

# From Dust to Digital

Ten Years of the  
Endangered Archives Programme



EDITED BY MAJA KOMINKO

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From Dust to Digital  
Ten Years of the  
Endangered Archives Programme

*Edited by Maja Kominko*



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# Contents

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Acknowledgements	ix
List of illustrations	xi
List of recordings	xxix
Notes on contributors	xxxix
Introduction	xxxvii
<i>Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin</i>	
Preserving the past: creating the Endangered Archives Programme	xxxix
<i>Barry Supple</i>	
The Endangered Archives Programme after ten years	xliii
<i>Anthea Case</i>	
What the Endangered Archives Programme does	xlvi
Crumb trails, threads and traces: Endangered Archives and history	xlix
<i>Maja Kominko</i>	
PART I. INSCRIPTIONS	
1 The “written landscape” of the central Sahara: recording and digitising the Tifinagh inscriptions in the Tadrart Acacus Mountains	1
<i>Stefano Biagetti, Ali Ait Kaci and Savino di Lernia</i>	
PART II. MANUSCRIPTS	
2 Metadata and endangered archives: lessons from the Ahom manuscripts project	31
<i>Stephen Morey</i>	

3	Unravelling Lepcha manuscripts <i>Heleen Plaisier</i>	67
4	Technological aspects of the monastic manuscript collection at May Wäyni, Ethiopia <i>Michael Gervers and Jacek Tomaszewski</i>	89
5	Localising Islamic knowledge: acquisition and copying of the Riyadha Mosque manuscript collection in Lamu, Kenya <i>Anne Bang</i>	135
6	In the shadow of Timbuktu: the manuscripts of Djenné <i>Sophie Sarin</i>	173

### PART III. DOCUMENTARY ARCHIVES

7	The first Gypsy/Roma organisations, churches and newspapers <i>Elena Mariushakova and Veselin Popov</i>	189
8	Sacred boundaries: parishes and the making of space in the colonial Andes <i>Gabriela Ramos</i>	225
9	Researching the history of slavery in Colombia and Brazil through ecclesiastical and notarial archives <i>Jane Landers, Pablo Gómez, José Polo Acuña and Courtney J. Campbell</i>	259
10	Convict labour in early colonial Northern Nigeria: a preliminary study <i>Mohammed Bashir Salau</i>	293
11	Murid Ajami sources of knowledge: the myth and the reality <i>Fallou Ngom</i>	331
12	Digitisation of Islamic manuscripts and periodicals in Jerusalem and Acre <i>Qasem Abu Harb</i>	377

### PART IV. PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES

13	A charlatan's album: <i>cartes-de-visite</i> from Bolivia, Argentina and Paraguay (1860-1880) <i>Irina Podgorny</i>	417
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14	Hearing images, tasting pictures: making sense of Christian mission photography in the Lushai Hills District, Northeast India (1870-1920) <i>Kyle Jackson</i>	445
15	The photographs of Baluev: capturing the “socialist transformation” of the Krasnoyarsk northern frontier, 1938-1939 <i>David Anderson, Mikhail S. Batashev and Craig Campbell</i>	487
16	Archiving a Cameroonian photographic studio <i>David Zeitlyn</i>	531
PART V. SOUND ARCHIVES		
17	Music for a revolution: the sound archives of Radio Télévision Guinée <i>Graeme Counsel</i>	547
18	Conservation of the Iranian <i>Golha</i> radio programmes and the heritage of Persian classical poetry and music <i>Jane Lewisohn</i>	587
19	The use of sound archives for the investigation, teaching and safeguarding of endangered languages in Russia <i>Tjeerd De Graaf and Victor Denisov</i>	617
	Index	635





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# List of illustrations

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1.1	Map of the Tadrart Acacus and the central Saharan massifs. First published in Stefano Biagetti, Ali Ait Kaci, Lucia Mori and Savino di Lernia, "Writing the Desert: The 'Tifinagh' Rock Inscriptions of the Tadrart Acacus (South-West Libya)", <i>Azania</i> , 47.2 (2012), 153-74 (p. 170).	2
1.2	Map of the Tadrart Acacus with the sites recorded for the Endangered Archives Programme sorted by significance (adapted from Biagetti et al., 2012).	14
1.3	An example of Tifinagh inscription, site 09/87B (EAP265/1/87B). Photo by R. Ceccacci, CC BY.	15
1.4	The <i>Basmala</i> inscription from site 09/67.	16
1.5	Site 09/73 features the toponym of Teshuinat (TŠWNT).	17
1.6	Graph illustrating the significance and context of Tifinagh sites.	20
1.7	3D view of the <i>aqba</i> of <i>wadi</i> Tasba on the western escarpment of the Tadrart Acacus (map from Google Earth).	21
1.8	Site 09/74, close to the <i>guelta</i> of <i>wadi</i> Bubu (EAP265/1/74). Photo by R. Ceccacci, CC BY.	22
1.9	Etaghas Ti-n-Lalan (map from Google Earth, adapted from di Lernia et al., 2012).	23
1.10	Site 09/73, Ti-n-Anneuin, vandalised in 2009 (EAP265/1/73). Photo by R. Ceccacci, CC BY.	26
2.1	Iftiqar Rahman photographing the <i>Phe Lung Phe Ban</i> paper manuscript belonging to Hara Phukan. Photo by Poppy Gogoi, CC BY.	34
2.2	The <i>Phe Lung Phe Ban</i> cloth manuscript belonging to Tileshwar Mohan (EAP373), CC BY.	37
2.3	The <i>Phe Lung Phe Ban</i> manuscript belonging to Hara Phukan (EAP373), CC BY.	38
2.4	Folio 33r of the <i>Khun Lung Khun Lai</i> manuscript belonging to Tulsī Phukan (EAP373), CC BY.	39

2.5	Folio 9r of the <i>Du Kai Seng</i> manuscript belonging to Tileshwar Mohan (EAP373), CC BY.	44
2.6	A page from one of the <i>Ban Seng</i> manuscripts belonging to Bhim Kanta Phukan (EAP373), CC BY.	45
2.7	Folio 6v of the <i>Ming Mvng Lung Phai</i> manuscript belonging to Tileshwar Mohan (EAP373), CC BY.	51
2.8	Folio 1r of a <i>Sai Kai</i> manuscript belonging to Padma Sangbun Phukan (EAP373), CC BY.	55
2.9	Folio 20v of the <i>Nang Khai</i> manuscript belonging to Baparam Hati Baruah (EAP373), CC BY.	58
2.10	Folio 3v of the <i>Nang Khai</i> manuscript belonging to Baparam Hati Baruah (EAP373), CC BY.	59
2.11	Folio 1v of the <i>Bar Amra</i> manuscript belonging to Junaram Sangbun Phukan (EAP373), CC BY.	61
3.1	<i>Prayers to the Choten</i> . Foning Collection (EAP281/1/9), CC BY.	67
3.2	<i>Worship of Ekádoshi</i> . Tamyong Collection (EAP281/3/1), CC BY.	68
3.3	<i>The Legend of the Goddess Queen</i> . Foning Collection (EAP281/1/20), CC BY.	72
3.4	<i>The Legend of Cenrejú</i> . Foning Collection (EAP281/1/6), CC BY.	77
3.5	<i>The Legend of the Goddess Nángse</i> . Foning Collection (EAP281/1/13), CC BY.	79
3.6	Astrological text. Namchu Collection (EAP281/2/1), CC BY.	80
3.7	Astrological text. Foning Collection (EAP281/1/10), CC BY.	80
3.8	Astrological text. Foning Collection (EAP281/1/14), CC BY.	81
3.9	<i>Parkhó Calculations</i> . Foning Collection (EAP281/1/7), CC BY.	82
3.10	Astrological text. Dendrup Adyemnu Collection (EAP281/4/3), CC BY.	84
4.1	May Wäyñi. Treasury building interior with cased manuscripts on pegs. Photo CC BY-NC.	91
4.2	May Wäyñi. Church ambulatory, assembly line set-up. Photo CC BY-NC.	93
4.3	May Wäyñi. Preparing manuscripts in the <i>iqabet</i> for preliminary observation. Photo CC BY-NC.	94
4.4	May Wäyñi. A monk re-stitches a manuscript binding in the church courtyard. Photo CC BY-NC.	96
4.5	May Wäyñi. Particularly vulnerable manuscripts are stored in acid-free cartons. Photo CC BY-NC.	97

4.6	May Wäyni manuscripts. Examples of minimally-prepared parchment showing (a) hairy surface and (b) gelatinisation (EAP526/1/15 and EAP526/1/44), CC BY-NC.	98
4.7	May Wäyni manuscript <i>Sərʿatā qəddase</i> [ <i>Order of the Mass</i> ] showing the structure of the semi-translucent parchment with traces of ruling (EAP526/1/90), CC BY-NC.	99
4.8	May Wäyni manuscript <i>Mäləʾaktä Pawlos</i> [ <i>Letters of Paul</i> ] showing extensive water damage (EAP526/1/56), CC BY-NC.	100
4.9	May Wäyni manuscript <i>Şälotä ʿəṭan</i> [ <i>The Prayer of Incense</i> ] gnawed by rodents (EAP526/1/62), CC BY-NC.	100
4.10	May Wäyni manuscript book boards showing various stages of cover deterioration (a (EAP526/1/4) and b (EAP526/1/1), with sewn repairs to c (EAP526/1/19) and d (EAP526/1/4)), CC BY-NC.	102
4.11	May Wäyni manuscript <i>Arganonä wəddase</i> [ <i>The Harp of Praise</i> ] by Giyorgis of Sagla showing a variety of threads and cords used to connect the book block to the covers (EAP526/1/23), CC BY-NC.	103
4.12	May Wäyni manuscript <i>Qeddus Gädlä Gäbrä Manfäs Qeddus</i> [ <i>The Life of Gäbrä Manfäs Qeddus</i> ] showing sewn repairs to the front book board (EAP526/1/30), CC BY-NC.	103
4.13	May Wäyni manuscript <i>Mäzmurä Dawit</i> [ <i>Psalms of David</i> ] showing loose folios held together by stab-stitching (EAP526/1/61), CC BY-NC.	104
4.14	May Wäyni manuscript <i>Mäshafä Tälmid</i> [ <i>The Book of the Disciple</i> ] showing the ruptures to the original leather covering around the spine of the volume that provide free access to the lacing holes in the boards, holes made for resewing the book (EAP526/1/45), CC BY-NC.	106
4.15	May Wäyni manuscript <i>Dərsanä Mikaʿel</i> [ <i>Homily in Honour of the Archangel Michael</i> ]. Full-page miniatures (EAP526/1/7), CC BY-NC.	108
4.16	A rare fifteenth-century illumination of the Virgin and Child bound between folios 171 and 172 of a seventeenth-century copy of <i>Täʿammärä Maryam</i> [ <i>The Miracles of Mary</i> ] (EAP526/1/41), CC BY-NC.	108
4.17	Drawing of a combined quire structure.	114
4.18	May Wäyni manuscript <i>Orit</i> [ <i>Octateuch</i> ] and <i>Mäshafä kufale</i> [ <i>The Book of Jubilees</i> ] showing low-quality folios used as protective flyleaves (EAP526/1/3), CC BY-NC.	115
4.19	Drawing showing the distribution of flyleaf arrangements in the May Wäyni collection.	116
4.20	May Wäyni manuscript showing straight long stitches on the spine (EAP526/1/89), CC BY-NC.	116

- 4.21 May Wäyни manuscript *Dārsanā Mikāʿel* [Homily in Honour of the Archangel Michael] showing spine lining with a wide strip of leather (EAP526/1/7), CC BY-NC. 118
- 4.22 May Wäyни manuscript *Dārsanā arbaʿtu ʿansāsa* [Homily on the Four Celestial Creatures] showing the endband made of a folded strip of leather (EAP526/1/29), CC BY-NC. 119
- 4.23 Different types of textiles used as lining for the inner side of the manuscript bindings: (a) Indian plain-weave, shuttle-woven fabric (?) – with “*buta*” (Persian) or “*boteh*” (Indian) motif (EAP526/1/18); (b) six narrow strips of plain-weave fabric each with both selvages (EAP526/1/48); (c) tapestry, plain-weave fabric (EAP526/1/37); (d) Indian Masulipatam plain-weave fabric, block-printed (EAP526/1/43), CC BY-NC. 121
- 4.24 Set of iron tools for decorating bindings, CC BY-NC. 122
- 4.25 Tools found on bindings in May Wäyни collection. Straight lines: triple (1- EAP526/1/26), double (2- EAP526/1/37), single (3- EAP526/1/39). Circles: single (4- EAP526/1/4 [Ø≈5 mm]), double (5- EAP526/1/18 [Ø≈5 mm]). Corni-form (6- EAP526/1/4 [18 × 8mm], 7- EAP526/1/44 [17 × 8 mm]). V-form: dotted (8- EAP526/1/11 [5 × 10mm], triple lines (9- EAP526/1/24 [9 × 12 mm]). Almond form: ‘mother of water’ (10- EAP526/1/4 [7 × 10 mm]), ‘palm shape’ (11- EAP526/1/5 [13 × 6 mm], 12- EAP526/1/49 [12 × 6mm]). Diagonal cross: 13- EAP526/1/17 [7 × 7 mm], 14- EAP526/1/11 [8 × 8mm], 15- EAP526/1/5 [10 × 10 mm], 16- EAP526/1/4 [9 × 9 mm], 17- EAP526/1/18 [7 × 7 mm], 18- EAP526/1/87 [9 × 9 mm], 19- EAP526/1/48 [8 × 8 mm], 20- EAP526/1/42 [12 × 12 mm], 21- EAP526/1/11 [8 × 10 mm]. Criss-cross: 22- EAP526/1/7 [4 × 6 mm], 23- EAP526/1/26 [9 × 10 mm], 24- EAP526/1/15 [8 × 8 mm], 25- EAP526/1/18 [9 × 9 mm], 26- EAP526/1/49 [7 × 9 mm], 27- EAP526/1/5 [9 × 10 mm]; 28- EAP526/1/66 [8 × 8 mm]. Grid pattern: 29- EAP526/1/24 [7 × 13 mm], 30- EAP526/1/4 [10 × 15 mm], 31- EAP526/1/41 [12 × 12 mm]. Straight strapwork elements: 32- EAP526/1/3 [5 × 11 mm], 33- EAP526/1/18 [6 × 9 mm]. Wavy lines: 34- EAP526/1/3 [5 × 14 mm], 35- EAP526/1/26 [6 × 15 mm], 36- EAP526/1/1 [4 × 10 mm]. Curve strapwork elements or ‘wave form’: 37- EAP526/1/13 [8 × 10 mm], 38- EAP526/1/15 [6 × 10 mm], 39- EAP526/1/18 [9 × 10 mm], 40- EAP526/1/49 [7 × 10 mm], 41- EAP526/1/22 [9 × 10 mm], 42- EAP526/1/31 [9 × 10 mm], 43- EAP526/1/22 [6 × 10 mm], 44- EAP526/1/41 [7 × 10 mm], 45- EAP526/1/41 [7 × 10 mm]. Rosette motives: 46- EAP526/1/25 [8 × 8 mm], 47- EAP526/1/31 [7 × 7 mm], 48- EAP526/1/46 [7 × 7 mm]. All images CC BY-NC. 124-25
- 4.26 Decorative tooling on the central panels of the leather covering of four manuscripts from May Wäyни (a (EAP526/1/4), b (EAP526/1/16), c (EAP526/1/7), d (EAP526/1/31)), CC BY-NC. 127

- 4.27 May Wäyni manuscript *Zena Sälase* [Narrative Teaching on the Holy Trinity]. Tooled leather binding (EAP526/1/73), CC BY-NC. 128
- 4.28 Tooled leather decoration on the spines of manuscripts (from left to right: EAP526/1/31, EAP526/1/22, EAP526/1/44), CC BY-NC. 129
- 4.29 May Wäyni manuscript *Gädlä Pētros zä-Däbrä Abbay* [Acts of Petros of Däbrä Abbay] showing decoration of the inner side of the cover (EAP526/1/65), CC BY-NC. 130
- 4.30 May Wäyni manuscript showing tooled decoration on the edges of the covers (EAP526/1/52), CC BY-NC. 131
- 5.1 First page of *Sharḥ Tarbiyyat al-aṭfāl* by Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Qaḥṭānī (d. Zanzibar, 1869). Possibly in the author's own hand (EAP466/1/38, image 3), CC BY-ND. 139
- 5.2 *Wiṣayāt Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Sumayṭ ilā 'Abd Allāh BāKathīr*. Spiritual testament from the Zanzibari Sufi shaykh Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ (d. 1925) to his friend and disciple 'Abd Allāh Bā Kathīr (d. 1925), dated 1337H/1918-1919. Possibly in the author's own hand (EAP466/1/99, image 2), CC BY-ND. 140
- 5.3 Example of late *waqf* donation "for the benefit of Muslims". Notebook with compilation of prayers and *adhkār* (Sufi texts for recitation) (EAP/1/106, image 2), CC BY-ND. 147
- 5.4 *Al-Fawā'id al-Saniyya fī dhikr faḍā'il man yantasibu ilā al-silsila al-nabawīyya* [The Benefits of Remembering the Virtues of those Belonging to the Prophetic Lineage], by Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alawī, d. 1203/1788-1789 in Ḥaḍramawt. The inscriptions show the travelling of this particular manuscript, first given as a gift in 1891-1892 and then again in Batavia (Jakarta) in 1946-1947 (EAP466/1/29, image 4), CC BY-ND. 150
- 5.5 *Al-Fawā'id al-Saniyya fī dhikr faḍā'il man yantasibu ilā al-silsila al-nabawīyya*, by Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alawī (d. 1203/1788-1789 in Ḥaḍramawt) (EAP466/1/29, image 6), CC BY-ND. 151
- 5.6 Example of local copying in the nineteenth century. *Alfyya* [The One Thousand, verse of 1000 lines] with marginal commentary by Ibn 'Aqīl copied by Shārū b. 'Uṭhmān b. Abī Bakr b. 'Alī al-Sūmālī in 1858 (EAP466/1/15, image 574), CC BY-ND. 155
- 5.7 *Diwān al-'Adanī* [The Collected Poetry of Abū Bakr al-'Adanī], copied by Sālim b. Yusallim b. 'Awaḍ Bā Ṣafar for Habib Saleh in 1927 [1] (EAP466/1/19, image 2), CC BY-ND. 157
- 5.8 *Diwān al-'Adanī* [The Collected Poetry of Abū Bakr al-'Adanī], copied by Sālim b. Yusallim b. 'Awaḍ Bā Ṣafar for Habib Saleh in 1927 [2] (EAP466/1/19, image 3), CC BY-ND. 158



5.9	Colophon showing the signature of copyist Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Bakrī Kijūma and the date 18 Jumāda II 1352H/8 October 1928. (EAP466/1/58, image 310), CC BY-ND.	160
6.1	Façade of Djenné library. Photo by author, CC BY.	175
6.2	<i>Tārīkh al-Sudan</i> [ <i>History of the Sudan</i> ] manuscript in the library's collection. Photo by author, CC BY.	176
6.3	Manuscripts storage chest in one of the houses in Djenné. Photo by author, CC BY.	177
6.4	<i>Prayers to the Prophet</i> from the Maiga family collection. Photo by author, CC BY.	180
6.5	Two manuscript storage boxes made for the library. Photo by author, CC BY.	183
7.1	Stamp of the Egyptian Nation organisation, Public Domain.	193
7.2	Shakir Pashov as a soldier (EAP067/1/2/4, image 4), Public Domain.	196
7.3	Roma youth preparing a sample of the future alphabet (EAP067/8/1/16), Public Domain.	204
7.4	Shakir Pashov (centre) as a Member of Parliament with voters (EAP067/1/1/14), Public Domain.	207
7.5	Shakir Pashov (centre) with participants at the national conference of the <i>Ekhipe</i> (EAP067/1/1/1), Public Domain.	210
7.6	Shakir Pashov with his wife in Rogozina (EAP067/1/1/13), Orphan Work.	214
7.7	Shakir Pashov as an honoured pensioner (EAP067/1/2/5), Orphan Work.	215
7.8	Shakir Pashov's card identifying him as an "active fighter against fascism and capitalism" (EAP067/1/8), Public Domain.	215
7.9	Obituary commemorating the six-month anniversary of Shakir Pashov's death (EAP067/1/9, image 2), Public Domain.	216
7.10	Obituary commemorating the first full anniversary of Shakir Pashov's death (EAP067/1/9, image 3), Public Domain.	216
8.1	Map of the Valley of Canta, Peru, by Évelyne Mesclier, CC BY.	226
8.2	Cover page of the records of the petition to close down the parish of Pariamarca in the <i>corregimiento</i> of Canta, 1650 (EAP333/1/3/11 image 1), Public Domain.	236

- 8.3 In this letter, Don Gerónimo de Salazar y Salcedo, parish priest of San Antonio de Paríamarca, explains that because of the fire that destroyed the textile mill of Paríamarca, he requested the closing down of the *doctrina*. Lima, 11 October 1651 (EAP333/1/3/11 image 46), Public Domain. 238
- 8.4 Register of the inhabitants (men, women and youth) of the *doctrina* of San Antonio de Paríamarca, 1650 (EAP333/1/3/11 image 23), Public Domain. 239
- 8.5 In this letter, the protector of the Indians, don Francisco Valençuela, states that the priest of Paríamarca's salary cannot be paid with the proceeds of the Indians' assets. Lima, c. 1651 (EAP333/1/3/11 image 54), Public Domain. 241
- 8.6 Sample page of the census conducted in 1653 by Juan de Escalante y Mendoza showing part of the headcount of the *ayllu* (kin group) Julcan Yumay (EAP333/1/3/11 image 107), Public Domain. 244
- 8.7 Sample page of the census conducted in 1653 by Juan de Escalante y Mendoza, showing part of the headcount of the *ayllu* Allauca Pacha (EAP333/1/3/11 image 113), Public Domain. 245
- 8.8 Sample page of the census conducted in 1653 by Juan de Escalante y Mendoza showing part of the headcount of *reservados*, adult men and women who because of their occupation, age or health were exempted from paying tribute (EAP333/1/3/11 image 106), Public Domain. 248
- 8.9 Cultivated fields in Paríamarca, August 2014. Photo by Évelyne Mesclier, CC BY. 250
- 8.10 A street in Paríamarca, August 2014. Photo by Évelyne Mesclier, CC BY. 253
- 8.11 A view of the town and valley of Canta, August 2014. Photo by Évelyne Mesclier, CC BY. 254
- 9.1 Map of Pacific and Caribbean Colombia, by James R. Landers, CC BY-NC-ND. 262
- 9.2 The Quibdó team examines a notarial register at the EAP workshop. Photo by David LaFavor, CC BY. 265
- 9.3 Notarial Document from Quibdó (EAP255/2). Photo by Quibdó team member, CC BY-NC-ND. 267
- 9.4 Project directors and University of Cartagena student team at EAP workshop. Photo by Mabel Vergel, CC BY-NC-ND. 271
- 9.5 Endangered ecclesiastical records from the Iglesia de Santa Cruz de Lórica, Córdoba. Photo by Cartagena team member, CC BY-NC-ND. 273

- 9.6 Students learn to film endangered records at Vanderbilt’s digital workshop at the University of Cartagena. Photo by David LaFevor, CC BY. 273
- 9.7 Cathedral of San Jerónimo de Buenavista, Montería, Córdoba. Photo by Mabel Vergel, CC BY-NC-ND. 274
- 9.8 Baptism document of Maria Olalla, San Jerónimo de Buenavista Cathedral, Montería, Córdoba (EAP640). Photo by Cartagena team member, CC BY-NC-ND. 275
- 9.9 *Nova et Accurata Brasiliae Totius Tabula* made in 1640 by Joan Blaeu. Note the Capitania de Paraíba, highlighted on the northeastern coast. Ministério das Relações Exteriores do Brasil, Public Domain (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blaeu1640.jpg>). 277
- 9.10 Map of Paraíba, highlighting São João do Cariri in the interior and João Pessoa on the coast, created by Courtney J. Campbell, CC BY-NC-ND. 278
- 9.11 Students from the Universidade Federal da Paraíba filming ecclesiastical records from Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri (EAP627). Photo by Tara LaFevor, CC BY. 280
- 9.12 *Sesmaria* (land grant) document from Paraíba (EAP627). Photo by Courtney J. Campbell, CC BY-NC-ND. 281
- 9.13 *Sesmaria* document from Paraíba (EAP627). Photo by Paraíba team member, CC BY-NC-ND. 282
- 9.14 Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri Church (EAP627). Photo by David LaFevor, CC BY. 283
- 9.15 *Book of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths, 1752-1808*, from Paróquia de Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri Paraíba (EAP627). Photo by Paraíba team member, CC BY-NC-ND. 284
- 9.16 *Book of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths, 1752-1808*, from Paróquia de Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri Paraíba (EAP627). Photo by Paraíba team member, CC BY-NC-ND. 285
- 10.1 *Kitāb tārīkh Zazzau [A History of Zazzu or Zaria Emirate]* by B. Ulama-i, 1924. Digitised handwritten Arabic document (EAP535/1/2/3/2, image 2), Public Domain. 296
- 10.2 Digitised original file description written in English on an Arabic document by Sultan Muhammad Bello, n.d. (probably 1954-1966). The National Archives, Kaduna (EAP535/1/2/3/3, image 2), Public Domain. 296
- 10.3 *A Guide to Understanding Certain Aspects of Islam*, by Sultan Muhammad Bello, 1809. The National Archives, Kaduna (EAP535/1/2/3/3, image 3), Public Domain. 297

10.4	<i>Waqar jami-yah</i> by Sheikh Ahmadu ti-la ibn Abdullahi, n.d. (EAP535/1/2/19/20, image 2), Public Domain.	297
10.5	Report on the annual inspection of Zungeru prison by Lieutenant Colonel Hasler, 1906 [1] (EAP535/2/2/5/4, image 7), Public Domain.	301
10.6	Report on the annual inspection of Zungeru prison by Lieutenant Colonel Hasler, 1906 [2] (EAP535/2/2/5/4, image 5), Public Domain.	302
10.7	Report on Bornu Province prisons by W. P. Hewby, 1906 [1] (EAP535/2/2/5/16, image 53), Public Domain.	303
10.8	Report on Bornu Province prisons by W. P. Hewby, 1906 [2] (EAP535/2/2/5/16, image 54), Public Domain.	304
10.9	Document from the Niger Province annual report on cotton production for 1911 by Major W. Hamilton Browne, 1912 (EAP535/2/2/11/18, image 58), Public Domain.	311
10.10	Report on the unsatisfactory conduct of the Maaji of Zaria by the District Officer in charge of the Zaria Emirate, Y. Kirkpatrick, to the Resident of Zaria Province, 1921 [1] (EAP535/2/3/6/18, image 20), Public Domain.	316
10.11	Report on the unsatisfactory conduct of the Maaji of Zaria by the District Officer in charge of the Zaria Emirate, Y. Kirkpatrick, to the Resident of Zaria Province, 1921 [2] (EAP535/2/3/6/18, image 21), Public Domain.	317
10.12	Report on the unsatisfactory conduct of the Maaji of Zaria by the District Officer in charge of the Zaria Emirate, Y. Kirkpatrick, to the Resident of Zaria Province, 1921 [3] (EAP535/2/3/6/18, image 22), Public Domain.	318
10.13	Document from "Report September quarter 1911-Kabba Province" concerning constraints on crop cultivation by J. A. Ley Greeves, 1912 (EAP535/2/2/10/32, image 21), Public Domain.	321
11.1	Picture of Ahmadou Bamba taken during the 2012 Mąggal, the yearly celebration of his arrest in 1895. The Arabic verses read as follows: "My intention on this day is to thank You, God; O You, the only one I implore, The Lord of the Throne".	341
11.2	Mbaye Nguirane reading an Ajami excerpt of one of Moussa Ka's poems during an interview with Fallou Ngom on 11 June 2011. Born in 1940 in Diourbel, Senegal, Nguirane is a leading specialist in Sufism, a historian and a public speaker.	347
11.3	This image is the last page of Moukhtar Ndong's Ajami healing and protection manual, <i>Manāfi'ul Muslim</i> (EAP334/12/2, image 19), CC BY.	359

- 11.4 “In the Name of Your Quills and Ink” by the master poet and social critic, Mbaye Diakhaté, written between 1902 and 1954 (EAP334/4/2, image 46), CC BY. 360
- 11.5 A page from Habibou Rassoulou Sy’s *Lawtanuk Barka* [*Flourishing of Baraka*], a genealogy book of the family of *Boroom Tuubaa* (Ahmadou Bamba). Bamba is located in the circle in bold (EAP334/12/1, image 6), CC BY. 363
- 11.6 A work of Ajami art displaying a key Murid maxim: “*Loo yootu jàpp ko* (Seize whatever you reach)” in Mbaye Diakhaté’s “*Yow miy Murid, Seetal Ayib yi La Wër* [You, the Murid, Beware of the Challenges Surrounding You]” (EAP334/8/1, image 29). 364
- 11.7 Photo of a shopkeeper’s Ajami advertisement in Diourbel, the heartland of Muridiyya, taken in June 2009. The Ajami text reads as follows: “*Fii dañu fiy wecciku ay Qasā’id aki band(u) ak kayiti kaamil aki daa*” [Poems, audiocassettes, Quran-copying quality paper and ink are sold here]”. The word *TIGO* refers to a local mobile phone company. 365
- 11.8 A mill owner’s advertisement for grinding grains, including peanuts. The Ajami text reads as follows: “*Ku bëgg wàllu wàlla soqlu wàlla tigadege wàlla nooflaay; kaay fii la. Waa Kër Xaadimu Rasuul* [If you want (your grains) pounded or grinded or peanut butter effortlessly; come here. The People of The Servant of the Prophet (Ahmadou Bamba)]”. Photo taken in Diourbel in June 2009. 366
- 11.9 Shopping for Ajami materials in Touba, Senegal during the 2012 Màggal. 367
- 11.10 Shopping for Ajami materials and Murid paraphernalia in Touba, Senegal, 12 July 2014. 367
- 11.11 An advertisement in Ajami for the mobile phone company Orange in a suburb of the Murid holy city of Touba, 12 July 2014. 368
- 11.12 A public announcement in Ajami and six foreign languages asking pilgrims who attended the 2011 Màggal to turn off their mobile phones when entering the Great Mosque of Touba where Ahmadou Bamba is buried, 11 January 2011. 369
- 12.1 Front page of *al-Jāmi’ah al-Islāmīyah* [*Islamic Union*] newspaper, 27 July 1937 (EAP119/1/12/480, image 1), CC BY. 385
- 12.2 Front page of *al-Liwā’* [*The Flag*] newspaper, 16 December 1935 (EAP119/1/17/2, image 1), CC BY. 386
- 12.3 Front page of *Mira’at al-Sharq* [*The Mirror of the East*] newspaper, on the Balfour Declaration, 2 November 1917 (EAP119/1/24/1, image 1), CC BY. 388

12.4	Front page of <i>al-Jāmi'ah al-'Arabīyah</i> [ <i>The Arab League</i> ] newspaper, on the Buraq uprising, 16 October 1929 (EAP119/1/13/260, image 1), CC BY.	389
12.5	Page three of <i>al-Jāmi'ah al-'Arabīyah</i> [ <i>The Arab League</i> ] newspaper, on al-Qassam unrest, 22 November 1935 (EAP119/1/13/1504, image 3), CC BY.	390
12.6	Front page of <i>al-Iqdām</i> [ <i>The Courage</i> ] newspaper, on political parties, 30 March 1935 (EAP119/1/23/34, image 1), CC BY.	391
12.7	Front page of <i>al-Difā'</i> [ <i>The Defence</i> ] newspaper, on the great strike of 1936, 17 June 1936 (EAP119/1/21/169, image 1), CC BY.	392
12.8	Page three of <i>al-Jāmi'ah al-'Arabīyah</i> [ <i>The Arab League</i> ] newspaper, on the Palestinian press under the Mandate, 3 April 1930 (EAP119/1/13/338, image 3), CC BY.	393
12.9	Damaged page of <i>Filasfīn</i> [ <i>Palestine</i> ] newspaper, 30 December 1947 (EAP119/1/22/1802, image 1), CC BY.	395
12.10	Damaged paper of <i>Bāb sharḥ al-shamsīyah</i> , work on logic, 1389 CE (EAP399/1/23, image 4), CC BY.	397
12.11	<i>Ashraf al-Wasā'il</i> , biography of the Prophet, 1566 CE (EAP399/1/12, image 4), CC BY.	397
12.12	<i>Khālīṣ al-talkhīṣ</i> , on the Arabic language, seventeenth century CE (EAP399/1/42, image 5), CC BY.	398
12.13	<i>al-Wasīlah fī al-Ḥisāb</i> , on mathematics, 1412 CE (EAP399/1/14, image 18), CC BY.	398
12.14	<i>Taṣrīf al-Šāfiyah</i> , on the Arabic language, 1345 CE (EAP399/1/34, image 85), CC BY.	399
12.15	<i>al-Rawḍah</i> , on jurisprudence and matters of doctrine, 1329 CE (EAP521/1/90, image 4), CC BY.	404
12.16	<i>Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl</i> , exegesis, 1437 CE (EAP521/1/6, image 3), CC BY.	404
12.17	<i>Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah</i> , on history, 1542 CE (EAP521/1/26, image 33), CC BY.	405
12.18	<i>al-Nawādir al-Sulṭānīyah</i> , on the history and biography of Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, 1228 CE (EAP521/1/24, image 29), CC BY.	405
13.1	<i>Carte-de-visite</i> from Bernabé Mendizábal to Mr. Comendador Dr. Guido Bennati (EAP207/6/1, images 27 and 28), Public Domain.	419
13.2	Itineraries of Guido Bennati in South America. Map by Samanta Faiad, Dept. Ilustración Científica del Museo de La Plata, CC BY.	421
13.3	Museo de La Plata, c. 1890 ( <i>Anales del Museo de La Plata</i> , 1890), Public Domain.	423

- 13.4 *Carte-de-visite* from Michel-Aimé Pouget (EAP207/6/1, images 29 and 30), Public Domain. 428
- 13.5 “Souvenirs of Bolivia” (from *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 43 (November 22, 1877), p. 316). © CSIC, Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás, all rights reserved. 435
- 13.6 “The Ruins of Pumapungu”, view to the southwest. © Stübel’s Collections, Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde, Leipzig, all rights reserved. 436
- 13.7 “The church of Tiahuanaco”. © Stübel’s Collections, Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde, Leipzig, all rights reserved. 437
- 14.1 Mission Veng Church, c. 1913-1919, Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod Archive, Aijal, Mizoram, India. 450
- 14.2 Challiana, seated second from right, with F. W. Savidge, seated second from left, and others, n.d., British Library (EAP454/16/1), CC BY. 463
- 14.3 Wedding at Mission Veng Church, n.d., British Library (EAP454/12/1 Pt 2), CC BY. 465
- 14.4 Church leaders at Mission Veng Church, 1919, British Library (EAP454/13/22), CC BY. 465
- 14.5 Liangkhaia at Mission Veng Church, 1919, British Library (EAP454/13/22), CC BY. 467
- 14.6 Suaka Lal, Veli and Chhingtei at Durtlang, 1938, British Library (EAP454/3/3 Pt 2), CC BY. 470
- 14.7 “Wives of the Soldiers in Lungleh”, c. 1938, loose photo in J. H. Lorrain’s file, BMS Acc. 250, Angus Library and Archive, Regent’s Park College, Oxford. 470
- 14.8 “Some of the mothers who live in Lungleh”, c. 1938, loose photo in J. H. Lorrain’s file, BMS Acc. 250, Angus Library and Archive, Regent’s Park College, Oxford. 478
- 14.9 Two Mizo nurses in Serkawn, c. 1924, British Library (EAP454/6/1), CC BY. 478
- 15.1 Baluev writing in his journal in Dudinka, 1938. © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia (KKKM 3604), all rights reserved. 492
- 15.2 Map of the Evenki National District. Photo by I. I. Baluev (EAP016/4/1/223). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved. 495

- 15.3 The first camp after crossing the border between Taimyr and Evenkia with all three expedition members: Baluev, Dolgikh and Strulev. © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia (KKKM 3683), all rights reserved. 497
- 15.4 Stakhanovite hunter, Stepan N. Pankagir, on the hunt for squirrels. Uchug, Evenki National District, 17 January 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1264). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved. 504
- 15.5 Prize-winning hunter Ivan K. Solov'ev (a Yakut) shows his award to his wife. Next to her is V. V. Antsiferov. Kamen' Factory, 7 November 1938 (EAP016/4/1/1913). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved. 511
- 15.6 Female hunters. From the left, Mariia L. Mukto and Mariia F. Chapogir hunting for squirrels in the forest. Evenki National District, 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1323). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved. 512
- 15.7 Icefishing with reindeer fat. Evenki National District, 1939. © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia (KKKM 3684), all rights reserved. 513
- 15.8 Geography lesson in grade seven at the Russian School. Evenkii National District, Tura Settlement, January 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1546). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved. 515
- 15.9 The Yakut Nikolai N. Botulu (Katykhinskii) with a polar fox caught in the jaws of a trap. He was from Ezhova, Taimyr National District, but his traps were located in the Evenki National District, 1938 (EAP016/4/1/315). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved. 516
- 15.10 Krasnoyarsk *krai* forest on the border of the Evenki National District, Boguchansk Region, February 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1646). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved. 517
- 15.11 Three modes of transport: reindeer, sleigh and truck. Evenki National District, Tura, 1939. © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia (KKKM 3767), all rights reserved. 519
- 15.12 Evenki hunter Danil V. Miroshko trading furs. The head of the exchange is Luka Pavlovich Shcherbakov. Tura, January 1939. © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia (KKKM 3822), all rights reserved. 519
- 15.13 A reindeer herd with herder from the Reindeer *Sovkhoz* (state farm), NKZ. Evenki National District, February 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1341). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved. 520
- 15.14 Headquarters for the Reindeer *Sovkhoz* (state farm), NKZ. A *chum* (conical tent) is in the foreground, a new home for Evenki labourers in the background. © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia (KKKM 3706), all rights reserved. 521



- 15.15 Yakut tent in Tura in the winter. Evenki National District, Tura settlement, January 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1556). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved. 522
- 15.16 New Year's tree celebration at the secondary school. © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, (KKKM 3759), all rights reserved. 523
- 15.17 Children performing exercises under a portrait of Stalin (a small portrait of the assassinated Bolshevik leader, Sergei Kirov, is behind the teacher's head) (EAP016/4/1/1246). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved. 525
- 16.1 Jacques Toussele with a plate camera in 1965. © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND. 532
- 16.2 Jacques Toussele in 2001. Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND. 533
- 16.3 The studio in 1973 (EAP054/1/123/56). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND. 535
- 16.4 The studio building in 2006. Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND. 535
- 16.5 A street seller (EAP054/1/54/58). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND. 536
- 16.6 Portrait for an ID card (EAP054/1/94/167). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND. 536
- 16.7 Portrait of an elderly man with spear and pipe (EAP054/1/68/125). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND. 537
- 16.8 Portrait for an ID card (EAP054/1/177/24). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND. 537
- 16.9 Portraits for school ID cards. Double exposure on a single negative (EAP054/1/52/144). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND. 538
- 16.10 A photocopy of a print of a man standing, showing how the original negative was cropped (EAP054/1/4/145). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND. 540
- 16.11 Original negative for the print shown in Fig. 16.10 (EAP054/1/50/562). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND. 541
- 16.12 Baptism. Damaged negative (EAP054/1/44/45). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND. 543
- 16.13 Negatives before scanning. Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND. 543
- 16.14 The documentary team at work in Mbouda. Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND. 544

- 17.1 The logo of the Syliphone recording company. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY. 555
- 17.2 Bembeya Jazz National, *Regard sur le passé* (Syliphone, SLP 10, c. 1969). The photo depicts Samory Touré, grandfather of President Sékou Touré, who led the insurgency against French rule in the late nineteenth century. The orchestra's version of the epic narrative in honour of his life earned them great acclaim; when it was performed at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival, held in Algiers in 1969, it won Guinea a silver medal. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY. 557
- 17.3 Ensemble Instrumental de la Radiodiffusion Nationale, *Guinée an XI* (Syliphone, SLP 16, 1970). Guinea's premier traditional ensemble displays the prominence of the *griot* musical tradition, with two *koras* (first and second rows, centre) and a *balafon* (second row, far left). © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY. 558
- 17.4 The *verso* cover of a box set of four Syliphone LPs (Syliphone, SLP 10-SLP 13, 1970), released in recognition of the performances of Guinea's artists at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival, held in Algiers in 1969. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY. 558
- 17.5 Bembeya Jazz National/Horoya Band National, *Concerts des Orchestres Nationaux* (Syliphone, SLP 27, 1971). Political doctrine was reinforced through Syliphone. Here the cover depicts an enemy combatant, his boat blasted, surrendering to the JRDA (*Jeunesse de la Révolution Démocratique Africaine*, the youth wing of the PDG) and the APRG (*Armée Populaire Révolutionnaire de Guinée*). © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY. 559
- 17.6 *Édition spécial de la régie Syliphone. Commémorant le 1<sup>er</sup> anniversaire de la victoire du peuple de Guinée sur l'Impérialisme International* (Syliphone SLPs 26-29, 1971). A box set of four LP discs ("*Coffret special aggression*") released to celebrate Guinea's victory over the Portuguese-led forces which invaded the country in 1970. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY. 559
- 17.7 *Horoya Band National* (Syliphone, SLP 41, c. 1973). Many of Guinea's orchestras featured the band members wearing traditional cloth. Here, an orchestra from Kankan in the north of Guinea wears outfits in the *bògòlanfini* style associated with Mandé culture. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY. 560

- 17.8 Various Artists, *Discothèque 70* (Syliphone, SLP 23, 1971). Tradition and modernity: a compilation of music by Guinean orchestras is promoted by images from local cultural traditions. Here, a Fulbé woman is depicted. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY. 560
- 17.9 The Radio Télévision Guinée (RTG) offices in Boulbinet, Conakry. Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND. 568
- 17.10 Audio reels stored in the RTG's "annexe". Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND. 569
- 17.11 Some of the audio reels were in urgent need of preservation. Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND. 569
- 17.12 Archiving the audio reels and creating digital copies. Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND. 570
- 18.1 Davud Pirnia (on the right) and Rahi Mu'ayyiri (on the left) at the radio in Tehran, c. 1950. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain. 588
- 18.2 Parviz Yahaqqi (on the right) and Bijan Taraqqi (on the left) composing a song for the *Golha* programmes. Tehran, late 1950s. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain. 589
- 18.3 Rahim Moini-Kermanshahi (on the right) and 'Ali Tajvidi (on the left) composing a song for the *Golha* programmes. Tehran, mid-1950s. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain. 589
- 18.4 Vigin Derderian, one of the most popular pop singers from the 1950s. He sang several Armenian tunes for the *Golha* programmes. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain. 592
- 18.5 Ali Akbar Shanazi teaching his pupil Pirayeh Pourafar at the Centre for the Preservation and Promotion of Music in Tehran, in 1977. Courtesy of Pirayeh Pourafar, Public Domain. 597
- 18.6 Ghulam Hosain Banan (on the left) and Navab-Safa (on the right) working on a song for the *Golha* programmes. Tehran, late 1950s. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain. 599
- 18.7 Akbar Golpaygani (on the left) and Farhang Sharif (on the right) in the late 1960s. Courtesy of Alireza Mirnaghibi, Public Domain. 602
- 18.8 Left to right: Shaf'i Kadkani, Hushang Ebtehaj and Bastani Parizi. They were all poets whose work was featured in the *Golha* programmes, c. 1970. Courtesy of Alireza Mirnaghibi, Public Domain. 605

18.9	Mohammad Reza Lutfi (on the left) and Hushang Ebtehaj (on the right) in the mid-1970s. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain.	606
18.10	Text of the <i>Golha-yi javidan</i> and <i>Golha-yi rangarang</i> programmes printed in the <i>Radio-yi Iran</i> journal. <i>Majala-yi Radio</i> , 16-17 (1335 A.Hsh./1956), Public Domain.	607
18.11	Faramarz Payvar (on the left) and Hosain Tehrani (on the right), at the Tomb of Hafiz, Shiraz Arts Festival, c. 1970. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain.	610
18.12	Left to right: Turaj Nigahban, Gulshan Ibrahimi and Humayun Khuram. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain.	611
19.1	The Pushkinskii Dom in St Petersburg. Photo by V. Denisov, CC BY.	620
19.2	The phonogram collection in St Petersburg. Photo by V. Denisov, CC BY.	621
19.3	The catalogue of sound recordings in the Pushkinskii Dom.	624
19.4	The sound laboratory in Izhevsk. Photo by V. Denisov, CC BY.	625



# List of recordings

---

- |       |  |     |
|-------|--|-----|
| 17.1  | Orchestre Honoré Coppet, "notitle" (1963), 4'40". SyliPHONE2-068-02. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved.                               | 573 |
| 17.2  | Syli Orchestre National, "Syli" (c. 1962), 4'33". SyliPHONE3-248-3. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved.                                | 573 |
| 17.3  | Balla et ses Balladins, "PDG" (c. 1970), 5'22". SyliPHONE2-089-08. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved.                                 | 573 |
| 17.4  | Orchestre de la Pailote, "Dia" (1967), 3'48". SyliPHONE4-358-10. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved.                                   | 574 |
| 17.5  | Orchestre de la Garde Républicaine 1ère formation, "Sabougnouma" (1964), 4'25". SyliPHONE2-067-02. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved. | 574 |
| 17.6  | Kébedo Jazz, "Kankan diaraby" (1964), 3'20". SyliPHONE2-052-03. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved.                                    | 574 |
| 17.7  | Orchestre Féminin Gendarmerie Nationale, "La bibeta" (1963), 3'41". SyliPHONE4-382-08. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved.             | 574 |
| 17.8  | Syli Authentic, "Aguibou" (c. 1976), 7'04". SyliPHONE2-077-01. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved.                                     | 575 |
| 17.9  | Koubia Jazz, "Commissaire minuit" (1987), 5'40". SyliPHONE4-022-03. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved.                                | 575 |
| 17.10 | Bembeya Jazz National, "Ballaké" (c. 1972), 8'02". SyliPHONE2-091-01. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved.                              | 575 |
| 17.11 | Kouyaté Sory Kandia, "Miniyamba" (c. 1968), 2'24". SyliPHONE4-380-05. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved.                              | 576 |
| 17.12 | Kouyaté Sory Kandia, "Sakhodougou" (c. 1973), 8'26". SyliPHONE3-168-4. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved.                             | 576 |

- 17.13 Mama Kanté avec l'Ensemble Instrumental de Kissidougou, "JRDA" (1970), 4'37". SyliPHONE4-251-12. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved. 576
- 17.14 Fodé Conté, "Bamba toumani" (c. 1978), 3'33". With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved. 576
- 17.15 Les Virtuoses Diabaté, "Toubaka" (c. 1971), 4'22". SyliPHONE4-047-04. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved. 577
- 17.16 Kadé Diawara, "Banankoro" (c. 1976), 4'25". With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved. 577
- 17.17 M'Bady Kouyaté, "Djandjon" (c. 1974), 7'35". SyliPHONE4-322-03. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved. 577
- 17.18 Femmes du Comité Landreah, "Révolution" (1964), 2'54". SyliPHONE3-068-3. Sung in the Susu language. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved. 578
- 17.19 Musique Folklorique du Comité de Guèlémata, "Noau bo kui kpe la Guinée ma" (1968), 2'33". SyliPHONE3-088-3. Sung in the Guèrzé language. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved. 578
- 17.20 Sergent Ourékaba, "Alla wata kohana" (c. 1986), 2'10". SyliPHONE4-755-06. Sung in the Fulfuldé language. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved. 578
- 17.21 Binta Laaly Sow, "56" (c. 1986), 5'01". SyliPHONE4-581-09. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved. 579
- 17.22 Farba Téla, "Niina" (1979), 7'52". SyliPHONE3-097-2. With permission from Sterns Music, all rights reserved. 579
- 18.1 *Golha-yi javidan* 85, broadcast between 1956 and 1959. Public Domain. 591
- 18.2 *Golha-yi rangarang* 158, broadcast between 1956 and 1972. Public Domain. 591
- 18.3 *Barg-i sabz* 23, broadcast between 1956 and 1972. Public Domain. 591
- 18.4 *Yik shakh-i gol* 196, broadcast between 1956 and 1972. Public Domain. 591
- 18.5 *Golha-yi sahra'i* 14, broadcast between 1960 and 1972. Public Domain. 591
- 18.6 *Golha-yi taza* 200, broadcast between 1972 and 1979. Public Domain. 604

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# Introduction

*Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin*

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We would like to thank Lisbet's father, Hans Rausing, whose exceptional capability and great generosity enabled us to fund the Endangered Archives Programme and contribute to the preservation of vulnerable archival collections worldwide.

The keepers of fragile, at-risk archives often do not have the means of preserving them. Faced with conflicts and their aftermath, natural disasters and epidemics, not even governments can afford to secure the survival of their archival heritage. And what of archives in private possession or those in small, struggling institutions? What of the heritage of minorities, whose position may be precarious in any case? What of the heritage of the displaced and the exiled whose archives are no longer understood or seen as relevant by the communities who keep them? It is easy to condemn neglect, but these communities often struggle to preserve their own heritage, let alone the heritage of others that came to them through accidents of history. We cannot expect them to shoulder the burden alone.

Endangered archives are scattered throughout the globe, often unknown or inaccessible. Ensuring that help reaches where it is most urgently needed may be a complex matter. This is why we decided to establish a grant programme allowing those who know of archives in danger to apply for support to digitise them. We chose digitisation because it preserves the content of the archives, even if the physical materials may disappear in the future. Importantly, it enables access to the documents without the need for physical handling that might cause further deterioration.

Access to the materials must be a crucial part of any effort to safeguard the knowledge and memory they contain. Minorities, exiles, the displaced and various first nations who have often been denied access to their own

heritage as a result struggle to maintain their cultural identity. Who could lay claim to rescuing their heritage if we digitise it without making it accessible to them? And we do mean accessible — not only to those who can afford the travel to London but to every member of any dispersed community and to anyone who wants to explore and understand their culture. Digitisation may help to preserve the archives, but without open access the impact of these efforts will be limited.

The digitised collections contain a wealth of historical knowledge. They may not be part of school *curricula* or learned canons, but it is not for us to decide whether they do or do not become part of them in the future. Simply put: if this is the memory of the world, the world needs to be able to access it. We are proud that ten years from its inception, the Endangered Archives Programme has made nearly four million files available through its website. These are nearly four million individual windows into the human past that might otherwise have remained inaccessible or could even have closed forever.

Much of the credit for the wonderful success of the programme should go to the British Library and the programme's team. Their tireless enthusiasm and dedication made it possible to transform the concept into an efficient reality. The global reach and significance of the programme would have been impossible to achieve without the international panel of experts who, over the years, have generously shared their knowledge and assiduously scrutinised applications, making sure that the support is directed where it is most needed. The expertise of the British Library curators helps to ensure that, what could have so easily have become a Borghesian labyrinth, is an accessible and clear archive of archives. We are also grateful to the Advisory Board and to the staff of the Arcadia Fund for their unflinching support, advice and hard work. Most importantly, however, our recognition is due to grantees who took risks and often worked in harsh conditions to ensure that historical materials were preserved. They are the real heroes of the Endangered Archives Programme.

We are grateful to the British Library for agreeing to keep the collections in perpetuity and ensuring that they remain freely accessible. We hope that not all scholarly publications based on these materials will be closed behind paywalls.

# Preserving the past: creating the Endangered Archives Programme

*Barry Supple*

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When Arcadia was established in 2001, Lisbet Rausing was concerned to use its resources to protect and advance knowledge and to establish the means of preserving that knowledge. That aim was based on an appreciation of the importance of academic and professional expertise. But the essence of the fund's purposes was the preservation and enlargement of cultural information and awareness in their broadest senses.

These aims were initially embodied in the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme, which reflected the growing awareness of the threat to a core aspect of human culture. It was designed to support projects to record the nature, structure and use of as many of the world's languages that are threatened by extinction as possible. It exemplified a combination of an overarching central initiative and a responsiveness to approaches and applications by well-qualified experts.

As the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme was being launched, attention turned to a parallel need to act on behalf of a field of knowledge and culture that was also under threat. Historical archives — the essential records of human activity — are subject to the ravages of time, to neglect, to forgetfulness, and to the destructive forces of war and civil unrest. In response to this danger, Arcadia established the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) to ensure that archival material was not only preserved, digitally recorded and retained in its original location where possible, but also safely deposited in more than one location. It embodied a major effort to ensure that knowledge of the past — of human social life in its huge variety — would remain available to the future.



The aims and means of the EAP — its “model” — followed logically on those of the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme. Both were concerned to rescue or maintain culturally significant records. Both focused on a large-scale effort to protect important fields of knowledge. But both were designed to attract individual proposals within those fields rather than depend on direct, detailed initiatives by Arcadia. It followed that both of them respected, and were designed to harness, the efforts and initiatives of a multitude of scholars.

As with the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme, the EAP depended on a panel of international experts to allocate grants to individual scholars and an institution, in this case the British Library, to administer those grants. Given its role and the nature of the EAP, the panel had to be international, experienced and representative of interests and archival knowledge. By the same token, it was composed of historians and archivists of standing, reputation and influence.

Initially, and given the flow of applications for support at an unusually generous and enlightened level, it might have been assumed that the panel’s work would be undertaken straightforwardly within the original parameters of the EAP. It was anticipated that grants would be fairly scrupulously confined to funding the digital recording (and the deposit of those recordings) of archival material (historical written data, photographs and sound recordings) largely derived from pre-industrial societies. Indeed, at the initial stage it was not envisaged that support would be offered to applications concerned with more unconventional archives or the physical preservation/restoration of material generated by advanced societies.

However, as knowledge of the programme spread, applications became more diverse — and in some respects unexpectedly and commendably adventurous. First, panel discussions increasingly focused on the fact that the boundaries between categories of archives are porous and the distinctions sometimes difficult to maintain. At the same time, the EAP came to acknowledge the urgency of the threat to archives that appeared to be outside the original expectations but were no less significant for historical research and the preservation of cultural knowledge.

Quite early on in the history of the EAP, therefore, the panel had to consider proposals to preserve seemingly unconventional material — material concerned with Italian folk songs, for example, or Iranian radio broadcasts between the two world wars, or Chinese tax records. Whatever doubts were entertained were resolved by the quality and intrinsic interest of the data

— which sometimes persuaded an initially sceptical panel. By the same token, some unusually significant archival records from relatively modern periods and developed societies also seemed sufficiently important to overcome a strict interpretation of the programme's original criteria. In effect, the EAP was drawn into a very broad-based appreciation of the worthwhile diversity and multitudinous character of archival records — and the importance of ensuring their survival.

Initially, it was not envisaged that the EAP would support focused work on the physical preservation of material. But it was not always easy to maintain the distinction between preserving by sustaining and copying, and preserving by protecting archives through the acquisition of storage materials and other means of physical maintenance of archives. This was comparable to the fact that the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme, while primarily focusing on the recording of endangered languages, did have an influence on the preservation or extension of their use, even though that was not specified as a direct objective of the scheme.

It is also worth emphasising that the EAP arrived at these extensions or variants of the original guidelines through the detailed consideration of a wealth of empirical situations. That is, the panel learned more about archival issues precisely because it had to consider a wider and deeper range of such concerns than its members' individual experiences may have brought to their attention before the panel was formed. Applicants as well as decision-makers determined the shape and evolution of the programme.

And this is an example of the important fact that in the last resort, it is less the work of the panel than the scholarly efforts and huge commitments of those who were supported by the EAP that will loom large in its preservation of, and therefore contribution to, social and cultural knowledge. This volume offers a relatively small but significant sample of the fruits of all those endeavours, ensuring that the past will be illuminated and that darkness will not obscure history.



# The Endangered Archives Programme after ten years

*Anthea Case*

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Ten years on, the broad objectives of the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) remain unchanged. The EAP continues to bring into the international research domain neglected, vulnerable or inaccessible archival materials relating to “pre-industrial” societies worldwide. It does so by providing relatively small grants to individual researchers to find and copy endangered or vulnerable material.

The reach of the EAP has been global, supporting a remarkable range of dedicated people — not just professional archivists and academics but independent researchers and amateur enthusiasts of the best kind. Some six million pounds in 240 grants has now been given for archives from Argentina to Zambia, for the digital preservation of around 400 manuscripts in Ethiopian desert monasteries, of piles of paper decaying in institutions without the resources to look after them, of boxes of shellac records and early tape recordings and Saharan rock inscriptions. Grants have also led to the discovery of unknown and important archives in private hands, such as manuscripts of the minority Cham people in Vietnam and handwritten records of village customary law in southern India.

All this digitised material is now freely available to academics, individuals and communities, in both local archives and through the British Library website. This volume shows the breadth and quality of the scholarly activity that the EAP has made possible. Its impact, however, goes much further than that.

Against this background it is not surprising that an independent review in 2010, after the first five years, found the EAP to be innovative, worthwhile and successful in the eyes of participating scholars both internationally and

in the home countries of the archival projects concerned. Much of this success reflects two key decisions taken at the start of the programme: to administer it through a world-class institution — the British Library — with a global reach in terms of skills and networks; and to recruit an international panel of experts to guide its decisions on policy and on individual grants. The contributions of the library and the panel have been significant in steering the EAP through the two main challenges we have faced since 2004.

The scope of the programme, originally conceived along conventional lines, has been challenged by applications from the start. The current approach has evolved through pretty continuous discussion at panel meetings about such fundamental questions as “what constitutes an archive” and “what constitutes pre-industrial society”. In practice, there has been a widening of the definition of “pre-industrial” or “pre-modern” in response to the expressed needs in the field, as evidenced by applications and the cases they make for importance and vulnerability. Some risks affect material whatever its age — storm and tempest, political instability — but paper used from the end of the nineteenth century and audio visual materials in the early twentieth century are particularly vulnerable to the ravages of the environment and the innate fragility of the media. The panel’s approach is subtle — there is no single cut-off date. This allows the issues of risk and importance to be judged on their merits in individual circumstances.

The EAP’s focus has always been on access and preservation rather than on conservation. In 2004, worldwide access through the web was not envisaged. The digitised, or in some cases microfilmed, master copies were expected to be viewed in in-country local archives, with back-up copies available to view in the British Library, or mailed to researchers who could not get there.

By 2010, development of the internet and the expectations of scholars had made it clear that the route to dissemination needed to be via the British Library website which was not subject to the vagaries besetting access to material elsewhere, especially in less developed countries. This presented a major challenge. Placing future material online would be relatively easy. Dealing with the material already deposited — approximately 100 projects, a huge variety of subject matter, digitised by different hands — has been more challenging. A single project might produce five terabytes of material, or in one instance, fifteen terabytes. Sound recordings and videos presented further difficulties, but this is being worked on, with the aim of streaming recordings, where rights have been cleared, through the British Library Sounds website.

Curating and cataloguing this has been a huge task for both curatorial and technical staff. But now, this enormous amount of newly digitised material is free to view online via the British Library website. A significant amount of the new material is in a wide variety of non-roman scripts. It will enable new scholarship and new collaborations by both western and non-western scholars and underline the volume and value of writings in other scripts.

More recently, in 2013, the final report from *The Global Dimensions of Scholarship and Research Libraries: A Forum on the Future*, identified the EAP as one of the most promising initiatives in efforts to align research library agendas with globalising scholarship and teaching.

In addition to delivering on its core objectives of preservation and dissemination for the benefit of scholarship worldwide, the EAP has also secured further benefits, in general unforeseen at the start. Perhaps the most important of these is the impact on communities where the archives are sited.

In fulfilling its aim, the EAP builds the capacity for local communities to continue to care for archival sources beyond the life of a project. It does this by preferring to train local people to help deliver projects rather than employ experts from overseas. The equipment is deposited with the archival partner for further use after the project has ended. And the EAP, through the British Library, offers outstanding technical and general support, which is highly valued by those leading projects.

The international status of the British Library and its involvement in the programme has had significant impacts locally. Archives in many developing countries are poorly funded and personnel employed there generally struggle to protect their collections. The involvement of the EAP has meant that governments and universities have been made aware of the value of the materials they possess and have sometimes pledged to develop a strategy for long-term preservation and to enhance their support for archives more generally.

One of the great pleasures of being involved in the programme is to read the final reports, which express profound thanks for saving part of a group's heritage for future generations. This is particularly true for minority groups whose collections are often dispersed in private hands, with much of their heritage already lost. The value of the EAP lies in the fact that it does not remove items from their owners, unless they are happy for this to happen. It therefore overcomes the concerns that people may have about the loss of their material heritage. At the same time, the free open access to the materials through the British Library makes them available to anyone with an internet

connection — this brings to light the material held in remote or unknown archives, and increases the interest of researchers to visit those archives.

Overall, the EAP is generally seen to be working in the interests of local people rather than that of the British Library, which has not often been their historical experience of contact with outside groups. The involvement of the EAP has also raised the esteem of local cultures and their history, and those who have been employed in projects clearly take great pride in being involved. The excitement felt by local people, which emanates from the reports, is both rewarding and humbling.

The work of the EAP is still unfinished. Archives remain at risk from war, theft, natural disasters, climate change, neglect and planned or accidental destruction. Recent events, whether the hurricane which swept through the Philippines in 2013 or the unrest in the Middle East, only serve to underline the continuing importance of the work of the EAP's grantees.

# What the Endangered Archives Programme does

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Once a year for the past decade an eminent panel of nine experts – librarians, archivists and academics – has met at the British Library to consider applications from individuals wishing to preserve vulnerable archival collections worldwide.

The panel awards two types of grants. Pilot grants support initial exploration to locate and assess the state of endangered collections. These projects may serve as preparation for major grants which support the digitisation of collections. The digital images recorded by the EAP projects are deposited with local institutions and the British Library, which makes them available online. To qualify for a grant the material must be potentially significant for scholarship, endangered and from a pre-modern period. Importantly, the panel only awards grants where the resulting materials can be made open to access on the library's website.

So far the Programme has awarded 244 grants worldwide totalling £6m, giving between £500k and £900k each year. It has supported 91 pilot projects and 153 major projects. It has digitised collections endangered by environmental factors, neglect, obsolescence of materials or the vulnerability of the minority groups to whom the materials belong. Among the collections documented are records from the low-lying island of Tuvalu, under threat from rising sea waters, and murals on crumbling temples in India. The programme has digitised photographs taken by Buddhist monks in Luang Prabang, images that provide a unique view of monastic life and that had been forgotten for decades in storage. It has supported digitisation of traditional music and stories recorded on magnetic tapes and phonograph records from the mountains of Azerbaijan. It has also helped to digitise Hakku Patras, historic certificates of rights granted to families from dependant castes, which



allowed them to practice their trade in the villages of Andhra Pradesh in India. Across the programme, the digitally preserved materials range from rock inscriptions to sound recordings, spanning the first millennium BC to the twentieth century, from Chile to Siberia.

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# Crumb trails, threads and traces: Endangered Archives and history

Maja Kominko

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Advocating the opening of the Imperial Archives of France to scholars, their director-general Léon de Laborde, argued in 1858 that government “has no better means to prevent the writing of bad books than to provide scholars with the means to write good ones”, and that opening the Archives would let “the light of history shine from its true source”.<sup>1</sup> The issue of what historians’ sources are and how they should be approached was debated from the beginning of history-writing, perhaps unsurprisingly considering that it underlies the fundamental question of what history is, and why and how it should be written.<sup>2</sup> What constitutes an archive is not always clear-cut: although predominantly understood as a formal repository of official records, the concept is often extended to accommodate more diverse documentary residue of the past.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 Quoted after Jennifer S. Milligan, “The Problem of *Publicité* in the Archives of Second Empire France”, in *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, ed. by Francis X. Blouin, Jr. and William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 20-35 (p. 20).
- 2 Donald R. Kelly, *Faces of History. Historical Inquiry from Herodotus to Herder* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1998); R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Arnaldo Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 152-78; Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012).
- 3 Francis X. Blouin, Jr. and William G. Rosenberg, *Processing the Past. Contesting Authority in History and the Archives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For a critical theory of archives as a locus of authority, see Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive: une impression freudienne* (Paris: Édition Galilée, 1995). For an overview of the theoretical discussion, see Wolfgang Ernst, *Das Rumoren der Archive: Ordnung aus Unordnung* (Berlin: Merve-Verlag, 2002).

The Endangered Archives Programme (EAP), founded to digitise and bring vulnerable documentary materials into the academic domain, belongs to a long tradition of scholarly efforts to find and to publish new pieces of historical evidence. Although not many collections digitised over the first decade of the Endangered Archives Programme can be defined as “archives” in the strictest sense, as we hope this volume shows, this does not make them any less valuable as witnesses of the past.

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In 1707 Elias Assemani, a Maronite priest in the service of Pope Clement XI, was hauled out of the Nile after the boat he travelled on had sunk. The monk who accompanied him drowned, but the 34 Oriental manuscripts they carried were rescued, cleaned, dried and shipped to the Vatican.<sup>4</sup> Assemani acquired these codices in the Deir al-Surian Monastery, which historically was home to Syrian monks in the Egyptian desert. Reports of large collections held by this and several other monasteries in Egypt had reached Europe almost a century earlier, at a time of growing interest in manuscript-based scholarship, development of scientific approaches to codicology and palaeography, and growing interest in the Near East.<sup>5</sup> The latter, largely driven by the region’s association with the Bible, was further fuelled by publication of the great Polyglot Bibles, which combined not only Hebrew, Greek and Latin, but also Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic and Ethiopic texts.<sup>6</sup> The importance of teaching, studying and translating Near Eastern languages increased, and with it the activity of Oriental printing presses in Europe. But accessible textual sources were limited, and it was not long before European scholars and institutions started looking for manuscripts.<sup>7</sup>

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4 *Bibliotheca orientalis Clementino-Vaticana, in qua manuscriptos codices syriacos, arabicos, persicos, turcicos, hebraicos, samaritanos, armenicos, æthiopicos, Graecos, ægyptiacos, ibericos & malabaricos*, ed. by Giuseppe Simone Assemani (Roma: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1719), Praefatio, sec. 7; Brian E. Colless, “The Place of Syrian Christian Mysticism in Religious History”, *Journal of Religious History*, 5 (June 1968), 1-15 (p. 1).

5 Peter N. Miller, “Peiresc, the Levant and the Mediterranean”, in *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*, ed. by Alastair Hamilton, Murits H. Van Den Boogert and Bart Westerweel (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 103-22.

6 Peter N. Miller, “The “Antiquarianization” of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653-57)”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 62 (July 2001), 463-82; *The Republic of Letters*.

7 Columba Stewart, “Yours, Mine, or Theirs? Historical Observations on the Use, Collection and Sharing of Manuscripts in Western Europe and the Christian Orient”, in *Malphono Rabo w-Malphone*, ed. by George A. Kiraz (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008), pp. 603-30.

It seems that it was with Elias Assemani that the “harvesting of manuscripts” from the Orient began in earnest. His first visit to Deir al-Surian Monastery was followed by other expeditions to the Middle East on behalf of the Vatican Library and in the company of his cousin Joseph Assemani, its future librarian. The manuscripts they collected constitute much of the Vatican Library’s Oriental holdings.<sup>8</sup> Other libraries followed suit. For example, the British Library preserves over 500 codices bought from the Deir al-Surian Monastery between 1839 and 1851.<sup>9</sup> The acquisition of Oriental manuscripts continued throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and with the codices put “to noble use”, scholarship on Eastern Christianity, Near Eastern languages and history grew exponentially.<sup>10</sup> The only occasional wrinkle in this process was caused by the Eastern monks’ reluctance to part with their books. This frustrated westerners, who believed the monks had neither intellectual interest in the manuscripts, nor the skills to read and understand them.<sup>11</sup> Rarely did they pause to reflect on why the monks were so unwilling to sell, and if they considered it at all, they wrote it off as result of anathemas placed in the codices against those who remove them from monasteries.<sup>12</sup> The buyers grew cunning: on one occasion Joseph Assemani was careful to procure codices from the superior without the knowledge of the monks, who would have opposed the transaction.<sup>13</sup> The murkiest and most famous of all such stories is that of the acquisition of the *Codex Sinaiticus*, a Greek Bible including the earliest copy of the Greek New Testament, obtained by Constantine Tischendorf in two instalments: 43 loose leaves, which he brought to Leipzig in 1844, were allegedly

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8 *Ricerche sulla formazione del più antico fondo dei manoscritti orientali della Biblioteca Vaticana*. Studi e Testi 92, ed. by Giorgio Levi della Vida (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1939).

