

**Research Paper**

# De-Stereotyping the History of Africa: the Hieroglyphs of Ancient Egypt and the Manuscripts of Timbuktu as the Clues Establishing the Anteriority of African Civilization

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The paper strived to deconstruct the commonly held stereotypical myths about Africa. In this dynamics, it has been discovered that two salient elements like Africa does not have any history as well as the black race is an inferior one, had been developed by Eurocentrists to justify the horrendous practices of slavery and colonialism in Africa. In other words, the first element was generally related to the lack of any writing practice or system existing in pre-colonial Africa before the arrival of Arabs and Europeans and the second one was linked to the color of the skin of the African people, their blackness. However it must be pointed out that the study also explored, explained and showed how the Hieroglyphs of Ancient Egypt and the Manuscripts of Timbuktu could effectively and efficiently contribute to the De-Stereotyping of the History of Africa if their exploitation, teaching and dissemination were popularized in and outside Africa. In so doing, the study's data were collected and analyzed in the context of the postcolonial theory as well as the adoption of the Homi Bhabharian Third Space of Enunciation to advocate a democratized globalization of cultures and nations.

**Key words:** Hieroglyphs, Manuscripts of Timbuktu, Africa, stereotypes and Eurocentrism

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## INTRODUCTION

Historically, Africa is the cradle of humankind and the birth place of one of the oldest and greatest civilizations on earth. However these historical facts about Africa have unfortunately been ignored or denied by some

Eurocentrists in their works. They invented stories and myths about Africa to account for their coming to Africa. Thus by Eurocentric myths, we mean the multifaceted invented clichés, stereotypes and archetypes about

Africa and the African. In addition, they refer to the different ways through which Eurocentrists positively represent, describe, praise and perceive Europe and the European in contrast to Africa and the African too. In this frame of mind, Eurocentrists have deliberately developed and adopted a particular discourse on Africa and the African on the basis of two key elements: race and the lack of any written system in precolonial Africa. Such a discourse is rooted in the binary opposition of Europe and Africa. It clearly indicates that Africa has become the antithesis of Europe in terms of civilization and development, mainly in the domains of writing and culture. It is in regard to the foregoing that the objective of the study is to deconstruct the commonly constructed myths, perceptions, and misconceptions by Eurocentrists about Africa and the African.

As in the above, the study is highly important because it is observed that many Africans as well as Europeans still believe in the propagandas coalesced in the discourse of Eurocentrism on Africa. Its importance and relevance also lie in the facts that many Africans still do not know that Africa had always had her own writing systems like the *hieroglyphs*<sup>1</sup>, the *Ajami*<sup>2</sup> and the *Tifinagh*<sup>3</sup> before the arrival of Europeans and to some extent before the Arabs in Africa and she had produced some of the worldly greatest civilizations as well. Also, it is noticed that the vast majority of postcolonial Africans are easily losing what is indeed admirable in their indigenous traditions, customs and cultures. This is due to the way western cultures are packaged, diffused and advertised in consistence with the ideology of Eurocentrism which is rooted in strategies like polarity and the *Hamitic Theory or hypothesis*<sup>4</sup>. At last, by writing about such an extremely salient topic, many postcolonial Africans would eventually be interpellated into accepting, learning, praising, revisiting and cherishing African culture and authentic history. It implies that the ultimate pertinence of the study is therefore to enable the contemporary African to acquire appropriate knowledge about his history, culture, writing systems and others in a

<sup>1</sup> They refer to the first pictorial system of writing invented by the people of Kemet in the ancient world. The French scholar JEAN François Champollion was the first European to decipher them on a stone found near Rosetta by French soldiers in 1799.

<sup>2</sup> It comes from Arabic and it etymologically means for non-Arab or for foreigner. Thus, it should be understood as a writing practice using foreign languages by modifying the Arab script.

<sup>3</sup> It is a writing system which was devised by the Touareg people to mainly produce and promote their literature, especially poetry. The system was highly mastered by women who were the principle artists for poetry production and writing.

