

The basics of Soninke Ajami

ن ر و أَجَمِن خَرَنَع

Read and write Soninke in Arabic script

سوننگَنَخِين خَرَنَع دَ أَ سَفَنَدِ تِ اَرِينْسِكِين عَ

29 March 2014

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Language: Soninke, spoken in Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania and in the diaspora

Genre: Literacy, transition guide

Course to learn how to read and write Soninke in Arabic script, for those who read English and Soninke in Roman script.

Foreword

This guide is designed for those who read Soninke in Roman script who want to read and write the language in Ajami (Arabic script). This gives access to Ajami literature, and can also help facilitate contact with Soninkes who read Arabic. There are many of them in Soninkara!

This guide contains reading and writing exercises. Separate sheets are also available with the transcriptions and other answers so you can correct your own work. After having completed all the exercises, you will know the basics of Soninke Ajami.

Enjoy learning!

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Introduction

1. The transcription of non-Arabic languages in Arabic characters is called “Ajami”.
Ajami has been developed for many West African languages, including Soninke.

2. Ajami is written from right to left.

Read these Soninke words from right to left: *egoon* ← *eyet*.

Write your name here, from right to left:

_____ ←

3. The Soninke consonants are: **b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t w x y**.

The short vowels in Soninke are: **a e i o u**.

4. In Ajami, the consonants are written as letters on the line, and the vowels as small signs above or below their consonant.

Try and work out what is written here in Soninke:

u o a a a a u
sgr ygn knm m | wr
i i i e

5. In Ajami, as in Arabic, there is no difference between majuscules and miniscules.
6. Ajami, like Arab, is written cursively and most consonants in a word are joined.
There are some exceptions to this rule that we will see later.

7. Every Ajami consonant has four forms: initial, middle, final and isolated.

b b_b_b ←

8. This manual presents a provisional orthography for Soninke Ajami. At the end you will find the differences between this and the orthography decided by the Direction for the Promotion of National Languages in Senegal in 2008.
9. Those who follow this course to the end will be able to read and write Soninke in Ajami.

Lesson 1

Three consonants that are similar (b, p, t)

We will learn the vowels later. We will start with the following three consonants.

These consonants are similar to each other:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| b | p | t |
| ب | پ | ت |

Each consonant has four forms:

| summary | isolated | final | middle | initial | letter |
|---------|----------|-------|--------|---------|--------|
| ببب | ب | ب | ب | ب | b |
| پپپ | پ | پ | پ | پ | p |
| تتت | ت | ت | ت | ت | t |

ببب پپپ تتت

Copy the consonants here:

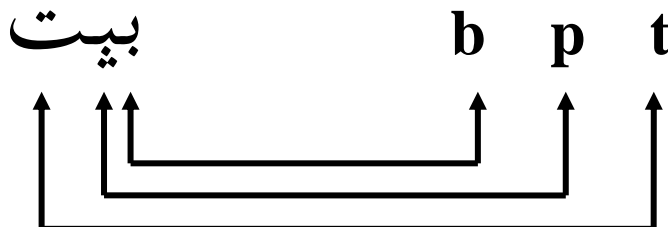
Remember that ...

Ajami is written from right to left



Soninke in Roman script is

written from left to right →



Transcribe in Roman script,
from left to right: ➔

Transcribe these consonants in Ajami,
← from right to left:

ب _____

_____ t

پ _____

_____ b

ت _____

_____ p

تب _____

بت _____ b t

پت _____

_____ t b

تپ _____

_____ b p t

پت _____

_____ p t b

تپ _____

_____ p b t

پتب _____

_____ t p b

پبت _____

_____ b b t

بتپ _____

_____ b t p

تتب _____

_____ t b p

Lesson 2

The consonants n, ɲ/ñ, y et m

These consonants are similar:

| | | |
|---|-------|---|
| n | ɲ / ñ | y |
| ن | ي | ي |

and also:

| |
|---|
| m |
| م |

Each consonant has four forms:

| summary | isolated | final | middle | initial | letter |
|---------|----------|-------|--------|---------|--------|
| ننن ن | م | م | م | م | m |
| نيني ن | ن | ن | ن | ن | n |
| يبي ي | ي | ي | ي | ي | ɲ / ñ |
| ممم م | ي | ي | ي | ي | y |

