

Unveiling the Literary Tapestry: Exploring the Arabic-Afrikaans Tradition among Cape Muslims - **Shamiega Chaudhari** (Cape Peninsula University of Technology)

In the realm of South African literary heritage, Achmat Davids emerges as a pivotal figure, illuminating the obscured narrative of Cape Muslim and their cultural contributions. Central to his mission was rectifying historical distortions and fostering a sense of pride in their unique heritage. Davids championed authentic communication, avoiding arrogance and embracing the language of ordinary people. His distinction between “Cape Malay” and “Cape Muslim” underscored the rejection of racial connotations and affirmed the multifaceted identity of the community.

This paper delves into the vibrant literary tradition of Arabic-Afrikaans, also known as “Ajami” among Cape Muslims, shedding light on its evolution and cultural significance. “Ajami” refers to the use of Arabic script to represent the sounds and phonemes of a non-Arabic language. Ajami has been historically used in various regions of Africa and Asia where Arabic script served as a medium for writing local languages, such as Hausa, Swahili and Afrikaans/Cape Dutch.

Anchored by the pioneering work of Achmat Davids, Muhammed Haron, Mogamat Alexander, Fallou Ngom and others, the narrative navigates through historical distortions, linguistic innovations and cultural resilience within the Cape Muslim community. Davids seminal contributions in correcting historical narratives and advocating for authentic communication set the stage for a deeper exploration of Cape Muslim identity. Haron and Alexander further enrich this discourse through their scholarship, illuminating the multifaceted dimensions of Cape Muslim Afrikaans literature. Through meticulous research and scholarly inquiry, they unveil the intricate interplay of linguistic adaptation, cultural transmission and religious education that shaped the Arabic-Afrikaans literary tradition.

The narrative extends to the pivotal role of the madrassah system, the influence of diverse cultural heritages and the enduring legacy of influential figures like Abu Bakr Effendi and Imam Abdurakib ibn Abdul Kahaar. As the narrative unfolds, it underscores the resilience and cultural pride embedded within the Cape Muslim Afrikaans, offering valuable insights into South Africa’s rich tapestry of intersectional perspectives across disciplines and languages.