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"Borciin Tarey"

Returning to Our Nobility

Conference on the Ancient African Literacy Tradition

On October 20th and 21st, 2006 the Shrine of the Black Madonna hosts the "Borciin Tarey: Returning to Our Nobility" Conference on the Ancient African literacy tradition, celebrating the manuscripts from the scholars at Sankore Mosque in ancient Timbuktu. These rare treasures include some of the actual manuscripts from the collection of the **Jean Lefe Ag Nouh** family. It has been estimated that approximately 18,000 manuscripts are still housed in the archives in Timbuktu, and some estimates say that nearly 100,000 additional manuscripts remain in private collections from the homes of the families of scholars in Timbuktu itself, and perhaps as many as a million more manuscripts remain in the Nation of Mali. Actual ancient manuscripts from the home of Mr. Nouh in Timbuktu will be on display at the conference.

These manuscripts, dating back as far as five to six hundred years ago, cover diverse academic fields of literature, theological material, mathematics, science, astronomy, law and other areas. While most are written in Arabic script, some record the knowledge and cultural traditions of ethnic groups such as the Songhai, Bamana, etc. **It is the purpose of this conference to situate the literate tradition of ancient Ghana, Mali and Songhai in the context of the whole African literary tradition, from the Nile to the Niger and beyond.** The depth and

breadth of Africa's ancient literary tradition has been obscured, leaving many to conclude that African people had only oral traditions. Yet the ancient Nilotic scripts from Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt come from a cradle that led the Ancient world. Many other indigenous scripts from various parts of Africa must be considered, even as we celebrate the great heritage of Timbuktu, Djenné and Gao in Mali, Sokoto in Nigeria, as well as the Nsibidi, Adinkra and Dogona, and many other scripts.

It is not only the scripts, but the **deep thinking that is associated with them that we seek to amplify.** Their connection to and reflection of African World Views, knowledge and skills enlarge, in a robust way, our understanding of our African Continental heritage, and provides the basis for a more complete understanding of African culture in the diaspora. In addition, and just as important, this literary and oral mastery tradition of African people was brought to the diaspora, and exists in power in diverse forms today, including such powerful forms as contemporary Hip Hop.

The preservation of this rich legacy, and its wide publication is needed now by African descendants and the world at large. Join us for an outstanding conference designed to punctuate this powerful aspect of African and African diaspora tradition.

Recovering The Power of the