ننن ن يبي ي يبي ي ممم م

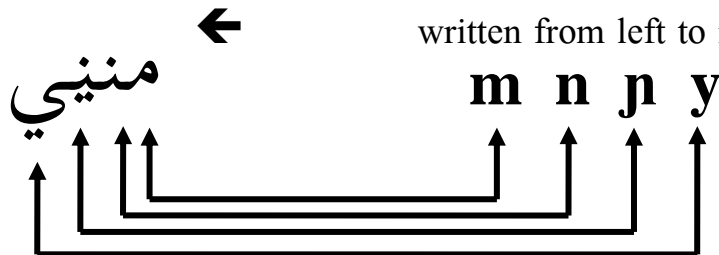
Write them here:

Remember that ...

Ajami is written from right to left

Soninke in Roman script is

written from left to right



Transcribe these consonants: ➔

← Transcribe in Ajami:

م _____

_____ m n ɲ

ن _____

_____ n ɲ y

ي _____

_____ ɲ y m

ي _____

_____ y m n

مين _____

_____ m n ɲ y

ني _____

_____ n ɲ y m

نيم _____

_____ ɲ y m n

يمن _____

_____ y m n ɲ

مني _____

_____ ɲ y m n

نيم _____

_____ y t b ɲ

نيم _____

_____ b m p

يمن _____

_____ t b y

Lesson 3

The five short vowels (a, e, i, o, u)

In Latin-based alphabets all the consonants and vowels are written on the line. However, in Arab-based alphabets, only the consonants are written on the line. The vowels are written either above or below the consonant. The vowels **a** **o** and **u** are written above a consonant; the vowels **i** and **e** are written below a consonant.

| a | e ¹ | i | o | u |
|----|----------------|----|----|----|
| ◌َ | ◌ِ | ◌ِ | ◌ُ | ◌ُ |

Copy the vowels here:

a e i o u

◌َ ◌ِ ◌ِ ◌ُ ◌ُ

► Vowels cannot be used alone, without a consonant. For the initial vowels used at the start of a word, or those that make up a word, (for example “a”, “i”, “alimaami”), see lesson 5.

Reading exercise

| | | | | | |
|-----|----------|-----|-----|-----|----------|
| تِ | يِ يِ يِ | بِ | مِ | نِ | نِ نِ نِ |
| تِي | مَنِم | بِي | نِي | تِي | تِي |
| نِي | تِب | بِي | مِت | پِت | پِت پِت |

¹ According to Senegal Ajami standards the equivalent of the vowel “e” is ◌ِ and not ◌ِ.

Transcribe these words: ➔

← Transcribe these words in Ajami:

ن _____

_____ b a

تِم _____

_____ n o

مَت _____

_____ b i y i

بُت _____

_____ t e m u

بِن _____

_____ b o n e

بَت _____

_____ p a y i

مَي _____

_____ n a m a

مَنِم _____

_____ y e t u

نِم _____

_____ b i t a

يَت _____

_____ m u n i

Lesson 4

The five nasal vowels and the letter n without a vowel

| an | en ¹ | in | on | un |
|----|-----------------|----|----|----|
| نَ | نِ | نِ | نُ | نُ |

To indicate a nasal vowel, the letter “n” is added after the consonant that carries the vowel that is nasalised. This letter “n” does not carry a vowel.²

There are also other cases where the letter “n” does not carry a vowel:

- The –n of clarification after a noun or an adjective.

Examples: yaxaren n ri; a laaten ya ni.

- The word n, used as a personal pronoun or an abbreviation of “nan”

Examples: n ri; o n daga.

- The prenasalisation of a consonant.

Examples: nta, nke, the suffixes –nte (siginte), –nke (Sooninke), –nko (Sabinko).

Reading exercise

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------|------|--------------|------|------|------|
| ن | نَب | نَت | نَن | بَنُ | يَنُ | تَنُ | تَنِ |
| بِنَم | تَنِينِ | تِنِم | تِنِ | بِنِ | يِنِ | بِنِ | تِنِ |
| تِينِ يِ نِ | ن تَنِينِ يِ نِ | | | بِنِ نَتِ نِ | | | |

¹ According to Senegal Ajami standards the equivalent of “en” is نِ and not نِ.