<sup>4</sup> It consists in relating the origins of any artistic or scientific inventions or creations found in Africa to the influence of white people. It was thus an implied manner to deny intelligence, reason and creativity to Africans by advocating the supremacy of the white race over the black one.

globalized context of Westernization. In implementing the study, the following research questions need to be asked:

- What is Eurocentrism and its implications?
- What may be the psychological impacts of Eurocentrism on the postcolonial African?
- Is the first writing system the work of the African genius or due to outside non-African influence?
- And how can the knowing, exploitation, teaching, promotion and the preservation of the Hieroglyphs of Ancient Egypt and the Manuscripts of Timbuktu effectively and efficiently contribute to the De-Stereotyping of the History of Africa?

The answers to the foregoing research questions would purposively show the anteriority and importance of African civilizations before the coming of Europeans and Arabs in Africa. In the same frame of mind, the research data are collected and analyzed in the context of the postcolonial theory. In analyzing the data, some cultural studies and postcolonial concepts, like multiculturalism, Otherness, binarism, Louis Althusser's Interpellation, Bhabha's Third Space of Enunciation, are therefore utilized to reach the specific objectives of the study as indirectly conveyed through the research questions. Let us now review some of the Eurocentric myths about both Africa and Europe in the coming paragraphs to better comprehend the issue at stake.

### **Eurocentric Myths about Africa and Europe**

Most of the stories (*Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inferieures* by Lévy-Bruhl, *Lectures of the Philosophy of History* by George Hegel etc) written by Europeans about Africa and Africans at the beginning of slavery and colonialism were deliberately prepared to distort the reality of Africa. By distorting the reality of Africa, they wanted to render their interventions in Africa humanistic by pretending that Africa did not have any history. Their justification of the latter was constructed on the so called inability of the African to cleverly devise a writing system to record his past deeds, daily activities and future planning. Even today, this myth is unfortunately still disseminated through western televisions and radios' channels, literature, Media, schools' handbooks and many others. For instance, the former president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, in a speech delivered on July, 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at the University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar sustains such a falsified view on African history and the African as follows:

The tragedy of Africa is that the African man has not gone far enough in history. The African peasant, who

for millennia has lived with the seasons, whose ideal life is to be in harmony with nature, knows only the eternal beginning of time punctuated by the endless repetition of the same gestures and actions. Same words. In this imaginary where everything starts all over again, there is no place for human adventure, nor for the idea of progress (...) The problem of Africa and allow a friend of Africa to say it, He's there. Africa's challenge is to go deeper into history. It is to draw from it the energy, the strength, the desire, the will to listen and to marry its own history. The problem of Africa is to stop always repeating, to constantly rehearse, to free oneself from the myth of the eternal return, is to become aware that the golden age that it never stops regret, will not return for the reason that it never existed (p.6).

This excerpt from the speech of Sarkozy indeed highlights and confirms the Eurocentric propagandas against Africa. She is unfortunately, and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by a French president in office at the time of the speech, described as having had no history, but she should rather seize the opportunity to finally enter history. That is, she must now inscribe and have her own history by becoming civilized and reasonable in dealing with the present so as to better prepare her future. Besides, the foregoing passage indicates that the future does not depend on the past and it is therefore assured only through work and anticipation. Like Sarkozy and even before him in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the same view was developed by George Hegel in *Lectures of the Philosophy of History*, another key Eurocentrist, cited in *Africa in World History* in the like manner: "Africa is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit"(P.XVII). This shows the extent to which Westerners have had a wrong view on Africa and the African. The paradox is that many archeological and scientific pieces of evidence have attested and proven the inventions of writing systems by Africans like the hieroglyphs, *Tifinagh* and the most recent one which is *N'Ko*<sup>5</sup>. These writing systems are the testimonies that Africa has always had her own history and had also recorded it through the foregoing writing systems. The works of Cheikh Anta Diop (*Civilization or Barbarism*), Williams Chancellor (*The Destruction of the Black Civilization*), Ivan Van Sertima (*They Came before Columbus*), Gerald Massey (*Ancient Egypt: The Light of the World*), Martin Bernal (*Black Athena*) and many other scholars are good illustrations of the existence of history and civilization in Africa and they at the same time deconstruct the Eurocentric belief based on the non-existence of history in Africa.

<sup>5</sup> It is a writing system devised by Souleymane Kanté, a Guinean scholar at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to write the Manlinké language. It is a complete system which can produce any sound made by man.

