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Moving across Languages, Literacies, and Schooling Traditions

In the summer of 2009, I led a one-week teachers' workshop on Somali history, language, and culture (for more information on the course, see <http://somali.wikidot.com/>). For our first meeting, we read an article about the history and collapse of educational systems in Somalia (Abdi, 1998). During class discussion, I asked the 29 workshop participants (all non-Somali) if they knew about Qur'anic schooling, called *dugsi* by Somalis. Most did not, while some were aware that their Somali students attended religious classes on the weekend. One teacher had visited a *dugsi*, and she recalled being baffled by what she saw: "It looked like complete chaos. All these kids, all different ages, sitting on the floor, everybody yelling something different."

Qur'anic schooling is an important part of the educational experience of children all over the world, yet it is one of the least-studied and most poorly understood educational institutions in today's world (Wagner, 1999). Because Qur'anic schooling emphasizes memorization and transcription of Qur'anic texts without comprehension of their literal meaning, this schooling tradition is widely believed by nonparticipants to have a stultifying effect on children's cognitive and linguistic development, even though there is no empirical evidence to support such claims (Wagner, 1993). Research on Qur'anic schooling has increased in recent years (e.g., Boyle, 2004; Moore, 2008; Rosowsky, 2008), but misrepresentations of this tradition have dominated in Western media since the events of September 11, 2001 (McClure, 2009), and much misunderstanding of Islamic education remains (Niyozov & Plum, 2009).

Millions of children participate in both Qur'anic and public schooling, and for the majority, this double schooling entails learning (in) two different non-native languages. Such is the case for many children of Muslim immigrants to the United States from Africa, the Middle East, and South and Central Asia (Haddad, Senzai, & Smith, 2009). Despite the extent of this kind

of educational experience, we know little about Qur'anic schooling, double schooling, and how they shape Muslim children as learners and users of second languages and literacies.

In my own research, I have sought to document and understand the double schooling experiences of Muslim children for whom the language of literacy in both of their schools is not their native language. At the turn of the last millennium, I conducted research in a Fulbe community in northern Cameroon, documenting the apprenticeship of seven children into the language and literacy practices of their multilingual community. Fulfulde, the vernacular, was the language of daily interaction at home and in the neighborhood, while Arabic was privileged in Qur'anic schools and French was dominant in public schools. I combined a video-based longitudinal multiple-case study design with ethnographic study of the children's schools and community, collecting locally available educational materials and conducting interviews and video playback sessions with family members, public and Qur'anic school teachers, Islamic scholars, and public education officials. This study built on my previous work in the region as a researcher in 1996 and 1999 and as a Peace Corps volunteer from 1992 to 1994, as well as research conducted by other scholars in the region. Currently, I am in the early stages of similar research in the Somali immigrant and refugee community in Columbus, Ohio.

An important part of my new work has been working with public school educators, both Somali and non-Somali, who want to improve the educational experience of children of the Somali Diaspora. In preparing the teachers' workshop mentioned above, I examined books and other materials that had been written for non-Somali educators who work with Somali children and families (e.g., Fahin & McMahan, 2004; Kahin, 1997; Lynch, 2008; Putman & Noor, 1999; Van Lehman & Eno, 2002). All the materials made

reference to the fact that almost all Somalis are Muslim, and many of these works provided basic information about Islam. However, Qur'anic schooling was mentioned in only a few texts and only in passing. All the materials emphasized that a Somali child was likely to come to public school having had limited experience with schooling or literacy, or, as Kahin (1997) writes, they would be "non-literate or semi-literate with previous little formal schooling, due to the war" (p. 50).

Kahin was writing in the mid-1990s, in the early years of the Somali Diaspora, when civil war and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Somalis led to the breakdown of Qur'anic and public schooling in Somalia. In the years since, Islamic education has been revived in Somalia, and efforts have been made in refugee camps to provide both Qur'anic and public schooling, but access to education has been and continues to be a concern (Hassan & Robleh, 2004). Once in the US, however, Somali families take advantage of the educational opportunities available, sending their children to Qur'anic and public schools.