9 William Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 (London: [n. pub.], 1872), pp. viii-xxxii. For more general information on western collecting, see Stewart, “Yours, Mine, or Theirs?”, pp. 622-27.

10 Wright, *Catalogue*, 4-5; See also Sebastian Brock, “The Development of Syriac Studies”, in *The Edward Hincks Bicentenary Lectures*, ed. by Kevin J. Cathcart (Dublin: University College Dublin, 1994), pp. 94-113.

11 William George Browne, *Travels in Africa, Egypt, and Syria, from 1792 to 1798* (London: T. Cadell Junior & W. Davies, Strand and T. N. Longman & O. Rees, Paternoster-Row, 1799), pp. 42-43; Charles-Nicolas-Sigisbert Sonnini de Manoncourt, *Voyage dans la haute et basse Égypte, fait par ordre de l’ancien gouvernement, et contenant des observations de tous genres*, 2 vols (Paris: F. Buisson, 1799), pp. 185-216.

12 Wright, *Catalogue*, 4.

13 Wright, *Catalogue*, 7.

recovered from a basket of old parchments, ready to be burned; the bound codex, secured in 1859, was borrowed to present to the Emperor of Russia.<sup>14</sup>

The European buyers' accounts take pains to illustrate that the manuscripts were neither read nor kept in good condition: they were usually piled up in cellars, covered in dust and neglected.<sup>15</sup> Westerners shrank in horror at traces of wax on ancient lectionaries used for liturgy.<sup>16</sup> To take them at their word, had they not rescued the manuscripts, the codices would have perished. Some accounts seem exaggerated; others may be true, but the miserable state of the codices mostly seems due to the fact that the monks had no resources to care for them, rather than to any lack of appreciation. Would the manuscripts have been lost, were they not brought to the west? Possibly some would. Even today the fate of several collections in Syria and Iraq is not known. Yet the travellers' damning statements are belied by the fact that many of the monasteries retain large libraries of manuscripts to this day.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, it is clear that most of the westerners hunted for manuscripts out of genuine scholarly interest. This was not new. In fact, this was how many collections were created in the first place. The Deir al-Surian Monastery's library was greatly expanded through acquisition of manuscripts by the abbot Moses of Nisibis in the tenth century. Notes in several codices document the circumstances of their purchase. In 925, a new vizier sent to Egypt from Caliph al-Muqtadir demanded that monks, who had previously been exempt, should pay the poll-tax. The monasteries of the Egyptian desert elected the abbot of Deir al-Surian as their representative to travel to Baghdad and appeal to the Caliph. It took Moses five years, from 927 to 932, to battle the Abbasid bureaucracy and have the vizier's ruling overturned. It was during these years that he acquired over 250 books, some several centuries old, and brought them back to Deir al-Surian. The arid climate of the Egyptian desert preserved the manuscripts, which are among the oldest Syriac

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14 The latter codex was purchased in 1933 by the British Library. David Parker, *Codex Sinaiticus: The Story of the World's Oldest Bible* (London: British Library, 2010), pp. 127-48.

15 Curzon, in *Visit to the Monasteries*, pp. 23-24, claims to hear a report of monks in Bulgaria who, during a service, stood on old manuscripts in order to protect their bare feet from the cold marble floor of the church. For a description of the lamentable state of the collections in Egypt, see Curzon, *Visit to the Monasteries*, pp. 82, 85-87 and 381-82.

16 Curzon, *Visit to the Monasteries*, pp. 78-82.

17 Bigoul al-Suriany, "The Manuscript Collection of Deir al-Surian: Its Survival into the Third Millennium", in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies. Leiden, 27 August – 2 September 2000*, ed. by Mat Immerzeel and Jacques van der Vliet (Leuven, Paris and Dudley, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters en Departement Oosterse Studies, 2004), pp. 281-94.

codices in the world. It is from this collection alone that we have complete writings of the most famous early Syriac authors, Ephrem and Aphrahat.<sup>18</sup> Moses had acquired the books for the spiritual and intellectual benefit of his community; intellectual benefit to the scholarly community also drove the western buyers. Yet there are differences: Moses was part of the historical community that produced the codices; the westerners were outsiders who believed themselves better equipped to read and interpret Eastern Christian books than Eastern Christians themselves.<sup>19</sup> Unsurprisingly, the monks learned to firmly close the doors of their libraries to visitors from the west. Only gradually did scholars travelling to the Middle East to read, rather than buy, regain Christian communities' trust and obtained access to important and in many cases unknown collections. New catalogues were published both by Levantine and western authors, bringing previously unknown works to scholarly attention.<sup>20</sup> Even so, access remained a problem for very practical reasons. A new effort then began: first to microfilm (from the 1950s), then to digitise (from the 1990s) the manuscripts and make them available without removing them from the libraries where they reside.<sup>21</sup> Importantly, photographic documentation ensures that a record of all codices will be preserved, a significant safety measure considering the difficult history of the Middle East. It also permits us to digitally unite dispersed collections and divided manuscripts such as the *Codex Sinaiticus*.<sup>22</sup> Needless to say, the Eastern Christian manuscripts on which I have focused here, are only one example, a case study, in what has been a much wider phenomenon encompassing and affecting, to various degrees, almost all regions of the globe. Arguably

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18 Sebastian Brock, "Without Mushê of Nisibis, Where Would We Be? Some Reflections on the Transmission of Syriac Literature", *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 56 (2004), 15-24.

19 For a wide-ranging discussion of the Occidental bias of history-writing, see Jack Goody, *Theft of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

20 Arthur Vööbus, "In Pursuit of Syriac Manuscripts", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 37/2 (April 1978), 187-93. For examples of catalogues, see Agnes Smith Lewis, *Catalogue of the Syriac Mss. in the Convent of S. Catharine on Mount Sinai*. *Studia Sinaitica* 1 (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1894); Addai Scher, *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et arabes, conservés dans la Bibliothèque épiscopale de Séert (Kurdistan) avec notes bibliographiques* (Mosul: Imprimerie des pères dominicains, 1905).

21 Kenneth Clark, "Microfilming Manuscripts in Jerusalem and at Mount Sinai", *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 123 (1951), 17-24. For large-scale digitisation projects in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and Ethiopia, see <http://www.hmml.org/our-collections.html>

22 <http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/project/> For the hopes of a digital reunion of the Deir al-Surian collection expressed by Father Bigoul, the monastery's librarian, see *British Library Annual Report 2001-2002* (London: The Stationary Office, 2002), p. 13.

the materials brought to western libraries were accessed and studied by more readers than it would otherwise have been possible. Yet this has come at a price. Leaving aside the difficult issue of how the loss of manuscripts affected their custodians, the removal from their original context led to the loss of entire levels of historical information on collection formation, on traditional use of manuscripts, on their original cultural significance. It is important to note that, at the time when western scholars began their hunt for manuscripts, Europe had long ceased to use manuscripts for intellectual and religious purposes. The availability of printing brought the demise of manuscript literary culture and transformed manuscripts into artefacts, to be protected and studied.<sup>23</sup> The western scholars did not recognise that the link between communities and manuscripts as objects of cultural and religious significance still existed elsewhere.

The rise of manuscript-based scholarship and efforts to gather codices into secure libraries were part of a broader interest in primary documents, increasingly gathered into archives and approached scientifically.<sup>24</sup> These efforts culminated with Leopold Ranke, who in his *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1534* [*Histories of the Latin and German Peoples from 1494 to 1534*] declared his intention to write “how it actually happened” (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*), challenging the status of previous historians as primary sources of history.<sup>25</sup> In 1831 he published a small volume, *Ueber die Verschwörung gegen Venedig, im Jahre 1618* [*On the Conspiracy against Venice in the Year 1618*], on a subject which, as he explained to his publisher, was “distant, complicated ... [and] not a very important matter”.<sup>26</sup> The publication was nevertheless significant: in it, Ranke delivered and described in detail his model of how the historian should work, placing archives at the centre of historical inquiry.<sup>27</sup> Ranke firmly believed that the science of history lay in a strict presentation of the facts; that history could be uncovered from historical documents; and that the task of the historian was not to interpret

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23 Stewart, “Yours, Mine, or Theirs?”, pp. 606-13.

24 Anthony Pagden, “Eighteenth-Century Anthropology and the ‘History of Mankind’”, in *History and the Disciplines: The Reclassification of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Donald R. Kelley (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997), pp. 223-33.

25 Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 4-5. His historical intention was not new. Indeed, Herodotus was already seeking to narrate the real story (*ton eonta logon*) (*History* 1.95.1, 1.116.5).

26 Leopold von Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, ed. by B. Hoefft (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe 1949), p. 158

27 Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen, “Leopold Ranke’s Archival Turn: Location and Evidence in Modern Historiography”, *Modern Intellectual History*, 5/3 (2008), 425-53.

documents, but to give them their own voice. For a century after Ranke, history and archival research became inseparable.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, as historians started knocking on archives' doors in unprecedented numbers, even the most willing archivists began to realise that access was not without problems. Léon de Laborde may have seen it as a noble ideal, but in practice the negotiation between opening the Imperial Archives and retaining the degree of control required by the French government proved complex and quickly resulted in a scandal. *L'affaire d'Haussonville* started with a project initiated by Louis Napoleon to publish the official edition of his uncle's complete *Correspondance*, which Louis hoped would strengthen his own claim to power. In 1867, a prominent historian and admirer of Napoleon Bonaparte, Joseph d'Haussonville, demonstrated that some letters were conspicuously missing from the official "complete" correspondence. He also exposed the politically-biased practices of the Imperial Archives, where his requests for documents that could undermine the state-approved version were increasingly denied or returned with the annotation "not found". As d'Haussonville noted, this begged the question of the government's role in protecting and shaping the nation's memory.<sup>29</sup> The problem of access was not limited to France. Ranke travelled for months to visit archives and invested significant effort in cultivating archivists and powerful patrons who could ease his way into repositories.<sup>30</sup> Other historians in turn had to trust Ranke's personal credibility, since they could not easily verify whether he accurately quoted, ignored or misrepresented important evidence. It soon became apparent that greater transparency was necessary, and as a result German historians began publishing large editions of archival sources, beginning with the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*.<sup>31</sup>

The archives on which Ranke and other nineteenth-century historians depended were mostly the official state or church repositories, believed to

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28 Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote. A Curious History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), pp. 38-50. In France, Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos opened their 1898 methodological textbook, intended for students in historical seminars, with this declaration: "History is done with documents [...] Lacking documents, the history of immense periods of the past of humankind is forever unknowable. For nothing can replace documents: no documents, no history". C. V. Langlois and C. Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (Paris: Hachette, 1898), pp. 1-2.

29 Milligan, "Problem of *Publicité*", pp. 25-28; Stefan Berger, "The Role of the National Archives in Constructing National Master Narratives in Europe", *Archival Science*, 13 (2013), 1-22 (pp. 7-8).

30 Risbjerg Eskildsen, *Leopold Ranke*, pp. 442-46.

31 Grafton, *The Footnote*, pp. 36-72; David Knowles, *Great Historical Enterprises: Problems in Monastic History* (London and New York: Thomas Nelson, 1963).



hold “authentic” records, privileged in the determination of historical truth.<sup>32</sup> Since the introduction of diplomatics in the seventeenth century, historians and archivists had tools to verify the authenticity of records, but the objectivity of the documents themselves, however authentic, was a different issue.<sup>33</sup> To assume that one could objectively reconstruct history from archives, it was necessary to assume that history was objectively recorded in the first place, and that the content of archives was objectively preserved without any bias in what was kept and what was discarded.<sup>34</sup> Gradually, it became clear that such assumptions could not be sustained. Moreover, historians such as Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch and other *Annalistes* moved away from *histoire événementielle* towards broader analyses of the role of social phenomena in historical events, for which the records kept in official archives provided only limited testimony.<sup>35</sup> Some limitations were practical: official state archives only recorded events in which the state bureaucracy was directly or indirectly involved. This meant that entire areas of history were omitted, rendering not only whole swaths of population, but also many events, invisible: for example, any rebellion that escaped repression usually escaped history as well.<sup>36</sup> Increasingly other types of records – parish registers, personal archives, oral histories – came to play an important role, whilst archival documents were analysed not only for what they recorded but how they recorded it and why.<sup>37</sup> At the same time microhistory and the history of everyday life became subjects of interest.<sup>38</sup> As a

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32 Michel Duchein, *The History of European Archives*, p. 16; Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen, “Inventing the Archive: Testimony and Virtue in Modern Historiography”, *History of the Human Sciences*, 26/4 (2013), 8-26.

33 Jean Mabillon, *De re diplomatica libri VI* (Paris: Lutec, 1681).

34 Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 21-46, 573-629.

35 For the new definition of historical method, see Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft* (New York: Knopf, 1953).

36 François Furet, “Quantitative Methods of History”, in *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology*, ed. by Jacques le Goff and Pierre Nora (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 12-27.

37 Michel Foucault, *L’archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969); Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009); Nicholas B. Dirks, “Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of an Archive”, in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. by Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

38 Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

result, a question arose: what are we to preserve, what historical records from the past are we to secure for the future? Perversely, this question may be best answered by looking at what has been discarded in the past.

When he first came to the site of Oxyrhynchus, in Upper Egypt, Bernard Grenfell was not impressed by its ancient rubbish mounds. Yet, within a decade of excavation, he and Arthur Hunt had uncovered 500,000 fragments of papyri, which included plays by Menander, fragments of Euclid's *Elements*, parts of several lost plays by Sophocles, and Christian Apocrypha.<sup>39</sup> There were also tax returns, petitions, lease and sale contracts, wills, letters and shopping lists: from Alexander the Great to the Arab conquest, the entire life of a market town was captured in its discarded papers.<sup>40</sup> The papyri were sent to Oxford, and in 1898 Hunt and Grenfell published the first volume of a long series on the finds (79 volumes published as of 2014). The documents became an essential reference work for the study of Egypt between the fourth century BC and the seventh century AD, and, more broadly, one of the richest sources for the study of ancient culture, literature and economics. It is something of a paradox that we lament the loss of the library of Alexandria, a library we know so little about, when one of the archives that allowed us to learn the most about antiquity came from an ancient dump.<sup>41</sup>

With the arrival of digitisation we can preserve more than ever before. Though I would not advocate preserving everything, the case of Oxyrhynchus shows that, in the case of historical records, we should not make the decision on preservation based solely on the status of the collection. Forgotten, neglected, discarded collections may contain a wealth of historical information. The issue of the bulk of materials is no longer a problem. The new archival "post-custodial" model recognises that stewardship and curation are possible without physical custody of the records.<sup>42</sup>

This model has another important implication. In recent decades, increasing attention has been given to the relationship between archives and the communities, particularly in cases of contested ownership or loss of custody.<sup>43</sup>

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39 William A. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

40 For more information, see <http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/oxyrhynchus/parsons3.html>

41 Roger Bagnall, "Alexandria: Library of Dreams", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 146/4 (2002), 348-62.

42 F. Gerald Ham, "Archival Strategies for the Post-Custodial Era", *Society of American Archivists*, 44/3 (1981), 207-16.

43 E. Ketelaar, "Sharing: Collected Memories in Communities of Records", *Archives and*

A poignant and illustrative example is the case of the archives of the Virgin Islands. In 1917 the Islands, then a colony of Denmark, were sold to the United States. The historical records dating back to the seventeenth century were transferred to the Danish National Archives and the National Archives of the United States, becoming inaccessible to the islanders themselves. These records were created primarily by and for the bureaucracy of the Danish West Indies, and they were in Danish. The subjects discussed in the documents were the enslaved and free Africans who made up the bulk of the Danish West Indian population, who were for the most part non-literate, and who spoke English or Dutch Creole.<sup>44</sup> Despite the islands' strong oral tradition, lack of access to the archives meant that the descendants of that population struggled to write their own history.<sup>45</sup> Their collective memory came to be challenged: for example, in 1998 a Danish-American historian questioned the factual underpinnings of the African folk hero Buddhoe, a resistance fighter celebrated by the islanders as the crucial figure in the successful and bloodless Emancipation Rebellion of 1848. The scholar pointed out that no one by this name existed in census records or slave lists of the time, thus undermining the symbol of islanders' identity on the basis of documents that islanders could not access.<sup>46</sup> This situation is not unique. The records of Native Americans, created by federal officials in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, were stored for decades in federal repositories, leading to a situation in which "to be an Indian is having non-Indians control the documents from which other non-Indians write their vision of your history".<sup>47</sup> Until recently, the aboriginal records in Australia were located thousands of kilometres away from the communities they concerned: they were the property of the Crown, and no allowances were made for Aboriginal communities to co-own and co-manage them.<sup>48</sup> Many first and post-colonial nations still have to negotiate access to archives controlled by others.<sup>49</sup> It is ironic that the same

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*Manuscripts*, 33 (2005), 44-61.

44 Janette Bastian, *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost its Archives and Found Its Memory* (London: Libraries Unlimited, 2003), pp. 19-34.

45 Kenneth E. Foote, "To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory and Culture", *American Archivist*, 53 (Summer 1990), 378-92 (pp. 380-82).

46 Bastian, *Owning Memory*, pp. 45-48.

47 William T. Hagan, "Archival Captive – The American Indian", *American Archivist*, 41 (April 1978), 135-42.

48 George Morgan, "Decolonising the Archives: Who Owns the Documents", *Comma*, 1 (2003), 147-51.

49 Frederick Cooper, "Memories of Colonization: Commemoration, Preservation and Erasure in an African Archive", in *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory*, pp. 257-66.

states that control these archives have in the past made significant efforts to access, copy and acquire complete records of their own history as written not only by themselves, but also by others. For example, in 1841, the state of New York dispatched John Romeyn Brodhead on a journey to Europe to copy or acquire documents in England, Netherlands and France relating to the history of the United States.<sup>50</sup> Access to records is crucial not only for knowledge of the past and the self-definition of communities, but also for shaping communities' futures; it is vital for justice, reconciliation, language revitalisation or any other form of mending broken links with the past.<sup>51</sup> Starting with a declaration of the French National Assembly in 1794, the access to archival records has been increasingly recognised as a civic right.<sup>52</sup> This right should not be limited to citizens of western countries, and digitisation gives an unparalleled opportunity to allow fully democratic open access.

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This volume, celebrating the tenth anniversary of the EAP, is designed to showcase the historical significance and research potential of the collections digitised through the programme. We invited 19 articles from the 244 projects that the EAP has supported since its inception.<sup>53</sup> To ensure the volume illustrates the wide range of research that the digitised material makes possible, we asked the authors to focus on the collections they digitised, but otherwise gave them complete freedom as to the choice of subject and methodology. The majority of the primary materials discussed in the articles are freely available on the EAP website. The chapters are organised in sections according to the type of media they discuss (inscriptions, manuscripts, archival records, newspapers, photographs, sound archives). Although the categories are porous and divisions are not clear-cut, this provides an illustration of the diverse methodologies used to approach similar types of documentary material in different settings and different regions of the globe.

The first article challenges the traditional notion of the archive. Stefano Biagetti, Ali Ait Kaci and Savino di Lernia discuss the Tifinagh inscriptions in the Tadrart Acacus Mountains in Libya. Their contribution places the

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50 Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, pp. 8-9.

51 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1995).

52 Blouin and Rosenberg, *Processing the Past*, p. 21; Michel Duchein, "The History of European Archives and the Development of the Archival Profession in Europe", *American Archivist*, 55 (Winter 1993), pp. 14-25.

53 See <http://eap.bl.uk/database/collections.a4d>

inscriptions, dated between the early first millennium A.D. and the twentieth century, in the context of the landscape and archaeological finds in the area. The authors show that though the events the inscriptions record (such as the fact that a certain Busni, son of Nebuk went to a place called Tswnt) may not be of monumental historical significance, analysis of the types of names recorded, of the vocabulary used, and of the location of inscriptions allows to reconstruct the history of the region from its “written landscape”.

The following section, on manuscripts, brings together contributions on collections of codices in India, Ethiopia, Kenya and Mali. The articles consider not only the content of the manuscripts, but also their material aspects. What unites them is an emphasis on the original context in which the manuscripts are preserved. The issues of ownership, collection formation and even the symbolic meaning of the codices for their owners are considered as part of the manuscripts’ important historical testimony.

The section begins with a contribution by Stephen Morey, who provides an account of locating, digitising, transcribing and translating Tai Ahom manuscripts from Assam State, Northeast India. The surviving manuscripts mostly date from the eighteenth century, but the texts they preserve are often much older. The Tai Ahom language is no longer spoken and – due to script modernisation – read by very few people, making the recording, transcribing and translating of manuscripts an urgent matter. The author describes the difficulties of this process, the complexities and particularities of the language. He also provides an account of the digitisation and contextualises this scholarly endeavour by discussing the current owners’ relationships with manuscripts which, although no longer understood, are still treasured as objects of symbolic and religious significance.

In the next article, on Lepcha manuscripts, Heleen Plaisier likewise explores codices in private possession, written in a language that, although still spoken, is increasingly under threat of falling silent. The manuscript collections she discusses belong to the Lepcha people, an ethnic minority of circa 30,000 inhabiting a region divided between India, Nepal and Bhutan. Lepcha literary tradition dates back to the eighteenth century when their alphabet was devised to disseminate translations of Tibetan Buddhist texts. Lepcha literature has not been studied, but the author shows that preserved codices capture the way in which the Tibetan influence was combined with native Lepcha stories and customs to create a distinct new tradition.

Jacek Tomaszewski and Michael Gervers focus on physical aspects of the books preserved in the collection of the May Wäyni Monastery in Ethiopia.

In the context of discussing how manuscripts are stored, they explore the physical construction of manuscripts, the methods of their production and historical repairs undertaken for their preservation. Analysis of the parchment, writing layers, book-block and binding structure provides new insights into the history of book production in Ethiopia. The authors describe procedures devised to overcome the practical problems of digitising fragile materials in a challenging environment without further compromising their condition. They offer several recommendations for manuscript conservation strategy in Ethiopia.

The next article also concerns a distinct collection of books in East Africa, but concentrates on their content. Anne Bang examines a collection belonging to the Riyadhha Mosque in Lamu, Kenya, investigating its intellectual connection with the Sufi and legal traditions of Ḥaḍramawt, Yemen, in the period circa 1880-1940. The author also analyses the means by which these books came to be part of the collection: imports, gifts, *waqf* (pious endowment), local copying and local textual production. In doing so, she traces the various ways in which Islamic textual knowledge came to be incorporated into the local canon in Lamu.

The process of creating a library is also explored by Sophie Sarin, both in the historical context of manuscript production in Djenné, Mali, and in the contemporary context of the foundation of a Djenné Manuscript Library, designed to safeguard manuscripts which belong to local families. The library allows the families – traditional keepers of the old, unique and scarcely-known collections – to deposit codices in a secure environment without forfeiting ownership. The author describes the process of negotiation with the families and the archivists' efforts to overcome their reservations and address their concerns. She also outlines the potential of the study of these manuscripts for future investigation into the intellectual history of the region.

There follows a section, on archival records, which brings together articles exploring institutional, community and church archives as well as libraries in Europe, South America, Africa and the Middle East. The authors employ diverse methodologies to approach microhistories and even personal stories captured in the records, demonstrating their significance in the broader historical context, as well as their importance for the local communities.

Elena Marushiakova and Veselin Popov investigate documents and publications recording early Roma movements towards self-determination in modern Bulgaria. Centring on the dramatic life story of one man, the activist Shakir Pashov, the article follows the efforts of the Roma in Bulgaria

to gain a measure of political autonomy within the national framework. The article demonstrates the importance of primary sources and outlines the consequences of detachment from archival records, leading in extreme cases to the scholarly acceptance of events which never actually occurred. The authors engage carefully with documents, noting layers of writing and re-writing resulting from the often dramatic events and reversals that surrounded the creation of Roma records in Bulgaria.

Church records are the subject of analysis for Gabriela Ramos, who explores ecclesiastical documents in Peru revealing the agents and circumstances behind the demarcation of parochial jurisdictions. The author employs a case of contested boundaries, recorded only partially but in fascinating detail, as a window onto a changing demography and economy, and as a microcosm of the church's efforts to control the population of the region. This microhistory allows us to understand the broader processes shaping the institutions of colonial Peru.

Jane Landers, Pablo Gómez, José Polo Acuña and Courtney Campbell also employ ecclesiastical and notarial records to investigate the history of slavery in rural communities on the Pacific and Caribbean coasts of Colombia and Northeastern Brazil. Thousands of African slaves were transported to the region to exploit the gold and silver mines. Indigenous groups joined African slaves in cattle ranching and agricultural labour. The records used by the authors allow a reconstruction of the social and commercial history of these under-studied regions and of African, Afro-descendant and indigenous communities long ignored in Colombian and Brazilian history. The authors touch upon the importance of digitised records for recognising and addressing the land claims of indigenous groups in both countries.

Bashir Salau investigates the ways in which the early colonial administrators in Northern Nigeria experimented with the use of convict labour for the completion of public projects. His contribution introduces and analyses a variety of colonial records related to prisons, placing them in the broader context of the history of the prison system in Nigeria.

Moving from archives of colonial power to archives of communities under colonial rule in Senegal, Fallou Ngom explores the tradition of Ajami, the writing of other languages using modified Arabic script, a practice deeply embedded in the histories and cultures of Islamised Africa. The article focuses on the Ajami tradition of the Muridiyya Sufi order founded by Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba (1853-1927). Discussing both archival and modern material,

the author analyses the religious and secular functions of Ajami and its role in the emergence of a distinct African Muslim identity.

A contribution from Qasem Abu Harb discusses the digitisation of historical periodicals and manuscripts at the al-Aqṣá Mosque Library in East Jerusalem and the al-Jazzār Mosque Library in Acre, placing these two libraries and the materials they contain in the historical and cultural context of Palestine. The article makes a strong case for digitisation and online access as important means both for preserving the manuscripts and for making them accessible not only to scholars abroad, but also to scholars and students in Palestine.

The section on photographic archives brings together contributions on archives in Argentina, India, Russia and Cameroon. The focus of the articles ranges in subject and approach, but what unites them is an emphasis on the importance of context for the historical interpretation of these images.

Irina Podgorny's article skilfully attempts to resurrect the "murdered evidence", a series of *cartes-de-visite* whose original context and provenance were lost when they reached the museum of La Plata, Argentina and moved through its various departments. In a careful investigation, the author gathers traces of evidence, following Ariadne's thread through a labyrinth of stories, retracing the origins of the photographs back to the milieu of an Italian charlatan, Commendatore Guido Bennati, who travelled through South America in the late 1860s and 1870s.

Kyle Jackson uses missionary photographs from the Mizoram Hills in Northeast India to move away from categories of cultural domination, often employed in discussions of colonial and missionary history, towards exploring the many layers of cross-cultural experience in everyday lives. Placing the photographs in the context of Mizo folklore and contemporary written sources, Jackson offers a sensory immersion into the world that these photographs depict. We are invited not only to see through the eyes of the Mizo and the missionaries, but also to smell through their noses, hear through their ears and even attempt to reach *harhna*, the Mizo sense of spiritual awakening.

David Anderson, Craig Campbell and Mikhail Batashev discuss a collection of photographs by Ivan Baluev, a gifted photographer whose life is known only from documents in his personal file in the Krasnoyarsk Regional Museum. These photographs were taken in 1938 and 1939 during a nine-month "Northern Expedition" to some of the most remote areas of the central Siberian district. Commissioned by the Museum, they capture the sovietisation of the region and its indigenous people, the transition from the old ways of life to the new era. Yet, placed in the context of Baluev's expedition journal, they also



reveal elements of his personal and often ironic commentary on the reality he photographed. Previously, the photographs were most often discussed only as distinct images, not as a collection and not in the context of other documents from the expedition. Consequently, the personal input of the photographer was invisible until now.

Also concentrating on the work of one photographer, David Zeitlyn writes about the private archive of a photographic studio in the West Region of Cameroon. The author places his discussion in the context of the history and current status of photography in West Africa, outlining how mundane bureaucratic factors – such as changes in the design of identity cards – affect the way in which photographers operate. The article explores the social significance of photography and the role of photographs as both personal and communal records. It also outlines different processes – both intentional and accidental – that underlay the creation of the archive and that must be considered in its interpretation.

The last section discusses sound recordings from Guinea, Iran and Russia. The authors devote much attention to the historical context of creation of these materials, but equally to the diverse potential they have for the present: facilitating political reconciliation, inspiring cultural revival, assisting language revitalisation.

Graeme Counsel discusses the collection of vinyl discs from Syliphone, the national record label of Guinea. The collection, which captures the music of the era of President Sékou Touré (1958-1984) was preserved in the sound archives of the offices of Radio Télévision Guinée in Conakry. It has been neglected despite the high quality of the recordings, and despite their potential to illuminate the first decades following Guinea's independence. The article investigates the stories behind the musical recordings and reconstructs the political context that shaped them. It also reports on archiving and digitisation in an unpredictable and politically charged environment.

Jane Lewisohn provides an overview of the cultural importance of the *Golha* ("Flowers of Persian Song and Music") radio programmes in contemporary Iran. Her article places these programmes in the broader cultural context of twentieth-century Iran and explores the impact they had on the perception of Persian music and poetry. The author describes the process of collecting and digitising the recordings, as well as the impact their digitisation and online publication had on the study of Persian and world music, and on Iranians both in the country and abroad.

The final article, by Tjeerd de Graaf and Victor Denisov, discusses the cataloguing and digitisation of linguistic and ethnographic sound recordings made during the first half of the twentieth century, and stored in institutional and private collections in Russia. The authors make a strong case for the importance of these collections in preserving and revitalising endangered languages in the Russian Federation. They demonstrate that, although many languages are nearly lost, the historic recordings contain enduring testimony to their earlier life, testimony crucial for communities trying to recover what has been nearly forgotten.

The articles use variety of approaches to interpret traces of history captured in digitised records. From their analysis of the form and content of these records new narratives emerge, often in unexpectedly vivid and even personal details. Most of the sources discussed here were not previously subjects of scholarly attention. We hope that the articles in this volume will open new debates and encourage scholars to explore the archives preserved by the EAP with the spirit of discovery (and without the dust) that accompanied young Jules Michelet on his first visit to the archives, those “catacombs of manuscripts”: “I was not slow to discern in the midst of the apparent silence of these galleries, a movement and murmur which were not those of death. These papers and parchments, so long deserted, desired no better than to be restored to the light of day (...) And as I breathed on their dust, I saw them [the dead] rise up. They raised from the sepulchre, one the hand, the other the head, as in the Last Judgement of Michelangelo or in the Dance of Death”.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Jules Michelet, *The History of France*, trans. by G. H. Smith (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1848), p. 48.

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# 1. The “written landscape” of the central Sahara: recording and digitising the Tifinagh inscriptions in the Tadrart Acacus Mountains

*Stefano Biagetti, Ali Ait Kaci and Savino di Lernia*

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The archaeology of the Sahara in both historical and modern times remains, for the most part, inadequately investigated and poorly understood. However, the Fazzan in southwest Libya stands as a remarkable exception. In the last two decades, the University of Leicester<sup>1</sup> and the Sapienza University of Rome<sup>2</sup> have undertaken various research programmes that focus on the impressive evidence left by the Garamantian kingdom (c. 1000 BC-AD 700). These studies have provided groundbreaking data on the history of the Fazzan (Fig. 1.1), an area which was the centre of a veritable network of trans-Saharan connections that developed in Garamantian times and continued to modern times, later giving birth to the Tuareg societies.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 *The Archaeology of Fazzan. Volume 1: Synthesis*, ed. by David J. Mattingly (London: Society for Libyan Studies, 2003); *The Archaeology of Fazzan. Volume 2: Site Gazetteer, Pottery and Other Surveoy Finds*, ed. by David J. Mattingly (London: Society for Libyan Studies, 2007); and *The Archaeology of Fazzan. Volume 3: Excavations of C. M. Daniels* (London: Society for Libyan Studies, 2010).
- 2 *Aghram Nadharif: The Barkat Oasis (Sha 'Abiya of Ghat, Libyan Sahara) in Garamantian Times*, ed. by Mario Liverani (Florence: All'Insegna del Giglio, 2005); and *Life and Death of a Rural Village in Garamantian Times: The Archaeological Investigation in the Oasis of Fewet (Libyan Sahara)*, ed. by Lucia Mori (Florence: All'Insegna del Giglio, 2013).
- 3 David Edwards, "Archaeology in the Southern Fazzan and Prospects for Future Research", *Libyan Studies*, 32 (2001), 49-66; Mario Liverani, "Imperialismo, colonizzazione e progresso tecnico: il caso del Sahara libico in età romana", *Studi Storici*, 4 (2006), 1003-56; and Andrew Wilson, "Saharan Trade in the Roman Period: Short-, Medium- and Long-Distance Trade Networks", *Azania*, 47/4 (2012), 409-49.

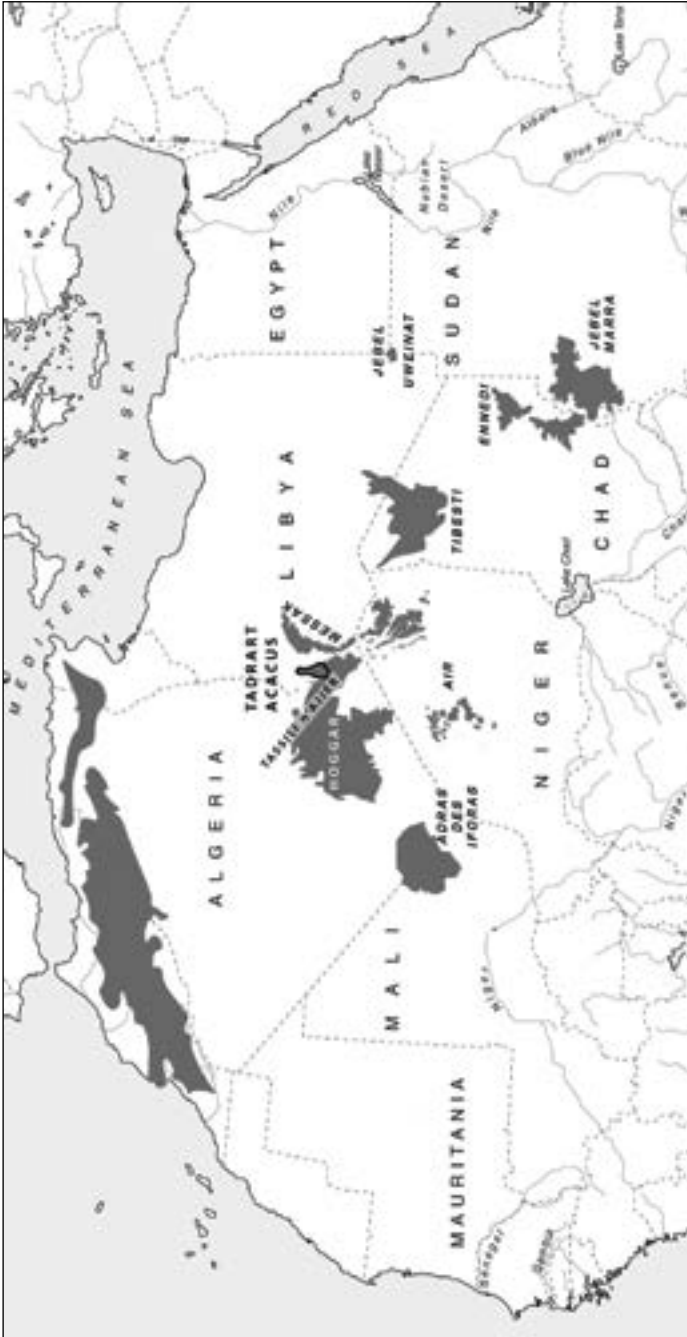


Fig. 1.1 Map of the Tadrart Acacus and the central Saharan massifs.

Farmers, caravaneers and herders in this area all participated and intercepted in a variety of socio-economical exchanges that developed from the first millennium BC to the present day. In spite of its arid climate, the central Sahara has, in the last 3,000 years, seen some extremely successful human adaptations to limited resources. An intangible heritage of indigenous knowledge allowed complex societies to flourish in the largest desert in the world. That heritage has left a legacy of tangible evidence in the form of remains, such as forts, monuments, burials, and settlements, all of which have been the focus of recent archaeological studies. This paper deals with the less investigated element of the archaeological and historical landscape of the region: the Tifinagh inscriptions carved and painted on the boulders, caves and rock shelters of the Tadrart Acacus valleys.

## The Tadrart Acacus in historical and modern times: the significance of the archaeological research

The Tadrart Acacus massif is of particular importance to the understanding of both local and trans-Saharan cultural trajectories over the past three millennia. The Acacus is set at the very centre of the Sahara, close to the oasis of Ghat and that of Al Awaynat, and about 300 kilometres from the heartland of the Garamantian kingdom, the relatively lush area of the Wadi el Ajal. It hosts a unique set of rock art sites that were added to UNESCO’s World Heritage list in 1985. These sites are often located in physical connection with archaeological deposits in caves and rock shelters. The massif is seen as a key area for studies of Africa’s past: several archaeological deposits have been tested in the past fifty years,<sup>4</sup> and some were subjected to excavations.<sup>5</sup> Its primary role in African prehistoric archaeology has been

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4 Mauro Cremaschi and Savino di Lernia, “The Geoarchaeological Survey in the Central Tadrart Acacus and Surroundings (Libyan Sahara): Environment and Cultures”, in *Wadi Teshuinat: Palaeoenvironment and Prehistory in South-Western Fezzan (Libyan Sahara)*, ed. by Mauro Cremaschi and Savino di Lernia (Milan: CNR, 1998), pp. 243-325.

5 Fabrizio Mori, *Tadrart Acacus: Arte rupestre e culture del Sahara preistorico* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965); Barbara E. Barich, “La serie stratigrafica dell’Uadi Ti-N-Torha (Acacus, Libia)”, *Origini*, 8 (1974), 7-157; Barbara E. Barich, “The Uan Muhuggiag Rock Shelter”, in *Archaeology and Environment in the Libyan Sahara: The Excavations in the Tadrart Acacus, 1978-1983*, ed. by Barbara E. Barich (Oxford: BAR International Series, 1987), pp. 123-219; *Uan Afuda Cave: Hunter-Gatherer Societies of the Central Sahara*, ed. by Savino di Lernia (Florence: All’Insegna del Giglio, 1999); *Uan Tabu in the Settlement History of the Libyan Sahara*, ed. by Elena A. A. Garcea (Florence: All’Insegna del Giglio, 2001); and Stefano Biagetti and Savino di Lernia, “Holocene Deposits of Saharan Rock Shelters: The Case of Takarkori and Other Sites from the Tadrart Acacus Mountains (Southwest Libya)”, *African Archaeological Review*, 30/3 (2013), 305-38.



further confirmed by some recent discoveries of the Middle Neolithic age (c. sixth to fifth millennium before present) — such as the earliest dairying in Africa and an outstanding set of cattle burials — that received attention in the popular media as well as in academic circles.<sup>6</sup>

In the last fifteen years, the work of the Libyan-Italian Archaeological Mission of the local Department of Archaeology (DoA) and Sapienza University of Rome focused on the village and adjacent necropolis of Fewet,<sup>7</sup> the fortified settlement of Aghram Nadharif (close to the Ghat area),<sup>8</sup> some funerary monuments in the Wadi Tanezzuft,<sup>9</sup> and on two forts located east of the Acacus massif.<sup>10</sup> The still-inhabited mountain range of the Tadrart Acacus, cut by dozens of dry river valleys, has been largely neglected. However, in recent years, the development of ethnoarchaeological studies<sup>11</sup> has further enlarged the aims of the DoA-Sapienza research to include modern and contemporary civilisations. In fact, the study of human-environment interaction in such a hyper arid region has become one of the hottest topics in the debate around sustainable development in dry lands. The impact of social science in the design and development of possible solutions to mitigate the effects of drought in dry regions has been low and scarcely significant so far. Major involvement from social scientists in the issue of sustainable development has been again recently voiced at the international

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6 Julie Dunne et al., “First Dairying in ‘Green’ Saharan Africa in the 5th Millennium BC”, *Nature*, 486 (2012), 390-94; and Mary Ann Tafuri et al., “Inside the ‘African Cattle Complex’: Animal Burials in the Holocene Central Sahara”, *PLoS ONE*, 8 (2013), <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0056879>.

7 Roberto Castelli, Maria Carmela Gatto, Mauro Cremaschi, Mario Liverani and Lucia Mori, “A Preliminary Report of Excavations in Fewet, Libyan Sahara”, *Journal of African Archaeology*, 3 (2005), 69-102; and Mori, *Life and Death of a Rural Village*.

8 Liverani, *Aghram Nadharif*.

9 *Sand, Stones, and Bones: The Archaeology of Death in the Wadi Tanezzuft Valley (5000-2000 BP)*, ed. by Savino di Lernia and Giorgio Manzi (Florence: All’Insegna del Giglio, 2002).

10 Stefano Biagetti and Savino di Lernia, “Combining Intensive Field Survey and Digital Technologies: New Data on the Garamantian Castles of Wadi Awiss, Acacus Mountains, Libyan Sahara”, *Journal of African Archaeology*, 6/1 (2008), 57-85.

11 Stefano Biagetti, *Ethnoarchaeology of the Kel Tadrart Tuareg: Pastoralism and Resilience in Central Sahara* (New York: Springer, 2014); Stefano Biagetti and Jasper Morgan Chalcraft, “Imagining Aridity: Human-Environment Interactions in the Acacus Mountains, South-West Libya”, in *Imagining Landscapes: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. by Monica Janowski and Tim Ingold (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 77-95; Savino di Lernia, Isabella Massamba N’siala and Andrea Zerboni, “Saharan Waterscapes’: Traditional Knowledge and Historical Depth of Water Management in the Akakus Mountains (SW Libya)”, in *Changing Deserts: Integrating People and Their Environment*, ed. by Lisa Mol and Troy Sternberg (Cambridge: White Horse Press, 2012), pp. 101-28; and Andrea Zerboni, Isabella Massamba N’siala, Stefano Biagetti and Savino di Lernia, “Burning without Slashing: Cultural and Environmental Implications of a Traditional Charcoal Making Technology in the Central Sahara”, *Journal of Arid Environments*, 98 (2013), 126-31.

level.<sup>12</sup> There is a strong need to develop integrated approaches focused on the study of the indigenous knowledge in arid lands, by the adoption of archaeological, geoarchaeological, historical and anthropological tools to unveil the practices of variable resource management by desert communities.

The long tradition of scientific research in the area makes the Tadrart Acacus an ideal place to adopt a multi-pronged approach focusing on landscape, where data from historical and modern times are integrated with the study of the ethnographic present.<sup>13</sup> These new studies have deeply affected our perception of the whole Acacus landscape, paving the way to more nuanced reasoning about the human-environment interaction in both the modern and historical context.

## Materials and methods

Thanks to a major grant from the British Library’s Endangered Archives Programme, the project EAP265: The Tifinagh rock inscriptions in the Tadrart Acacus Mountains (southwest Libya): An Unknown Endangered Heritage<sup>14</sup> represented the first research focused on this peculiar type of archaeological and epigraphic evidence. The use of Tifinagh characters in North Africa may date back to the first half of the first millennium BC.<sup>15</sup> These types of signs, still used by contemporary Tuareg, were adopted to write down different Libyco-Berber languages or idioms (Table 1.1). This explains why current Kel Tadrart Tuareg are often unable to read the ancient Tifinagh texts of the Tadrart Acacus. The origin of this African alphabet is debated and discussed on the basis of the studies carried out on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic façades of North Africa.<sup>16</sup>

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12 *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation: Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, ed. by Christopher Field, Vicente Barros, Thomas F. Stocker and Qin Dahe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

13 Biagetti, *Ethnoarchaeology of the Kel Tadrart Tuareg*; Biagetti and Chalcraft, “Imagining Aridity”; di Lernia, N’siala and Zerboni, “Saharan Waterscapes”; and Zerboni, N’siala, Biagetti and di Lernia, “Burning Without Slashing”.

14 [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP265](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP265)

15 Mohamed Aghali-Zakara and Jeannine Drouin, “Écritures libyco-berbères: vingt-cinq siècles d’histoire”, in *L’aventure des écritures: naissances*, ed. by Anne Zali and Annie Berthier (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1997), pp. 99-111; Lionel Galand, “L’écriture libyco-berbère”, *Sahara*, 10 (1999), 143-45.

16 Gabriel Camps, “Recherches sur les plus anciennes inscriptions libyques de l’Afrique du nord et du Sahara”, *Bulletin archéologique du C.T.H.S., n.s. (1974-1975)*, 10-11 (1978), 145-66; José Farrujia de la Rosa, Werner Pichler and Alain Rodrigue, “The Colonization of the Canary Islands and the Libyco-Berber and Latino-Canarian Scripts”, *Sahara*, 20 (2009), 83-100; Lionel Galand, “Du berbère au libyque: une remontée difficile”, *Lalies*, 16 (1996), 77-98; Lionel Galand, “Un vieux débat: l’origine de l’écriture libyco-berbère”, *La lettre de répertoire des inscriptions libyco-berbères*, 7 (2001), 1-3; and Werner Pichler, *Origin and Development of the Libyco-Berber Script* (Cologne: Köppe, 2007).

6 From Dust to Digital

Table 1.1 Tifinagh alphabet, from Aghali-Zakara (1993 and 2002): Hoggar (Algeria); Air (Niger); Ghat (Libya); Azawagh (Niger-Mali); and Adghagh (Mali).

Letter	Name	Hoggar	Ghat	Air	Azawagh	Adghagh
A	tayerit	·	·	·	·	·
B	ieb	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
D	ied	⊐, V	⊐	E	E	V
Ḍ	ieḍ	E	E			E
F	ief	⊎	⊎	⊎	⊎	I
G	ieg	⊗	⊎	⊎	⊎	⊎
G <sup>y</sup>	ieg <sup>y</sup>	⊎	I			∴
Γ	ieγ	∴	∴	∴	∴	∴
H	ieh	∴	∴	∴	∴	∴
J	iej	⊗		#	#	⊗
K	iek	∴	∴	∴	∴	∴
X	iex	∴	∴		∴	∴
L	iel					
Ḷ	ieḻ					⊎
M	iem	⊐	⊐	⊐	⊐	⊐
N	ien					
N <sup>y</sup>	ien <sup>y</sup>	#				
Q	ieq	∴	∴	∴	∴	∴
R	ier	○	○	○	○	○
S	ies	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Š	ieš	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Ṣ̌	ieṣ					⊎
T	iet	+	+	+	+	+
Ṭ	ieṭ	⊎	⊎			⊎
W, [u]	iew	∴	∴	∴	∴	∴
Y, [i]	iey	↵	↵	↵	↵	↵
Z	iez	⊗	#	⊗	⊎, ⊗	⊗
Ẓ	ieẓ	#	⊗		⊎, ⊗	#

The Saharan texts, however, have been rarely subjected to systematic recording and publication.<sup>17</sup> In the absence of any bilingual texts, the translation of Saharan inscriptions is extremely difficult. However, some attempts have been made, and they seem to confirm that Tifinagh was mainly used to write short personal messages, epitaphs, and “tags”.<sup>18</sup> A further hurdle to translation is that these texts normally feature metaphors – alterations of signs and/or words – so that they become hardly readable. It has been suggested that some inscriptions have a “ludique” character whose aim was precisely to prevent the comprehension by anyone other than the author and the recipient(s) of the message.<sup>19</sup> Tifinagh texts present interpretive problems similar to those raised by Saharan rock art, such as its interpretation, meaning, and chronology. Therefore, the EAP265 project aimed to: 1) create a database of all the available data regarding Tifinagh inscriptions noticed in the past surveys; 2) digitally record known and unknown Tifinagh sites on the ground; and 3) make available an open access dataset.

During the fieldwork we carried out in October to December 2009 we identified 124 sites (Table 1.2; Fig. 1.2). Our landscape approach included two main field methods. The first method was geomorphologically inspired, and featured visits to the most relevant water points and other locations of interest such as passageways and what we later discovered to be crop fields. In the Tadrart Acacus, water occurs in the form of *gueltas* (rock pools where rainfall gathers) and wells. *Gueltas* have been subjected to investigation by the “Saharan Waterscapes” project, as have *etaghass* (empty spaces where crops can be raised after floods).<sup>20</sup> The *aqbas* (passageways) that connect the western oases (Tahala, Ghat, Barkat and Fewet) to the valleys of the Tadrart Acacus, have been surveyed, since these are still to this day a key element of the Acacus landscape. Those mountain trails feature variable gradients and climb for up to 300 metres. In addition, some of the Kel Tadrart elders showed us a variety of previously unknown sites.

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17 Mohamed Aghali-Zakara and Jeannine Drouin, *Inscriptions rupestres libyco-berbères: Sahel nigero-malien* (Geneva: Droz, 2007); Camps; and Pichler.

18 Ali Ait Kaci, “Recherche sur l’ancêtre des alphabets libyco-berbères”, *Libyan Studies*, 38 (2007), 13-37.

19 Aghali-Zakara and Drouin, *Inscriptions rupestres libyco-berbères*.

20 Di Lerna, N’siala and Zerboni, “Saharan Waterscapes”.

Table 1.2 List of the sites recorded (adapted from Biagetti et al., 2012). Site types are open-air (O-A), rock shelters (RS), and caves (C). Technique includes pecking (P), carving (C), pecking and further carving (PC), and painting (Pa). Chronology features pre-Islamic (P-I; early first millennium BC - 700 CE); Islamic (I; CE 700 - 1500 CE) and Modern (M; CE 1500 - present).

ID	N	E	area	context	site type	support	N of surfaces	significance	technique	chronology
09/01	25°34'18.91"	10°26'03.16"	W. Irlarlaren	wadi	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/02	25°34'17.76"	10°25'38.93"	W. Irlarlaren	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/03	25°34'17.98"	10°25'38.75"	W. Irlarlaren	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/04	25°43'28.78"	10°24'27.79"	W. Irlarlaren	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	high	P	n.a.
09/05	25°43'26.80"	10°24'26.64"	W. Tanezfert	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	average	P	n.a.
09/06	25°43'26.87"	10°24'26.42"	W. Tanezfert	wadi	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/07	25°43'26.90"	10°24'26.24"	W. Tanezfert	wadi	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/08	25°43'35.33"	10°24'27.43"	W. Tanezfert	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	very high	P,C,PC	I
09/09	25°43'32.70"	10°24'28.62"	W. Tanezfert	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	very high	P,PC	n.a.
09/10	25°27'27.00"	10°26'22.88"	W. Toula	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	C	n.a.
09/11	25°27'19.40"	10°26'15.32"	W. Toula	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P	n.a.
09/12	25°27'19.94"	10°26'12.70"	W. Toula	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P	I - M
09/13	25°14'24.32"	10°23'35.16"	W. Toula	aqba	O-A	boulder	1	high	P,C	I
09/14	25°08'40.85"	10°23'46.54"	W. Ghallasc'm	wadi	O-A	slab	1	average	C	I
09/15	25°08'30.37"	10°24'03.35"	W. Ghallasc'm	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	average	P	M
09/16	25°08'27.89"	10°24'05.15"	W. Ghallasc'm	wadi	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/17	25°08'14.86"	10°24'09.22"	W. Ghallasc'm	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	average	PC	n.a.
09/18	25°06'54.79"	10°24'24.15"	W. Ghallasc'm	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	very high	P,PC	n.a.

09/19	25°06'55.01"	10°24'24.51"	W. Ghallasc'm	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	high	P,C,PC	n.a.
09/20	25°06'54.32"	10°24'24.44"	W. Ghallasc'm	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	very high	P,PC	n.a.
09/21	25°06'53.82"	10°24'24.73"	W. Ghallasc'm	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	very high	P	n.a.
09/22	24°55'43.18"	10°10'49.54"	W. Tanezzuft	wadi	O-A	bedrock	1	very high	P,PC	n.a.
09/23	25°03'05.44"	10°23'31.05"	W. Ghallasc'm	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	average	P	n.a.
09/24	25°17'49.85"	10°28'15.60"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P	n.a.
09/25	25°17'49.63"	10°28'16.78"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P	n.a.
09/26	25°17'50.60"	10°28'19.77"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P	n.a.
09/27	25°17'50.64"	10°28'22.30"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P	n.a.
09/28	25°17'50.68"	10°28'22.47"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P,PC	I
09/29	25°17'50.39"	10°28'23.55"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	boulder	1	average	P	I
09/30	25°17'49.81"	10°28'24.88"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	boulder	1	average	P	n.a.
09/31	25°17'50.53"	10°28'33.31"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	boulder	1	average	P	n.a.
09/32	25°17'50.20"	10°28'33.56"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P	I
09/33	25°17'49.99"	10°28'35.40"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P	I
09/34	25°17'49.96"	10°28'35.47"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P	n.a.
09/35	25°17'50.28"	10°28'35.68"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/36	25°17'48.44"	10°28'38.20"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	boulder	1	high	P	n.a.
09/37	25°17'49.06"	10°28'40.08"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	I
09/38	25°17'49.20"	10°28'40.44"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/39	25°17'49.34"	10°28'40.69"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.

ID	N	E	area	context	site type	support	N of surfaces	significance	technique	chronology
09/40	25°17'49.42"	10°28'40.73"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P	n.a.
09/41	25°17'49.45"	10°28'40.76"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/42	25°17'48.95"	10°28'41.88"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	boulder	1	high	P	n.a.
09/43	25°17'48.73"	10°28'44.11"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P,C	n.a.
09/44	25°17'48.59"	10°28'44.11"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P	n.a.
09/45	25°17'48.16"	10°28'44.58"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P,PC	Pre-I
09/46	25°17'47.47"	10°28'44.65"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	very high	P,C	n.a.
09/47	25°17'47.69"	10°28'44.58"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/48	25°17'47.58"	10°28'44.51"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/49	25°17'46.50"	10°28'48.29"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	C	n.a.
09/50	25°17'46.43"	10°28'48.68"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	bedrock	1	average	P	n.a.
09/51	25°17'46.36"	10°28'48.72"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/52	25°17'46.28"	10°28'48.76"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P,PC	n.a.
09/53	25°17'46.36"	10°28'48.86"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	high	P,PC	n.a.
09/54	25°17'46.50"	10°28'49.44"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	M
09/55	25°17'46.57"	10°28'48.83"	W. Tasba	aqba	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/56	25°27'51.01"	10°27'28.01"	Awiss mts	wadi	O-A	wall	1	very high	P,C,PC	n.a.
09/57	24°31'16.10"	10°32'40.06"	Waltannuet	guelta	O-A	wall	2	high	P,PC	n.a.
09/58	24°31'56.10"	10°30'50.18"	W. Takarkori	wadi	O-A	wall	1	high	P	I
09/59	24°31'55.60"	10°30'50.58"	W. Takarkori	wadi	O-A	wall	1	high	P,PC	I

09/60	24°35'36.89"	10°37'42.89"	W. Bubu	wadi	RS	wall	3	high	P,C,PC	n.a.
09/61A	24°36'23.08"	10°38'53.70"	W. Bubu	wadi	O-A	boulder	2	very high	P	M
09/61B	24°36'23.08"	10°38'53.70"	W. Bubu	wadi	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/61C	24°36'23.08"	10°38'53.70"	W. Bubu	wadi	O-A	slab	1	high	P	n.a.
09/62	24°41'43.40"	10°37'53.90"	W. Anshalt	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	high	P	n.a.
09/63	24°58'34.07"	10°28'56.06"	Ti-n-Lalan	etaghas	RS	wall	6	very high	P,PC	n.a.
09/64	24°58'50.27"	10°29'1.932"	Ti-n-Lalan	etaghas	O-A	complex	3	very high	P,C,PC	n.a.
09/65	24°58'57.04"	10°28'34.24"	Ti-n-Lalan	etaghas	O-A	wall	1	very high	P,PC	I-M
09/66	24°58'34.40"	10°28'46.20"	Ti-n-Lalan	etaghas	O-A	wall	1	average	P,PC	n.a.
09/67	24°58'39.68"	10°28'44.04"	Ti-n-Lalan	etaghas	O-A	wall	1	average	P	M
09/68	24°58'51.82"	10°28'46.70"	Ti-n-Lalan	etaghas	O-A	wall	1	average	P	n.a.
09/69	24°58'56.60"	10°28'44.50"	Ti-n-Lalan	etaghas	RS	wall	1	average	Pa	n.a.
09/70	24°57'25.20"	10°30'56.23"	Ti-n-Lalan	etaghas	O-A	wall	1	average	Pa	I
09/71	24°53'47.76"	10°38'02.69"	Ti-n-Lalan	etaghas	O-A	wall	2	high	C	I
09/72	24°58'54.62"	10°28'59.19"	Ti-n-Lalan	etaghas	O-A	wall	3	very high	P,C	Pre-I-I-M
09/73	24°57'20.95"	10°32'30.01"	Ti-n-Anneuin	wadi	C	wall	6	very high	P,Pa	n.a.
09/74	24°34'45.98"	10°38'12.01"	W. Bubu	guelta	O-A	wall	2	very high	P	n.a.
09/75A	24°36'12.49"	10°38'48.76"	Ti-n-Amateli	guelta	O-A	wall	1	very high	P,C	n.a.
09/75B	24°36'12.06"	10°38'47.68"	Ti-n-Amateli	guelta	O-A	wall	2	very high	P,C	n.a.
09/76	24°44'36.02"	10°32'26.01"	Intri	guelta	O-A	wall	8	high	P,C	I
09/77	24°53'41.03"	10°33'21.06"	Tibestiwen	guelta	O-A	wall	6	high	P,C,PC	I-M
09/78A	24°57'43.99"	10°34'44.33"	Iknuen	guelta	O-A	wall	3	very high	P	n.a.



ID	N	E	area	context	site type	support	N of surfaces	significance	technique	chronology
09/78B	24°57'44.42"	10°34'42.06"	Iknuen	guelta	O-A	wall	1	very high	P,C	n.a.
09/79	25°00'56.95"	10°37'24.24"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	RS	wall	1	high	C,Pa	n.a.
09/80A	25°01'43.64"	10°35'54.31"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	O-A	wall	3	very high	P,C	n.a.
09/80B	25°01'43.57"	10°35'55.28"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	O-A	wall	3	high	P,C,PC	I
09/80C	25°01'42.78"	10°35'55.43"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	O-A	wall	1	high	P,C	n.a.
09/81	25°00'11.95"	10°37'21.47"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	O-A	slab	1	average	P	n.a.
09/82A	25°02'35.09"	10°34'50.01"	Tejleteri	guelta	O-A	complex	15	very high	P,C,PC	n.a.
09/82B	25°02'32.24"	10°34'55.23"	Tejleteri	guelta	O-A	wall	1	very high	P,PC	n.a.
09/82C	25°02'31.92"	10°34'55.63"	Tejleteri	guelta	O-A	wall	1	very high	P	n.a.
09/83	25°01'13.62"	10°37'17.58"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	O-A	wall	1	very high	P	n.a.
09/84	25°02'26.34"	10°36'07.49"	W. Raharmellen	guelta	O-A	wall	2	high	P,C	n.a.
09/85A	25°01'30.04"	10°35'58.27"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	O-A	wall	1	very high	P,C	n.a.
09/85B	25°01'30.00"	10°35'57.66"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	RS	wall	2	very high	P,C	n.a.
09/86	25°01'37.49"	10°33'50.76"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	RS	wall	1	very high	P,C	n.a.
09/87A	24°51'37.51"	10°32'25.36"	W. Teshuinat	wadi	O-A	slab	1	high	P,PC	n.a.
09/87B	24°51'37.48"	10°32'25.00"	W. Teshuinat	wadi	O-A	wall	1	high	P	n.a.
09/87C	24°51'38.20"	10°32'24.72"	W. Teshuinat	wadi	O-A	wall	2	high	PC	n.a.
09/87D	24°51'34.67"	10°32'26.88"	W. Teshuinat	wadi	RS	wall	1	high	PC	n.a.
09/88	24°59'50.82"	10°38'03.70"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	RS	wall	1	very high	P	n.a.
09/89A	25°01'12.43"	10°34'43.60"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	O-A	wall	2	very high	P,PC	n.a.
09/89B	25°01'11.93"	10°34'41.84"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	O-A	wall	1	very high	PC	n.a.

09/90	25°01'35.22"	10°31'11.17"	W. Raharmellen	wadi	O-A	wall	1	high	P,PC	I
09/91	25°14'17.81"	10°37'07.61"	W. Gargor	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	average	P	n.a.
09/92	25°14'21.01"	10°34'56.02"	W. Gargor	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	high	P,PC	n.a.
09/93	25°14'4.596"	10°33'50.32"	W. Gargor	wadi	O-A	wall	1	average	P	n.a.
09/94	25°13'45.98"	10°32'52.11"	W. Gargor	wadi	O-A	wall	1	average	P	n.a.
09/95	25°11'51.32"	10°30'31.03"	W. Gargor	wadi	O-A	wall	1	very high	P	n.a.
09/96	25°11'55.64"	10°40'24.16"	Sughd	well	O-A	wall	24	very high	P,C,PC	n.a.
09/97	25°12'00.86"	10°40'31.26"	W. Taluaut	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	high	P	n.a.
09/98	25°12'16.99"	10°40'43.42"	W. Taluaut	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	high	P,PC	n.a.
09/99	25°12'13.64"	10°40'45.73"	W. Taluaut	wadi	O-A	bedrock	1	average	P	n.a.
09/100	25°11'59.35"	10°40'30.47"	W. Taluaut	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	average	P	n.a.
09/101	25°11'58.96"	10°40'29.46"	W. Taluaut	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	average	P	n.a.
09/102	25°11'58.13"	10°40'28.38"	W. Taluaut	wadi	O-A	boulder	1	average	P	n.a.
09/103	25°11'57.80"	10°40'27.01"	W. Taluaut	wadi	O-A	slab	1	average	P,PC	n.a.
09/104	25°11'56.58"	10°40'26.08"	W. Taluaut	wadi	O-A	slab	1	high	P	n.a.
09/105	25°11'54.96"	10°40'20.10"	W. Taluaut	wadi	O-A	wall	1	high	P	n.a.
09/106	25°11'50.17"	10°40'17.14"	W. Taluaut	wadi	O-A	wall	4	very high	P,PC	n.a.
09/107	25°17'30.98"	10°30'40.90"	Ti-n-Tararit	guelta	O-A	wall	2	very high	P,C,PC	n.a.
09/108	25°16'42.82"	10°30'6.084"	Awiss mts	wadi	RS	wall	1	average	P,PC	n.a.
09/109	25°20'00.10"	10°31'19.06"	Awiss mts	wadi	RS	wall	2	high	P,C,PC	n.a.
09/110	25°20'01.03"	10°31'27.51"	W. Ti-n-Torha	wadi	RS	wall	3	high	P,C,PC	n.a.
09/111	25°16'28.31"	10°34'57.25"	W. Tehet	wadi	RS	wall	1	very high	P,C,PC	n.a.



Tifinagh texts of the Tadrart Acacus are carved and painted onto isolated boulders, rocky flanks, and rock shelter walls, and are often characterised by uneven spatial patterns (Fig. 1.3). This raises the issue of how to define a “site” and how to digitally record sets of lines and signs distributed on several uneven stony surfaces. We designed a hierarchical system: a single Tifinagh letter or complex text featuring a clearly recognisable spatial consistency was defined as “site” and progressively labelled from 09/01 to 09/111.<sup>21</sup> The whole archive was ultimately given to the largest database of African rock art, the African Rock Art Digital Archive, not only to preserve but also to foster new studies on the recorded evidence.<sup>22</sup>



Fig. 1.3 An example of Tifinagh inscription, site 09/87B (EAP265/1/87B).  
Photo by R. Ceccacci, CC BY.

## The sites and their setting in a historical perspective

All the Tifinagh sites found in the Tadrart Acacus are included in Table 1.1, with data for the identification of the sites, their coordinates and local toponyms; the most relevant geomorphological data; and archaeological

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21 Stefano Biagetti, Ali Ait Kaci, Lucia Mori and Savino di Lernia, “Writing the Desert. The ‘Tifinagh’ Rock Inscriptions of the Tadrart Acacus (South-West Libya)”, *Azania*, 47/2 (2012), 153-74.

22 The African Rock Art Digital Archive is available at <http://www.sarada.co.za>

and epigraphic information on the type of site, technique, significance and, when available, chronology. The significance of each site was established on the basis of the size of the inscriptions, testifying to the presence of repeated rock markings and/or complex texts. We deduced chronology from the study of first names occurring in the Tifinagh texts.<sup>23</sup>

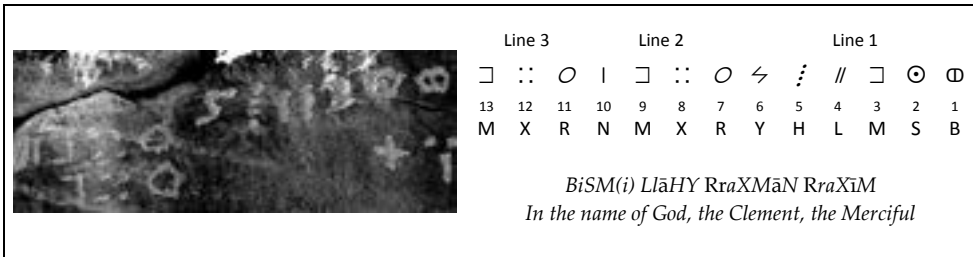


Fig. 1.4 The *Basmala* inscription from site 09/67.

Most of the Tifinagh sites include lists of anthroponyms that in some cases are veritable genealogies going back several generations. More than 135 anthroponymic sequences have been identified so far, and site 09/92 is likely to include the longest genealogy so far known in Libyco-Berber epigraphy.<sup>24</sup> After the spread of Islam, the Tuareg and other Berber populations adopted Arab names. This “neo-anthroponymy” includes names borrowed from the most prominent personalities of Islam; the Tadrart Acacus, for example, features the names Mohamed (37 cases), Ahmed (26), Moussa (17), Fatima (16), and Ali (16). The *Basmala* (a phrase used by Muslims, often translated as “in the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful”) occurs once (Fig. 1.4). Occasionally, love messages have been recorded as well. In four cases, place names have been recognised: these are TDMKT (read Tadmekka, site 09/85A), likely referring to Es-Souk, an important centre located in Mali and traditionally inhabited by Tuareg; MK(T) (read Mecca, site 09/92), the Islamic Holy City; TŠWNT (read Teshuinat, the largest Acacus wadi, in 09/73, Fig. 1.5); and TGMYT (read Tagamayet “place where there is some couch grass”, in Wadi Raharmellen, 09/88). Furthermore, the same graphist (i.e. author) named Biya, can be recognised in various sites where he left his signature: the same author has written text in at least four sites throughout the Tadrart Acacus, including 09/63 located in the Ti-n-Lalan area, 09/90 in wadi Raharmellen (c.

<sup>23</sup> Biagetti, Kaci, Mori and di Lernia, “Writing the Desert”.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

7 km northeast from site 09/63), 09/37 in wadi Tasba (c. 35 km north from site 09/63), and 09/82A in Tejleteri (c. 13 km east-north-east from site 09/63).

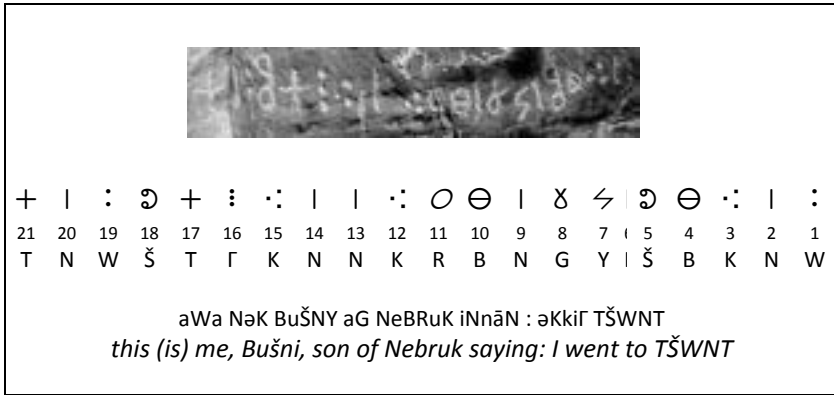


Fig. 1.5 Site 09/73 features the toponym of Teshuinat (TŠWNT).

