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African Written and Oral systems of Thought as Philosophy

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in African Studies

by

Chelsi Dimm

2017

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

African Written and Oral systems of Thought as Philosophy

by

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Master of Arts in African Studies

University of California, Los Angeles 2017

Professor Andrew Apter, Chair

Philosophical research has been geared toward the epistemological, metaphysical, and physical as denoted only in written systems. I want to challenge this framework by using several case examples in the field African Philosophy, which I will describe in the next paragraph. African Philosophy has not been accepted as readily by the departments as a whole. I will discuss two reasons why this happens. The first is within written systems in Africa. Philosophers who use written language like Ibn Rushd's (and Aquinas) place in geography has been categorized in Spain, although the empire he and his father were working in were the African Almoravid and Almohad empires. Second, when it comes to philosophers who work in non-written philosophy, the same arguments that Goody and Watts have used in their work "the consequences of Literacy" in the 60's repeat in differing ways to denounce the non-written as mystical and non-logical; therefore not belonging in the philosophy department at all. Some in the field have carved out paths for logic in symbols and others have recorded oral narratives in writing to justify the field of African Philosophy in Philosophy writ-large.

The thesis of Chelsi Dimm is approved.

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2017

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Philosophical research has been geared toward the epistemological, metaphysical, and physical as denoted only in written systems. I want to challenge this framework by using several case examples in the field African Philosophy, which I will describe in the next paragraph. African Philosophy has not been accepted as readily by the departments as a whole. I will discuss two reasons why this happens.

The first is within written systems in Africa. Philosophers who use written language like Ibn Rushd's (and Aquinas) place in geography has been categorized in Spain, although the empire he and his father were working in were the African Almoravid and Almohad empires¹. Second, when it comes to philosophers who work in non-written philosophy, the same arguments that Goody and Watts (1963) have used in their work "the consequences of Literacy" in the 1960's repeat in differing ways to denounce the non-written as mystical and non-logical; therefore, not belonging in the philosophy department at all. Some in the field have carved out paths for logic in symbols and others have recorded oral narratives in writing to justify the field of African Philosophy in Philosophy writ-large.

The case examples I will use to show this divide is a false binary, in addition to Ibn Rushd as a writing philosopher, include proverbs and symbols as articulated by Dr. Kwasi Wierdu (year and put in refs). I will look at art inscription on vessels and their role in knowledge as well as magic squares articulation of Sufi knowledge articulated by Dr. Polly Roberts in *Sufi Arts in Urban Senegal*. Here I will also reference to Dr. Soulyemaine Daigone's (2011) book *African Art as Philosophy* which records the importance of understanding the art behind Léopold Sédar

¹ Urvoy 1991

Senghor's philosophy. Lastly, I will look at a historiography of how Ibo divination has been studied, starting from a mystic practice to a description of a metaphysical worldview. Each of these case studies will be overviews of what has already been studied in the non-written form of philosophy. The goals of this paper are: 1) to show an example of the false bias that the strong focus on the written has incurred; 2) to urge university philosophy departments in particular to consider more strongly the epistemologies and metaphysics from non-written systems of thought that have been documented quite well in other disciplines over time; and 3) to reconsider methodologies and incorporate a better understanding of African History in the history of philosophy.

First, let us articulate some of the ideas that posit writing and non-writing as binary opposites. Writing as logical. I find that many of these themes circle back into the way philosophy is practiced today in Western universities. Jack Goody and Ian Watts wrote "The Consequences of Literacy" in 1963. This article was written in the tone of Goody, a social anthropologist whose interest was writing and how it shapes society and a classicist interested in writing in early philosophy. Its publication spurred many important research projects into how writing systems shape and change society, human interactions, and knowledge. However, in focusing on the written over the non-literate, it included a bias toward the written, and therefore privileged it as a technology and as knowledge. While, this bias is not limited to Goody and Watts' work, the article provides an interesting example of how writing and knowledge became tied together in a particular time of interest for philosophers, the pre-Socratic and Socratic period.

Goody and Watts make three strong arguments about how rational thought began. Both involve its ties to language and the conception of written language as a technology over the non-written. According to the authors, the specific kind of alphabetic characters of the text in Greece give rise to the type of rational thought, as exemplified in ancient Greek philosophy. The belief that to be rational is to be written has been held by many philosophers to date. While Goody and Watts deny that there is a difference in the mental capacity between the literate and non-literate, they state something which in my view is just as biased:

"One reason for their existence, for instance, may be what has been described above: the fact that writing establishes a different kind of relationship between the word and its referent, a relationship that is more general and more abstract, and less closely connected with the particularities of person, place and time, than obtains in oral communication" (321).

This statement appears quite close to saying that the written word somehow creates objective truth. Goody and Watts' reason is that it is unchangeable and that histories have to be compared in their unchanged form to present-day realities. Somehow, this "view from nowhere" is more akin to logic for the authors and less so to myth; however, they do not elaborate as to why exactly, and they just take it to be the case. Inherent in their statement is the epistemological claim that the truth is what is most general and abstract. There is much philosophical debate on whether or not this claim is true, but that is outside the scope of this paper. At times in history that writing was equated to objective truth was taken for granted and at other times it was highly contested.

The second reason offered for the beginning for rational thought is that the first rational people had access to, and critiqued, pre-existing and written thoughts, "Among the early pre-

Socratics there is much evidence of the close connection between new ideas and the criticism of the old” (323). With regard to Goody and Watts’ second claim, reference is to a doxographic, or written and revised, rational philosophical tradition, which is a specific type of tradition in philosophy. They equate doxographic with rationality, to achieve an understanding of literacy as a prerequisite for rationality.

Now I will begin to refute these two main ideas and add a third idea. To assume that all philosophy should be critical in a way that relies on new texts revising old texts is limiting and does not account for independent ideas. This critical nature of revision is also apparent in oral traditions and not solely writing, especially through ritual. Yet ceremonies are not considered as a means for philosophical tradition by Goody and Watts. Andrew Apter in *Beyond Words* documents this ability of oral communication to revise within ceremonies. He shows the critical ways in which a ceremony questions and appoints government officials. Ceremonies can reference other points in time and build on or critique them.

The ideas that Goody and Watts posit about doxographic writing as necessary for critical thought are also inconsistent. First, they situate Greece as the first place where critical thought emerged. This would presume that Greece was the first area to have an alphabetic system, as it is necessary and sufficient for logical thought because it is abstract. It has been documented that the Greeks used the Phoenecian alphabet and adopted it to their own language. If this were so, they were not the first people to have an alphabet. Therefore, according to the authors’ logic the Greeks would not have been the birthplace of rational thought.

Ancient Egypt had science, philosophy, and religions but that could not be that case if we took Goody and Watts argument here seriously. According to Cheikh Anta Diop in *The African Origin of Civilization*, many of the scientific, political and philosophical ideas from ancient Egypt were adopted by ancient Greece and transformed into its own system of thought. At that time ancient Egypt was using Demotic hieroglyphs which is not an alphabetic language. Even the word *hieroglyph* is of Greek origin, which means sacred inscriptions. So one could pose the question, are traditions that were the same in Greece and Egypt only rational when written in ancient Greek? Or was it the doxographic argument that made the Egyptian ideas logical? How can the metaphysical status of the same idea change by being commented upon? The ideas of Goody and Watts here are over generalized.

The third argument is that ancient Greece was said by many philosophers as well as Goody and Watts to possess a certain kind of rationalism, one that surpasses mythologies because of the new ability of authors to write and revise their thesis. The ability to revise is in contrast to their explanation of the oral and its inability for revision because of the nature of memory, they state:

“What the individual remembers tends to be what is of critical importance in his experience of the main social relationships. In each generation, therefore, the individual memory will mediate the cultural heritage in such a way that its new constituents will adjust to the old by the process of interpretation that Bartlett calls "rationalizing" or the "effort after meaning"; and whatever parts of it have ceased to be of contemporary relevance are likely to be eliminated by the process of forgetting” (307).