² In Soninke Ajami the sukun ُ used in Arabic and in other Ajami variants is not used.

Some punctuation signs¹:

Copy the Ajami signs here:

| | |
|---|----|
| . | .. |
| ? | ؟ |
| ! | ! |
| , | ، |

Transcribe these words and phrases: ➔

← Transcribe in Ajami:

بَنْبُ _____

_____ tonbe

تُنْمُ _____

_____ yanpa

نَبَ! _____

_____ penpe

بَنْتِ _____

_____ yintinte

ن تَنْپِ _____

_____ N nta bontene.

يَنْشَنِ يَ نِ بَ ؟ _____

_____ N moton ya ni.

¹ See lesson 13 for a complete table of punctuation signs.

Lesson 5

Initial vowels with alif

As is the case in Arabic, the letter alif in Soninke Ajami is used to carry an initial vowel, either above or below. (An alif that does not carry a vowel elongates the preceding vowel, as we will see in lesson 8.)

The letter alif can be joined to a preceding consonant (on the right) but not with a consonant that follows it (on the left).

Alif is taller than the consonants that we have seen until now.

| summary | isolated | final | middle | initial | letter |
|---------|----------|-------|--------|---------|--------|
| | | | | | alif |

Copy here the two forms of the letter alif: ←

The five initial vowels¹

| a | e ² | i | o | u |
|---|----------------|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

Copy them here:

The initial alif is used for many personal pronouns such as (أ), i (إ), an (أن), in (إن) and o (ؤ).

¹ In Standard Arabic the letter hamza (ء), which indicates a glottal stop, is often used above or below the alif at the start of a word (for example أ for the letter “a” at the start of a word). In Soninke Ajami the hamza is not used with the alif.

² According to Senegal Ajami standards the equivalent of the initial “ee” is ء and not ء .

► In roman script a vowel can be deleted if it is followed by another vowel, and replaced by an apostrophe. For example:

N da a wari. - N d'a wari.

In Ajami **this contraction is never used**, and the **complete form** is always written.

► The letter alif does not join with the following consonant (on the left). Therefore, the consonant after alif takes the initial form, or if it is followed by only one consonant in the word, this consonant is written in its **isolated form** and not in its final form.

Example: اَن is written in isolated form ن and not final form نـ .

► There is a small **distance** between the alif, which does not join on the left, and the following consonant in the same word. This distance is smaller than that between two words. We will see the same thing in lesson 7 for other letters which do not join on the left.

| Transcribe these words: ➡ | ⬅ Transcribe in Ajami: |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| ! ! _____ | _____ An bonte ba ? |
| اَي _____ | _____ I ma i banbu. |
| اُم _____ | _____ Umu ya ni ba ? |
| اَمِي _____ | _____ A ni manime yi ? |
| اِبْنِ _____ | _____ A bononten ni. |
| اَن تِنْتِ ! _____ | _____ Aminata ya ni ! |

Lesson 6

The shadda and double consonants

| shadda |
|--------|
| ◌ّ |

When a consonant is doubled in Soninke, like “tt”, in Ajami we write تّ with a shadda (◌ّ) above the consonant. Therefore, “bb” is written بّب in Ajami.

The upper vowel signs (◌َ, ◌ُ, ◌ِ) are written above the shadda.

Examples to copy in Ajami

| | |
|-------|------|
| batte | بّٲٲ |
| banna | بّنّ |

| | |
|-------|------|
| teppu | تّٲٲ |
| bubba | بّبّ |

Examples to compare

| | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| تّٲٲ | بّبّ | بّٲٲ | مّنّ | بّنّ |
| تٲٲ | تّبّ | بّٲٲ | مّن | بّن |

Reading exercise

| | | | | | |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|
| تّٲٲ | بّنّ | بّٲٲ | تّٲٲ | بّبّ | يّٲٲ |
| تُنّم | مّنّ | مّنم | تّٲٲ | بّٲٲ | مّنّ |

| Transcribe these phrases: | Transcribe in Ajami: |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| مَنْ؟ _____ | _____ butte |
| أُمُّ نَ مَنْ؟ _____ | _____ toppa |
| يَبْنِي نَ؟ _____ | _____ annabinyinme |
| أَنْتَ إِبْنُ؟ _____ | _____ bubba |

Lesson 7

**Three consonants that do not join
with the following consonant (d, r, w)**

| d | r | w |
|---|---|---|
| د | ر | و |

These three consonants **d**, **r** et **w**, like alif, can be joined to a preceding consonant (on the right) but not to a consonant that follows (on the left).¹

| summary | letter | letter | letter | letter | letter |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| د د د د د | د | د | د | د | d |
| ر ر ر ر ر | ر | ر | ر | ر | r |
| و و و و و | و | و | و | و | w |

Look at how certain characters ascend (also like alif), whilst others descend.