The short discussion above shows the potential of this kind of study. Besides that, it is the place of these inscriptions that holds relevance for the comprehension of the whole landscape. It is often noted that Tifinagh texts are usually short and there is no literature published in Tifinagh characters. Whilst one may accept this reductionist view on Tifinagh on the whole, the case of the Tadrart Acacus allows us to go beyond the intrinsic limits of these kinds of inscriptions, by adopting a landscape approach. As Christopher Chippindale and George Nash argued in a synthesis of different approaches to rock art, it is likely that the firmest attribute of human-made signs on the stone is their place.<sup>25</sup> The position in the space of the Tifinagh signs thus represents a solid starting point. The 124 Tifinagh sites recorded (Table 1.2) are found in a variety of landscape contexts, occurring along *aqbas* (30.6%), *wadis* (51.6%), *gueltas* (10.5%), *etaghass* (6.5%), and the only well (0.8%) (Table 1.3). Most of the Tifinagh evidence has been recorded in open air sites (111, around 90%), and only a small percentage comes from caves and rock shelters (Table 1.4). Nearly half of the Tifinagh inscriptions were carved or painted on boulders and slabs, the rest occurring on the sandstone walls of rocky cliffs (Table 1.5). Most of the evidence (79.9%) consists of single-surfaced sites, whereas multi-surfaced sites occur less frequently (Table 1.6). Regarding the significance, the three categories (average, high, very high) are evenly

25 Christopher Chippindale and George Nash, “Pictures in Place: Approaches to the Figured Landscape of Rock Art”, in *The Figured Landscapes of Rock-Art: Looking at Pictures in Place*, ed. by Christopher Chippindale and George Nash (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1-36.

distributed (Table 1.7). The four types of techniques were unevenly used, with pecking largely occurring in the majority of cases (>60%) (Table 1.8). Occasionally a mixed technique featuring first pecking and then a regularisation obtained by carving was recorded. The case of painting is different: the type of surface was not among the causes that drove that specific choice. It is worth stressing that three out of four painted inscriptions occurred in cave (1) and rock shelters (2). Unfortunately, the chronology of the inscriptions has been determined so far only for 19.4% of the sites.

Table 1.3 Context of sites according to the most relevant element of landscape for human occupations.

<b>context</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
aqba	38	30.6
etaghas	8	6.5
guelta	13	10.5
wadi	64	51.6
well	1	0.8
total	124	100

Table 1.4 Type of sites.

<b>type</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
open-air	111	89.5
rock shelter	12	9.7
cave	1	0.8
total	124	100

Table 1.5 Support of sites.

<b>support</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
boulder	26	21.0
slab	42	33.9
bedrock	3	2.4
wall	51	41.1
complex	2	1.6
total	124	100

Table 1.6 Number of surfaces.

<b>N of surfaces</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
1	99	79.8
2	11	8.9
3	7	5.6
4	1	0.8
6	3	2.4
8	1	0.8
15	1	0.8
24	1	0.8
total	124	100

Table 1.7 Significance of sites

<b>significance</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
average	43	34.7
high	46	37.1
very high	35	28.2
total	124	100

Table 1.8 Techniques (\*total here is not 124, since various techniques may occur at a single site)

<b>technique</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
pecked	113	60.8
carved	31	16.7
pecked+carved	38	20.4
painted	4	2.2
total	186*	100

As a whole, the Acacus repertoire looks rather modern. The Tadrart Acacus is inhabited by a single lineage of Tuareg, the Kel Tadrart, whose existence has been noted since the first colonial-period reports.<sup>26</sup> There is no evidence that

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<sup>26</sup> Biagetti, *Ethnoarchaeology of the Kel Tadrart Tuaregi*; Ugo Gigliarelli, *Il Fezzàn* (Tripoli:



in the last century other groups regularly frequented the Acacus, although there may have been occasional “incursions”. If this suggests that the Kel Tadrart are the likely authors of the modern inscriptions, it does not tell us who wrote the texts in the Islamic age. The low proportion of the sites for which dating can be securely determined makes development of further historical hypotheses difficult.

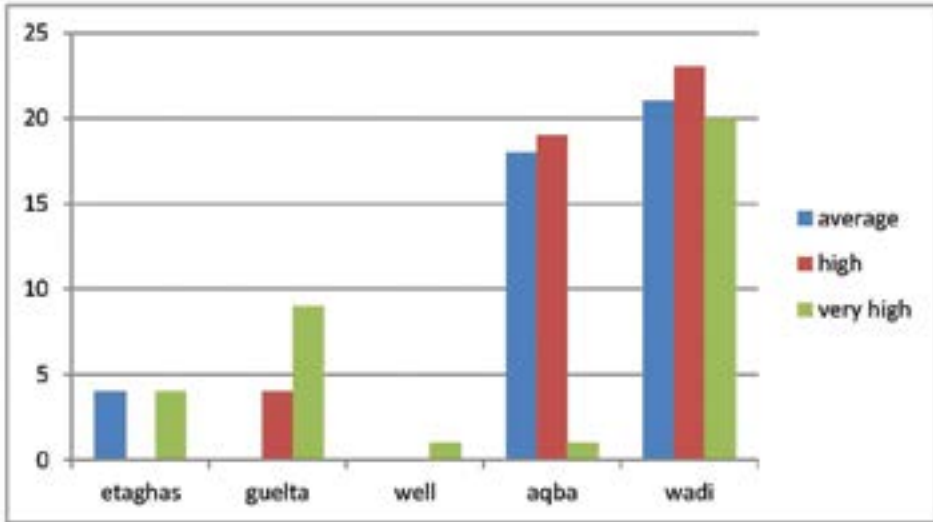


Fig. 1.6 Significance and context of Tifinagh sites.

Going back to our landscape approach, a considerable proportion of high importance Tifinagh texts are located in sites that have a connection to water, whether the *gueltas*, the *etaghas*, or the sole well (Fig. 1.6). The *aqbas* also have a large number of sites, but these are generally less complex and their texts shorter than those recorded around water. Even so, these texts can be used to better understand the use of landscape by its inhabitants. For example, in the Tadrart Acacus there are at least six main mountain trails that connect the large *wadis* of the east to the oasis set along the *wadi* Tanezzuft to the west of the Tadrart Acacus (see Fig. 1.2). The occurrence of Tifinagh is a clear sign of the use of a determined route (Fig. 1.7), as in the case of *wadi* Tasba.

Governo della Tripolitania, Ufficio Studi, 1932); Mori, *Tadrart Acacus*; and Emilio Scarin, “Nomadi e seminomadi del Fezzan”, in *Il Sahara italiano: Fezzan e Oasi di Gat. Parte prima*, ed. by Reale Società Geografica Italiana (Rome: Società Italiana Arti Grafiche, 1937), pp. 518-90.

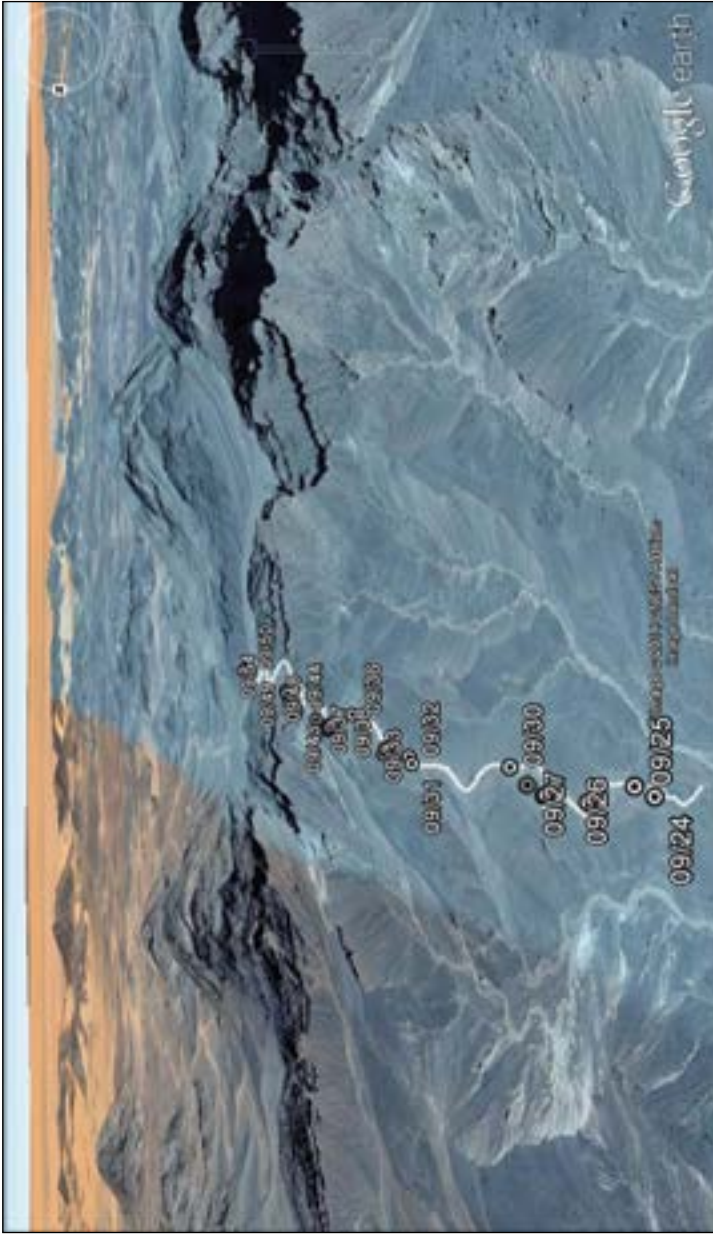


Fig. 1.7 3D view of the *aqba* of *awadi* Tasba on the western escarpment of the Tadrart Acacus (map from Google Earth).

In spite of their relatively low number, the sites connected with water are far more complex in the Tadrart Acacus. Research undertaken by Savino di Lernia and his colleagues highlighted the role of the *gueltas* — the traditional water reservoirs that still play a key role in shaping the Kel Tadrart — in the inhabitants' successful adaptation to the rugged environment of the Acacus massif.<sup>27</sup>



Fig. 1.8 Site 09/74, close to the *guelta* of *wadi Bubu* (EAP265/1/74).  
Photo by R. Ceccacci, CC BY.

It has been demonstrated that the Kel Tadrart settlements are located close to *gueltas*;<sup>28</sup> however, not all the “main *gueltas*”,<sup>29</sup> i.e. the *gueltas* recognised as very important for water supply by the current Kel Tadrart, feature Tifinagh inscriptions. As a matter of fact, only half of the *gueltas* recorded for the EAP project corresponded to the “main *gueltas*” as identified by the current Kel Tadrart Tuareg (Fig. 1.8). On the other hand, other *gueltas* with Tifinagh were not included among the main *gueltas*. Similarly, among the four *etaghass* recognised by di Lernia et al. as locales for temporary cultivation in the case of exceptional floods,<sup>30</sup> only one — Ti-n-Lalan (Fig. 1.9) — bears a significant number of Tifinagh inscriptions at the edges of the crop field. The case of the *etaghass* looks quite similar to that of the *gueltas*. It is intriguing to note that dates of inscriptions at

27 Di Lernia, N'siala and Zerboni, “Saharan Waterscapes”.

28 Ibid., pp. 113-15; Biagetti, *Ethnoarchaeology of the Kel Tadrart Tuareg*; and Biagetti and Chalcraft, “Imagining Aridity”.

29 Di Lernia, N'siala and Zerboni, “Saharan Waterscapes”.

30 Ibid.

one site can range from pre-Islamic, through Islamic to modern times (Table 1.2). This raises the issue of the enduring importance of this locale from historical, and possibly late prehistoric, to the present day.<sup>31</sup> The discovery of the remains of a settlement inhabited in 2005 testifies to the current use of this area by the Kel Tadrart Tuareg.<sup>32</sup>



Fig. 1.9 Etghas Ti-n-Lalan: the white line borders the *etghas*, the dots indicate the Tifnagh sites, and the triangle refers to the Kel Tadrart settlement (map from Google Earth, adapted from di Lemia et al., 2012).

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., and Biagetti, *Ethnoarchaeology of the Kel Tadrart Tuareg*, ch. 5.

Recent research shows that the late Holocene rock art follows a clear pattern of spatial distribution in the Tadrart Acacus.<sup>33</sup> The later phase that includes the so-called “Camel style” can be considered as roughly contemporary to the earliest Tifinagh inscriptions in the Tadrart Acacus. Dating rock art, like dating Tifinagh, poses many challenges. However, scholars agree that the Camel phase began before the end of the Garamantian age (AD 700) and further developed until modern times.<sup>34</sup> In some areas of the Acacus, concentrations of Camel style subjects have been identified<sup>35</sup> and these overlap with several Tifinagh sites, with the exception of those set on the *aqbas* along the western side of the mountain. According to di Lernia and Gallinaro, 83.5% of Camel phase rock art is to be found within caves and/or rock shelters, whilst the Tifinagh inscriptions mainly appear on open air sites (89.5%).<sup>36</sup> An anthropogenic deposit from a rock shelter along *wadi* Teshuinat (central Acacus) allowed to obtain the C14 date (1260±60 uncal. BP, i.e. some 1,000 years ago) placing it in the Islamic period.<sup>37</sup> It is the only securely dated material in the Acacus valleys but, given the occurrence of Camel phase rock art, it seems likely that the top archaeological layers in Tifinagh inscription sites would yield a similar date.

## Changing landscape: the role of the Tifinagh

Tadrart Acacus is often thought of as being poorly frequented in historical and modern times, but in fact resilient human groups have developed a variety of adaptive strategies to flourish in its hyper-arid conditions. The Tifinagh evidence adds previously unknown data to our understanding of the cultural landscape of the massif over the past two millennia. In spite of the issues of both dating and translation, the Tifinagh inscriptions allow us to distinguish between different forms of frequentation in the Tadrart Acacus, at least in historical and modern times. Humans have used rock art to mark their presence in this area at least since early Holocene times. In spite of the socio-cultural context that gave birth to rock markings, the subjects depicted or inscribed

33 Savino di Lernia and Marina Gallinaro, “Working in a UNESCO WH Site: Problems and Practices on the Rock Art of the Tadrart Acacus (SW Libya, central Sahara)”, *Journal of African Archaeology*, 9 (2011), 159-75; and Marina Gallinaro, “Saharan Rock Art: Local Dynamics and Wider Perspectives”, *Arts*, 2 (2013), 350-82.

34 Tertia Barnett and David J. Mattingly, “The Engraved Heritage: Rock-Art and Inscriptions”, in *The Archaeology of Fazzan. Volume 1: Synthesis*, ed. by David J. Mattingly (London: Society for Libyan Studies, 2003), pp. 279-326; and di Lernia and Gallinaro, “Working in a UNESCO WH Site”.

35 Di Lernia and Gallinaro, “Working in a UNESCO WH Site”, Fig. 6, p. 170.

36 *Ibid.*, Table 2, p. 167.

37 Cremaschi and di Lernia, “The Geoarchaeological Survey in the Central Tadrart Acacus and Surroundings”.

in the Tadrart Acacus articulate and give formal visibility to the relationship between humans and the landscape. The fact that some *aqbas* were marked by Tifinagh inscriptions alone, with no rock art, suggests that the texts were marking a passage, the movement of people through the rugged mountain trails. These people were likely to be connected with the small-scale trade traditionally linking the Kel Tadrart to the oases on the Tanazzuft. It is no surprise, then, that the most relevant *aqbas* are those on the northern sector of the Tadrart Acacus, intercepting and overlapping with longer regional east-west routes. These trade routes were in use from Garamantian times onwards.<sup>38</sup>

As well as being markers of human movement, the Tifinagh inscriptions of the Tadrart Acacus are also signs of permanence, as indicated by their occurrence along some of the largest and most relevant *wadis*, such as Raharmellen and Teshuinat. These are the places where better pastures are to be found,<sup>39</sup> and they continue to be the sites of current Kel Tadrart occupation. The discovery that cultivation was practiced in the *etaghas* has opened a window on what was until recently thought to be an exclusively pastoral landscape. Overriding the traditional dialectic between the desert and the sown, between nomads and farmers, the *etaghas* of the Acacus offer promising avenues of interpretation of the cultural trajectories in arid lands.<sup>40</sup> Not dissimilarly, the use of the *gueltas* is highlighted by the presence of Tifinagh. From an ethnoarchaeological perspective, it is highly significant to unveil the relationships between current inhabitants of the Acacus and the major features of the landscape. This is relevant to our view of a previously undifferentiated landscape, punctuated by dozens of *gueltas*, and cut by a number of *aqbas*. The study of the Tifinagh evidence is thus as significant as that of rock art and other archaeological and historical data. The Tifinagh inscriptions emerge as one of the most tangible remains of the heritage of intangible knowledge that has allowed humans to inhabit the harsh land of the Tadrart Acacus in recent and modern times.

The current situation in the Sahara is likely to pose new threat to the remains of the past (see Fig. 1.10) in the desert. Acts of vandalism occurred in 2009 and others have been recently reported.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, this broad set of traditional technologies deserves to be understood and preserved, and further taken into account by stakeholders charged with the design of development plans in arid lands. Human groups living in extreme environments have

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38 Liverani, "Imperialismo, colonizzazione e progresso tecnico"; and Wilson.

39 Biagetti, *Ethnoarchaeology of the Kel Tadrart Tuareg*, ch. 4.

40 Di Lernia, N'siala and Zerboni, "Saharan Waterscapes", pp. 117-19.

41 Savino di Lernia, Marina Gallinaro and Andrea Zerboni, "Unesco World Heritage Site Vandalized: Report on Damages to Acacus Rock Art Paintings (SW Libya)", *Sahara*, 21 (2010), 59-76, Fig. 10. We were told of further acts of vandalism by Ali Khalfalla, DoA representative in Ghat-Acacus area.

developed effective strategies to survive and minimise the risks that arise from drought and continual fluctuation of natural resources. Far from representing the shadow of past civilisations, the contemporary inhabitants of Sahara are the evidence of continued successful adaptation over the last 3,000 years. In this spirit, a new season of investigation in the now barely accessible central Sahara would be most welcome, at least for focusing on the materials so far collected and integrated with remote sensing techniques.<sup>42</sup>



Fig. 1.10 Site 09/73, Ti-n-Anneuin, vandalised in 2009 (EAP265/1/73).  
Photo by R. Ceccacci, CC BY.

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42 The research for this article was funded by a Major Project Grant from the Endangered Archives Programme of the British Library (Savino di Lernia as Principal Investigator), and included in the activities of the Italian-Libyan Archaeological Mission in the Acacus and Messak Sapienza University of Rome and the Libyan Department of Archaeology (Tripoli and Sebha), directed by S. di Lernia and funded by Grandi Scavi di Ateneo (Sapienza), and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGPC/CGPS) entrusted to S. di Lernia. We thank Lucia Mori, who took part in the research project. We wish to thank Giuma Anag and Salah Agahb, former chairmen of the DoA, for their support of the project, and Saad Abdul Aziz for his help and advice. We are very grateful to Mohammed Hammadani for his contribution in the field. We are indebted to Cathy Collins and Lynda Barraclough from the EAP for their support and co-operation. We express our gratitude to Maja Kominko, who has enthusiastically followed all the editing, showing strong support and patience. Ultimately, we thank the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful and useful comments.

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## 2. Metadata and endangered archives: lessons from the Ahom Manuscripts Project

*Stephen Morey*

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Since 2011, the project EAP373: Documenting, conserving and archiving the Tai Ahom manuscripts of Assam has been, with the help of the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme, digitising and documenting the written legacy of the Tai Ahom.<sup>1</sup> It has done this in three ways: by photographing

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1 Since 2007, this work on Ahom was funded first by the DoBeS Documentation of Endangered Languages project, financed by the Volkswagen Stiftung, based at the Max Planck Institute in Nijmegen, and later by the Australian Research Council under the Future Fellowship Scheme. The project EAP373: Documenting, conserving and archiving the Tai Ahom manuscripts of Assam ([http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP373](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP373)), which is on-going, has been funded by the Endangered Archives Programme, whose support for my work is much appreciated. I am very grateful to members of the research team, particularly Ajahn Chaichuen Khamdaengyodtai whose work on Ahom manuscripts has provided so much enlightenment. The main task of photography and metadata collection has been undertaken by Poppy Gogoi and Medini Madhab Mohan, whose expertise in locating and identifying manuscripts has been invaluable. In the early stages of this project Zeenat Tabassum, Karabi Mazumder, Iftiqar Rahman, Jürgen Schöpf and Palash Nath all gave great assistance. The leading Ahom pandits, Tileshwar Mohan and Junaram Sangbun Phukon, in particular have given enormous help over the years. The support of the Centre for Research in Computational Linguistics at the University of Maryland, and its director Doug Cooper has been very beneficial for a long time. I am very grateful also to the editors of this volume, particularly Maja Kominko and the anonymous reviewers for many helpful comments, and to Bianca Gualandi for her work on images. Finally, I want to thank all the manuscript owners, the Institute of Tai Studies and Research, and its director Girin Phukan; Bhim Kanta Baruah, David Holm, B. J. Terwiel, Wilaiwan Khanittanan, Ranoo Wichasin, Thananan Trongdi, Anthony Jukes, Pittayawat Pittayporn and Atul Borgohain, the last being my mentor and supporter in Ahom studies for many years.

and cataloguing Ahom manuscripts, and archiving the resulting digital materials at the British Library; by archiving digital photographs with our partners at the Institute for Tai Studies and Research (Moran, India), Gauhati University (Guwahati, India) and Dibrugarh University (Dibrugarh, India); and by making images and metadata universally available online through the Center for Research in Computational Linguistics, where they will be integrated with existing search tools developed under the Ahom Lexicography project<sup>2</sup> and the Tai and Tibeto-Burman languages of Assam website.<sup>3</sup>

Between October 2011 and the middle of 2014, the project photographed 411 manuscripts owned by around fifty different persons — a total of nearly 15,000 images. All materials will be available online through the EAP website in combination with basic metadata. Around twenty different manuscripts have been transcribed, of which around ten have been translated in full or in part.<sup>4</sup>

The methodology of the project followed these steps:

- Locating the manuscripts
- Seeking permission from the owners for them to be copied
- Cleaning and ordering the manuscripts
- Photography
- Data management
- Metadata preparation
- Transcription
- Translation and revision of metadata

While it may seem obvious that the photographing, archiving and long-term preservation of these manuscripts is a good idea, this has not always been apparent to the manuscript owners, who are members of the Tai Ahom priestly caste. Not all of them have allowed us to take photographs for a variety of reasons. For example, there is a belief among some of some of the priestly families that the knowledge contained in the manuscripts should

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2 <http://sealang.net/ahom>

3 <http://sealang.net/assam>

4 As these translations are made ready, they will be published in searchable form on the Tai and Tibeto-Burman languages of Assam website (<http://sealang.net/assam>).

not be shared, and this belief has to be respected; however, the injunction presented as Example 14 below, in our opinion, shows that in the minds of earlier copyists and custodians the knowledge in these manuscripts should be made available. Secondly, since many aspects of Tai Ahom culture have been lost in the last 300 years, those portions of the culture that remain — of which the manuscripts are a large part — become even more important to the community, and there is a sense in which these should not be shared casually with outsiders.

We had a number of meetings with community leaders in different villages to discuss and explain the project, answer questions, and present our work. One of the achievements of the overall project, the online Tai Ahom dictionary,<sup>5</sup> was a big argument in favour of our project. Despite some difficulties, most of the manuscript owners have been pleased to have the manuscripts photographed and those photographs preserved and available for study.<sup>6</sup>

The actual photography itself is not always an easy process. We used a camera with a fixed distance lens to avoid distortion at the edges of the shot. For most manuscripts this worked well. *Ban Seng* manuscripts, for example, were often only approximately 5 cm wide and 8 cm long. But with a large manuscript it was often necessary to stand far above the manuscript to get a shot of the whole page. *Du Kai Seng* manuscripts were typically much larger, as much as 12 cm wide and 47 cm long. Even bigger were cloth manuscripts (usually with the text *Phe Lung Phe Ban*). The following photograph (Fig. 2.1) shows Iftiqar Rahman taking photos of a large nineteenth-century paper manuscript, a *Phe Lung Phe Ban* belonging to Hara Phukan of Amguri Deodhai village, in which each page was approximately 35 cm wide and 45 cm long.<sup>7</sup>

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5 <http://sealang.net/ahom>

6 Kamol Rajkonwar, who lives on the banks of the Disangpani River at Lakwa, was particularly keen to get his manuscripts photographed and delighted that the work was being undertaken. When we arrived at his house, he surprised me by producing a copy of my 2002 doctoral thesis on the Tai languages of Assam. Disangpani is an example of a name with elements from possibly three different languages. *Di* is a word for the Boro or Dimasa language, the language of the pre-Ahom inhabitants of the area, meaning “water”. Most of the rivers in the Ahom area have names with *Di-* as a prefix. The meaning of *sang* is not known but could be Tai Ahom, and *pani* is Assamese for “water”. The place where Rajkonwar lives is near a large outdoor area sacred to the Tai Ahoms, containing altars to some of the deities mentioned in some manuscripts. The exact function of this sacred area is not known and, as far as I know, it has not been investigated in a scholarly manner.

7 Iftiqar Rahman is a Master’s graduate in linguistics who assisted Poppy Gogoi with photography on several occasions.



Fig. 2.1 Iftiqar Rahman photographing the *Phe Lung Phe Ban* paper manuscript belonging to Hara Phukan. Photo by Poppy Gogoi, CC BY.

Before taking the photographs, a good deal of time was needed to organise the manuscripts at every site so that they were photographed in page order, whenever possible (see below for a more in depth discussion of the issues involved in page ordering). For example, in one house we found one complete text (which was probably a nineteenth-century copy of a text not yet photographed anywhere else), and all the older manuscripts arranged by the owner into two groups. But these two groups turned out to be parts of at least six different manuscripts, and portions of the two largest of these were found in each of the two groups. None of them were complete, and so before we could photograph them, it was essential to group them as best we could, a process that took a great deal more time than the photography itself.

## The Tai Ahom

The Tai Ahom are descendants of Tai speaking people, led by King Siukapha, whose traditional date of arrival in Northeast India is 1228.<sup>8</sup> Linguistically,

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8 Edward Gait, *A History of Assam* (Guwahati: Lawyers Book Stall, 1992 [1905]); and Golap Chandra Barua, *Ahom Buranji: From the Earliest Time to the End of Ahom Rule* (Guwahati: Spectrum, 1985 [1930]).

Tai Ahom is one of a group of Tai languages that is classified as part of Southwestern Tai, because the historical home of speakers of these varieties is in the southwestern area of the Tai speaking world (Thailand, southwestern China, Laos and Myanmar).<sup>9</sup>

Unlike Tai Ahom, most of other communities speaking Southwestern Tai languages are Buddhist.<sup>10</sup> Several of them, for example the Tai Khamyang and Tai Phake in India, also still practice ancient Tai rituals described in Tai Ahom manuscripts, such as spirit calling. These rituals, together with chicken bone augury, are observed by more distantly related linguistic groups, such as Zhuang in China.<sup>11</sup>

The linguistic forms and the literature recorded in Tai Ahom manuscripts are believed to represent one of the oldest examples of Tai language for which we have records. Where a Tai Ahom manuscript is dated, the date is that of its copying, and most of these are late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. In the opinion of Chaichuen Khamdaengyodtai, who has assisted with the identification and translation of some manuscripts, the texts are much older, although there is no way of ascertaining their exact age.

The Ahom Kingdom ruled in Northeast India until the early nineteenth century, but over time the Ahom community assimilated with the Assamese speaking majority, and the Tai Ahom language was lost as a mother tongue by about 1800.<sup>12</sup> Today, most Tai Ahom people are Assamese speaking, probably mostly monolingual, and are followers of Hinduism. Nevertheless, the language does survive in some ritual contexts, such as the Me Dam Me Phi ritual celebrated on 31 January every year. This festival became a public event in the 1970s, and the date of 31 January was gazetted as a public holiday in Assam some time after that. The authenticity of rituals such as this is not uncontested. For example, B. J. Terwiel reported that “So far I have come across no record of the state ritual of Medam Mephi being performed before

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9 Li Fang-Kuei, *A Handbook of Comparative Tai* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1977). The other two main divisions of Tai, according to Li, are Central and Northern, and both of these are to be found in China — in Yunnan, Sichuan and particularly Guangxi provinces — as well as northern Vietnam. Speakers of Central and Northern Tai varieties are not generally Buddhist. The modern location of the Tai Ahom is in fact north of most of these areas, but that is due to migration since the thirteenth century.

10 A large proportion of Tai people in Vietnam and some in Laos practice what has been described as “traditional religion”. For example, the White Tai (*Tai Dón*) are said to be mostly animist.

11 Linguistically Zhuang is very diverse, and languages subsumed under this name fall into both Central Tai and Northern Tai.

12 B. J. Terwiel, “Recreating the Past: Revivalism in Northeastern India”, *Bijdragen: Journal of the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology*, 152 (1996), 275-92; and Stephen Morey, “Ahom and Tangsa: Case Studies of Language Maintenance and Loss in North East India”, *Language Documentation and Conservation*, 7 (2014), 46-77.



the 1970s,” adding that he believed the Ahom rituals were “created” in the 1960s.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, my consultants have maintained that the Me Dam Me Phi ceremony was held since time immemorial in private houses prior to its becoming a public ritual in the 1970s, using some of the prayers found also in manuscript form.

## The Ahom manuscripts

Regardless of the authenticity of these rituals, there is no doubt about the authenticity of the manuscripts that preserve the Tai Ahom language in a wide range of styles. While a number of manuscripts are held in public institutions in Assam, such as the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Guwahati, the Tai Museum in Sibsagar, and the Institute of Tai Studies and Research in Moran, the large majority of Tai Ahom manuscripts are kept in the homes of members of the Ahom priestly caste, many of whom no longer know the language and cannot read the texts. These manuscripts are often kept very well — nicely wrapped and regularly cleaned and kept free of insects. However, by the time we came to see some of the manuscripts, they were seriously damaged by water, damp or insects, with pages out of order and portions of different manuscripts kept together. Our photography sessions thus often involved time spent on cleaning manuscripts.<sup>14</sup>

Most of the surviving manuscripts photographed in the project were copied in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, although the tradition of manuscript copying is continuing. These older manuscripts are overwhelmingly written on bark from the *sasi* tree (*Aquillaria Agallocha*), which is cut, scraped and dried for some time before it can be used. In many traditional Tai Ahom gardens, a *sasi* tree can still to be found. Apart from the bark manuscripts, there are a smaller number of manuscripts written on Assamese style silk, or other cloths. These usually contain the *Phe Lung Phe Ban* text of calendrically related predictions (discussed in more detail below). An example of one such silk manuscript is owned by Tileshwar Mohan of Parijat village, measuring approximately 50 cm wide and 68 cm long (Fig. 2.2).<sup>15</sup>

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13 Terwiel, “Recreating the Past”, p. 286.

14 Mustard oil was found to be the best available substance to clean off generations of dirt in order to be able to read the text. Often the first page of the manuscript was the one that was most exposed to the elements and was virtually unreadable. This, not surprisingly, made the identification of manuscripts even more difficult.

15 Usually it was necessary to photograph the silk manuscript both in full and in parts — generally each of the four corners — in order to have a detailed enough photograph of it. In the case of this manuscript, we decided to hold it up against the wall of the owner’s



Fig. 2.2 The *Phe Lung Phe Ban* cloth manuscript belonging to Tileshwar Mohan (EAP373), CC BY.

For the modern day Tai Ahom community, these manuscripts represent a link to their long history, commencing with the arrival of King Siukapha in 1228 AD. From at least the late nineteenth century and throughout the early twentieth century, members of the Tai Ahom priestly caste continued copying the manuscripts,<sup>16</sup> but although a small number of manuscripts are still copied onto *sasi* bark, in most of the collections that we have been able to study and photograph, the later manuscripts are written on paper. This paper was usually of a much poorer quality than the bark, as can be seen in the image below (Fig. 2.3). Most of the paper manuscripts are probably not as important as the old bark manuscripts, from the point of view of the texts they contain at least, but we have photographed them when possible. Sometimes they contain versions of texts that are incomplete in the bark manuscripts, and when eventually these are studied in detail, the paper manuscripts may become invaluable.

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house for photographing.

16 We cannot be sure that the tradition of manuscript copying was continuous throughout the nineteenth century, although members of the Tai Ahom priestly caste assured us many times that they were. We can say with confidence, based on dates found in the manuscripts, and information about the copyists, that there has been a continuous tradition of copying texts since at least the late nineteenth century. For example, in some cases the copyist was identified as the great-grandfather of the present owner, and, in combination with the Lakni date, we could establish that the book was copied in the last third of the nineteenth century.

An example of such a manuscript is the *Phe Lung Phe Ban* belonging to Hara Phukan, mentioned earlier.

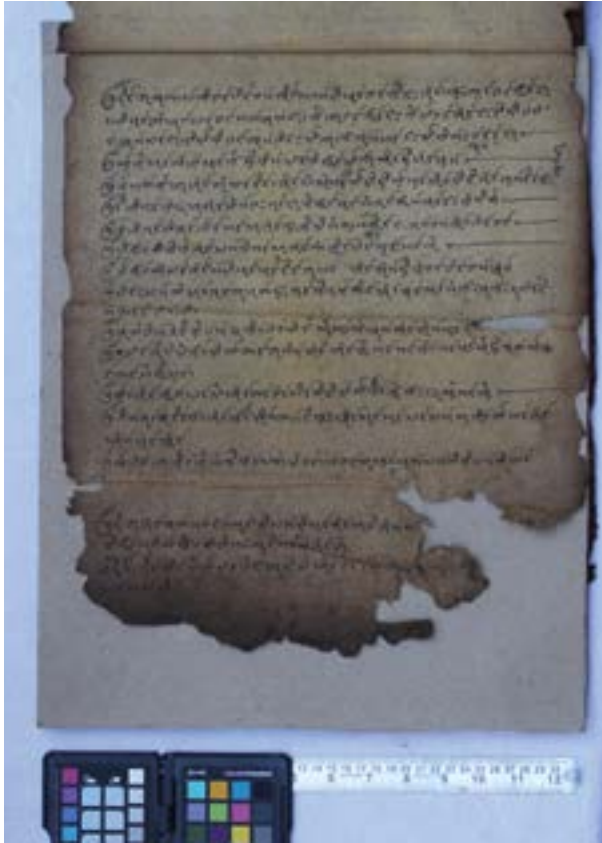


Fig. 2.3 The *Phe Lung Phe Ban* manuscript belonging to Hara Phukan (EAP373), CC BY.

Apart from the *sasi* bark, cloth and paper manuscripts, the Ahom script was also used on brass plates, coins<sup>17</sup> and some inscriptions on stone, the most famous of which is the Snake Pillar at Guwahati Museum.<sup>18</sup> We did not photograph any examples of these. In the manuscripts that we did photograph,

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17 The inscriptions on the coins are usually in Sanskrit or Persian, but a very small number have inscriptions in the Ahom script. The coins are comprehensively listed in Anup Mitra, *Coins of the Ahom Kingdom* (Calcutta: Mahua Mitra, 2001). Mitra lists a coin of King Pramataa Simha (Sunenpha) (1744-1751) as an example of a coin with a Tai Ahom inscription (p. 76).

18 For an illustration of the pillar, see Raju Mimi, *Arunachal Times*, 6 February 2011, <http://www.roingcorrespondent.in/the-sadiya-snake-pillar-mishmi-ahom-friendship>

the copying date and the name and location of the copyist are often given, occasionally together with the name of the manuscript.

The dates are usually in the sixty-year Lakni cycle, a calendrical cycle used for both years and days. The Lakni cycle names the year by means of two series of terms used in combination, as in *Kat Kau*. The first element, *Kat* is one of ten words that are used in the first position, combining with the second element, *Kau*, which is one of twelve terms used in second position.<sup>19</sup> Altogether sixty combinations are used and the cycle starts again after sixty years. With a Lakni date alone, such as *Kat Kau*, we cannot tell if a manuscript was copied in 1805 or sixty years early in 1745, or even sixty years earlier than that. Sometimes additional information is given and the date can be more certain. For example, on line four of the last page of manuscript *Khun Lung Khun Lai*, owned by Tulsi Phukan of Sibsagar district (Fig. 2.4), the date is given as *Lakni era Kat Kau*, eighth month, in the time of King Kamaleshwar Singh (reigned 1795-1811). Thus this particular *Kat Kau* year corresponds to 1805.<sup>20</sup>



Fig. 2.4 Folio 33r of the *Khun Lung Khun Lai* manuscript belonging to Tulsi Phukan (EAP373), CC BY.

The section containing the name and date and other information, including the name of the text, *Khun Lung Khun Lai* commences with several *ru lai* symbols,

<sup>19</sup> For an explanation of the Lakni system and a comparison with other calendars in Southeast Asia, see B. J. Terwiel, *The Tai of Assam and Ancient Tai Ritual, Volume II: Sacrifices and Time-reckoning* (Gaya: Centre for South East Asian Studies, 1981).

<sup>20</sup> Taking the accession of King Siuhummiung in the year *Rung Bau* as equivalent to 1497, the year 1805 corresponds to *Kat Kau*.

illustrated below as the opening of Example 9. This symbol is used to mark a new paragraph or section within a manuscript. This section begins with the date, *ᱠᱟᱞᱟᱱ ᱦᱚᱱᱚᱛ* (*lak ni kat kau*). The second sentence names the king as *ᱠᱟᱱᱟᱨ ᱦᱚᱱᱚᱛ* (*ko mo las por*), the nearest Tai Ahom spelling for the Assamese name. It also names the location as *Song Su Kat*, an old name for the city of Jorhat.

The pages of the manuscripts are usually numbered, using either Ahom numerals or Ahom numbers spelled out in letters, or a combination of both; in a few cases the Lakni cycle is used to number pages. Generally pages are numbered on the verso side, but not always. The manuscript *Sai Kai* owned by Padma Sangbun Phukan of Amguri has numbering on the recto side.<sup>21</sup> We did not realise this when the manuscript was photographed. At that time it was arranged in order assuming that pages were numbered on the back so that, after photographing the cover (images 0001 and 0002), the correct order of the images is 0004, 0003, 0006, 0005, 0008, 0007, etc, something that was only discovered as a result of working on a translation of the whole text. There are probably other manuscripts photographed in the wrong order, because we did not have the chance to carefully examine the text.

Most of these manuscripts have never been translated, because (a) Tai Ahom language is no longer spoken or indeed understood by most of the manuscript owners, (b) most of the manuscripts have never been photographed or published in any way and have not been available for study, (c) much of the ritual connected with the manuscripts is no longer practiced, making some of the references in the texts impossible to understand, and (d) the Ahom script under-specifies the sound distinctions in the languages, meaning that often a single syllable represents several different pronunciations and meanings. The EAP project has to a large extent overcome (b), by making photographs of over 400 texts. Before discussing points (c) and (d) in detail, the following section will briefly survey the kind of manuscripts that have been found.

## Types of Ahom manuscripts

The Tai Ahom manuscripts that we have photographed are of the following types:

- a. History (Buranji)<sup>22</sup>
- b. Creation stories

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21 This manuscript will be archived as EAP373\_PadmaSangBunPhukan\_SaiKai\_0001 to 0058.tif.

22 This is an Assamese term, of possible Tai origin, referring to histories.

- c. Spirit calling texts
  - i. Khon Ming Lung Phai (*lung* “large”)
  - ii. Khon Ming Kang Phai (*kang* “middle”)
  - iii. Khon Ming Phai Noi (*noi* “small”)
- d. Mantras and prayers
- e. Predictions and augury
  - i. Phe Lung Phe Ban
  - ii. Du Kai Seng (chicken bone augury)
  - iii. Ban Seng
- f. Other priestly texts, relating to the performance of rituals, such as those translated in *Tai Ahoms and the Stars*<sup>23</sup>
- g. Calendar (Lakni)
- h. Stories
  - i. Traditional Tai stories
  - ii. Stories of Buddhist origin
- i. Lexicons (Bar Amra, Loti Amra)<sup>24</sup>
- j. Writing Practice, manuscripts that involve copying the written syllables of Tai Ahom in alphabetical order, presumably used to teach the script

The most common texts are probably those relating to prediction and augury (e), with each of the three manuscript types listed there being found in multiple copies from a variety of owners.<sup>25</sup> For example, one manuscript owner, Kesab

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23 *Tai Ahoms and the Stars: Three Ritual Texts to Ward off Danger*, ed. and trans. by B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992). This is an excellent and well-notated translation.

24 These are Assamese terms for two lexicons composed in the late eighteenth century at the time when the Ahom language was in decline as a mother tongue. Both are written in Ahom script. The *Bar Amra* is a Tai Ahom-Assamese lexicon, mostly of monosyllabic words, presented in the Ahom alphabetical order with Assamese words transcribed in Ahom script. The *Loti Amra* is arranged in semantic fields commencing with body parts and contains mostly multisyllabic expressions. Also written entirely in Ahom script, the *Loti Amra* puts Assamese words first then Tai words second. These two lexicons formed the basis of our online dictionary (<http://sealang.net/ahom>).

25 Once the project is completed, and all the texts identified, it will be possible to quantify these claims. The texts in category (e), *Phe Lung Phe Ban*, *Du Kai Seng*, and *Ban Seng*, are all very easy to identify, but some of the other categories are not.

Baruah of Amguri Deodhai village, possesses no fewer than nine separate versions of the *Du Kai Seng* text, which is used for the interpretation of chicken bones after sacrifice. There are multiple examples of each of the categories listed above, and future students of these manuscripts will, in time, be able to compare different versions of the same text.

The most widely known texts, both among the Ahom community themselves and among the wider community, are the histories or *Buranjis*. One set of *Buranji* manuscripts was translated by G. C. Barua, with two parallel texts, one in Ahom (using Ahom script) and the other an English translation.<sup>26</sup> It is relatively easy to match the two texts and thus make an in-depth study of the translation, but because Barua's knowledge of Ahom was sketchy, the translation is not reliable. It is, however, a widely available book that has been reprinted several times. The *Buranji* texts have been translated more recently into Standard Thai by Ranoo Wichasin.<sup>27</sup> To illustrate the problems with Barua's translation, consider Example 1.<sup>28</sup> Our analysis, based on Ranoo's translation relies on the reading of the phrase *khai che* as "shift city".

Example 1)	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫
	lak ni	kap mit	cham chau pha	sv kvn mvng	khai	che
	year	Kap Mit	NFIN-king	PN	shift	city
	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫	𑜋𑜢𑜤𑜂𑜫
	ma	ju	tai	mvng		
	come	stay at	Tai	country		

"In the year Kap Mit, King Svkvnmvng shifted his (capital) city to Tai Mvng".

26 Golap Chandra Barua, *Ahom Buranji: From the Earliest Time to the End of Ahom Rule* (Guwahati: Spectrum, 1985 [1930]).

27 Ranoo Wichasin, trans., *Ahom Buranji* (Bangkok: Amarin, 1996).

28 We will present examples here in four lines: (1) Ahom script, (2) suggested phonemic reading, (3) English gloss, and (4) free translation into English.

We use the symbol <v> to mark an unrounded back vowel /u/ or /ɯ/ in IPA script. Some Tai languages like Phake have a distinction between these two sounds, but there is reason to believe that in Ahom this distinction had been lost by the end of the Ahom Kingdom. This is discussed in Stephen Morey, *The Tai Languages of Assam: A Grammar and Texts* (Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, 2005), p. 176. We write <v> to encourage the members of the Ahom community not to pronounce it as /u/ or /e/, a practice that can be seen in Barua's translation, where the same vowel is present in all three syllables of the king's name, written as /u/ in the first and third syllables, with the second syllable being read as having an /e/ vowel with an initial consonant cluster.

As we will see in more detail below, the same syllable in Tai Ahom can have a number of meanings, and *khai* could mean “shift”, “ill”, “tell” and several other possibilities. Barua’s original translation for this line was “In Lākni Kapmit (i.e., in 1540 AD) Chāophā Shuklenmung fell ill. He proceeded to Tāimung and stopped there”, reading *khai* as “ill” which- would make sense if not for the fact that it is followed by *che*. The combination of *khai che*, however, only makes sense in the meaning “shift city”.

One of the surprising findings of our project so far is the significant number of manuscripts containing stories that appear to be of Buddhist origin. For example, the *Nemi Mang* story, one of the previous lives of the Buddha,<sup>29</sup> is found on folios 47r-66v of the manuscript owned by Gileswar Bailung Phukan of Patsako.<sup>30</sup> The greater part of the manuscript is a story which is ultimately named in the text as *Alika*,<sup>31</sup> which from its form and content is likely to be a Buddhist story also.<sup>32</sup> Only a more in-depth study of all of the texts identified as stories will be able to establish how many of them are of Buddhist origin.

The extent of Buddhist influence within the historical Ahom Kingdom is a matter of controversy among the Ahom community, with some people, particularly some of those connected with the royal caste (Rajkonwar), expressing the view that the Tai Ahom were traditionally Buddhist, while others maintain that this was not so. The place of Buddhism, as distinct from both the traditional Ahom rituals of sacrifice and prayer to the ancestor spirits, and the Hindu worship gradually adopted by the Ahoms after 1500, is a matter for further research, but the manuscripts can help with this. Not only are there Buddhist texts, like *Nemi Mang*, but also, as we will discuss in more detail below, Buddhist features are found in some of the Ahom prayers (*mantras*) that are still in use.

The Buddhist manuscripts and histories are relatively easy to translate because in the case of histories, much of the detail is confirmed by Assamese language sources,<sup>33</sup> and in the case of Buddhist manuscripts, the stories are

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29 The text in Pali is named *Nimi Jataka* and is no. 541 in the series of *Jataka* (previous lives of the Buddha). This is a very famous story, illustrated, for example, in murals in temples in Thailand, <http://www.buddha-images.com/nimi-jataka.asp>. An English translation is *The Jataka, Volume VII*, trans. by E. B. Cowell and W. H. D. Rouse (1907), <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j6/j6007.htm>

30 Archived as EAP373\_GileshwarBailung\_NemiMang.

31 The naming of both manuscripts is on folio 66r, line 3. It was necessary to read a fair amount of the text in order to find this.

32 Translations of these two texts are searchable online at the *Tai and Tibeto-Burman Languages of Assam* website, <http://sealang.net/assam>

33 There are a number of Assamese Buranjis. For a discussion of them, see Lila Gogoi, *The Buranjis, Historical Literature of Assam: A Critical Survey* (New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1986).



often known from other Buddhist sources.<sup>34</sup> However the other categories are more challenging. For example the *Du Kai Seng* (chicken bone augury) and *Ban Seng* (augury) texts — listed above under the general category “Predictions and Augury” — are often very short with little context. In our experience, both these kinds of texts contain no copying dates and no information about the copyist. Nothing is known about the age of the texts, but the existence of similar texts among the Zhuang in China suggests that these are very old. The *Du Kai Seng* contains an illustration of the way chicken bones can appear, and then a short piece of text explaining what this means, usually concluding with *ni jav* “it is good” or *bau ni* “it is not good”. This is exemplified by an example belonging to Tileshwar Mohan, of Parijat village (Fig. 2.5).



Fig. 2.5 Folio 9r of the *Du Kai Seng* manuscript belonging to Tileshwar Mohan (EAP373), CC BY.

There are small pictures in the manuscript showing chicken bones and small sticks. After sacrifice and cleaning, the chicken bones are found to have tiny holes in them. Sticks are then placed in these holes and this is

<sup>34</sup> All the Buddhist canonical texts were published in Romanised script by the Pali Text Society, along with translations. Some of the translations are available online at <http://www.palikanon.org>, and the Pali texts are available to be searched at <http://www.tipitaka.org>

compared with the drawings in the manuscript to establish the meaning. In the example illustrated here (Fig. 2.5), we see that both the bone on the left, and that on the right, are un-auspicious, with both predictions ending in  $\text{𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰}$  (*bau ni*) “not good”.

*Ban Seng* texts are even shorter, containing one page per prediction and a small piece of bone, or perhaps tooth, that is used to choose one of the pages when the augurer is searching for the right prediction. We have not yet translated examples of either of these texts. *Ban Seng* texts are tiny in size, and are exemplified by a manuscript owned by Bhim Kanta Phukan at Simaluguri (Fig. 2.6).



Fig. 2.6 A page from one of the *Ban Seng* manuscripts belonging to Bhim Kanta Phukan (EAP373), CC BY.

## The challenges of interpreting Tai Ahom manuscripts

In order to classify the manuscripts photographed, something needs to be said about the content. As already mentioned at the very beginning of this paper, the best metadata would be that which allows for the greatest usability, and the thing that most people will want to be able to do with Ahom manuscripts is to understand their content. However, the translation of Tai

Ahom manuscripts is a challenging task, and in this section we will detail the reasons for that, which are related to the structure of the Tai language.

Tai languages are tonal, and most words are single syllables (monosyllables) consisting of up to five elements:<sup>35</sup> an optional initial consonant; an optional second consonant (/y/, /r/, /w/); a vowel; a tone; and an optional final consonant (/ŋ/, /n/ or /m/), written followed by a virama,<sup>36</sup> or a second vowel (/i/, /u/ or /u/). The traditional Tai scripts used in Northeast India and most of Myanmar did not mark all the vowel distinctions, and did not mark tone at all.<sup>37</sup> Some examples of Ahom words are given in Example 2, with their pronunciation and an explanation of each symbol.<sup>38</sup>

Example 2	𑜀𑜃𑜫	king	k i n g virama
	𑜀𑜃𑜫𑜀	krit	k r i t virama
	𑜀	kai	k ai

There are several differences between this kind of writing system and the alphabetic system used in the Roman script. First of all, the vowels, exemplified here by /i/, are written as diacritics to the consonant, in the case of /i/ as an oval shaped symbol above the consonant. Secondly, where there is a consonant cluster, as in the word *krit*, the second consonant is written as an attachment to the initial consonant. Standing by itself, /r/ is written as 𑜀, but as the second consonant in a cluster it takes a different form.

All written syllables in Tai Ahom and related languages can be pronounced in a number of ways with a range of meanings. Consider again the first word in Example 2, which it is suggested was pronounced /king/. We cannot be sure that it was not /keng/ or /keng/. Several of the spoken languages closely related to Tai Ahom (Shan, Khamti, Tai Phake) have nine distinct vowels (and

35 There are different linguistic theoretical frameworks for the presentation of the elements within a syllable. In one theoretical framework, all vowel initial words are actually preceded by a glottal stop [ʔ], and this is represented in writing by 𑜀 in the Ahom script. In our analysis, the glottal stop is not a phoneme of Tai Ahom, and vowel initial syllables are permitted. For further discussion, see Morey, *The Tai Languages of Assam*, p. 111.

36 This is the word given to a sign indicating that a consonant has no following vowel. Consonants without it can be interpreted as being followed by /a/. It is called *sāt* in Tai Phake.

37 Morey, *The Tai Languages of Assam*, ch. 7.

38 We use a digraph <ng> rather than the IPA symbol /ŋ/ to mark the velar nasal. This is because we are using only Roman letters to transcribe the Ahom script in our work, to make it easier for the members of the Ahom community to interpret the linguistic materials.

a length distinction between /a/ and /aa/), but only five or six vowel symbols. Thus, in Tai Phake a word written <king> would look like ᩉ᩠ᩅᩁ (the equivalent in Phake of the Ahom script above), but this can be pronounced as /keng/ or /kəng/ as well as /king/, because in stop and nasal final syllables these three different vowels are all written identically.<sup>39</sup> In addition, there are six contrastive tones in Phake. There are thus eighteen possible pronunciations in Tai Phake for the word written *king*, and of those, twelve different meanings have recorded for eight of the possible pronunciations.

We do not even know how many tones were present in spoken Tai Ahom, let alone the form of those tones, but the expectation is that, as with the modern spoken Tai languages, the tones may have exhibited a combination of features: (relative) pitch; contour (change of pitch); phonation (plain, breathy and creaky); and duration.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, it is likely that the number and form of those tones changed over time, whereas because they were not marked, the writing remained the same.

Native speakers who read Tai manuscripts of this type do so somewhat differently from the way we read modern English, or the way we read older manuscripts in the European tradition. Consider the English word *horse*. When this is written in isolation, the meaning is clear to all native English speakers. This is not so with the Ahom word ᩉ᩠ᩅ (also written ᩉ᩠ᩅ) /ma/, which can mean “horse” but can also mean “dog”, “to come”, “shoulder” and, in compounds, “fruit”. Which of these meanings is correct in a particular manuscript depends on the context.

The following examples demonstrate the process of translation. We will discuss this in detail with regard to the manuscript *Ming Mvng Lung Phai*, what we term in English a “spirit calling” text. The main translators for this text were Chaichuen Khamdaengyodtai, whose expertise is in Shan languages and literature, and myself, with knowledge of comparative Tai and Tai grammar. After the text had been transcribed for the first draft translation in 2007, Chaichuen and I worked for a week with Nabin Shyam Phalung, a speaker of the related Tai Aiton language, thoroughly experienced in reading Tai Aiton texts, and for many years the Head of the Tai section at the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Guwahati.<sup>41</sup> The

39 For a discussion of the writing of vowels in the Tai Phake script, and how the script under specifies the vowel contrasts, see Morey, *The Tai Languages of Assam*, pp. 190-94.

40 Stephen Morey, “Studying Tones in North East India: Tai, Singpho and Tangsa”, *Language Documentation and Conservation*, 8 (2014), 637-71.

41 Nabin’s skills as both a native speaker of a closely related Tai language and his decades of experience working with Tai Ahom manuscripts were not enough to allow him to undertake the task of translating this text alone.

translation was then revised in 2008, in the Ahom village of Parijat, working together with other members of the research team and also with several members of the Tai Ahom priestly caste, including the manuscript's owner.

This translation method, while probably the most reliable, was also exceptionally time consuming and expensive, requiring the physical presence of people from different countries in the same location. Subsequent texts have been translated by Chaichuen doing a draft translation into Shan, after which I translate the Shan into English; then Chaichuen and I meet, discuss and revise the translation line by line. The new methodology has the advantage of including a gloss in Shan as well as English, as we will see below in Example 8. Using one or other of these methods, we have completed translations of the following manuscripts: *Alika*,<sup>42</sup> *Lakni*,<sup>43</sup> *Ma Likha Lit*,<sup>44</sup> *Ming Mvng Lung Phai*, *Nemi Mang*,<sup>45</sup> *Pvn Ko Mvng*,<sup>46</sup> running to approximately 4200 lines. All the translations are searchable online at the Tai and Tibeto Languages of Assam website.<sup>47</sup>

Returning to the *Ming Mvng Lung Phai* text, in Tai belief, if the spirit (*khon* or *khwan*) of a person, of the paddy rice or of the country, or some other entity, goes away, this causes difficulty. The spirit therefore has to be recalled at a ceremony that includes the reading of an appropriate text. We have never experienced an Ahom spirit calling ceremony, but have witnessed the calling of the spirit of both an ill person and of rice in the Tai Phake and Tai Khamyang communities. In the first case, a young person was ill, which was attributed to the absence of the *khon* from the ill person; in the second case an individual had a poor harvest, which was attributed to the absence of the *khon* of the paddy rice. The ceremony, in which sweets and fruit were offered to the spirit, included the reading of the appropriate spirit calling text three times. In the case of the calling of the spirit of the ill person, which

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42 This text, containing what we believe is probably a Buddhist story, forms the first two thirds of EAP373\_GileshwarBailung\_Nemimang\_0001 to 0139.tif.

43 This text was translated from a photocopy. The location of the original of this manuscript is not known.

44 This text, containing what we believe is probably a Buddhist story, has yet to be photographed for the project.

45 This text, a Buddhist story, forms the last third of EAP373\_GileshwarBailung\_Nemimang\_0001 to 0139.tif.

46 This text, which tells the story of the creation of the world, is archived as EAP373\_TileshwarMohan\_PvnKoMvng\_0001 to 0038.

47 This website (<http://sealang.net/assam>) is updated from time to time and additional texts will be added as the translations are completed. The next one to be completed will be the *Nang Khai* manuscript owned by the late Baparam Hatibaruah, the photographs of which will be archived as EAP373\_BaparamHatiBaruah\_NangKhai\_0001.tif to 0078.tif.

was held inside, at the conclusion of the third reading of the text the spirit was felt to have returned, and the doors of the house were shut to keep it in.<sup>48</sup>

*Ming Mvng Lung Phai* is one of a number of such texts that we believe were to be read when the whole country is in difficulty. The date of composition of these texts is not known, but, in view of the related texts in the Zhuang speaking areas of China, it is felt that they are very old. The version of the text that we studied is owned by one of the most senior Tai Ahom priests or *Deodhai*, Chaw Tileshwar Mohan, who has been a great supporter of this research for many years. The project has identified other examples of this text, but his version is by far the most complete and most reliable,<sup>49</sup> as Fig. 2.7 below shows.

In the section of the text discussed below, the possible locations to which the spirit has gone, and from which it will need to be recalled, are being presented. One example of this is the passage of two lines: *men ru ri nang ru ba, men na cha nang lin kang*. The poetics of this is clear. The first word is parallel in both lines, as is the fourth word, and in addition there is a “waist rhyme” between the end of the first line, *ba*, and the third syllable of the second line, *cha*.

Our first translation of the two lines is given in Examples 3 and 4. Both translations assumed that *men* was the word for non-Tai tribal people who live in mountainous areas. This is assumed by people in Assam to refer to people living on the border of India and Myanmar, an area mostly populated by Naga people; therefore this word is usually translated as “Naga”. However, if the text had been composed in the original home of the Tai Ahoms, on the Myanmar-China border, this word would refer to a different tribal group,<sup>50</sup> so we have glossed it as “Hill Tribal”.

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48 For a more detailed discussion of spirit calling among the Ahom, see B. J. Terwiel, *The Tai of Assam and Ancient Tai Ritual, Volume I: Life Style Ceremonies* (Gaya: Centre for South East Asian Studies, 1980), p. 53. For the practice among the Zhuang in China, see David Holm, *Recalling Lost Souls: The Baeu Rodo Scriptures, Tai Cosmogonic Texts from Guangxi in Southern China* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2004).

49 Unfortunately the first folio was damaged by insects between 2007, when I first photographed it in JPG format, and 2012, when the EAP-funded project was able to take raw format files and convert them to TIF format for archiving.

50 In Assam the word *men* is mostly associated with the people now called Naga, but in Shan State the cognate word refers to the “ethnic group inhabiting the mountains of Muang Ting”. Sao Tern Moeng, *Shan-English Dictionary* (Kensington, MD: Dunwoody Press, 1995). The phrases “head like horses” and “roll up their chins” might refer to people who wear long-necked decorations, such as the Kayan people in Shan state, i.e. in the mountain areas on the China-Myanmar border. Photographs of women wearing these decorations can be found on the Wikipedia page “Kayan people (Burma)”, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kayan\\_people\\_%28Burma%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kayan_people_%28Burma%29). Equally these might be ways of

Having decided on this reading for *men*, the first draft translation assumed that *nang* was a verb meaning “sit”, which is certainly one of its possible meanings, along with “back”, “extend”, “lady”, “loud”, “be like” and “nose”. Chaichuen then assumed that the phrase *ru ba*, which in Example 3 follows *nang*, would be a location, and proposed on the “top of the shoulder”. Syntactically this would have to mean that the long-headed Hill Tribal was sitting there.

Example 3)	𑜏𑜃𑜫	𑜏𑜃𑜫	𑜏𑜃𑜫	𑜏𑜃𑜫	𑜏𑜃𑜫	𑜏𑜃𑜫	”
	men	ru	ri	nang	ru	ba	
	Hill Tribal	head	long	sit	head	shoulder	

“The long headed Hill Tribals sit on the shoulder”.

Example 4)	𑜏𑜃𑜫	𑜏𑜃𑜫	𑜏𑜃𑜫	𑜏𑜃𑜫	𑜏𑜃𑜫	”
	men	na	cha	nang	lin	kang
	Hill Tribal	face	bad	sit	plain	middle

“The bad faced Hill Tribals sit in the middle of the plain”.

Since these two lines should relate to the location where the spirit was, these translations were plainly not satisfactory. At the time of this work, the research team were staying in Parijat, which is where the manuscript is kept. Chaichuen excitedly came in one morning, having thought about the translation over night, with the suggestion that *nang* should be read as “like”, and that these two lines were thus similes. With this in mind, we could translate Example 3 as “[The spirit is] with the long headed Hill Tribals whose heads are like dogs”, reading the last word *ma* as “dog”. This involves reading the first letter of that word, the last in Example 3, as having initial 𑜏𑜃𑜫 *m* rather than initial 𑜏𑜃𑜫 *b*. In many manuscripts, such as *Ming Mong Lung Phai*, these two letters are not distinguished.

After listening to Chaichuen’s suggestion, I then suggested that reading *ma* as “horse” made even more sense — the heads of horses being long — and thus both lines were re-translated as similes describing the Tai Ahom

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referring to the headdresses of the Naga people on the India-Myanmar border.

scribes impression of the appearance of the Hill Tribals. Our final translation is given in Examples 5 and 6:

Example 5) ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ

men	ru	ri	nang	ru	ma		ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ
Hill Tribal	head	long	like	head	horse		ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ

“With the long headed Hill Tribals, whose heads are like horses”.

Example 6) ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ      ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ

men	na	cha	nang	lin	kang		ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ
Hill Tribal	face	bad	like	roll up	chin		ᨧᩣ᩠ᨦ

“With the bad faced Hill Tribals who roll up their chins”  
 (EAP373\_TileshwarMohan\_MingMvngLungPhai, 6v1).



Fig. 2.7 Folio 6v of the *Ming Mvng Lung Phai* manuscript belonging to Tileshwar Mohan (EAP373), CC BY.

The translation process demonstrated here relied on Chaichuen’s substantial lexical knowledge of large numbers of words from Tai varieties still spoken in both Shan State in Myanmar, and in the former Mau Long kingdom, the



original home of the Tai Ahom, now inside the Dehong prefecture in Yunnan Province, China. To get the translation to what we see in Examples 5 and 6 requires a deep knowledge of Tai literature that is rapidly becoming extinct, and the ability to read texts in the traditional way. The modernisation of the Shan script since the 1950s, which includes the marking of tone, has made reading a Shan text much more like reading an English text, because the words with different tones are now marked differently.<sup>51</sup> The last of the expert readers from the generation brought up before script modernisation are now becoming elderly, and the younger generation, brought up with the reformed script, are reported to have great difficulty reading the traditional texts.

This is the key difference between the challenge of interpreting the Tai Ahom manuscripts and those of interpreting, for example, old English manuscripts, or Latin manuscripts from a period much older than the Ahom texts. Old English and Latin are languages where the script is essentially phonemic, marking most phonemic contrasts. The meaning of a single word is clear, in all but very uncommon cases of homography (such as the modern English *bear* which could be noun (“type of animal”) or verb (“hold up”) with completely different meaning). In Tai Ahom on the other hand, every written syllable has multiple meanings — in some cases as many as twenty have been recorded — and the texts can only be interpreted in context, and with a very substantial vocabulary at the call of the translator.

One major claim in this paper is that it is of the greatest importance that good quality translations be made of as many of the manuscripts as possible because this is unlikely to be possible to the same extent in the future. Whereas the translation of a Latin or Old English text is likely to be just as possible in 100 years time as it is now, this is not the case with Tai Ahom, because the generation of Chaichuen is the last which has been trained in reading Tai texts in the traditional way, and those are the skills required to interpret these texts correctly.

Even making basic metadata on a single manuscript is not something that can be done without considerable effort. We have been fortunate in having Chau Medini Madhab Mohan as a consultant on our project, not only because he has knowledge of the location of large numbers of manuscripts, but also because his experience in studying them has allowed him to identify texts reasonably quickly. This identification is partly done by reading some portion

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51 See Søren Egerod, “Essentials of Shan Phonology and Script”, *Academia Sinica: Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology*, 29 (1957), 121-27. For further details of Shan script and script reform, see Sai Kam Mong, *The History and Development of the Shan Scripts* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 2004).

of the texts for meaning, and partly done by comparing stock phrases found often in the texts. So, for example, in the manuscript *Ming Mvng Lung Phai*, and indeed in all spirit calling texts, there are phrases used for calling the spirit back, which in this manuscript follows the locations where the spirit might be, as in Examples 5 and 6 above. This stock phrase is give as Example 7.

Example 7)	𑜏	𑜑𑜃𑜫	𑜏𑜃	𑜑𑜃𑜫	𑜑	𑜑𑜃	𑜏𑜃	𑜏
	mau	ko	ma	te	na	chau	vi	
	2SG	LINK	come	TRUE	FIN	RESP	VOC	

“Come, please come, lord!” (EAP373\_TileshwarMohan\_Ming MvngLungPhai, 6v1).

The presence of these phrases would be enough to identify the manuscript as a spirit calling text, a group name for which is *khon ming* (*khon* “spirit”; *ming* “tutelary spirit”). Medini Mohan has said that there are three main texts within this genre: *Khon Ming Lung Phai* (*lung* “large”); *Khon Ming Kang Phai* (*kang* “middle”); and *Khon Ming Phai Noi* (*noi* “small”). It has not always been possible to say which of the three a particular text belongs to.

## The relationship between contemporary ritual and Tai Ahom manuscripts: The Ai Seng Lau prayer

During our photography sessions, the manuscript owners have sometimes asked for a prayer to be performed before the work of photography is commenced.<sup>52</sup> This took various forms, sometimes involving the lighting of an oil lamp (probably a Hindu influence) and the offering of money by the project, but also included the recitation of the *Ai Seng Lau* prayer. Examples of this were recorded in February 2013, in the home of Chau Hara Phukan at Amguri, where we digitised 21 manuscripts;<sup>53</sup> and in the home of Chau Kamal Rajkonwar at Lakwa, where we digitised eleven manuscripts.<sup>54</sup> The prayer spoken on that occasion was the *Ai Seng Lau*, led on both occasions by Medini Mohan. The first section of the *Ai Seng Lau* prayer, as it was uttered, is given below as Example 8.

52 We hope that eventually the videos of these short ceremonies can be archived together with the photographs of the manuscripts.

53 We will not list these here, but the digitised files will have the prefix EAP373\_HaraPhukan\_.

54 These will be archived with the prefix EAP373\_KamolRajkonwar\_.

Example 8)

ဟ	လဲ	ဖါ	ဟ	ပိ	ဖါ
pha	lai	bet	pha	pin	bet
sky	many	knife	sky	be	knife
ဟ	လါ	မိတ်;	ဟ	ပိဆံ	မိတ်;

ဟ	ဖျှေ	ဗျ	ရဲလွင်	မိတ်ကျ
pha	phara	tara	along	sik kya
sky	creator	creator	(Bodhisattva)	(Sikkya)
ဟ	ဟူးလ	တူင်လ	ကလွင်း	သဂြ

ရ	ပိ	ပွ	မ	က	က	က	။
ra	ni pan	boi	mu	chau	kau	vi	
(create)	Nirvana	pray	2SG	RESP	1SG	VOC	
လ	ဆိတ်;ပါဆံ,	ဝံ;	မိုး	လဝံ;	ဂဝံ	ကိုဝံ;	

“The God who is like many knives, the God who is a knife, we pray to you, who are the creator of the sky, the peak of the heaven, oh my Lord”.

There are a number of difficulties in translating this prayer. The first of these is the translation of the word *bit*, which can also be read as *mit*. Here we have translated it as “knife”, but there is another Ahom word *mit*, attested in the *Bar Amra* lexicon with the meaning “rainbow”. If we take this as the meaning of *mit*, we would read *lai mit* as “pattern of the rainbow”, which is a plausible meaning here.

Example 8 is part of a longer prayer that is frequently used in Tai Ahom rituals. While we have not found this exact phrase in a manuscript, we have found references to a similar passage in manuscripts such as the *Sai Kai* text for which there are several versions. The one shown below (Fig. 2.8) belongs to Chau Padma Sangbun Phukan of Amguri, but we have also consulted two additional copies belonging to Tileshwar Mohan,<sup>55</sup> the owner of the *Ming Mong Lung Phai* manuscript. None of these manuscripts have the dates of copying, or information about the copyist. None of them is complete, but

<sup>55</sup> These will be archived as EAP373\_TileshwarMohan\_SaiKai\_0001 to 0032.tif and EAP373\_TileshwarMohan\_SaiKai\_\_02\_0001 to 0038.jpg.

careful comparison of the three versions means that the text is in the process of being reconstructed. The first line of this text is presented in Example 9. This example confirms the reading of “knife”, in a metaphorical sense, as the one who is carving out the earth, because there cannot have been a rainbow at the time when the creation of the sky had not yet happened.

Example 9)	၄	ယဝ	ဖိုး	ဟ	ဖိုး	
	ru lai	jem	mv	pha	pin	
	opening word	beginning	time	sky.God	be	
		လိမ်	ပိုဝ်း	ဟ	ပိန်	
	ဗါ	၎	လင် ငို	ဟ	ဗ်	။
	bit	ko	lang din	on	pha	cham
	knife	begin	ground	before	sky	N.FIN
	မိတ်;	ဂေ;	လင်လိမ်	ကွမ်	ဟ	လမ်း

“Long ago when the God who is a knife was beginning to create the ground, and before the sky was created” (EAP373\_PadmaSangBunPhukan\_SaiKai1\_0004).