The second major myth developed and promoted is related to the ideological constructed meaning given to the color of Africans. Their blackness becomes synonymous with inferiority, savagery, backwardness, timeless whereas whiteness incarnates superiority, civilization, development and time-consciousness as devised and fathered by Eurocentrists. At the same time Africa is represented and perceived by the West in terms like *primitive Africa*, *wild and dangerous Africa*, *exotic Africa*, *broken Africa* and many other falsified descriptions. This stance is substantiated and summarized by Coulibaly, Aboubacar Sidiki (2017) in an article entitled " La représentation de l'Occident et de l'Afrique dans la littérature africaine: une analyse comparative de *No Longer at Ease* d'Achebe, de *Second Class Citizen* d'Emecheta and de « Minutes of Glory » de Ngugi in the like manner:

Historically, it is from the 15th century that the question of the binary confrontation between Africa and the West begins with discourses, writings and representations on slavery. For example, it is precisely since the 15th century that the history of Cham has been used to excess and by many white slavers and missionaries to extol black slavery (...) Slavery thus marks the beginning of this West-African paradigm and it reached its peak with colonization in the 18th and 19th centuries. During this period, everything in Africa was perceived, described and represented under the sign of ignorance, bestiality, obscurantism and absolute barbarism. At the same time, the West was projected as the antithesis of Africa. He was magnified and represented in terms and qualifications always positive as if the West was synonymous with absolute beauty and perfection. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the writings of Hegel and Gobineau are a perfect illustration of this paradigm (p.449).

As in the above, it is clearly ascertained that such thoughts about Africa are rather myths than being stuck to actual facts. That is why Paul Bohannan cited in *Africa in World History* also confirmed the foregoing thought by explaining that: "Africa has, for generations now, been viewed through a web of myth...Only when the myth is stripped away can the reality of Africa emerge" (XVII). Unambiguously, the excerpt reveals that Westerners manufactured such stereotypes about Africa for economic and materialistic purposes as well. The truth is that Africa is not only the birthplace of mankind, but also the continent responsible for the creation of the first writing on earth. The latter is to be developed and illustrated furthermore in the second major part of the paper. Yet, it has now become axiomatic to explicate what Eurocentrism is and its operating mode because it

is the main ideological channel through which history and writing have been denied to Africa.

### **Eurocentrism: a definition**

Although several definitions and ways of defining Eurocentrism have been elaborated by scholars all around the globe, making the postcolonial Africans and non-Africans aware of the ideological meanings and engagements at play in Eurocentrists' discourse is a complex and long-range intellectual activity. The first step of this activity accordingly consists in telling people in clear and illustrating terms the true nature and definitional meaning of Eurocentrism. As African scholars, concerned with the negative impacts and effect of Eurocentric discourse and representations on the mind of the postcolonial African, we see and define Eurocentrism as any western propaganda about Africa and the African or non-Westerners in order to mentally, politically, culturally and economically dominate and exploit them. It also refers to a set of strategies devised by the West to subtly promote their civilization and maintained their ideologically constructed superiority through multiple channels such as literature, cinema, school handbooks, schools syllabi, international institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund), NATO, etc.

Besides, it operates and works through binary confrontations, polarities between the North and the South or the Developed World and the Third World. This binarism is better illustrated in the following words while talking about European and African concepts and perceptions of time:

The concept of time has been developed and explained by different scholars around the world depending on their cultural or ideological orientations. For instance, the way it is conceived in the West varies from the way it is perceived in the South. In certain cases even if links exist between Western and African conceptions of time, ideology antagonizes them into a binary confrontation (Coulibaly et al, 2017, P. 779).

### **The Effect of Eurocentrism on the Psychology of the African**

As in the foregoing stance, it is also preponderant to account for some of the noticeable and visible influence and effect of Eurocentric propagandas on the psychology of the contemporary African. By addressing them, many Africans would eventually be aware of the psychological effect that Eurocentrists' perceptions and representations of Africa may have developed upon themselves as Africans. Our conviction is that when you know your