Knowing one's students is key to working effectively with them. It is particularly important for teachers who work with English language learners to know about the educational and literacy backgrounds of student and their family members (Diaz-Rico, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2004). My goal in writing this article is to provide insights into the schooling and literacy experiences Somali children and other Muslim immigrants may bring to public school from their *other* school. I first discuss Qur'anic schooling in the Maroua Fulbe community, describing the organization and the significance of this schooling tradition for participants. I discuss recent developments in this community, including the rise of double schooling and changes in Islamic educational practice. I then shift my focus to the Somali immigrant and refugee community in Columbus, Ohio, discussing changes in Somali Qur'anic schooling that have arisen in this diasporic context. After a discussion of how Qur'anic school experiences may affect Muslim language-minority children's second language and literacy learning in public school, I conclude with reflections on how knowledge of Qur'anic schooling and Qur'anic school-based literacies might impact the practices of public elementary school educators.

QUR'ANIC SCHOOLING IN MAROUA

Fulbe children in Maroua, Cameroon, attended Qur'anic school to learn to recite, read, and write the Qur'an, the core religious text of Islam that is believed to be the word of God, revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Mohammad. The primary goal in the first years of schooling was the faithful—verbatim, fluent, and reverent—rendering of Qur'anic texts by the child. Fulbe children learned the Qur'an "by rote." That is, children learned through extensive imitation, repetition, and memorization and without explanation of the literal meaning of the text. This kind of teaching and learning of sacred texts is characteristic of the traditional pedagogies associated with other religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Judaism (Wagner, 1983). Secular schooling around the world was built on these foundations, though rote learning has fallen out of favor in many countries (Wagner, 1983). Today, in many religious communities, the study of sacred texts with or without comprehension continues to be valued as an act of piety, discipline, cultural preservation, and personal transformation.

Instruction in Maroua Fulbe Qur'anic schools was in Fulfulde, the children's native language, but the text was in Arabic, a language the children, and often their teachers, did not understand. Accurate reproduction of Qur'anic texts in recitation and in writing was the goal. A reciter must pronounce the sounds accurately and in correct sequence with correct intonation, pausing only where it was required or permissible. Otherwise, he might be saying something completely different than what was revealed (in Arabic) to the Prophet by God. Minimally, a child was expected to recite part of the Qur'an from memory (essential to the five daily prayers), handle the Qur'an respectfully, and listen to Qur'anic recitation and citation (frequent in this community) with the proper speech, demeanor, and affect. Correct response to and rendering of the sounds of the Qur'an constituted the essential first layer of understanding of the sacred text. Subsequent layers of understanding were reserved for the learner who had "finished her Qur'an," that is, recited and written the entire Qur'an without error.

Qur'anic schools were located in the households of the teachers, and most children attended a school in their neighborhood. Instruction

was individualized, with each child progressing through the curriculum at his own pace. The child was under little pressure to keep up with other children, and the teacher, or *mallum*, could accommodate each individual by adjusting his instruction to her level and rate of learning. [For purposes of this article, I am assuming a male teacher—the most typical case—and a female student.] By working with children one-on-one, a *mallum* was said to be able to gauge accurately each child's intellectual capacity and current level of understanding. He could then teach her only what she would be able to understand, guarding her from discouragement and incomplete or incorrect understanding of the sacred text.

The Qur'anic school curriculum had distinct stages. In the first stage, the child attended irregularly, sometimes studying her own assigned text, sometimes just observing. In the second stage, the child memorized chapters 1 and 114–104 of Qur'an, sometimes more, studying the Qur'an in reverse order after mastering the opening chapter. The third stage entailed learning to name the consonants as they appeared in chapters 1 and 114–104. Finally, in the fourth stage, the child wrote and recited the remaining chapters (103–2). Once a child completed this stage, she had “finished her Qur'an,” an achievement that was highly valued and celebrated with gifts for teacher and student and a feast for the family and the school.