Fig. 2.8 Folio 1r of a *Sai Kai* manuscript belonging to Padma Sangbun Phukan (EAP373), CC BY.

Returning to Example 8, the second line contains a number of Buddhist terms: *phura* (Buddha), *tara* (teaching of the Buddha or *dharma*), *along* (Bodhisattva, previous incarnation of the Buddha), *sikkyā* (Sakya, creator God in the Buddhist texts) and *nipan* (Nirvana, the state of enlightenment). The presence of these terms in the prayer suggests Buddhist influence on the Tai Ahom rituals. Chaichuen has suggested that these words can be interpreted as replacing original Tai expressions, as we see in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1 Buddhist terms in the Ai Seng Lau prayer and Tai equivalents

Buddhist term		Tai term (Shan)		
𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	phura	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	phu:la	person-create
𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	tara	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	tola	body-create
𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	along	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	yot;chau;	peak-respected
𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	sikkyā	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	laenglon	Lengdon (creator God)
𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	nipan	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	moeng:saeng moeng:kham	country- diamond country-gold

A few lines later in the *Ai Seng Lau* prayer, we see the following, in which a deity or entity called *ji* (first daughter) is invoked, as seen in Example 10:

Example 10)	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫
	ji	nang	luk	nying	khv	boi
	1 <sup>st</sup> daughter	lady	child	female	big	worship
	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫
	mav	chau	kau	vi		
	you	RESP	1SG	VOC		
	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜏𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫		

“We pray to you, the first great daughter, oh my Lord”.

The same entity is found in the *Sai Kai* manuscript in the line that immediately follows Example 9, presented here as Example 11:

Example 11)	𑜏	𑜑	𑜑		𑜑	𑜑	𑜑	
	hav	man	ji		nang	luk	nying	
	GIVE	3SG	first daughter		lady	child	female	
	𑜏;	𑜑:	𑜑;		𑜑:	𑜑:	𑜑:	
	𑜑	𑜑	𑜑	𑜑	𑜑	𑜑	𑜑	𑜑
	khiuw	man	ko	tai	pin	din	sv	tav
	big	3SG	LINK	die	be	ground	straight	under
	𑜏.	𑜑:	𑜑;	𑜑	𑜑	𑜑	𑜑;	𑜑:

“He made the first daughter, the big one, after she died she became the ground directly under” (EAP373\_ Padma SangBunPhukan\_SaiKai1\_0004).

Both the *Ai Seng Lau* prayer and the *Sai Kai* manuscript have the same phrase to refer to this deity, *ji nang luk nying khiuw* (the first daughter, the big one). In the *Sai Kai* manuscript, it goes on after Example 11 to refer to the three younger sisters of *ji*, namely *i* (second daughter), *am* (third daughter) and *ai* (fourth daughter). These four words occurring in the same position in four successive lines confirm for us the reading that we have given in Example 11.

This brief discussion of Ahom prayers has been presented to show the relationship between these manuscripts and the living tradition of Ahom prayers. The similarity between the *Ai Seng Lau* prayer and the *Sai Kai* manuscripts confirms that the language of those prayers is not the “Pseudo Ahom language” that Terwiel has suggested was in use for some Ahom rituals.<sup>56</sup> It remains possible that the prayers such as *Ai Seng Lau* have been newly created after studying the manuscripts, although members of the Tai Ahom priestly caste specifically say that this prayer has been handed down from father to son over many generations, though without knowing the full meaning of the prayer. What we can say is that the close study of the manuscripts has allowed for a translation of the prayers that are in use in contemporary ritual to be undertaken.

56 Terwiel, “Recreating the Past”, p. 283.

## Stories

In addition to the Buddhist stories mentioned earlier, there are a number of Tai stories whose storyline is not necessarily known from other sources and whose translation is thus more challenging. One example of these is the *Nang Khai* story, from a manuscript owned by the late Baparam Hati Baruah of Hati Gaon (Fig. 2.9).<sup>57</sup> The manuscript, one of the first photographed in the project, has the name of the copyist, and the name of the text, but no date. On fol 20v (image 0042) it is written: “In the seventh month, his father who was Serela Baruah and his son Mekheli, he wrote this *Nang Khai* scripture which should not be allowed to disappear, should not be hidden [lest] you fall into the forks of hell”. The name of the manuscript is given as  $\text{নং খাই পুথি}$  [*Nang Khai Puthi*], where *puthi* is an Assamese word meaning “sacred text”. Altogether there are 37 folios in this text, and so it is curious that the scribe gave his name only a little over half way through. Although we have not yet finished translating the whole text, it does appear to be one story; perhaps in writing his name in the middle of the text, the copyist was confused about the contents.



Fig. 2.9 Folio 20v of the *Nang Khai* manuscript belonging to Baparam Hati Baruah (EAP373), CC BY.

Since the translation of the manuscript is not yet complete,<sup>58</sup> we do not yet know the meaning of “*nang khai*”. It could be “lady egg”, referring to a lady

<sup>57</sup> Baparam Hati Baruah passed away in 2014 before the translation of his manuscript could be completed and presented to him. His house was one of very few Ahom houses that maintained the Tai tradition of building on stilts, but with the special feature that the bamboo floors on the upper level were rendered with mud. This manuscript is archived as EAP373\_BaparamHatiBaruah\_NangKhai\_0001 to 0078.tif.

<sup>58</sup> We hope this will be completed in early 2015.

who is related to the king, one term for whom is *khai pha* (“the egg of the sky”). So while we know the name of this manuscript because it is explicitly stated, we will not know what that means until the whole text has been studied. The story of this manuscript is about a river creature, or Naga, and a man, referred to as “the single man”, who casts his fishing net over the river and accidentally catches that Naga.<sup>59</sup>

This text gives some clues as to its place of origin. If our translation is correct, it refers to the Mekong River, as we see in Example 12, reproduced in Fig. 2.10.

Example 12)	ကန် ဖရူ	ဦး	ကျွဲ	ကျွဲ	ဗ	။
	khan to	ngvk	khai khong	rong	ba	
	thus	Naga	egg-Mekong	call	say	
	ခန့်တရဲ;	ဦး;	ခံ,ခွင်	ရွင်.	ဝဲ;	။

“Thus the Naga who was the egg of Mekong called out, saying”  
(EAP373\_BaparamHatiBaruah\_NangKhai\_0008).



Fig. 2.10 Folio 3v of the *Nang Khai* manuscript belonging to Baparam Hati Baruah (EAP373), CC BY.

59 There is another manuscript, EAP373\_SandicharanPhukan\_OdbhutKakhotNangKhai, which shares the name *Nang Khai*. We have not been able to compare the two texts to see if there is any similarity. In March 2014, we photographed yet another manuscript in fragments, also entitled *Nang Khai* (EAP373\_DhamenMohamBoruah\_NangKhai), but once again we have not been able to connect the text of that version to the version of Baparam Hati Baruah.



Chaichuen observed that this text, which he has never heard of in Shan areas, refers to the history of Tai people in the Mekong river area, and consequently must have been brought to Assam rather than composed there. In his view, this would have to have been done before the destruction of the kingdoms of Muang Mau Lung, Muang Kong and Muang Yang in the year 1555. This campaign was led by the Burmese King Bayinnaung of Toungoo (1550-1581). Thus our assumption is that the manuscript must have been composed before 1555 and that it may not survive in Mau Lung. Chaichuen said that this story could not have been brought later, because all of the old manuscripts were burned during the wars waged by King Bayinnaung. So far this is the only text we have analysed that can definitely be associated with the Mau Lung area, but we expect there are more among the manuscripts that have been photographed.

## Scholarly outcomes

The major scholarly outcomes of EAP373 are: the transcription and translation of a number manuscripts; the further development of the online Tao Ahom Dictionary; the preparation of a descriptive grammar of Tai Ahom; and the realization of the proposal to include Tai Ahom script in the Unicode.

As we have seen, the process of transcribing and translating texts is very time consuming, but they form the basis for the continued development of the online Ahom Dictionary.<sup>60</sup> At present the dictionary contains over 4,500 head words and many subentries for multiple senses of a word and for compounds. Each word listed in the dictionary is sourced to an Ahom manuscript, in many cases the *Bar Amra*, a Tai-Ahom to Assamese lexicon. There are a number of copies of the *Bar Amra*, of which the most important is kept at the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Guwahati. The version that we were able to consult is that owned by Junaram Sangbun Phukan, one of the most senior Ahom priests (*Deodhai*) from Parijat village. The manuscript, written completely in Ahom script, gives a word in Tai and then a translation in Assamese. An example is given below (Fig. 2.11).

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60 <http://sealang.net/ahom>



Fig. 2.11 Folio 1v of the *Bar Amra* manuscript belonging to Junaram Sangbun Phukan (EAP373), CC BY.

This page, folio 1v, is divided into three columns. The Assamese meanings of the word 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜨 *kai* are given on the left hand side (lines 1-6). The fifth line is the word for “chicken” which reads as in Example 13, with the Assamese translation written in Ahom script and marked by the case marker -𑜀𑜂, which marks some direct and indirect objects.

Example 13) 𑜀	𑜂	𑜆	𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜨	𑜀
kai	cham	ba	ku ku rak	
chicken	PRT	say	chicken-K	

“For a fowl, kai is said”.

The entire manuscript was transcribed by Zeenat Tabassum,<sup>61</sup> and formed the basis for a dictionary in the Toolbox format.<sup>62</sup> All words that occur in the *Bar*

61 Tabassum is a Master’s graduate in linguistics from Gauhati University. This work was done between 2005 and 2008 some years before the EAP project commenced. The translation was conducted taking into account the earlier translation in Bimala Kanta Barua and N. N. Deodhari Phukan. *Ahom Lexicons, Based on Original Tai Manuscripts* (Guwahati: Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, 1964).

62 Toolbox is a dictionary-writing program produced by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, <http://www-01.sil.org/computing/toolbox>

*Amra* are included, but in addition words that we find in other manuscripts are added when their meanings are confirmed. Each of those words is sourced back to at least one example in the manuscripts. The online dictionary includes the sentence containing an example of the word, in Ahom script, transliteration, with English, Shan and sometimes Assamese translations.<sup>63</sup> All the manuscripts referenced in the dictionary are also in the EAP archive.

The writing of a descriptive Ahom grammar, based on the language examples as found in the manuscripts, whose translation is possible because of their identification through this project. A sketch grammar, running to around 34 pages has been already published: it is available in a published article, and has been archived online as part of the DoBeS website.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, there is the development of a Unicode encoding for the Ahom script, which has been jointly developed by Martin Hosken and myself.<sup>65</sup> The final version of the Ahom Unicode proposal was presented to the Unicode consortium in October 2012 and approved. A first draft Tai Ahom unicode font has been produced, together with a keyboard, and since July 2014 the font has been in use by community members on Facebook and in some email formats. There are some remaining technical issues to ensure that the font renders correctly in word-processing programs like Microsoft Word or Open Office.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless the fact that the Tai Ahom language can now be used

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63 We are working towards making the dictionary truly quadrilingual (Tai Ahom, English, Shan, Assamese) but this will take some time. Some entries are already quadrilingual, as with the entry for *kai* (chicken).

64 For the published version, see Stephen Morey, "A Sketch of Tai Ahom", in *Axamiya aru Axamar Bhasa [Assamese and the Languages of Assam]*, ed. by Biswajit Das and Axamar Bhasa (Guwahati: AANK-Bank, 2011). At present the best way to access the online Ahom materials is to follow a link to projects on the DoBeS website (<http://www.mpi.nl/DoBeS>), then Tangsa, Tai and Singpho in Northeast India, then click on corpus and then the node "Ahom". All of the materials that we have deposited on the website are available for download.

65 Martin Hosken and Stephen Morey, "Revised Proposal to add the Ahom Script in the SMP of the UCS", Working Group Document, 14 September 2012, <http://www.unicode.org/L2/L2012/12309-ahom-rev.pdf>

66 The Ahom font renders perfectly on Facebook using the Mozilla Firefox browser, once it is set as the default font. In other browsers and other platforms it may not work so well, as yet. The reason for these rendering issues is the way in which characters are coded. For example, the vowel /e/, is written before the consonant that it sounds after. So the word *ke* is written 𑜀𑜃𑜫 which is e k. Unicode requires the /e/ to be encoded after the consonant and therefore the fonts have to be designed so that the vowel appears in front of the consonant even though it is encoded after. At present the Ahom Unicode font will not work properly in Microsoft Word, and for that reason in this paper and in our online dictionary and texts we are still using the old legacy font, designed by me in the 1990s.

on social media has the potential to lead to a great expansion in the use of this script and further strengthen the revival of the language.

## Coda: a manuscript’s injunctions

Sometimes at the end of a manuscript, following the section containing the name of the copyist and the date of the copying, there is an injunction from the copyist about what should happen to the text. Example 14 is a line of text from the end of the *Khun Lung Khun Lai* manuscript belonging to Tului Phukan (see Fig. 2.4).

Example 14)	པ	ཡེ	ཡ	པ	ཤི	ལཱ
	phav	jon	ja	hav	rai	lak
	who	beg	PROH	give	disappear	steal
	ཕྱི	ཡུ་ཚེ:	ཡ།	ཉི;	ཉཱ	ལོན.
	ཐ	པཱེ	ཡ	ཎ		ཎ
	bai	svng	ja	am		
	keep	hide	PROH	keep silent		
	འ.	འཕྱིེ,	ཡ།	མཎཎ:		

“If someone begs [to take it] don’t give it lest it disappear, keep it hidden, but don’t keep silent [about the story]”.

This translation was done by Chaichuen and myself, and the meaning emerged after some discussion. The grammatical structure of this line is: *phav jon, ja hv rai lak, bai svng, ja am*. The sentence consists of a condition (*phav jon* “[if] someone begs [it]”), followed by three commands: *ja hav rai lak* (“don’t let it be lost and taken away”), *bai svng* (“keep it hidden” or perhaps “keep it safe”), and *ja am* (“don’t keep silent about it”). This we interpret as a request to the future owners of the book to keep it in its proper location, not to let it be taken away, keep it safe, but not to hide its contents and meaning from the wider community. I consider that our work is exactly in accord with this injunction.

## Abbreviations

FIN	final particle
GIVE	grammaticalisation of the word “give” to imply causation, or allowing something to happen
LINK	linking word, sometimes translatable as “also”
N.FIN	non-final, a particle indicating that another phrase or clauses is to follow
PL	plural
PN	proper name
PROH	prohibitive, “don’t do X”
RESP	respect particle
SG	singular
TRUE	literally “true”; this particle is largely bleached of meaning but conveys that the statement is believed to be true
VOC	vocative

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### 3. Unravelling Lepcha manuscripts

*Heleen Plaisier*

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Lepcha is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Indian state of Sikkim, the Darjeeling district in West Bengal, the Ilām district in Nepal, and in a few villages of the Samtse district in southwestern Bhutan. The Lepcha people are regarded as the native inhabitants of Sikkim, and most of the areas in which Lepcha is spoken today were once Sikkimese territory. The exact position of Lepcha within the clade of Tibeto-Burman languages is still unclear. The current number of Lepcha speakers is estimated to be around 30,000, but many Lepchas today never mastered the language fluently and give preference to Nepali and English.<sup>1</sup>



Fig. 3.1 *Prayers to the Choten*. Foning Collection (EAP281/1/9), CC BY.

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1 Heleen Plaisier, *A Grammar of Lepcha* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 1.



Although there are still areas in which the Lepcha language flourishes, the culture has been losing ground for over 100 years. Lepcha manuscripts represent the oldest stages of the Lepcha literary tradition and with the endangerment of the Lepcha language and culture, the survival of these texts is at risk. Many Lepcha texts are based on Tibetan originals and combine elements of non-Buddhist native Lepcha religious beliefs with Tibetan Buddhist values and traditions (Fig. 3.1). Any study of Lepcha civilisation cannot ignore the enormous impact of the Tibetan language and culture, a research topic that has so far received little attention.



Fig. 3.2 *Worship of Ekádoshi*. Tamyong Collection (EAP281/3/1), CC BY.

Many aspects of Lepcha culture, literature and religion are as yet undocumented. It is of paramount importance to document and describe these traditions before they become too eroded, and to work towards a balanced interpretation of their precise nature. This chapter presents the first steps in unravelling the Lepcha materials that were recently digitised through the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP), in order to highlight their significance and encourage further research.<sup>2</sup>

2 The author gratefully acknowledges the Endangered Archives Programme for funding the pilot project EAP281: Locating and identifying Lepcha manuscripts as a first step towards their preservation, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP281](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP281). The digitised Lepcha titles mentioned in this chapter are available at <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP281>, and their EAP catalogue numbers are given in footnotes.

## Written Lepcha

### The native Lepcha orthography

The Lepcha people maintain a literary tradition that dates back to the eighteenth century. The Lepcha script is understood to have been devised at the time of the third *chogyal* of Sikkim, Chador Namgyal, who reigned from 1700-1716. According to Lepcha tradition, the native Lepcha orthography was created by the Lepcha scholar Thikúng Mensalóng, who is believed to have been a contemporary of Lama Lhatsun Chenpo, i.e. Lama Lhatsun Namkha Jigme (1597-1654), the patron saint of Sikkim, who played a definitive part in the Sikkimese conversion to Buddhism. Since sources mention that Mensalóng and Lhatsun Chenpo met each other,<sup>3</sup> they may well have worked together on the Lepcha orthography, which would account for a Tibetan tradition which ascribes the introduction of the Lepcha script to Lhatsun Chenpo. The Lepcha tradition that credits Mensalóng with the invention of the Lepcha script seems even more plausible when we realise that the Limbu or Kiranti script was also developed during the reign of Chador Namgyal, not by Chador Namgyal himself, but by the Limbu monk Śirijaṅgā.<sup>4</sup>

It has been suggested that there was a literary tradition amongst the Lepcha before the arrival of Buddhism, and that Lepcha texts were destroyed by Tibetan Buddhist monks in the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup> These suggestions are not supported by evidence, but it is important to point here to a striking parallel in Limbu history, where Limbu books that reflected the shamanistic Limbu religion were forbidden and destroyed by the regime, and the inventor of the Limbu script, Śirijaṅgā, was killed by Buddhist monks after having used the script to write down non-Buddhist Limbu traditions.<sup>6</sup>

The native Lepcha orthography is systematically treated in a work entitled *Lazóng*,<sup>7</sup> which is traditionally used to teach the first steps of reading and

3 Arthur Foning, *Lepcha: My Vanishing Tribe* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1987), p. 152.

4 George van Driem, *Languages of the Himalayas: An Ethnolinguistic Handbook of the Greater Himalayan Region* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 674-75. The origin of the Lepcha orthography is discussed in detail in Plaisier, *A Grammar of Lepcha*, pp. 32-44.

5 George Byres Mainwaring, *A Grammar of the Rong (Lepcha) Language as it Exists in the Dorjeling and Sikim Hills* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1876), p. xi.

6 Van Driem, *Languages of the Himalayas*, pp. 675-76.

7 *Lazóng*: EAP281/1/11. Titles and direct quotations from Lepcha are transcribed according to the conventions of the transliteration described in Plaisier, *A Grammar of Lepcha*, pp. 38-44.

writing Lepcha.<sup>8</sup> Customarily, *Lazóng* is recited by a teacher in a set melody, which enables his audience of students to read and chant along, memorising the values of the letters and syllables in the process. Although this work might seem to be a rather insignificant list of letter combinations to the outsider, the *Lazóng* represents an old, powerful and important Lepcha tradition. It is said that the next step in the traditional approach would be to practise writing by using a work entitled *shuyuk hlápjen*, but no surviving copies of this book have yet been identified. Although most people nowadays learn to read and write Lepcha through different methods, the traditional method based on recitation of the *Lazóng* is still practised in some areas. The traditional order of the Lepcha alphabet in the *Lazóng* is different from the order found in modern primers and textbooks, and even modern versions of the *Lazóng*,<sup>9</sup> which follow the order of the *devanāgarī* alphabet.

Lepcha literature comprises various literary genres, such as folk tales, poetry, fiction and religious works. The subject has as yet received little scholarly attention and only a few transcriptions, translations and analyses of Lepcha works have been published to date. Albert Grünwedel, the Tibetologist who edited the Lepcha dictionary manuscript left behind by George Byres Mainwaring, published several Lepcha texts that display clear links to Tibetan works.<sup>10</sup> An excellent account of traditional Lepcha stories was published by C. de Beauvoir Stocks,<sup>11</sup> and René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz wrote an article on the Lepcha, "*Legende vom Turmbau* [Legend of the Building of the Tower]".<sup>12</sup> Several Lepcha legends are described in the publications of Geoffrey Gorer, Matthias Hermanns, Amal Kumar Das, George Kotturan and Richard Keith Sprigg.<sup>13</sup> Halfdan Siiger and Jørgen Rischel include descriptions of various

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8 Plaisier, *Catalogue of Lepcha Manuscripts in the van Manen Collection* (Leiden: Kern Institute, 2003), pp. 31-32.

9 Khárpú Támsáng, *Róng Choming ân Lázóng* (Kalimpong: Mani Printing Works, 1982).

10 Albert Grünwedel, "Drei Leptscha Texte, mit Auszügen aus dem Padma-than-yig und Glossar", *T'oung Pao*, 7 (1896), 522-62; idem, "Ein Kapitel des Ta-she-Sung", *Festschrift für Adolf Bastian* (Berlin, 1896); idem, "Leptscha-Text mit Übersetzung", *Veröffentlichungen aus dem Königlichen Museum für Völkerkunde zu Berlin*, 4 (1897), 118-26; idem, "Padmasambhava und Mandarava: Leptscha Übersetzung des Mandarava-Legende", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 52 (1898), 447-61; and idem, "Padmasambhava und verwandtes", *Baessler-Archiv*, 3 (1913).

11 C. de Beauvoir Stocks, "Folklore and Customs of the Lap-chas of Sikkim", *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, new series 21 (1925), 325-505; and idem, "A Rong Folk Tobacco Story", *Folklore*, 37 (1926), 193-95.

12 René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, "Die Legende vom Turmbau der Lepcha", *Anthropos*, 48 (1953), 889-97.

13 Geoffrey Gorer, *Himalayan Village: An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim* (London: M. Joseph, 1938); Matthias Hermanns, *The Indo-Tibetans* (Bombay: Fernandes, 1954), pp. 30-96; Amal Kumar Das, *The Lepchas of West Bengal* (Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1978), pp. 216-33;

Lepcha myths in their book, as well as analyses and translations of over forty short Lepcha texts.<sup>14</sup> I published a transcription and translation of two Lepcha resurrection texts,<sup>15</sup> and Arthur Foning provides a translation and discussion of various important Lepcha legends.<sup>16</sup> Of particular value are Khárpú Támsáng's books on Lepcha mythology, which capture traditional stories in the Lepcha language.<sup>17</sup>

## Lepcha manuscripts

The oldest handwritten materials in Lepcha to have been identified were written in the second half of the nineteenth century. Lepcha texts are written on paper and are usually in book form, either handmade volumes or machine-made exercise books. Some Lepcha manuscripts are in concertina form, and occasionally they consist of loose sheets. Dog-ears, small stains, mould, insect and worm damage (Fig. 3.2), weakened paper, discoloration of ink, grease stains, damp stains and water spots occur in almost all Lepcha manuscripts.

Over the centuries, religious Lepcha texts have been meticulously copied by hand by devoted scribes, a tradition which continues to date. Copies are made to ensure the survival of the texts and to pass them on to others. The act of copying these books by hand is considered to be a devoutly religious task that should not be undertaken without respect for the meaning of the text. The copyist may add a short colophon to the work, which is a text passage in which the name of the scribe, the place, year, month, day and in some cases even the time of the transcript is given.

If the text was not copied per se, but written down by the scribe whilst being narrated or recited by someone else, this may also be mentioned in the colophon. The colophon is a personal contribution of the scribe and is generally written in a style different from the rest of the work — it is usually

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George Kotturan, *The Himalayan Gateway: History and Culture of Sikkim* (Delhi: Sterling, 1983), pp. 122-24; *Folk Tales of Sikkim* (Delhi: Sterling, 1989); Richard Keith Sprigg, "The Lepcha Language and Three Hundred Years of Tibetan Influence in Sikkim", *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, 24 (1982), 16-31; and Sprigg, "Hooker's Expenses in Sikkim: An Early Lepcha Text", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 46/2 (1983), 305-25.

14 Halfdan Siiger and Jørgen Rischel, *The Lepchas: Culture and Religion of a Himalayan People* (Copenhagen: Gyldenal, 1967).

15 Heleen Plaisier, "Two Lepcha Delúk Texts", in *Medieval Tibeto-Burman Languages IV*, ed. by Nathan Hill (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 23-109.

16 Foning, *Lepcha*, pp. 85-109 and 265-80.

17 Khárpú Támsáng, *Róng Tôm Sung: A Treasure of the Lepcha Moral Stories* (Kalimpong: Lyangsong Tamsang, 1999); and idem, *Róng Sung Gyom* (Kalimpong: Lepcha Association, 2002).

more personal and more direct. In addition to a few personal words, the colophon typically contains certain solemn and honorary phrases and prayers, which are used by the scribe to urge the reader to treat the text with respect and to take to heart its moral lessons.

Over 200 Lepcha manuscripts are held in European libraries, universities and museums. This number relates to the number of physical manuscript volumes, but one manuscript volume often contains several literary works. The largest collection of Lepcha manuscripts can be found in the collection of the Kern Institute at Leiden University, and consists of 182 manuscripts collected by Johan van Manen (1877-1943).<sup>18</sup> The Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna houses seven manuscripts collected by René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1923-1959), and the National Museum in Copenhagen has twelve manuscripts collected by Halfdan Siiger (1911-1999). The School of Oriental and African Studies in London houses five Lepcha manuscripts. There are a further seven in the British Library; six of these volumes were collected by Brian Houghton Hodgson (c. 1800-1894) and one by Lawrence Augustine Waddell (1854-1938).



Fig. 3.3 *The Legend of the Goddess Queen*. Foning Collection (EAP281/1/20), CC BY.

<sup>18</sup> Plaisier, *Catalogue of Lepcha Manuscripts*.

For three months in 2009, with the support of EAP, I explored the Lepcha manuscripts surviving in private collections in Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The aim of this project was to locate collections of manuscripts, identify the texts, and discuss with owners the possibility of digitising their materials for preservation. The project was supported by a local partner, the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in Gangtok (Sikkim, India), which itself houses thirty Lepcha manuscripts, the description and digitisation of which were included in the project.

During the project we have consulted and described six private collections of Lepcha manuscripts.<sup>19</sup> These are the collections of the late Arthur Foning of Chyu-Pundi Farm in Mongbol Basti in Kalimpong, Óng Tshering Namchu of Mane Gombú village in Kalimpong, Dendrup Adyenmú Lepcha of Mane Gombú, now residing in Gangtok in Sikkim, Chuksung Lepcha of Lower Burtuk in Sikkim, Tamyong Lepcha of Luknyi (Linge Payong) in Sikkim, and Chong Róngkup of Pulungdung near Darjeeling. Foning (1913-1987) was a renowned Lepcha scholar who published various works on Lepcha culture. Chuksung Lepcha works as a government official in Sikkim and is active in several groups with a vested interest in the preservation of Lepcha heritage. Dendrup Lepcha is a well-known literary figure, researcher and journalist in Gangtok with an enduring passion for Lepcha cultural studies. Óng Tshering Namchu, Tamyong Lepcha and Chong Róngkup all practice as *bóngthings*, traditional Lepcha religious specialists, and as such regularly use their Lepcha manuscripts for recitation during religious ceremonies.

These collections contain 89 manuscripts altogether, of which forty were selected for digitisation.<sup>20</sup> Preference was given to rare and unusual titles, and only a few copies were included of better-known works. Some manuscripts were too fragile to be included in the digitisation. The manuscripts we have digitised were produced between 1894 and 1963 by Rapdensing Foning, Núrshing Lepcha, N. S. Kárthák, Nákphe Lepcha, Khámbú Singh Lepcha, Tshángdo Tshering Lepcha, P. T. Lepcha, Thilok Lepcha and other unnamed or presently unidentified scribes. All manuscripts remain in the owners' private collections. The digitised copies of these manuscripts are available

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19 A further 125 manuscripts were located in Kalimpong but not described, and reports of up to 420 manuscripts in Sikkim, Darjeeling, Nepal and Bhutan were noted.

20 2448 digital images were created using a Nikon D80 digital camera with a Sigma DC 17-70 mm lens, using a tripod to stabilise the camera. Images were made in RAW format and converted to TIFF 300 ppi TIFF, 3872 × 2592, Adobe RGB (1998), 10.0 MP.

online through the EAP, and copies are also accessible upon request at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology.<sup>21</sup>

## Lepcha literature

### Lepcha religious beliefs

The central religious roles in the Lepcha community are traditionally occupied by the *mun* and *bóngthing*, who both function as shamans. The *bóngthing* is traditionally a male shaman who presides at recurring religious ceremonies and seasonal festivals and may heal acute illness. The *mun*, often but not necessarily a female shaman, is a healer who exorcises demons, helps to heal illness and guides souls to the afterlife. It is possible for a *bóngthing* to develop into a *mun*; in Sikkim such healers are known as *padem*. The indigenous religious beliefs of the Lepchas were undoubtedly influenced by Tibetan Buddhist values and traditions since the introduction of Buddhism in Sikkim, but especially since the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty in the seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup> Indigenous Lepcha shamanism coexists with Buddhist customs and beliefs, so that at many important ceremonies in Lepcha life, both Buddhist *lamas* and Lepcha *bóngthings* preside, each to perform their own rituals.

### Popular Lepcha texts

It is generally assumed that the majority of religious Lepcha texts are of a Buddhist nature, but since the texts also appear to display at least some elements of the native Lepcha religious beliefs, they are generally regarded as adaptations rather than direct translations of Tibetan Buddhist texts:<sup>23</sup>

If one goes through these books carefully, it will be seen unmistakably that, apart from the plain copying down from the original Tibetan texts, the stories have been presented and given out to the readers in a complete Lepcha

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21 Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Deorali, Gangtok, Sikkim 737 101, India.

22 van Driem, *Languages of the Himalayas*, pp. 904-05.

23 See Piotr Klafkowski, "Rong (Lepcha), the Vanishing Language and Culture of Eastern Himalaya", *Lingua Posnaniensis*, 23 (1980), 105-18 (p. 112); and Plaisier, *Catalogue of Lepcha Manuscripts*, pp. 37-40.

aura. The readers will feel that these stories etc. were written by the Lepchas themselves, and for themselves, exclusively.<sup>24</sup>

No research to date has compared these Lepcha adaptations with the Tibetan originals. The lack of adequate dictionaries and relevant text editions make the translation of Lepcha texts a challenging affair and only few transcriptions, translations or analyses of Lepcha manuscript texts have been published to date. Also, the abundant spelling variations or spelling errors that are present in Lepcha manuscript texts can be problematic. The identification of strands of native traditions in Lepcha literature is further complicated by our limited knowledge of the ancient Lepcha religious beliefs. Moreover, only few Lepchas can still read the handwriting and comprehend the language used in old texts.

In the titles of Lepcha works we often find an indication of genre, such as *sung* (story, narrative), *cho* (book, learning), *munlóm* (prayer, blessing), or *námthár* (legend, biography). These designations are obviously direct loans from equivalent categories in Tibetan literature, i.e. Tibetan *Gsuñ*, *Chos*, *sMon-lam* and *rNam-thar*. Indeed, a Lepcha book, referred to as *cho*, typically conveys a canonical message, whereas a *munlóm* is usually a prayer book of some kind. A Lepcha *námthár* is generally a text containing a sacred legend, some chapter of native lore or a hagiography about the life of a saint or miracle-worker. The Lepcha term *sung* is used specifically for traditional stories that were originally not written down, but transmitted orally. In a broader sense, *sung* refers to narratives or stories in general.

Some Lepchas indicate any text with a Buddhist connection by adding the designation *námthó námthár* or *námthár cho*. Most popular works exist under different titles, such as *tashe thúng sá námthar*, *tashe thúng sá cho*, and *tashe sung*, or *chotyen munlóm*, *chotyen námthár*, or even *chotyen munlóm sá sung* and *chotyen munlóm sá námthár*. Whether these different titles represent different versions of the text is still an open question. In colloquial Lepcha, designations such as *munlóm* and *námthár* are pretty interchangeable, and appear to be used not so much because of their literal meaning, but rather their connotation of indicating some kind of sacred text.

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24 Arthur Foning, "A Short Account of the Lepcha Language and Literature", *Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute*, 13/3-4 (1979), 20-30 (p. 24).



The pivotal work in Lepcha literature is entitled *Tashe sung* [*The Story of Lord Tashe*].<sup>25</sup> This book describes the legendary life of *Tashe thing* (Lord Tashe), who is equalled to Padmasambhava in the Tibetan *Pad-ma than-yig*. The book describes different events in Lord Tashe's life, his extraordinary powers and knowledge, his views on life and death, his battle against evil and the blessings he was able to spread around. Parts of this work are traditionally recited twice a day by Lepcha people: in the early morning and late evening. Lepcha texts are recited or chanted in a specific manner, referred to as *nyumjó* (melody, tune). There is a range of such chanting styles, of which the simplest and most commonly used is referred to as *shimvunmú* *ʔúng tasót nyumjó* (flowing melody).<sup>26</sup>

There are other Lepcha works that are subsidiary to the *Tashe sung*, and in a sense all these texts form part of a large epos about Lord Tashe's life and work. For example, the work *Rum pundí sá námthár* [*The Legend of the Goddess Queen*] describes how Lord Tashe is struck by the troubles and suffering of human beings on earth, and how he sends his wife to earth to fight the bad influences that prevail there (Fig. 3.3).<sup>27</sup> She tries to lead three wicked kings to a righteous and more religious path by taking birth as one of the king's daughters. Since her suffering is so great, Lord Tashe himself takes birth as one of the king's sons, and ultimately succeeds in fighting evil.

Another work found in many copies is *Chotyen munlóm* [*Prayers to the Choten*], a book of prayers, ritual ceremonies and offerings, which is intended to demonstrate the formulae for showing devotion and expressing worship.<sup>28</sup> The book explains that the reading of prayers procures blessings. *Chotyen munlóm* is partly written in the form of a dialogue between *sángge kungáwu* (Lord Buddha) and *tukbo thing* (Lord Tukbo). This is a book of prophecy, which predicts and describes calamities that mankind will have to suffer. According to René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, this text corresponds to the Tibetan text *mChod-rten sMon-lam*, about the Bya-ruñ kha-śor *stūpa* at Kathmandu.<sup>29</sup>

In several manuscripts we have found the work entitled *Lopân birútsáná* [*The Learned Master Birutsana*], which contains wise sayings, moral and ethical instructions of a contemporary of Padmasambhava, who in Tibet is known

25 *Tashe sung*: EAP281/1/8, EAP281/1/22, EAP281/1/23, EAP281/2/2, EAP281/4/1, EAP281/5/6, EAP281/5/10. Plaisier, *Catalogue of Lepcha Manuscripts*, p. 41.

26 Päsóng Choring Simik, "Rhythmic Tones in Reading Lepcha Religious Books", *Aachuley: A Quarterly Lepcha Bilingual News Magazine*, 2/3 (1998), 17-18.

27 *Rum pundí sá námthár*: EAP281/1/20.

28 *Chotyen munlóm*: EAP281/1/9, EAP281/5/3.

29 Plaisier, *Catalogue of Lepcha Manuscripts*, pp. 34-35 and 41.

as *Slob-pdon* Vairocana.<sup>30</sup> Foning pointed to this title as the source of many expressions in the Lepcha language, often referred to as *tungbór* (idiom) and *ringdyul* (metaphor).<sup>31</sup>

Another example of a popular work attested in manuscripts we digitised, *Cenrejú sá námthár* [*The Legend of Cenrejú*], is based on the legend of Cenrejú, the Bodhisattva of compassion (Tibetan *Spyan-ras-gzigs*, Sanskrit *Avalokiteśvara*) (Fig. 3.4).<sup>32</sup> Cenrejú tries to liberate all living beings from all kinds of suffering, but eventually has to accept that his goal cannot be reached without help. He despairs and consequently his head splits into many pieces. The Buddha (*Amitābha*) puts his body back together and creates a body with many different arms and heads, which will enable Cenrejú to fight many different kinds of suffering all at the same time. Cenrejú is sometimes portrayed with a thousand arms and eleven heads, and is then called *Ekádoshi*.



Fig. 3.4 *The Legend of Cenrejú*. Foning Collection (EAP281/1/6), CC BY.

30 *Lopân birútsána*: EAP281/1/15, EAP281/1/18.

31 Foning, *Lepcha*, pp. 166-70.

32 *Cenrejú sá námthár*: EAP281/1/6.

We have also found texts related to the worship of Ekadoshi (Sanskrit *Avalokiteśvara Eka-daśa-mukha*) such as *Ekadoshi sa munlom* [*Worship of Ekadoshi*] (Fig. 3.2).<sup>33</sup> The text describes the life of the virtuous king Bírbáho and explains the cult of Ekádoshi, in which it is customary to fast and pray once a year for two whole days and one whole night. In the book, the existence of different religions in the world is explained, and the need for tolerance towards other religions, such as Hinduism, is strongly emphasised. This Lepcha title may correspond to the Sanskrit-Tibetan work *I-kā-da-śa sMon-lam*.

Other popular texts we found are *Tángku námthár* [*The Legendary Origin of Tobacco*] which explains the demonic origins of tobacco and the dangerous consequences of its use,<sup>34</sup> and *Tukfil sá námthár* [*The Legend of the Ants*], a popular story that demonstrates the value of mutual respect between living creatures.<sup>35</sup> The latter text describes how, while a priest is meditating, an ant walks over the table in front of him. The priest flicks the insect off the table, and nearly kills it. The ant is shocked and asks the priest angrily if he realises that he came close to killing it. The priest is not moved and the ant takes the matter to the ant-king who attacks the priest with his army, in order to teach him a lesson. The terrified priest prays for help and is rescued by a magic light which frightens the ants away. In the end no one is hurt, but the priest and the ants learn to respect each other.<sup>36</sup>

Another lively story is recounted in the book *Guru choʔóng* which contains the records of the pious Guru Choʔóng and his sinful mother Gompúkít.<sup>37</sup> This work may be based on the Tibetan *Gu-ru Chos-dbañ gi rNam-thar*, a story about Padmasambhava. *Trimík Kunden sá námthár* [*The Legend of Trimík Kunden*] is the Lepcha version of the Tibetan legend *Dri-med Kun-ldan rNam-thar*, based on the *Viśvantara* or *Vessantara Jātaka*, the last great birth of the Buddha, and describes many heroic sacrifices made by the charitable prince.<sup>38</sup>

33 *Ekádoshi sá munlóm*: EAP281/1/23, EAP281/2/3, EAP281/3/1.

34 *Tángku námthár*: EAP281/1/18.

35 *Tukfil sá námthár*: EAP281/1/9.

36 Plaisier, *Catalogue of Lepcha manuscripts*, p. 50.

37 *Gúrú choʔóng*: EAP281/1/8.

38 *Trimík Kunden sá námthár*: EAP281/1/21.

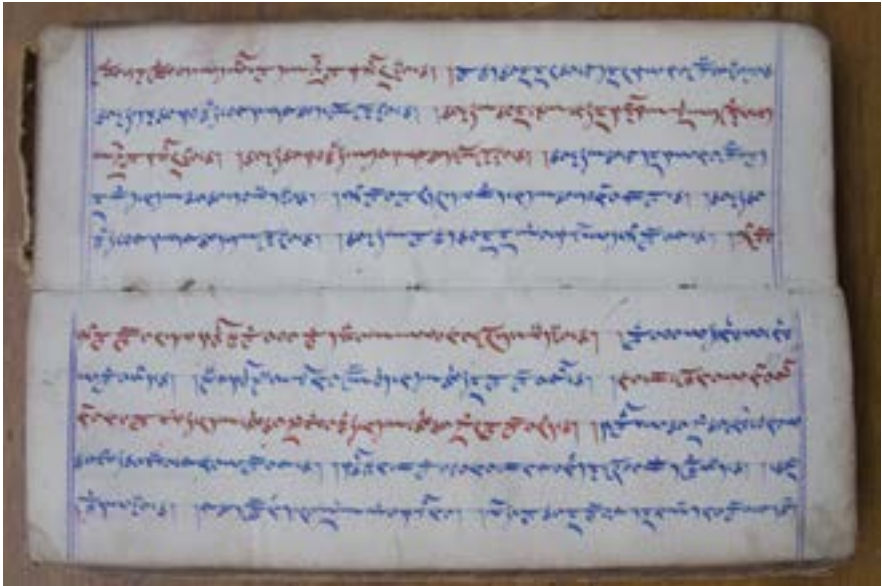


Fig. 3.5 *The Legend of the Goddess Nángse*. Foning Collection (EAP281/1/13), CC BY.

## Lepcha resurrection texts

In Lepcha literature we also find a group of texts in which people relate their experiences in the afterlife. This literature describes the experiences of those who meet their death and are subsequently sent back to the living to recount the torments to which sinners are subjected after dying. In the Lepcha language, their accounts are referred to by the term *delúk*, literally “resurrection” or “revenant”. The term *delúk* is akin to the Tibetan phrase *h̄Das-log*, which is used for Tibetan narratives of a similar nature. These tales are found in Tibetan as early as the seventeenth century and in Lepcha since the eighteenth century. The genre is generally understood as a mediation of Buddhist doctrine through traditional Tibetan beliefs.<sup>39</sup>

While a number of Lepcha *delúk* texts are clearly based on Tibetan originals, others may be original Lepcha texts in the *h̄Das-log* tradition. Two *delúk* texts that are well-known from Tibetan literature were frequently copied in their

<sup>39</sup> Plaisier, *Two Lepcha Delúk Texts*, pp. 24-25.

Lepcha versions; these are the stories of *Lingse chokit* and *Kármá zóngjun*. Other examples of Lepcha *delúk* texts are *Sakon delúk sá sung* [The Story of the Resurrection of Sakon], *Nungyang mun delúk* [A Nun's Return from Hell], *Phyukbú pake sá námthár* [The Legend of the Wealthy Man Pake], *Thóngsál Drámmo námthár* [The Life of Thóngsál Drámmo], *Mun Tembú sá delúk* [The Resurrection of the Priestess Tembú] and *Rummit Nángse sá námthár* [The Legend of the Goddess Nángse] (Fig. 3.5).<sup>40</sup>



Fig. 3.6 Astrological text. Namchu Collection (EAP281/2/1), CC BY.



Fig. 3.7 Astrological text. Foning Collection (EAP281/1/10), CC BY.

<sup>40</sup> *Sakon delúk sá sung*: EAP281/5/1. *Rummit nángse sá námthár*: EAP281/1/13.

## Lepcha astrological texts

There are many astrological works in Lepcha, in fact the majority of the forty manuscripts digitised through the EAP contain texts belonging to this category. In traditional Lepcha life, astrology is used in many different ways. Astrology concerns itself with the prediction of the many different things to happen in a person's life and focuses on the reading of auspicious and inauspicious signs and omens. It is believed that the fate of a human being can be influenced by his actions. Astrology can help to support religion by suggesting appropriate religious practices. It is also connected to the field of medicine, because it can help in diagnosing and curing diseases. Apart from casting horoscopes and offering an analysis of a person's character or personality, astrology is also used in determining the suitability of marriage partners, and to advise travellers and farmers.<sup>41</sup>



Fig. 3.8 Astrological text. Foning Collection (EAP281/1/14), CC BY.

<sup>41</sup> Plaisier, *Catalogue of Lepcha Manuscripts*, p. 57.

Lepcha astrological texts, sometimes simply referred to as *tsu* (astrology; Tibetan *rTsis*)<sup>42</sup> have not yet been studied at all, and it has not yet been possible to identify many of the digitised material (Figs. 3.6, 3.7, 3.8 and 3.10). There appear to be clear links between Lepcha astrology and traditional Tibetan astrological traditions, for example the text *Parkhó sá tsu* [*Parkhó Calculations*] (Fig. 3.9) appears to relate directly to the Tibetan tradition of geomantic diagrams, described in *sPar-kha-hi rTsis*.<sup>43</sup> One of the astrological works in Lepcha that is often encountered in manuscript form is called in full *khyenrúng dínngá sá tsu kyân sá cho*, but is often referred to simply as *tsu kyân sá cho* [*Book of Astrology*].<sup>44</sup> It is thought that this book consists of several volumes relating to birth, journeys and marriage, some of which have been found copied independently, e.g. *lágék lálát sá tsu* (birth horoscopes) and *bri sá tsu* (marriage horoscopes).<sup>45</sup>



Fig. 3.9 *Parkhó Calculations*. Foning Collection (EAP281/1/7), CC BY.

42 *Tsu*: EAP281/1/10.

43 *Parkhó sá tsu*: EAP281/1/4, EAP281/1/12, EAP281/2/1.

44 *Khyenrúng dínngá sá tsu kyân sá cho*: EAP281/1/14.

45 *Bri sá tsu*: EAP281/1/19.

Funerary texts relate to death and funerary traditions that are read aloud or chanted from memory in the presence of a person who is dying or has just passed away. In Lepcha literature, the title *thókdra* serves as a cover term for all Lepcha funerary texts, among which is the book entitled *thókdra* itself, but also works such as *ʔámák sá munlóm*, *nyúthíng lóm frón*, and possibly some of the titles designated *shang sá tsu*.<sup>46</sup>

The Lepcha designation *shang sá tsu* refers to “death horoscopes”. The reading of the death horoscope is essential for the organisation of the funeral ceremony. Every ritual action is based on the conclusions reached by the astrologer. Among the most significant of the calculations are the immediate cause of death, the prediction of the future destiny of the spirit and the handling and timing of the removal of the deceased body.

The Tibetan Buddhist tradition is such that traditionally, to help the deceased travellers gain insight into their situation, a monk or skilled layperson will recite guiding instructions and inspirational prayers from special funerary texts, sometimes referred to as *Bar-do Thos-sgrol*, or the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The term *thókdra* appears to be the Lepcha spelling of the Tibetan *Thos-sgrol*. The Lepcha *thókdra* contains words of guidance and consolation to the departed spirit, and is recited by the *mun* at the time the funeral pyre is lit. Some versions of this text or parts of it are written in the second person, as if speaking directly to the deceased. The first part of this book emphasises that the belief in the holy scriptures alone will guide the departed soul to heaven. In the second part, the departed soul is consoled by the words that death is inevitable. The deceased is persuaded to have left the world of the living; it is pointed out that the deceased cannot cast any more shadows, and can step silently on dried leaves or twigs without breaking them. In the third part, the departed soul is cautioned against the tricks of evil spirits who will take the form of loved and near ones, and is directed to pay homage to the gods. In the last part, the deceased has been guided to the abode of gods and the text concludes by consoling the departed soul.

Although they generally coexist, the native Lepcha religious beliefs and Tibetan Buddhist beliefs sometimes contradict each other. The Lepchas use the term *sanglyon* to refer to both the Tibetan Buddhist and the Lepcha rituals for guiding the soul of the deceased from this world to their next destination. For the Lepchas there is traditionally no judgement in the afterlife, and once

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46 *Shang sá tsu*: EAP281/1/1, EAP281/1/2, EAP281/1/4, EAP281/1/9, EAP281/1/16, EAP281/1/17.



the soul reaches its destination it lives on forever among all other immortal spirits.<sup>47</sup> The Lepchas traditionally believe that people who have died shall never return to our world benevolently: they can only ever have contact with our world again in the form of *múng* (evil spirits). After death a soul can be converted into an evil spirit while it is in *tongdek márdek lyáng* (the netherworld), and the risk of this happening is provoked when death occurs suddenly, violently, at a young age, or when the proper funerary ceremonies are not conducted. In contrast, the Tibetan Buddhist soul is judged after death and consequently guided to its next incarnation. From glancing at the contents of the funerary texts, it appears that belief in a judgement of the soul by the Lord of the Dead, *choqe pano* (Tibetan *Chhos-kyi rGyal-po*); the migrations of the soul through the perils of the *Bar-do*, the stage between death and new life, to its rebirth in one of the “six worlds”; the punishment of sinners in hell or *nyó lyáng* (Tibetan *dMyal ba*); and other well known traditions of Tibetan Buddhism are now widespread among the Lepchas.



Fig. 3.10 Astrological text. Dendrup Adyemnu Collection (EAP281/4/3), CC BY.

<sup>47</sup> Gorer, *Himalayan Village*, p. 346.

## Conclusion

The discussion above illustrates the richness of the religious and literary tapestry of the Lepcha people that is perpetuated in their manuscripts. Preservation of the archival materials that represent the earliest stages of the Lepcha literary tradition not only ensures that the Lepcha people continue to have access to their own heritage, but also enables further research into the various strands of influence of Tibetan Buddhist traditions, non-Buddhist Tibetan beliefs and linguistic evidence that can be unravelled in Lepcha traditions.

The study of Lepcha manuscripts is still in its early days, but it is expected to shed light on the nature of indigenous Lepcha religious beliefs and the spread of Buddhism in the area, while from a linguistic point of view the language used in these old texts is of historical interest. One impediment to progress in establishing the exact position of Lepcha within the Tibeto-Burman languages is the limited understanding of historical phonological borrowing of Tibetan into Lepcha. Linguistic analysis can also engage our literary and cultural questions; a comparative study of loanwords and calques will elucidate which Tibetan Buddhist concepts the Lepcha regarded as foreign and which they saw as parallel to their own traditions.

Elaborating such linguistic and literary influences will, in turn, promote more general insight into the way a foreign religion may be adapted to a local culture. The complex influence Tibetan Buddhism has exercised on the religion, literature and language of the Lepcha people has parallels with the experience of many other indigenous peoples in the region.

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## Archival resources<sup>48</sup>

EAP281/1/6

*Cenrejú sá námthár.*

EAP281/1/9, EAP281/5/3

*Chotyen munlóm.*

EAP281/1/23, EAP281/2/3, EAP281/3/1

*Ekádoshi sá munlóm.*

EAP281/1/8

*Gúru choʔóng.*

EAP281/1/14

*Khyenrúng dínngá sá tsu kyân sá cho.*

EAP281/1/11

*Lazóng.*

EAP281/1/15, EAP281/1/18

*Lopân birútsáná.*

EAP281/1/4, EAP281/1/12, EAP281/2/1

*Parkhó sá tsu.*

EAP281/1/20

*Rum pundi sá námthár.*

EAP281/5/1

*Sakon delúk sá sung.*

EAP281/1/13

*Rummit nángse sá námthár.*

EAP281/1/1, EAP281/1/2, EAP281/1/4, EAP281/1/9, EAP281/1/16, EAP281/1/17

*Shang sá tsu.*

EAP281/1/18

*Tángku námthár.*

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<sup>48</sup> <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP281>

EAP281/1/8, EAP281/1/22, EAP281/1/23, EAP281/2/2, EAP281/4/1, EAP281/5/6,  
EAP281/5/10

*Tashe sung.*

EAP281/1/21

*Trímík kunden sá námthár.*

EAP281/1/10

*Tsu.*

EAP281/1/9

*Tukfíl sá námthár.*

# 4. Technological aspects of the monastic manuscript collection at May Wäyni, Ethiopia<sup>1</sup>

*Jacek Tomaszewski and Michael Gervers*

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Located in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is one of the most ancient civilisations in the world, a place where traditional culture, firmly fixed in the past, is continually challenged by the customs of the modern world. One of the treasures of this country is its manuscript culture, inseparably tied to the Christian tradition. There are thousands of churches in Ethiopia, and stored in nearly every one are parchment manuscripts which contain ancient and sometimes unknown religious texts. This rich cultural heritage is particularly vulnerable to damage, loss and destruction, and requires a variety of approaches for its preservation.

One otherwise inconspicuous place is the village and ancient monastic site of May Wäyni in the northern province of Tigray. The complete collection of manuscripts there was digitised in 2013 under the auspices of the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme (EAP).<sup>2</sup> The site is located on a steep slope at a distance of nearly fifty kilometres south from Tigray's capital city of Mekelle. It is situated a few kilometres away from the main road and is

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- 1 The transliteration of Ge'ez and Amharic words in this chapter is based on the system used by the Encyclopaedia Aethiopica (EAE).
  - 2 EAP526: Digitisation of the endangered monastic archive at May Wäyni (Tigray, Ethiopia), [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP526](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP526). The digitisation was undertaken by Michael Gervers (University of Toronto, Canada), Ewa Balicka-Witakowska (Uppsala University, Sweden), Jan Retsö (Gothenburg University, Sweden) and Jacek Tomaszewski (Polish Institute of World Art Studies, Warsaw). The expedition was greatly facilitated by the cooperation of Ato Kebede Amare, General Manager for the Agency of Culture and Tourism in the National State of Tigray. The authors would like to thank Ewa Balicka-Witakowska for her important contributions towards the accuracy of this chapter.

barely accessible by vehicle. The monastic enclosure stands alone on relatively flat terrain. According to local tradition, the monastery was founded by the saintly monk Father Qäsäla Giyorgis<sup>3</sup> and flourished at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries. He was one of the companions of the important Ethiopian monastic figure Yohannes Käma, abbot of Däbrä Libanos Monastery in Šäwa.<sup>4</sup>

A provincial Ethiopian church library may generally contain about forty manuscripts, so the May Wäyni collection of 91 items is considered large.<sup>5</sup> It consists not only of the standard set of books needed to perform the liturgy and other services, but also of important texts for the study of the history of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Church, the literature of the Christian and Ethiopian Church, and the history of the manuscript book. Most of the manuscripts appear to have been copied in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,<sup>6</sup> only a few are decorated.

The old church of May Wäyni and its storage facility collapsed in recent years, and the construction of the new church has been delayed due to lack of funds. The manuscripts are presently stored in a relatively new “treasury” building made of mud and mortar, where most of them are stacked on a rough wooden rack, kept in heavy wooden boxes or hung on wall pegs (Fig. 4.1). Regularly-used liturgical books reside in the altar unit of the unfinished sanctuary of the new church. To prevent further damage to the manuscripts, the monks have distributed those not used during the daily services among

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3 We are grateful to Denis Nosnitsin for pointing out that the monastic rules he wrote are to be found in the nineteenth-century manuscript HMML, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, Pr. No. 5000, for which see Getatchew Haile, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, Collegeville*, 10 (Collegeville, MN: Saint John’s University, 1993), p. 383.

4 Stéphane Ancel, “Yohannes Käma”, *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (hereafter cited as *EAE*), ed. by Siegbert Uhlig et al., 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014), p. 81f.

5 By way of comparison, Däbrä Sälam Mikä’el in Tigray is noted to have had 44 manuscripts in 1974 (*EAE* II, p. 39); Däbrä Bahṛay in Wollo has 54 (*ibid.*, p. 11); the old Aksumite church of Däbrä Libanos in Eritrea is known to have had at least 84 in 1994 (*ibid.*, p. 29); Däbrä Šarabi in Tigray has 98. In the second quarter of the sixteenth century, Däbrä Bəsrat in Šäwa was said to have had hundreds (*EAE* II, p. 15). The monastery of Gundä Gunde currently has 219 manuscripts (see below, n. 7), having previously given an additional 65 to the re-established nunnery of Asir Matira. Gianfrancesco Lusini reports that the greatest manuscript collection in Eritrea is at Däbrä Bizän, holding 572 manuscripts (*EAE* II, p. 17a).

6 No information about dating was found in the colophons of the manuscripts. Furthermore, differences in the handwriting of the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century have proved difficult to distinguish, the more so since around 1800: “From about 1800 onward, the art of handwriting entered into a state of flux and styles developed which are parallel to those of the recent past and the present”. Siegbert Uhlig, *Introduction to Ethiopian Palaeography* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990), pp. 87-115 (p. 103).

themselves and the villagers. This arrangement is particularly unfortunate as it may lead to the increased dispersal and consequent loss of volumes.



Fig. 4.1 May Wäyni. Treasury building interior with cased manuscripts on pegs. Photo CC BY-NC.

During an initial visit to May Wäyni in 2009, only some of the manuscripts were available to us in evaluating the extent of the collection and determining the scope of spiritual activity carried out in the compound. A prior inspection of the rugged terrain around the church and surroundings ruled out the possibility of setting up camp for the time required to digitise the books. Lack of water for cooking and drinking, or electricity for powering and charging the photographic and computer equipment, necessitated daily travel to and from Mekelle. On the one hand, these daily expeditions had their drawbacks — three hours a day were spent traveling, and because the churchyard was also used for religious purposes, the field station had to be established and dismantled daily. On the other hand, the evenings could be spent in the city downloading and backing up image files on computers, charging batteries and making necessary repairs to equipment.

Having made a positive assessment of the content of the archive, we agreed with the monks and representatives of the local community on how to establish the conditions for digitising the collection. These discussions substantially improved the efficiency of the process and at the same time allowed the benefits of the project to be presented to the local inhabitants. The



previous experiences of teams studying or digitising manuscripts in various places in Ethiopia have shown that, despite lengthy negotiations ending in consensus, work may be frequently interrupted, often for trivial reasons.<sup>7</sup> The assumption is that any collection of manuscripts is the property of the entire community, both lay and ecclesiastical, and the opposition of even a single member may bring all digitisation activity to a sudden halt. In such circumstances, no governmental or church authority can legally impose a decision on the community.<sup>8</sup> Objective factors of this sort, in addition to the difficult field conditions, render the process of digitising in Ethiopia extremely complicated.<sup>9</sup>

With participation from representatives of the local church authorities, we established a detailed plan for the digitisation of the manuscripts and prepared all materials, tools, equipment and procedures. The recording of any collection in such difficult conditions as were encountered at May Wäyni requires elaborate preparation and the development of appropriate methods

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7 EAP254 was diverted from the Shire region of Tigray Province, following an unexpected episcopal decision, and redirected to Romanat (Enderta region) with the assistance of the civilian Commissioner of Culture and Tourism. EAP340 was interrupted after the digitisation of only four manuscripts due to a dispute between the local community at Däbrä Sarabi (Tigray Province) and the regional agency responsible for repairing their church. An attempt carried out there by Ethio-spore in May 2014 was also unsuccessful.

8 The problem was presented by Ewa Balicka-Witakowska at the COMSt (Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies) conference: “La circulation des collections” (team 5, workshop 4), Paris, 12 January 2012.

9 An early project to preserve the content of manuscripts in Ethiopia was the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (or EMMML), which administered the microfilming, in Addis Ababa, of nearly 10,000 volumes from Šäwa province between 1973 and 1987. Since the introduction of digital photography, field expeditions have been mounted by Michael Gervers, Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, Denis Nosnitsin, Mersha Alehegne Mengistie, Meley Mulugetta Bazzabeh, Hasen Said and Steve Delamarter. Gervers and Balicka-Witakowska digitised the entire manuscript collection (219 items) of the monastery of Gundä Gunde in 2006 with the support of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library at Saint John’s University (Collegeville, Minnesota); the collection is presently being prepared for open access over the internet by the Library of the University of Toronto Scarborough. In 2007, they digitised a further 65 manuscripts at Asir Matira (Tigray), which formerly belonged to Gundä Gunde, for the Hiob Ludolf Centre for Ethiopian Studies in Hamburg. More recently, digitisation in Ethiopia has been sponsored by the British Library’s Endangered Archives Programme (EAP254, the library of Romanat Qeddus Mika’el; EAP286, the collection of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa; EAP336, manuscripts of the *lay bet* exegetical tradition [about which see *EAE* II, p. 473]; EAP340, manuscripts from the monastery of Ewošatəwos at Däbrä Särabi; EAP357, manuscripts from the Säharti and Enderta regions of Tigray; EAP401, Islamic manuscripts; EAP432, monastic collections from East Gojjam; EAP526, the monastic collection of May Wäyni) and by the European Research Council’s European Union Seventh Framework Programme (see: <http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/ethiostudies/Ethio-spore>).

to facilitate the recording process.<sup>10</sup> In the absence of on-site electricity, the team depended on a portable, gasoline-fuelled generator to run cameras and laptop computers. At May Wäyṇi, digitisation began in the ambulatory of the new, not yet finished church of St George, situated several hundred metres from the monastic buildings where the manuscripts were stored. Because the four-member team included a woman, work could not be conducted within the monastic compound itself. The manuscripts were therefore transported back and forth along a rough and narrow track.

The ambulatory, which is, fortunately, roofed, provided daylight suitably diffused by reflection from the bare stone walls. The team was thus able to operate relatively smoothly along a makeshift “assembly line” in the cambered space running below the oblong arcades through which the light passed.



Fig. 4.2 May Wäyṇi. Church ambulatory, assembly line set-up. Photo CC BY-NC.

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10 Cf. Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, “Recording Manuscripts in the Field,” *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies*, ed. by A. Bausi et al. (Hamburg: COMSt - Norderstedt: BOD, 2014), pp. 626-31.

Other places were also organised: a temporary stocking of the manuscripts as they were successively transported from the treasury (Fig. 4.3), a provisional conservator's field studio, a position where one could sit to paginate the manuscripts and prepare the metadata and, finally, two recording stations. Dusty ground, an incline and a rough floor were the negative aspects of this space, although these problems were resolved by spreading reed mats provided by the monks which, in turn, were covered with large tarpaulin sheets, and by propping boards on stones so that they could be rendered parallel to the camera lenses.



Fig. 4.3 May Wäyni. Preparing manuscripts in the *iqabet* for preliminary observation.  
Photo CC BY-NC.

No sooner had the team been established at this site than some members of the local community deemed it inappropriate, either for the kind of activity being carried out or because religious services were to be held there. As always in Ethiopia, there was an alternative, which in this case took the form of a large British army bell tent left behind by the Napier Expedition of 1868;<sup>11</sup> it was there that most of the digitisation took place. Foliation and

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<sup>11</sup> On the Napier expedition, see Clements R. Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*

other preliminary activities continued in the open air, with a fallen tree trunk serving as the studio workbench.

As each manuscript arrived from the treasury, it was checked by the conservator to determine how best to digitise it, while the condition of the folios, the handwriting and the painted decoration were recorded. All manuscripts were cleaned with a soft brush or small vacuum to remove impurities from the folios and the bindings. Some manuscripts required modest repairs to the leather which covered the wooden binding boards, or a strengthening of the sewn structure. The foliation and preparation of metadata provided a final opportunity to study the individual manuscript and to determine in which order the digitisation was to be executed. At a subsequent stage, recommendations for conservation focused mainly on protecting the book block and binding against cracking and on avoiding damage to the folios as digitisation proceeded. The shooting of manuscripts with damaged leather covers and spines, or manuscripts with leaves in an advanced state of deterioration caused by rodents, worms, damp, dirt, mold and tearing due to overly tight or inadequate stitching, had to be constantly monitored.<sup>12</sup>

Each of the two digitisation posts was equipped with a modest set of tools. In order not to have to change focal length more than a minimal amount from one manuscript to the next, large manuscripts were digitised at one post and smaller ones at the other. Volumes were stabilised on styrofoam or light plywood baseboards wrapped with black fabric, while custom-made velcro angle brackets held the covers in place. The construction of Ethiopian codices, whose book blocks are sewn with a chain stitch, allowed the volumes to be opened relatively easily and safely, although when tight bindings were encountered it was invariably difficult to capture fully the words written on the inner margins. In such cases, verso and recto folios were photographed separately rather than as a single image. It was possible to maintain an even plane for facing verso and recto folios by placing soft bags filled with styrofoam pellets below the side of the manuscript with the fewest folios turned.

Badly damaged manuscripts in which loose folios had been reattached by sewing with a stabbing technique, or where the cover was missing and the sewing which held the quires together had loosened or disappeared, presented particular difficulties.

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(London: Macmillan, 1869). For images of the bell tent, see William Simpson, *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia, 1868*, ed. by Richard Pankhurst (Los Angeles, CA: Tsehai, 2002), p. 87.

12 The digitised manuscripts mentioned in this chapter are available at <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP526>.



Fig. 4.4 May Wäyni. A monk re-stitches a manuscript binding in the church courtyard. Photo CC BY-NC.

In such cases, the positioning of the open folios had to be constantly manipulated in order to keep them within the frame of the angle fasteners. Depending upon the format and condition of the manuscript, folios could be kept in place manually by applying pressure to the margins with one to four transparent quarter-inch plexiglass rods with rounded bodies and polished ends. In especially arduous cases it was occasionally necessary for the entire four-person team to manage a single manuscript, with one person on the camera, a second on the computer and two holding down verso and recto sides of facing folios using the transparent rods.

In remote parts of the world, storage conditions are usually unsatisfactory and adequate means of preservation unavailable. Experience in the preservation of written materials from such areas has shown that attempts to transfer unrealistic recommendations and high standards invariably fail. Sometimes a simple, fundamental change to the method of storage, such as raising volumes from the floor, can effectively improve manuscript security. Guidance about simple and correct remedial treatments at May Wäyni showed that, with minimum effort, those responsible for the books could effectively protect them from further damage by improving their storage conditions. Traditionally, as in the case of a few codices at May Wäyni, Ethiopians have hung their cased manuscripts from wooden pegs inserted into the whitewashed earth wall of a roofed repository (see Fig. 4.1). With passing time, straps have broken and cases have been lost, leaving the floor as the most available alternative storage space. It is there, however, that they have become vulnerable to attack from

water, damp and rodents. Increasingly, ecclesiastical libraries in Tigray are being equipped with closed metal shelving units, but not yet in May Wäyṅni, where the wooden shelves and the manuscripts they bear are all the more vulnerable to fire as well. The team placed most damaged manuscripts and those lacking their leather cases<sup>13</sup> in special boxes made of acid-free cardboard.<sup>14</sup>



Fig. 4.5 May Wäyṅni. Particularly vulnerable manuscripts are stored in acid-free cartons. Photo CC BY-NC.

The examination and recording of manuscripts at May Wäyṅni permitted a broad study of the technological aspects of Ethiopian manuscripts. This would not have been possible without our being able to handle them. Physical examination of individual manuscripts and the direct assessment of the condition of an entire collection helped to determine what lay behind their relative states of deterioration. The results of this survey at May Wäyṅni were reached through an analysis of existing damage to the parchment and to the writing and painting layer, as well as to the construction of the book blocks and the bindings.<sup>15</sup>

13 Amharic: *mahdär*.

14 Some manuscripts were customarily covered with cloth jackets (Amharic: *lābas* and its types *suti*, *gəmgə*, *šəfan*). See Mersha Alehegne, "Towards a Glossary of Ethiopian Manuscript Culture and Practice", *Aethiopia: International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 14 (2011), 145-62 (p. 153).

15 Observations on the nature of Ethiopian binding and its structure were published recently in Marco Di Bella and Nikolas Sarris, "Field Conservation in East Tigray, Ethiopia", in *Care and Conservation of Manuscripts 14: Proceedings of the Fourteenth International Seminar Held at the University of Copenhagen 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> October 2012*, ed. by Matthew J. Driscoll (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2014), pp. 271-307.

Ethiopian parchment has distinctive features that differentiate it from its European counterparts. Dissimilarities result mainly from different methods of manufacturing and indirectly from the type of mainly goat leather used to produce it.<sup>16</sup> A fairly basic way of making parchment, without strong chemical processing, produces a relatively raw, rigid, uneven and sometimes hairy product, with large areas of gelatinisation on the surface (Fig. 4.6a and b).



Fig. 4.6 May Wäyni manuscripts. Examples of minimally-prepared parchment showing (a) hairy surface and (b) gelatinisation (EAP526/1/15 and EAP526/1/44), CC BY-NC.

For this reason, parts of some folios were semitransparent and already deformed at the time of creation. This effect is clearly visible on a number of pages from the manuscript containing the *Sər'atä qəddase* [*Order of the Mass*] (EAP526/1/90), where ruled lines appear as light impressions because of changes to the structure of the semi-translucent parchment under the pressure of a metal

<sup>16</sup> For the traditional technology of parchment production, see Sergew Hable Selassie, *Bookmaking in Ethiopia* (Leiden: Karstens Drukkers, 1981), pp. 9-12; John Mellors and Anne Parsons, "Manuscript and Book Production in South Gondar in the Twenty-First Century", in *Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on the History of Ethiopian Art, Addis Ababa 5-8 November 2002*, ed. by Birhanu Teferra and Richard Pankhurst (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 2003), pp. 185-89. The results of scientific research on the properties and character of Ethiopian parchment are noted in W. Liszewska, *Conservation of Historical Parchments: New Methods of Leafcasting with the Use of Parchment Fibres* (Warsaw: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych, 2012), pp. 380-98.

ruler (Fig. 4.7). Visual assessment of the condition of all manuscripts in the collection indicated that, as a consequence of the progressive gelatinisation of the parchment, further deterioration appeared in the form of a glass-like layer on the surface of most of the folios.