Copy them here:

د د ر ر و و

Reading exercise

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| د | د | د | د | د | د | د | د |
| د | د | د | د | د | د | د | د |
| د | د | د | د | د | د | د | د |
| د | د | د | د | د | د | د | د |

¹ This is also the case for two other consonants in Arabic, that are not used in Soninke Ajami: ز (z) et ذ (dh).

| Transcribe these words: | Transcribe in Ajami: |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| دَنْبُ | demu |
| دِنْدِ | yide |
| يَنْدِ | bure |
| بَرَمَ | toro |
| يُرَ | wayi |
| وَنْدِ | newo |
| تُونِبُ | wure |
| نَنْبَرِ | nerundi |
| مَدِّ | warinde |
| يَتْرِنَمِ | doronme |
| وَبِّ | An ra w'a yi ? |
| أَرْبَ | A d'i wari. |
| أَرِينْدِ | O d'a wutu. |
| يُورِ | Manmadu Tarawore |

Lesson 8

The five long vowels (aa, ee, ii, oo, uu)

When a Soninke word has a long vowel like **oo**, the Ajami form is written by a short vowel sign followed by a letter that does not carry a vowel. For **ee** this is a combination of **ى** (ي without the two dots below) and a small alif: **ىٰ**.

Copy the Ajami characters here:

| aa | ee ¹ | ii | oo | uu |
|----|-----------------|----|----|----|
| اَ | ىٰ | يٰ | وْ | وُ |

| aa | ee | ii | oo | uu |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

In Soninke in Roman script long vowels are not used at the start of words. In Ajami this is usually also the case.²

► In Roman script Soninke a word never ends with a long vowel. In Ajami monosyllabic words are written according to their pronunciation.

| Pronunciation | naa | naan | taa | taan | tee | teen | maa | maan |
|---------------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|
| Roman script | na | naan | ta | taan | te | teen | ma | maan |
| Ajami script | نَا | نَانْ | تَا | تَانْ | تِي | تِينْ | مَا | مَانْ |

► Attention: there are also some monosyllabic words that are pronounced with a short vowel, for example the word “na” can be written in Ajami in two ways.

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| نَا: نَا وَ نِ | نَ: أَنْ أَوْ تُ! |
| مَا: نَ مَا بُتْ | مَ: نَ مَ بُتْ |

¹ According to Senegal Ajami standards the equivalent of “ee” is **ىٰ** and not **ىٰ**.

² There are some exceptions in Ajami for certain well-known Qur’anic names.

| Transcribe: | Transcribe in Ajami: |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| مِرَان | daaru |
| بِيد | booto |
| مُود | neene |
| دُوم | tuure |
| دِم | miiri |
| بُور | tooro |
| يُوم | diina |
| يِرَام | ee ! |
| أَمِين | wutaade |
| بُور | duumante |
| إِ وَ رِينَ | A ri ten di. |
| تَانُ تُنِم | N ma wa roono. |
| أَنْ نَنْ رِي ! | Naanu tanmi. |

Lesson 9

Three tall consonants (g, k, l) and laa

We have already seen the letter alif, which is taller than the others. There are also three other tall letters.

| | | |
|---|----------------|---|
| k | g ¹ | l |
| ک | گ | ل |

In Ajami, as in Arabic, there is also a special combination:

ل (la) + ا (alif) = لا (laa).

| |
|-----|
| laa |
| لا |

| summary | isolated | final | middle | initial | letter |
|----------|----------|-------|--------|---------|--------|
| ککک ک | ک | ک | ک | ک | k |
| گگگ گ | گ | گ | گ | گ | g |
| للل ل | ل | ل | ل | ل | l |
| لا لا لا | لا | | لا | لا | laa |

When the consonant ک comes in the final position or isolated position, it can also take this alternative form: ك .