At every stage, the child's assigned text was transcribed from a printed loose-leaf Qur'an onto her *alluha* (a wooden tablet) for her to study. During the first few stages, a more expert person (the teacher, an advanced student, or a member of the child's family) transcribed the text for the child. Writing instruction typically began only after the child had learned to decode Arabic writing. Initially, the teacher would scratch the text into the clay coating on the *alluha*, and the child wrote with pen and ink over the teacher's marks. As the child became a more competent writer and was deemed mature enough to handle the Qur'an respectfully, she was allowed to transcribe the text onto her *alluha* himself, following only lines scratched by the teacher to help the child write in straight lines. Eventually, the child would transcribe independently.

The teaching and learning of each Qur'anic text was accomplished through what I call *guided repetition*—a practice for teaching and learning

that involves modeling by an expert and imitation of the model by a novice, with memorization through rehearsal and performance by the novice (Moore, 2006; Rogoff et al., 2007). The first phase was a formal and focused one-on-one interaction in which the teacher modeled the recitation of the text for the child, who then attempted to imitate the teacher's recitation. The second phase began once the teacher judged the child to have sufficient command of the text to practice it independently. The child was sent to sit among the other students and recite her text over and over at very loud volume until his recitation was fluent. Many children would be in this phase at the same time, each child practicing his or her own assigned text in a loud voice. In the final phase, the child displayed her mastery of the text by reciting it for the teacher in a focused, one-on-one interaction. Teachers usually had assistants, advanced students who were authorized to supervise children while the teacher provided one-on-one instruction.

Fulbe families sent their children to *janngirde* (“place of recitation, reading, study”) to study the Qur'an in order to develop not only competence in reciting, reading, and writing the sacred text, but also self-discipline, good moral character, and respect for and submission to God's Word (Santerre, 1973; Tourneux & Iyébi-Mandjek, 1994). Such practice is not unique to the Maroua Fulbe or Islam. Memorization of the Qur'an is an important part of elementary religious education in most Muslim communities today and is viewed as a means of instilling respect, self-control, and proper religious feeling (Bray, 1986; Musa Ahmed, 1996). Seen by community members as a progressively transformative process, the acquisition of Qur'anic textual knowledge was believed by Maroua Fulbe to be fundamental to becoming Muslim (Moore, 2008).

CHANGE IN MAROUA

Above I describe what was widely regarded by Fulbe in Maroua as the traditional model of Qur'anic schooling. I have used the ethnographic past because schooling traditions, like any other tradition, are not static, but constantly changing in their forms and meanings. At the time of my research (1996, 1999, 2000–2001), there was a growing movement to “modernize” Islamic education in the region. Change was underway, and these changes in educational practice were

connected to the movement of people across schooling traditions and geographic space.

Fulbe participation in public schooling was low until the mid 1980s, when Fulbe authorities began to encourage rather than discourage attendance (Tourneux & Iyébi-Mandjek, 1994). This shift occurred after Cameroon's Fulbe president was succeeded by a Christian southerner, who ended preferential treatment of Fulbe within the state power structure (Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000). During the 1990s, there was a rapid expansion in the rates of participation in Qur'anic schooling and in the number of Qur'anic schools in Maroua and northern Cameroon as a whole (Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000). Girls' rates of participation rose, and more children of both genders pursued their Qur'anic studies further than had been typical in the past (Seignobos & Nassourou, 2000).

Unlike previous generations of Qur'anic school teachers, many of the new teachers had participated in both Qur'anic and public schooling. They introduced several public school-like practices into *janngirde*, such as the singing of songs and collective instruction sessions (that often included the use of a chalkboard) on prayer, the basic tenets of Islam, and proper conduct for Muslims. Several of these "new" Qur'anic teachers explained that such practices made Qur'anic schooling more appealing and motivating for the growing number of children who participated in public schooling.

More dramatic changes were advocated by Fulbe and Muslims of other ethnicities who had pursued advanced studies in Arab states (most often Saudi Arabia). These men had returned home with new ideas of how Islamic education should be done based on what they had seen in the Middle East. New Islamic elementary schools were established in the 1990s, where both religious and nonreligious subjects were taught collectively, and Arabic was taught from the early grades as a second language for daily communication. This latter innovation was promoted as a means for students to gain access to the meaning of the Qur'an and to the *ummah*, the worldwide community of believers.

