Fulfulde (spoken in Mali, western Niger and Cameroon) plus Zarma, Hausa, Kanuri and Tadaksahak.

Jonathan Kew, a British NRSI software developer, provided training in the conversion software. The participants learned how to convert Scripture from the Roman script to the Ajami script. They also discussed ways to distribute the rewritten Scriptures in the seven languages.

* The NRSI (Non-Roman Script Initiative) is the group within Wycliffe focused on the technological side of making computers understand complex scripts for the 600 language groups who still need the Word of God. This is the group Ken is joining.

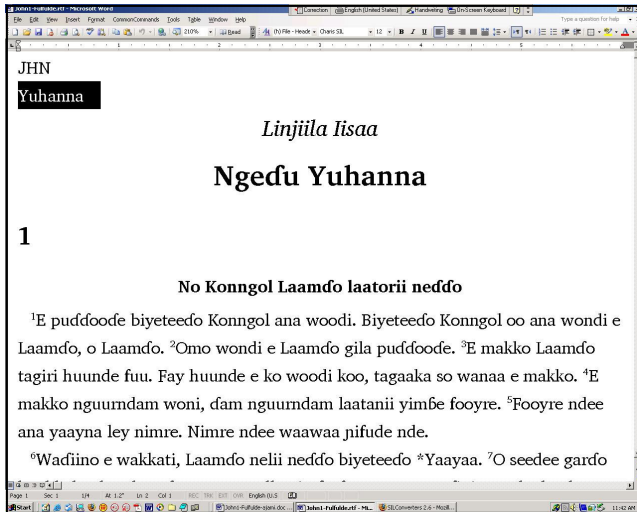


Fig. 1—The opening of John 1 in Malian Fulfulde using the Roman-style alphabet.

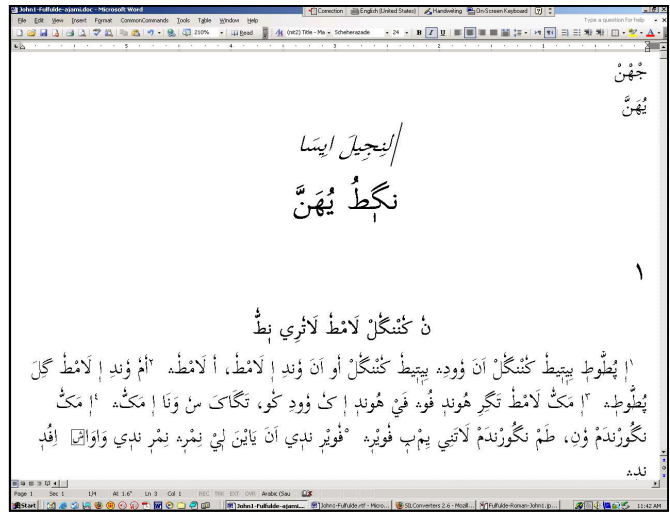


Fig. 2—The opening of John 1 in Malian Fulfulde using the Ajami script. This text was generated by software.

History in the Making

During the workshop, one of the national translators made history by using the software to convert a letter he'd written to his father in Tadaksahak into the Ajami script. Previously, he had always written his letters in Roman-script Tadaksahak and somebody in the village who understood it would have to read the letter out loud to his father. But the translator's father could read Arabic scripts, so when he received the letter in the Ajami script, he "sounded out" the Tadaksahak text without help!

Although this software tool was not written specifically to do conversions from Roman to Ajami scripts, God is using it (and the engineers in the NRSI) to present the Scriptures to people He loves in the form they will most readily accept.

Wienecke Family Eager to Begin Working

The only thing blocking us from actually joining the NRSI ScriptSource database and website development project is our support level. We are now at 90% of our new quota, and we must hit 100% before Ken can begin NRSI work full-time. We need a number of **new regular-support partners**, be they individuals or churches, in order to make up for attrition and some growth in our expenses. We also need **new prayer partners**, as well as some **people to champion this ministry** in their own churches and groups. Full details about how to do these things can now be found on our...

Updated Family Website!

Ken has made many improvements on our website. Please go take a look. It has an up-to-date prayer calendar, ministry description, full instructions for new partners and a newsletter archive which covers the last three years. You can make secure one-time gifts at the site, as well as set up a series of automatic regular monthly gifts. Thank you for your involvement with us and this important work.

<http://www.wysite.org/sites/wienecke>

Your servants,
Ken, Katy, Christopher and Charissa

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