Look at these letters and copy them:

ککک ک گگگ گ للل ل لا لا لا

¹ Selon le standard d'ajami au Sénégal l'équivalent de « g » est گ et non pas گ.

Reading exercise

| | | | | |
|--------|-------|-----------|--------|----------|
| بَاثَى | كُنْ | كِنْبَكَّ | بَمَكْ | كَاوْ |
| مُلَّ | كِلَّ | وَكْذُ | لَنْبْ | كُنْجْ |
| لَاوَر | لَادَ | بَلَّادْ | يَالَ | لَكْرَبْ |

Transcribe these words:

Transcribe in Ajami:

كَنْبُ

_____ kaagume

دِبْكُمُ

_____ mukke

تُنْكَنِيكَ

_____ dinka

لِلْ

_____ kallungooru

كَرْنِكْ

_____ luuke

لِكْ

_____ giilo

دُتْ

_____ tanpille

لَنْبْ

_____ wallaana

لَايْدُ

_____ labo

كَلَّانَ

_____ laato

Lesson 10

Three other consonants that are similar (j, x, ɣ)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| j | x | ɣ |
| ج | خ | غ |

| summary | isolated | final | middle | initial | letter |
|---------|----------|-------|--------|---------|--------|
| ججج ج | ج | ج | ج | ج | j |
| خخخ خ | خ | خ | خ | خ | x |
| غغغ غ | غ | غ | غ | غ | ɣ |

Copy the letters here:

ججج ج

خخخ خ

غغغ غ

Reading exercise

| | | | | |
|---------|-------|---------|-------|------|
| تَخ | خَوْخ | جَكِّن | جَكِّ | جَاج |
| خَلِنَع | جَج | پَلِنَع | دُج | عَ |

| Transcribe: | Transcribe in Ajami: |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| أَرَجَنِّ _____ | _____ janmu |
| خَرْبَنَمَ _____ | _____ yuguxulle |
| تُرَنِّجَ _____ | _____ tanjikke |
| خَرَخَ _____ | _____ xaaxo |
| جَلَاخُ _____ | _____ liqe |
| جَيِّي _____ | _____ waajunde |
| تِلْعَنَتِ _____ | _____ balaaxu |
| جَخْتَنِّجَ _____ | _____ ŋalinte |
| مَلْدِرَجَنَمَ _____ | _____ bajjo |
| أَوْ خَرَنِّجَ ۞ _____ | Ke xoten ya ni ! |
| خَ دَ جِي كِنِ يَخَرَنِّ عَ ! _____ | A d'a ro benŋen di. |

Lesson 11

Three other consonants that are similar (f, h, q)

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| f | q | h |
| ف | ق | هـ |

| summary | isolated | final | middle | initial | letter |
|---------|----------|-------|--------|---------|--------|
| ففف ف | ف | ف | ف | ف | f |
| ققق ق | ق | ق | ق | ق | q |
| ههه هـ | هـ | هـ | هـ | هـ | h |

Compare with this consonant that you learned earlier:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| م | م | م | م | m |
|---|---|---|---|---|

ففف ف ققق ق ههه هـ

Reading exercise

| | | | | | | |
|--------|-------|-------|--------|------------|---------|-------|
| فَابَ | هَاجُ | مَانِ | كَهْتِ | فَرَنْفَرِ | يَقِي | فِلْ |
| كِرِفْ | خَقِي | دَقُ | بِهْ | نَفَ | فَنَقِي | هَقِي |

Transcribe :

فُونُ

هَنِم

رَقِ

فِدِّ

يَنْقَ

فُنْلَنِم

وُلَهْ

لِفْنَدِ

هِيَجِ

Transcribe in Ajami :

_____ haṇu

_____ fo wo fo

_____ noqu

_____ haqile

_____ harafe

_____ hanniye

_____ kafumande

_____ fulaane

_____ follaqe

فَنِّ فَنِّ جِين وَ زُونْ فَنَجْن دِثْ

Hari n'a birandi n'a xoorondi !

هَرَنَ وَاشْ خَلْنِ كِي أَي !

Fatumata, an d'a faamu ?