Fig. 4.7 May Wäyni manuscript *Sər˘atü qəddase* [*Order of the Mass*] showing the structure of the semi-translucent parchment with traces of ruling (EAP526/1/90), CC BY-NC.

A majority of the manuscripts from the May Wäyni collection have to a large extent already been very badly damaged. In many cases, the degradation has affected entire parchment folios. Nearly 30% of the manuscripts bear traces of water stains caused by poorly-secured storage conditions. The parchment of these manuscripts has suffered damage mainly to the margins, which have become very stiff, brittle, fragile and therefore vulnerable to additional injury during use (Fig. 4.8). Nearly a quarter of the manuscripts have suffered further harm in varying degrees due to rodents (Fig. 4.9), while 11% of the total are largely deformed and severely damaged by use. On the positive side, the volumes showed no serious injury from microbiological agents. Resistance to the action of microorganisms can be caused by the fairly compacted structure of the collagen fibers. For the several manuscripts which were in extremely bad condition, special procedures had to be applied in order to digitise them.





Fig. 4.8 May Wäyni manuscript *Mälə'əktä Pāvlos* [Letters of Paul] showing extensive water damage (EAP526/1/56), CC BY-NC.



Fig. 4.9 May Wäyni manuscript *Šälotä ʿəṭan* [The Prayer of Incense] gnawed by rodents (EAP526/1/62), CC BY-NC.

The state of the parchment folios was one problem, while that of the condition of the book blocks and manuscript bindings was quite another. The sewn structure of most manuscripts was in urgent need of repair. The binding boards of 30% of the manuscripts were found to be seriously damaged – cracking and warping being characteristic features of the wood used for the purpose in the region.<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that the boards are generally bound in leather, which in over 40% of cases was found to be damaged in varying degrees. In most cases the leather at the edges of the covers or in the joints was torn, 16% had lost the leather on the spine, 13% had lost their leather covering altogether or nearly so, and in an additional 13%, small residues of leather were still visible on the inner sides of the boards. This type of damage is typical of Ethiopian bindings and results from a rapid deterioration of the leather.

The damages can be attributed mainly to such issues as the use of the book, the natural ageing of the materials and the unfavourable climate, but also to the use of a relatively weak adhesive.<sup>18</sup> It seems that the bindings of most Ethiopian manuscripts go through similar stages of deterioration, which can be described as follows: the leather covering between the edges of the boards and the spine cracks and gradually disappears due to the weak attachment of the endband sewing to the covers; large losses of leather then occur at the corners and along all the edges of the boards; the leather separates completely from the spine and from both covers, remaining only as turn-ins. Finally, even the traces of the adhesive layers on both sides of the boards fade (Fig. 4.10).<sup>19</sup>

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17 Species used to produce cover boards for books are mainly *Cordia Africana* (Wanza), *Juniperus procera* (Gatira) and *Olea Africana* (Weyra). Widespread use of these types of wood arises from the popularity of these trees in church woodland in Ethiopia. See Mulugeta Lemenih and Frans Bongers, "Dry Forests of Ethiopia and Their Silviculture", in *Silviculture in the Tropics*, ed. by Sven Günter, Michael Weber, Bernd Stimm and Reinhard Mosandl (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2011), pp. 261-72 (p. 269).

18 Currently, wheat starch paste is commonly used for this purpose (Sergew Hable Sellassie, *Bookmaking in Ethiopia*, p. 25), but there is no information on the kinds of adhesives used in the past. It appears that another type of adhesive was originally used on the binding of manuscript EAP526/1/48. Survey tests by Raman spectroscopy of a sample of the binding substance excluded starch glue and gums and confirmed the presence of elements characteristic of gum resins (tests were carried out by the Faculty of Chemistry of the Warsaw University of Technology). In the absence of relevant chemical samples, however, it was not possible to identify the binder.

19 Jacek Tomaszewski, Ewa Balicka-Witakowska and Zofia Żukowska, "Ethiopian Manuscript Maywäyini 041 with Added Miniature: Codicological and Technological Analysis", *Annales d'Éthiopie*, 29 (forthcoming in 2015).



Fig. 4.10 May Wäyni manuscript book boards showing various stages of cover deterioration (a (EAP526/1/4) and b (EAP526/1/1), with sewn repairs to c (EAP526/1/19) and d (EAP526/1/4)), CC BY-NC.

An overview of the collection revealed former methods of traditional manuscript repair and their scope. These methods were mainly provisional and were concerned only with maintaining the integrity of the whole book and its binding rather than with repairs to individual parchment folios. In 16% of the manuscripts, a plurality of sewn repairs were visible in different kinds of threads and cords, used particularly for connecting the book block to the covers (Fig. 4.11). Other typical treatments saw repairs to damaged and broken boards, which in 12% of the cases generally involved tying them together with string, leather strips, plastic cords or even wire, since other adhesives were unavailable (Fig. 4.12).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Different types of material for repairing boards are visible on the bindings: EAP526/1/3,



Fig. 4.11 May Wäyṅi manuscript *Arganonä waddase* [*The Harp of Praise*] by Giyorgis of Sagla showing a variety of threads and cords used to connect the book block to the covers (EAP526/1/23), CC BY-NC.



Fig. 4.12 May Wäyṅi manuscript *Qeddus Gädlä Gäbrä Manfäs Qeddus* [*The Life of Gäbrä Manfäs Qeddus*] showing sewn repairs to the front book board (EAP526/1/30), CC BY-NC.

The main method of repair, however, was to re-sew the book block entirely and often to rebind the entire manuscript in new leather. Recent sewing is evident in 8% of the collection, although a larger number of volumes bound

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EAP526/1/14, EAP526/1/19, EAP526/1/30, EAP526/1/32, EAP526/1/33, EAP526/1/40, EAP526/1/51, EAP526/1/61, EAP526/1/64, EAP526/1/70, EAP526/1/74, EAP526/1/85 and EAP526/1/86. Other examples are illustrated in Steve Delamarter and Melaku Terefe, *Ethiopian Scribal Practice 1: Plates for the Catalogue of the Ethiopian Manuscript Imaging Project* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), p. 35, plates 7, 22, 45 and 65.

in new leather were also re-sewn. The procedure is clearly recognisable in the manuscripts devoid of leather covering and with exposed spines, where relatively fresh threads are visible (Figs. 4.11 and 4.12). As a rule, thoroughly repaired manuscripts were rebound using new materials. It was not unusual, however, to find discarded boards from older manuscripts reused for this purpose, as evidenced by additional holes located especially on the outer edge of the boards which formerly connected the cover to the book block.<sup>21</sup> Newly bound manuscripts were covered with new leather and were decorated with blind tooling, using traditional patterns. As a result of such procedures, it sometimes proved difficult to determine whether the book had been subjected to any additional treatment. The only clue might be the relatively good condition of the binding compared to that of the folios of the manuscript.

Due to the lack of effective adhesives in Ethiopia, any local repairs to wooden boards or to manuscript folia tend to be rendered by sewing or linking with string or thongs. A major difficulty at May Wäyni was the state of damaged folio margins, as well as the gathering of individual folios which were broken along the folds. The May Wäyni collection exhibited very few examples of repairs to the margins of parchment folios. Some simple stitching is visible on the folios of manuscript EAP526/1/61.



Fig. 4.13 May Wäyni manuscript *Mäzmurä Dawit* [*Psalms of David*] showing loose folios held together by stab-stitching (EAP526/1/61), CC BY-NC.

<sup>21</sup> Additional lacing holes are visible on opposite sides of the boards of EAP526/1/34 and EAP526/1/50. The practice is also noted by Di Bella and Sarris, p. 302.

Approximately 8% of the manuscripts which had fallen apart, leaving loose folios and quires, are currently held together by stab-stitching along the edges of the inner margins of all folios.<sup>22</sup> Stabbing was the only effective means available for connecting the leaves of deteriorated manuscripts; the practice is broadly used not only in this collection, but also in many other places in Tigray and elsewhere in Ethiopia.<sup>23</sup> In many cases, additional folded strips of parchment were inserted in order to span and reinforce individual folios before sewing.<sup>24</sup>

These manuscripts proved extremely difficult to photograph because the degree to which they could be opened was restricted by the stitching, and also because the folded strips covered words and letters along the inner margins of the folios. Since multiple photographs needed to be taken in such cases, an entire day could be spent digitising a single long manuscript of this sort. In the case of the extremely damaged manuscript containing the *Mäläʾaktä Pawlos* [*Letters of Paul*, EAP526/1/56], the thread which was pierced well into the inner margin, and thus hindered the opening of the book, was removed.

In the absence of adequate methods and means for the effective repair of the original historic materials, the total rebinding of a manuscript was the most reasonable solution for its preservation.<sup>25</sup> In this context, it was uncommon to find repairs to bindings in which bookbinders sought to maintain the original, decorated leather covers. In such cases, repairs were limited to the attachment of new leather to the spine and to the inner margins of the book boards, and to introducing new endbands. This type of repair was observed in 6% of the manuscript bindings in May Wäyni.<sup>26</sup> Some of

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22 The technique of stabbing is described in detail by Bernard C. Middleton, *A History of English Craft Bookbinding Technique* (New York: Hafner, 1963), pp. 11-12.

23 Further examples of stabbing in the May Wäyni collection are visible in manuscripts EAP526/1/57, EAP526/1/80, EAP526/1/85 and EAP526/1/89. Good examples of this practice are also to be found in manuscripts from the monastery of Märʾawi Krəstos, where such repairs were made systematically. See also Delamarter and Melaku Terefe, plate 22.

24 Additional folded strips (Amharic: *sir*) appear in EAP526/1/63, EAP526/1/83 and EAP526/1/91; see also Delamarter and Terefe, plate 25.

25 This observation relates to other book collections observed in Tigray province. Examples of rebound manuscripts can be found, for example, in the book collections of Däbrä Abbay and Märʾawi Krəstos (Shire region), among many others. Total rebinding has been widely used in Europe in the past. For information on rebinding in the fifteenth century, see Janos A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 277; and for rebinding in England in the nineteenth century, see Middleton, p. 6. In modern Europe, many of the medieval ecclesiastical books have received new bindings made in accordance with contemporary fashion and design.

26 New leather is clearly visible on the spine of the following manuscripts: EAP526/1/2, EAP526/1/17, EAP526/1/22, EAP526/1/41 and EAP526/1/67. See also Delamarter and Terefe, plate 85.

these books may have been re-sewn previously, as evidenced by ruptures to the original leather covering around the spine of the volume providing free access to the lacing holes in the boards. Very clear traces of such actions are visible on the binding of the *Māṣḥafū Tālmīd* [*The Book of the Disciple*] manuscript (EAP526/1/45).<sup>27</sup>



Fig. 4.14 May Wäyni manuscript *Māṣḥafū Tālmīd* [*The Book of the Disciple*] showing the ruptures to the original leather covering around the spine of the volume that provide free access to the lacing holes in the boards, holes made for resewing the book (EAP526/1/45), CC BY-NC.

In this case, however, the repair did not include the pasting of new leather onto the spine. In examples where the repair was comprehensive, the original leather on the boards near the spine was trimmed and a new piece of leather was pasted on or under the edge of the old leather.

Direct contact with the May Wäyni manuscripts provided an opportunity to analyse their codicological and technological aspects. As the pages were

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<sup>27</sup> Such repairs were observed on manuscripts EAP526/1/1, EAP526/1/9, EAP526/1/23, EAP526/1/25, EAP526/1/34, EAP526/1/45, EAP526/1/46 and EAP526/1/3.

prepared for writing, prick holes and metal point rulings were applied to designate the layout of columns and lines, invariably on the flesh side of each bifolio. The holes were predominantly round and were probably made with a locally produced awl (*wäsfe*). Folio rulings were made in two ways. In most cases (77%) each bifolium was ruled individually on the flesh side, after which the bifolia were assembled in quires (see Fig. 4.7). In the remaining 33% of manuscripts, another ruling system was applied. Once quires had been assembled and tacketed, they were ruled on the flesh sides which invariably faced each other. This system is clearly evident, especially in the middle bifolio of a quire with the hair side open, where lines on both pages do not coincide on the facing verso and recto folios.

In most May Wäyni manuscripts (about 70% of the collection), numeric quire signatures appear as guidelines for binding, but the system was not applied consecutively. The signature was most frequently placed on the first page of each quire, at the top of the inner margin (58% of cases); they also appear in the middle of the upper margin (34%). The system of quire signatures is sometimes more complex. In a few cases, for decorative purposes, ornamented numbers could be repeated three times in the upper margin. The signature occasionally appears in the upper right corner of the last page of one quire, and in the upper left corner of the first page of the next. Generally, the numeric signatures are turned into decoration, encircled by black and red dots and strokes, and often arranged in the form of a cross.<sup>28</sup>

Decorated manuscripts are relatively few in the collection. The aniconic decoration, called *haräg* in Ethiopic,<sup>29</sup> used to mark the headings, chapters or a section of the text, is present in barely 15% of the manuscripts.<sup>30</sup> Figural decoration as a full-page miniature or drawing appears very rarely, in only eight manuscripts.<sup>31</sup> An exception is the richly decorated manuscript of *Därsanä Mika'el* [*Homily in Honour of the Archangel Michael*, EAP526/1/7], where six miniatures and a drawing are included.

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28 See, for example, EAP526/1/53 ff. 11v and 12r, and EAP526/1/91 f. 8r; and Delamarter and Terefe, plates 4, 12, 30, 32 and 48.

29 Carla Zanotti-Eman, "Linear Decoration in Ethiopian Manuscripts", in *African Zion: The Sacred Art of Ethiopia*, ed. by Roderick Grierson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 63-67; Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "Haräg", in *EAE II*, pp. 1009a-1010b.

30 EAP526/1/5, EAP526/1/6, EAP526/1/8, EAP526/1/13, EAP526/1/21, EAP526/1/24, EAP526/1/28, EAP526/1/30, EAP526/1/39, 40, EAP526/1/42, EAP526/1/61, EAP526/1/65, EAP526/1/67 and EAP526/1/78.

31 Painted miniatures are found in manuscripts EAP526/1/7, EAP526/1/23, EAP526/1/41, EAP526/1/49 and EAP526/1/79. Some small drawings are also to be found in manuscripts EAP526/1/18, EAP526/1/22 and EAP526/1/40.





Fig. 4.15 May Wäyni manuscript *Därsanä Mika'el* [Homily in Honour of the Archangel Michael]. Full-page miniatures (EAP526/1/7), CC BY-NC.



Fig. 4.16 A rare fifteenth-century illumination of the Virgin and Child bound between folios 171 and 172 of a seventeenth-century copy of *Tä'ammərä Maryam* [The Miracles of Mary] (EAP526/1/41), CC BY-NC.

Other manuscripts contain miniatures which were added at a later time. For example, a much earlier miniature originating from another manuscript was added to *Tä'ammərä Maryam* [*The Miracles of Mary*] (EAP526/1/041) (Fig. 4.16).<sup>32</sup> Mary is depicted in the miniature nursing Jesus, a type popular in the art of Coptic Egypt and known throughout the Byzantine world as *Galaktotrophousa* or *Maria lactans*.<sup>33</sup> Colour and patterning add a decorative quality to the clothing of the highly stylised figures. The limited scale of colours applied in the miniature include red (cinnabar), blue (indigo), yellow (orpiment), light green (composed of two pigments: indigo and orpiment), light brown (the natural earth pigment modified by the addition of a small amount of cinnabar) and black (soot). An organic yellow appears also to have been applied to paint Mary's *maphorion* and halo.<sup>34</sup> All of these stylistic and technological features associated the miniature with a series of illustrated manuscripts attributed to the fifteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

The book blocks and the binding structures of all manuscripts in May Wäyni were analysed on site.<sup>36</sup> The number of quires<sup>37</sup> is usually a consequence of the contents of the volume.<sup>38</sup> In practice, however, depending on when and by whom a particular version of the manuscript was copied, and on individual additions to it, the number of pages and quires can vary substantially (see Table 4.1).<sup>39</sup>

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32 Both the manuscript and the miniature itself have been subjected to detailed codicological analysis in Tomaszewski, Balicka-Witakowska and Żukowska, "Ethiopian Manuscript Maywäyni 041" (forthcoming in 2015).

33 Ibid.

34 For the identification of the pigments, the non-destructive methods of  $\mu$ -Raman and Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR)-spectroscopy were used by Zofia Żukowska from the Faculty of Chemistry of the Warsaw University of Technology.

35 Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "Un Psautier Éthiopien Illustré Inconnu", *Orientalia Suecana*, 33-34 (1984-86), 17-48 (Figs. VII, 13, 15, 32, 35, 43, 44); Tomaszewski, Balicka-Witakowska, and Żukowska, "Ethiopian Manuscript Maywäyni 041" (forthcoming in 2015).

36 For basic information on the structure of Ethiopian bindings, see Szirmai, pp. 45-50.

37 Amharic: *gəbbi* or *qəş*.

38 Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, Alessandro Bausi, Claire Bosc-Tiessé and Denis Nosnitsin, "Ethiopian Codicology", in *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies*, ed. by A. Bausi et al. (Hamburg: COMSt - Norderstedt: BOD, 2014), pp. 168-191.

39 The authors are grateful to Emmanuel Fritsch and Jan Retsö for their assistance in identifying the manuscripts appearing in the table.

Table 4.1 List of the manuscripts showing details of construction of the book blocks.

<b>Title of the Manuscript</b>	<b>Number of manuscript</b>	<b>Number of folios</b>	<b>Number of quires</b>	<b>Number of bifolia in quires*</b>
<i>Mäṣḥafä täklil</i> [Ritual of Matrimony]	01	82	9	(3/5; 6/4)
<i>Arbaʿetu wängelat</i> [Gospel Book]	02	158	19	(9/5; 9/4; 1/2)
	22	133	18	(12/4; 5/3; 1/2)
<i>Orit</i> [Octateuch] and <i>Mäṣḥafä kufale</i> [The Book of Jubilees]	03	170	16	(1/6; 14/5; 1/4)
<i>Nägärä Maryam</i> [Mariology]	04	112	14	(13/4; 1/3)
<i>Mäṣḥafä təmqät</i> [Ritual of Baptism]	05	148	16	(1/7 4/5; 11/4)
<i>Rätuʿa Haymanot</i> [The Orthodox One]	06	291	38	(2/5; 31/4; 1/3; 3/2; 1/1)
<i>Dərsanä Mikaʿel</i> [Homily in Honour of the Archangel Michael]	07	133	14	(9/5; 5/4)
	26	88	11	(11/4)
<i>Bahrä ḥassab</i> [Sea of Computation]	08	90	9	(7/5; 2/4)
<i>Zəmmare</i> [Antiphonary for the Eucharist]	09	136	14	(1/6; 12/5; 1/2)
<i>Gädlä Kiros</i> [Life of Our Father Kiros]	10	56	7	(6/4; 1/2)
	16	54	6	(6/4)
<i>Mäṣḥafä qəddase</i> [Missal]	11	112	13	(1/6; 5/5; 5/4; 1/3; 1/2)
	17	130	15	(1/5; 14/4)
	25	115	15	(14/4; 1/0,5)
	54	292	23	(20/7; 3/6)
	58	65	8	(1/5; 7/4)
	82	58 (incomplete)	9	(5/4; 2/3; 2/2)
<i>Mälkäʿ</i> [Portraits]	12	202	26	(24/4; 1/3; 1/2)
<i>Täʿammər</i> [Collection of Miracles]	13	73	10	(8/4; 1/3; 1/2)
<i>Gädlä Gäbrä Manfäs Qeddus</i> [Life of Gäbrä Manfäs Qeddus]	14	60	8	(1/5; 5/4; 2/3)
	20	130	14	(13/5; 1/4)
	30	100	14	(10/4; 2/3; 1/2; 1/1)

<i>Šälötä ʿəṭan</i> [Prayer of Incense]	15	54	8	(7/4; 1/2)
	51	34	4	(3/4; 1/3)
<i>Täʿammärä Iyasus</i> [Book of the Miracles of Jesus]	18	142	18	(17/4; 1/2)
	38	147	17	(17/4)
	44	41	6	(3/4; 2/3; 1/2)
	72	57	7	(1/5; 4/4; 2/3)
	75	70	10	(9/4; 1/2)
<i>Täʿammärä Maryam</i> [The Miracles of Mary]	19	59	8	(5/4; 3/3)
	28	77	11	(9/4; 1/3; 1/2)
	33	73	9	(9/4)
	41	177	22	(3/5; 16/4; 1/3; 1/2; 1/1)
	74	84	9	(4/5; 5/4)
<i>Šəratä Yaʿəqob zäsərug</i> [Order of James of Sarug]	21	102	13	(12/4; 1/2)
<i>Arganonä wəddase</i> [The Harp of Praise by Giyorgis of Sagla]	23	175	22	(1/7; 21/4)
<i>Gäbrä ḥawaryat</i> [Acts of the Apostles]	24	91	15	(3/4; 10/3; 2/2)
<i>Dəggʷa</i> [Antiphony (Proper for the Divine Office)]	27	60	6	(6/5)
	40	261	27	(3/6; 22/5; 1/4; 1/2)
<i>Dərsanä arbaʿtu ənsəsa</i> [Homily on the Four Celestial Creatures]	29	69	13	(9/4; 2/3; 1/2)
<i>Gubaʿe qana</i> [Collection of Hymns]	31	149	18	(1/6; 2/5; 14/4; 1/3)
Miscellanea. Collection of Marian Texts	32	55	10	(3/4; 2/3; 4/2; 1/1)
<i>Gəbrä Həmanat</i> [Ritual of the Holy Week]	34	184	21	(6/5; 15/4)
<i>Šomä dəggʷa</i> [Antiphony Proper for the Great Lent]	35	88	9	(7/5; 2/4)
<i>Səratä qəddase</i> [Order of the Mass]	36	76	9	(9/4)
	90	26 (incomplete)	-	-
<i>Qəddase</i> [Missal]	37	117	12	(1/6; 9/5; 1/4; 1/3)
<i>Gädlä Täklä Haymanot</i> [Life of St. Täklä Haymanot]	39	101	13	(1/5; 8/4; 4/3)

<i>Zena šəllase</i> [Narrative Teaching on the Holy Trinity]	42	116	14	(14/4)
	66	95	11	(11/4)
	73	61	8	(6/4; 2/3)
<i>Gənzāt</i> [Funeral Ritual]	43	118	16	(15/4; 1/3)
	55	125	15	(5/5; 6/4; 2/3; 2/2)
<i>Məşəfə Təlmid</i> [The Book of the Disciple]	45	192	18	(18/5)
<i>Gädlä säməʿətət</i> [Martyrology or Synaxarion]	46	193	21	(13/5; 8/4)
	47	210	24	(17/5; 4/4; 1/3; 1/1)
<i>Mar Yəšəhaq</i> [Book of St. Isaac the Syrian, of Nineveh]	48	104	12	(12/4)
<i>Dərsanä Gäbrəʿel</i> [Homily on Gabriel]	49	78	12	(5/4; 5/3; 2/2)
<i>Məşəfə Mədhané ʿAlām</i> [Book of the Saviour of the World]	50	82 (incomplete)	11	(1/5; 5/4; 5/3)
	68	76	9	(8/4; 1/3)
<i>Şəlotä ʿəṭan</i> [The Prayer of Incense]	70	47	6	(5/4; 1/3)
	62	120	14	(3/5; 11/4)
<i>Collection of Prayers</i>	52	53	3	(1/4; 2/3)
<i>Haymanotä abäw</i> [The Faith of the Fathers]	53	174	23	(21/4; 1/3; 1/2)
<i>Mäləʿaktä Pəwlos</i> [Letters of Paul]	56	51 (incomplete)	-	-
	71	35	7	(4/4; 2/3; 1/2)
<i>Məzmurä Dawit</i> [Psalms of David]	59	50	5	(5/5)
	61	149	15	(12/5; 3/4)
	85	191	18	(11/5; 5/4; 1/3; 1/2)
	81	68 (incomplete)	8	(3/5; 4/4; 1/3)
<i>Prayers to Mary</i>	57	50 (incomplete)	-	-
<i>Collection of Prayers for Weekdays</i>	60	86 (incomplete)	7	(1/4; 6/3)

<i>Gädlä hawaryat [The Contendings of the Apostles]</i>	63	22 (incomplete)	3	(1/6; 1/4; 1/3)
<i>Tä'ammärä Mika'el [Miracles of Michael]</i>	64	36	4	(2/5; 1/4; 1/3)
<i>Gädlä Pētros zä-Däbrä Abbay [Acts of Petros of Däbrä Abbay]</i>	65	65	8	(8/4)
<i>Zena Mika'el [Story of Michael]</i>	67	108	12	(4/5; 8/4)
<i>Mäṣḥafä krəstəmma [Ritual of Baptism]</i>	69	40	5	(5/4)
<i>Mäftəḫe šəray [Against the Magical Charms]</i>	76	38	5	(4/4; 1/2)
<i>Dərsanä Sənbät [Homily of the Sabbath]</i>	77	52	8	(2/5; 5/4; 1/3)
<i>Dərsanä Ya'əqob zäsərug [Homilies of Jacob of Serug]</i>	78	40	5	(4/4; 1/3)
<i>Sälam Šəllase [In Praise of the Holy Trinity]</i>	79	30	5	(3/4; 1/2; 1/1)
<i>Ra'əyā Yohannəs [Apocalypse of John]</i>	83	11 (incomplete)	-	-
<i>Keštätä aryam ["Revelation on the Highest Heaven"]</i>	84	16	2	(2/4)
<i>Mäṣḥafä Ziq [Lesser Antiphony]</i>	86	52	7	(6/4; 1/1)
	89	21	2	(2/5)
<i>Dərsanä mahyāwi [Homily of the Life-Giver]</i>	87	74	10	(8/4; 1/2; 1/1)
<i>Säyfü Mäläkot [The Sword of the Divinity]</i>	88	100	12	(1/6; 11/4)
<i>Arba'ətu wängelat [New Testament], Mälə'əktä [Letters], Yohannəs Afäwäraq [Homily of John Chrysostom]</i>	91	55 (incomplete)	8	(5/5; 3/4; 1/3)

\*The number of bifolia in quires are included in the right column: number of quires/number of bifolia in a single quire. Simplified data do not reveal the exact arrangement of irregular quires.

In well-preserved manuscripts, the number ranges from two to 38, but the majority of volumes are of medium thickness and contain from seven to fifteen quires (63%). In 57% of all manuscripts the number of folios in each quire is irregular, while the remainder are of quaternion format (33%), with eight leaves in each quire, and in quinion format with ten (10%). In most cases, books with disparate numbers of quires have leaves inserted at the end of the book block, rarely at its beginning. Manuscripts with an irregular structure are usually constructed of quires in quaternion and quinion format, with far fewer in formats of three and six bifolia. In one case, a relatively new paper manuscript with quires in seven or six bifolia was observed.<sup>40</sup>

All manuscripts, whether of regular or irregular construction, consist of bifolia and single leaves. In books with quires of mixed construction, the number of folios in a given quire is generally even, although odd number systems are not unusual; for example: 6/5, 4/5, 3/4, 2/3, and in the reverse order of 5/6, etc. The use of differing numbers of folios in quires is largely practical. It reflects the need to adapt quire structures to the content of the text and provides the opportunity to use smaller pieces of parchment by attaching single leaves on narrow strips between bifolia (Fig. 4.17).



Fig. 4.17 Drawing of a combined quire structure.

Protective flyleaves are widely used in book-block construction, and are most often added at the beginning of the manuscript, while the final protective sheet tends to be part of the last quire of the book. This last folio is often blank on both sides, although cases of leaves with text on the recto side were also noted. These records, frequently including small memorial texts and documents, could be very important for a local community. In many manuscripts, protective flyleaves are also present at the end of the book block, in which case they tend to have the same structure as those placed at the beginning. On occasion, however, their folio composition is irregular, indicating that no particular attention was paid to the consistent arrangement of the book.

<sup>40</sup> EAP526/1/54.

Lower quality parchment was generally used in the preparation of flyleaves. Numerous stains, discolorations, defects and semi-transparency tend to be the main features of this material, whether inserted as separate protective flyleaves at the beginning of the manuscript (Fig. 4.18) or as the final unwritten folio of the last quire.<sup>41</sup> In the latter case, the outer bifolio of the quire was chosen for the purpose. In this manner, the part used for the first written leaf could be of good quality parchment, while the last leaf of this bifolio (derived from the outer edge of the hide) would be less well-prepared, often damaged and gelatinised.



Fig. 4.18 May Wäyni manuscript *Orit* [Octateuch] and *Mäşhafä kufale* [The Book of Jubilees] showing low-quality folios used as protective flyleaves (EAP526/1/3), CC BY-NC.

Separate protective end flyleaves were observed in 73% percent of all manuscripts. However, because many of the manuscripts are preserved in bad condition and are incomplete, it is likely that a significant number originally had additional folios which have not survived. Nine variants of flyleaves were observed, generally resulting from quires made of one or two bifolia. Nearly half of all manuscripts (48%) have a single bifolio as protective end flyleaves (Fig. 4.19c), and sixteen have two (Fig. 4.19i). There are other variants, in which single sheets of parchment retained by folded strips are sewn together to create bifolia (Fig. 4.19d and e).

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<sup>41</sup> See Delamarter and Terefe, plate 35.



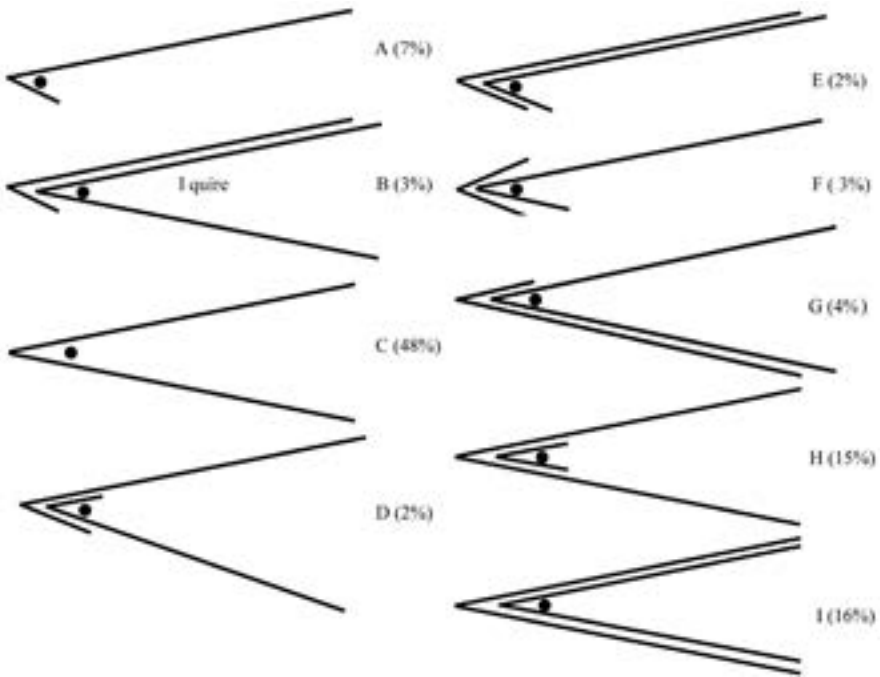


Fig. 4.19 Distribution of flyleaf arrangements in the May Wäyni collection.

With but two exceptions, all the manuscripts were originally bound between wooden boards. In one example (EAP526/1/89), the manuscript has a limp binding made of thick parchment. This volume is rather small (12.5 × 15.5 centimetres) and contains only two quires bearing the text known as the *Māṣḥafū Ziq* [*Lesser Antiphony* or *Book of Antiphonal Chants*]. Its cover is made of the same kind of parchment as that used to prepare the whole manuscript, with a similar disposition of ruled lines indicating that it could represent the original construction of the binding. Quires are attached to the covering material by means of straight long stitches, carelessly executed, running through the first and second quires. This simple and transitory way of binding is relatively rare, occurring mainly in small books of limited content (Fig. 4.20).



Fig. 4.20 May Wäyni manuscript showing straight long stitches on the spine (EAP526/1/89), CC BY-NC.

A second exception to the common form of binding between wooden boards is to be found in contemporary liturgical manuscripts written on machine-made paper (for example, *Mäṣḥafä qəddase* [Missal], EAP526/1/54). These covers were prepared from cardboard. Despite the use of modern materials, the form of the book, the writing materials used and the techniques for decorating its leather covers are still traditional.

12% of all manuscript bindings have been completely destroyed. Their folios are not secured and require urgent protection. It can only be assumed that, like most of the manuscripts, they were once secured by wooden covers. 21% have bare board bindings, a type showing no evidence of having previously been covered with leather. The remaining 66% are bound in leather-covered wooden boards.<sup>42</sup> Of those currently bound only in boards, some presumably had leather covering in the past which has since disappeared.

Over 90% of the books from the May Wäyni manuscript collection were sewn with thick thread<sup>43</sup> on two pairs of sewing stations, while only two small manuscripts were sewn on one pair and one on three pairs. Another group, comprising six manuscripts of small format, had three sewing stations (1.5 pairs).<sup>44</sup> The clear tendency to use two pairs of sewing stations was common for small and relatively large manuscripts, regardless of their format.

The construction of the spine could be assessed for two-thirds of all the leather-bound volumes. In the remaining cases, both the spine and the endbands have been lost. A characteristic feature of Ethiopian bindings is the very simple spine structure. It is flat, untreated and covered only by leather, which is glued to the wooden boards. An exception is the *Dərsanä Mikāʾel* [Homily in Honour of the Archangel Michael] manuscript (EAP526/1/7), in which an additional wide strip of leather has been applied to the spine. Threads connecting the covers to the book block have been stitched through the strip of leather, which was folded over the edges of the first and last quire, indicating that this feature was added at the time the book was sewn (Fig. 4.21).

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42 A smooth goat leather used to cover wooden manuscript boards bears the name *baḥər ʿarāb* because it was imported from Arabian countries in the past, and its current manufacture is based on the Arabic tradition. See Alehegne, p. 149. Another, native version, called *baḥər tənḅən*, presumably from the Tənḅən region of Tigray province, was considered to be more durable, but less attractive. See Sergew Hable Sellassie, pp. 24-25; and Richard Pankhurst, "Ethiopian Manuscript Bindings and their Decoration", *Abbay*, 12 (1983-1984), 205-57 (p. 207).

43 Amharic: *gəmmat*.

44 This system is described by Dan Peterson, "An Investigation and Treatment of an Uncommon Ethiopian Binding and Consideration of its Historical Context", *The Book and Paper Group Annual*, 27 (2008), 55-62 (p. 55).



Fig. 4.21 May Wäyni manuscript *Dərsanä Mikaʾel* [*Homily in Honour of the Archangel Michael*] showing spine lining with a wide strip of leather (EAP526/1/7), CC BY-NC.

At the top and bottom of the spine, this piece of leather was folded and braided endbands were sewn through it. As a result, on the back of a fully leather-bound book, the seams connecting the endbands to the leather spine and quires are invisible. Such use of additional material to strengthen the spine appears to have been rare in the Ethiopian bookmaking tradition. Further research may determine the extent to which bookbinders resorted to this solution or whether it appeared incidentally as a relic of the early Coptic technique.<sup>45</sup>

In the majority (70%) of well-preserved leather bindings, one finds endbands sewn on after the covering was complete. As in the previously-mentioned example, they are usually made of a two-thonged slit braid, stitched with threads to each quire and to the leather spine.<sup>46</sup> As a rule, the longer ends of the braided endbands are sewn between the covers and the book block to the nearest book-sewing station. Although this is a common way of strengthening the construction of the binding, simple folded strips of leather were often used in place of braided thongs.<sup>47</sup> This type of endband, though less decorative, provides considerably more strength to the binding as the covering material at the top and bottom of the spine is stitched not through two, but through four layers of leather (Fig. 4.22). Apart from these two predominant types, there

45 A similar solution was used in the first multi-quire Coptic codices by way of separate leather strips attached to the inner sides of the covers. See Szirmai, pp. 24-25. Parchment lining of the spine was mentioned by Di Bella and Sarris, p. 301, Fig. 178.

46 Some basic information, with drawings, about typical Ethiopian endbands is provided by Monika Gast, "A History of Endbands, Based on a Study of Karl Jäckel", *The New Bookbinder*, 3 (1983), 42-58 (p. 58). Additional illustrations appear in Delamarter and Terefe, plates 11 and 56.

47 This far less frequent type of endband was observed in the binding of the *Dərsanä arba'ātu ənsəsa* [*Homily on the Four Celestial Creatures*] manuscript (EAP526/1/29) and the *Tä'ammärä İyasus* [*Book of the Miracles of Jesus*] manuscript (EAP526/1/72).

are also numerous examples of manuscripts without any endbands (20%), resulting in a substantially weakened binding structure.



Fig. 4.22 May Wäyni manuscript *Därsanä arba'ätu änsäsa* [*Homily on the Four Celestial Creatures*] showing the endband made of a folded strip of leather (EAP526/1/29), CC BY-NC.

Another striking feature of Ethiopian manuscript bindings is the manner in which the inner face of the boards is finished. In 46% of cases, the surface of the boards between the wide leather turn-ins is inlaid with decorative textiles (Fig. 4.23),<sup>48</sup> and less frequently with paper, in order to secure the book block and to decorate the manuscript. In other cases, the inner surfaces of the boards have been entirely covered with leather (30%), while in a number of cases the boards were left bare (24%). The types of fabrics used for this purpose are worthy of note. In addition to the relatively modest fabric of tabby or twill weave, monochrome (EAP526/1/25, 45, 46, 47) or with vertical stripes (EAP526/1/4, 87), examples of more decorative cloths occur. Fragments of Indian Masulipatam cloths (Fig. 4.23d),<sup>49</sup> imported from the eighteenth to at least the early twentieth century, are recognisable because of their characteristic design and colour, along with other types of fabric carried to East Africa by Gujarati traders.<sup>50</sup> Two small

48 Textiles may in some cases provide evidence for the dating of a binding. See Richard Pankhurst, "Imported Textiles in Ethiopian Eighteenth Century Manuscript Bindings in Britain", *Azania: Journal of the British Institute in Eastern Africa*, 16 (1981), pp. 131-50 and plates I-VIII. See also Michael Gervers, "The Portuguese Import of Luxury Textiles to Ethiopia in the 16th and 17th Centuries and their Subsequent Artistic Influence", in *The Indigenous and the Foreign in Christian Ethiopian Art: On Portuguese-Ethiopian Contacts in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17th Centuries: Papers from the Fifth International Conference on the History of Ethiopian Art (Arrabida, 26-30 November 1999)*, ed. by Manuel João Ramos with Isabel Boavida (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 121-34 and plates 10-12.

49 In Masulipatam, a special type of *Kalamkari* (Hindu temple hangings; literally, "pen-work"), the outlines and main features of the designs are printed with hand-carved wooden blocks. See Krishna Chaitanya, *A History of Indian Painting: The Modern Period* (New Delhi: Shakti Malik Abhinav, 1994), pp. 93-94.

50 Pedro Machado, "Awash in a Sea of Cloth: Gujarat Africa, and the Western Indian Ocean, 1300-1800", in *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850*, ed. by

fragments of this plain-weave fabric, decorated with a black block-printed plant design and probably hand-painted brownish background, are used on the inner side of the binding of a manuscript containing the *Gənzät* [*Funeral Ritual*, EAP526/1/43,1; Fig. 4.23d]. Decorative shuttle-woven textiles bearing the “*buta*” motif also come from North India or Persia (Fig. 4.23a). Recognisable types of textiles used in bindings include satin (EAP526/1/42,1,117), damask (EAP526/1/23,1) and even tapestry weave (EAP526/1/37,1,118).<sup>51</sup> Unique in this collection is a modest, dark blue-striped plain-weave textile insert made up of six narrow strips with their selvages (Fig. 4.23b).<sup>52</sup>

All but one of the leather bindings from the May Wäyni collection are tooled with a variety of decorative motifs which are unusually well made. The preparation of the leather and the quality of the decorative tooling illustrate well-developed skills arising out of a long tradition. As a rule, the tooled decoration is based on a large, centrally-positioned cross, framed by an ornamental border. A limited number of tools with relatively simple patterns are used for decorating the leather-bound book covers of Ethiopian manuscripts.<sup>53</sup> It is believed that the simple structure of Ethiopian binding is very similar to that of early Coptic codices.<sup>54</sup> Presumably, all decorative elements of the binding also stem from this early period in the development of the codex. As the tradition of writing and bookbinding spread, patterns travelled with it such that similar ornamentation can be found on Syrian, Armenian and even European bindings from the Romanesque period. However, the limited number of examples from the early Coptic period makes it difficult to trace unambiguously the direction of influence. Richard Pankhurst found the closest similarity between Ethiopian and Armenian bindings, especially in the decoration of the central panel, the use of one or more bands in ornamental fringes and the employment of a number of similar tools.<sup>55</sup> Despite the differences in binding

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Giorgio Riello and Prasanna Parthasarathi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 161-80 (p. 167). See also Richard Pankhurst, “Indian Trade with Ethiopia, the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries”, *Cahiers d’Études Africaines*, 14/55 (1965), 455-97.

51 We are grateful to Katarzyna Zapolska for her help in identifying the types and technical details of the textiles found among manuscripts of the May Wäyni collection.

52 Sarah Fee (Department of Textiles and Costume, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto) confirms that such weft-faced, warp-striped bands, only 2.4 centimetres wide, are known from the Western Indian Ocean region and could have been woven on the braid loom or even produced by pit-loom weavers in Ethiopia.

53 The technique of decorating leather bindings with iron tools is called *mädägg<sup>w</sup>äs* in Amharic. See Alehegne, p. 153.

54 Szirmai, p. 45.

55 Pankhurst, “Ethiopian Manuscript Bindings”, pp. 212-13.

and decorative techniques that have evolved through the centuries between these two traditions, a significant feature common to both is the application of decorative textiles to the inside of the covers.<sup>56</sup>



Fig. 4.23 Different types of textiles used as lining for the inner side of the manuscript bindings: (a) Indian plain-weave, shuttle-woven fabric (?) – with “*buta*” (Persian) or “*boteh*” (Indian) motif (EAP526/1/18); (b) six narrow strips of plain-weave fabric each with both selvages (EAP526/1/48); (c) tapestry, plain-weave fabric (EAP526/1/37); (d) Indian Masulipatam plain-weave fabric, block-printed (EAP526/1/43), CC BY-NC.

<sup>56</sup> Jacek Tomaszewski, *Oprawy haftowane i tekstylne z XVI–XIX wieku w zbiorach polskich, t. 1, Kontekst historyczny [Embroidered and Textile Bookbindings from the 16th to the 19th Century in Polish Collections, I: Historical Context]* (Warsaw: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych, Biblioteka Narodowa, 2013), p. 23, Fig. 6.

The literature mentions no more than ten basic tooled designs used by bookbinders (*k<sup>w</sup>ättač*) for the decoration of Ethiopian bindings.<sup>57</sup> The existing classification of individual patterns is, however, imprecise and needs to be systematised, especially in the context of early examples.<sup>58</sup> The simple iron tools are all used for decorating the central, rectangular motif and surrounding frames (Fig. 4.24). The principal divisions of the composition are created using drawn pallets,<sup>59</sup> giving the impression of single, double and triple lines. Equally popular are traditional motifs of diagonal crosses or X-form type,<sup>60</sup> a motif resembling a palm tree or its leaf,<sup>61</sup> an undulating or wave pattern, also called “mother of water”,<sup>62</sup> and the rosette.<sup>63</sup>



Fig. 4.24 Set of iron tools for decorating bindings, CC BY-NC.

57 Currently, in the region of Tigray, tools are usually obtained in the market place in Aksum. Mellors and Parsons, *Ethiopian Bookmaking*, p. 17.

58 Pankhurst, “Ethiopian Manuscript Bindings”, p. 207.

59 Amharic: *masmäriya* (Alehegne, p. 155).

60 Amharic: *märgäs* (ibid., p. 154).

61 Amharic: *balä—zämbaba* (ibid., p. 160).

62 Amharic: *yä—wəha ənnat* (ibid.). This decoration, consisting of two concentric ellipses, is similar to the water insect of that name (Pankhurst, “Ethiopian Manuscript Bindings”, p. 251).

63 Amharic: *ṭəmazz* (Alehegne, p. 159).

One of the oldest border designs, frequently appearing on the outer edge of the fringe, consists of an oblique chequered patterning or crisscross ornament. Because of its importance, this decoration is called *Ge'ez*, “head” or “principle”.<sup>64</sup> Different strapwork or braided elements, used to build so-called zigzag type patterns<sup>65</sup> are commonly enclosed in a square or rectangular shape. The typical tool set also includes a double wheel, called “dove’s eye”<sup>66</sup> or corniform, which is also known as a single curved element in the form of a crescent.<sup>67</sup> Other motifs occur, but they are less popular and tend to be used incidentally by local craftsmen.<sup>68</sup>

Virtually all the basic variations of decorative motifs are visible on the bindings in the May Wäyni collection. The most popular binding tools are those used for creating the framing fillets. Nine varieties of cross motifs could be identified, among which is a tool for producing a circle superimposed on a cross and complemented by four dots (Fig. 4.25: 19). Seven basic varieties of crisscross patterning are supplemented by a grid pattern which has not previously been noted in sets of bookmakers’ tools (Fig. 4.25: 29-31). The crisscross is used in conjunction with the above-mentioned patterns to create fillets. A variety of simple strap-work elements in the form of straight (Fig. 4.25: 32-33) and wavy shapes (Fig. 4.25: 34-36) together serve as the basis for a large group of tools used solely to create fillets as well as more complicated patterns arising from a broad braid motif (Fig. 4.25: 37-45). The first two from this group (Fig. 4.25: 37-38) are very popular and represent an intermediate form between the wave-like design and braiding.

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64 Amharic: *rə’əsä mädägg’əs* and *mädägg’əs* (ibid., pp. 157 and 153).

65 Amharic: *bälä—gämäd* (ibid., p. 161).

66 Amharic: *‘aynä regb* (ibid., p. 148).

67 Amharic: *fäyyäl fäläg* (resembling the hoofprint of a goat) or *gärnä bäg<sup>c</sup>* and also *gärnä təməzz* (ibid., pp. 150, 157). Berthe Van Regemorter introduced the term in a literal translation, “ram’s horns”, which was also used by Pankhurst. Berthe Van Regemorter, *Some Oriental Bindings in the Chester Beatty Library* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis and Co, 1961), pp. 13-14.

68 Some additional motifs are mentioned in bibliographic sources, for example *gäwz* — a design in the form of a circular “sun” with lines radiating in all directions that was used in block-stamped medallions — or *mahtäm*, a stamp which typically indicates the owner’s name, that is, a person or monastery. See Alehegne, pp. 151 and 155; Thomas Leiper Kane, *Amharic-English Dictionary*, 2 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1990), p. 2023b.



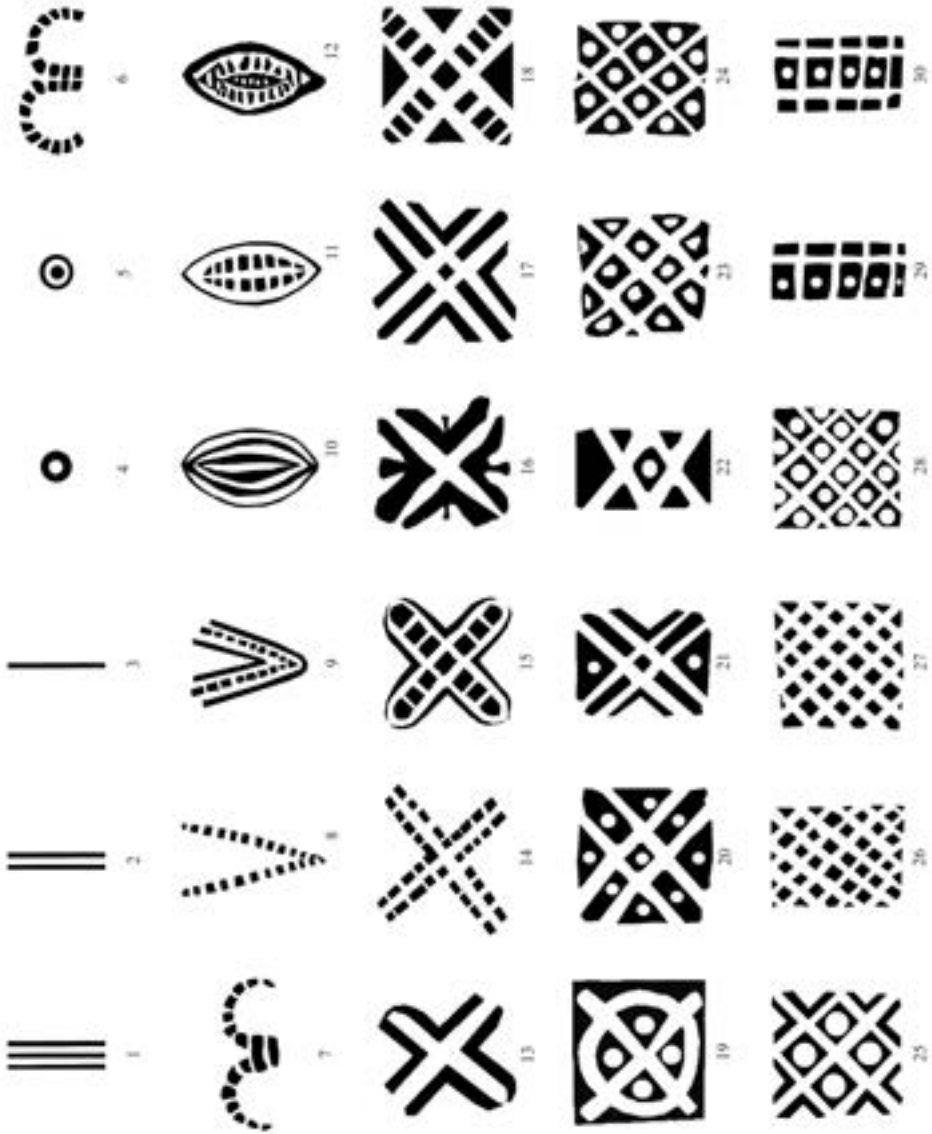




Fig. 4.25 Tools found on bindings in May Wäyṅi collection. Straight lines: triple (1- EAP526/1/26), double (2- EAP526/1/37), single (3- EAP526/1/39). Circles: single (4- EAP526/1/4 [Ø=5 mm]), double (5- EAP526/1/18 [Ø=5 mm]), triple (6- EAP526/1/4 [18 x 8 mm]), 7- EAP526/1/44 [17 x 8 mm]). V-form: dotted (8- EAP526/1/11 [5 x 10 mm]), triple lines (9- EAP526/1/24 [9 x 12 mm]). Almond form: 'mother of water' (10- EAP526/1/4 [7 x 10 mm]), 'palm shape' (11- EAP526/1/5 [13 x 6 mm]), 12- EAP526/1/49 [12 x 6 mm]), Diagonal cross: 13- EAP526/1/17 [7 x 7 mm]), 14- EAP526/1/11 [8 x 8 mm]), 15- EAP526/1/5 [10 x 10 mm]), 16- EAP526/1/4 [9 x 9 mm]), 17- EAP526/1/18 [7 x 7 mm]), 18- EAP526/1/87 [9 x 9 mm]), 19- EAP526/1/48 [8 x 8 mm]), 20- EAP526/1/42 [12 x 12 mm]), 21- EAP526/1/11 [8 x 10 mm]). Criss-cross: 22- EAP526/1/7 [4 x 6 mm]), 23- EAP526/1/26 [9 x 10 mm]), 24- EAP526/1/15 [8 x 8 mm]), 25- EAP526/1/18 [9 x 9 mm]), 26- EAP526/1/49 [7 x 9 mm]), 27- EAP526/1/5 [9 x 10 mm]), 28- EAP526/1/66 [8 x 8 mm]). Grid pattern: 29- EAP526/1/24 [7 x 13 mm]), 30- EAP526/1/4 [10 x 15 mm]), 31- EAP526/1/41 [12 x 12 mm]). Straight strapwork elements: 32- EAP526/1/3 [5 x 11 mm]), 33- EAP526/1/18 [6 x 9 mm]). Wavy lines: 34- EAP526/1/3 [5 x 14 mm]), 35- EAP526/1/26 [6 x 15 mm]), 36- EAP526/1/1 [4 x 10 mm]). Curve strapwork elements or 'wave form': 37- EAP526/1/13 [8 x 10 mm]), 38- EAP526/1/15 [6 x 10 mm]), 39- EAP526/1/18 [9 x 10 mm]), 40- EAP526/1/49 [7 x 10 mm]), 41- EAP526/1/22 [9 x 10 mm]), 42- EAP526/1/31 [9 x 10 mm]), 43- EAP526/1/22 [6 x 10 mm]), 44- EAP526/1/41 [7 x 10 mm]), 45- EAP526/1/41 [7 x 10 mm]). Rosette motives: 46- EAP526/1/25 [8 x 8 mm]), 47- EAP526/1/31 [7 x 7 mm]), 48- EAP526/1/46 [7 x 7 mm]). All images CC BY-NC.

Forms of simple rosettes (Fig. 4.25: 46-48) appear rarely, but are characteristic elements which allow the linking of individual bindings to a particular creator. A survey of the entire collection identified two types of the basic forms of this so-called “dove’s eye” tool. In contrast, the tool which gives the imprint of a single or double circle is common (Fig. 4.25: 4-5). Another pattern which has not previously been mentioned in the literature can be defined as the “V-form.” Two variations of this type of decorative tooling appear in the bindings of the May Wäyni manuscripts, one consisting of a single dotted line (Fig. 4.25: 8) and the other of two solid outer lines with a dotted line down the centre (Fig. 4.25: 9).

Established centuries ago, decorative conventions and most of the tools were rigidly prescribed by Ethiopian bookbinders.<sup>69</sup> Many of these patterns were used by different binders in almost identical form, although in many cases small differences can be seen in the drawing or the size of the design. Finding these subtle differences may contribute to the identification of the individual binders. Although it is assumed that seven or more kinds of tools may be used to decorate large books, it is common to find only three used on small bindings.<sup>70</sup> The number of border arms and of tools used depends more on the creativity of the bookbinder than on the format of the book. Not only did the diligence and accuracy of a scribe’s handwriting serve as testimony to his artistry, but it also promoted the splendour of the decorative binding that he prepared for his book. For this reason, as many designs and tools were applied as possible, and in many cases a sense of *horror vacui* is clearly visible.

Over 73% of the tooled fringes consist of two or three ornamental sequences. The remaining fringes are more complex, having four or five fringe arms. Only in one case is the central field encompassed by a single decorative frame. Normally, a seemingly simple traditional decorative surround is enriched with different varieties of the central cross theme, yet the number of variations based on such simple shapes and figures is remarkable. It is challenging to create a typology of these central elements, enclosed in a rectangular shape, because the wide variety of tooled ornaments differs from the basic compositional scheme. However, with some simplification, four main groups of motifs can be identified.<sup>71</sup>

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69 Pankhurst, “Ethiopian Manuscript Bindings”, p. 209.

70 Mellors and Parsons, *Ethiopian Bookmaking*, p. 17; see also Delamarter and Terefe, plates 24, 37 and 106.

71 Pankhurst established three forms of central panel decoration based on the cross motif.

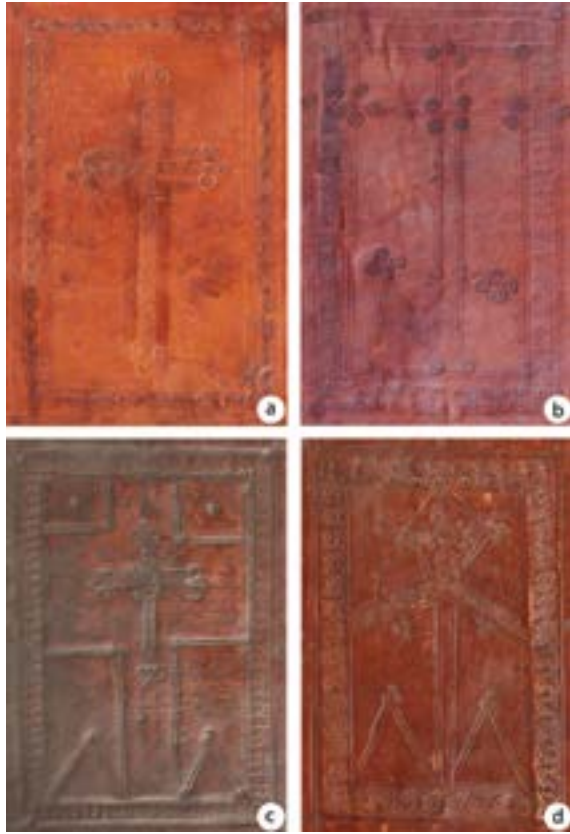


Fig. 4.26 Decorative tooling on the central panels of the leather covering of four manuscripts from May Wäyṅi (a (EAP526/1/4), b (EAP526/1/16), c (EAP526/1/7), d (EAP526/1/31)), CC BY-NC.

In the simplest version, the ornamented central Latin cross stands alone or is sometimes found with an unobtrusive decorative background (Fig. 4.26a).<sup>72</sup> The cross in the next group is enhanced by squares or triangles at the base (Fig. 4.26b). In the third group, rectangular forms appear below the cross with square ones at the top, thus creating an additional background outline for it (Fig. 4.26c).<sup>73</sup> These forms could be further decorated with straight-line or

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To his classification we have added another motif with squares or triangles placed at the base of the cross (Fig. 4.26b). He also distinguished three basic forms of cross tooling on bindings: 1) the Latin cross; 2) an equal-armed cross with extended lower stem; and 3) the diamond-shaped cross (“Ethiopian Manuscript Bindings”, p. 209).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 211, Fig. 5a.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., Fig. 5b.

dual-wheel tooling. In the last group, a church is represented schematically with a diamond-shaped cross on an architectural post rising above the pitch of the roof (Fig. 4.26d).<sup>74</sup>

The tooling of most of the bindings in the May Wäyni collection is based on these few characteristic schemes, only some of which received a marginally different decoration. Although it, too, is based on a cross motif, the tooled composition of the binding from a copy of the *Zena šállase* [*Narrative Teaching on the Holy Trinity*, EAP526/1/73; Fig. 4.27] is less complex, but deserves particular attention due to its elaborate tooling. The upper cover consists of a centrally-arranged simple cross whose arms extend to the outer frame of a double, ornamental fringe. On the back cover, the fringe embodies a single ornamental sequence, while the central cross is filled with embossed decoration. Smaller crosses were placed in rectangular fields in the corners of the composition, the lower pair being additionally decorated with a blind, stamped pattern.



Fig. 4.27 May Wäyni manuscript *Zena Šallase* [*Narrative Teaching on the Holy Trinity*].  
Tooled leather binding (EAP526/1/73), CC BY-NC.

Tooling was not restricted to the covers. Blind tooling ornamentation can be observed in nearly 30% of the manuscripts from May Wäyni whose leather has been entirely preserved (Fig. 4.28).<sup>75</sup> Most often, it consists of a rectangular

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., Fig. 5c.

<sup>75</sup> Very few authors mention the decoration on the spine. Antoine d'Abbadie, in the introduction to his catalogue of Ethiopian manuscripts, states that the spines of the manuscripts remain undecorated. Antoine d'Abbadie, *Catalogue raisonné de manuscrits éthiopiens appartenant à Antoine d'Abbadie* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1859), p. 87. Pankhurst claims that the spine is left with little or no tooling ("Ethiopian Manuscript Binding", p. 209).

segment dividing the surface into two to six fields, usually filled with diagonally arranged crosses. In some cases, smaller fields close the composition at the top and bottom of the spine. Less typical are designs consisting of a sequence of crosses, placed on the back of the book without segmental division, but usually enriched with additional small tool impressions. An unusual decoration appears on the manuscript of the *Tä'ammärä Iyäsus* [Book of the Miracles of Jesus, EAP526/1/44], whose spine is divided by oblique lines into triangular fields and embellished with impressions of rectangular stamps in a crisscross pattern (Fig. 4.28, right). The arrangement of decoration on the spines of these manuscripts has a purely decorative function and was introduced independently of the layout of the sewing stations.



Fig. 4.28 Tooled leather decoration on the spines of manuscripts (from left to right: EAP526/1/31, EAP526/1/22, EAP526/1/44), CC BY-NC.

Decorative stamping is further visible on the inner side of the covers, particularly on the wide leather turn-ins and strips pasted down on the binding edge of the wooden cover to form the border of the central field. This ornamentation is predominantly restricted to the tooling of straight lines, enhanced with double circles. Among the manuscripts from May Wäyni, of particular distinction is the very precisely made and relatively new binding of the *Gädlä Pēṭros zä-Däbrä Abbay* [Acts of Petros of Däbrä Abbay, EAP526/1/65]. On the inner side of the covers, the evenly trimmed leather margins form a border for the middle field lined with a plain-weave textile. The orange and

white textile is printed in oblique diamonds which are filled alternately with impressions of small diamonds and four-leaf rosettes or crosses. Placed in the middle of the central panel is a square cross, also made of leather (Fig. 4.29). Both the cross and the border are tooled and divided into square and rectangular segments, the insides of which have been stamped with diagonal lines. Double circles and crosses are tooled in the corners of each field and where the lines intersect. In this case, the leather ornamentation seems to have been inspired by the geometric pattern of the printed textile.



Fig. 4.29 May Wäyni manuscript *Gädlä Petros zä-Däbrä Abbay* [*Acts of Petros of Däbrä Abbay*] showing decoration of the inner side of the cover (EAP526/1/65), CC BY-NC.

Finally, tooled decoration can also be found on the edges of the covers. As on the inner side of the covers, the tooling on the edges serves both a decorative and technological purpose. The impression with a hot metal tool on moist leather enhances its adhesion to the cover. This type of decoration is present on about 30% of all bindings with preserved leather covers. Most often, it takes the form of a triple line running along all edges of the book. Less common is the impression of double circles or other patterns, including more complex decoration in which multiple lines and circles are integrated.



Fig. 4.30 May Wäyni manuscript showing tooled decoration on the edges of the covers (EAP526/1/52), CC BY-NC.

The examination and recording of the May Wäyni manuscripts have provided the opportunity to develop a more general conservation strategy for manuscripts found in Ethiopia. The compromising storage conditions and the state of preservation of the collection are common to its rural counterparts throughout the country. Many, if not most, of these manuscripts are vulnerable to massive loss and destruction, and it is probable that large numbers will suffer such a fate sooner rather than later. To some extent, this situation can be marginally postponed by the ancient scribal tradition of copying books manually, a custom still practiced in various parts of the country. However, this method of replicating texts is insufficient, all the more so when one considers the example of late antique and medieval Europe. In the difficult conditions facing Ethiopia today, every effort needs to be undertaken to preserve both the tangible and the intangible history of the region. Digitisation is an extremely important and effective tool for the protection and preservation of this heritage but, faced with the enormous numbers of extant Ethiopian manuscripts, it can only succeed if accompanied by increased activity at the international level. In order to preserve the manuscript traditions of Ethiopia adequately there must be broad cooperation among Ethiopians and non-Ethiopians in the conservation of the most valuable literary works, sustained through training in modern conservation methods and, wherever possible, by supporting surviving scribal practices.



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# 5. Localising Islamic knowledge: acquisition and copying of the Riyadha Mosque manuscript collection in Lamu, Kenya<sup>1</sup>

Anne K. Bang

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In Lamu, Islamic practice and intellectual traditions in the late nineteenth century were strongly marked by the foundation of the Riyadha Mosque, established by Ṣālīḥ b. ‘Alawī Jamal al-Layl, known in East Africa as Habib Saleh (1853-1936).<sup>2</sup> He was a descendant of early migrants from Ḥaḍramawt, Yemen, who settled in Pate in the late sixteenth century. From there, the Jamal al-Layl family branched out to the urban centres of East Africa, including Zanzibar and the Comoro Islands. Being not only of Ḥaḍramī (and thus Arab) origin, but also claiming Sharīfian descent (i.e. in direct patrilineage from the prophet Muḥammad), the male representatives of the Jamal al-Layl clan in East Africa were able to take up professions as religious experts, often in combination with roles as traders.

As part of the stratum collectively called the ‘Alawī *sāda*, the Jamal al-Layl family was also known to adhere to the brand of Sufism (Islamic mysticism

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- 1 The transliteration of Arabic words in this chapter is based on the LOC transliteration system.
  - 2 The honorific use of the term *ḥabīb* (beloved) is common to many of the most revered scholars of the ‘Alawī tradition up to the present time; for example, “Habib ‘Umar” (‘Umar b. Ḥafīz) is the current leader of the Dar al-Muṣṭafā in Tarim, Ḥaḍramawt. In some instances, the term *ḥabīb* is used almost synonymously with the term *sharīf* or *sayyid*, implying descent from the prophet. Abdallah Saleh Farsy, in his hagiographic account of the Islamic scholars of East Africa, uses the name “Habib Saleh” consistently. See Abdallah Saleh Farsy, *Baadhi ya Wanavyoni wa Kishafii wa Mashariki ya Afrika [The Shafī’i Ulama of East Africa, ca. 1830-1970: A Hagiographic Account]*, trans. and ed. by Randall L. Pouwels (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 1989).

organised in *ṭarīqas*, or brotherhoods) known as the *ṭarīqa* ‘Alawiyya. The “‘Alawī way” rests on a dual *silsila* (chain of spiritual transmission). The first links back to Shu‘ayb Abū Madyan (d. 1197 in the Maghreb) and shares the same origin as the more widely diffused *ṭarīqa* Shādhiliyya.<sup>3</sup> However, in Ḥaḍramawt, the ‘Alawiyya was for centuries perpetuated as “clan Sufism” among the *sāda*, its spiritual secrets understood to rest within the bloodline of the prophet. This came to be known as a second chain of transmission, and in turn made for a tight-knit stratum that upheld strict rules of endogamous marriage and control of access to knowledge. However, by the nineteenth century, the idea that mystical knowledge was accessible only to males born to a *sayyid* father had somewhat retreated, probably due to centuries of widespread migration and the accompanying need for intermarriage into host societies in East Africa, Southeast Asia and India. The shift was also likely the result of an ongoing intellectual reform within the ‘Alawī *ṭarīqa*, closely connected to reformist ideas emerging within the wider Islamic world. What we do know is that in late nineteenth-century East Africa, representatives of the *ṭarīqa* ‘Alawiyya were ready to teach non-‘Alawīs to marry their daughters to them and initiate them into the *ṭarīqa*.

Habib Saleh was born in Grande Comore, but left as a young man to stay with relatives in Lamu. He returned to Grande Comore again, but finally settled in Lamu some time in the late 1870s or early 1880s. His biography, as well as his religious and intellectual formation are well documented in earlier studies and will not be repeated at length here.<sup>4</sup> However, one aspect that must be addressed is Habib Saleh’s spiritual connection to his Sufi master in Ḥaḍramawt, the renowned teacher, saintly figure and scholar ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī (d. 1915).<sup>5</sup> In the history of the ‘Alawī *ṭarīqa*, al-Ḥibshī

3 Anne K. Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 13-16; and J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 16. Trimingham bases his observation on Maghrebi sources deriving from the Shādhiliyya-Jazūliyya.

4 Ṣāliḥ Muḥammad ‘Alī Badawī, *Al-Riyād bayna māḍīhi wa-ḥādirīhi*, Transcript, NP, 1410/1989; Abdul Hamid M. el Zein, *The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974); Peter Lienhardt, “The Mosque College of Lamu and its Social Background”, *Tanzania Notes and Records*, 53 (1959), 228-42; BinSumeit Kitamy, “The Role of the Riyadhha Mosque College in Enhancing Islamic Identity in Kenya”, in *Islam in Kenya: Proceedings of the National Seminar on Contemporary Islam in Kenya*, ed. by Mohamed Bakari and Saad S. Yahya (Nairobi: Mewa, 1995), pp. 269-76; and Patricia W. Romero, “‘Where Have All the Slaves Gone?’: Emancipation and Post-Emancipation in Lamu, Kenya”, *The Journal of African History*, 27 (1986), 497-512.