In interviews, many Fulbe expressed ambivalence about or even opposition to these innovations. One common objection was that collective instruction could not assure the mastery of each text by every child before the next text was

introduced, thus putting some children at risk of reciting with error. Another widespread concern was that treating Arabic "just like any other language" and teaching it to young children who had not yet memorized the Qur'an effectively desecralized the language of the Qur'an and undermined the development of respect for the Word of God and the social order in theocratic Fulbe society.

Many Fulbe considered the introduction of practices borrowed from public schooling highly suspect. This schooling tradition had first been imported and imposed by the French colonial administration in the early 1900s, and after independence, the system remained the same in many respects (Capelle, 1990). In the postcolonial period, public schooling was still widely referred to by Fulbe as *janngirde nasaara* ("school of the white man") and believed to undermine Fulbe culture and religion through indoctrination of children into French culture and Christianity (Regis, 2003; Tourneux & Iyébi-Mandjek, 1994). Founders of the new Islamic schools argued that the educational model they had imported from Muslim nations in the Middle East was Islamic. However, as some opponents to these innovations pointed out, these Muslim nations had, in fact, adopted their models of education from the Christian West decades earlier (cf., Daun & Walford, 2004).

In my study, I focused on children who participated in both Qur'anic and public schooling. Rates of double schooling had risen significantly due to the mid-1980s increase in public schooling (Tourneux & Iyébi-Mandjek, 1994) and the expansion of Qur'anic schooling in the 1990s (Seignobos & Nassourou, 2000). Fulbe children who attended public school also continued to attend Qur'anic schooling, albeit on an altered schedule that accommodated the hours and calendar of public schooling. Instead of spending most of their day at Qur'anic school, children who double-schooled attended public school during the morning and early afternoon, then spent two to three hours in late afternoons and/or evenings at Qur'anic school, plus another four to six hours on the weekend. The long public school vacation was a time to "catch up" through more intensive Qur'anic study.

Double schooling was considered problematic by many. Non-Muslim public educators argued that Qur'anic schooling took time away from

public school studies and interfered with students' social, cognitive, and linguistic development by teaching them a passive, nonanalytic learning style and an ethnocentric and superstitious world view (Tourneux & Iyébi-Mandjek, 1994). Some Fulbe claimed that public schooling interfered with children's social, moral, and spiritual development. Even parents who sent their children to public school expressed concern that children learned things at school that were counter to the norms of Islam and Fulbe culture.

However, many Fulbe with whom I spoke viewed double schooling in a positive light. Some argued that study skills and literacy skills developed in one school setting transferred to the other. That is, a child who could read and write Qur'anic Arabic would have an easier time learning to read and write French, and vice versa. Many maintained that Qur'anic schooling made Muslim children better public school students by fostering self-discipline and respect for and dedication to learning. Several parents and young adults explained to me that children who liked attending public school were motivated to do well in Qur'anic school because good progress in their religious studies made the continuation of their secular education acceptable to family and community members who might otherwise oppose it.

QUR'ANIC SCHOOLING IN COLUMBUS

There is variation across time and space in how Qur'anic schooling is organized, but there is also a remarkable constancy across contexts in how religious knowledge is conceptualized and conveyed (Bray, 1986; Eickelman, 2002). I have found many similarities between the traditional model I observed in Maroua and how Qur'anic schooling in pre-war Somalia has been described in interviews with Somalis in Columbus and in published works (e.g., Abdi, 1998; Lewis, 1961; Sheikh Hassan & Robleh, 2004). Somalis with whom I have spoken often describe *dugsi* as somewhat less formal than the Fulbe system, but the organization of curriculum and instruction is quite similar, as are the socialization goals. One salient difference is that in the Somali system, a student finished the Qur'an only when he or she had memorized it in its entirety, as is the case in many Muslim communities (cf., Brenner, 2001; Eickelman, 1985; Gade, 2004). A Somali who has achieved this level of sacred knowledge is referred

to as *haafidh*, or guardian of the Qur'an. In pre-war Somali and in the Diaspora, completion of the Qur'an is the exception rather than the rule, and the *haafidh* is held in very high regard.