These philosophers imply that there is a coherent truth, memory only encapsulates parts of it, our memory cannot record everything, but writing has the ability to record everything. They stress the importance of genealogies, and the ability to record history in a way that does not rely on memory, or the inherent selectiveness that memory is usually attributed, while at the same time do not consider the forging of documents, destruction or disappearance of them, as functioning the same way as a selective memory. do they consider the inability of language to translate directly into logical propositions and devices used by oral communicators that stabilize memory, thereby enabling one to recite an accurate portrayal of past ideas and occurrences. Instead, they contend that alphabetic writing is a necessary condition for rationality.

The following section briefly discusses Goody's subsequent works to address whether or not these earlier themes on rationality were amended. After "The consequences of Literacy", Goody wrote *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* in 1977, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* in 1986, and *Myth Ritual and the Oral* in 2010. A key theme in *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* is that the modes of transmission in oral societies make it the case that the knowledge gleaned from the oral is necessarily cultural in nature, and not individual. He substantiates this by quoting Durkheim, a sociologist who believes that the social is the most important factor in knowledge: ergo, it is appropriate to classify non-written knowledge as social knowledge. This line of thought provides a valid critique of the work on Bantu philosophy, namely it is a description of culture. Inherent in this work, though not explicit is the line of thinking that the doxographic nature of the work is important, where there are individuals who comment and revise previous work. Goody does give an example by stating,

“The fact that there is a turnover (of shrines) means that some individuals in that society are rethinking aspects of the conceptual universe... These are among the intellectuals of non-literate societies” (30). He relates these people to Pythagoras and goes on to state that those who praise leaders and manipulate chiefs are also intellectual. In one breath he both proposed very good methods of studying non-written knowledge and condemns it as a lesser technology than the written and a restricted literacy. Again, I think this line of reasoning has to do with the idea that it is difficult to tell an individual’s work from the overall cultural narrative, and therefore the framework of doxography is not quite present. Goody also introduces the theme of memory and states that writing gives oral communication a semi-permanent form and allows ideas to flow further away than from face-to-face communication. It also adds the potential for cumulative knowledge (37). This theme is again considered in his later works.

One of the most interesting points Goody makes in *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* is that there may be no equivalent written document for a “utterance” or speech event (86). If this is to be taken seriously, then it would be impossible to contend that the written is a technology while the oral is not because they are incommensurate. He brings this up in relation to lists. The question of what to do about this incommensurability will be brought up again in relation to African philosophy as a field in Andrew Apter’s chapter “Que Faire in the African Philosophy” section of this paper. This introduces a new puzzle: philosophy studies writing, sociology studies society’s knowledge. It is not that one is more important than the other, it is just that the methodology of sociology has expanded to study written documents. Yet, the methodology of philosophy still does not consider non-written or oral history sources. There is a new field emerging which arose out of the Vienna Circle known as Social Epistemology.

Currently a lot of the work is on Science studies by prominent authors such as Bruno Latour, Barry Barnes, and David Bloor. Social Epistemology aims to study the social aspects of how knowledge is produced. A few examples include how decisions are made with regard to new knowledge systems, whether or not to adopt them, and how culture and society shape what knowledge is able to be produced. These themes are similar to the ways in which Goody describes a non-written society, yet they occur in societies where a lot of correspondence is written. It therefore suggests that the two are incommensurate, yet both are important in how, why, and which knowledge is produced.

Jack Goody's book *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* in 1986 attempts to limit the discussion to the differences between writing and oral transmission, but it includes an evolutionary bias where writing is seen as a necessary and inevitable advancement over oral communication. While discussing the ways that writing structures society in a more advanced way, he does not describe the ways that oral communication structures society. This diminishes the role of the oral and does not allow a fair comparison to the role of writing. This can be considered an evolutionary bias because it assumes writing is the newest and best technology without considering the function of oral communication.

Further, Goody offers few case examples. He focuses on examples generally, and not specifically in his comparative study to articulate the nature of written and its differences from the oral. He considers one facet of the oral memory, in this quotation:

“Throughout Africa we find trade and sometimes credit; in written bills of exchange, as well as maps, itineraries, and passports being used by merchants. In oral societies one can certainly find analogous precursors to all of these practices of the merchants of the Middle East, but writing

permits a development in complexity that would otherwise be impossible. Take the simple matter of credit. Owing to the limits of human memory, the Ghanian ladies observed by Hart who provided food on credit to employees in a transport yard and collected payment at the gates at the end of the month, could handle only a restricted number of customers and a restricted number of different kinds of transaction” (83).

The difference between the function of oral trade and written trade is extremely insightful. However, one sees memory as a tool of the oral, but as ‘restricting’ the amount and complexity of trade. It is also a precursor to a type of trade that is currently impossible. This is an example of the evolutionary bias because Goody does not say that writing structures trade differently, but in a better way. He applies this reasoning to religion as well, saying that religions develop into becoming literate. As *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* is principally dedicated to the study of the written, this is one of few examples about the oral. However, a discussion of the oral would give have been more effective to illustrating the distinctions he is drawing about the written. A few case studies that specifically relate to the ideas of memory and writing are the *lukassa* memory board, pottery inscriptions, and magic square inscriptions as described by Dr. Polly Roberts in *Memory: art and the making of history*.

Goody’s book *Myth Ritual and the Oral* (2010) engages genres of oral communication, an idea that is evident in *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*. The oral is posited oral as the first technology, before writing, with writing as the second technology. Goody further deconstructs the distinction of a religious and empirical divide, thus providing some legitimacy for oral religious ceremony to be critical, but not fully critical. However, his discussion of the way that oral communication functions within society is lacking because the focus is on it as the

first technology and its relation to meme theory and evolutionary theory through the theorists discussed in the book. He also uses the term 'literacy' in quotations when speaking of oral literacy. This distinction denotes a critical difference with written literacy: discussion of legends, epics, myths, folktales, and personal narratives show the use of each within the formation of history. Goody places the most truth value within personal narratives because his definition of truth refers to what people believe. I believe this is a reaction to the *Domestication* book because there he focused more on community and culture which he did not consider completely knowledge. Another reason for the personal narrative is that people find folktales and epics amusing rather than they believe them literally. And I would argue that his logic would also consider these the basis for a doxographic oral tradition.

The evolutionary bias, as seen to different degrees in all of these theories, can be amended by examining philosophers who posit the critical nature of the oral and its function within society. They comment on doxographic traditions as well as the logic in writing and symbols and the preservation of memory in proverbs.

To summarize, according to Goody and Watts the written language helps to stabilize memory, allow for revisions, and more generally makes it more logical. I have already stated my critiques to these ideas. My intent now is to move on to ideas of written and non-written knowledge as discussed in the field of African philosophy. This will problematize the binary divide and illuminate the places where different philosophers locate knowledge. This debate is important in the field of philosophy because so often ideas like the ones Goody and Watts articulate go unchallenged within the field. Moreover, it is assumed that what will be studied is a text that is part of a doxographic tradition. But if one takes philosophy to be the love of

knowledge as its name implies, then it is important to investigate seriously which sources are philosophical in nature.

Appiah and Mudimbe in the “The Impact of African Studies on Philosophy” state:

“African Philosophy was generally used, during nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth- at least in the idiom of the European anthropologists, missionaries, and travelers- to mean something like African *Weltanphaungen*. What they describe are cultural curiosities perceived and analyzed not as rational systems in their own right but rather as exotic and primitive exempla” (117).