5 In Swahili, the name is usually referred to as “al-Hibshi”, whereas the Ḥaḍramī vocalisation is given as “al-Ḥabshī”. I have chosen here to use the most common

is known as part of a group of scholars who were the driving force behind what has been termed a “reform” of the religious precepts of the ‘Alawiyya. It may be argued whether or not this reform actually constituted a clear break with the past, but what is clear is that their emphasis on institution building (first and foremost in the form of religious schools for primary and higher education, known as *ribāts*), changed the ways in which Islamic knowledge was transmitted. Rather than restricting transmission to the personal relationship between a *murshid* (master) and his student (*murīd*), Islamic — and even Sufi — knowledge was now understood as a set of texts that could be taught in classes, following an organised curriculum. As a consequence, these institutions emphasised written authority, in the sense that they favoured text (and, specifically text in Arabic) over oral transmission.

The *ribāt* founded by al-Ḥibshī in Say’ūn, Ḥaḍramawt, was named al-Riyāḍ (The Garden), and received students from the wide diaspora of Ḥaḍramī ‘Alawī migrants in the Indian Ocean. The efforts of scholars like al-Ḥibshī influenced like-minded scholars (‘Alawīs primarily, but also non-‘Alawīs) who founded similar teaching institutions not only in East Africa, but also further afield in the Indian Ocean, including Indonesia.<sup>6</sup> The Riyadha Mosque and its teaching institution was explicitly modelled on that of al-Riyāḍ in Say’ūn, and the impact of al-Ḥibshī on the Riyadha was to be long standing. In the Riyadha library there are manuscript copies of al-Ḥibshī’s writings, his *khuṭbas* (Friday sermons) and his *mawlid* (text recited on the occasion of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad) *Simṭ al-durar*.<sup>7</sup>

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Swahili vocalisation. On the history of ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī, see Freitag, Ulrike, “Hadhrāmawt: A Religious Centre for the Northwestern Indian Ocean in the Late 19th and early 20th Centuries?”, *Studia Islamica*, 89 (1999), 165-83; and Bang, *Sufis and Scholars*, pp. 63-68. On the relationship between Habib Saleh and ‘Alī al-Ḥibshī, see Badawī: “there existed between [the two] a strong bond and connection, even though the two never met in their lives” (p. 24).

6 In Indonesia, the emergence of new strands of education among the Ḥaḍramīs caused a deep conflict between “traditionalists” and “modernists”. For the development of new teaching institutions, see Ulrike Freitag, *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadhrāmawt: Reforming the Homeland* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, *The Hadrami Awakening: Community and Identity in the Netherlands East Indies, 1900-1942* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Muḥammad Nūr b. Muḥammad Khayr al-Anṣārī, *Ta’rikh al-Irshād*; and Deliar Noer, *The Muslim Modernist Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973). For two contemporary Dutch accounts of the conflict, see B. J. O. Schrieke, “De Strijd onder de Arabieren in Pers en Literatuur”, *Notulen van de Algemeene en Directievergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, 58 (1920), 190-240; and C. O. van der Plas, “De Arabische Gemeente Ontvaakt”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift*, 20 (1931), 176-85.

7 The works of al-Ḥibshī can be found in EAP466/1/49, EAP466/1/52, EAP466/1/69. For more detailed description, see the bibliography below.

The construction of the Riyadhha Mosque was made possible through the help of Sayyid Maṣṣab b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (1828-1922).<sup>8</sup> He was a Lamu-born Ḥaḍramī ‘Alawī scholar very much in touch with reformist ideas then current in Ḥaḍramawt as well as in Mecca. After a career that included studies in Mecca and Ḥaḍramawt, and long periods as *qāḍī* (Islamic judge) of Dar-es-Salaam and Chwaka, Zanzibar, he returned to Lamu as a revered religious authority, especially consulted upon questions of Arabic language and grammar. In 1903, he transformed some of his land in Lamu into a *waqf* (pious endowment) for the purpose of building the Riyadhha.<sup>9</sup> However, it should be noted that Habib Saleh started his teaching activities several years earlier, probably shortly after he settled in Lamu some time between 1875 and 1885.<sup>10</sup>

From the very beginning, the main hallmark of the Riyadhha was the incorporation of ritual traditions derived from al-Ḥibshī (notably the *Simṭ al-durar*, also known as the *Mawlid al-Ḥibshī*). However, the most enduring reformist agenda of the Riyadhha was the admittance of students from beyond the stone town itself (Oromo, Giriama, Pokomo and others). These groups had until then been considered “outsiders” by the traditional Lamu aristocracy, and many of them were former slaves.<sup>11</sup>

## The manuscript collection of the Riyadhha Mosque

The manuscript collection of the Riyadhha consists of approximately 150 manuscripts, presently housed in the library of the educational facility of the mosque. It is the largest privately held collection of Islamic manuscripts known to exist in Kenya, and the manuscripts date from the early nineteenth century to the 1930s. In terms of content, it ranges from 700-page tomes of Islamic law to smaller leaflets of 20-50 pages meant for use in an educational setting. The older manuscripts are bound in leather, while the more recent are written by pen in lined schoolbooks. The Riyadhha collection is unique from several perspectives. Firstly, it provides an important overview of the historical orientation of Islamic education in East Africa. Secondly, several of the manuscripts have inscriptions

8 Badawī, p. 17; Farsy, pp. 66-68; and Bang, *Sufis and Scholars*, p. 102.

9 *Waqfiyya* dated 1320/1903 (both years are actually given in the *waqfiyya*), and stamped by the East Africa Protectorate Lamu Registry, 21 Feb 1903: In the possession of the Riyadhha Mosque.

10 This is also the conclusion arrived at by Peter Lienhardt, “The Mosque College of Lamu and its Social Background”, *Tanzania Notes and Records*, 53 (1959), 228-42 (p. 230).

11 Patricia W. Romero, “Where Have All the Slaves Gone?: Emancipation and Post-Emancipation in Lamu, Kenya”, *The Journal of African History*, 27 (1986), 497-512.

that name owners over decades, indicating the economy of books and reading. Thirdly, the presence in some of the manuscripts of inter-linear Swahili translations in the Arabic script allows for research on the use of the Arabic script before colonial education.<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, the collection holds copies of texts authored by East African scholars themselves, sometimes in the author's own hand. One prominent example is EAP466/1/38 (Fig. 5.1) by the Brawa-born scholar Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Qaḥṭānī (ca. 1790-1869), *Sharḥ tarbiyyat al-atfāl*: a commentary on the text “*Tarbiyyat al-atfāl*” [*Instruction for children*]. Al-Qaḥṭānī was a renowned scholar on the coast.



Fig. 5.1 First page of *Sharḥ Tarbiyyat al-atfāl* by Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Qaḥṭānī (d. Zanzibar, 1869). Possibly in the author's own hand (EAP466/1/38, image 3), CC BY-ND.

12 The texts that include Swahili *ajami* have been included below in the list of works by local copyists (EAP466/1/38).



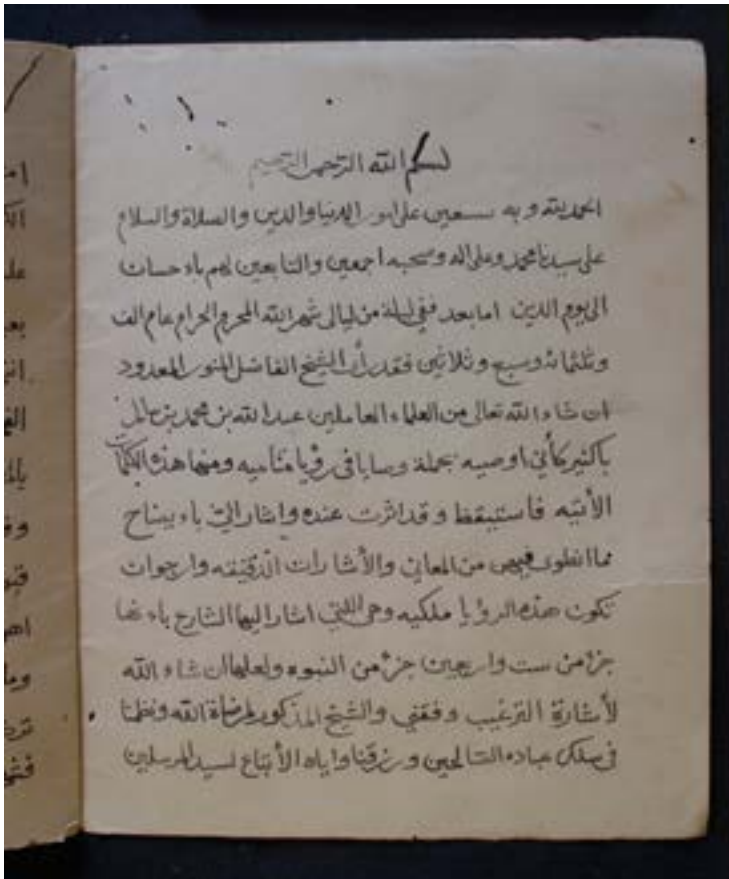


Fig. 5.2 *Wiṣayāt Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Sumayṭ ilā ‘Abd Allāh BāKathīr*. Spiritual testament from the Zanzibari Sufi shaykh Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ (d. 1925) to his friend and disciple ‘Abd Allāh Bā Kathīr (d. 1925), dated 1337H/1918-1919. Possibly in the author’s own hand (EAP466/1/99, image 2), CC BY-ND.

Another example is EAP466/1/99 (Fig. 5.2). This is the “spiritual testament” of the leading Sufi and chief *qāḍī* of Zanzibar Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ to his close friend, disciple and associate, the Lamu-born scholar ‘Abd Allāh Bā Kathīr, who founded the Madrasa Bā Kathīr in Zanzibar and who maintained close family ties with Habib Saleh. Most likely, the manuscript is in the author’s own hand. Also by a local author is EAP466/1/144. This is a travelogue produced by the aforementioned ‘Abd Allāh Bā Kathīr, meticulously listing the *shaykhs* with whom he studied during his journey in Ḥaḍramawt in 1897. A final example is EAP466/1/60, authored by the Zanzibari scholar Ḥasan b.

Muḥammad Jamal al-Layl (d. 1904), who came from the same family as Habib Saleh. The work, entitled *Marsūmat al-‘Ayniyya*, is a commentary on a well-known poem by the Ḥaḍramī ‘Alawī poet ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alawī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1719). While these are certainly important and merit an in-depth study, the focus here is on the mechanisms by which texts authored outside East Africa were made available there.

My first visit to the Riyadhha was in April 2010. I then returned in July 2010, with colleagues from the University of Bergen and the University of Cape Town. Together with Aydarooos and Ahmad Badawi of the Riyadhha, and Eirik Hovden from the University of Bergen, we made a preliminary inventory of the manuscript collection, simply numbering each manuscript in order from one upwards, and listing its title, author, copyist and date of copy only. In total, at that time we listed forty manuscripts. In August 2011, we received the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) grant to digitise the collection; this task was completed in December 2012, and the digitised collection is accessible at the EAP website.<sup>13</sup>

The EAP website displays 144 individual items. In addition, twelve other manuscripts were partly digitised but they have not been put online, either because they were too fragile to be completely digitised, or because of errors during the digitising process. There is still no full catalogue of the collection. The handlists produced for the EAP project, as well as a provisional catalogue created for some categories of text (devotional texts, Sufism, genealogy and *fiqh*) forms the basis for this contribution. A future full catalogue will certainly add much depth to what is stated here, both in terms of the content of the works, as well as their transmission.

As has been argued elsewhere, the titles in the manuscript collection in the Riyadhha Mosque show clear traces of the close intellectual inter-connection with the Ḥaḍramawt and with wider trends of Islamic thought that were spreading throughout the Indian Ocean during that period.<sup>14</sup> This is especially clear if we look at the prevalence of texts that can be categorised as devotional, i.e. supererogatory prayers, Sufi *dhikr* (commemorations of God), *mawlid* texts, various types of invocations, prayers and poetry expressing devotion

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13 EAP466: The manuscripts of the Riyadh Mosque of Lamu, Kenya, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP466](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP466). The digitised manuscripts are available at <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP466>

14 For the content of this intellectual tradition, see Anne K. Bang, “The Riyadhha Mosque Manuscript Collection in Lamu: A Ḥaḍramī Tradition in Kenya”, *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*, 5/4 (2014); and idem, *Islamic Sufi Networks in the Western Indian Ocean (c. 1880-1940): Ripples of Reform* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

to the prophet. The collection shows a not unexpected over-representation of authors from within the Ḥaḍramī ‘Alawī tradition, or authors sanctioned by this tradition. This is especially so in the fields of Sufism and genealogy, where authors from the ‘Alawī tradition dominate.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Riyadhha collection also holds multiple copies of texts that were common to all of East Africa, and indeed beyond to the wider Muslim world (such as the *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* and the *Mawlid Barzanjī*).<sup>15</sup> From their presence in an educational institution, we can deduce that knowledge of these texts — literally, the ability to read them — was an essential prerequisite for being an educated member of contemporary Muslim society. There existed, in other words, what Roman Loimeier in his study of Zanzibar called an Arabic-language *bildungskanon*:<sup>16</sup> an educational common ground that encompassed Ḥaḍramawt, Lamu, Zanzibar and the Comoro Islands. This canon was being taught in new educational facilities, such as the aforementioned al-Riyād in Say’ūn and the Madrasa Bā Kathīr in Zanzibar.

Before the emergence of print, this *bildungskanon* consisted mainly of manuscript texts that reached the Riyadhha through buying, donations or copying over a long period of time — well into the era of print. Manuscripts were acquired during travel (to Ḥaḍramawt, Mecca, Egypt or elsewhere), either directly on behalf of the Riyadhha, or by individuals who later decided to deposit their books with the institution, often through the Islamic institution of *waqf*. Buyers and donors, in other words, were important transmitters of ideas. Known texts were also copied by local copyists, who thus also acted as transmitters. The focus here is on the ways in which the manuscripts, as physical manifestations of an emerging *bildungskanon*, found their way to the shelves of the Riyadhha.

## Buyers, owners and donors

One illustrative example of how the actual, physical transmission of manuscripts took place can be found in the Riyadhha library. Around 1890,

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15 *Qaṣīdat al-Burda*, by the Sufi and poet al-Buṣīri (d. 1202) is a poetic praise of the Prophet Muḥammad and widely recited among Sunni Muslims throughout the world. The *mawlid* poem authored by Ja’far al-Barzanjī (d. 1764) is a panegyric on the Prophet, widely recited in the Islamic world on the date of his birth. See Marion Holmes Katz, *The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad: Devotional Piety in Sunni Islam* (London: Routledge, 2007); and Constance E. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions: A Study of Prayer-Manuals in Common Use* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996 [1961]).

16 Roman Loimeier, *Between Social Skills and Marketable Skills: The Politics of Islamic Education in 20th Century Zanzibar* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

the *mufti* of Tarīm, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mashhūr, completed a massive genealogical work known as *Shams al-Zahīra* [*The Mid-day Sun*].<sup>17</sup> Six years later, the Lamu-born scholar ‘Abd Allāh Bā Kathīr travelled to Tarīm in the search for knowledge. While in Tarim, he sought out al-Mashhūr and then wrote a letter to his colleague in Zanzibar, the aforementioned Ḥasan Jamal al-Layl (d. 1904). This letter is reproduced in the front of the text authored by Ḥasan Jamal al-Layl, the *Marsūmat al-‘Ayniyya* mentioned above, and which deals precisely with genealogy:

[Al-Mashhūr] greets you and gives you a big gift, but I don’t want to send it by somebody else’s hand, as it is very a precious book, but I will bring it myself after the Hajj [Pilgrimage]. What he composed is a book about all the *sāda* and the names they were known by...<sup>18</sup>

It is worth noting that Bā Kathīr emphasises the value of the book, not necessarily in monetary terms, but nonetheless as too precious to be sent by somebody else’s hand. The implication, of course, is that books were frequently sent “by somebody else’s hand” from Ḥaḍramawt and elsewhere to the scholarly centres of East Africa, including Lamu. The sending of texts back and forth seems to have been a common feature of intellectual friendships and collaborations; for example, Ṭāhir al-Amawī (d. 1938), *qāḍī* of Zanzibar, corresponded regularly with the *mufti* of Mecca. In this correspondence too, the sending of books, journal and texts is frequently mentioned.<sup>19</sup>

The text that Bā Kathīr brought to Zanzibar was almost certainly al-Mashhūr’s *magnum opus*, the *Shams al-zahīra al-dāḥiyya al-munīra fī nasab wa-silsila ahl al-bayt al-nabawī* [*The Luminescent, encompassing mid-day sun on the lineage and genealogy of the people of the house of the Prophet*].<sup>20</sup> This work

17 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn Al-Mashhūr, *Shams al-zahīra fī nasab ahl al-bayt min banī ‘Alawī. Furū’ Fāṭima al-Zahrā’ wa-Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī*, 2 vols., 2nd edn., ed. by Muḥammad Ḍiyā’ Shihāb, Jiddah (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Ma’rifa, 1984). Al-Mashhūr himself was a representative of the reformist movement discussed above, and the founder of a school in Tarim that was sought out by scholars from East Africa and beyond.

18 Another, related text by Ḥasan b. Muḥammad Jamal al-Layl can be found in the Zanzibar National Archives, ZA 8/58 (photocopy in Bergen). For a discussion of this text, see Valerie J. Hoffman, “The Role of the Masharifu on the Swahili Coast in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries”, in *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet*, ed. by Morimoto Kazuo (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 185-97.

19 For a discussion of this correspondence, see Anne K. Bang, “Another Scholar for all Seasons?: Tahir b. Abi Bakr al-Amawi (1877-1938), Qadi of Zanzibar”, in *The Global Worlds of the Swahili. Interfaces of Islam, Identity and Space in 19th and 20th-Century East Africa*, ed. by Roman Loimeier and Rüdiger Seesemann (Hamburg: LIT Verlag, 2006), pp. 273-88.

20 See al-Mashhūr. The book was first printed in Hyderabad in 1911, and again in Mecca in 1955. The latest edition, from 1984 (which is the one consulted here) has additional entries and updates. For a discussion of its content, see B. G. Martin, “Arab Migrations

was only completed in manuscript form by 1890, and it is interesting to note how relatively quickly a copy made its way to East Africa. The *Shams al-zahīra* was since copied throughout the ‘Alawī diaspora, including in East Africa. One example is a copy held by the Riyadhha Mosque, copied in Ṣafar 1322/April 1904 by Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Jamal al-Layl (Ahmad Badawi, the son of Habib Saleh, b. 1305/1887-88).<sup>21</sup>

## Owners affiliated with the Riyadhha Mosque

Not surprisingly, we find among the original owners of manuscripts in the Riyadhha collection the founder of the mosque itself, Habib Saleh. Three manuscripts carry his inscription (EAP466/1/17, 19, 28) while a fourth (EAP466/1/49) almost certainly belonged to him (by textual evidence, the text is a compilation of works by Habib Saleh’s *shaykh*, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī). By all accounts, the manuscripts remained with the family, and were deposited at the Riyadhha for safekeeping.

Another central Riyadhha-affiliated scholar whose books can be found at the library was Sayyid Maṣṣab b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. EAP466/1/48 is a collection of Sufi *ijāzas* (certificates, proof of proficiency) and spiritual advice from his main teacher in Ḥaḍramawt, ‘Aydarūs b. ‘Umar al-Ḥibshī (d. 1896, Ḥaḍramawt). This collection stems from Sayyid Maṣṣab’s period of study with ‘Aydarūs al-Ḥibshī, and almost certainly belonged to him. The series of Quranic *juzus*<sup>22</sup> held in the Riyadhha all carry his inscription, stating that the copy is “verified by Sayyid Maṣṣab”. According to the account by Abdallah Saleh Farsy, Sayyid Maṣṣab was known as the best Arabist in Lamu, and his “verification” meant that the vocalisation was correct and that the copy could be used for recital.

While it is not entirely clear from the inscription if the copies actually *belonged* to Sayyid Maṣṣab, they certainly came to the mosque via him. The

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to East Africa in Medieval Times”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 7/3 (1974), 367-90. For a discussion of its diffusion and meaning within the ‘Alawī diaspora, see Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

21 This manuscript is not on the EAP website as it was insufficiently digitised (not all pages could be opened). In the initial listing by Shaykh Ahmad Nabhany, it was assigned the number RM30. It is stored in the Riyadhha library.

22 For the purpose of reciting and learning the Quran by heart, the text is often divided into thirty sections (Ar: *juz’*, Swahili: *juzu*). These do not correspond to the chapters of the Quran, as breaks are inserted in order to make the sections of even length. EAP466/1/118 – 43 are individual manuscripts where each *juz* is bound separately.

same is the case with a copy of the *Du‘a Birr Walidayn*, a prayer often recited for one’s parents (EAP466/1/105). This copy bears Sayyid Maṣṣab’s comments and corrections in the margin, indicating that it may have belonged to him. The final inscription is almost unreadable, so another possibility is that Sayyid Maṣṣab was the copyist of the eight-page prayer. A final possibility, of course, is that Sayyid Maṣṣab corrected the work of another, unknown copyist.

## The institution of *waqf* and the transmission of Islamic knowledge

The donation of books as *waqf* (pious endowment, permanently removing the item in question from circulation in the market) served as a way for the learned class to ensure that manuscripts and books remained within families or institutions.<sup>23</sup> The Riyadhha collection shows that *waqf* was used as a way to safeguard access to Islamic learning. One interesting example of *waqf* donation in the collection is in fact not a manuscript, but a lithograph printed in Cairo in 1272/1855. This is a gloss by the Egyptian scholar Muḥammad al-Khiḍr al-Dimyāṭī (1798-1870), completed by the author in 1250/1834, of the commentary by Ibn ‘Aqīl on Ibn Mālik’s grammatical poem, the *Alfiyya*.

The Riyadhha’s copy is one of the earliest printed versions of this book coming from Egypt, and hence one of the earliest printed versions overall.<sup>24</sup> The inscriptions in the front of the book show the history of this particular copy. The oldest inscription says that the book was acquired by one Sa‘īd Qāsim b. Sa‘īd al-Ma‘marī in Rajab 1297/June 1880 and taken to Lamu by him. The Ma‘marī (Swahili: Maamri) family was (and is) a well-known Lamu family, originally of Omani origin, but long since part of the Sunni Muslim community of the region; they were known as traders and “pillars of the

23 The use of *waqf* to establish and expand libraries was a well-known practice in the Ottoman Middle East. See Hakan Anameric and Fatih Rukanci, “Libraries in the Middle East During the Ottoman Empire (1517-1918)”, *Libri*, 59 (2009), 145-54. For a discussion concerning *waqf* endowment of books in Zanzibar, see Anne K. Bang, “Authority and Piety, Writing and Print: A Preliminary Study of Islamic Texts in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Zanzibar”, *Africa*, 81 (2011), 63-81.

24 ‘Ayīda Ibrāhīm Nuṣayr, *Al-kutub al-‘Arabiyya allatī nushirat fi Misr fi ‘l-Qarn al-tāsi’ ‘ashar* (Cairo: The American University of Cairo Publications, 1990), p. 148. The overview by Nuṣayr lists only three editions printed in 1272H, and no earlier edition. However, it also shows that the gloss by al-Dimyāṭī was printed repeatedly in the years that followed by several printers, and no less than five times by the Būlāq Printing Press between 1865 and 1895. On the Būlāq Printing Press, established by Muḥammad ‘Alī in 1821, see Johannes Pedersen, *Den Arabiske Bog* (Copenhagen: Fischer, 1946).

community". The next thing we know is that the book was bought by one Sa'īd b. Rāshid from the estate of Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Ma'marī, most likely the brother of the first owner. Sa'īd then made the book *waqf* for his son Nāsir to be used "as a fount for knowledge".

How did Sa'īd Qāsim al-Ma'marī obtain this book? It is possible that he bought it himself in Cairo, but Cairo was not part of the regular orbit of travelling trader-scholars from East Africa. Was it ordered from Cairo through middlemen and travellers – in other words "carried by somebody else's hand"? Was it traded in Mecca or Ḥaḍramawt and procured during *hajj* or on a trading trip? Evidently, such questions cannot be answered with reference to a single manuscript or book, but this book demonstrates the important role played by individuals in procuring Islamic texts as well as the institution of *waqf* for safeguarding this knowledge for future generations. It seems clear that the book remained in the possession of the Ma'marī family from 1880 until at least some time in the early twentieth century. Most likely, it was only deposited at the Riyadhha some time after the 1903 foundation of the mosque itself.

Several other manuscripts in the Riyadhha were donated as *waqf* (at least nine carry clear *waqf* inscriptions; EAP466/1/1, 2, 27, 35, 40, 43, 44, 66, 106). The earliest (EAP466/1/66) is a section of the Quran that was made *waqf* on 11 Rabi' al-Awwal 1268/3 January 1852 by Bwana Mshām (?) b. Abī Bakr b. Bwana Kawab (?) al-Lāmī for his daughter Khamisa. This, of course, was decades before the foundation of the Riyadhha. However, being *waqf*, it was probably deposited at the Riyadhha later, either for safekeeping or for use. The story is different for the 27-page long poem contained in EAP466/1/35. This was made *waqf* to the Riyadhha directly in 1364/1945. The *waqfiyya* note tells us that the manuscript was "made *waqf* by 'Abd al-Ḥabīb b. 'Abd Allāh al-Yāfi'ī for the mosque of the *qutb* (spiritual pole) Ṣāliḥ b. 'Alawī b. 'Abd Allāh Bā Ḥasan Jamal al-Layl". The same 'Abd al-Ḥabīb was also the copyist of the manuscript, having penned it eight years earlier (in Rajab 1356/September-October 1937).

A final, charming example of *waqf* donation to the Riyadhha is EAP466/1/106 (Fig. 5.3). This is a collection of prayers and *dhikr*, penned in a notebook in 1934, clearly for the purpose of aiding memory. On the front page, a hand that evidently was not skilled in Arabic calligraphy has written: "This book is *waqf* for all Muslims [of] God most high". The word *waqafa* is misspelled, and rendered as *wakafa*. The same manuscript also carries an official stamp

of the Riyadha, which curiously is not found in any other manuscripts (but generally in the printed works held by the institution).

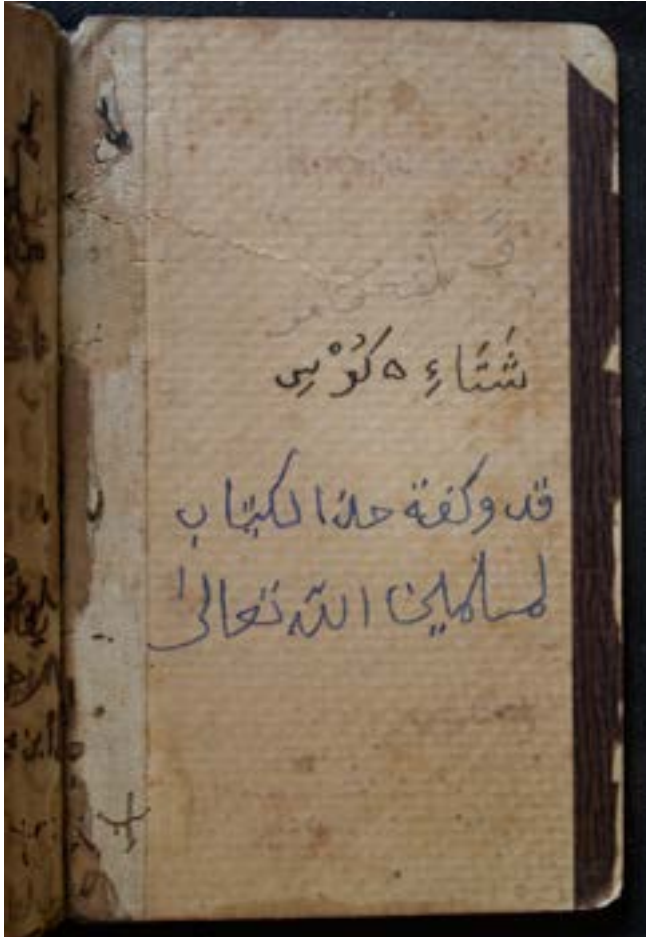


Fig. 5.3 Example of late *waqf* donation “for the benefit of Muslims”.  
Notebook with compilation of prayers and *adhkār* (Sufi texts for recitation)  
(EAP/1/106, image 2), CC BY-ND.

## Purchasing manuscripts abroad

As indicated above, many of the Riyadha manuscripts were not produced in Lamu, or even East Africa. Many carry the inscriptions of copyists whose names indicate origins in Ḥaḍramawt or Mecca, although this cannot be



fully verified without a thorough analysis of paper, ink and script, and a comparative survey of copyists in Ḥaḍramawt and Mecca. Although little actual research has been produced on this phenomenon, we have many indications that texts in manuscript form circulated alongside other goods, and that scholars, traders and benefactors alike played a role as transmitters of Islamic knowledge. As has been demonstrated by Amal N. Ghazal, the Ibāḍīs of East Africa had access to text produced in Oman within a remarkably short period after production.<sup>25</sup> General studies on the transmission of knowledge in the late nineteenth century indicate a pattern whereby manuscripts and books circulated along established trade routes.<sup>26</sup>

Among the manuscripts that made their way to the Riyadhha, we also find a more surprising item: a Ḥanafī legal text.<sup>27</sup> In a region where the overwhelming majority follow the Shāfī school of Islamic jurisprudence, we can assume that this text was not used for actual *fatwas* (rulings), but rather for the intellectual study of law. The set of inscriptions on the manuscript demonstrate how texts of this type could be acquired. What we find is that the two first owners were evidently Meccan, which indicates that the manuscript itself was most likely produced in Mecca. The last owner given is Abū Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar al-Shāṭirī, who was then residing in Mombasa. He adds: “I bought this book in Mecca for half a piaster (*niṣf qirsh*)”, thus providing us with an indication of what a manuscript of several hundred pages would fetch in Mecca in the late nineteenth century. The most likely conclusion is that Abū Bakr al-Shāṭirī bought the book for himself. However, interviewees also indicated that members of the Shāṭirī family in East Africa were known to act as philanthropists on behalf of the community, buying books during their travels and donating them to individual teachers, or mosques, like in this case, to the Riyadhha.<sup>28</sup>

25 Amal N. Ghazal, *Islamic Reform and Arab Nationalism: Expanding the Crescent from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean (1880s–1930s)* (London: Routledge, 2010). On the transmission of texts within the Ibāḍī tradition, see also Rex S. O’Fahey, and Knut S. Vikør, “A Zanzibari *Waqf* of Books: The Library of the Mundhiri Family”, *Sudanic Africa*, 7 (1996), 4–23.

26 Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon, eds., *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); and Scott S. Reese, ed., *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). As an example of circulation to East Africa, see Philip Sadgrove, “From Wādī Mīzāb to Unguja: Zanzibar’s Scholarly Links”, in Reese, pp. 184–211.

27 Muṣṭafā b. Khayr al-Dīn b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Rūmī al-Ḥanifī (d. 1616), *Tartīb qawā’id al-ashbāh wa’l-nazā’ir (Tanwīr al-adhhān wa-’l-damā’ir)*. The poor condition of this manuscript did not allow for its full digitisation. Its original reference in the Riyadhha catalogue is RM6.

28 Interview, Aydarooos and Ahmad Jamal al-Layl, Lamu, Kenya, 5 December 2011.

## The Riyadha as a repository after the age of manuscripts

The first decades of the twentieth century saw the gradual shift from handwritten manuscripts to printed texts in the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia, and East Africa.<sup>29</sup> In centres like Cairo, Beirut, Mecca, Hyderabad, Batavia (Jakarta) and Zanzibar, printing presses were being set up to print anything from small prayer leaflets to multi-volume legal tomes. The *bildungskanon* was gradually put into circulation in the form of books, and East African scholars were also seeing their own works take on printed form.<sup>30</sup> That said, the Riyadha collection shows that the tradition of transmitting knowledge in manuscript form continued well into the 1930s and 40s, especially when it came to devotional texts to be recited. These were copied in lined, colonially produced notebooks, probably for memorisation (Fig. 5.3). More surprisingly, the Riyadha continued to acquire manuscripts at this point in time, now probably for the purposes of preservation rather than for direct usage. In other words, the Riyadha took on a function as an archive for the ‘Alawī tradition, as keepers of items of *baraka* (blessing, magic powers) and increasingly also of monetary value.

One example of the many different functions of a manuscript is EAP466/1/29 (Figs. 5.4 and 5.5). This work includes descriptions of Ḥaḍramawt, typically highlighting its many glorious mosques, scholars, books, and its learned tradition. As such, it is a classic ‘Alawī work, describing at length the “sublime benefits” of the homeland, forming precisely what Engsang Ho has called “travelling texts that formulate discourses of mobility”.<sup>31</sup> It was completed in 1203/1788-89 by Aḥmad al-Ḥaddād who was the grandson of the famous Ḥaḍramī poet and religious teacher ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alawī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1719).

The copy in the Riyadha library was completed in 1253/1837-38 (i.e. some fifty years after it was first written) by Ja‘far b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaddād. It is not clear whether the copying took place in Ḥaḍramawt itself or in some other location on the Indian Ocean rim; either scenario is equally likely.

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29 For an overview of the introduction of print in the Islamic world, see Jakob Skovgaard-Pedersen, ed., *Culture and History (16) special issue: The Introduction of the Printing Press in the Middle East* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997); Francis Robinson, “Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 27 (1993), 229-51; A. Ayalon, “Private Publishing in the Naḥḍa”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 40:4 (2008), 561-77. For the spread of printing, see Nile Green, “Journeyman, Middlemen: Travel, Transculture and Technology in the Origins of Muslim Printing”, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 41 (2009), 203-24.

30 Bang, *Islamic Sufi Networks*, pp. 130-39; and Ghazal.

31 Ho, p. 154.

It has a fascinating set of inscriptions that shows the diasporic life of the book itself. The first inscription simply says that the copy was given away in 1309/1891-92 — in other words when the copy was almost fifty years old — by ‘Aqīl b. ‘Aydarūs b. ‘Aqīl “as a gift” to ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī al-Ḥaddād. A half-century later, in 1366/1946-47, it was given away again, indicating the long life these manuscripts had, being re-circulated as gifts, donated as *waqf* or passed on as inheritance. The inscription shows that the copy at this point was in Southeast Asia: “To Ṭāhā b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥaddād Bā Faqīh from Shaykh Bū Bakr b. Sālim in Bandar Batawī [Batavia/Jakarta]”. Most likely, Ṭāhā b. ‘Alī was the one who brought the copy to East Africa, probably to Mombasa, from where it passed on to Lamu.



Fig. 5.4 *Al-Fawā'id al-Saniyya fī dhikr faḍā'il man yantasiḇu ilā al-silsila al-nabawīyya* [The Benefits of Remembering the Virtues of those Belonging to the Prophetic Lineage], by Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alawī, d. 1203/1788-1789 in Ḥaḍramawt. The inscriptions show the travelling of this particular manuscript, first given as a gift in 1891-1892 and then again in Batavia (Jakarta) in 1946-1947 (EAP466/1/29, image 4), CC BY-ND.



Fig. 5.5 *Al-Fawā'id al-Saniyya fi dhikr faḍā'il man yantasiibu ilā al-silsila al-nabawīyya*, by Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alawī (d. 1203/1788-1789 in Hadramawt) (EAP466/1/29, image 6), CC BY-ND.

What is clear is that this particular copy reached East Africa some time in the latter half of the twentieth century, which shows that even at this late point – when printed and even audio Islamic material had long since arrived – manuscript copies were still circulating. The same pattern can be observed elsewhere in East Africa, notably in Zanzibar, where handwritten manuscripts were being made *waqf* for the Madrasa Bā Kathīr as late as the 1930s.<sup>32</sup> In contrast to the Riyadhha case, this *waqf* inscription specifies explicitly that the manuscript is to be used for “recitation”, the interpretation being that the volume is not yet a “collectors item” or deposited in the institution

<sup>32</sup> Bang, “Authority and Piety”. The example concerns a volume of Ramadan prayers, copied in 1847, which was made *waqf* for the Madrasa Bā Kathīr some time after the founder’s death in 1925.

for safe-keeping. In other words, manuscripts could have extraordinary long lives, first as items for use, especially reference works and texts used for recitation. Then – even as print copies of the same text appeared – manuscripts were kept as items with special value (charisma or *baraka*), as a result of their author, copyist or possibly their previous owners.

By the late twentieth century, manuscripts may also have been circulated due to their monetary value.<sup>33</sup> In some instances, there are indications that manuscripts were also taken care of for their value as cultural heritage, thus disassociating them entirely from their value as items of learning or holders of special *baraka*.<sup>34</sup> A possible example of this is found in EAP466/1/40. This is an unidentified book of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) that carries the inscription: “This is the book of Khalfān b. Suwā, Bājūnī by tribe, Shāfi‘ī of *madhhab*”. A second note states that “I received this book from the aforementioned”, signed by Muḥammad Bā Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Aḥmad Badawī Jamal al-Layl in Rajab 1369/April 1950, meaning that the manuscript came into the Jamal al-Layl family and thus the Riyadha collection, possibly as an item of heritage value. For the purpose of this discussion, however, it should be stated that although indications are that manuscripts were circulated and kept long after their “user value” had expired, we have too few examples and lack sufficient data to say anything conclusive about the motivation for donating or endowing these manuscripts as *waqf*.

From the two examples mentioned here, and with reference to the attached list of manuscripts, it is striking that books were owned and purchased both by ‘Alawī Ḥaḍramī families and their associates (al-Shāṭirī, al-Ahdal), and also by those whose names do not indicate any family link to the Ḥaḍramawt (al-Bājūnī). This, in turn, points to a more widely diffused pattern of text distribution, which can only be verified by an in-depth study of the originals.

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33 Reinhard Schulze, “The Birth of Tradition and Modernity in 18th and 19th Century Islamic Culture: The Case of Printing”, *Culture and History*, 16 (1997), 29-72.

34 The awareness of these manuscripts as cultural heritage seems to have started in the 1970s. It is possible that this awareness stemmed at least partly from the Eastern Africa Centre for Research and Oral Tradition (EACROTTONAL) manuscript survey in East Africa, which between 1979 and 1988 aimed to map and collect manuscripts for research. See Khamis, Khamis S., “The Zanzibar National Archives”, in *Islam in East Africa, New Sources: Archives, Manuscripts and Written Historical Sources, Oral History, Archaeology*, ed. by Biancamaria Scaria Amoretti (Rome: Herder, 2001), pp. 17-25. For a discussion and examples from Zanzibar, see Anne K. Bang, “Zanzibari Islamic Knowledge Transmission Revisited: Loss, Lament, Legacy – and Transformation”, *Social Dynamics*, 38/3 (2012), 419-34.

## The copyist as transmitter of Islamic knowledge

The origin of an individual manuscript can to some extent be deduced from the names of its copyist whose *nisba* (family) names are sometimes given. The Ḥaḍramī *nisba* is typically prefixed by the syllable Bā (such as Bā Kathīr, Bā Ṣafar), indicating tribal belonging. In addition, a set of family names such as Jamal al-Layl, al-Shātīrī, Sumayt, al-Hibshī indicates that the person belongs to the *sāda* stratum. Of course, there were many copyists in East Africa too, who carried Ḥaḍramī names, and it is thus not possible to determine with certainty whether the copying actually took place in Ḥaḍramawt, East Africa, or elsewhere. Further research into the paper and ink, as well as a detailed analysis of script and handwriting is the best way to provide more in-depth knowledge about the origin of each individual manuscript. Furthermore, the *nisba* name of a copyist also indicates his origin, while in some cases the copyist himself has noted his place of residence or where the copying took place.

A total of 31 out of the 144 manuscripts can clearly be identified as being produced by a scribe in Lamu or East Africa, either because the name or place is actually given or because other circumstances indicate that copying took place in East Africa. This is, however, a very conservative figure. More specifically, there remains several twentieth-century notebook texts that have no scribe or copyist noted, but which are highly likely to have been copied in Lamu (and even in the Riyadhha itself) and which may be identified through a comparison of handwriting and through interviews with older representatives of the Riyadhha.

The majority of the Riyadhha manuscripts that we can know for certain were copied locally derive from the twentieth century (only six date from the nineteenth century). That said, this should not be construed to mean that copying was not an activity undertaken by East African scholars in the nineteenth century and earlier. Their relative scarcity in the Riyadhha collection is most likely due to the physical disintegration of the older manuscripts, which makes it difficult or impossible to identify the names of copyists, and the fact that much research is needed to determine the provenance of each manuscript. In the list below I have also included texts that are by known East African authors, on the assumption that they are most likely to have been copied locally. Furthermore I have assumed that the manuscripts which contain Swahili *ajami* (Swahili in the Arabic script) were penned by East African scribes. I am not qualified to make any identification (let alone analysis) of the Swahili manuscripts, but they are included in the attached provisional catalogue.

	Name	Riyadha MS	Copied year
1	Shārū b. Uthmān b. Abī Bakr (al-Sūmālī)	EAP466/1/15 EAP466/1/030	1858 1840-42
2	Muḥammad b. Maṣ‘ūd al-Wārith or al-Wardī	EAP466/1/2 EAP466/1/39	1860 1862
3	Muḥammad b. Shaykh b. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Barāwī	EAP466/1/60	1896
4	Muḥammad b. ‘Umar Maddi al-Shanjānī	EAP466/1/144	1899
5	‘Alī b. Nāṣir al-Mazrū‘ī	EAP466/1/49	1905-05
6	‘Abd al-Ḥabīb b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Nāsir	EAP466/1/10 EAP466/1/35	1906-07 1937 (?)
7	‘Umar b. Aḥmad b. Yunus al-Mafāzī, Pate	EAP466/1/91	1915-16
8	Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān b. Faqīh b. Abī Bakr al-Bājūnī	EAP466/1/34	1921-22
9	Sālīm b. Yusallim b. ‘Awaḍ Bā Ṣafar	EAP466/1/19 EAP466/1/28 EAP466/1/59 EAP466/1/76 EAP466/1/107	1927 1917-18 1934 1927 1929
10	Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Bakrī Kijuma	EAP466/1/58	1928
11	Aḥmad b. Sa‘īd b. Sulaymān (“in Malindi”)	EAP466/1/61	1932
12	Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf (Maddi)	EAP466/1/75 EAP466/1/81 EAP466/1/102 EAP466/1/103	1932-33 1932 1932 nd (?)
13	‘Abd Allāh b. Hamīd b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Shirāzī al-Qumrī	EAP466/1/69	Between 1927 and c. 1930.
14	‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Sa‘īd b. Aḥmad, Lamu	EAP466/1/65	Undated, twentieth century

Without a proper comparison of handwriting and ink that can only be conducted on the original texts, this list gives only the cases where the copyist can be identified as East African by origin or residence, by name, as given in the text or

from direct mention of where the text was copied. On this basis, fourteen East African (or East Africa-based) copyists can be identified in the Riyadha collection.

As in the case of ownership and purchase, we see in this list that scribes of diverse origin (Ḥaḍramī, Somali, Brawanese, Comorian — al-Qumrī meaning “The Comorian”) acted as copyists over a period of seventy years. It is also worth noting that the oldest locally produced manuscript was copied by a man of Somali origin (Shārū b. ‘Uthmān al-Sūmālī, Fig. 5.6). In other words, knowledge of Arabic and Islamic text was relatively widely diffused in terms of ethnic background. More detailed research to identify hitherto unidentified copyists and their background, as well as their other roles in society, will undoubtedly give further nuance to this picture.



Fig. 5.6 Example of local copying in the nineteenth century. *Alfiyya* [The One Thousand, verse of 1000 lines] with marginal commentary by Ibn ‘Aqīl copied by Shārū b. ‘Uthmān b. Abī Bakr b. ‘Alī al-Sūmālī in 1858 (EAP466/1/15, image 574), CC BY-ND.



## Twentieth century local copyists: modernity in handwriting

The scribe whose name appears most frequently in the Riyadhha collection is Sālīm b. ‘Awaḍ Bā Ṣafar, who stands as the copyist of five manuscripts. Although his name identifies him as a person of Ḥaḍramī family background, we can safely assume that he was a resident in East Africa, probably Lamu. This is because he also appears as the copyist of manuscripts in Swahili (*ajami*).<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Bā Ṣafar was a contemporary of, and clearly somewhat of a favourite copyist for Habib Saleh, having penned two of the manuscripts that we know belonged to him. Of special interest are the two copies of the poetry collection by the Ḥaḍramī ‘Alawī poet-saint, Abū Bakr al-‘Aydārūs (known as al-‘Adanī), penned by Bā Ṣafar. In July 1927, he completed a 266-page copy of the text, and equipped his copy with an index whereby each poem was listed by page number — much in the same way as it is done in a printed book. It is not known if this copy made Habib Saleh commission yet another version of the same text. What we do know is that by November that same year, Bā Ṣafar had completed a new copy, with the same index system, this one running to 244 pages and with an illumination on the front page. This copy was owned by Habib Saleh, and it is likely that he commissioned it from Bā Ṣafar directly (Figs. 5.7 and 5.8).

The use of an index and pagination is a striking feature of the copies produced by Bā Ṣafar. This was the age when printed Arabic books were becoming widely circulated in East Africa, and it is not unlikely that Bā Ṣafar based himself on the “print model” rather than the traditional layout of Arabic poetry in manuscript form, whereby sequence is marked by a lead word at the end of each page.

Texts in the Riyadhha collection copied by Sālīm b. Yusallim b. ‘Awaḍ Bā Ṣafar		
EAP466/1/19	EAP466/1/28	EAP466/1/59
EAP477/1/76	EAP466/1/107	

<sup>35</sup> Bā Ṣafar is mentioned by Mohammad Ibrahim Abou Egl as one of the copyists whose handwriting resembles that of Muhammad Kijuma (see below). While Abou Egl does not provide any further identification of Bā Ṣafar, he does refer to manuscripts by Bā Ṣafar in European collections that are in Swahili. I have not consulted these for this article. Mohammad Ibrahim Abou Egl, *The Life and Works of Muhamadi Kijuma* (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1983), p. 160.



Fig. 5.7 *Diwān al-‘Adanī* [The Collected Poetry of Abū Bakr al-‘Adanī],  
copied by Sālim b. Yusallim b. ‘Awaḍ Bā Ṣafar for Habib Saleh in 1927 [1]  
(EAP466/1/19, image 2), CC BY-ND.



Fig. 5.8 *Diwān al-'Adanī* [The Collected Poetry of Abū Bakr al-'Adanī], copied by Sālim b. Yusallim b. 'Awaḍ Bā Ṣafar for Habib Saleh in 1927 [2] (EAP466/1/19, image 3), CC BY-ND.

Another copyist — and another contemporary of Habib Saleh and Bā Ṣafar — was Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf (al-Maddī: he sometimes uses the *nisba* name, sometimes not). He adhered to the same style as Bā Ṣafar, using pagination, and he even added a table of contents to some of the works. In the case of al-Maddī, we may even wonder *why* he made the copies. As the table below shows, he copied three texts in quick succession between June and August 1932 — the longest being 38 pages. The last copy was completed in October 1933, and is also a relatively short text (forty pages). We can speculate here that al-Maddī was commissioned to write these texts for use in the Riyadh

education, which would indicate that they were not available in printed form. Another possibility, of course, is that Aḥmad himself was a student at the Riyadhha and that the writing of these texts was part of his student work.

Texts in the Riyadhha collection copied by Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf (al-Maddī)		
EAP466/1/75	EAP466/1/81	EAP466/1/102
EAP466/1/103		

## The famous scribe, Muhammad Kijuma: EAP466/1/58

Although often assigned a role of anonymity as a name at the end of a long text, copyists and scribes could also be well-known public figures, either as exceptional calligraphers or as authors or artists in their own right. One such figure was Muhammad Kijuma (1855-1945), who stands as the copyist of EAP466/1/58 (Fig. 5.9).<sup>36</sup> Kijuma was born in Lamu and received traditional Islamic education there. As a young man, he studied with his relative Sayyid Maṣab b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, the man who donated part of his land for the foundation of the Riyadhha Mosque and who “verified” Quran texts for recitation. Sayyid Maṣab, too, was known as an excellent calligrapher and – as mentioned above – a highly skilled Arabist.

Kijuma then turned to the somewhat dubious profession of a musician (at least as viewed by his strictly Islamic-observant mother), followed by an interest in carpentry, carving and art. It is worth noting that some of the less transgressive *ngomas* (songs with accompanying dance) were even incorporated into the public *mawlid* celebrations of the Riyadhha, apparently sanctioned by Habib Saleh himself.<sup>37</sup> The more expressive ones, however, were condemned outright as un-Islamic. In sum, Kijuma was a talented artist in many ways, and his later fame in Lamu is that of a somewhat controversial cultural icon: composer of songs, artist, carver and – not least – calligrapher. His lasting legacy is as a scribe of Swahili poetry into manuscript form in the Arabic script, mainly for European clients, and many of which have been kept in European collections. His poem on the act of writing has been quoted frequently by scholars of the Swahili poetic tradition. It emphasises the care taken by the scribe to make sure his writing “looks nice”:

<sup>36</sup> On the life of Kijuma, see *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Let me have black ink  
With Syrian paper  
And a reed pen  
That I may write with it

Together with a good board  
That I may mark lines with  
That the writing looks nice  
And be in a straight line<sup>38</sup>

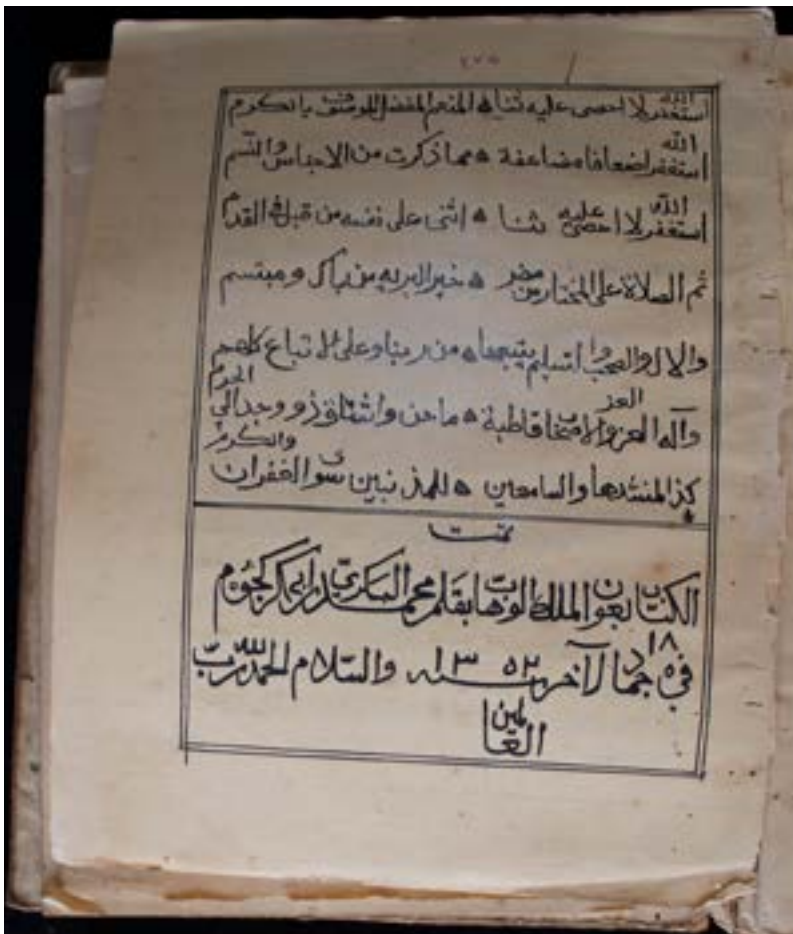


Fig. 5.9 Colophon showing the signature of copyist Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Bakrī Kijūma and the date 18 Jumāda II 1352H/8 October 1928.

(EAP466/1/58, image 310), CC BY-ND.

38 Translation from Swahili in *ibid.*, p. 158.

## Conclusion

The latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth was the period when text-based Islam became widely diffused on the East African coast. The Riyadhha Mosque in Lamu was part and parcel of this development, claiming authority based not only on the divine revelations (the Quran and the Sunna), but also in the wider corpus of Islamic texts. The impact of Ḥaḍramawt (Yemen) is very evident when it comes to the choice of texts. In total, these texts formed the basis for a new type of authority, beyond local hierarchies, that has been referred to as a reform. While Islamic scholars were at the forefront of this reform, important roles were also played by book-buyers, owners and individuals who endowed books as *waqf* for the purpose of their own family members or for “all Muslims”.

In the Riyadhha, families of Ḥaḍramī origin seem to have played a particularly important role, possibly because of their relatively high socio-economic status, and because of their family connections with the Ḥaḍramawt (where, after all, the majority of texts originated). However, it is also clear that individuals of all backgrounds could decide to endow a particularly important manuscript, and that women also held this prerogative.

The copyist is another of the “silent” transmitters of Islamic knowledge. Although the evidence from the Riyadhha remains inconclusive (a thorough analysis of paper, ink and script is needed, as well as a comparison between the handwriting of known authors and copyists), indications are that in the nineteenth and early twentieth century there existed an active class of scribes whose meticulous work made the Islamic scriptural tradition available to local scholars and students. In the twentieth century we see a new development closely linked to the emergence of educational institutions like the Riyadhha. At this time, texts were copied in lined notebooks, clearly for educational purposes or for the purpose of memorising. The latter was particularly the case for the many devotional texts that were (and still are) central to ritual practice at the Riyadhha.

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## Provisional catalogue entries for the Riyadhha manuscripts referred to in this article<sup>39</sup>

EAP466/1/1

Unidentified work of *fiqh*.

Date of copy and copyist unknown.

Manuscript, Arabic, 215 pages.

*Fiqh*.

*Waqfiyya* note, folio 215.

EAP466/1/2

Title: *Fath al-qarīb al-mujīb aw qawl al-mukhtār fi sharḥ ghāyat al-iqtiṣār*.

Author: Abī 'Abd Allāh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Ghāzzī al-Shāfi'ī, known as Ibn al-Gharābīlī, d. 918/1512.

Date of copy: 13 Šafar 1277/30 August 1860.

Copyist: Muḥammad b. Mas'ūd al-Wārith (or al-Wardī) in Zanzibar ("naskhhā and Zinjibār").

Manuscript, Arabic, 225 pages.

*Fiqh*.

Note, folio 226: *Waqfiyya* note. Not clear if the *waqf* is made by or for Fātima bt. Ḥabīb b. Shayr (Shīr?) al-Wardī, who died 21 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1352/6 April 1934. The original bestowing seems to have been on 15 Jumāda I 1352/6 September 1933 by

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<sup>39</sup> See <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP466>

Shayr (Shīr) b. Muḥammad. Written by Muḥammad b. Mas‘ūd al-Wārith/al-Wardī (same as copyist).

EAP466/1/10

Title: *Mawlid Dībā’ī*.

Author: ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Dībā’ī (d. 1537).

Date of copy: 1324 H/1906-07.

Copyist: ‘Abd al-Ḥabīb b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Nāṣir.

Manuscript, Arabic, 46 pages.

Devotional. Poetic text for recitation on the occasion of *mawlid*.

Note: The identification of this copyist as local is based on the fact that the same person donated EAP466/1/35 as *waqf*. See below, EAP466/1/35.

EAP466/1/11

Title: *Mawlid Barzanjī*.

Author: Ja‘far b. Ḥasan al-Barzanjī, d. 1764.

Date of copy: 13 Rajab 1313/30 December 1895

Copyist: Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. ‘Umar al-Bakrī.

Manuscript, Arabic, 29 pages.

Devotional. The most widely recited poem on the occasion of *mawlid*.

EAP466/1/15

*Alfiyya* with marginal commentary, *Sharḥ Ibn ‘Aqīl*.

Author: Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Mālik (d. 1273) and ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn ‘Aqīl.

Date of copy: 30 Ṣafar 1283/16 July 1866

Copyist: ‘Uthmān b. Ḥājj b. ‘Uthmān b. Ḥājj b. Shayth (?) in Faza, Pate Island.

Manuscript, Arabic, 1283/1866, 567 pages.

Grammar, language.

EAP466/1/17

Unidentified.

Date of copy and copyist unknown.

Manuscript, Arabic, 342 pages.

Fiqh.

Note of ownership: Saleh b. Alawi Jamal al-Layl.

EAP466/1/19

Title: *Kitāb majmū‘ diwān al-Ḥabīb al-‘Adanī*.

Author: Abū Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Aydārūs, known as al-‘Adanī, 1447-1508, Aden.

Date of copy: 11 Jumāda I 1356/6 November 1927.

Copyist: Sālim b. Yusallim b. ‘Awaḍ Bā Ṣafar.

Manuscript, Arabic, 244 pages. Paginated.

Note: A beautifully copied volume of the *diwān* of al-‘Adanī, made for Habib Saleh. The copy has an index listing the individual poems by page number.

EAP466/1/23

Title: *Kitāb waṣīyyāt al-Jāmi'a*.

Author: 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥsin b. 'Alawī al-Saqqāf.

Date of copy: 1320/1902-03.

Copyist: 'Abd al-Ḥabīb b. 'Abd Allāh b. Nāṣir 'Awaḍ al-'Afif (?).

Manuscript, Arabic, 312 pages.

Sufism.

EAP466/1/24

Title: *Al-Fath al-Mubīn. Sharḥ snfās al-'Aydarūs Fakhr al-Dīn*.

Auhor: Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muṣṭafā b. Saykh al-'Aydarus, d. 1778.

Date of copy: 1324/1906-07.

Copyist: Sulaymān b. Sālim al-Mazrū'ī.

Manuscript, Arabic, 456 pages.

EAP466/1/27

Title: *Hāshiyā 'alā sharḥ Ibn 'Aqīl 'alā Alfiyya ibn Mālik*.

Author: Muḥammad al-Khidrī al-Dimyātī, d. 1870, Egypt. Commentary completed 1250/1834.

Litograph, Cairo, 1272/1855, 718 pages.

Grammar, language.

Waḳfiyya note, folio 3.

EAP466/1/28

Title: *Idāḥ al-asrār 'ulūm al-muqarrībīn*.

Author: Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Shaykh al-'Aydarūs (d. 1621-22. Born and educated in Tarīm, died in Surat, India (?). Aḥmad b. Zayn al-Ḥibshī (?).

Date of copy: 1336/1917-18.

Copyist: Sālim b. Yusallim b. 'Awaḍ Bā Ṣafar.

Manuscript, Arabic, 225 pages, paginated.

Time measurement/astronomy.

Note of ownership: Saleh b. Alawi Jamal al-Layl.

EAP466/1/29

Title: *Al-Fawā'id al-Saniyya fī dhikr faḍā'il man yantasibu ilā al-silsila al-nabawīyya*.

Author: Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alawī al-Ḥaddād, d. 1203/1788-89.

Unidentified text.

Date of copy: 1253/1837-38.

Copyist: Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alawī al-Ḥaddād.

Manuscript, Arabic, 244 pages.

Nasab/genealogy.

Note, folio 2-3: Several notes of ownership.

EAP466/1/34

Title: *Ahl Badr*.

Author: Unknown.

Date of copy: 1340 H/1921-22.

Copyist: Muḥammad b. Uthmān b. Faqīh b. Abī Bakr al-Bajūnī.

Manuscript, Arabic, 42 pages.

Devotional. *Du'ā'* for recitation upon completion of the names of the participants in the battle of Badr.

EAP466/1/35

Title: 2 poems in praise of the *sāda* 'Alawiyya, various *du'ā'* for 'Alawī saints.

Author: Unknown.

Date of copy: Rajab 1356/September 1937.

Copyist: 'Abd al-Ḥabīb b. 'Abd Allāh b. Nāṣir.

Devotional. Poetry.

EAP466/1/38

Title: *Sharḥ Tarbiyyat al-atfāl*.

Author: Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Qaḥṭānī, d. Zanzibar, 1869.

Copyist: Not given. Possibly in the author's own hand (?).

Date: Not given. Mid/late nineteenth century by visual appearance.

Manuscript, Arabic with some text in Swahili *ajami* added at the end, 154 pages.

Grammar, language.

EAP466/1/40

Title: Unidentified.

Author: Unknown.

Date of copy and copyist: Unknown.

Manuscript, Arabic, 341 pages.

Fiqh.

Notes:

- 1) Book made waqf by Khaṭīb b. Da' lān (?) al-Bājūnī (...) to the mosque of Barza b. Harān (Harūn??). No date.
- 2) Note of ownership: Khalfān b. Suwā al-Bājūnī by tribe, Shāfi'ī by madhhab.  
Note of ownership: I received this book from the aforementioned. Muḥammad Bā Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥabīb Aḥmad Badawī, Rajab 1349/Nov-Dec 1930.

EAP466/1/43

Title: *Shifā' al-ṣudūr*. Possibly: *Shifā' al-Ṣuḍur fī ziyārāt al-mashāhid wa-l-qubūr*.

Author: Mar'ī b. Yūsuf al-Maqdisī, d. 1033/1623-2.

Manuscript, Arabic, 260 pages.

Sufism/fiqh. On grave visitation.

Note, folio 2: Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. Ḥaydar bought this book from (...?) 'Umar b. Yūsuf al-Lāmī in Ḥijja (?) 1277/June 1861 (Or: Ḥijja, 1377/June 1958. Most likely 1277).

Note, folio 7: Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. Ḥaydar bought this book "Shifā' al-Ṣuḍur" from 'Umar b. Yūsuf al-[...] in Muḥarram 1277. Both are loose sheets, and it is possible that the first may have belonged to another book (?).

EAP466/1/44

Quran, from Sura 2 (al-Baqara).

Part of series of *juzus*, EAP466/1/44-45-46-47.

Manuscript, Arabic, 312 pages.

Illuminated frontispiece, black, red, yellow.

Note of ownership/waqf: Sayyid ‘Abd Allāh b. Salam (Yusallim?) b. ‘Umar owned this maṣḥaf and made it waqf for the Lahm (?) Mosque. No date.

EAP466/1/48

Title: *Wiṣayāt wa-jamī‘āt al-ijāzāt ‘Aydarūs b. ‘Umar al-Ḥibshī.*

Author: ‘Aydarūs b. ‘Umar al-Ḥibshī (d. 1896, Ḥaḍramawt).

Date of copy and copyist: Unknown.

Manuscript, Arabic, 121 pages

Sufism. A collection of *ijāzas* and advice by ‘Aydarūs b. ‘Umar al-Ḥibshī.

Note: Inscriptions suggest the ownership of Sayyid Maṣḥab b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān.

EAP466/1/49

Title: *Mukātabāt ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī.*

Author: ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī (d. 1915, Ḥaḍramawt).

Date of copy: 1323 H/1905-06.

Copyist: More than one hand. Copyist 1: ‘Alī b. Naṣr al-Mazrū‘ī.

Manuscript, Arabic, 157 pages.

Sufism. A collection of writings by ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī.

EAP466/1/51

Several texts, including poetry, text on moon sighting, *du‘ā‘*, prayer to the prophet, etc.

Author: ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abd al-Ghānī al-Amawī al-Barāwī, d. 1896, Zanzibar (folio 9 onwards to folio 40). Possibly also by his son, Burhān b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Amawī, d. 1935, Zanzibar (folio 33 onwards).

Poetry and a collection of *du‘āt* by Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Qaḥṭānī, d. Zanzibar, 1869 (folio 41-99), *abyāt* by al-Qaḥṭānī (folio 53 onwards), and a series of prayers/poetry by al-Qaḥṭānī.

Date of copy and copyist: Unknown.

Manuscript, Arabic, 98 pages.

Poetry, devotional, astronomy.

Note: Folio 1: Added text in a different hand, ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Mazrū‘ī, possibly ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Yāfi‘ al-Mazrū‘ī, d. 1894 in Mombasa.

EAP466/1/58

Title: *Miscellaneous devotional texts.*

Author: Several authors.

Date of copy: 1347/1928.

Copyist: Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Bakrī Kijūma.

Manuscript, Arabic, 314 pages.

Devotional. Collection of *adkār* and *du‘āt*.

EAP466/1/59

Title: *Majmū‘ al-laṭā‘if al-‘arshiyya.*

Author: ‘Aydarūs b. ‘Umar al-Ḥibshī.

Date of copy: 1353/1934.

Copyist: Sālim b. Yusallim b. 'Awaḍ Bā Ṣafar.  
Manuscript, Arabic, 129 pages. Paginated.  
Sufism.

EAP466/1/60

Title: *Marsūmat al-'ayniyya*.

Author: Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Jamal al-Layl, d. 1904, Zanzibar.

Date of copy: 14 Rabī' I 1314/14 August 1896.

Copyist: Muḥammad b. Shaykh b. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Barāwī.

Manuscript, Arabic, 62 pages.

Genealogy, Sufism. Commentary on the *Al-Qaṣīda al-'Ayniyya* by al-Ḥaddād (d. 1719, Ḥaḍramawt). A two-page preface in another hand, a letter from 'Abd Allāh Bā Kaṭhīr to the author.

EAP466/1/61

1) Title: *Tahmīs 'alā qaṣīdat al-mudhariyya li-al-imām al-Buṣīrī*.

Author: 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alawī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1719, Ḥaḍramawt).

2) Title: *Jāliyat al-qadr bi-asmā' ahl al-Badr*.

Author: Ja'far al-Barzanjī (d. 1765, Medina).

Date of copy: 7 Jumāda II 1351/1932

Copyist: Aḥmad b. Sa'īd b. Sulaymān, in "jihāt Sawāhilī, fi Bandar Malindi".

Manuscript, Arabic, 37 pages.

Devotional.

EAP466/1/63

Title: *Qur'at al-anbiyā'*.

Author: Unknown.

Date of copy and copyist: Unknown.

Manuscript, Swahili *ajami* with some Arabic, 29 pages.

Fortune-telling, based on the names of the prophets, possibly a translation into Swahili from an Arabic original.

EAP466/1/65

Title: *Iḥdā 'ashariyya*.

Author: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Miḥḍār, d. 1304/1886-87, Ḥaḍramawt.

Date of copy: Undated. Twentieth century by visual appearance.

Copyist: 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Sa'īd b. Aḥmad, "resident in Lamu".

Manuscript, Arabic, 42 pages.

Devotional. Poetic text recited on the 11th of every month.

EAP466/1/66

Quran, juz 11.

Date of copy and copyist: Unknown

Manuscript, Arabic, 56 pages.

Note, folio 2: Made *waqf* by Qāḍī Hishām b. Abī Bakr b. Bwana Kawb (or: Kūb)

al-Lāmī for his daughter Khamīsa and her children, 11 Rabī' I 1261/20 March 1845.

Written by Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Lāmī by his own hand.

EAP466/1/69

Title: *Khuṭbas* of ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī, and various *ijāzas* and *waṣīyya* (spiritual advice) including from ‘Aydarūs b. ‘Umar al-Ḥibshī to Sayyid Maṣṣab b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman.

Author: ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī et al.

Date of Copy: At different points between March 1927 and January 1930.

Copyist: ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥamīd b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Shirāzī al-Qumrī.

Manuscript, Arabic, 267 pages.

Sufism.

EAP466/1/75

Collection of texts: *Majmū‘ al-mutun*:

1. *Jawāhir al-tawḥīd*, by Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī.

2. *Bad‘ al-amālī*, *matn al-Kharīda*.

3. *Al-kharīda*, by Aḥmad al-Dardīr.

Copyist: Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf Maddī.

Date of copy: 1351/1932-33.

Manuscript, Arabic, 19 pages

EAP466/1/76

Title: *Diwān al-Ḥabīb Abū Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Aydarūs al-‘Adanī*.

Author: Abū Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Aydarūs, known as al-‘Adanī, d. Aden, 1508.

Date of copy: 6 Muḥarram 1346/6 July 1927.

Copyist: Sālim b. Yusallim b. ‘Awaḍ Bā Ṣafar.

Manuscript, Arabic, 266 pages. Paginated.

Poetry, Sufism.

EAP466/1/81

Title: *Compilation of devotional texts*.

Author: Multiple authors.

Date of copy: 27 Muḥarram 1351/2 June 1932

Copyist: Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf (al-Maddī).

Manuscript, Arabic, 38 pages. Paginated. In lined notebook with a table of contents at front.

EAP466/1/83

Title: Unidentified *sharḥ* on a *qaṣīda* on *tawḥīd* by ‘Abd al-Ġanī al-Nabulsī (d. 1731).

Author: Possibly Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Sumayṭ’s text entitled *Mātālib al-Sunniya*.

Date of copy: Unknown. Twentieth century by visual appearance.

Copyist: Unknown, looks like same copyist as that of EAP466/1/144 (*Riḥlat al-Ashwāq*).

Manuscript, Arabic, 16 pages.

*Tawḥīd* (?).

Note: The copy is incomplete.

EAP466/1/91

Title: *Ṭayyib al-asmā‘ al-mubāraka*.

Author: Unknown.

Date of copy: 1334 H/1915-16.

Copyist: 'Umar b. Aḥmad b. Yunus al-Mafāzī, resident in Siyu (Pate).

Manuscript, Arabic, 36 pages.

Devotional text based on the names of God.