Somali refugees began resettling in central Ohio after civil war broke out in Somalia in 1991, and the community has grown rapidly since, becoming the second largest in the United States (after Minneapolis), estimated to be more than 45,000 (Roble & Rutledge, 2008). The upheaval of civil war and the resulting Diaspora meant that the Qur'anic schooling of many Somalis was disrupted (likewise for public schooling). Nonetheless, Somalis have sustained their Qur'anic schooling tradition and have brought it with them to the United States.

Among Somali children in Columbus, double schooling is the norm. Families first send their children to Qur'anic schooling, or *dugsi*, around the age of five. Some children have been attending *dugsi* for several months before entering Kindergarten, while others begin both kinds of schooling at about the same time. Most children are taught by a Somali *ma'alim* and attend *dugsi* on Saturday and Sunday for about four hours each, while a few also attend for a couple of hours on weekday afternoons after public school gets out. As was the case for the Fulbe, public school holidays are occasions for more intensive participation in Qur'anic schooling.

Somali Qur'anic schooling in the Diaspora differs in some respects from schooling in pre-war Somalia. Paper notebooks have replaced the *loox*, a wooden tablet like the *alluha* of the Fulbe. A significant change in the curriculum is that, instead of focusing exclusively on oral recitation and memorization in the early stages, many teachers begin reading and writing instruction very soon after a child begins schooling. Some Somalis in Columbus argued that early instruction in reading and writing facilitated children's learning of the Qur'an. Others expressed concern that it interfered with the timely development of Qur'anic recitation skills, which are integral to the five daily prayers that children begin performing by the age of seven.

The reason for this shift in the curriculum is unclear, but it may be related to change in the sequencing of Somali children's introduction to the two types of schooling. In pre-war Somalia, children attended Qur'anic school for three or four years before beginning public school,

whereas Somali children of the Diaspora begin Qur'anic and public school about the same time. This simultaneity of schooling may be causing a shift in community beliefs about when it is appropriate and effective to begin literacy instruction. The curricular shift in Columbus may also be linked to the emergence in post-war Somalia of "hybrid" Qur'anic schools that provide instruction in numeracy and Somali and Arabic literacy in addition to traditional Qur'anic instruction (Warsame, 2007). Many Somalis in Columbus with whom I have spoken were aware of this trend (which UNICEF has recently begun supporting through its Integrated Qur'anic Schools Project). The Qur'anic schooling tradition is being transformed by Somalis not only in the Diaspora, but also in Somalia, and it seems likely that the flow of innovation is bi-directional.

As in the pre-war system, Qur'anic schooling in Columbus focuses on the teaching and learning of the Qur'an without explanation of the literal meaning of the text. As in Maroua, some teachers supplement the traditional curriculum with instruction in basic Islamic principles and practices. These lessons are teacher-fronted, and teachers vary with respect to how much they allow or encourage questions and discussion. The introduction of such lessons may be related to the rise in religiosity among Somalis since the start of the civil war, a trend observed by several researchers (e.g., Abdi, 2007; Berns McGown, 1999; DeVoe, 2002; Sheikh Hassan & Robleh, 2004). It seems likely that an increased concern with religious practice and belief underlies other changes in Qur'anic school practice, such as separation of boys and girls and more restricted contact between male Qur'anic teachers and post-pubescent female students. While there is a trend toward greater separation of the sexes, many Somalis pointed out to me that girls' participation in Qur'anic schooling has expanded dramatically in the Diaspora.

An important consequence of the Diaspora is that many Somalis have contact with Muslims who are not Somali. Before coming to Columbus, some Somalis sojourned in the Middle East and/or in European countries with large Muslim minority communities. While most Somali children living in Columbus attend a Somali-run *dugsi*, some children and/or their family members have had non-Somali teachers. In addition to attending *dugsi*, some children listen to and recite along

with audio recordings of Qur'anic recitations by renowned reciters, many of them non-Somali. Exposure to other Qur'anic schooling traditions has led some Somalis to reflect critically on the practices of their own community. For example, several people have told me that one development in the Diaspora is greater emphasis on the study of *tajwid*, the discipline of proper recitation of the Qur'an.