I think what they are getting at has a similar projection in the arts, which I will explain to get at the main point. Non-Western art in Europe and North America was first exhibited in cabinets of curiosity. There was no real relationship of meaning between the objects shown. The audience was typically Westerners who had little knowledge of the significance or meaning that is usually kept as a secret within these objects. These cabinets of curiosity were exhibited in the same time period referenced by Appiah and Mudimbe . They posit an interesting difference between the critical and the exotic. The critical is a hidden meaning and the exotic is the cultural in this sense—not a critical culture—but one that has perceived non-relational and unchanging meaning.

One can likewise discern an uncritical view of African philosophy that may have been meant to subjugate peoples or is relayed by someone who not attuned to the critical nature of the symbols. Stating that attempts for African philosophy at this time were *Weltanphaungen* is correct, but it is not because African philosophy is merely culture. It is because some of these attempts were uncritical and missing the point. This critique has nothing to do with the objects of ceremonies or symbols themselves, but the ability of those who are writing about or

exhibiting the objects to understand their full meaning. To tie together some ideas, *Bantu Philosophy* by Placide Tempels has been discredited by Appiah and Mudimbe in this quotation because it is an example of culture not philosophy. It has also been discredited by Goody in *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* because the cultural or communal idea is not the idea of an individual who critically revises the thesis. Andrew Apter in his chapter "Que Faire" uses Mudimbe's idea that African philosophy is secret wisdom, and Hountondji's (date?) idea that African philosophy has yet to explain how it offers an intermediate space for configuring differences. Apter locates some present studies in this endeavor in the Cultural studies department. Although this is a highly philosophical endeavor, it is not taught within philosophy departments.

The fact that there is a distinction between African philosophy and Western philosophy in part has to do with the source material for philosophy and other false (and racist) ideas that consider Africa as non-literate. The African philosophers generally agree that there are legitimate oral sources of African philosophy as well as written sources, and they debate how the oral sources should be interpreted. Western philosophy has a doxographic tradition, where written theses are built upon, and the nature of the philosophical tradition is inherently through writing. Because theorists have posited that oral sources are not critical and pre-writing, and writing is rational, the field of philosophy that deals with oral sources in African philosophy is differentiated from Western philosophy.

This divide is one of the main themes of debate within the field of African philosophy, which is also unrepresented within philosophy departments. The views on this theme are generally divided into two camps, the ethnophilosophers, who are constructing a written

African philosophy, and the sage philosophers, who among other achievements are critical and logical non-written communication. This paper now focuses on the debates within African philosophy on the written-oral divide that challenge the idea that the written is more logical and the idea of the binary construction of the written and non-written.

A central debate in the Early and Middle Period of African Philosophy, where Chimakonam does not characterize necessarily by years, but instead by themes, is “What is African Philosophy?” This debate centers on the division of African philosophy between ethnophilosophy or sage philosophy. A theme in this debate, whether overt or latent, is Early African thought is oral; and it either has the qualities to be compared with a literate (written and rational) western philosophy, or it is an ethnophilosophy and does not contain logical or critical elements; it is instead a culture or religion. The ethnophilosophers do agree on the oral nature of the source material for African philosophy, but in order to make it critical philosophy it must be analyzed further, or written down. Sage philosophers, on the other hand, are proponents of the critical nature of mixed written and oral methods of rationality. A positive feature of this structuring of the history of African philosophy is that it shows how texts relate to one another and builds a critical reflection on the doxographic tradition, it lacks mention of non-written forms of knowledge.

The Early period of African philosophy has many debates present, such as the nature of group thinking, where anthropologists posit the interviews of a single person as the belief of an entire group of people, or the openness or closed-ness of African society. Debates also center on whether these oral sources constitute *Weltanschauung*, which is culture, or philosophical thought. Positing something as either culture or knowledge seems to me to be an antiquated

binary thought. It is the case that culture has knowledge in it. I think this binary is rooted in the written-nonwritten binary and is something that needs to be further evaluated. It is the case that the newest cultural inventions of the time shaped the way Western philosophers conceptualized how the mind worked: for Descartes the wax block and for Turing, the computer. This topic will be addressed further as I address some writers in the field of African philosophy's views.

A brief overview of some "ethnophilosophers" is needed before going into more detail about some sage philosophes. The term ethnophilosophy became popular in on in Henry Odera Orika's thinking, but he later rejected ethnophilosophy because it carried with it the claim that African thought was unitary, and there were not individual thinkers involved². Orika then used Sage philosophy, which posits that wise men and women in any society are sources of philosophy as his framework for discussing African philosophy. Generally, ethnophilosophers are those who equate the thinking of a group of people as a unitary philosophical thought. Ethnophilosophers include Placide Tempels, Marcielle Griaule, Paulin J. Hountondji, and Barry Hallen. Tempels, for example, talks about Bantu philosophy, particularly the notions of force. In Bantu the comparison is to a Western interpretation of being where the idea of force tied to being is not present. Tempels is considered an ethnophilosopher because he takes the ideas of a group of people and not an individual as the basis for philosophical thought. Tempels' methodology involves an examination of the spoken language and the connections that it entails. The definition of being within the language cannot be differentiated from a notion of

² Orika, 1991

force. I think he uses a facet of the oral language that is the same as written knowledge, the definition of a word, in order to elevate the oral knowledge to count under a written form of knowing. In other words, both oral and written transmission entail definitions of words. The definition of being can be critically analyzed, even to critics of oral communication, because they include an aspect of the written. One can see the merging of orality and writing together to form a philosophy here, which does show the impossibility of a binary existence. Also, there are many pieces discussed previously that denounce this work as philosophy.

Hountondji (1976), writes about the oral traditions and rituals in ethnophilosophy. The only time he believes that this thought can be philosophy is when it is “a literature produced by Africans dealing with philosophical issues”(121) Again, we see a starting point of oral sources being written down by critical philosophers in order to create a philosophical tradition.

Last, Barry Hallen (2002) quotes Hountondji and takes up the theme that one must separate the mythical from the rational. Hallen discusses how some aspects of African thought are logical and worth keeping while others are just culture or religion. He focuses less on the written oral debate and more on disciplinary boundaries so to speak, between religion, culture, and philosophy. Hallen articulates a history of African Philosophy stating:

“Disputes between ethnophilosophers arise primarily over how to arrive at a correct rendering of an oral literature and traditions African systems of thought are depicted as placing minimal emphasis on the rigorous argumentation and criticisms that are prerequisites for the sort of truth that involves discarding the old and creating the new. Tradition becomes suspect as a justification that is “true” and is portrayed as antithetical to innovation” (68).

Tradition as described in Hallen's work is oral literature. And the oral tradition cannot be seen according to him and others such as Hountondji as a verification of truth. This statement is framed by Hallen's idea for African philosophy to look not at the past but into the present for knowledge. This is in line with the thinking of ethnophilosophers who generally see oral communication as un-critical. Ethno-philosophers present many positive contributions, Namely, there is a discussion of the critical nature of, and what constitutes, African philosophy. This discussion is not occurring elsewhere and is important in the attempt to decolonize university philosophy departments. It is thus important to build from the ideas of these thinkers in an otherwise inhospitable intellectual climate for their research.

Around the same time a group of philosophers, endorsed African Sage philosophy, the sage philosophers regarded orality as critical in and of itself without a written counterpart to justify their logic. Gyekye (year) observes that songs, symbols, and proverbs are the material of philosophy. N.K. Dzobo (year) also articulates many symbols and their understanding within society. These thinkers not only argue for the criticalness of oral communication.