Notes of ownership: Muhammad b. Salim b. Hamid al-Khawasini. 2. Alawi b.

Muhammad b. Ahmad Badawi.

EAP466/1/96

Title: *Dini ni ngome*.

Author: Unknown.

Date of copy and copyist: Unknown.

Manuscript, Swahili *ajami*, 9 pages.

EAP466/1/99

Title: *Wiṣayāt Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Sumayṭ ilā 'Abd Allāh BāKathīr*.

Author: Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Sumayṭ (d. 1925, Zanzibar).

Date of copy: 1337/1918-19.

Copyist: Possibly autograph copy (or 'Abd Allāh Bā Kathīr?). Possibly same copyist as EAP466/1/144.

Manuscript, Arabic, 11 pages.

Sufism. Sufi advice/ legacy from Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ (d. 1925, Zanzibar) to his colleague and disciple, 'Abd Allāh BāKathīr (d. 1925, Zanzibar).

EAP466/1/102

Title: *Matn al-Bājūrī wa'-nafs*.

Author: Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī, d. 1277/1860 (Shaykh al-Azhar).

Date of copy: 2 Ṣafar 1351/7 June 1932.

Copyist: Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh (al-Maddī).

Manuscript, Arabic, 24 pages. Paginated. In lined notebook.  
*Tawhīd*.

EAP466/1/103

Title: *Mulḥat al-i'rāb*.

Author: Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsīm b. 'Alī al-Ḥarīrī.

Date of copy: 7 Rajab 1352/27 October 1933 (both H and CE date are given)

Copyist: Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh (al-Maddī).

Manuscript, Arabic, 40 pages. Paginated. In lined notebook.  
Grammar, language.

EAP466/1/105

Title: *Du'ā' birr walidayn*.

Author: Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī al-Ḥubb al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 611/1214-15, Ḥaḍramawt).

Date of copy: 1334 H/1915-16.

Copyist: Unknown. Possibly Sayyid Maṣṣab b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān.

Manuscript, Arabic, 8 pages.

The copy most likely belonged to Sayyid Maṣṣab b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān. It bears his corrections in the margins.



EAP466/1/106

Title: *Kitāb jāmi‘ al-aḡkār.*

Author: Multiple authors.

Date of copy: 1353/1934.

Copyist: Unknown.

Manuscript, Arabic and Swahili, 144 pages.

Devotional/Sufism. Notebook with a collection of *ḏikr* and prayers for the prophet.

Some of the prayers have additional commentary in Swahili in Arabic script.

Waqfiyya note, folio 1.

EAP466/1/107

Title: *Naḡh al-misk al-maftūt min akhbār wādī Ḥaḡramawt.*

Author: ‘Alī b. Aḡmad b. Ḥasan b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Aḡtas.

Date of copy: 24 *Dū* ‘1-Qi’da 1347/4 May 1929.

Copyist: Sālīm b. Yusallim b. ‘Awaḡ Bā Ṣafar.

Manuscript, Arabic, 25 pages. Paginated.

Genealogy. A history of the genealogical lines of the *sāda* and *qabā’il* (tribes) of Ḥaḡramawt.

EAP466/1/111

Title: Misc. devotional texts.

Author: Multiple authors.

Date of copy: 12 Rabī‘ 11342/23 Oct 1923.

Copyist: Wālī b. Abī Bakr b. Muḡammad al-Barāwī.

Manuscript, Arabic, 37 pages.

EAP466/1/144

Title: *Riḡlat al-ashwāq al-qāwīyya ilā diyār al-sāda al-‘alawīyya.*

Author: ‘Abd Allāh BāKathīr, d. Zanzibar 1925.

Date of copy: 27 Jumāda II 1317/1 November 1899.

Copyist: Muḡammad b. ‘Umar b. Maddi al-Shinjanī.

Travelogue from the journey in Ḥaḡramawt.

## 6. In the shadow of Timbuktu: the manuscripts of Djenné<sup>1</sup>

Sophie Sarin

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The ancient mud city of Djenné occupies an island in the Bani, a major tributary to the Niger River at the heart of the Niger inland delta in Mali. Although Djenné is less famous than its “twin sister” Timbuktu, which is situated 220 miles to the north on the edge of the Sahara desert, both cities have been important historical centres of trans-Saharan commerce and Islamic learning from the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Djenné is protected by its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, due not only to its spectacular mud architecture, including the world famous mosque, but also to the important archaeological site of Djenné Djenno.<sup>3</sup>

Modern day Djenné has in the region of fifty Quranic schools in which students (*talibés*) study Arabic and the Quran under the tuition of a *marabout*.<sup>4</sup> Many *talibés* come from destinations as far removed as Ghana or Nigeria to

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- 1 The transliteration of Arabic words in this chapter is based on the LOC transliteration system.
  - 2 For more on the history and location of Djenné, see John O. Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: Al-Sa'di's Ta'rikh al-Sudan Down to 1613, and Other Contemporary Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); and Charlotte Joy, *The Politics of Heritage Management in Mali: From UNESCO to Djenné* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012), pp. 25-30.
  - 3 On Djenné's World Heritage Site status and its problems, see Joy, *The Politics of Heritage Management in Mali*, pp. 51-74 and 75-92. For more on Djenné Djenno, see Roderick J. McIntosh and Susan Keech McIntosh, “The Inland Niger Delta Before the Empire of Mali: Evidence from Jenne-Jeno”, *Journal of African History*, 22 (1981), 1-22; and *Excavations at Jenne-Jeno, Hambarketolo and Kaniana (Inland Niger Delta, Mali): The 1981 Season*, ed. by Susan Keech McIntosh (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).
  - 4 Geert Mommersteeg, “Marabouts à Djenné: enseignement coranique, invocations et amulettes”, in *Djenné: une ville millénaire au Mali*, ed. by Rogier M. A. Bedaux and J. D. van der Waals (Leiden: Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunder, 1994), pp. 65-75.

study in Djenné, which is still regarded as a centre for Islamic learning. Djenné has therefore over the centuries become an important depository for Arabic manuscripts, which have been copied and stored in the private homes of the ancient Djenné families, many of which have Quranic schools attached.<sup>5</sup>

The Islam practiced in Mali traditionally promotes the veneration of saints and often encompasses elements of Sufi mysticism.<sup>6</sup> During the recent occupation of the north of Mali by militants (April 2012-January 2013), a large number of mausoleums of saints in Timbuktu were destroyed by extremists, and several thousand manuscripts from the Ahmed Baba Institute of Timbuktu were burned.<sup>7</sup> Alongside the traditional dangers such as mould, water, insects and other environmental hazards, a dramatic new menace to manuscripts had suddenly manifested itself in the form of a wilful destruction by fundamentalists. Fortunately Djenné lies 130 miles south of Douentza, the southernmost town occupied by the rebels during their ten-month rule, and was never touched by this destructive force.

Since 2009, with the support of the Endangered Archives Programme, the Djenné Manuscript Library has begun work to survey and create an inventory of the manuscripts of Djenné, and, an effort to digitise the collection has been underway since 2011. The digitisation project carried on regardless of the momentous events that were unfolding only a day's journey further north, and the team never stopped working during this time. When fuel rationing

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5 For a good description of the tradition of contemporary learning in Djenné see Geert Mommersteeg, *In the City of the Marabouts: Islamic Culture in West Africa* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2012); and idem, "L'éducation oranique au Mali: le pouvoir des mots sacrés", in *L'enseignement Islamique au Mali*, ed. by Bintou Sanankoua and Louis Brenner (London: Jamana, 1991). See also Joy, *The Politics of Heritage Management in Mali*, pp. 95-107.

6 Benjamin Soares, "Islam in Mali in the Neoliberal Era", *African Affairs*, 105 (2006), 77-95; and idem, "Islam in Mali Since the 2012 Coup", *Fieldsights: Hot Spots, Cultural Anthropology Online*, 10 June 2013, <http://production.culanth.org/fieldsights/321-islam-in-mali-since-the-2012-coup>

7 For more on the 2012-2013 conflict in Mali, see Alexander Thurston and Andrew Lebovich, *A Handbook on Mali's 2012-2013 Crisis*, ISITA working paper, 2 September 2013, <http://africacenter.org/2013/09/a-handbook-on-malis-2012-2013-crisis>; Luke Harding, "Timbuktu Mayor: Mali Rebels Torched Library of Historic Manuscripts", *The Guardian*, 28 January 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/28/mali-timbuktu-library-ancient-manuscripts>; and the collection of resources available at Berkeley's Center for Africa Studies website, <http://africa.berkeley.edu/Outreach/Mali.php>. Many manuscripts that were thought to be lost were smuggled out to safety. The reports from the Ahmed Baba's staff indicate that those manuscripts that were lost were destroyed in haste as the only valuable items the rebels could find in the building immediately before their flight, rather than because of their content. See Drew Hinshaw, "Historic Timbuktu Texts Saved From Burning", *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 February 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323926104578276003922396218>

made daytime work impossible, we worked only during night-time hours when electricity was available.

The Djenné Manuscript Library<sup>8</sup> is housed in a handsome two-storey traditional Djenné mud building just to the south of the Great Mosque.



Fig. 6.1 Façade of Djenné library. Photo by author, CC BY.

It was built in 2006 with the support of the European Community Fund and the Embassy of the United States of America. In 2007, a management committee made up of notable Djenné residents was put in place; their task was to ensure that the library remained the property of the whole population of Djenné, and continued to provide a safe repository for the manuscripts from private family collections. The deposited manuscripts remained the property of their owners. The library is therefore a public space housing private collections: an original model, entirely different from that of Timbuktu which has in the region of fifty small separate private family libraries which are housed in the individual homes of the collectors.<sup>9</sup>

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8 <http://www.djennemanuscripts.com>

9 Ismaël Diadié Haidara and Haoua Taore, "The Private Libraries of Timbuktu", in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. by Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), pp. 271-75.



Fig. 6.2 *Tārīkh al-Sudan* [History of the Sudan] manuscript in the library's collection.  
Photo by author, CC BY.

The idea of digitisation first emerged when, after reading the description of the Djenné Manuscript Library on my blog,<sup>10</sup> a reader informed me about the Endangered Archives Programme at the British Library.<sup>11</sup> With its support, we began our pilot project in the autumn of 2009. The project was a collaboration between Mamadou Samake of the Mission Culturelle of Djenné, a Malian government body,<sup>12</sup> Babou Touré, a Djenné school teacher representing the Djenné Manuscript library, and myself. The aim of the pilot project was to survey the manuscripts in Djenné. This work involved visiting private Djenné families, and most of the work was carried out *in situ* in the family houses. Djenné is a close-knit community and people tend to be reluctant to show their manuscripts to strangers. The work was carried out by Garba Yaro and Yelpha Deité, the two library archivists who are both members of ancient Djenné families, and without whose reassuring familiarity the doors would have remained shut. Over the four months, we explored collections in thirteen Djenné family homes, many of which were also Quranic schools. We identified more than 4,000 manuscripts, but we were fully aware that this was only a small portion of the total number preserved in Djenné.

10 <http://www.djennedjenno.blogspot.com>

11 The academic sponsors of our initiative were Dimitri Bondarev from SOAS, now at Hamburg University, and Constant Hamès from CNRS.

12 On Mission Culturelle, see Joy, *The Politics of Heritage Management in Mali*, pp. 32-35.

The survey revealed that the manuscripts contained texts on a whole variety of subjects: along with Qurans, religious texts, grammars, historical texts, correspondence and works of literature there were also esoteric and magical texts. This discovery tallied with the fact that Djenné has traditionally been regarded as a centre for *maraboutage*, an Islamic form of magic which is still practised extensively by the Djenné *marabouts*.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, these magical texts constituted more than half of the surveyed manuscripts. During this phase, the archivists simply noted the theme, and returned the manuscript into the storage chest without entering into further investigation. The existence of a *Tārīkh [History] of the Empire of Macina*, written in Fulfulde was noted; however, this manuscript has not yet been re-located into the library and we are still hoping the owners will bring it in.

The manuscripts held in private family houses varied greatly in terms of the state of their preservation. Most were kept in metal or wooden storage boxes in no discernable order.



Fig. 6.3 Manuscripts storage chest in one of the houses in Djenné.  
Photo by author, CC BY.

13 See Trevor H. J. Marchand, *The Masons of Djenné* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 7-8, 25, 71 and 74. On *maraboutage* and *marabouts*, see 26, 32, 35, 102-08 and 269-73. See also Geert Mommersteeg, "Allah's Words as Amulet", *Etnofoor*, 3/1 (1990), 63-76; and idem, "Qur'anic Teachers and Magico-Religious Specialists in Djenné", *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) Newsletter*, 3 (1999), 30.

Our archivists identified each manuscript and separated it from the others with a sheet of white paper before returning it to its place in the box. Most manuscripts were found to be incomplete or perhaps only jumbled up — later more thorough investigation would be needed. We were hoping that at a later date we would be able to digitise these codices. The most common damage noted on the manuscripts was from termites and from water, as well as from bad storage and careless handling. The preservation was not helped by the fact that Djenné houses are all made of mud and during the rainy season they often leak.<sup>14</sup>

A large number of Djenné manuscripts have been acquired over the past decades by the Ahmed Baba Institute<sup>15</sup> and SAVAMA in Timbuktu.<sup>16</sup> These institutions had a policy of buying up manuscripts all over Mali in order to centralise the manuscript scholarship to Timbuktu.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, a substantial deposit of Arabic manuscripts in Djenné remained in the city.

Between August 2011 and August 2013, with the support of the EAP, we digitised 2,009 manuscripts in the Djenné Manuscript Library, producing nearly 150,000 digital images<sup>18</sup>. The documents are for the most part undated and many are incomplete. The manuscripts collected and digitised so far are only written on paper, although there are allegedly manuscripts in Djenné written on fish parchment.<sup>19</sup> The majority of the documents are estimated to date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although there are many from earlier times, and the oldest dated manuscript in the Djenné library is from 1394.<sup>20</sup> With the exception of rare manuscripts in French, which have

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14 On the efforts to modernise houses in Djenné and on the lack of funds to maintain them, see Michael Rowlands, “Entangled Memories and Parallel Heritages in Mali”, in *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*, ed. by Ferdinand de Jong and Michael Rowlands (Walnut Creek, CA: West Coast Press, 2007), pp. 71-98 (p. 95); and Charlotte Joy, “Enchanting Town of Mud: Djenné, a World Heritage Site in Mali”, in *ibid.*, pp 145-59 (p. 153).

15 [http://www.tombouctoumanuscripts.org/libraries/ahmed\\_baba\\_institute\\_of\\_higher\\_learning\\_and\\_islamic\\_research\\_iheri-ab](http://www.tombouctoumanuscripts.org/libraries/ahmed_baba_institute_of_higher_learning_and_islamic_research_iheri-ab)

16 It is a well-known fact to everyone in Djenné, including the archivists at the library, that Abdel Kader Haidara has bought manuscripts from the Djenné collections, both for the Ahmed Baba institute when he worked for them and for his own library the Mamma Haidara.

17 Mohammed Ould Youbba, “The Ahmed Baba Institute of Higher Islamic Studies and Research”, in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. by Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), pp. 287-302.

18 EAP488: Major project to digitise and preserve the manuscripts of Djenné, Mali, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP488](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP488)

19 This information has been provided by Yelpha Deité and Garba Yaro, our two archivists.

20 The manuscripts are dated by the colophones.

not yet been digitised and which contain legal papers and certain official documents such as diplomas from medersas (madrasas) or tax receipts dating from colonial times, the manuscripts are all written in Arabic script.

The library also contains, as of July 2014, 122 manuscripts with sections in the local languages of Songhai, Bozo, Fulfulde and Bamanan written in Arabic script.<sup>21</sup> These sections are sometimes explanations in the margin of difficult Arabic words in the text, or in the case of esoteric manuscripts concerning traditional medicine the names of plants and trees used are often written in Bamanan. There are only few manuscripts written entirely in a language different from Arabic: two in Fulfulde, a theological tract and a document on natural medicine; one manuscript contains "Praise to the Prophet" in Songhai and another one preserves esoteric texts in Bamanan.<sup>22</sup>

The large majority of the Djenné manuscripts were copied in Djenné, and only a small proportion were brought in from elsewhere. The names of the copyist are known, and these are often ancestors of the collector's families. This is possible to ascertain, to a certain degree, by consulting the family genealogy, of the sort preserved in the manuscript EAP488/1/2/15, *Quissatou Baloukiya: History*. This undated text contains an account of the well-known legend of Quissatou Baloukiya, a virtuous woman, and was copied in Djenné by Imam, son of Ousman. He is found seven generations down in the genealogy of the Yaro family. Similarly, the manuscript *Kitāb nuzhat al-khawāṭir fī uṣūl sharḥ al-dagā'in* [*The Book of the Excursion into the Ideas about the Sources Explaining the Hatred*] (EAP488/1/7/24) is a traditional Arabic grammar in verse, copied in Djenné in 1836 by Aquadi Ahmed, who forms part of the line of *marabouts* which served the family Djeite. In this case the genealogy goes back seven generations: Alqadi Ahmed, son of Imam Mohamed, son of Baha, son of Amar, son of Moussa, son of Mahmoud, son of Ousmane, son of Mohamed, son of Babou Almoustafa Attawate. Another locally transcribed manuscript is a handsome volume, *Dalā'il al-khayrāt wa-shawāriq al-anwār fī dhikr al-ṣalāt 'alā al-nabī al-mukhtār* [*Directions to the Benefits and Shining Lights: On the Benediction over the Chosen Prophet*] (EAP488/1/1/1). It was copied in the Hausa calligraphy in 1899 by Bakaina, son of Alpha Sidi, son of Mohamed Cheick, son of Cheick

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21 On the practice of writing other languages in the Arabic script, so-called Ajami, see for example, Moulaye Hassane, "Ajami in Africa: The Use of Arabic Script in the Transcription of African Languages", in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. by Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), pp. 109-22.

22 Information provided by the project archivist, Yelpha.



Boubacar, who is an ancestor of the present owner. Bakaina is an ancient and traditional Djenné name.



Fig. 6.4 *Prayers to the Prophet* from the Maiga family collection.  
Photo by author, CC BY.

This differs from Timbuktu, which seems to have had a more energetic trade in manuscripts, not only in recent times but also back in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, at the height of its importance as a centre for trade and learning before the trans-Saharan trade routes shifted as a result of the development of shipping along the West African coast.<sup>23</sup> Many of Timbuktu's treasures have been copied in the Maghreb or in the Middle East and then brought to Timbuktu as valuable merchandise. Djenné, on the other hand, appears to have been less cosmopolitan in its manuscript trade, which is why the majority of manuscripts were copied locally. The Djenné scribes were nevertheless influenced by different calligraphic styles. With the Moroccan conquest in the sixteenth century, the Maghreb style was copied in Djenné, just as later the Hausa style became adopted, inspired by the arrival of students from northern Nigeria to the Djenné Quranic schools.<sup>24</sup>

23 See, for example, Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

24 On script styles from West Africa, see Mauro Nobili, "Arabic Scripts in West African Manuscripts: A Tentative Classification from the de Gironcourt Manuscript Collection",

In order to embark on the digitisation project, we had to create a new workroom with three digital cameras and lighting units. We also bought and installed computers and, most importantly, hired new staff to work in the library. This latter task proved to be more problematic than anticipated due to the system of family connections in Djenné. We all agreed that the new staff should be local, but Samake and I insisted on good Arabic knowledge, a good general level of education and knowledge of French. Other members of the team, however, regarded family connections as more significant than qualifications. To work successfully in Djenné, it is necessary to come to viable compromises, and therefore the workroom staff were chosen by the library management committee. With regards to the digitisation workers, Samake and I insisted that at least one of the team should have a good knowledge of Arabic, French and English. Ultimately, we were able to hire Mohammed Diallo from the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* in Bamako. After the staff were finally assembled, a month or so of training took place before the work proper began in the autumn of 2011.

Fundamental for digitisation was the painstaking work to survey the manuscripts, carried out by Garba and Yelpha, our archivists. An important part of their task was raising awareness among the manuscript owners about the importance of their manuscripts. The increased availability of printed material meant that, over the last century, the manuscripts were increasingly seen as not valuable and even redundant. Gradually, these efforts began to bear fruit and a steady trickle of Djenné notables started depositing their manuscripts for safekeeping in the Djenné Manuscript Library. Soon after the project started, we noted that the documents brought to the library were often different from those we were allowed to see on our visits to family homes. The families who chose to bring part of their collections would often select manuscripts that were regarded to have a high status, and these were most likely to be Quranic or traditional Islamic texts. We decided that it was necessary to introduce a rule that allowed for only one Quran per family to be sent for digitisation. Otherwise, we would have run a risk of producing a digital collection consisting predominantly of Qurans, thus misrepresenting the types of manuscripts present and produced in the city. Fortunately, there were also significantly high numbers of other types of

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*Islamic Africa Journal*, 2/1 (2011), 105-33; and idem, "Manuscript Culture of West Africa, Part 2: A Survey of Scholarly Production Dedicated to Local Collections of Manuscripts", *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter*, 3 (Jan 2012), 11-17.

texts being brought, and we decided to continue the digitisation work at the library instead of displacing moveable units into the family houses.

The reason for the steady and growing trickle of new deposits at the library must also be linked to the fact that the manuscript owners receive 3000FCFA (around £4) per day during the time that the team are digitising their manuscripts. This amount, although not very large, is nevertheless three times the wage for a day-labourer in Mali, and it is a welcome addition to the family budget in a town which has precious few opportunities for earning money.

A few months into the digitisation project, we encountered serious difficulties that continue to be a matter of concern. The initiative for the construction of the library had come from the Imam of Djenné, who successfully raised funds for this project from the European Union and the American Embassy. Although locals believed that the library was built for the benefit of the whole town, once it was constructed, the Imam appropriated it for himself. This caused a serious schism and the Imam withdrew his manuscripts from the library. He decided to build his own private library, which he did with the assistance of SAVAMA-DCI,<sup>25</sup> an association for the promotion of manuscript culture from Timbuktu. The head of SAVAMA-DCI, Abdel Kader Haidara, has been widely recognised for his work to safeguard the manuscripts of Mali. His work has involved the opening of small libraries with the help of external funding – a model that has been rejected in Djenné because it is against the philosophy of its library.<sup>26</sup> The schism between the Imam and the town of Djenné became serious enough to call in the then Minister of Culture, Cheick Oumar Sissoko, and it was he who put the management committee in place in 2007.

At this point, the problem seemed to have been contained. However, with the arrival of the support from the EAP project, this old feud re-emerged with renewed vigour. A few months into the project, we were scheduled to begin making protective acid-free carton boxes in which to store up to 300 manuscripts. The material for the boxes was imported from the UK. I had hired a van and driver to deliver this bulky shipment to Djenné, and I arrived at the library with the van just after sunset prayers on a Friday in January

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.savamadci.net>

<sup>26</sup> For a selection of the recent press coverage recognising Abdel Kader Haidara's role in the preservation of Mali's manuscripts, see Joshua Hammer, *The Brave Sage of Timbuktu: Abdel Kader Haidara*, The Innovators Project, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/innovators/2014/04/140421-haidara-timbuktu-manuscripts-mali-library-conservation>

2012, having travelled the ten-hour journey from Bamako. In front of the library, there was a gathering of some twenty people, including the Imam. As I attempted to alight from the lorry and begin the unloading, the Imam said to me: "I forbid you to ever set foot in this place again!" To avoid a physical confrontation, I returned to my hotel with the truck and the material. During the course of the evening, each of the eleven town councillors of Djenné contacted me to insist that I return to the library the following morning and to assure me that I would come to no harm. The next day, I returned to the library, and we began to work on preparing boxes, after a short period of instruction from a professional box maker from Timbuktu.<sup>27</sup>



Fig. 6.5 Two manuscript storage boxes made for the library. Photo by author, CC BY.

Although this incident had a positive conclusion, it cannot be denied that there is a strong antipathy towards the project from the Imam, a powerful figure on a national scale in Mali, and even beyond, and a small but powerful section of the Djenné community. This antipathy can at least partially explain certain rumours and attempts to bring the project into disrepute. These attempts, which draw their venom from the eventual free Internet access of the digitised images, were taken seriously enough by the Prefect of Djenné to jeopardise the very existence of the project. When I was called to the Prefect's

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<sup>27</sup> Garba Traoré is the Head Conservator at the Ahmed Baba Institute. The project relied on him several times for teaching and lecturing.

office to explain in detail the free Internet access, he expressed his critical view of the matter, likening it to the French colonial appropriation of the large collections of Malian manuscripts, now found in the French National Library.<sup>28</sup> It was impossible to convince him that the project is not at all similar in that it does not remove the original manuscripts from the Djenné library.

Digitisation has only recently come to be recognised as a way to preserve manuscripts in Mali. Timbuktu has received significant support to digitise its entire collection, with large funding from, amongst many other sources, the Government of South Africa.<sup>29</sup> Yet, only a small percentage of the manuscripts were digitised at the time of the destruction of the Ahmed Baba Institute. The pace of the digitisation and the recognition of its value have increased in the aftermath of the Timbuktu events. There is still some reluctance towards digitisation and, in particular, towards free Internet access to digitised manuscripts. We should bear in mind, however, that the open access movement and notion that access to knowledge should be free, are relatively new phenomenon even in the western world. Moreover, in Mali there is a deep mistrust towards foreign philanthropy, which is seen as having a veiled interest. Indeed, we have often heard that the British Library is using the digital collection from Djenné to make money, and nothing can be done to dissuade the majority of people that this is not the case.<sup>30</sup>

The EAP requires free Internet access to all digitised collections. In Djenné, this has become a major bone of contention and ultimately, in order to continue the project, we were forced to negotiate a compromise. With the permission of the EAP, we delayed the online publication of the Djenné collection until 2018. We convinced the manuscript holders in Djenné that this would give us five years to promote the Djenné library and find new sponsors before the collection went online. The compromise, reached in 2013, proved to be the key that unlocked the impasse. The same year we were awarded a new grant from the Programme that allows us to continue our digitisation efforts.<sup>31</sup> By

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28 Nouredine Ghali, *Inventaire de la Bibliothèque 'umarienne de Ségou, conservée à la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Édition du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1985).

29 <http://www.tombouctoumanuscripts.org>. For other initiatives, see Dmitry Bondarev, *Safeguarding the Manuscripts from Timbuktu: A Report on the Current Situation and a Proposal for a Larger Preservation Project*, Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, Hamburg, 9 May 2013, [http://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/cal-details/Safeguarding\\_Timbuktu\\_Manuscripts\\_2013.pdf](http://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/cal-details/Safeguarding_Timbuktu_Manuscripts_2013.pdf)

30 On an ongoing local perception that their heritage may have been “sold to the whites”, see Joy, “Enchanting Town of Mud”, pp. 156-57.

31 EAP690: Project to digitise and preserve the manuscripts of Djenné and surrounding

mutual agreement, there will be a three-year delay on Internet publication after the end of the project, which means that the entire Djenné collection will be available online in 2018.

The results of the first digitisation project, a hard drive containing 150,000 images, was delivered to the British Library in August 2013. A copy was also delivered to the *Archives Nationales* in Bamako in December, in a ceremony attended by the British Ambassador and televised by Malian TV. The same event was used to launch the present project (EAP690). Such high profile events are invaluable for the promoting of good will for the project, and are used as a strategy to combat the undercurrents of ill will which still threaten to damage the project and the library.

Alongside the digitisation supported by the EAP, we have organised several events that aim to raise awareness of the importance of the manuscripts of Djenné, and to promote positive attitudes towards the library. In April 2014, we organised a week-long teaching seminar on the conservation and storage of manuscripts. The seminar culminated in a televised conference in Djenné, attended by over a hundred people. Among the participants were the manuscript owners who deposited their collections at the Djenné Manuscript Library, as well as scholars and conservators from Brazil, Sweden and Germany. The conference was supported by the EAP, the Helen Hamlyn Trust (UK), The Rizoma Institute (Brazil) and The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg, the latter represented by conservator Eva Brozowski, who conducted research into traditional inks used in the Djenné manuscripts. In association with MaliMali<sup>32</sup> we have also organised calligraphy workshops and competitions at the Djenné Manuscript Library.

These events and efforts would never have been possible had the library not received the support from the EAP. The growth of the library's collection, as the local population gradually deposit their manuscripts, is the most potent sign of the success of the projects in Djenné. The collection grew from 2,172 manuscripts representing 33 families in 2011, to close to 6,000 manuscripts, from 100 families in 2014. We are proud to see this sign of trust from the local people, who increasingly see the library and its archivists as reliable custodians of their collections.

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villages, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP690](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP690)  
32 <http://www.malimali.org>

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## 7. The first Gypsy/Roma organisations, churches and newspapers

*Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov*

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In the 1970s, a young and provocative German scholar, Kirsten Martins-Heuss, shocked the academic public with her statement that Gypsy Studies is “a science of the plagiarist”.<sup>1</sup> It cannot be denied that there are still some grounds for such a critique. In the history of Gypsy (now known as Roma) movements and organisations, inaccurate data and interpretations often make their way from book to book without attempts at verification — for example, scholars refer to the Gypsy Conference in Kannstadt (Germany) in 1871, an event that never actually took place.<sup>2</sup> However, it is not always inaccuracy on the part of scholars which is to blame, but the unavailability of complete or reliable records, or the use of second-hand data taken from other publications without first checking the primary sources.

In order to avoid such traps, the research for this chapter is based mainly on primary sources, uncovered among public or family records, most of which were collected, investigated and digitised as part of our projects supported by the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP).<sup>3</sup> These sources

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1 Kirsten Martins-Heuss, *Zur mythischen Figur des Zigeuners in der deutschen Zigeunerforschung* (Frankfurt: Hagg Herchen, 1983), p. 8.

2 Donald Kenrick, *The Romani World: A Historical Dictionary of the Gypsies*, 3rd edn. (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2007), p. 386.

3 EAP067: Preservation of Gypsy/Roma historical and cultural heritage in Bulgaria, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP067](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP067), and EAP285: Preservation of Gypsy/Roma historical and cultural heritage in Bulgaria – major project, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP285](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP285)

have been largely out of circulation until now, and they throw new light onto several aspects of the history of the Roma movement for civic emancipation through the creation of public organisations. Apart from these sources, no other evidence corroborating the occurrence of most of the events discussed has been discovered to date.<sup>4</sup> The digitised sources we rely on are stored in the Studii Romani Archive.<sup>5</sup> A significant number may now also be accessed through the EAP website.<sup>6</sup> The books and newspapers discussed are preserved in Bulgarian public libraries.

This chapter focuses on the sources that document the emergence and early development of Roma social and political projects in Bulgaria during the first half of the twentieth century, and that illuminate the main concepts of the emerging Roma discourse. These sources chart the key stages in the evolution of the Roma movement and encompass the movement's different branches and aspirations.

## The first Roma organisation

The first source presented in this chapter is an historical statute officially registering a Roma public organisation, written in the Bulgarian town of Vidin in 1910 and published in the form of a small book that same year. This group was, in all likelihood, the first state-approved Roma organisation in the world. The published registration document, entitled *Ustav na Egiptyanskata narodnost v gr. Vidin* [*Statute of the Egyptian Nation in the Town of Vidin*], designates the Roma as *Egiptyani* ("Egyptians" in Bulgarian), *Kipti* ("Copts", as in Ottoman sources) and *Tsigani* ("Gypsies" in Bulgarian).<sup>7</sup>

The creation and the main aims of the first Roma organisation in Bulgaria can be understood in the context of the country's history. Part of the Ottoman Empire for five centuries, Bulgaria became an independent country in the

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4 The historical background of these events is described in general works devoted to Bulgarian history in the period under review. Frederick B. Chary, *The History of Bulgaria* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2011); R. J. Crampton, *Bulgaria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Raymond Detrez, *Historical Dictionary of Bulgaria* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006).

5 <http://www.studiiromani.org>

6 See <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP067> and <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP285>

7 The original of the statute was not discovered in Bulgarian archives. It is available only in published book form: Anonymous, *Ustav na Egiptyanskata narodnost v gr. Vidin* [*Statute on the Egyptian Nation in the Town of Vidin*] (Vidin: Bozhinov & Konev, 1910). A copy of the book is preserved in the Specialised Library within the Studii Romani Archive (ASR), and the digitised version is forthcoming. All translations are ours unless otherwise stated.

aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, first as the Bulgarian Principality and from 5 October 1908 as the Kingdom of Bulgaria. Independence changed the inter-ethnic relations of the country; whereas the position of ethnic Turks was established by peace treaties, the Roma were left out. Therefore, the foundation of the Roma organisation stemmed from the need to negotiate the new citizens' situation. The Roma needed to secure the rightful status of their communities in the new independent state and to introduce legal parameters to the relationship between themselves and the state and local authorities, as well as to relations within their own community.<sup>8</sup> Article 1 of the statute describes the main tasks of the organisation: "Under the old custom of the aforesaid nation in Vidin, this statute establishes procedures for their right-relations in the society and among themselves".

The statute determined the terms of office and methods of election of the head of the organisation as well as his responsibilities:

Article 3: For compliance and enforcement of the regulations is to be responsible a chief, called *mukhtar*, who is elected indefinitely by lot from among nine people of the neighbourhoods' elders – these leaders (*çeribaşı*)<sup>9</sup> are to be determined by secret ballot among those who have civil and political rights. Even better, those who are inscribed in the municipal election lists should be eligible to become voters and to be elected. [...]

Article 10: [A *mukhtar* is elected] to represent the group before the authorities of the state and all public institutions, [...] to protect the general moral and material interests of his compatriots, [...] to evoke civic awareness among his own people and to assist measures and introduce decrees needed for decent and respectable human life, [...] to take care of finding work for the poor, [...] ensuring proper mental, health and social education of adults, [...] to seek to ensure strict compliance with all lawful orders, [...] to give accurate information to all state and public institutions on issues concerning people of his own nationality.<sup>10</sup>

From the text of the statute, it is not clear who was the first head (*mukhtar*) of the new organisation, but most likely it was the chairman of the founding

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8 In the Ottoman Empire, the Roma had citizenship status, were classified according to their ethnicity and had their own economic niches and position in the society. See Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001); Faika Çelik, "Exploring Marginality in the Ottoman Empire: Gypsies or People of Malice (Ehl-i Fesad) as viewed by the Ottomans", *EUI Working Paper RSCAS*, 39 (2004), 1-21; and Faika Çelik, "'Civilizing Mission' in the Late Ottoman Discourse: The Case of Gypsies", *Oriente Moderno*, 93 (2013), 577-97.

9 In the first paragraph of the statute preceding Article 3, local variants of the Ottoman administrative term *çeribaşı* are used: *tseribashi* and *malebashi*.

10 Anon., *Ustav na Egiptjanskata narodnost v gr. Vidin*, pp. 4 and 6.

committee (comprising a total of 21 people), Gyullish Mustafa, who, as explicitly noted in the statute, was a member of the Bulgarian army in the position of reserve sergeant.<sup>11</sup>

All the designations used in these statute articles are taken from the old Ottoman Empire terminology, in which the *mukhtar* was the mayor of a village, elected by the population and representing the village before the authorities, and the *çeribaşı* were the heads of the Roma *Cemaat* (Tax Unit), responsible for collecting taxes.<sup>12</sup> These designations were transferred to the new realities of the independent Bulgarian state: the *mukhtar* became the chief of the “Egyptians” in Vidin and its district, and the *çeribaşı* became the heads of separate Roma *mahallas*.<sup>13</sup> The statute of the organisation reflects an effort to transfer and legalise existing social relations inherited from the time of the Empire, when the Roma were referred to as *Kıptı* or *Çingene* (“Gypsies” in Turkish); although without official status as a religious or ethnic community (*millet* in Bulgarian), they were *de facto* treated as such.<sup>14</sup> The statute explicitly mentions that only those who are “inscribed in the municipal election lists” may participate in electing the organisation’s head — that is, those who have civil and political rights. This indicates that the organisation was established not only out of the Roma desire to be recognised as a distinct ethnic group, but also because of their aspirations to be publicly acknowledged as an equal part of the overall social structure of the new Bulgarian nation-state.

From the *Statute of the Egyptian Nation in the Town of Vidin*, it is clear that the organisation was self-financing. Its revenue was generated through “[...] voluntary donations and bequests [...] fines for divorce and unlawful cohabitation [...] interest from money-lending [...] and] rents for the common property”.<sup>15</sup> The organisation’s leaders (the *mukhtar* together with his deputy and treasurer) received annual remuneration for their “work” — a sum collected from all families “according to their property status”, of which “it

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11 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

12 Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 39-41.

13 During the Ottoman Empire, *mahalla* referred to a residential ethnic neighbourhood. For more information about Ottoman urban structure, see Nicolay Todorov, *Balkanskiat grad 15-19 vek: sotsialno-ikonomicheskoto i demografsko razvitiie* [*A Balkan City, 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Social, Economical and Demographic Development*] (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1972).

14 For more detail on the functioning of the Ottoman system in regard to religious and ethnic communities (including the Roma), see *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. by Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, 1 (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982); Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*; and Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, and Refugees* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2009).

15 Anon., *Ustav na Egiphtyanskata narodnost*, Article 16, p. 10.

is envisaged for the *mukhtar* to take half of the total amount and for half to be divided between his two assistants".<sup>16</sup>

The statute also attempts to establish the Roma as a "nation", equal to all other nations in the country, through symbols, signs and holidays. The organisation's public symbols are described in detail — an example of the stamp of the organisation can be seen below (Fig. 7.1).



Fig. 7.1 Stamp of the Egyptian Nation organisation, Public Domain.

It is a circular stamp with the inscription "*Kiptiysko mukhtarstvo – v g. Vidin* (Coptic town hall – in the town of Vidin)". The stamp depicts St George on horseback with a king's daughter behind him and a spear in his hand, point stuck in a crocodile. As specified in the statute, the picture on the stamp illustrates "a girl who was doomed to be sacrificed to an animal, deified in Egypt, and who was rescued by St George in the same way as the people were saved from paganism".<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the *mukhtar* wore an oval metal emblem on his chest bearing the inscriptions "*Koptic mukhtar*" and "*city of Vidin*". Between these two phrases was a graven image of the Eye of Horus, considered to be one of the major ancient Egyptian symbols.

The references to ancient Egypt in the names used to define the community, such as "*Egyptians*" and "*Copts*" in the organisation's statute and symbols, reflected the belief at that time that the Roma had originated in Egypt.<sup>18</sup> This belief was implied in the term *Αιγύπτιοι* (*Aigyptioi*), meaning Egyptian, whose use was already widespread in Byzantine times.<sup>19</sup> It was also commonplace during the Ottoman period to use the term *Kipti* to designate the Roma in state administrative documents. This designation was accepted by the Roma

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Article 23, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Article 19, pp. 11-12.

<sup>18</sup> Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 16, 17 and 26.

<sup>19</sup> George C. Soulis, "The Gypsies in the Byzantine Empire and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 15 (1961), pp. 141-65.

themselves, and it was the basis for the appearance of numerous etiological legends, widespread among the Roma in the Balkans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These legends illustrate the community's efforts to uncover their land of origin, "proof" of which they claimed to find in the Old Testament.<sup>20</sup> The links made to ancient Egypt are a clear reflection of the Roma's intention to express their equality with other nations that, unlike them, had their own countries of origin.

The statute designates St George's Day, "which remained from the old times", as the annual holy patron day.<sup>21</sup> The honouring of St George as patron of the Roma and the celebration of his day (*Gergyovden* in Bulgarian, *Ђурђевдан* in Serbian, etc.) are reflected in both the stamp and the statute of the organisation: indeed, there was a widespread cult of St George among the Roma in the Balkans.<sup>22</sup> Along with Roma Christians, the Muslim Roma also honoured this day under the name *Hidirlez* (*Hederlesi*, *Herdelez*, *Ederlezi*, etc. in the Roma languages), replacing the Christian saint with the Islamic prophets *Hızır* and *İlyas*.<sup>23</sup>

It is noteworthy that among the members of the founding committee listed in the statute, those with Muslim names are more numerous than those with Christian names.<sup>24</sup> At that time, the majority of Roma living in

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20 For examples and texts of numerous etiological legends, see *Studii Romani I*, ed. by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov (Sofia: Club'90, 1994), pp. 16-47; *Studii Romani II*, ed. by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov (Sofia: Club'90, 1995), pp. 22-45; and Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, "Myth as Process", in *Scholarship and the Gypsy Struggle: Commitment in Romani Studies*, ed. by Thomas Acton (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2000), pp. 81-93.

21 Anon., *Ustav na Egiphtyanskata narodnost*, Article 18, p. 11.

22 For more on the cult of St George and its dissemination among Roma in the Balkans, see Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 136-37; Elsie Ivančić Dunin, *Gypsy St. George's Day – Coming of Summer. Romski Gjurgjovden. Romano Gjurgjovdani-Erdelezi. Skopje, Macedonia 1967-1997* (Skopje: Zdrúženie na ljubiteli na romska folklorna umetnost "Romano ilo", 1998); Trajko Petrovski, *Kalendarskite običaji kaj Romite vo Skopje i okolinata [Calendar Customs of the Roma in Skopje and Surroundings]* (Skopje: Feniks, 1993), pp. 142-47; and Tatomir Vukanović, *Romi (cigani) u Jugoslaviji [Roma (Gypsies) in Yugoslavia]* (Vranje: Stamparija „Nova Jugoslavija“, 1983), pp. 276-79.

23 Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, "The Vanished Kurban: Modern Dimensions of the Celebration of *Kakaval/Hidrellez* Among the Gypsies in Eastern Thrace (Turkey)", in *Kurban on the Balkans*, ed. by Bilijana Sikimić and Petko Hristov (Belgrade: Institute of Balkan Studies, 2007), pp. 33-50.

24 Some of them even have two names: one Muslim and one Christian. Such inter-religious names among the Roma are documented from Ottoman times, e.g. in the tax register of 1522-1523 (Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 30-31). This practice of using inter-religious names in Bulgaria was reinforced after the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, which resulted in several waves of forced name changes from Muslim

Vidin were Muslims: the fact that a Christian saint is on the organisation's stamp shows that voluntary conversion to the new official religion (Orthodox Christianity) in the independent Bulgarian state had not only begun, but was already advanced. Nowadays, the conversion is complete: all Roma in Vidin are Christians, the memory of their previous religion is faint and for many it has already disappeared.<sup>25</sup>

To date, the *Statute of the Egyptian Nation in the Town of Vidin* is the only known piece of historical evidence supporting the existence of this first Roma organisation. It can be assumed that the organisation existed for only a relatively short period of time; soon after its establishment, a period of hostilities and conflicts began, which included two Balkan wars (1912-1913) and World War I, with the result that many Roma men were mobilised as part of the Bulgarian army and its military operations.<sup>26</sup>

## Roma organisations and newspapers between the two World Wars

Two sources discovered 2007 and 2008 enable us to outline the development of the Roma movement in Bulgaria from the end of World War I to the mid-1950s.<sup>27</sup> A 1957 book manuscript by Shakir Pashov reveals a number of important phases of this evolution in the first half of the twentieth century. Although the title of the manuscript, *Istoriya na tsiganite v Balgaria i v Evropa: "Roma"* [*A History of the Gypsies in Bulgaria and in Europe: "Roma"*], uses the term "Roma" in inverted commas as the designation for the community, the rest of the text employs the Bulgarian word *Tsigani*.<sup>28</sup> The information

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to Bulgarian Christian ones. Even today we can observe the practice of using double names, as in a Rom with both a Muslim and a Christian name. See Hristo Kyuchukov, *My Name Was Hyussein* (Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2004); Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*; Ulrich Büchschenschütz, *Maltsinstvenata politika v Balgaria. Politika na BKP kam evrei, romi, pomatsi i turtsi 1944-1989* [*The Minority Policies of the Bulgarian Communist Party towards Jews, Roma, Pomaks and Turks (1944-89)*] (Sofia: IMIR, 2000); and Plamena Stoyanova, "Preimenuvane na tsiganite: myusyulmani v Balgariya [Renaming of the Roma: Muslims in Bulgaria]", in *XVII Kyustendilski chtenia 2010*, ed. by Christo Berov (Sofia: Istoricheski Fakultet, SU "Climent Ohridski" and Regionalen istoricheski muzei Kyustendil, 2012), pp. 252-68.

25 Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*, pp. 89-90.

26 For a discussion of the scale of Roma participation in the Bulgarian army, see Velcho Krastev and Evgenia Ivanova, *Ciganite po patishtata na voynata* [*Gypsies on the Road of the War*] (Stara Zagora: Litera Print, 2014).

27 EAP067/1/6; ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. C 4 a-d.

28 The manuscript was digitised in frames for our EAP067 project (EAP067/1/11); ASR,



we glean from this manuscript can be combined with insights provided by Shakir Pashov's partially-preserved (the first page is missing), signed "Autobiography", stored in his family archives and dated 1967.<sup>29</sup>

Shakir Mahmudov Pashov was born on 20 October 1898 in the village of Gorna Bania (today a neighbourhood of Sofia). His whole, often turbulent, life was dedicated to the Roma movement. He graduated from the railway workers' school, was conscripted into the Bulgarian army during World War I and was wounded several times (Fig. 7.2). After his return from the War in 1919, according to his book manuscript and autobiography, he founded the "Bulgarian Communist Party among Gypsies" group in Sofia and served there as its secretary. He was employed by the Bulgarian State Railways until 1919, when he was fired for his involvement in the Communist-organised railway strike that paralysed the whole country.<sup>30</sup>



Fig. 7.2 Shakir Pashov as a soldier (EAP067/1/2/4, image 4), Public Domain.

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Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. E 1-216.

<sup>29</sup> EAP067/1/6.

<sup>30</sup> Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. C 4 d.; see also Lilyana Kovacheva, *Shakir Pashov. O Apostoli e Romengoro* [Shakir Pashov: The Apostle of the Roma] (Sofia: Kham 2003).

In Pashov's book manuscript, we read that on his initiative, a "Gypsy committee" was formed in 1919. This committee met Prime Minister Alexander Stamboliyski from the Bulgarian Agrarian Union (BAP) with a request for the reinstatement of Roma voting rights, which had been nullified by the Election Law of 1901.<sup>31</sup> On 2 December 1919, the National Assembly passed a new electoral law introducing compulsory voting for all Bulgarian citizens; in practice, this law eliminated restrictions on the Roma's voting rights. It was also in 1919 that, according to Pashov's manuscript, a *Druzhestvo Egipet* ("Society 'Egypt'" in Bulgarian) was established in which "the majority of the Gypsy intelligentsia and all the progressive youth" of Sofia participated. The main tasks of the society were "to raise the cultural and educational level of the society members and of the whole Gypsy minority, and most of all, to work to raise political and public awareness of the Gypsy minority".<sup>32</sup> A few months later, however, the General Assembly of the Society "Egypt" decided to merge with the Bulgarian Communist Party.<sup>33</sup>

In the Bulgarian archives there are no materials concerning the creation or registration of a public organisation called the Society "Egypt". However, there is the statute of an association, approved by the Ministry of the Interior and Public Health on 2 August 1919,<sup>34</sup> named *Sofiyskata obshto myusulmansko prosvetno-kulturno vzaimospomogatelna organizacia "Istikbal-Badeshte"* (Sofia's Common Moslem Educational and Cultural Mutual Aid Organisation "Istikbal-Future"). The chair of this association was Yusein Mekhmedov and its secretary was none other than Shakir Mahmudov Pashov. The association that Pashov calls the Society "Egypt" in his book manuscript is in fact the Sofia Common Moslem Educational and Cultural Mutual Aid Organisation "Istikbal". Pashov intentionally changed a wording which included the attribute "Moslem" to something more neutral. The manuscript was written at a time when the Bulgarian Communist Party was fighting against the "Turkisation of Gypsies", and so Pashov considered it inappropriate to attract attention to his past activities in connection with Islam.<sup>35</sup>

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31 ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. E 101-102. For more details on the suspension of the electoral rights of the majority of Roma in Bulgaria in 1901, and the struggles to defend their constitutional rights, see Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*, pp. 29-30.

32 ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. E 99-100.

33 Ibid.

34 TsDA: Fund 1Б, op. 8, a.e. 596, l. 69. See also: Nyagulov, Blagovest, "Iz istoriyata na tsiganite/romite v Balgaria (1878-1944) [From the History of Gypsies/Roma in Bulgaria (1878-1944)]", in *Integratsia na romite v balgarskoto obshtestvo [Integration of the Roma in Bulgarian Society]*, ed. by Velina Topalova and Aleksey Pamporov (Sofia: Institut po sotsiologia pri BAN, 2007), pp. 24-42.

35 For more details, see Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, "Zigeunerpolitik und

However, in the 1919 statute, the words “Gypsy” or “Gypsies” do not appear once in connection with the *Istikbal*. From this statute it is clear that the Roma of Sofia (majority Muslim at that time) intended to use this organisation to acquire control of the mosque and *waqf* (Islamic religious endowment) properties in the capital city, manoeuvres which the local Islamic leaders resisted. The organisation filed a number of lawsuits in its attempt to acquire control of these assets. Indeed, the court proceedings and litigations dragged on for more than a year, but the case was eventually dismissed by the Supreme Administrative Court, and the organisation had, in the meantime, changed its name (see below).<sup>36</sup>

In the 1920s and early 1930s, Pashov was very active politically. In 1922 he was a delegate to the Congress of the Communist Party, and in 1924 he was elected municipal councillor as a member of the United Front, a coalition between the Communist Party and the left wing of the Bulgarian Agrarian People’s Party.<sup>37</sup> Following the St Nedelya Church assault — a Bulgarian Communist Party terrorist attack carried out on 16 April 1925 — Pashov was arrested.<sup>38</sup> Several months after his arrest, in the midst of the subsequent state political terror, he emigrated to Turkey.<sup>39</sup> He returned to Bulgaria in 1929 and became an active member of the Bulgarian Workers’ Party (an organisation linked to the then-illegal Communist Party). As such, he was involved in the municipal election campaign of 1931. During this time, Pashov was also employed as a mechanic at the Municipal Technical Workshop until he was dismissed in 1935 because of his involvement in a political strike. He then opened a small private iron workshop.<sup>40</sup>

Although the association statute states that the *Istikbal* was established in 1919, Pashov claims in his manuscript and autobiography to have founded the organisation on 7 May 1929, with a membership of 1,500 people. In 1930 it absorbed several other Roma organisations of different kinds, such as mutual aid, cultural, educational and sport societies.<sup>41</sup> The organisation

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Zigeunerforschung in Bulgarien (1919-1989)”, in *Zwischen Erziehung und Vernichtung. Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Michael Zimmermann (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2007), pp. 132-33.

36 TsDA: Fund 264k, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 1-3,6, 14; See also: Nyagulov, “Iz istoriyata na tsiganite/romite v Balgaria”, p.36

37 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 101-10.

38 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. C 4a.

39 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 101-10; ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. C 4a.

40 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. C 4a.; ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 101-10.

41 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 101-10, ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. C 4a. This is also confirmed in a statement from the Blagoev Regional Council regarding the “Personal People’s Pension” issued to Pashov in 1967 (ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. C 5a, 5b).

then changed its name to *Obsht mohamedano-tsiganski natsionalen kulurno-prosveten i vzaimospomagatelen sayuz v Balgaria* (Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National, Cultural, Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria).<sup>42</sup> The word “Gypsy” is thus already present in the new name. Pashov himself headed this new organisation and also started publishing a newspaper called *Terbie* [Upbringing].<sup>43</sup> According to Shakir Pashov’s book manuscript, “the progressive youth united [...] the organisations under one common name: the *Istikbal*”.<sup>44</sup> Once again Pashov retrospectively changed the organisation’s name in order to avoid the adjective “Mohammedan”, concealing its connection with Islam.

On 7 May 1932, a conference was held in the city of Mezdra, attended by Roma from different cities in northwest Bulgaria. At this conference, it was decided to open up the *Istikbal*, which until then had been an association exclusively for Roma residents of Sofia, to all Gypsies living in Bulgaria, and to distribute the newspaper *Terbie* throughout the country.<sup>45</sup> Two years later, however, the organisation was banned and the newspaper closed. This was not a specific anti-Gypsy measure: the new pro-fascist government of Kimon Georgiev — which came to power following a military coup on 19 May 1934 — disbanded all political parties, trade unions and minority organisations, closing all their publications. Every attempt by Pashov to restore the organisation was unsuccessful.

After 1934, Pashov continued his political and cultural activities, albeit in different forms. He agitated with the Roma community to end the custom of *Baba Hakki* (Turkish for “father rights”, i.e. bride price), created a Roma support association for funerals and established an informal Roma club, headquartered in the famous pub *By Keva* (Keva was the name of a very popular Gypsy singer and dancer of the time).<sup>46</sup> In 1935, he organised a delegation comprised of Roma men and women wearing traditional *shalvary* (Islamic trousers) to greet the newborn Crown Prince Simeon at the King’s palace. On 3 March 1938, Pashov organised a ball for the Roma in an urban casino in the garden of the National Theatre, with musical and dance performances of

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42 TsDA: Fund 264k, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 7-12, 14, 28-29

43 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 101-10. The newspaper *Terbie* was published in Sofia from 1933-1934; the preserved copies are: ann. I, No. 1; ann. II, No. 2-7.

44 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 103-104.

45 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 101-10.

46 *Ibid.* For more on the famous pub *By Keva*, see Dragan Tenev, *Tristakhilyadna Sofiya i az mezhdú dvete voini* [Three Hundred Thousand’s Sofia and Me Between Two Wars] (Sofia: Balgarski pisatel, 1997), pp. 225-27 and 233-35; and Raina Kostentseva, *Moyat roden grad Sofia. V kraya na XIX nachaloto na XX vek i sled tova* [My Home City of Sofia: At the End of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and After] (Sofia: Riva, 2008), p. 148.

the *Arabian Nights*. He personally invited Tsar Boris III, who did not attend but did send an envelope of money for the “poor Gypsies”.<sup>47</sup>

The account of the early history of the Bulgarian Roma movement in Pashov’s manuscript and autobiography cannot be regarded as entirely reliable: there are several differences between the two texts, and some discrepancies with other sources. We already mentioned the inconsistency between the dates given for the establishment of the *Istikbal* — 1919 according to the statute, a decade later according to Pashov.<sup>48</sup> The State Archives, however, do not contain any references to the registration of the *Istikbal* at this later date, whereas they do provide supporting evidence for its creation in 1919. We also indicated the intentional names changes of Pashov’s organisations. In addition to the organisation’s statute, the State Archives preserve a letter from 10 July 1934 in which the the Ministry of the Interior and Public Health rejects its request for registration because “the Gypsy-Moslems in Bulgaria are organised under foreign influence”.<sup>49</sup>

These “errors” in Pashov’s manuscript and in his autobiography are not random. Pashov recounts the organisation’s development in accordance with the Communist ideology of the time. For example, the newspaper *Terbie* is described in Pashov’s manuscript as having been published on behalf of the *Istikbal*, whereas his autobiography associates it with the workers in the tobacco industry.<sup>50</sup> The latter claim is clearly false, as the headings of the preserved issues of the newspaper clearly state that the newspaper is published by “the Mohammedan National Enlightenment and Cultural Organisation”, or, from the sixth issue onwards, by “the Mutual Mohammedan National Enlightenment and Cultural Union in Bulgaria”. Moreover, the newspaper *Terbie* was published from 1933 to 1934. Consequently, and contrary to what Pashov later claims, it would have been impossible to take the decision to widen the newspaper’s distribution at the 1932 conference in Mezdra since the newspaper did not at that time exist. Besides, the main problems discussed on the pages of all issues of *Terbie* were the protracted conflicts and disputes over the management of *waqf* properties and the admission or exclusion of Roma Muslims as mosque trustees.

In the same way, Pashov probably exaggerated his participation in political struggles as a member of the Communist Party. For example, he claimed to

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47 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 101-10.

48 Ibid.

49 TsDA: Fund 264k, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 1-3,6, 14; see also: Nyagulov, “Iz istoriyata na tsiganite/romite v Balgaria”, p. 36

50 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 99-100; and ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. C 4a, 4b.

have been on the electoral list of the Communist Party for seats in the Bulgarian Parliament in the 1920s, among the leadership of the Workers' Party in Sofia in the 1930s, and a resistance fighter in the 1940s. There are no documents in police archives to confirm Pashov's claims, but there is evidence in the protocols and annual reports of local party organisations, and in letters of recommendation, indicating that his participation was more limited.<sup>51</sup>

In fact, Pashov's approach to the preparation of his manuscript — his exaggerations, omissions and inaccuracies — was a response to the situation in Bulgaria at that time. Most probably he hoped to arrange publication of his book, although no correspondence with publishers or other sources has been unearthed to provide evidence for this. Under the conditions of a totalitarian state in which Communist Party control was comprehensive, any manuscript involving the history of the Communist Party would need to undergo an extensive review process by Party committees and editorial and censorship boards in order to be published. To fulfil these requirements, Pashov presumably chose to highlight his commitment and that of his organisations to the Communist Party, while concealing other key aspects of their activities.

## Roma organisations and newspapers under Communist rule

In this section, we will illustrate the next stage in the development of the Roma movement by way of the difficult transformations sustained by the Roma organisations led by Pashov under Communist rule. The main archival sources we discuss are connected with the statute of the United General Cultural Organisation of Gypsy Minorities "*Ekhipe*" (referred to subsequently as the *Ekhipe* [Unity])<sup>52</sup> and the newspaper *Romano esi* [*Roma Voice*].<sup>53</sup>

On 9 September 1944, after the Red Army entered Bulgaria, a new government dominated by the Communist Bulgarian Workers' Party was established. After several transitional years, all power was seized by the Communist Party, and the construction of a new type of society, the socialist state, began. In this new political situation, Roma communities became the

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51 ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov". Numerous documents of this kind are preserved in the ASR and are currently being processed.

52 EAP285/1/1; ASR Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. K 1-5. The statute is not dated, but was probably prepared in 1945 or 1946; see also the text below.

53 EAP067/7/1-9; ASR Fund "Shakir Pashov", f.I.

object of targeted state policy. They did not present an issue of paramount importance for the Bulgarian state — which had to solve many more urgent and significant socio-political and economic problems — but nevertheless their place in public policy is notable.<sup>54</sup>

For a relatively short period of time (from 1945 to 1950), the leading political line was to promote the Roma as an equal ethnic community within the Bulgarian nation and to encourage their active involvement in the construction of a new socialist society. This policy was in direct correlation with the so-called “*korenizatsiia*” (“indigenisation”) conducted in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s — a strategy which aimed to support and develop the identity, culture, mother tongue and education of various ethnic communities, and which ended with the adoption of the new Soviet Constitution of 1936, also known as the Stalin’s constitution.<sup>55</sup>

In the case of Bulgaria, the promotion of Roma ethnicity in the first years of Communist rule was certainly inspired by the Soviet “indigenisation” policy. It is also likely to have stemmed, however, from the personal relationship between Shakir Pashov and Georgi Dimitrov, the famous Communist leader and Premier of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria (1946-1949). Pashov himself describes the history of his friendship with Georgi Dimitrov as follows:

During the 1923 election for Members of Parliament, among the candidates was also Comrade Georgi Dimitrov, who visited the polls of the Third District electoral station [...] and for a moment the opposition gang rushed at him with fists, but our party group, present as agitators, immediately pounced and got their hands off Dimitrov, as other comrades also arrived. We accompanied them to the tram and he [Dimitrov] said to me: “Shakir, when the day comes when we gain power, you will be the greatest man, and lay a carpet for me from the station to the palace”. And look, the glorious date 9 September 1944 arrived and it came true; I became a deputy in the Grand National Assembly, nurtured by the ideas of the Party, because my whole life passed in struggle for the triumph of Marxist ideas and in antifascist activities from 1919 to today”.<sup>56</sup>

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54 Marushiakova and Popov, “Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung in Bulgarien”, pp. 151-52.

55 For more on the policy of “*korenizatsiia*”, see Gerhard Simon, *Die nichtrussischen Völker in Gesellschaft und Innenpolitik der UdSSR* (Cologne: Bundesinstitut für Ostwissenschaftliche und Internationale Studien, 1979); and *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. by Ronald G. Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For more on the policy towards the Roma in the Soviet Union in the same period, see Marushiakova and Popov, “Soviet Union Before World War II”, *Factsheets on Roma*, Council of Europe, 2008, <http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/index.php/history/second-migration-intensified-discrimination/soviet-union-before-world-war-ii>

56 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. C4.

After a short period of belatedly emulating the Soviet “indigenisation” policy, and after the death of Georgi Dimitrov, the Bulgarian state gradually returned to its former pattern of policies which underestimated or neglected Roma issues.<sup>57</sup>

While the “indigenisation” policy was still current, however, an initiative of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party led to the creation, on 6 March 1945, of the *Ekhipe* organisation in the Roma neighbourhood of Tatarly in Sofia.<sup>58</sup> Pashov was elected as chairman of the *Ekhipe*’s central committee. The Central State Archive in Bulgaria preserves a draft of a statute belonging to the organisation.<sup>59</sup> It is undated, but was probably prepared in 1945 or 1946, since the newspaper *Romano esi* reported on the organisation’s approval by the Minister of the Interior in 1946.<sup>60</sup> Some statements in this document are particularly interesting, because they differ from – and even contradict – Soviet policy, thereby demonstrating the creativity of the Bulgarian Roma:

Paragraph 1. The United Gypsy Organisation in Bulgaria incorporates all Gypsies who belong to the Worldwide Gypsy Organisation and are members of the local societies of the United Gypsy Organisation in Bulgaria where they pay their membership fees.

Paragraph 2. The United Gypsy Organisation in Bulgaria is the legitimate representative of the Gypsy movement in the country and before the Worldwide Gypsy Organisation. All members of the organisation are Gypsies over 18 years of age, of Islamic or Orthodox religion, without discrimination on the basis of gender or social status.

Paragraph 3. The United Gypsy Organisation has the following tasks:

- A) To struggle against Fascism, as well as anti-Gypsy and racist prejudices;
- B) To raise Gypsy national sentiment and consciousness among Bulgarian Gypsies;
- C) To introduce the Gypsy language to the Gypsy masses as a spoken

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57 Marushiakova and Popov, “Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung in Bulgarien”, pp. 151-52. This is not a paradox: eastern European countries *de facto* did not follow the same principles in matters of internal policy. While there was superficial unity on the ideological level, since each country adhered to the “principles of Marxism-Leninism”, in practice each country interpreted these principles in its own way and conducted its own national policy, including its policy towards the Roma population.

58 Evidence of this can be gleaned from a report by the Chair of the Department “Masses” to the central committee of the Communist Party regarding the need to establish Gypsy organisations (SAA-TsDA, 1B, 25, 71). The creation of the *Ekhipe* is also described in Pashov’s manuscript, see ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 121-24.

59 SAA-TsDA, 1B, 8, 596; for a digitised copy of this statute, see ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. K 1-5.

60 *Romano esi*, 1946, No. 1.



and written language; [...] E) To acquaint the Bulgarian Gypsy minority with Gypsy spiritual, social and economic culture; [...] I) To illuminate Bulgarian public opinion about the needs of the Gypsy population; K) To create a sense of striving among Gypsies towards developing a national home on their own land.

As can be clearly seen from the draft statute quoted above, its author(s), presumably Pashov himself, articulate a number of specific objectives for the new organisation, reflecting an attempt to promote equality for the Roma in Bulgarian society. However, it is not clear what is meant by the “Worldwide Gypsy Organisation”, since no such organisation existed at that time. Statements of this sort may indicate that Pashov had a strategic plan to lay the foundations for a global organisation uniting the Roma worldwide. He may have even considered the creation of a separate, independent Roma state.

All these visions, however, are excluded from Pashov’s book manuscript, which is understandable given that the book was written later, when the policy of the Bulgarian state towards the Roma had changed and the internationalisation of the Roma movement was considered undesirable. A comparison of the aims in the draft statute to the actual development of his organisation in the coming years demonstrates that political realities forced Pashov to abandon his ideas of global unity for the Roma and to focus his efforts on solving the particular problems of the Roma in Bulgaria.



Fig. 7.3 Roma youth preparing a sample of the future alphabet (EAP067/8/1/16), Public Domain.

The draft statute for the *Ekhipe* organisation specifies public symbols, particularly a flag and an official holiday. Article 59 decrees the holiday to be 7 May (that is, the day after the St George festivities) and the flag to be red

with two white fields and a triangle in the middle. In line with the effort to create a Roma flag and an official holiday — symbols which are characteristic of all nation-states — was the attempt to create a national Roma alphabet, distinct from the Bulgarian one (Fig. 7.3).

We have collected numerous narratives from all over Bulgaria describing these endeavours, but we were able to find only one source documenting them: a photograph from this period which shows Roma youth preparing a sample of the future alphabet.<sup>61</sup> Among the youth activists in this photo, we identified Sulyo Metkov, Yashar Malikov and Tsvetan Nikolov, who were also active in the Roma movement in later years. Moreover, the new organisation started publishing the newspaper *Romano esi*, with Pashov as editor-in-chief. The first issue appeared on 25 February 1946.<sup>62</sup>

The *Ekhipe's* draft statute clearly shows that it was founded not by government initiative, but by the Roma themselves. The document gives no indication of a political commitment to any socio-political formation, but the organisation was to become politicised very quickly nonetheless. Immediately after 9 September 1944, Pashov himself became involved in the activities of the Fatherland Front.<sup>63</sup> As articles in *Romano esi* document, a Roma section of the Fatherland Front was established, and Pashov was elected its chairman. He ran agitation campaigns for the inclusion of the Roma and for their participation in the election of a Grand National Assembly, held on 27 October 1946. Some photographs illustrating his agitation campaigns are preserved in Pashov's family archive.<sup>64</sup>

On 28 February 1947, a letter from the "All Gypsy Cultural Organisation" (another name used for the *Ekhipe*) to the regional committee of the Fatherland Front was discussed at a meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Workers' Party.<sup>65</sup> The letter proposed the appointment of Pashov as a representative of the Roma minority in Sofia in the upcoming election on 27 October (i.e. the letter was only discussed several months

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61 ASR, Fund "Roma activists", J31.

62 These events are also described in Pashov's book manuscript. See ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. E. 121-22. The digitised frames of our EAP issues of *Romano esi* are in the ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. I. and EAP067/7/1/1-9.

63 The Fatherland Front was a resistance movement active during World War II. After the war, it joined the ruling party coalition dominated by the Bulgarian Communist Party, and later it morphed into a mass movement controlled by the authorities.

64 All photographs of Pashov's social and political activities from his family archive were digitised for the EAP067 project and can be viewed at <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP067> and also in the ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", A1-57.

65 All documents connected to the appointment of Pashov as a representative of the Roma minority in Sofia are preserved in SAA-TsDA, 1B, 6, 235. The events described are not discussed in Pashov's book manuscript.

after the election). The letter itself was written on behalf of the “Common Organisation of the Gypsy Minority for Combating Fascism and Racism”, which is yet another name for the *Ekhipe*. Such discrepancies over the exact name of this Gypsy organisation are also found in many other sources, preserved in the Fund of State Agency Archives.<sup>66</sup> According to this letter, a conference which brought together the chairs of the different sections (occupational unions) of the organisation, including fourteen delegates representing 300 members, took the following decision:

Because of today’s Fatherland Front government, after 9 September 1944 wider and greater freedom was given to the Bulgarian people, and mostly to the national minorities, such as we are, who in the past were treated like cattle and not respected as people. In today’s democratic government we must emphasise that we value our freedom, and must morally and materially, even at the expenses of our lives, give support to the Fatherland Front, the only defender [...] of national minorities. That’s why we all [...] in the upcoming crucial moments [...] have to appoint our representative to represent the Roma minority in the Grand National Assembly.

A secret ballot was conducted and Pashov was elected as the Roma representative. For the discussion of this letter at the meeting of the Politburo, two other documents are of use and relate to Pashov: his autobiographical statement and an attestation made by the district committee of the Communist Party. In the autobiographical statement, Pashov writes that since 1918 he had been a member of the Bulgarian Social Democratic Workers’ Party (Narrow Socialists), which subsequently developed into the Bulgarian Communist Party, and that he had actively participated in its political struggles for more than two decades. The attestation confirms his participation in the Communist movement and also notes that he was arrested on two occasions (in 1923 and 1925), and that subsequently his membership was suspended. A special emphasis is placed on the influence which Pashov has among the Roma and on the fact that he “is considered as the honest one in midst of this minority”, “progressive and with relatively higher culture”, and promising “if it comes to selecting a candidate from Gypsy minority” since “[one] more appropriate than he does not exist”.<sup>67</sup> The attestation also states that with the inclusion of Pashov as a Member of Parliament, “the party can only win since it will raise the party in the eyes of the Gypsy minority and the party will become firmly

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<sup>66</sup> SAA-TsDA, 1B, 6, 235.