problem and its nature, you can successfully find the appropriate ways through which you can finally overcome or deal with it. Among the influence and the effect of Eurocentric discourse on Africa and the African, we have observed and noticed multiple psychological problems which affect the daily life of the contemporary African inside and outside the continent. The first remark is that the vast majority of Africans strongly believe that writing is a pure European invention. The second one is that they consider their traditions, customs and way of life as primitive and uncivilized. The third one is that they admire, praise and value more whatever comes or is conceived in the West at the expense of whatever is African or African made. For instance, most African national teams (football teams of Gabon, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Morocco, and the Malian national team of basketball...) are coached by Westerners whereas local competences exist. Sometimes; the local competences are more qualified for the job than white foreigners ignorant of African cultural and sports' reality. The complex and the paradox lie in the fact that when an African coach is recruited, he is less paid and trusted than the white foreigner who is believed to possess godlike power and intelligence. The case of the former coach, Mamadou KEITA called Kapi, of the national football team of Mali is a good illustration of the latter. He took the Malian national football team to the semi-finals of the African Cup 1994. He was paid 500.000 FCFA whereas white foreign coaches were paid about 9.000.000 FCFA. In spite of the fact that they were 8 times more paid than the local coach, none of them succeeded to do better than him. This third element reveals the psychological complexes and pathologies that the practice and the dissemination of the ideology of Eurocentrism have engendered upon the postcolonial African.

This last element is so prevailing in Africa that even in the domains of education, infrastructures' building, capacity building, planes piloting, non-African engineers, trainers, teachers, universities, schools, pilots, technicians are privileged and preferred to Africans. As illustrations, the plane of the current President of the Republic of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita reelected 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2018, is piloted and maintained by Europeans. His security staff is exclusively composed of white people as well. The question needed to be asked is how and why can an independent African nation still rely on non-Africans for his security and development? The answer to this question is thus simple because it is nothing else than what we have named the *autophobia* of the African. By *autophobia*, we mean the rejection of the Self (Africans and his *Africanity*<sup>6</sup>) at the profit of the Other (Non-Africans and Non-African ways of living) as well as

<sup>6</sup> It refers to the sum total of all the typical cultural ingredients or ways of living that make up the African identity.

the blindly belief in the Eurocentric ideological propagandas about the so-called inferiority of the African. In so doing, the second major part of this study however develops, demonstrates and illustrates how the two major myths (lack of any writing system in pre-colonial Africa and the color of Africans' skin as synonymous with inferiority and backwardness) mooted by Eurocentrists to deny history, intelligence and civilization to Africa are actually mere purposive inventions more than being based and articulated around scientific and ascertained proofs.

### De-stereotyping the African History

By de-stereotyping the African history, we entail deconstructing Eurocentric myths on Africa by restoring the historical and scientific proof about the anteriority of Africans' invention of writing and their rich and glorious civilization. That is, revisiting and reminding both Africans and non-Africans of the huge historical and cultural heritage that Africa has handed over humanity. Without this African heritage as the foundation or origins of Europeans' civilization in diverse domains, the world would have not known the significant developments that it experiences currently<sup>7</sup>.

### Hieroglyphs: The first Writing System

As a reminder, it was made to believe that Africa did not have any history because she did not invent or establish any writing system before her contact with Europe. Such a belief can no longer be held today in regard to the availability of several historical and scientific clues. In this context it becomes pertinent to specify that since in the Ancient World, Africa, through the case of *Kemet*<sup>8</sup>, had her own writing system to record history, every day's activities and keep administrative records. Be it the Phoenicians, who were one of the earliest people to establish trading relations with Ancient Egypt, or the Greeks, they were all inspired or learned from ancient Egyptians before being able to come up with their own writing systems. Concerning the anteriority of the invention of writing by Africans, two Malians scholars MAIGA, Abida Aboubacrine and COULIBALY, Aboubacar Sidiki (2016) in "The Social Role of Literature and the Accountability of the Artist". *Inter. J. Eng. Lit. Cult.* 4(9) confirm the foregoing as follows:

At first, the main social function of literature was religious and ritualistic in the Ancient World. The writings of that period were about religious beliefs and practices of a given people, of a given culture. Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman mythologies had had a very powerful influence on Western cultures in their totality. That is due to the fact that both writing and religion started in those nations, especially in Egypt, and then travelled to the other parts of the universe. However, it is very important to specify that the origins of Greek and Roman myths are in the history of Ancient Egypt ... (p.200)

These two scholars while accounting for the social function of literature offhandedly reveals that Africans were the first to indeed establish a writing system to record and practice their literature and religion. Besides, the quotation also indicates that Greece and Rome both had learned from the African civilization before being able to develop theirs. That is, the source of the development of Europe is found in Africa across several spheres of human activity.