According to Dzobo, "visual images and ordinary objects are used symbolically to communicate knowledge, feelings and values" (85). He seeks not to explain the symbolic system in its entirety but to situate specific groups of symbols in their context. Dzobo distinguishes between artificial signs, natural symbol, and proverbs as sources of information. Artificial signs are things that are not written down: they occur in everyday life. He presents the theoretical example of a traffic light as a sign to slow down, or a visual of smoke to indicate the correlation to fire. These symbols have a function in organizing society when everyone can

recognize them and adhere to their meanings. Dzobo argues for the use of the sign to ‘furnish information about the environment and about intentions and feelings of people’ (86).

In addition to signs, Dzobo talks about symbols. The function of a symbol is to “make us think of its objects in a certain way” (87). There is a structuring of thought pattern that is based on the appearance of a symbol. By a natural symbol, he means those things that have a nature similar to what they represent. A few examples he includes are the top of a linguist’s staff in Ghana carved with a depiction of a hand with an egg in it, which is meant to symbolize that ‘power held in one hand is not safe.’ The fragile egg in the hand symbolizes the delicate nature of democracy, in one hand, or by one person. Dzobo also articulates six groups of symbols: Adinkra symbols, stool symbols, linguist staff symbols, religious symbols, ritual symbols and oral literary symbols. Each group of symbols relates to its location within society. This happens in a similar way that genres of writing are established.

The Kente cloth is the national cloth of Ghana: “It is used traditionally as a mourning cloth and is normally worn to say goodbye to the dead and to express sympathy for the bereaved family, and so is commonly seen at funerals and memorial services. It is usually adorned with various symbols that express various views of life and death” (89). Dzobo then lists symbols on the cloth, which includes the Bewu symbol, which looks like an x with circles on the end of each of the lines, and this symbol represents a view of the body as separate from the soul, and the soul as immortal. It also means, “Life and death are two aspects of one reality and one cannot be had without the other” (90). Another example is stool symbols engraved on the stool given at the birth of a child. These symbols are used to continue to welcome the wife into the home, and the middle portion is carved with a symbol meant to teach a lesson. An example

that Dzobo gives of the middle section of the stool is the Nyansapow. This means wisdom generally, but “the present generation cannot lay aside easily the wisdom of the past; and they can only do this if they have something better to replace it” (91). The center part is carved in different symbols; to the stool itself that is given to a wife can have many different meanings.

The linguist staff symbols are used in diplomacy. It is also fashioned from carved wood. Religious and ritual symbols, such as the tripod, relate to the stability of the High-God. Oral literacy symbols include proverbs. Dzobo further distinguishes that each location of symbol gives meaning to it: the symbols of the Adinkra cloth hold meanings about reality, those on the stool hold meanings for a person and to welcome, and the symbols on the staff are about leadership. These genres that Dzobo articulates gives greater clarity to the function of the symbols in society, and it assists in showing the many ways that the visualization and situation together create meaning. These symbols, which are carved on wood, or dyed into cloth are examples of meaning informing a more permanent object. There are many media present in communication beyond that written on commonly used paper, and this is important to remember when examining writing in an African context because wood and cloth are incorporated into the list of materials used for expression. Even cylindrical metal seals are a source of writing, so it is not a stretch to include wood and cloth. These symbols, though not alphabetic, still hold the function of memory assistance. An important piece of information in this discussion thus is that the location of the symbols can change the meaning, which is not the case for writing. Dzobo’s contribution is the symbols as a technology for understanding in themselves, which deserves further study.

Proverbs are another source of information for African philosophers. Gyekye(year) shows the critical nature of the proverb by citing the complex ideas that it encapsulates as proof. But he also shows that the proverb has a function in society as well, as a brief saying that is easily remembered to be a reminder of more complex ideas. He also articulates some proverbs and their meanings within a Yoruba context. One proverb that he talks about is 'goodness sells itself; badness walks around'. This refers to "the value of a thing is in the inherent power that it has to satisfy human needs, and it is this power that attracts people to it" (97). Gyeke argues that the proverb is a shorthand way to talk about more complex topics. The way that the proverb functions is different from writing in that "It is not always easy to make out the connotative meaning of a proverb, but, if its connotative meaning is grasped, it is found to be a vehicle used by our fathers and mothers to approach, apprehend and recollect reality in their experience" (95). Here he talks about the difficulty in translating an exact history within proverbs. First the proverbs are used as a tool to aid memory, which in relation to a written doxographic tradition is seen to be faulty. The proverb remedies and balances the memory by 'jogging the mind' or giving a short hand account in order to get into the right mindset and remember further details. It is one example of how memory is checked and critical, not just unwieldy and unverifiable, even though there could be a case where unchecked memory is grounds for knowledge. This shows again a mixed media of writing and non-writing methods for knowing. The memory may not be tangible like the written document, but its existence is solid, and there are checks to aid it. Proverb is one, but others include the cadence of poems, and songs with both words and tunes to aid memory of the exact phrasing.

The articulation of oral and mixed methods of understanding critique a functional idea of literacy in which writing is the only skill, and it becomes blameworthy not to have the skill. The sage philosophers show that oral understanding is not lacking or in need of an additional technology; it can also be mixed with written technologies and these technologies need to be judged on how well they are researched and not whether the source materials are writing.

The inclusion of African philosophy, particularly those philosophers who illuminate the nature of oral and mixed methods, give an example of the nature of the oral society as different from the written and also show how they operate on logical systems which may not always be identical. But judging understanding and rationality from a written literacy is misleading and does not include other types of critical thought inherent in symbols, proverbs, signs, or even institutions of oral knowledge, like griots or ceremonies. Using the African philosophers as a case study example in the history of literacy shows that definitions of literacy are not as inclusive as they should be. It also shows the distinct differences along the written and oral divide. This case study allows for a more nuanced look into how other case studies are evaluated. The written is not an evolutionary necessity, but oftentimes occurs because of the context necessitating it. Understanding the oral knowledge in part helps to break the hegemony of the written and to give a more complete study of the function of writing in society.

The African sage philosophers are not the only valuable case study in this endeavor. They explain themes of literacy, and incorporate many helpful examples but they could discuss more about the institutions of oral history, like griots who professionally memorized and told histories and epics to people. Their discussion is focused on situating generally and abstractly

signs, symbols, and proverbs and their function within society. Because the issue of validity and truth within oral discourse and performance is of paramount importance to philosophy, and their discussions and case study are valuable for placing different ideas on the nature of oral sources, they have been featured in this essay. This work has accomplished critical research on knowledge, which is not, or only partially, written down the mix between written and oral systems show differing technologies that record knowledge. I think that showing the methodologies for knowledge is important because they are varied and reveal written, oral, ritual, and symbolic ways of knowing. They are sometimes commensurate and sometimes not. An important step is to show how these forms of knowledge are important in a particular area and to do cross-cultural studies about how such different knowledges can resolve analytical problems in other thought systems. It is not always the case that something is either a written literacy or an oral literacy, but there are mechanisms like written within symbols and that infer a performance in what and how pieces of writing come to be.

There are also aspects of written and oral knowledge within Ifa, divination. When scholars conceptualize writing's ties to knowledge from years of research, we come to methods where the performance becomes just as important as the written work in the knowledge system. The methodologies of those who study Ifa have changed over the years and it offers a good case example for how philosophy can adopt these methods to better study knowledge production. I will begin with the earliest written piece and end with the most recent in a historiography of how Ifa divination has been studied to illustrate this point.

First, Wande Ambiola in his analysis of Ifa (year) includes the names and myths about the gods of divination, the process to become a diviner in Ifa and that largest part of his book

refers to the linguistics of Ifa. More specifically he focuses on the Ese Ifa verses, which are oral. There are aspects of these verses that are to be memorized entirely, and aspects which the essence of the story is to be memorized but can be told in the individual diviner's own words. This analysis seems quite poignant, considering that some literacy theorists speculated that the mnemonics in oral communication are not appropriate for remembering, nor are they appropriate for knowledge and understanding. In his exposition of Ifa verses, Ambiola gives details to the idea that *oralcy* (again mixed with performance, written text, herbs, and embodied knowledge) is a legitimate avenue to knowledge.

