



The monthly newsletter of the African School Mobile Library
"African Studies by bicycle"

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Dear Reader

Welcome to Kitabu – the Swahili word for book – the new monthly newsletter of the African School Mobile Library.

To enhance the service of the ASML, I am half way through a diploma course in Library and Information Science. Because I'm enjoying it and see the potential in it, I may do a degree. One thing that is outstanding for me so far – I'm on unit four of seven – is the section which includes Library Extension Service. Wouldn't it be great to hear more readings, discussions, theatrical monologues, talks and acoustic performances, in the local libraries? For the regular user, but also for the non-user; to attract those who are embarrassed by their low literacy level and see libraries as alien space. There is a space within our communities, that could be used for the benefit of all.

By the way, when last did you see a Black librarian?

Going back to the degree idea, it would be perfect if it offered a module on manuscripts, so I could get a deeper insight into the parchment wonders, in the libraries of Mali and Nigeria. My favourite scholar from the Golden Age of Timbuktu, in the 16th century, was Muhammed Bagayogo. The al-Wangari library he founded, is still a repository of knowledge, attracting scholars and journalists worldwide. Wangari comes from Wangara, the trader/teachers – also known as Dyula – from the Soninke people, who founded ancient Ghana and the legendary trades through the Volta region: Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Ghana. The Bagayogo lineage are of the Wangara, part of the larger Mande grouping.

Here's are two pieces from 'Tales of Muhammed Bagayogo,' which I wrote five years ago.

Tale of the Happy Student

He hasn't stopped beaming. Entranced, blessed by the library of Mohammed Bagayogo. He came to request a recommended literature list, on the study of Islamic history – and got a bonus too! Can't believe he's there, in the research centre of Muhammed Bagayogo! God has certainly watched over him today. Books on subject matter such as mathematics (riyadiyah), law (fiqh) and philosophy (falfasa). The poor Mossi student who came to ask for a favour, got invited to a place of riches.

While mesmerised by the manuscripts, the great teacher returns, bringing cashew nuts – and a cold lemon drink. He would have liked to have stayed all day, but he knows the great teacher is a busy man. So he gives thanks, clasping his hands and bowing his head, for the magical twenty minutes – and the loan of a book. He can't stop grinning, as he walks down the street. The sand cannot bother him, the wind cannot detain him: he floats on a breeze of happiness.

Tale of Sweet Submersion

Muhammed Bagayogo enters his library, his place of immersion. Hundreds and hundreds of manuscripts; myriad range of subject matter. The great tomes of Maliki law; Koranic commentaries and Hadith; poems and fatwas; alongside others on medicine, history, astronomy, literature, philosophy, geography; the litany of sciences and mathematics.

Translations from the Greek into Arabic. The use of that blessing termed Ajami; the adaption of Arabic, for West African voices. Wide range of authors also; from Marrakesh and Fez; from Walata and Jenne, his place of birth – and from Timbuktu, his city of longtime residence.

Books of learning and his teaching. As soon as he enters, he is immersed in knowledge, by the men of gargantuan minds. Going deeper, deeper. Sometimes, there is no where else he'd rather be, than there – engulfed in erudition. He hopes that the children of his three sons, will come to know sweet submersion, when they enter this hallowed place.

Nigeria

As Black History Month is also the month of Nigerian Independence, lets see what the ASML has, on the fiction writing from that West African country.

GABRIEL OKARA - The Voice

BUCHI EMECHETA - In The Ditch - Second Class Citizen - The Moonlight Bride - The Bride Price - The Slave Girl - The Joys of Motherhood

WOLE SOYINKA - A Play of Giants (a play) - Ake - A Shuttle In The Crypt (poetry)

AMOS TUTUOLA - My Life In The Bush of Ghosts - The Brave African Huntress - The Palm Wine Drinkard

SONNY OTI – Evangelist Jeremiah (play)

CHINUA ACHEBE – Things Fall Apart – Anthills of the Savannah – A Man Of The People – Arrow of God

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