Values for Arabic-Script Orthographies

'A language is a dialect with a script'
(scripts divide!)

- cf. 'A language is a dialect with a navy' (Hindi-Urdu, Serbo-Croat)
- politically important
- potentially divisive
- a most exclusive medium
  ... because purely symbolic/arbitrary (cf. a language with loan-words, a digital medium mimicking print, or an image which is partially iconic)

'Religious necessity is the mother of orthographic invention ...'
(scripts are often religious!)

- (Hieroglyphics, Cyrillic, Arabic Script, SIL ...)
- Police visits because of AS, not language!
- Cameroonian Fulani lady learning AS AIDS booklet!
- choice of [arab], [latn], [cyrl], [deva] etc. is a major religio-cultural issue, not just a pragmatic one!

Arabic script is sacred
(so don't mess with it!)

"Arabic language is the receptacle of Islamic Culture. It is the ideal instrument of knowing the tenets of the true religion of Islam and understanding its rules, since it is the sole language in the world that is inextricably linked to religion. Arabic language is the language of Islam, for it is the language of the Holy Qur'an, the language of the Hadith of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the language of his pious followers, who made the history of Islam, conquered countries and spread the righteous religion there. It is furthermore the language of the Arab and Islamic heritage whose big edifice was built by the unrivalled scholars and thinkers of the Ummah. Most of these men did not have Arabic as mother tongue. But this fact did not prevent them from writing books in Arabic, and from excelling in thought and creation of the Islamic civilization through the gems they have compiled." (ISESCO)

Arabic script is magical
(so transliterate auspiciously … and 'think before you ink!')

"Magical Islam … uses individual Arabic letters to chase away evil and jinn. Arabic letters can be written disconnected on talismans and amulets, which is believed to increase their power, as every letter represents it's own intrinsic force, and behaves as a unique and living field of energy. The famous Islamic magican Al-Buni maintained Arabic letters have their own kingdoms, their own traditions and their own secrets. Each letter has it's own servants and it's own rulers and he deems them "a nation amongst nations". He also maintains that one should not use them in magic if one does not know their meaning. Each letter of the Arabic script has it's particular power derived from being linked to the four elements, to the heavens and the lower worlds, to numbers and to either light or darkness. The letters of light for example produce love and unity, while the letters of darkness generate hatred and war. Hence, each letter is used for a specific purpose, against specific diseases and for or against certain jinn. Muslim alchemists and magicans indicated for example that the letter Aleph is connected to the beginning of creation. It is supreme because it's origin is in the Divine Name of Allah himself. All of this reminds us that 'in the beginning was the word' " http://www.theartofislamichealing.com/the-magical-powers-of-arabic-letters/

Historic innovations

ث for Hausa /c/, perhaps as a combination of ت and ش, and now used in the country that calls itself تشاد

ض for Hausa /l/, presumably a phonological choice under a dialectal influence (obsolete)

ظ for Hausa /ts/

ْو for Kanuri /ə/

عَ for Kanuri -/a/ suffix

Vowel length for Kanuri tone marking!

Colonial

پ for Hausa /p/, under Persian influence (obsolete)

گ for Hausa /g/, under Persian influence (obsolete)

Recent proposed missionary innovations

Ligatures (e.g. كﭖ for /kp/, مﺑ for /mb/ in the Chadian national alphabet)

Qur'anic diacritics for tone-marking

ٔ *hamza* for glottalisation or implosive articulation

ًٌٍ *tanwin* (in Arabic, indefiniteness marker) for nasalisation

وٓ for /o/ and يٓ for /e/

ٰ for a vowel length between ٓ and lٓ

ے *yeh barree* for a different quality of consonant

˘ carets and ˆ circumflexes to modify consonants as *nukat*

˘ carets, ˆ circumflexes and � rotated and inverted *damma* for /o/ and /ɔ/

Recommendations

Follow:
- historic traditions, even when they are descriptively inadequate (e.g. Hausa وُ for /o/ and /ū/ [the current team add اٟ to distinguish])
- etymological spellings wherever necessary (don't insist on a phonemic representation of the spoken form)
- proper use of typographical marks (e.g. ◌ end of aya numbers verses at the end, not the beginning; ﴾ ﴿ ornate brackets are for citation not parenthesis)

Consider:
- points of contact (e.g. /g/ is represented by ق in Egyptian and Chadian Arabic, but غ in Kanuri and Hausa)
- sectarian preferences (e.g. Hausa Sufi Warsh وفى vs. Sunni Hafs فقن)

Avoid:
- redefining characters to a value they don't have in Arabic (ISESCO recommend instead digraphs and modifications)
- characters whose use is defined by the grammar or history of Arabic (e.g. ة taa marbutaa, ى alif maksuraa, ◌ dagger alif)
- modifications from other regions just because they're available in Unicode
- Qur'anic reading signs (e.g. ۩ sajdah)

Recommendations

- Be extremely conservative in every way!

- Be more loyal to the written form than to the spoken!

- Do care about appearances!
  (This is the graphic counterpart to *naturalness* in translation, and may in the case of AS be more important than *accuracy* (descriptiveness) and *clarity* (economy and consistency))

Remember we are accountable to history for our decisions!