He analyzes the eight-part structure of the Ese Verses. The Ese are the oral verses that correspond with each Ifa verse, which is written. In the action of divination, either cowries, a divining chain, or a divining dish will point toward an Ifa verse because of its configuration in space. The Ifa verse that it points to is then read in regard to the current patient. The Ese verses are oral narratives that correspond to the Ifa which describe ways in which previous patients have interacted with and have been cured from the Ifa verse. In hearing these verses that the diviner will recite, the patient will be able to respond to one and the diviner will then be able to give more detail on the patient's situation, and past which is leading to the current problem. To note the divination itself is a very dynamic process where more than one person work together through different roles to attain knowledge.

The importance to the written/oral divide as Goody posited is that the oral verses stand the test of time and in fact are not malleable, but standard. Ambiola states, "Ese Ifa has a structural pattern which distinguishes it from other forms of Yoruba oral literature. Since ese Ifa

is historical in content, its structure is also based on its historical nature. Nearly all ese Ifa have eight main parts" (43).

The parts are as follows:

"The first part states the name of the Ifa priests involved, The second states the name of the client for whom divination was performed. The third part states the reason for the divination, while the fourth part contains the instructions of the Ifa priest to the client after the divination. the fifth part tells whether or not the client complied with the diviner. The sixth part narrates what happened to the client. after he carried out or refused to carry out the instructions. The seventh part contains the reaction of the client to the joy or sorrow that resulted from the divination while the eighth part draws a fitting moral for the story as a whole" (43).

He goes on to state that the diviner recites parts one to three from memory. Then he remembers the basic storyline of parts four through six and recites them in his own words, and returns to reciting exactly by memory parts seven and eight. The length of parts four through six lend to remembering the main points of the story and not exact words because they are much longer than the other sections.

The memorized parts are recited in poetry form, which have a very particular rhythm. However, this rhythm, Abimbola claims has been neglected and only studied by Babblola, a Nigerian researcher. Therefore, one can see how the rhythm is a mnemonic device and assists in memory of the verbatim parts of the Ese verse. The tone, and whether the sound is a vowel or consonant, has regular patterns in the verses. The basic unit of rhythm is the line of Ese verse, and a stressed syllable is usually followed immediately by an unstressed syllable. Word play is another main feature of the Ifa Ese verses. All this is to say that there is a technology in

oral communication that is meant to portray history and philosophy. This case study runs contrary to some literacy theorists view, which has hindered divination and other knowledges from being studied as philosophy.

Abimbola provides a rigorous analysis of some of the oral Ese verses that show the regular structure and technologies used in creating them. This builds off of the views of previous scholars and gives an analysis of how the oral can posit rationalities. Omotade Adegbindin (year) also provides a history of both Western philosophy and divination as philosophy. In the same vein he incorporates previous scholars' knowledge toward the aim of studying divination more seriously in academia and taking the truth it elicits as knowledge and philosophy.

Adegbindin (1976) states that although the aspects of healing, art, music, performance are important to Ifa divination, so is the philosophical. He is interested in what kinds of truth divination reveals and in the metaphysical underpinnings of the process. Therefore, we see another important focus in the study of Ifa divination. In order to show that Ifa divination fits into the scope of philosophy more generally, which to date has been defined by Western philosophy, he shows that in Western metaphysics there is still room for a supernatural being. Some examples that I have studied include Spinoza's ontological demotion which states that human beings are modes of one substance, which is god. Therefore, a supernatural being accounts for the fabric of everything. And this is a theme throughout early modern philosophy and in earlier philosophies where a supernatural being accounts for at least part of the metaphysics. Of course, this was also prevalent in medieval philosophies including Ibn Rushd and Thomas Aquinas. And Adegbindin shows that ancient philosophies, which were not divorced

from supernatural beings, did not provide an altogether coherent notion of what philosophy is. He uses very tactful methods to show that Ifa divination belongs within the philosophical corpus.

After an account of the history of Philosophy, Adegbindin articulates what are the philosophical, the more than simply rational, elements of Ifa thought. He focuses on ontology (being) epistemology (knowledge) and ethics in Ifa. I will focus on two examples he gives of ontology and epistemology. In explaining ontology in Ifa, he uses the concept of ori, a person's anatomical head,, in which there is an impalpable force that determines the person's fortune or destiny. In this concept, there is the notion that the individual can affect the ori. There are many of these forces available to choose, some good and some bad. But the individual does not have access to whether they are good or bad before he/she chooses one. And therefore, it presents a distance notion of responsibility where praise, reward and punishment are muddled, because the individual does not have access to the content of their choice (105-6).With regard to epistemology he states, "Among the Yoruba, the concept "otito" (truth) largely reflects the correspondence theory of truth since the Yoruba rely heavily on the eye-witness or an empirically verifiable account of truth" (122). In the oral literature some references to what truth is, occurs by analogy: "Lumps constitute the bone of pounded yam, the cob is the bone of corn, to make a statement which turns out to be true, is the bone of the truth" (122).His volume covers the truth in the oral verses and in the written verses but does not go into truth in the actions, performance, or art of divination. It is nonetheless valuable because it shows divination as philosophy, but it could go further to show actions as philosophy.

The (2016) edited volume on Ifa by Jacob Olupona and Rowland Abiodun, *Ifa Divination, Knowledge, Power and Performance*, incorporates many rich studies. I will only cover a few of them here. Wande Abimbola wrote a follow-up essay entitled "Continuity and change." He states that in the oral verses, some are memorized verbatim and others in which essence is remembered. This allows for a small bit of freedom for the Babalawos. Likewise, he then picks up art in divination. He shows the variances of styles of tools used for divination, yet all are still accurate vessels of divination. They vary because of what is available to construct the items, and there is a lot of creativity when constructing the items, yet even so they all create truth that will heal an individual. He also states that food is used as a tool to get someone on your side, and if you feed an Orisha, then the Orisha will be a true messenger. Therefore, it is not simply the written and oral verses that function to make truth, but also the arts, their materials and food involved in the divination.

Lastly, Henry John Drewal (2016) comments in the volume by Olupona:

"The arts (sculpture, dance, song, chant, poetry, incantations, and the rest) as Rowan Abidun posits are all classifiable as *oro* (figures of speech), matters that are the subject of discussion, concern, or action. *Oro* should be interpreted as the embodiment of *ogbon*, *imo ati oye* (the one and indivisible combination of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding)- a concept that precedes speech, visual and verbal arts, performance, touch smell, but includes them all and more in the sense of *okanlenirinwo* (multiplicity)" (327).

Drewal critiques functionalist based studies of divination (Pritchard's is an example) as being great studies, but not incorporating the art and performance on its own terms. Although, in my opinion Pritchard does show social meaning in action, he also does not explicitly state, like Drewal does, the importance of the action as embodiment. The understanding of *patina*

could also fall into this category, of including touch and patterns of touch as visually showing the importance of an object to a person or group, and the meanings they hold true.

Reworking the theory for studying divination to include these non-written mediums is an important methodology because first, it incorporates more aspects of the divination process that are important, intricate and interesting. It also allows a space, as with African philosophy more generally, to contradict the inherent notion that philosophy is written. While there is literacy (read skills) involved in these non-written means of transmitting knowledge, there is also something very dynamic happening. They also have the ability to show regional differences, and Abimbola points out, which like the written records a history and a “diaspora.” The quotes are included because I do not want to give power to one region as the original over other regions.