In clear terms, the reference is made to the hieroglyphic system of writing which was invented and developed by Africans in *Kemet* before the Sumerians<sup>9</sup>. All their daily, weekly and yearly activities were recorded as well as the future planning of the country. The activity of writing was mainly the profession of trained administrators in writing and reading called scribes. They were clerks and archivists. This writing system was so developed that they had simplified it into two types: *demotic* and *heratic* systems. The simplification was done in order to permit people to appropriate and adapt the hieroglyphic writing to diverse social activities. The first one was used for trade and daily activities whereas the second one was exclusively utilized for religious purposes. This is actually confirmed in the following passage:

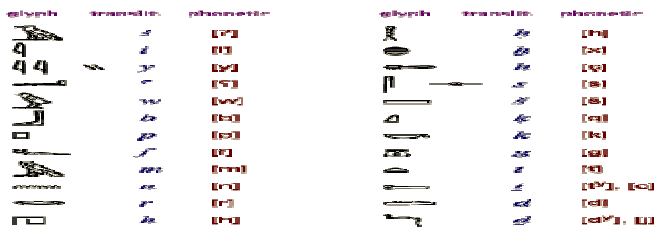
Education was cherished very much by Egyptians. By 2430 B.C they had devised a picture writing called hieroglyphics (priest writing). Originally each picture represented a word but gradually it came to represent a letter. A man was thought to be well educated if he could copy this writing really well. Such a scholar wrote on paper made from lengths of papyrus reeds stuck together in a crisscross fashion and stored in rolls. A brush reed dipped in ink made from soot, water, and gum was used to write... For everyday life, however, few could afford the time for this complicated writing so a quicker version called hieratic (priest writing) was developed. Busy traders later produced yet a simpler version called demotic... (Gadzekpo, 2011, pp.80-81).

<sup>7</sup> See Cheikh Anta Diop's *Civilization or Barbarism* and Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* to better understand this standpoint.

<sup>8</sup> It refers to name that ancient Egyptians had given to the country in which they were living through their hieroglyphic writing. It means the land of the black people or the world of the black people.

<sup>9</sup> They were the people who were living in the place now called southern Iraq.

Thus, people could now grasp the extent to which writing is not an imported European practice. Since the Phoenicians were one of the first non-African peoples to establish trade ties with Ancient Egypt, we could utter that their invention of an alphabet of 22 consonants was favored by such links. Without these trading ties, Phoenicia could have not been able to set up such a system of writing later completed by the Greeks and the Romans to make it 26 letters. This alphabet of 26 letters is nowadays used by most Westerners as the basis for their writing systems (French, English, Italian, Spanish, etc.). Below are some illustrations the hieroglyphic writing:



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Many of the past practices and beliefs of Ancient Egyptians were revealed through these hieroglyphs. This is to voice out the truth about the existence and production of history by Africans across the continent. Africans did not only invent the hieroglyphs but also other writing systems such as *Tifinagh*, *Ajami* and *N'Ko*. *Ajami*, unlike the two others, is rather the adoption and adaptation of the Arabs' system of writing to record, preserve, promote and teach their history, culture, artistic and scientific inventions. The manuscripts of Timbuktu are corroborative of such a fact about Africa. In other words, it consists of adopting Arabic script to produce African languages such as Hausa, Fulani, Soninké, Bambara, Wolof and others. In the form it is Arabic but in content and utterances it is purely African.

As for the *Tifinagh* and *N'ko*, they are uniquely the fruit of the African creative genius. It means that both their forms and contents are the confirmation of the African intelligence although the first is closer to the hieroglyphs in form and the second one is a bit closer to the Arabic script but they are different in the way they are uttered, read or written. Unlike western systems of writing, the *N'ko* is much more effective in sounds' production than any invented western system of writing. This therefore deconstructs the Eurocentric myth which pretends that Africa does not have any history because she was not able to devise her own writing system.