Lesson 12

Two other consonants that are similar (s, c)

| | |
|---|----------------|
| s | c ¹ |
| س | ش |

| summary | isolée | finale | médiale | initiale | lettre |
|---------|--------|--------|---------|----------|--------|
| سسس س | س | س | س | س | s |
| ششش ش | ش | ش | ش | ش | c |

Copiez ici:

سسس س

ششش ش

Reading exercise

| | | | | | | |
|---------|----------|--------|-----------|------|--------|-------|
| سِسي | سُنُسُ | سُرُقِ | سُونِنِكِ | سَهْ | كِسِ | سَاسَ |
| شِيخِ | تَنَشِكْ | شَاخُ | شَخَانِ ! | شُشُ | بُشَرُ | شَكَّ |
| أَشَارِ | بُشِنِ | شَنَسِ | خَرَخَشْ | كَشْ | دِكَشْ | بُشْ |

¹ According to Senegal orthography standards the equivalent of “c” is ش and not ت.

In Arabic the letter ش is pronounced as “sh” and not as the Soninke “c”.

Transcribe: Transcribe in Ajami:

سُنَخْسُ _____

_____ kososo

بِلِنَج _____

_____ harisa

شُشْفُ _____

_____ cawu

شَكْل _____

_____ wuccu

سَاس _____

_____ kaaca

فَتَنَفْسِي _____

_____ safa

فِش _____

_____ ceelu

كَشْنَت _____

_____ koccisaga

سَنَسْل _____

_____ caccare

هَرِنَ أَ سَفَنَدِن بُونَد !

Hari n'o su tanga !

Write your name here in Soninke:

Write your name here in Ajami:

Lesson 13

The punctuation signs

| | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|-----------|---|
| . | , | ; | : | ? | ! |
| • ∴ | ‘ | ؛ | : | ؟ | ! |
| | | | | | |
| - | — | # | * | (…) | |
| — | — | — | * | (. . .) | |
| | | | | | |
| “...” | | ‘ | ’ | {...} | |
| << . . . >> | | ! | ! | ☼ . . . ☼ | |

Transcribe:

A ti : « N naamu ! »

A ti: « O nan xawa taaxunu Kunbi
ya yi. »

إِ تِ : « جَابِ سِيسِ ! »

إِ تِ : « أَنْنَ خَوَ تَاخُنُ مِنْ »

يِ ؟ «

Lesson 14

Hindu-Arabic numerals (0 to 9)

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| ٠ | ١ | ٢ | ٣ | ٤ | ٥ | ٦ | ٧ | ٨ | ٩ |

Numbers are written from right to left (➡), either in Arabic numerals (0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9) or Hindu-Arabic numerals (٠ ١ ٢ ٣ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧ ٨ ٩), because this is the order in which Arab speakers read their numbers).

Therefore, 1234 is written: ١ ٢ ٣ ٤ and not: ٤ ٣ ٢ ١.

Write today's date here: day _____ month _____ year _____

Write your telephone number here: _____

| Transcribe: ➡ | ➡ Transcribe: |
|---------------|---------------|
| ٣٦٠٥٤ _____ | _____ 8642 |
| ٨٧٥٠٠ _____ | _____ 2007 |
| ٥٣٩٢ _____ | _____ 9753 |
| ١٩٢٣ _____ | _____ 4150 |

The Arab calendar is different to the western calendar (Gregorian).

For example the year 2014 corresponds with ١٤٣٦ \ ١٤٣٥ in Arabic.

Lesson 15

The Arabic alphabet

Different orders exist for the Arabic alphabet. The traditional order is different to that used today in dictionaries, directories and other alphabet lists.

The traditional order is called “abjad” or “abjada” and starts with

← ا ب ج د

In the modern order similar consonants are grouped together.

Arabic alphabet consonants

| | | | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|------|
| خ | ح | ج | ث | ت | ب | ا |
| kha | haa | jiim | thaa | taa | baa | alif |
| ص | ش | س | ز | ر | ذ | د |
| saad | shiin | siin | zaay | raa | thaal | daal |
| ق | ف | غ | ع | ظ | ط | ض |
| qaaf | faa | ghayn | ayn | thaa | taa | daad |
| ي | و | ه | ن | م | ل | ك |
| yaa | waaw | ha | nuun | miim | laam | kaaf |

Exercises

1. Mark on this alphabet chart all the consonants that exist in Soninke Ajami.

N.B. For the letter “kaaf” there are two variants, ك et ك .