These studies point to ways in which Ifa can be studied as philosophy without and with the written aspect of it. It goes beyond the “written oral divide” as posited by Goody, by showing the mix of the two, and also the importance of performance and art. I think the next step is to show the philosophical underpinnings of the performance and art, as well as how the writing style is important to philosophical investigations. It should be noted again, that racism is also a very real reason why these systems are not incorporated into the body of philosophical knowledge. After all, Socrates only began his quest for knowledge after the oracle at Delphi told him that he was the most intelligent man. All of his philosophy consists of transcribed conversations that Socrates had.

The idea that there is no rationality without writing has been held tightly by many philosophy programs and partly because of that the racist notion that contends that there is no African philosophy. Going hand in hand with the under-represented non-written or partially written traditions or some mix of both, written systems in Africa have been discredited. Many scholars still believe that Africans began writing only with colonialism by European countries in the 19th century. This is a glaring issue in the study of African philosophy. As Africans have been using language and written language for far longer than the arrival of Europeans. I will not go into the whole history of language and writing in Africa, but it is important to note that the Arabic script was a widespread writing system on the continent possibly as early as the 7th century. Many regional languages began to use the script to connote their own speech. This next section will deal briefly with the written philosophical tradition in North Africa, most notably Ibn Rushd. Ibn Rushd was a major contributor to the birth of an intellectual center. The Almoravid dynasty set the stage, by beginning education, promoting Arabic literacy and creating the groundwork for translating, analysis, and further study.⁴ Ibn Rushd's family were prominent jurists during this time, and then during the succeeding dynasty, the Almohads, Ibn Rushd became a jurist and prominent scholar in an empire that spanned regions Africa to parts of Iberia. Because of these intellectual breakthroughs, Ibn Rushd assisted in building libraries, and the transition of an empire to Cordova, Marrakech, and Fez, spread cross-cultural dialogue among scholars travelling through the region. Therefore, Ibn Rushd is a prominent figure in both the study of African history and in the intersections of scholarly thought that lead to contemporary ways of understanding history.

⁴ Urvoy, 1991

Ibn Rushd lived at a crossroads of emerging ideas between politics, medicine and philosophy. He was also as the crossroad of intellectual learning in the Almodad Empire, where scholars were travelling to access sources in libraries that were being built. He is viewed as of paramount importance for his influence in bridging cultures and for his commentaries on ancient Greek sources. His works were translated into three languages and were highly influential. He is also an important figure in modern-day philosophy in North Africa. It would take considerable training for a scholar to be able to tackle the legacy of Ibn Rushd, let alone simply situate his academics geographically and politically.

Much scholarly work has been completed on Ibn Rushd's, or Averroes in Latin, place in history and philosophy. Each come from a different point of view and some are from differing intellectual fields of study. Lines and holes exist in research among area, where scholars place him in Spain, which seemingly could be considered part of present day Europe, and therefore it causes no damage to the myth of philosophy as entirely Western. As most Western philosophers consider Ibn Rushd or Averroes as a Spanish philosopher, it is only Mohammed Abid Jabri, a Moroccan philosopher, who situates Ibn Rushd's intellectual positions and political landscape together to show how Islamic philosophy in North Africa can become a modern project. When historians and philosophers situate Ibn Rushd in his geographical context, in the Almohad Empire, which has its basis in the Almoravid Empire which was largely initiated by nomadic people, then the myth of the history of philosophy is challenged. Europe is no longer the epicenter for modern philosophy/ Instead, an area once ruled by the Almoravids and Almohads becomes the epicenter for philosophical thought. Further tracing the elements of

this tradition, by Urvoy, and the movement of centers of learning, by Fakry provides Rushd documentary evidence for this claim.

Another dividing line between the research done by the authors of the sources consulted is disciplinary boundaries. Sometimes it is important to situate the philosophy into the social or political situation in order to get a rich understanding of the intellectual history, and oftentimes those writing in the field of philosophy do not consider this. Historians sometimes provide less of a textual analysis of what was actually written as philosophy and at times this analysis could benefit the study of history.

The biography of Ibn Rushd titled, *Ibn Rushd (Averroes)*, is by Dominique Urvoy. This book was published in 1991. He published many books on the Muslim intellectual history in Spain and North Africa. He critiques previous books on Ibn Rushd for not situating his intellectual writings within the Muslim empires that spanned Spain and North Africa. Almoravidism oftentimes looked to ancient texts for justifications and truth. Almoradism looked toward rationality and the jurisprudence system in society to explore and exact philosophical ideas. Situated within this schema, Ibn Rushd's interpretations of Aristotle and Plato's works is not at the center of Ibn Rushd's intellectual history-- although it is an important aspect-- his central intellectual history is the philosophical endeavors within the jurisprudence system of the Almohad Empire. During his most prolific period of writing, he lived in Cordoba, Seville, and Marrakech.

The Almohad school of which Ibn Rushd was a part constituted “a rational ordering of the solution to different problems advanced by the various schools of law.”⁵ The Almohad school and the *fiqh* associated with it was taught in North Africa until the fourteenth century. Urvoy states that despite his family's links with the Almoravid ways of thinking, Ibn Rushd clearly aligns more with the Almohad line of reasoning. He built up a library in Seville and when presented to the Sultan of the Almohads, the sultan was not pleased with the state of philosophical endeavors and insisted that Ibn Rushd study Aristotle. Because he was no longer content with previous views, the Sultan wanted a revised view from Ibn Rushd. Ibn Rushd also became his personal physician. But subsequent instability in the Empire led the Sultan to disenfranchise Ibn Rushd, who returned to Almoravid practices. He ended his career with the title of the Caddy of Marrakech, which shows that he was brought back into some favor. Urvoy divides Ibn Rushd’s intellectual history into three periods. The first provided overviews of logic psychological and scientific questions. The second coupled his study of law with the study of philosophy. Here he commented on the Malaki school of law, Aristotle’s Ethics and on Plato's Republic. The third period included commentaries and original thought on many Aristotelian works.

In this way a more detailed and nuanced framing of Ibn Rushd thoughts on ancient philosophy, law, and science emerges. As a scholar of Muslim intellectual history Urvoy is able to situate what are sometimes considered disparate field of study together to form one all-encompassing look into the life of Ibn Rushd as it relates to society. As we will encounter later

⁵ Urvoy, 14

some other authors approach the history of Ibn Rushd through other lenses, and sometimes they neglect situating Ibn Rushd's intellectual history into the socio-political framework of the Almoravid and Almohads. Therefore, the nation-state boundaries are more prominent than the boundaries that were in effect in the medieval period in some of their books. This goes to show the unique perspective and necessity of Urvoy's approach and history.

One example is how she situates Ibn Rushd's intellectual history with the political and geographical systems of the time. Ibn Rushd began to compare celestial objects from two different geographical spaces, in Spain and Morocco, and used his observations to form commentaries on Aristotle's *On the Heavens*.⁶ This is an interesting and useful methodology, especially when physics and experimentation is involved, to attempt a fair reading of Aristotle, while still making one's own observations and ideas. Urvoy notes the particularly clear skies in Marrakech as a catalyst for this undertaking.⁷ Her study also relates Ibn Rushd's ideas to those of other prominent Muslim scholars and shows the similarities and differences. For instance, the notion of the relatedness of grammar to logic and law, Ibn Bajja and Ibn as-Sid and Ibn Tumart are major contemporaries to Ibn Rushd. Comparing Ibn Rushd to his contemporaries is a well thought-out strategy since his work only survived in Hebrew and Jewish circles or in Aristotelian terms. Because there are no Arabic texts, it is not the case that Rushd was not an important Muslim figure. Quite the opposite was the case, but his notoriety in the medieval period is because of his work as a jurist. The scholar-politician, *faqih*, were permitted to

⁶ Urvoy, 43

⁷ *ibid*

construct their vision of the world (109). Rushd's legacy was also important to both Christian and Jewish philosophers. As one of the first sources in my research, this work published in 1991 is comprehensive in its scope and provides a well-rounded approach to the study of Ibn Rushd.