### The Manuscripts of Timbuktu: the World Heritage of African Civilization

The manuscripts of Timbuktu and the multiplied scientific and literary evidence now available about the anteriority of African civilizations before the coming of Europeans in Africa dismantle the second Eurocentric myth based on the assumption that the black race is par excellence an inferior one. This belief can longer be held because Cheikh Anta Diop, Martin Bernal, Williams Chancellor, Gaoussou Diawara, and Ivan Van Sertima have shown the intellectual, artistic and cultural brilliance of the African in all the domains of human activity and the contributions of Africa to world history through their various works:

It is important to note that before the coming of Arab historians and merchants and explorers from Europe to West Africa, the people of the region had developed the secrets of many medicinal herbs and how to use them to cure sickness. They had discovered how look after cattle in very hot weather; they had become experts in growing food, they had found out how to recognize mineral in rocks, how to sink mines, how to get the ore and smelt and work it; they had developed a wide range of hand manufactures in many materials; they had worked out religions of their own; they had evolved methods of government. All those activities were indeed illustrations of improved cultures properly identified as civilizations. (Gadzekpo, 2011, p.54)

The foregoing passage hence evidences the anteriority of African civilization before the arrival of Arabs and Europeans in Africa. Like Gadzekpo, thanks to his exploitation of the manuscripts of Timbuktu, MAIGA Aboubakr Ismail (2003) as well sustains that:

The system of government under the Empire of Ghana as well as the foresight, equity and extent of power of its kings stand out as the oldest experiences of African national government known in this country. The prosperity of the Empire both before and after the advent of Islam ... attest to the ability of black Africans of the time to manage their own affairs and build on the style of government and the regime in place . (P.14)

He means in French that Africans were able to set up their own system of government before their contact with the Arabs. In other words, MAIGA explicates that even before the advent of Islam in West Africa, especially in Mali, Africans had developed and established a solid system of government based on justice, equality and planning and anticipation of activities for the welfare of the Empire. In the light of all the scientific proof available

<sup>10</sup> Source : taken from "the story of Egyptian Hieroglyphs" by pen2paper at www.Pens.co.uk

about the greatness and the dynamism of African civilization and history, Basil Davidson (1994) in *The Search for Africa* also affirms that:

THE STARTING POINT IS THAT THE CONDITION OF AFRICAN HISTORY NOW yields a picture of long, continuous, and broadly definable movement from one phase of sociopolitical relationships to another; and that this picture is generally valid, if with many partial modifications, for every large region of the continent. Thirty years ago, or even less, this kind of statement would have seemed perfectly absurd. (P, 67)

As for the manuscripts of Timbuktu, they are written in different African local languages through a modified Arabic script. They have allowed researchers across various disciplines and around the world to discover that Africa did not only produce great artistic, intellectual and scientific heritage for the world, but she was also able during the pre-colonial and colonial eras to Africanize and hybridize the Arabic script to adapt it to the local indigenous languages as asserted by Fallou Ngom in the following:

Although written records are rarely regarded as part of sub-Saharan Africa's intellectual heritage, important bodies of *Ajami* literature have existed in Oromo, Somali, Tigrigna, Kiswahili, Amharic, and Malagasy in East Africa, and Bamanakan, Mandinka, Kanuri, Yoruba, Berber, Hausa, Wolof, and Ffulfulde in West Africa for centuries. (P, 1)

This Senegalese scholar carries on explaining the richness of this Africanized Arabic script by Africans by specifying that:

*Ajami* developed in communities with a long history of practicing Islam, and who sought to adapt the Arabic alphabet to their own tongues, first for religious purposes such as prayers, writing magical protective devices, and disseminating religious materials and edicts, and later for secular functions such as commercial and administrative record-keeping, writing eulogies and family genealogies, recording important events such as births, deaths and weddings, and writing biographies, poetry, political satires, advertisements, road signs, public announcements, speeches and personal correspondence. There are also *Ajami* documents describing traditional treatment of various illnesses, the properties of plants and ways of using them and occult sciences; translations of works from Arabic into African languages; and texts on administrative and diplomatic matters (correspondence between Sultans and provincial rulers), Islamic jurisprudence,

behavioral codes, and grammar. (P,1)

Through the above, it may be construed that through imitating the Arab system of writing, Africans came up with a new system of writing adapted to the grammatical, phonological, phonetic, pragmatic and semantic rules of indigenous languages. This new system of writing as found in the manuscripts is no longer Arabic in utterance and grammar but a new system called *Ajami*, this fact is corroboratively authenticated by Ngom as follows:

This adaptation of the Arabic script to write African languages was not easy; the Arabic consonants and vowels reflected by the Arabic script do not necessarily correspond to those in specific African languages. Therefore scholars within each community devised systems of transcribing their languages by modifying the Arabic script, thereby allowing speakers to learn to write, read and recite *Ajami* texts. (p,1)