Qur'anic schooling has changed in the Somali Diaspora—not just in its form, but also in its meaning for participants. In Somalia, there was no question that children would grow up to be Somali and Muslim. But this outcome seems far less certain to Somalis in Columbus and other North American cities and towns, where their children's moral, spiritual, social, linguistic, and intellectual development may be influenced by many unfamiliar forces. In the diasporic context, Qur'anic schooling has become a key context for the development and maintenance of Somali-ness, or *Soomaalinimo*, of which Islamic practice and belief are key components. As one young Somali woman wrote in a reflective research report to me, "The intent behind sending children to Qur'anic schools has changed in the diaspora. The *dugsi* is now seen as a means of shaping children to be good Muslims, who do not lose their identity in their adopted nation."

MOVEMENT ACROSS LANGUAGES, LITERACIES, AND SCHOOLS

Before moving to Columbus, I was aware of the large Somali population there, and I understood that most children of Somali refugees and immigrants in the United States spoke Somali at home, studied Arabic texts at Qur'anic school, and learned (in) English at public school. I came to The Ohio State University excited to continue my research on the double schooling experiences of Muslim children for whom the language of literacy in both schools is not their native language, this time in the context of the Somali Diaspora. In my research in Maroua, I had set out to reexamine and expand on the concept of home-school discontinuity by documenting and comparing language and literacy socialization practices at home and two different kinds of schooling (Moore, 2006, 2010). My goal in Columbus has been to understand how Qur'anic schooling and double schooling shape young Somali children as learners and users of second languages and literacies.

My new research builds not only on my previous work in Cameroon, but also on research by other scholars in Muslim immigrant communities in Europe and North America. Linguistic ethnographers working in Great Britain have conducted studies with Muslim immigrant children who attended both public schools and community schools that provided instruction in the Qur'an and the heritage language (e.g., Creese & Martin, 2004; Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004). These studies show the children to be strategic and syncretic in their use of multiple languages and literacies to negotiate and construct their social identities across secular and religious educational contexts. This research also suggests that participation in community religious schooling may confer certain advantages for literacy learning in public school, including increased metalinguistic awareness; knowledge of how reading and writing are done, taught, and learned; and the ability to blend approaches from different languages and literacies.

In the course of her work with adolescent Somali immigrants and refugees in Minnesota who had limited formal schooling, applied linguist Martha Bigelow became familiar with Qur'anic schooling in that community. In her book, Bigelow (2010) reflects on the potential points of transfer between *dugsi* and public school. She raises the possibility that Qur'anic schooling, with its emphasis on memorization and recitation without comprehension, might not have an entirely positive effect on literacy learning in public school. However, she goes on to point out that in *dugsi*, Somali children learn the Arabic alphabet and text conventions, such as text directionality (right to left with lines of text ordered top to bottom) and the marking of word boundaries (space between the last letter of one word and the first letter of the next word). And while children are not taught the meaning of the texts, "they do learn that text corresponds to sounds that make up words which carry meaning—in this case sacred meaning" (p. 39).

Qur'anic schooling entails and rewards close and sustained attention to and accurate and fluent reproduction of oral and written second language forms. Through participation in this schooling tradition, Fulbe and Somali children learn to perceive and produce non-native speech sounds and words and to recognize and reproduce the symbols that represent them in writing. Accuracy,

automaticity, and fluency in reading and writing are developed through extensive practice of Qur'anic texts. If we translate these practices into the language of many reading researchers and practitioners, we get a list of what are widely held to be essential elements of early reading instruction and predictors of later reading success: knowledge of the alphabet, letter–sound correlation, concepts of print, decoding skills, and reading fluency—all of which have been shown to transfer from one language to another (August & Shanahan, 2006; Gersten et al., 2007).