The next secondary source consulted, published in 1998, is entitled *Averroes (Ibn Rushd)* and is written in French. Abdurrahman Badawi is an Egyptian scholar known for his understanding of Arab existentialism. He taught at universities in Libya, Kuwait, and Paris and has knowledge of many modern languages as well as Persian, ancient Greek, and Latin. His work includes a biography as well as an explanation of three areas of Ibn Rushd's literature: philosophy, psychology, and cosmology.

Badawi situates Ibn Rushd politically, mentioning his journeys between Cordova, Seville, and Marrakech. He does not so much emphasize the Almoravid or Almohad; however, there is a fair assessment of Ibn Rushd's presence in Africa. This is important because in many sources, beyond Fakry and Urvoy, Ibn Rushd was exiled to Marrakech and died shortly thereafter. Badawi lists a few reasons, political and textual, why Rushd fell out of favor with the Sultan, such as his non-acceptance of some stories in the Quran, and appealing to the Berbers.⁸

The next source is *Ibn Rushd's Contribution to an Aristotelian tradition*. It was written in 1999, after the previous sources, and it is focused toward those in a philosophy department. It is edited by Gerhard Endress and Jan A. Aertsen as the culmination of a series of conferences held in Fes, at Harvard, and in Cologne on Ibn Rushd's life and intellectual history. The focus is

⁸ Badawi, 14

on Ibn Rushd's life and works in relation to the Hellenistic tradition and in Latin literature and philosophy. This work aims to piece together the history of Ibn Rushd using primarily his writings in Hebrew, and Latin, and on other histories and writings in Greek, Arabic and Latin. The emphasis is on his life, relating Rashd's title as a jurist more to a Muslim tradition, and his work as a scientist to an Aristotelian tradition. As noted by Urvoy, he did practice physics to both gain independent insights and to create the most charitable reading of Aristotle's physics and astronomy. Therefore, these two books differ in methodology of reconstructing the life of Ibn Rushd: Urvoy presents his unique thought and commentary while the Endress and Aertsen volume is constructed through his adherence to Aristotelian science.

“Conspicuous by his absence: Averroes’ place today as an interpreter of Aristotle” by Steven Harvey who received his PhD at Harvard in Jewish philosophy and Medieval Islamic intellectual history, is one of the essays in the Endress and Aertsen volume. A historian and philosopher by training, Harvey is particularly speaking to historians and philosophers in the Greek tradition. He states that Greek historians and philosophers study Aristotle to understand ancient civilization, finding it curious that many do not read ancient Greek, Arabic or Latin, and that they solely focus on the works of Aristotle, which can be very esoteric. His essay argues that there is a gap in understanding the intellectual history especially since few medieval interpreters of Aristotle are included in the contemporary study of Aristotle. Harvey does not incorporate Ibn Rushd's original contributions to philosophy and relies solely on him as a “commentator.”

The inclusion of Ibn Rushd into the history of Western philosophy is very important, as he is a significant one; however, this article does not situate him geographically or politically. Because he only placed in relation to Aristotle, his intellectual contributions is diminished within the intellectual history. Given that Harvey studies Jewish philosophy as well, Ibn Rushd's contribution to Jewish intellectual history would have been an invaluable addition to this volume.

The next source, published in 2001, is entitled, *Averroes Ibn Rushd*, by Majid Fakry. The author of many books on the history of Islamic philosophy, and a professor of philosophy, he does situate the intellectuals that he studies in a political and historical framework to give more meaning to their ideas. Fakry teaches at the American University in Beirut, and was formerly a lecturer at SOAS and UCLA. He begins by identifying important intellectual centers before and during Ibn Rushd's time. The 11th century philosophical thought was becoming less prominent in the eastern Islamic regions, but this time in eastern regions philosophy was flourishing. The reign of Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Rahman began a study of mathematical and juridical subjects which later gave rise to the study of 'ancient sciences'.⁹ Cordova at this time began to rival Baghdad as the center for learning.

Notably, this author states that the mathematical and juridical studies gave rise to the study of ancient sciences, including Aristotle's physics and astronomy. Until this point, the importance of the study of jurisprudence and mathematics was stated to be important ways in which knowledge was enacted in society, but there was less of a causality between studying law

⁹ Fakry, xi

and being able to study ancient sciences. Fakry's version intertwines the two fields of study together, which is important. Other works have devoted separate chapters, and entirely separate frameworks, for these two studies. The incorporation of both gives more verisimilitude to Ibn Rushd studies, as his intellectual pursuits were probably not as disjointed as they appear because of a separation of scholarly departments in contemporary study. But Fakry's work undervalues the role that North Africa had as a center of knowledge because there were many cities that intellectuals travelled between during this time.

Fakry also talks about the history of Greek thought in that of Islam. During the Abbasid period Baghdad, the capital inherited from Alexandria and Athens, became the cultural center of the world because of the number of scholars, scientists, and theologians converged there from all over the world..¹⁰ What is most powerful about this history is that it is strikingly different than the history of philosophy often taught in Western schools, and it is more complete as well. This history also reinforces the importance of the region of Spain and North Africa as the successor to this intellectually rich history.

Fakry again articulates the history of intellectual centers, now adding that in the fifth and sixth century, before the Abbasid caliphate the centers of learning were in Jundishapur, Endessa, Nisibin, and Antioch..¹¹ At this time there were only a few Greek works translated and in circulation, including the *Timeaus* by Plato and Aristotle's logical works. These centers of the fifth and sixth century B.C.E. incorporated ideas and philosophies of India and Persia.

¹⁰ Fakry, x

¹¹ Fakry, 130

Acknowledgement of these centers of learning is important for the study of the history because oftentimes when they are isolated and comparatively studied, it provides grounds to articulate a history of hierarchy which in reality may not have existed in history, but justifies contemporary hierarchies. So Fakry's inclusion of these centers is important for the study of intellectual history more broadly.

Fakry uses this as a launching point to speak of Ibn Rushd's contributions to the beginning of Latin Scholasticism. He reiterates that Ibn Rushd's works have survived and are available to us in Hebrew, Latin, and Arabic.¹² However, this is in contrast with Lerner's (1974) description on the state of textual evidence of Ibn Rushd's writing in his translation. Another interesting dissimilarity in the secondary literature is that of Joseph Ben Abba Mari of Naples, a Jewish scholar and translator, who translated Ibn Rushd's work for Frederick II., King of Prussia. He was a prominent leader and that Ibn Rushd's works were translated for him shows the significance of the philosopher. . Both could have happened; however, it would be interesting to check the evidence here, but the reference to Ibn Rushd's sons and their contact with Frederick II seems speculative. The evidence is that Frederick II had knowledge of Ibn Rushd so perhaps his sons may have known Frederick II. The Jewish translations paved the way for the Latin translations, and they were translated in the thirteenth century. Their introduction began a revival of philosophy in Western Europe.¹³

¹² Fakry 131

¹³ Fakry, 133

In particular Fakry does a good job of situating Ibn Rushd's work *Decisive Treatise* by showing first that the Almoravids encouraged the study of the Maliki legal creed (*madhhab*) and the study of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) but prohibited the study of theology. The Almohads, and its founder Ahmad Ibn Tumart, introduced the study of theology (*kalam*) to North Africa and Spain and this opened the way for the study of philosophy and ancient sciences.¹⁴ In this way, Ibn Rushd was interested in the ways philosophy, science, and theology intersected. As Urvoy noted, Rushd's family was prominent in Almoravid and Almohad society, and therefore Ibn Tumart was influenced both. He was interested in how reason can join *kalam* and philosophy. In *Decisive Treatise* he showed how the differences between *kalam* and philosophy could be bridged by defining rational deduction as distinct from juridical reason. Fakry distinguishes jurisprudence and philosophy within the subject of reason. However, he does not make this distinction within the life of Ibn Rushd, and both of these fields together informed his philosophy. There was likely some fluidity between Ibn Rushd's study and the ideals.