In regard to this excerpt, we can grasp the complexity of the adaptation of Arabic script to African languages and the ingenuity of the African to establish his own system of writing through an adaptation process referred to as the *Ajami* system. Besides, the discovery of the manuscripts of Timbuktu is another salient clue proving the existence of a writing practice in Africa several years before the white colonizer. It is also a landmark evidence which laudably espouses the highly important contribution of Africa to world civilization and history. That thus implies that we are in a multicultural world where people from different epochs, races and nations have had to contribute to the development of mankind as done by Africans particularly. It is in line with such a stance that Seyni Moumouni (2017) in an article entitled "Scribes et manuscrits à Tombouctou: La Chaîne Du Manuscrit" reveals the African contribution to civilization in the like manner:

The prodigious work of the copyists began from the foundation of Timbuktu, it continues uninterrupted to the present day; Nearly twenty thousand manuscripts have thus reached us and they represent only a small part of the production of the workshops. Timbuktu was a true publishing house, it is the symbol of Africa's contribution to the written tradition of universal culture. Thanks to the work of these copyists. The works of famous and marginal authors are kept in private and public libraries. The debt that "civilization" owes to the scribes of Timbuktu is immense; without them, knowledge and acceptance of a written tradition in Africa would not have been possible. Today there are still copyists in Timbuktu, they are fighting for this old craft to continue. (p, 55)

In other words, Moumoonni, through the latter, highlights the importance of the manuscripts of Timbuktu and their consideration as a world cultural heritage worth of treasure.

However, it is highly necessary to underscore that nearly all Europe has adopted and adapted the Greco-Roman alphabet to the grammatical, phonetic and syntactic requirements of their local languages. In spite of this adoption and adaptation of the Greco-Roman alphabet, the ways, French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian are written, are all considered as original and independent systems of writing distinct from the Greek or Latin writing system. Paradoxically and even today from our own experiences, whenever we talk about the *Ajami* as an original way of writing, some Africans (students and colleagues) as well as Eurocentrists consider it as a mere imitation rather than being a different system from Arabic. What they have forgotten or failed to understand is that imitation does not mean blind exact reproduction but should rather be construed as a creative process to ascend to originality as sustained by Aristotle in his sense of poetics.

## CONCLUSION

All in all, people may now espouse the laudable idea that the numerous Eurocentric propagandas about Africa are nothing else than mere myths invented by Westerners for specific purposes. The first being related to the desire of Eurocentrists to economically trade Africans and exploit their lands' raw materials instead of true civilizing mission because the cultural reality and humanism of Africans on ground contradict its relevance and pertinence. We imply that we only civilize a people when they are not culturally, socially and politically organized. The second purpose was to ideologically construct their superiority by relating the invention of any artistic, scientific or intellectual creation to the only genius of the white Man. He is thus represented, in a kind of binarism with the black Man, as possessing intelligence, creativity, reason and civilization. However, the findings of this study have proven the converse.

On that basis, the first conclusion that can be drawn is that the first writing system of the world is the work of the African genius, particularly the *Negro-Egyptians* of Ancient Egypt. The African has not only invented the hieroglyphic writing but he has also invented, through the imitation of the Arabic script, a new writing system called *Ajami*. In addition, he has devised other original systems of writing known today as *Tifignah* and *N'ko*. The second conclusion is that the discourse of Eurocentrism has had a traumatic effect on the postcolonial African mind and behavior due to the different stereotypes and misconceptions developed and promoted by Eurocentrists through channels such as literature,

anthropology, cinema, media, school syllabi and many others. Its effect is so prevailing that whatever is black is automatically and unconsciously rejected by Africans and at the same time they prefer and privilege whatever is white or comes from the West.

The last conclusion is that the correct exploitation, diffusion, teaching and preservation of the manuscripts of Timbuktu all around the world would greatly contribute to the de-stereotyping of the African history by creating a Homi Bhabharian Third Space of Enunciation because of their richness. This space would become the locus where races and cultures dialog in a kind of negotiation based on a give and take cultural relationship. It means the rejection of all the invented myths and stereotypes about races and cultures by accepting and recognizing the differences in the name of multicultural diversity. It would also allow the postcolonial and neocolonial African and European to transcend the boundaries of Manichaeism and mental complexes to engage in a sincere complementary brotherhood based on their differences. Thus, the differences become a window of reconciliation, conciliation, complementarity and acceptance as favored by the Third Space of Enunciation.

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