2. Which Soninke Ajami consonants do not exist exactly in Arabic?

In Arabic the three short vowels a, i and u can be marked, but often they are not. The long vowels are marked by ا for aa, ي for ii and و for uu, as in Ajami. The vowels e and o are not used in Standard Arabic.

Arabic vowels

The three short vowels and long vowels in Arabic

| a | i | u | aa | ii | uu |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| اَ | اِ | اُ | اَ | يَ | وُ |

There are also other signs that exist in Arabic.

We have seen the shadda, which is also used in Soninke Ajami to show a double consonant.

The sukun shows consonants that do not carry a vowel. In Soninke Ajami this is not used.

The hamza shows a glottal stop (phonetic sign ʔ, transcribed as ‘).

The long aa at the start of a word has a special sign in Arabic. In Soninke Ajami this is not used.

Other signs in Arabic

| shadda | sukun | hamza | initial aa |
|--------|-------|-------|------------|
| ّ | ◌ْ | ء | آ |

Finally, there are grammatical signs in Arabic to show definite nouns. They are pronounced “anne, inne, ounne”, but are different to nasalised vowels.

Grammatical signs in Arabic

| an | in | un |
|-----|------|------|
| انْ | اِنْ | اَنْ |

Lesson 16

Supplementary characters in West Africa

West African languages have some sounds that do not exist in Arabic. To write these languages in Ajami characters have to be chosen or adapted to show these sounds. In Soninke Ajami this concerns the consonants **ɕ**, **g**, **ɲ**, **ŋ**, **p** and the vowels **e**, **o** as well as their long variants and all the nasalised vowels.

The choices made in this manual often correspond with the Ajami standards established in Senegal in 2008, but there are some exceptions:

| Letter | Senegal standard | in this manual |
|--------|---------------------|-------------------|
| c | ٲ | ش |
| g | گ | ڱ |
| e | ٲ̣ | ٲ̣̣ |
| ee | ٲ̣ي | ٲ̣ي̣̣ |

Write the two choices in Ajami

Supplementary characters (for Pulaar languages and others)

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ḡ | ḡ | ṭ | y | ṛ | ḏ | f |
| پ | پ | ث | ج | ج | ط | ظ |

Supplementary vowels (for Wolof)

| | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|------|------|------|
| à | ë | é | ó | ëë | ée | óó |
| اَ | اِ | اِ | اُ | اِاِ | اِاِ | اِاِ |

Lesson 17 : Summary

The Soninke alphabet and alternative characters

| Alternatives* | Soninke Ajami | Soninke | Alternatives* | Soninke Ajami | Soninke |
|---------------|---------------|----------|---------------|---------------|-----------|
| | ببب ب | b | | ووو و | w |
| ت، چ | ششش ش | c | | خخخ خ | x |
| ض | ددد د | d | | ييي ي | y |
| ف | ففف ف | f | | | |
| گ، ک، غ | گگگ گ | g | | ا | a |
| | ههه ه | h | ه | ه | e |
| | ججج ج | j | | ي | i |
| ك (isolated) | ککک ک | k | | و | o |
| | للل ل | l | | و | u |
| | لا لا لا لا | l + alif | | ا | aa |
| | ممم م | m | ي | ي | ee |
| ن | ننن ن | n | | ي | ii |
| نج | نين ن | n / ñ | | و | oo |
| ک | عقع ع | ŋ | | و | uu |
| پ پپ | پپپ پ | p | | ا | initial a |
| | ققق ق | q | ا | ا | initial e |
| | ررر ر | r | | ا | initial i |
| ص | سسس س | s | | ا | initial o |
| ط | تتت ت | t | | ا | initial u |

* The Senegal Ajami standard for c, g, e and ee, plus old characters.

Transcribe these proverbs:

چي جِخِنْتِن رَ نَت خُورِن.

دِگَن فَرَنفَرَن دَ تَنعُن فِت بَانَ ي.

جِي كَ تَو مَخ وَ مَخ، اَ مُلَن ي.

Booton duuron ra nta sikki.

Nuxunnen siri yaaxon naxa.

Xaranbalin na bitanbinna xooren ya noxon di.