Fakry also articulates the role that the Quran plays in interpreting Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and other works on celestial bodies and movement. Fakry specifically focuses on the idea of Aristotle's 'unmoved mover' that puts all of the other objects into motion. Ibn Rushd is particularly interested in the unmoved mover because of the Quranic conception of God as the all-knowing, all powerful creator of the universe.¹⁵ It is important that Fakry notes the literature and religiosity that Ibn Rushd uses in his interpretations of Aristotle and also how

¹⁴ Fakry, xii

¹⁵ Fakry, 55

the 'ancient science' influences his views on jurisprudence and reason. This theme was also brought up by Urvoy who situated Ibn Rushd's thought socio-politically, and explained Ibn Rushd's experience with stargazing that assisted in interpreting Aristotle. Here, we have the view that the Quran also influences his thought and writings. Both are important, but Fakry does not incorporate Marrakesh and Fez in North Africa into his study of Ibn Rushd as completely as Urvoy, which situates Ibn Rushd more with Muslim Spain. However, Fakry's situation of jurisprudence and philosophy together articulates a more robust history that includes Aristotelian and Islamic sources together.

The philosophy of Ibn Rushd is our next source. Published in 2010, it is a brief overview of Ibn Rushd's life and intellectual history. It is written by Ehsan Ashraf, who has published books on many works of Arabic philosophers. Ibn Rushd is portrayed as reacting to both Aristotle, and philosophers like al-Ghazali. Ashraf situates Ibn Rushd only within Spain, and mentions that when in Seville he becomes Qadi, or judge.¹⁶ He also states that Ibn Rushd's exile resulted from trying to reconcile the Quran with Aristotelian philosophy. It is written in the same difficulty of language, so I am unsure if it is reaching a new audience. The author also states that to write about Ibn Rushd, one must be as smart as him. And this was a lot of self-praise without delivering any further research on Ibn Rushd.

The next source is *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century*. It was published in 2011, and is the most recent source consulted for this historiography. The editors include Peter Adamson, Charles Burnett, Jill Kraye, and Will Ryan. Charles Burnett

¹⁶ Ashraf, 1

contributed essay considering Emperor Fredrick and Ibn Rushd's sons considered earlier. Peter Adamson is a professor of ancient and medieval philosophy and Jill Kraye, who holds a PhD in History from Columbia, focuses on Renaissance philosophy and writes historical essays on major philosophical works.

This collection of essays seeks to revise the thesis that the twelfth century saw a decline in philosophy. This may have arisen because of the decline of Baghdad as a center of learning; however, more research into the nature of this claim could lead to interesting results. The authors seek to develop a more nuanced view of Ibn Rushd. This history was written to show the varied field of Arabic philosophy between the 6th to 12th century and to prove that it was flourishing and not in decline.

In this book, the authors primarily speak of the Iberian Peninsula as the location where Arabic philosophy was taking place, mostly ignoring Africa's role in this tradition.¹⁷ This volume also considers the Hebrew lineage of Ibn Rushd. I will focus on the chapter, "Jewish philosophy on the Eve of the Age of Averroism: Ibn Daud's Necessary Existence and His use of Avicennian Science" by Resianne Fontaine and Steven Harvey. These authors focus on both Jewish Philosophy and Arabic philosophy and have published many books and articles in this field.

The authors state that Maimonides praised the work of Ibn Rushd and influenced the translation of Ibn Rushd's work into Hebrew. The authors do not go into a background of Maimonides; however, he was one of the most learned scholars in Jewish Torah and was a

¹⁷ Argano, 3

renowned philosopher. He was born in Cordova in the Almoravid dynasty, and died in Egypt. He worked as a philosopher, rabbi, and physician in Morocco and Egypt. Maimonides' citation of Ibn Rushd was the first known reference to him in Jewish literature. He stated that Aristotle is the basis of all knowledge; however, one must read Ibn Rushd and Alexander of Aphrodisias, another commentator on Aristotle.¹⁸ The authors argue that this assertion led to the translation of Ibn Rushd's texts into Hebrew. And he became the medium to learn Aristotle, proven by the fact that all of Rushd's texts were translated, yet only three of Aristotle's.¹⁹ The authors mention the unmoved mover as explained in Badawi's work earlier, or as they term the "necessary existent." The authors state that Ibn Sina was seen to deviate too far from Aristotle's ideas and therefore was not widely accepted in the Jewish intellectual tradition.²⁰ Ibn Daud was seen as influencing Maimonides, so much so as to form his intellectual path. They then draw the conclusion that without Ibn Daud, Ibn Rushd would not have been so popular in Jewish thought.²¹ The history in this chapter is very informative, as well as its linking of the influences on the intellectuals and their cross-cultural references.

The last scholar weighing in on Ibn Rushed is Muhammad Abid Jabri. He speaks of the misconceptions and ahistorical conceptions that have been misshaping Arab consciousness to present, and he focuses in part on Islamic Philosophy. He states,

"The Arab-Islamic Philosophy, on of the fragments of this history, is the first victim of those conceptions. It's story was always written outside of its own history, the one it contributed to construct... The medieval Arabic-Islamic society, a whole that encompasses the economic, the social, the cultural, the

¹⁸ Adamson, 215

¹⁹ ibid

²⁰ Adamson, 226

²¹ Adamson, 227

religious aspects etc. We must therefore look at philosophy within the framework of this unity. And in light of its contradictions and its conflicts if we really want to write its story within history itself' (48).

He states this in part for the political reason of bringing more peace. He believes that returning to the rationalist thought of thinkers like Ibn Rushd will help the area maintain modernity. He says that the early translations of Aristotle into Arabic done by philosophers like Ibn Rushd were likewise part of this project to maintain the state against Gnosticism. In this way Ibn Rushd's philosophy and commentaries on Aristotle are inherently political. I think situating the translations of Aristotle and showing how they relate to state formation in the Almohad Empire is the most important contribution made by Muhammed Abid Jabri because oftentimes Ibn Rushd is studied as either a jurist or a philosopher and here the motives become clear. He is very much a rationalist and not only agrees with Ibn Rushd's philosophy but also believes that it is the best way to maintain a state. He is clearly against Avicenna or Ibn Sina and the Abbasid Empire's ideologies. This ties into the history of Ibn Rushd being ostracized as a philosopher in his later life during the decline of intellectual tradition. Abid Jabri seems to think if Ibn Rushd's thinking were still in effect that this would have been different. Also notable is that Ibn Rushd's thinking was also in line with that of the Almoravid Empire because of his lineage. Thus, maybe this was the reason that Muhammad Abid Jabri did not necessarily correlate Ibn Rushd's thinking specifically with any one empire, but as a tool for state formation.

Overall there is a large gap in Western philosophy departments when it comes to African philosophy although there are many rich sources of African philosophy, of which this Masters thesis only covers a very small amount. This has come to be in part because of the belief that only writing holds logical thought and as a result of studying philosophers outside of

the context of their history. I hope that this thesis offers others more curiosity about why African philosophy is not taught and how it could be taught in the future. I also hope it highlights the creative work that philosophers from the continent have been doing on African philosophy.

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