Rosowsky (2001) suggests that Qur'anic school literacy practices and orientations may interfere with students' development of reading comprehension skills. He analyzed the English text reading strategies used by a group of Punjabi English language learners who were in their seventh year of public schooling in the UK and had attended Qur'anic schooling for several years. He compared the reading strategies of this group with those of another: non-Muslim, monolingual native English-speaking students of the same age and reading level (as established by standardized tests). He found that the Punjabi students relied more on decoding skills than did their native English-speaking peers, who demonstrated more use of comprehension skills. Rosowsky argues that the "pre-eminence of decoding" in Punjabi students' reading behavior was related to their intensive experience with Qur'anic literacy practices, which emphasized decoding without comprehension (p. 56). His findings are intriguing but flawed, for research has shown that whether Qur'anic schooled or not, English language learners are more likely than their native English-speaking peers to have decoding skills that are more highly developed than their reading comprehension skills (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Cultural psychologists working in Africa have produced more compelling findings regarding the consequences of Qur'anic school-based literacy. The Vai Project (Scribner & Cole, 1981) compared the cognitive effects of three kinds of literacy practices among the Vai of Liberia and found that adult Qur'anic Arabic literates performed better than Vai literates and English literates in memory-related tasks that resembled everyday practices of memorizing and reciting Qur'anic texts. The Morocco Literacy Project (Wagner, 1993) investigated the consequences of the Qur'anic preschool experience for learning

and subsequent public school achievement. Like Scribner and Cole, Wagner found a specific and significant positive effect on children's serial memory skills. Moreover, for children whose native language was Berber (not used in public school), the Qur'anic preschool experience correlated with higher reading achievement in Arabic during the first five years of public school and contributed a significant portion of variance to French literacy skills in the fifth year of elementary school. Wagner argues that rote learning of Arabic in Qur'anic school helped many language-minority children by providing a foundation on which to build a second literacy, even though the two literacies (Arabic and French) differed significantly and even though the first literacy was in a second language.

Both of these projects showed that participation in Qur'anic schooling was associated with the development of particular skills that were highly practiced and valued in school activities. However, neither project involved in-depth, ethnographic analysis of those activities and the skills they entail. Moreover, neither project was informed by second-language acquisition research, even though second language use was central to the schooling traditions whose effects were being studied. To understand how individuals are transformed as learners of language and literacy through their participation in Qur'anic schooling, we need to know more about how teaching and learning are accomplished in this activity setting; what kinds of second-language acquisition processes are in play; and what the educational and linguistic practices, processes, and outcomes mean to participants.

Somalis I have spoken with express the belief that Qur'anic school participation has a positive effect on public school participation. Some people argue for the kinds of literacy-specific connections made above, but most identify broader benefits, such as the development of self-discipline, commitment to education, and respect for learning and those who impart it. One of Bigelow's research participants articulated a line of reasoning that I have heard often in Columbus: *dugsi* helps Somalis in their public schooling because "[d]ugsi helps them be better people and thus more dedicated and serious students" (2010, p. 40).

For non-Muslim educators, some understanding of Qur'anic schooling can help them better

know and better support the learning of Muslim children whose families are recently arrived in the United States. The more a teacher knows about the schooling and literacy experiences a child brings to public school, the better able that teacher is to make connections with and build upon those experiences in the classroom. Such knowledge is also helpful in developing relationships with parents and other family members. In my work in Maroua and Columbus, I have found that my knowledge of and respect for Qur'anic schooling goes a long way toward establishing good rapport.

It remains unclear how Qur'anic school participation affects Muslim language-minority children's development of second language and literacy in public school. However, teachers and their students will benefit from awareness that many of the language and literacy skills developed in Qur'anic schooling are relevant and transferable to the English-language classroom. To date, no research supports the view that children who participate in Qur'anic schooling are more likely to develop and transfer to public school literacy activities an orientation to text that emphasizes decoding over comprehension. Nonetheless, teachers need to be aware that Muslim children who are English language learners may demonstrate high levels of decoding ability and oral reading fluency while still struggling with reading comprehension. For these children, as for all children, literacy instruction must make clear that reading is about making meaning of and with text, and instruction must provide ample opportunities for doing just that.

In both communities in which I have worked, the Qur'anic schooling tradition has been sustained and transformed by members as they have participated in other schooling traditions and have carried their own to other countries. Through my research, I hope to increase our understanding of Qur'anic schooling—how it is done and what means for participants as they move across continents, languages, literacies, and schooling traditions. Such understandings of the *other* school in Somali children's lives will help us improve public education for Muslim children learning in a second language and help us answer the theoretical question of how participation in one schooling tradition shapes participation and development as a communicatively competent participant in another.

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