West African Ajami Orthographies in Socio-Political Context

Andy Warren-Rothlin

ABSTRACT

Written Hausa, Fulfulde and Chadian Arabic share a number of sociolinguistic features, including aspects of their historical experience under colonialism, digraphic representation and multiple Arabic-script orthographies, and restricted domains in which Arabic script is used. Their environment is also marked by historic and modern Islamic traditions, as well as a Christian presence (including substantial print publishing), and much influence from both Europe (English and French, Roman script) and the Middle East (Arabic, Arabic script). Despite their strong traditions, one reason why the use of Arabic script has decreased is technical—the lack of standards; and some modern attempts at establishing standards may have inadvertently added to the pluralism. A number of non-Arabic sounds are represented very differently for the same by different writers.