<sup>67</sup> Attestation signed by Ya. Petkov, secretary of Region III of the Workers’ Party. In: SAA-TsDA, 1B, 6, 235, 1.9.

rooted among the Gypsy minority”.<sup>68</sup> Based on the documents submitted, the Politburo took the following decision: “[...] 2. Comrade Dimitar Ganev to resign as MP. To recommend to the next comrades on the list [...] to resign in order to enable the entry into the Grand National Assembly of Comrade Shakir Pashev<sup>69</sup> (a Gypsy)”.



Fig. 7.4 Shakir Pashov (centre) as a Member of Parliament with voters (EAP067/1/1/14), Public Domain.

As a member of the Grand National Assembly, Pashov worked on the new constitution of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria (called Dimitrov’s Constitution), adopted on 4 December 1947. It prohibited the propagation

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68 Ibid.

69 Some Party documents refer to Pashov as “Pashev”.

of any racial, national or religious hatred (Art. 72), and stipulated (Art. 79) that “national minorities have the right to learn their mother tongue and to develop their national culture”. As a Member of Parliament and leader of the Roma organisation, Pashov was very active (Fig. 7.4). He toured the country, campaigned among the Roma for their engagement in public and political life and pushed for the creation of Roma workers’ cooperatives (such as the “Carry and Transport” association of porters and carters in Sofia). He also helped to overcome the tension in Ruse resulting from exclusion of Roma from the management of *waqf* properties, and to resolve internal conflict among Roma in the village of Golintsi (today the neighbourhood of Mladenovo in Lom).<sup>70</sup>

One of Pashov’s main aims was the development of Gypsy organisations in Bulgaria. He initiated the establishment of new branches of the *Ekhipe*, which until then had only been for the Roma of Sofia, and in short order approximately ninety branches of the organisation appeared in various towns.<sup>71</sup> The support of the ruling Communist regime was crucial to achieving this. In July 1947, a special circular of the National Council of the Fatherland Front was distributed.<sup>72</sup> On the basis of articles 71 and 72 of the new constitution, the circular instructed all local authorities and party organisations to support the creation of Roma cultural and educational associations in every village or town where there were at least ten Roma families living.

Local Roma organisations were officially considered to be substructures of the united *Ekhipe*, though in practice they had autonomy from its central leadership. They were not, however, independent of the Communist Party. The dynamic is clear from the extensive collection of documents of the main Communist Party organisation *Istiklyal* in Varna (and the particular Roma neighbourhood of Mikhail Ivanov), members of which created their own branch of the Cultural and Educational Society *Istiklyal*.<sup>73</sup> The numerous documents, letters, protocols, minutes and decisions of these two Roma organisations outline their activities and their close links to (and *de facto* dependence on) city and regional Communist Party leadership. There is no evidence, however, of their maintaining any relations with the *Ekhipe*.

In 1947, at the instigation of Pashov and with his active support as a Member of Parliament, the “First Gypsy School” in Sofia was built in the

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70 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. C 4b, 4c. The attestation of Shakir Pashov, made by the District Committee of the Communist Party to confirm his activities. See SAA-SAB, 109, 1, 42.

71 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 121-24; and SAA-SAB, 109, 1, 42.

72 Circular No. 3118 SAA-SAB, 109, 1, 42.

73 SAA-SAB, 1440.

Roma neighbourhood of Fakultet. The elders of the neighbourhood still remember these events and the school remains in operation. In his speech at the opening of the school, Pashov said:

We must express our gratitude to the Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, which treats us as equal citizens. Before 9 September, nobody considered us as people [...] but after 9 September 1944, the Government of the Fatherland Front gave us complete freedom and made us equal with other citizens. It gave us complete freedom for cultural progress.<sup>74</sup>

In 1947, following the example of the famous Soviet *Romen* Theatre,<sup>75</sup> the "Central Gypsy Musical Artistic *Roma* Theatre" was founded under Pashov's leadership.<sup>76</sup> After a personal meeting with Georgi Dimitrov, then head of the Bulgarian state, Pashov secured from the state budget two million Bulgarian lev for the theatre.<sup>77</sup>

With Pashov as director, the *Roma* Theatre regularly put on performances in Sofia and toured around the country, presenting productions which included the unpublished play "White Gypsy", authored by Pashov himself.<sup>78</sup> Bulgarian National Radio regularly broadcast Roma music, and on St Basil's Day a special programme was aired to celebrate the so-called "Gypsy New Year".<sup>79</sup>

Pashov enjoyed great popularity among the Roma in Bulgaria, as evidenced by a poem written in the spirit of the era by a Rom, Alia Ismailov, and published in *Romano esi*. It ends with the verse: "... *Da zhivee Stalin, Tito, Dimitrov / i drugariat Shakir Mahmudov Pashov!* (Long live Stalin, Tito, Dimitrov / and Comrade Shakir Mahmudov Pashov!)"<sup>80</sup> In 1948, Pashov's popularity reached its peak, as did the Roma movement during the period of Communist rule. On 2 May 1948, at its national conference, the *Ekhipe* confirmed its

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74 Büchschenschutz, *Maltsinstvenata politika v Balgaria*, p. 48; see also ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. C 4; and ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. I, 10-4.

75 The *Romen* Theatre (*Moskovskii muzykal'no-dramaticheskii teatr "Romen"*), founded in 1931 in Moscow, is the oldest and most famous of Roma theatres. It became a symbol of high Roma culture. See Alaina Lemon, "Roma (Gypsies) in the Soviet Union and the Moscow Teatr 'Romen'", in *Gypsies: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, ed. by Diane Tong (New York: Garland, 1998), pp. 147-66.

76 ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. E 127-29. The activities of *Roma* theatre were featured in the newspaper *Romano esi*, mostly through the publishing of posters and advertisements of performances. See ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. I, 1-1, 2-2, 6-2.

77 ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. C 4.

78 ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", not digitised.

79 ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. E 127-29. For more on the significance of St Basil's Day for the Roma in Bulgaria, see Marushiakov and Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*, p. 130; idem, *Roma Culture in Past and Present* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2012), pp. 12-13; and idem, "Roma Culture", *Factsheets on Roma*, Council of Europe, 2012, <http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/index.php/culture/introduction/roma-culture>

80 *Romano esi*, 1948, No. 10, p. 4.

commitment to the policy of the Fatherland Front, which by this time had become a mass public organisation led by the Communist Party (Fig. 7.5).



Fig. 7.5 Shakir Pashov (centre) with participants at the national conference of the *Ekhipe* (EAP067/1/1/1), Public Domain.

With the active support of the authorities, the creation of new local Roma organisations continued after the *Ekhipe*'s national conference, and they were incorporated into the Fatherland Front as "Gypsy" sections.<sup>81</sup> Linking with the Fatherland Front, however, had unintended consequences for the Roma organisations and for Pashov himself: it led to the end of the Bulgarian state's support for Roma ethnic affirmation. In the autumn of 1948, the National Council of the Fatherland Front commissioned an assessment of the current activities of the Roma organisations and of the *Roma* Theatre. In their prepared statement we read:

"[...] The very establishment of the organisation is positive, because it comes to satisfy blatant needs of the Gypsies for education. But from the outset it was not on a sound footing, lacking any connection at all with the Fatherland Front Committees. It is for this reason that the Gypsy organisation launched an improper policy and worked along their Gypsy, minority line. Left to

81 For more details see Marushiakova and Popov, "Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung in Bulgarien".

itself without the control of the Fatherland Committees and their immediate help, the organisation was systematically ill [...] On 2 May 1948, without asking the opinion of the National Council of the Fatherland Front, a national conference of the Gypsy minority in Bulgaria was held at which a Central Initiative Committee was elected [...] Among the leadership two currents were established:

- A) One stream was headed by MP Shakir Mahmudov Pashev, who gathered around himself a set of the petite bourgeoisie; they approved his actions and decisions uncritically.
- B) The other stream was led by young communists who disagreed with the philistine understandings of MP Pashev and mercilessly criticised his deeds as unsystematic. [...]

Given the above, I have the following recommendations:

1. To carry out the reorganisation of the Central Initiative Committee, since a committee for the Gypsy minority should be formed which should be directly guided by the National Council of the Fatherland Front.
2. To remove the county and city committees of the Cultural and Educational Society of the Gypsy Minority and instead form Gypsy commissions attached to the respective minority commissions of the urban committees of the Fatherland Front. [...]

The Central Gypsy Theatre was set up in 1947-48 at the initiative of the Cultural and Educational Society of the Gypsy Minority; however, it was not established on the correct foundation, and because of that it is undergoing complete collapse.<sup>82</sup>

As a consequence of these conclusions, the Theatre was suspended and its future existence put in question. "Upon the request of the minority itself", the National Council of the Fatherland Front and its Minority Commission convened a general conference, which reported on both the positive and negative sides of the old management. A new leadership for the *Roma* Theatre, headed by Mustafa/Lubomir Aliev, was selected and approved.<sup>83</sup> The conference decided to put the Theatre under the auspices and direct

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<sup>82</sup> AMI, 13, 1, 759.

<sup>83</sup> Mustafa Aliev (who changed his name to Manush Romanov during the so-called "process of revival" in the 1980s) was born in 1927 in Sofia. He was active in the Workers' Youth Union (a Communist Party youth organisation). In 1949 (at that time his name was Lubomir Aliev), he became editor-in-chief of *Romano esi*, later called *Nevo drom* [*New Road*], and director of the *Roma* Theatre. After the closure of the Theatre, Aliev worked for many years as a local theatre director in the cities of Kurdjali, Montana and Kyustendil, also finding employment with Bulgarian National Television. After the changes of 1989, "Manush Romanov" became one of the founders (in May 1990) and chairmen of the Democratic Union "Roma". In 1990-1991 he was a Member of Parliament representing the Union of Democratic Forces. He died in Turkey in 2004.



control of the Minority Commission in financial and administrative matters, and in the hands of the Committee on Science, Art and Culture regarding matters of artistic accomplishment.<sup>84</sup>

Pashov was dismissed from the leadership of the *Roma* Theatre on the grounds of “financial and accounting irregularities in its management”.<sup>85</sup> He was also fired from his position as editor-in-chief of *Romano esi*. After the tenth issue was printed in 1948, the letterhead of the newspaper identifies Aliev as the head of the editorial board. This marks the beginning of a long struggle between Pashov and members of the “Saliko”, the local Roma branch of the Communist Party, such as Tair Selimov, Aliev, Sulyo Metkov and Angel Blagoev. The conflict expressed itself in letters containing unpleasant accusations and sent to various authorities, in new convocations of committees of the Fatherland Front, in new audits. Finally, a special commission of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Workers’ Party accused Pashov of many misdemeanours, especially in relation to his former work as a Roma activist before and during World War II — for example, his establishment of a Muslim organisation in 1919 and his management during the war of a charity in aid of Bulgarian officers and German soldiers. Finally, in the autumn of 1949, the city committee of the renamed Bulgarian Communist Party expelled Pashov from the Party.<sup>86</sup>

In the parliamentary elections of 18 December 1949, Pashov was replaced by Petko Yankov Kostov of Sliven as the Roma representative in the National Assembly.<sup>87</sup> A few months later, the newspaper *Nevo drom*, which had replaced *Romano esi*, contained the following official announcement:

The central leadership of the Cultural and Educational Society of the Gypsy Minority in Bulgaria, after examining the activities of Shakir Mahmudov Pashev at its meeting on 7 April this year [1950], took the following decisions:

For activity against the people before 9 September 1944 as an assistant to the police and for corruption after this date as leader of the Gypsy minority, Shakir Mahmudov Pashev is to be punished by being removed from the position of president of the Cultural and Educational Society of the Gypsy Minority in Bulgaria and permanently excluded from the organisation’s ranks.

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84 SAA-TsDA, 1B.

85 Ibid. Sources on the struggle between Pashov and members of the “Saliko” (the local branch of the Communist Party), including the letter of accusation, were preserved in the Archive of the Bulgarian Communist Party (now non-existent) and are currently kept in the State Agency Archives (SAA-TsDA, 1B).

86 Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*, p. 35; and idem, “Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung in Bulgarien”, p. 142.

87 *Nevo drom*, 1950, no. 3, p. 1.

Comrade Nikola Petrov Terzobaliev of Sliven is elected Chairman of the Cultural and Educational Society of the Gypsy Minority in Bulgaria.<sup>88</sup>

Soon after this decision, Pashov was arrested and sent to the concentration camp on the Danube island of Belene.<sup>89</sup> His removal from the leadership of the Roma organisations was followed by rapid changes in the Roma movement as a whole. The local Roma organisations were disbanded and their members absorbed into the regular territorial sections of the Fatherland Front, thus losing their distinction as “Gypsy” sections.<sup>90</sup>

The Roma newspaper and Theatre suffered similar fates. *Nevo drom* published its last issue in 1950. Although a proposal was put forward to dissolve the *Roma* Theatre, Decision 389 of the secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, dated 25 November 1949, recommended that the *Roma* Theatre continue to exist with the status of a “semi-professional” theatre integrated into the neighbourhood’s community centre. At that time, community centres were organised according to ethnicity and corresponded to the specific make-up of neighbourhoods. The Theatre ceased to exist in the 1950s.<sup>91</sup>

Pashov remained in the concentration camp until its closure on 1 January 1953. He was rehabilitated after the April Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1956, during the course of which those accused of so-called “cults of personality” and “perversions of the party line” were convicted. In 1957, Pashov joined the leadership of the Roma community reading centre “Ninth of September” in Sofia.<sup>92</sup> He actively contributed to the newspaper *Neve Roma* [*New Roma*] that the centre began to publish and helped to create the Artistic Collective for Music, Songs and Dances “*Roma*”.<sup>93</sup>

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88 Ibid.

89 Belene is the name of the first concentration camp for political prisoners in Bulgaria, operating on Persin Island (Belene Island) in the period 1949-1989 (with a few interruptions). Closed on 1 January 1953, it was rebuilt after the Hungarian events of late 1956 and again closed on 27 August 1959. The camp was opened once more in the mid-1980s, during the so-called “process of revival”, when many Turks were sent there. For more details about Belene and its inmates including Pashov, see *Gorchivi istini: Svidetelstva za komunisticheskite represii* [*Bitter Truths: Evidence of Communist Repressions*] (Sofia: Tsentar za podpomagane na khora, prezhiveli iztezanija, 2003).

90 Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*, p. 35; and idem, “Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung in Bulgarien”, p. 142.

91 Ibid.

92 The community reading centre (*Chitalishte* in Bulgarian) is a typical Bulgarian public institution which has existed from the nineteenth century to the present day. The *Chitalishte* is a building which fulfills several functions at once, being a community centre, library and theatre, as well as an educational centre where people of all ages can enroll in foreign-language, dance, music and other courses.

93 ASR, Fund “Shakir Pashov”, f. E 135-37.

Pashov's resumed activism did not last long. Soon he was persecuted again by the authorities, accused of "Gypsy nationalism" and, together with his wife, interned for three years (1959-1962) in Rogozina, a village in the Dobrich region (Fig. 7.6).<sup>94</sup>



Fig. 7.6 Shakir Pashov with his wife in Rogozina (EAP067/1/1/13), Orphan Work.

He was again rehabilitated in the second half the 1960s. In 1967 he was granted the so-called personal pension, and in 1976 he received the high title of "active fighter against fascism and capitalism" (Figs. 7.7 and 7.8).<sup>95</sup> After returning from internment in the Dobrich region, Pashov no longer took an active part in public life, and his name disappeared from the public domain. In the book *Gypsy Population in Bulgaria on the Path to Socialism*, published by the National Council of the Fatherland Front in 1968, there is no mention of Pashov or his activities.<sup>96</sup>

Shakir Pashov died on 5 October 1981 (Figs. 7.9 and 7.10).<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> A photograph from Pashov's life in Rogozina is preserved in his family archive. See ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", f. A, 57.

<sup>95</sup> For a digitised copy of Shakir Pashov's ID with the title "active fighter against fascism and capitalism", see ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", C 6 (see Fig. 7.8).

<sup>96</sup> Dimitar Genov, Tair Tairov and Vasil Marinov, *Tsiganskoto naselenie v NR Balgariya po patya na sotsializma* [Gypsy Population in the People's Republic of Bulgaria on the Road to Socialism] (Sofia: Natsionalen savet na Otechestveniya front, 1968).

<sup>97</sup> Pashov's digitised death certificate and obituary notices are kept in the ASR, Fund "Shakir Pashov", C7, C8, C 9 (see Figs. 7.9 and 7.10).



Fig. 7.7 Shakir Pashov as an honoured pensioner (EAP067/1/2/5), Orphan Work.



Fig. 7.8 Shakir Pashov's card identifying him as an "active fighter against fascism and capitalism" (EAP067/1/8), Public Domain.



Fig. 7.9 Obituary commemorating the six-month anniversary of Shakir Pashov's death (EAP067/1/9, image 2), Public Domain.



Fig. 7.10 Obituary commemorating the first full anniversary of Shakir Pashov's death (EAP067/1/9, image 3), Public Domain.

## Roma churches and religious newspapers

Parallel to the events discussed above, the Roma movement in Bulgaria in the 1930s and 1940s was marked by the rise of another new phenomenon: the arrival of evangelicalism and the establishment of “Gypsy” evangelical churches. In general, the establishment of the “new” churches of denominations different from Eastern Orthodoxy and Islam had begun in the area as early as the nineteenth century and continued under the new Bulgarian state. Gradually an interest in the Roma arose among the missionaries. The first successful mission among the Roma was in the village of Golintsi, the present-day neighbourhood of Mladenovo in Lom. A legend is still recalled by local Roma recounting the circumstances in which the “new faith” was accepted. According to this story, a Rom found the New Testament in a bag of maize which he stole from a Bulgarian. Being illiterate, the man gave the holy book to another Rom called Petar Punchev, who could read and who began to spread the word of Jesus among the Roma.<sup>98</sup>

In reality, two Roma pastors, Petar Punchev and Petar Minkov, pioneered the establishment of Roma evangelical churches in Bulgaria. Punchev was born in 1882 into a family of formerly nomadic Roma who had recently settled in Golintsi. Between 1903 and 1910 he frequented the Baptist Home in Lom, where he was baptised in 1910. He started preaching shortly thereafter and, as a result of his activity, a separate Roma church gradually took shape, first as a branch of the Lom church with 29 members. In 1923, Punchev was officially ordained a pastor, and the Roma church assumed official status as an organised church structure.<sup>99</sup> In 1927, Punchev published the only issue of the newspaper *Svetilnik* [Candlestick], with a supplement in the Roma language (Romani) entitled *Romano alav* [Roma Word].<sup>100</sup> This issue of the newspaper includes the legend of the “stolen gospel” and reports on the preparations of the Golintsi Roma women’s missionary society for the New Year *soirée*. Evangelical texts in Romani were also published in the paper under the heading *Romano alav*.

After Punchev’s death (the year of which is unknown), the Baptist church in Lom made an unsuccessful attempt to annex the Roma church.<sup>101</sup> Yet the Roma church remained independent even though an ethnic Bulgarian, Petar

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98 Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*; and Magdalena Slavkova, *Tsigani evangelisti v Balgaria* [Evangelical Gypsies in Bulgaria] (Sofia: Paradigma, 2007).

99 Slavkova, *Tsigani evangelisti v Balgaria*.

100 See EAP067/6/1 and in the ASR, Fund Newspapers, f. H.

101 Anonymous, *Tsiganska evangelska baptistka tsarkoa s. Golintsi* [Gypsy Evangelical Baptist Church in the Village of Golintsi] (Lom: Alfa, 1926).

Minkov, became its head.<sup>102</sup> Minkov preached in the 1920s and 1930s among the Roma in Golintsi, where he founded a Sunday school and where he opened a new church building in 1930.<sup>103</sup> He also published two miscellanies with religious songs in Romani — *Romane Svyato gili* [*Roma Holy Song*] (1929) and *Romane Svyati Gilya* [*Roma Holy Songs*] (1933) — as well as a second Gypsy church newspaper in Bulgarian, *Izvestiya na tsiganskata evangeliska missiya* [*Reports on the Gypsy Evangelical Mission*] (1933). In 1933, Minkov left Golintsi for Sofia, where he founded a school for illiterate Muslim Roma.<sup>104</sup>

In spite of the restrictive policy towards evangelical churches established after the pro-fascist *coup d'état* of 1934, evangelical preaching among the Roma continued and expanded into new regions, as illustrated by the publication in Romani of the Gospels of Matthew and John,<sup>105</sup> and of an entire cycle of evangelical literature.<sup>106</sup> Under Communist rule, the activities of Roma churches were strongly limited and supervised by authorities, and so their members gathered in private homes. After the breakdown of the socialist system in eastern Europe, evangelicalism among the Roma rapidly recovered, developed widely and became an important factor in the Roma movement.<sup>107</sup>

## Postscript

We hope that this chapter has shown that the first half of the twentieth century was a period of serious, even cardinal, changes in the social life of the Roma communities of Bulgaria. It may be worth noting that similar

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102 Ibid.

103 Slavkova, *Tsigani evangelisti v Balgaria*.

104 Ibid.

105 Atanas Atanasakiev, *Somnal evangelie (ketapi) katara Ioan* [*Holy Gospel (Book) of John*] (Sofia: Amerikansko Bibleisko druzhestvo & Britansko i chuzhdestranno Bibleisko druzhestvo, 1932); and idem, *Somnal evangelie (lil) Mateyatar* [*Holy Gospel (Book) of Matthew*] (Sofia: Amerikansko Bibleisko druzhestvo & Britansko i chuzhdestranno Bibleisko druzhestvo, 1932).

106 Anonymous, *Spasitel ashtal bezahanen* [*The Saviours Remained Without Sins*] (London: Scripture Gift Mission, [n.d.]); idem, *Spasitelo svetosko* [*The Saviours of the World*] (London: Scripture Gift Mission, [n.d.]); Atanas Tatarev, *Romane Somnal gilya* [*Romani Holy Songs*] (Sofia: Sayuz na balgarskite evangelski baptistki tsarkvi, 1936); idem, *Shtar bezsporne fakte* [*Four Indisputable Facts*] (London: Scripture Gift Mission, [n.d.]); idem, *Barre pridobivke* [*Large Gains*] (London: Scripture Gift Mission, [n.d.]); idem, *Duware bianipe* [*Two Times Born*] (Sofia: [n. pub.], 1933); idem, *O Del vakjarda*. [*The Lord Said*] (London: Scripture Gift Mission, [n.d.]); idem, *O drom uxtavdo* [*The High Road*] (London: Scripture Gift Mission, [n.d.]); and idem, *Savo peresarla Biblia* [*What the Bible Tells*] (London: Scripture Gift Mission, [n.d.]).

107 *Romani Pentecostalism: Gypsies and Charismatic Christianity*, ed. by David Thurfjell and Adrian Marsh (Frankfurt: Peter Lang 2014).

changes also occurred in all the countries of southeastern Europe. These parallel developments may be briefly illustrated by the following list of dates for the founding of Roma organisations in the region and at that time.

In Romania, the organisation *Infrateria Neorustica* was established in 1926 in Făgăraş county; 1933 saw the foundations of the *Asociația Generală a Țiganilor din România* (General Association of the Gypsies in Romania), headed by Ion Pop-Șerboianu (Archimandrite Calinik), and the alternative *Uniunii Generale a Romilor din România* (General Union of the Roma in Romania), headed by Gheorghe A. Lăzăreanu-Lăzurica and Gheorghe Niculescu. In the 1930s, the newspapers *O Rom* [The Roma], *Glasul Romilor* [Voice of the Roma], *Neamul Țigănesc* [Gypsy People] and *Timpul* [Times] were published.<sup>108</sup>

In Yugoslavia, *Prva srpsko-ciganska zadruga za uzajmno pomaganje u bolesti i smrti* (The First Serbian-Gypsy Association for Mutual Assistance in Sickness and Death), headed by Svetozar Simić, was inaugurated in 1927; and in 1935, the *Udruženja Beogradskih cigana slavara Tetkice Bibije* (Association of Belgrade Gypsies for the Celebration of Aunt Bibia) was established. In 1930, the newspaper *Romano lili/Ciganske novine* [Roma Newspaper/Gypsy Newspaper] was published, while *Prosvetni klub Jugoslovske ciganske omladine* (The Educational Club of Yugoslavian Gypsy Youth), which grew into *Omladina Jugoslavo-ciganska* (Yugoslavian-Gypsy Youth), also took shape.<sup>109</sup>

In Greece, the *Panhellenios Syllogos Ellinon Athinganon* (Panhellenic Cultural Association of the Greek Gypsies) was founded in Athens in 1939; its main goal was to obtain Greek citizenship and passports for Roma immigrants to Greece from Asia Minor in the 1920s.<sup>110</sup>

In the new ethno-national states of southeastern Europe, the Roma wanted to be recognised as equal citizens of the new social realities without, however, losing their own ethnic identity. This was the main goal of all the Roma organisations created in the period between the two World Wars.<sup>111</sup>

The reasons for the rapid development of the Roma movement in southeastern Europe during this period, which has no analogue in other parts of the world, should be sought in the Roma's specific social position and in the specific history of the region. The Roma had lived in the region

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108 Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004), pp. 127-32.

109 Dragoljub Acković, *Nacija smo a ne cigani* [We are a Nation, but not Gypsies] (Belgrade: Rominterpress, 2001), pp. 43-59.

110 Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Roma in Europe*, 3rd edn. (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2007), pp. 251-52.

111 Marushiakova and Popov, "The Roma – a Nation without a State?: Historical Background and Contemporary Tendencies", *Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte*, 14 (2004), pp. 71-100.



since Ottoman times and were an integral part of wider society, which is why they strove for equal participation in the political life of their countries. At the same time, they also wished to preserve their ethnic distinction. In other words, the Roma have always existed in at least two dimensions, or on two coordinate planes: both as a separate ethnic community (or, more exactly, communities) and as part of a society, as an ethnically-based group integral to the nation-state of which the Roma are residents and citizens.<sup>112</sup> The entire modern history of the Roma represents a search for balance between these two dimensions, without which it is impossible to preserve their existence as a separate ethnic group. The events presented in this chapter have illustrated the initial attempts of prominent Roma activists to reach such a balance in Bulgaria.

The most impressive illustration of these processes — in the context of the global social changes that occurred after World War I — is that given by Bernard Gilliat-Smith, who, as a British diplomat in Bulgaria during those years, offers an outsider's perspective on the development of the Roma. It is worth quoting his explanation of the changes in the community that he observed:

[... it] was due, I think, to the effects of the First Great War. Paši Suljoff's generation represented a different "culture", a culture which had been stabilised for a long time. The Sofia Gypsy "hammal"<sup>113</sup> was — a Sofia Gypsy "hammal". He did not aspire to be anything else. He was therefore psychologically, spiritually at peace with himself [...] Not so the post-war generation [of Gypsies in Sofia ...] who could be reckoned as belonging to the proletarians of the Bulgarian metropolis. The younger members of the colony were therefore already inoculated with a class hatred which was quite foreign to Paši Suljoff's generation [...] To feel "a class apart", despised by the Bulgars who were, *de facto*, their "Herrenfolk", was pain and grief to them.

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112 Elena Marushiakova, "Gypsy/Roma Identities in New European Dimension: The Case of Eastern Europe", in *Dynamics of National Identity and Transnational Identities in the Process of European Integration*, ed. by Elena Marushiakova (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), pp. 468-90.

113 *Hammal* - "Porter" in Bulgarian.

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# 8. Sacred boundaries: parishes and the making of space in the colonial Andes

*Gabriela Ramos*

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*To María Rostworowski*

The all-encompassing influence of the Catholic Church in Spanish America is a compelling reason to collect, preserve and study ecclesiastical records in any Latin American country. Church archives house documents that allow us to learn the history of people of all walks of life throughout the centuries. Ecclesiastical archives often provide us with the only clues to the lives of many anonymous men and women.

The Spanish Crown legitimised its sovereignty over the New World through its commitment to convert its inhabitants and future subjects to Christianity. To accomplish this end, significant changes were brought upon the indigenous population. Using the digitised collections of the Huacho diocese in Peru,<sup>1</sup> this chapter studies the agents and circumstances behind the formation of parishes and parish jurisdictions. The essays investigate the meaning of parish boundaries, how these boundaries were created, how both clergy and parishioners perceived them, and in what ways such boundaries contributed to shaping the colonial order. Although ecclesiastical legislation – especially that produced by the Council of Trent – provided guidance for the establishment of parishes, local circumstances and the overlapping of authorities and jurisdictions made parish boundaries the subject of controversy and contestation.<sup>2</sup>

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1 EAP333: Collecting and preserving parish archives in an Andean diocese, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP333](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP333)

2 The Council of Trent, one of the most important events in the history of the Catholic church, was held in the city of Trent in the sixteenth century (1545-47, 1551-52, 1562-63). The Council assembled western European prelates and theologians in response to the challenges posed by the Reformation. The Council of Trent produced canons and decrees clarifying Catholic doctrine and practice, and aimed to reform the life of the clergy. The literature on the subject is vast. An accessible book on Trent is John O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2013).

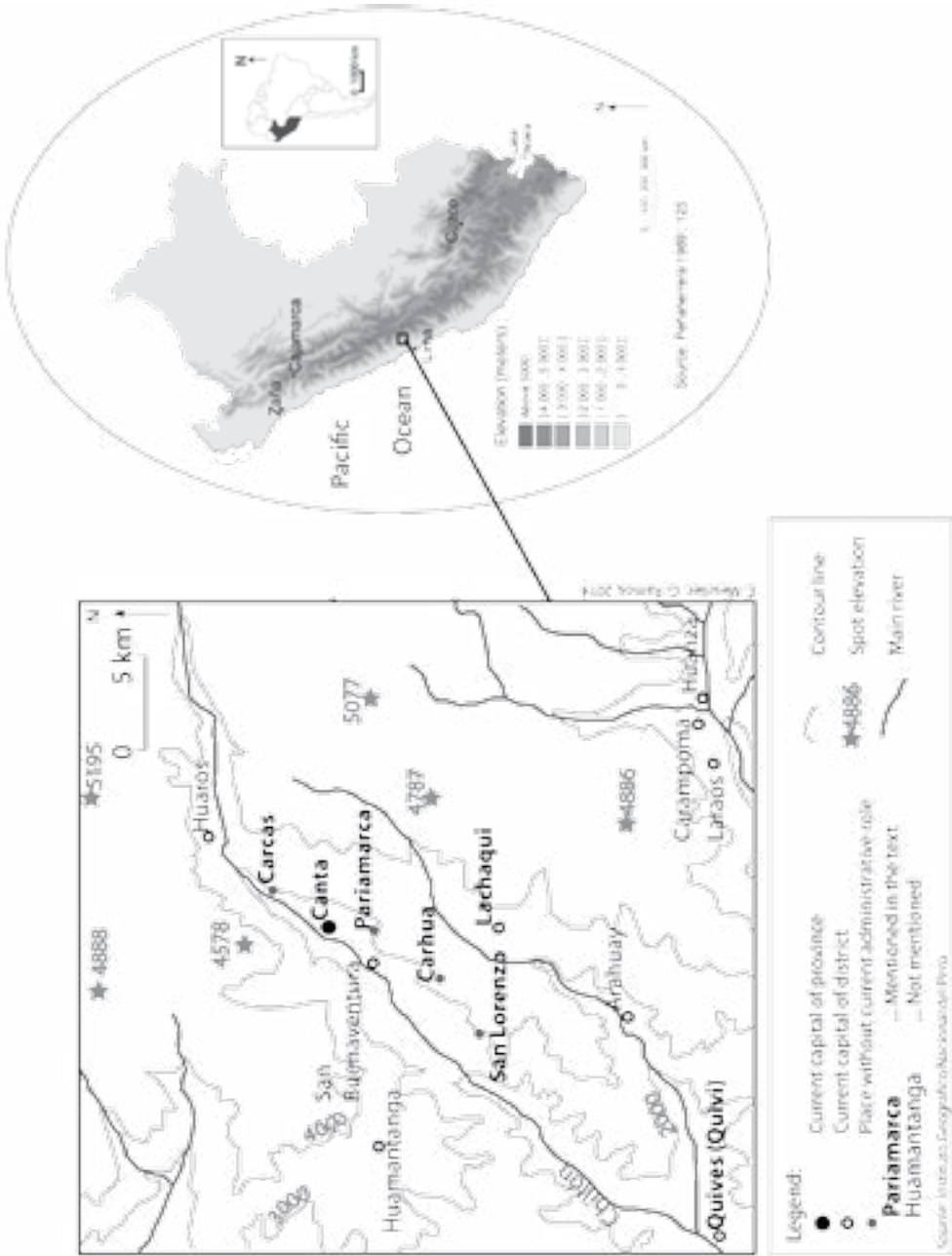


Fig. 8.1 Map of the Valley of Canta, Peru, by Évelyne Meschier, CC BY.

The extent to which towns and urban life were widespread in the pre-Columbian Andes is still a subject of discussion among scholars.<sup>3</sup> Although hundreds of years before the Spanish conquest ancient Andeans built impressive urban centres, most of them had primarily ceremonial and administrative functions. There is solid evidence suggesting that the state had a fair degree of control over population movement, and that not everyone was allowed to live in towns and cities. Temporary migrations were nevertheless common across the ecologically diverse Andean landscape. The inhabitants of a given area were able to claim access to land and to other resources in places situated at considerable distance, and at lower or higher altitudes from their usual settlements.<sup>4</sup> To assert their control over a recently conquered region or to increase agricultural production, the Inca, and possibly also their predecessors, usually moved entire populations even across considerable distances.<sup>5</sup> Religious life in the Andes demanded a continuous interaction with the surrounding environment. To secure their livelihoods, Andean people also travelled variable distances to perform religious rituals honouring their ancestors and several other protective deities scattered in the landscape.<sup>6</sup> It is possible to assert that mobility in the Andes was a norm, that sacred places were numerous, and that many settlements were neither large, nor permanent.

Spanish colonists took advantage of established Inca state governmental practices, even if at the same time colonial officials endeavoured to substantially modify key cultural and political patterns such as the use of the space. Mobility and dispersal were issues Spanish officials thought necessary to address in order to achieve political control over the indigenous population, to gain access to indigenous labour, to facilitate Christian indoctrination, and to collect tribute and taxes. The Spanish empire's economic, political and evangelising ends demanded a reorganisation of the space, following European ideas about what constituted a civilised, Christian life.<sup>7</sup> Urban life provided the model Spanish colonisers set out to apply in the Andes and elsewhere in Spanish America.<sup>8</sup>

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3 Krzysztof Makowski, "Andean Urbanism", in *Handbook of South American Archaeology*, ed. by Helaine Silverman and William Isbell (New York: Springer, 2008), pp. 633-57.

4 John V. Murra, *The Economic Organisation of the Inka State* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1980).

5 Terence D'Altroy, *The Incas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

6 Gabriela Ramos, *Death and Conversion in the Andes: Lima and Cuzco, 1532-1670* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

7 Jeremy Ravi Mumford, *Vertical Empire: The General Resettlement of Indians in the Colonial Andes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

8 Richard Kagan, and Fernando Marias, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).



Andean colonial cities and towns were set up following a grid layout, a format that provided a sense of order and allowed for the easy identification of the quarters into which urban centres were divided. Although the grid plan evoked the idea of regularity, uniformity was not the ideal pursued. A strong sense of hierarchy dominated the design the Spanish imposed on towns and cities throughout their New World domains. At the centre of each city, town or village, was the plaza or public square and, at its heart, stood the pillory, symbolising royal justice. The church, always the largest and tallest building on the central square, was a glaring sign of Catholicism's prevalence; the city council building and the houses of the prominent local officials and citizens usually surrounded the plaza. Although this description corresponds to the leading cities, any traveller journeying across Spanish America would observe that the model was applied in every urban settlement independently of its size and importance.

In the years following the arrival of the Spanish, a large proportion of what later became the Peruvian viceroyalty was immersed in wars between bands of Spanish conquistadors fighting over the conquest booty. Some Spaniards professed their loyalty to the king, while a few others were bold and ambitious enough to consider appropriating the wealth of Peru for themselves and installing a new monarchy in alliance with an Inca faction. Years of generalised instability caused by what the historiography knows as "The Civil Wars" delayed the organisation of a government — actually, the first viceroy to arrive in Peru was assassinated by one of the Spanish warring factions — while the few missionaries who were not themselves involved in the fighting failed to make much progress in this highly toxic and chaotic setting. Itinerant missionaries travelled throughout certain Andean regions, but no formal church organisation was possible until after the wars were over, when several of the first conquistadors and many of their rebel followers were executed, and a crown representative acknowledged by most, together with the appointed bishop, were able to act. Therefore, ecclesiastical divisions known as parishes and *doctrinas* did not exist until approximately thirty years after the arrival of the first Spaniards in the Andes.<sup>9</sup>

In the early modern period, Peru's wealth was usually represented to European audiences by accounts of the immense quantities of silver and gold enclosed in its temples, palaces and tombs, or found in mines such

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9 The name *doctrinas* was given to parishes entirely populated by Indians, thus dedicated exclusively to their religious indoctrination. Valentín Trujillo Mena, *La legislación eclesiástica en el virreynato del Perú durante el siglo XVI con especial aplicación a la Jerarquía y a la Organización Diocesana* (Lima: Editorial Lumen, 1981).

as Potosí.<sup>10</sup> While these riches attracted both conquistadors and migrants, most of them soon realised that, although the stories about the abundance of precious metals were no fabrication, the land's main source of wealth was its people. The Incas and their ancestors valued gold and silver for their appearance but, since they assigned them no monetary value, wealth consisted not in owning considerable amounts of precious metals, but in having as many people as possible under one's control.<sup>11</sup> Wealth involved power over labour, and also over the labourers' minds, since submission was crucial to validate power.

This idea of wealth in the Andes did not become entirely obsolete after the Spanish conquest. The civil wars that ravaged the region soon after the military conquest were caused by disputes over the control of people. In compensation for their participation in the expeditions leading to the subjugation of the Inca Empire, the first conquistadors were granted *encomiendas*. Known as *repartimiento* in late medieval Iberia, once transplanted to the New World, the *encomienda* was significantly transformed: it entitled its beneficiary to the labour and even tribute in kind of a group of people who inhabited or claimed domain over a territory, shared kin ties, and acknowledged the authority of their leaders or chiefs but, in contrast with the Iberian *repartimiento*, the *encomendero's*<sup>12</sup> domain was over people, not over their land.<sup>13</sup> In return,

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10 John H. Elliott, "The Spanish Conquest and Settlement of America", in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, 1st edn., ed. by Leslie Bethell, 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 147-206, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521232234.008>. For a contemporary description of the Potosí mines in the sixteenth century, see Joseph de Acosta, "Historia natural y moral de las Indias", in *Obras del P. José de Acosta*, ed. by S. J. Francisco Mateos (Madrid: Atlas, 1954 [1590]), pp. 1-24, [http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/historia-natural-y-moral-de-las-indias--0/html/fee5c626-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064\\_8.html#I\\_78\\_](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/historia-natural-y-moral-de-las-indias--0/html/fee5c626-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_8.html#I_78_), book 4, ch. 6

11 John V. Murra, "Andean Societies Before 1532", in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, 1st edn., ed. by Leslie Bethell, 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 59-90, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521232234.004>

12 An *encomendero* was the grantee of an *encomienda*.

13 The *encomienda* had its precedent in the *repartimientos* granted during the *Reconquista*, a crucial historical period in the Iberian peninsula by which Christian kings and lords fought intermittently throughout seven centuries to recapture territory from Muslim domination. Whilst in Iberia, the granting of *repartimientos* involved land, but this was not the case in the New World. This of course did not prevent *encomenderos* from appropriating land belonging to indigenous people. Scholars have suggested that the large landed property, known as *hacienda*, had its origins in the *encomienda*. For a classic example of this view, see Robert Keith, *Conquest and Agrarian Change: The Emergence of the Hacienda System on the Peruvian Coast* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976). For a brief, yet clear explanation of the *encomienda* in Iberian history and in the early history of Spanish conquest and colonisation of the New World, see John H. Elliott, "Spain and America in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, 1st edn., ed. by Leslie Bethell, 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge

*encomenderos* were committed to ensuring the religious indoctrination of the people under their charge, through enlisting priests and paying their salaries. The first *encomenderos* were convinced that their grants or *encomiendas* were perpetual and thus they could pass them over to their successors. However, at the time of the Spanish conquest of Peru, the *encomienda* was already under severe criticism, since it was considered the main culprit for huge population losses in the Caribbean and Mexico.<sup>14</sup>

Denunciations against the *encomienda* and concerns raised over the legitimacy of Spain's sovereignty claims over the inhabitants of the New World were behind the crown's decision in 1542 to issue the "New Laws" to protect the indigenous population from *encomendero* abuse and exploitation.<sup>15</sup> Asserting royal authority over the seigniorial system that rested upon the *encomienda* involved curtailing *encomenderos'* power by ending the perpetuity of *encomiendas*. The New Laws of 1542 that sparked vociferous protest in Mexico and triggered armed confrontation in Peru demonstrate the degree to which control over people was widely acknowledged as both a crucial source and a symbol of wealth.

In colonial Spanish America, a chain of mutual obligations linked power and its different incarnations — the pope as God's representative, the Spanish king, a number of Spanish subjects and officials, the Catholic clergy and Indian chiefs and headmen — to indigenous labour and religious conversion. The papal bull of 1493, which granted the Spanish sovereign with dominion over the New World, entrusted the Spanish crown with the conversion of the inhabitants of the Americas. Through the Royal Patronage, the Spanish king was committed to support the Catholic church and all missions to the New World.<sup>16</sup> In exchange, he was entitled to make ecclesiastical appointments within his domains: from parish clergy to archbishops.

We have already seen how the *encomienda* fitted within this scheme: indigenous peoples gave their labour and tribute — in kind and/or in cash — to the *encomendero* in return for religious indoctrination. Priests appointed to evangelise the Indians received the *sínodo*, a proportion of the Indian head

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University Press, 1984), pp. 147-206, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521232234.008>

14 On the population crisis at the time of contact, see, for example, Noble David Cook, *Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and idem, *Demographic Collapse: Indian Peru, 1520-1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

15 Lawrence A. Clayton, *Bartolomé de las Casas and the Conquest of the Americas* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

16 For an excellent discussion of the king's support of the Catholic church, see James Muldoon *The Americas in the Spanish World Order: The Justification for Conquest in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

tax or tribute, in payment for their services. Indian chiefs were in charge of collecting the head tax from their subjects and handing it to their *encomendero*. After the *encomienda* was suppressed or disappeared, Indian chiefs continued collecting the tribute transferring it now to Spanish magistrates known as *corregidores*. The funds to pay *corregidores'* salaries also came from the indigenous head tax. Indigenous leaders or chiefs, known in the Andes as *caciques*<sup>17</sup> or *curacas*, were entrusted with assuring that their subordinates pay tax, attend mass and catechism lessons, and provide their labour whenever they were requested for the benefit of the king or his representatives, the church, Spanish miners and farmers, or "the common good" such as when they were required to labour in public works. In return for their governmental duties and their cooperation, *curacas* were exempted from paying tribute, an acknowledgement of their condition as "nobles". As the crown's vassals, *curacas* and their subjects were entitled to the king's protection.

As a result of the circumstances explained above, offices and jurisdictions frequently overlapped. There was no question that the Indians had to be evangelised. Even a number of *curacas* agreed, if admittedly many did so for strategic and survival reasons. However, because of the Royal Patronage and the interwoven obligations and functions already described, decisions leading to the establishment of parishes and *doctrinas* involved the intervention of other agents in addition to the representatives of the Catholic church.

## The establishment of parishes and doctrinas

The circumstances surrounding the creation of new jurisdictions throughout the Andes during the colonial period and beyond remain surprisingly understudied. Scholars have focused on the formal and legal underpinnings of *reducciones*.<sup>18</sup> *Reducciones* were settlements modelled following a grid plan, where the indigenous population were forced to move since Spanish officials thought that population dispersal was not favourable to their good government and religious indoctrination. The ideas, conflicts and negotiations behind the formation of *reducciones* need further attention. In the Peruvian Andes, although Spaniards sought to create *reducciones* a few years after their arrival, a sweeping plan to implement them gained momentum during the rule of viceroy Francisco de Toledo (1569-1581), to the point that today the idea

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17 The term *cacique*, a word that the Spanish had learned in the Caribbean, was widely used across the Americas to refer to indigenous chiefs.

18 The resettlement of the indigenous population was carried out with mixed results all over Spanish America. In the Andes these settlements were known as *reducciones* and in Mexico they were called *congregaciones*.

of *reducción* is often closely associated with his name.<sup>19</sup> Because *reducciones* were meant to ease the religious conversion of the indigenous population, the presence of churches within them is normally assumed, but the story of the shaping of ecclesiastical jurisdictions — in other words, the creation of a complex hierarchy of parishes and chapels and their connection with *reducciones* — needs further scrutiny.

In the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent saw it necessary to reform parishes. The reforms aimed at achieving a more effective presence of the secular church in both cities and countryside. The council mandated that bishops should live in their dioceses and the clergy should settle closer to, and interact regularly with, their flocks. If a parish priest was unable to tend to the needs of the population — either because of their numbers, their dispersal, or both — it was imperative to set up new jurisdictions. The bishops attending the Council of Trent anticipated that these reforms were likely to elicit resistance among parish priests concerned about the imminent and possibly substantial cuts to their income and weakening of their influence, since the economic interest and political importance of a parish depended heavily on the number of people within its boundaries. The council decrees advised the bishops to carry on establishing new parishes regardless of the opposition.<sup>20</sup>

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19 Alejandro Málaga Medina gives a long-term overview of *reducciones* from the time of the conquest up to a few years after their implementation by viceroy Toledo. His research is based mostly on legislation and official documentation related to *reducciones*. See Alejandro Málaga Medina, "Las reducciones en el virreinato del Perú (1532-1580)", *Revista de Historia de América*, 80 (1975), 8-42. Daniel W. Gade and Mario Escobar offer a long-term perspective of settlements situated in a highland province of Cuzco. The authors are geographers, and the discussion presented is guided almost in its entirety by fieldwork, and by inferences transposed from the present to the past. See Daniel W. Gade and Mario Escobar, "Village Settlements and the Colonial Legacy in Southern Peru", *Geographical Review*, 72 (1982), 430-49. From the field of archaeology, Steven Wernke has published several works about *reducción* formation, focusing on the Colca valley in southern Peru. See, for example, Steven Wernke, "Negotiating Community and Landscape in the Andes: A Transconquest View", *American Anthropologist*, 109 (2007), 130-52. The most ambitious study to date on the subject is Mumford, who also offers an overview of *reducción* as a critical component of the colonial project; the strength of his book is the refreshing discussion of the legal and political debates surrounding *reducciones*. Mumford maintains that the documentary evidence for the founding and early history of *reducciones* is insufficient. For a discussion of these issues although for a later period in northern Peru, see Alejandro Diez, *Comunes y haciendas: procesos de comunalización en la sierra de Piura, siglos XVIII al XX* (Cuzco: CIPCA and Centro Bartolomé de las Casas, 1998).

20 "As regards those churches, to which, on account of the distance, or the difficulties of the locality, the parishioners cannot, without great inconvenience, repair to receive the sacraments, and to hear the divine offices; the bishops may, even against the will of the

## Population, territory and boundaries

The circumstances behind the formation of the most elementary ecclesiastical jurisdictions or, more precisely *doctrinas*, in the colonial Andes are varied and not always easy to elucidate. *Repartimientos* — social units formed by family groups related to each other through kin ties, often subdivided in smaller units, and each with its own leaders — were at the origins of several *doctrinas*, possibly established by missionaries belonging to the regular clergy.<sup>21</sup> This means that in several cases pre-conquest indigenous settlements could have constituted the initial places for the establishment of primitive churches or sites of worship and indoctrination. The First Lima Council, presided over by the Dominican friar Jerónimo de Loayza in 1551, referred to an already completed partition of the population and territory between the religious orders. The council advised the regular clergy to set up their convents in the best, most important or most populated region possible (*en la mayor comarca*) within the province under their charge.<sup>22</sup> In other instances *encomiendas* and pre-Toledan *reducciones* were the sites of the first Indian parishes.

The bishops provided guidance to priests and missionaries on how to select the places where churches should be built: the churches should be established in settlements where the leading indigenous chiefs had their main residence, and which had the largest population. The ruling was followed by the instruction that missionaries should either burn or tear down pre-existing sites of worship and, if the places where these pagan temples and shrines were conveniently located, Christian churches should be built

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rectors, establish new parishes, pursuant to the form of the constitution of Alexander III, which begins, Ad audientiam...". *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, ed. and trans. by J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), Twenty-First Session, Decree on Reformation, ch. 4, p. 147, <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct21.html>

21 *Repartimientos* were the grants of people given to *encomenderos* as compensation for their participation in the conquest (see above, note 13). A seventeenth-century Spanish dictionary defines *repartimiento* as the effect of dividing something into parts. Sebastián de Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (Barcelona: Alta Fulla, 2003 [Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1611]), p. 905. What early Spanish chroniclers and travellers described as *provincias* (provinces) were later divided between religious orders and *encomenderos*. *Repartimientos* stemmed from these initial divisions. It is apparent that the term *repartimiento* had a shifting meaning throughout the colonial period.

22 "Primer Concilio Provincial Limense, Constituciones de los Naturales", in *Concilios Limenses*, ed. by Rubén Vargas Ugarte, 3 vols (Lima: [n. pub.], 1951), 1, Constitución 29, p. 24. See also Mumford, p. 120.

in their stead. These instructions allow us to suggest that a number of new parishes were in fact erected on pre-Columbian indigenous settlements. To signal the distinctiveness of the new places of worship, priests were advised to acquire works of art to make the main churches attractive and worthy of gaining the people's appreciation. In smaller and secondary settlements, missionaries were to build churches of modest dimensions but no less dignified and, if enough people and means of support to the parish were not available, to set up a chapel or at the very least erect a cross.<sup>23</sup>

Although *repartimientos* are often described as primarily involving people and only secondarily territory, the circumstances behind the establishment of *doctrinas*, the instructions given to priests on how to organise and conduct indoctrination, and the interactions between priests and parishioners throughout time, suggest that the notion of a clear-cut separation between people and territory is difficult to pin down.<sup>24</sup> There was an overlap between *repartimiento*, *encomienda*, and *doctrina*. The notion behind the *repartimiento* and the *encomienda* revolved around people acknowledging the authority of a *curaca* or chief and/or, as explained above, sub-chiefs or *principales*. The close link between *repartimiento* and *provincia* involved the idea of not only population, but also of a territory claimed by those who inhabited it. Early accounts and descriptions penned by chroniclers and travellers, as well as church legislation support this view.<sup>25</sup> Local Andean populations also acknowledged salient features in the landscape like mountains, caves, lakes

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23 Vargas Ugarte, 1, Constitución 2, pp. 8-9; idem, Constitución 40, p. 33. A similar directive is found in the decrees of the Second Lima Council (1567) in idem, 1, p. 251. In this text, the bishops advised that *encomenderos* and *curacas* should also be consulted about the most adequate place to build a church.

24 Mumford, pp. 28-29. Mumford presents an interesting discussion on the subject of *repartimientos*. On Andean political organisation, see also María Rostworowski, *Estructuras andinas del poder: ideología religiosa y política* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1983).

25 See, for instance, Pedro Cieza de León, *Crónica del Perú, Primera parte* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1984). The link between parish and territory is best represented in the legislation concerning pastoral visitations. Both the Council of Trent and the local church councils ruled that bishops should periodically visit the towns within their dioceses to inspect the functioning of their parishes, to assess priest behaviour and competence, and to certify the correct indoctrination of their parishioners. Council of Trent rulings on visitations are found in Session 24, Reformation decrees, ch. 3, <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct24.html>. Constitution 44 of the Lima First Council ruled that bishops should inspect the towns within their dioceses every two years (Vargas Ugarte, 1, p. 62). On inspection visits in the Lima diocese, see Gabriela Ramos, "Pastoral Visitations as Spaces of Negotiation in Andean Parishes," in *The Americas* (forthcoming).

and rock formations, as well as tombs and funeral monuments as markers signifying their domain over a territory.<sup>26</sup>

The idea that the jurisdiction of a parish involved people but not territory, as if their status was identical to that of *repartimientos* and *encomiendas* needs further scrutiny. The Constitutions of the First Lima Council instructed priests on how to indoctrinate the Indians, implying that parishes had territorial jurisdiction: priests were advised to say mass in the most populated town of their *doctrinas* and to make sure that parishioners living in subsidiary towns were also in attendance. This emphasis on place later shifted to a greater accent on people. The Second Lima Council (1567) ruled that to ensure priests were able to accomplish their obligations, a maximum of 400 married men were to be assigned to a parish.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the drastic population changes experienced across the Andean region due to high mortality rates, displacement, and migration are behind this emphasis on population numbers. Different or shifting understandings concerning the sphere of influence of parish, *encomienda*, province, and *repartimiento* led to confusion and eventually to conflict. It should be noted that the equivocal status of parishes concerning their population scope and territorial boundaries was not a phenomenon unique to the Andes.<sup>28</sup>

While a diocese definitely involved territory — a bishop's jurisdiction clearly was the territory of his diocese — the intersection between the notions of *repartimiento* and *doctrina*, and the emphasis these two entities had on people rather than on place made the latter difficult to pin down but also easier to manipulate. In the Andes, the transformations brought by Spanish colonisation, such as significant population losses and continuous Indian migrations — voluntary and forced, temporary and permanent — added to the difficulty in determining parish or *doctrina* boundaries.

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26 As attested by *The Huarochirí Manuscript*, ed. by Frank Salomon (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991); and Cristóbal de Molina's *Fábulas y Mitos de los Incas*, ed. by Enrique Urbano and Pierre Duviols (Madrid: Historia 16, 1988). For archaeological studies supporting this view, see William Harris Isbell, *Mummies and Mortuary Monuments: A Postprocessual History of Central Andean Social Organization* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997); and Brian Bauer, *The Sacred Landscape of the Inca: The Cusco Ceque System* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998). A historical interpretation of this extended practice can be found in Ramos, *Death and Conversion*, pp. 9-33.

27 "Sumario del concilio provincial que se celebró en la ciudad de Los Reyes el año de mil y 567". Vargas Ugarte, 3, p. 249. Based on a study of the laws produced by the church in the sixteenth century, Trujillo Mena assures that territory was a constitutive part of the *doctrina* (p. 242).

28 Oliver Rackham described parish boundaries in England as "a rebuke to administrative tidiness". Oliver Rackham, "Review of 'Discovering Parish Boundaries'", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 43 (1992), 504.



## A petition to close down a *Doctrina*

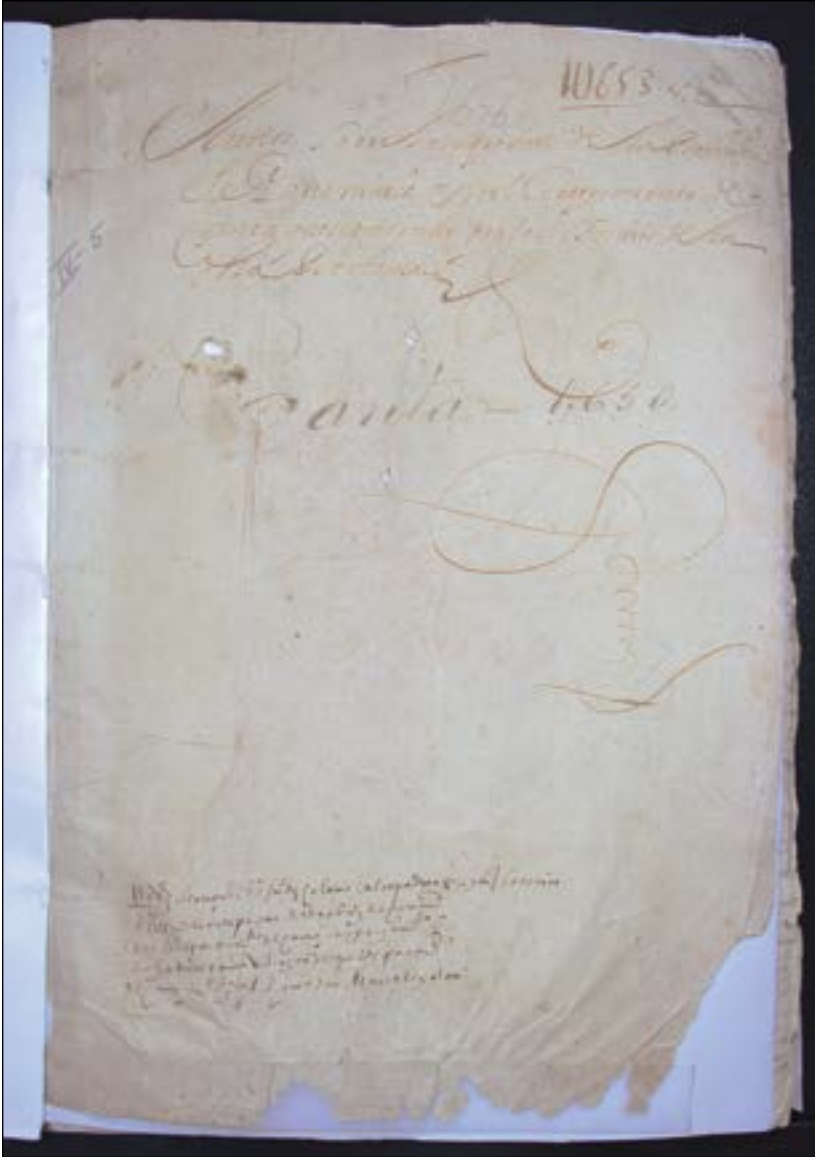


Fig. 8.2 Cover page of the records of the petition to close down the parish of Pariamarca in the *corregimiento* of Canta, 1650 (EAP333/1/3/11 image 1), Public Domain.

A file belonging to the historical archives in the Huacho diocese holds a petition of the “headmen” (Fig. 8.2) of the *doctrina* of Canta, a town in the highlands north of the city of Lima (Fig. 8.1), presented to the archbishop in 1650.<sup>29</sup> The petitioners sought to close down the *doctrina* of Paríamarca.<sup>30</sup> Following the filing of the petition, the archbishop started an investigation into the *doctrina* of Paríamarca. The *doctrina*, created on an unknown date, was separated from the parish of Canta to facilitate the indoctrination of, and the administration of the sacraments to, the labourers of a textile mill belonging to the *repartimiento* of Canta. Known as *obrajes*, textile mills flourished in different areas across Spanish America producing basic fabrics for the local market, namely Indian, African and other low-income consumers. Combining rudimentary technology with harsh working conditions, and normally set up when raw materials were readily available, a number of *obrajes* across colonial Spanish America prospered by meeting the demand from cities, mining centres, plantations, and other landed properties using slave labour.<sup>31</sup>

Apparently, the *obraje* of Paríamarca was economically successful enough to provide the indigenous people of the area with additional income and pay for the priest’s salary. Even though this was clearly advantageous for the Indians, when a fire destroyed the *obraje*, the *corregidor* (Spanish magistrate) decided against its reconstruction and ordered the demolition of its premises. The fact that a manufacture that was thriving was given such a sudden and extreme end does not seem reasonable. Regrettably, the sources do not explain the *corregidor*’s decision, and we can only hypothesise that competitors benefiting from the *obraje*’s extinction were behind it.

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29 I use the word “headmen” here and throughout because — for reasons that would be worth investigating, although not at this time — the documents describe most indigenous authorities as governors and principals, but — with one exception — not as *caciques* or *curacas* as it was customary in other areas of the Andes.

30 “Autos de la supresión de la doctrina de Paríamarca en el corregimiento de Canta que se pretende por los indios de dicha doctrina”, in Archives of the Diocese of Huacho (ADH), Curatos, Leg. 2, Exp. 1, 1653. For a good overview — although focused on Cuzco and Peru’s southeast — of how Andean settlements were organised and the participation indigenous people had in their government, see David Garrett, *Shadows of Empire: The Indian Nobility of Cuzco, 1750-1825* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 15-44.

31 On textile mills (*obrajes*) in the Andes and other regions of Spanish America, see Miriam Salas de Coloma, *De los obrajes de Canaria y Chincheros a las comunidades indígenas de Vilcashuamán, siglo XVI* (Lima: Sesator, 1979); Neus Escandell, *Producción y comercio de tejidos coloniales: Los obrajes y chorrillos del Cuzco 1570-1820* (Cuzco: Centro Bartolomé de las Casas, 1997); Javier Ortiz de la Tabla Ducasse, “Obrajes y obrajeros del Quito colonial”, *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 39 (1982), 341-65, and Richard Salvucci, *Textiles and Capitalism in Mexico: An Economic History of the Obrajes, 1539-1840* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).





Deprived of this source of income, the parish priest, don Gerónimo de Salazar, requested the archbishop to close down the *doctrina*, possibly because he thought that in this way he could leave Paríamarca and get another assignment (Fig. 8.3). The archbishop's reply requested that Salazar exhibit the parish registers to determine the number of parishioners in Paríamarca (Fig. 8.4). Noting that 500 people were listed, Salazar's petition was denied. Anticipating the difficulties he would face in collecting his salary with the *obraje* gone, Salazar filed another petition, this time to the viceregal government, requesting that his salary be funded with the proceeds of a farm — also belonging to the *repartimiento* of Canta — that had produced the wool used in the now extinct textile mill. Salazar's petition was successful, but his parishioners opposed the move, arguing that the farm was never meant to fund the priest's salary (Fig. 8.5). In fact, the indigenous headmen argued that the farm was too far away from Paríamarca, and not within the priest's reach. According to the headmen, the shepherds labouring at the farm were under the care of the curate of another *doctrina* where the farm was located. The *repartimiento* of Canta paid the priest a modest annual sum for performing his pastoral duties.

Salazar left the scene shortly thereafter as he was appointed to another parish. However, his departure did not bring the dispute to an end because the archbishopric stood fast in its decision not to close down the *doctrina*; in fact, a call for applicants to the vacant post started to circulate. To make the matters worse for the Indians, the government had accepted Salazar's argument that the *doctrina* of Paríamarca had been established counting on the proceeds from both the *obraje* and the farm belonging to the Indians of Canta. Although in the course of the investigation no papers certifying the parish origins were found at the diocesan archives, the government admitted as valid a document that the local scribe of Canta had provided Salazar attesting that the proceedings of the farm had been assigned to the *doctrina* of Paríamarca from its very beginnings.

To rend legible these and other incidents of the proceedings, it is worth pointing to the issues at stake thus far. First, how many people were necessary to set up a parish? Second, in the context of the *doctrina* (an Indian parish), did the number of people required to form a parish include everyone, or only taxpayers (*tributarios*)? Third, were the Indians supposed to pay for the priest's salary with means other than their taxes?



Different viewpoints were advanced to answer these questions. We have seen that when Salazar was asked to show the parish registers, the archbishop's representative concluded that, since 500 people appeared in them, the continuity of the *doctrina* was entirely justified. While the Second Church Council (1567) had established that a parish should have no more than 400 married Indians,<sup>32</sup> the Third Church Council (1583) decreed that "any Indian town with more than 200 or 300 taxpaying Indians<sup>33</sup> should have its own curate, and if there were less than 200 the prelate should make sure that they were permanently settled<sup>34</sup> so that they could be adequately indoctrinated and ruled".<sup>35</sup> The Indian headmen of Canta contested the archbishop's interpretation of Salazar's parish registers, because although 500 people "small and large" (*chicas y grandes*) were listed, only 66 of them were taxpayers. While the Indians insisted on this aspect of the council decree (only those who paid tax were to be counted), the archbishop highlighted the words indicating that it was the prelate's right to decide on the adequate number of people to form a parish.

Three years after the original filing of the petition, the archbishop commissioned the priest of the neighbouring *doctrina* of Quivi, don Juan de Escalante y Mendoza, to conduct a population count that should include "all the Indians, small and large, men and women, boys and girls as well as those exempted from tax,<sup>36</sup> foreigners, and all other residents in the parish of Canta and subsidiary towns, with as much meticulousness as possible".<sup>37</sup> Escalante started his investigation shortly after his appointment by requesting data from three different sources: governmental, ecclesiastic, and indigenous. The first were the records of the latest headcount, from an inspection carried out in 1640, the second were the parish registers, and the third were the tax registers kept in the hands of the *repartimiento's* governor.

In his efforts to obtain these documents, Escalante reported encountering resistance. He had to demand the magistrate's assistant repeatedly for his

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32 See note 21.

33 Males from eighteen to fifty years of age were subject to paying head tax.

34 The decree in Spanish uses the word "*reducido*", which I interpret here as established in a town or *reducción* and therefore under the government's control.

35 "Los decretos del santo concilio provincial celebrado en la ciudad de Los Reyes del Perú en el año de 1583", in Vargas Ugarte, 2, ch. 11, p. 348.

36 Exempted from tax were "*reservados*". These included men older than fifty years old; also, the ill or injured and unable to work, and those holding a position in the church, such as choristers and sacristans.

37 The order was issued on 7 October 1653, "Autos de la supresión...", ADH, Curatos, Leg. 1, Exp. 2, f. 88.

cooperation. Also, when the Indian governor, don Gabriel Tantavilca, handed him his registers, Escalante found that these contained only the numbers of people classified by towns, but no individual names or details of each household. Furthermore, when Escalante compared the three registers, he noticed that the disparity between them was such that he decided to conduct a population count himself. Escalante commanded the indigenous headmen that on Sunday — when everyone in the *doctrina* attended mass at the main parish church — the Indian parish officers<sup>38</sup> should allow no one to leave whilst Escalante carried out a house-by-house search to see if anyone was hiding. He would then proceed to the headcount.

Escalante may have thought that his authority was uncontested and his plan was infallible, but on Sunday a fire consumed the parish church and he reported that he had instead spent his time with the parishioners trying to save the edifice from complete ruin. Whether the fire was intentional or accidental, Escalante did not allow himself to be distracted by the incident and carried on with the investigation. He ordered Tantavilca and all other Indian officers to assemble all their subjects on Thursday, the day when everyone in the *doctrina* was meant to attend catechism instruction, and when he could proceed with the headcount.<sup>39</sup>

When Escalante was appointed to conduct the investigation into the *doctrina*, he was asked to be as meticulous as possible, and meticulous he was. The document resulting from the headcount provides to my knowledge one of the most detailed pictures we have of the conditions in which the inhabitants of a rural parish in mid-colonial Peru lived (Figs. 8.6, 8.7 and 8.8). Escalante aimed to describe the *repartimiento* as a whole, then the two parts<sup>40</sup> in which it was divided, and the *ayllus* or kin groups in which the towns were subdivided. This was followed by a description, household by household, noting the names and estimated age of each household dweller, and — when possible — the whereabouts of those who were absent.

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38 These parish officers were known as *fiscales* and *alguaciles*. Their duties could be described as those of a church police. Both *fiscales* and *alguaciles* had to make sure that everyone in town attended mass and catechism instruction and observed correct behaviour.

39 "Autos de la supresión...", ADH, Curatos, Leg. 1, Exp. 2, f. 97.

40 These *parcialidades*, in which *repartimientos* were divided, were not necessarily exact halves, as the case of Canta. Each moiety was subdivided in kin groups or *ayllus*. The number of *ayllus* in each moiety could vary. For a view on how *repartimientos* were organised, see Mumford, pp. 28-29.





Fig. 8.6 Sample page of the census conducted in 1653 by Juan de Escalante y Mendoza showing part of the headcount of the ayllu (kin group) Julcan Yumay (EAP333/1/3/11 image 107), Public Domain.



Fig. 8.7 Sample page of the census conducted in 1653 by Juan de Escalante y Mendoza, showing part of the headcount of the ayllu Allauca Pacha (EAP333/1/3/11 image 113), Public Domain.

In 1653, the *repartimiento* of Canta was organised into two *parcialidades*: Canta and Loccha.<sup>41</sup> Canta was subdivided in eight *ayllus* while Loccha was much smaller, with only four. Canta had a larger number of head tax payers, or *tributarios* (forty), as well as more people, with 290 in total. Loccha had 27 head taxpayers and a total of 192 people were counted. Loccha's smaller number of adult males and population did not mean it had a politically diminished status, because its governor, Tantavilca, was a member of the *parcialidad*, and presided over the *ayllu* Curaca Loccha, a name that suggests that this kin group had been holding for a while the office of indigenous governor.

Although outside academia the *ayllu* is often seen as the fundamental organisational unit in Andean society that has preserved most of its features since pre-Columbian times, historical evidence shows that while the term *ayllu* persisted throughout times, *ayllu* members have changed its form and composition to accommodate varying situations. The formation of new *ayllus* has also been part of this long-established process of social transformation. The image of the *ayllu* as an institution that hardly admits change is due in great part to the ability of its agents to make adjustments to new circumstances appear as mere reproductions of the old.

The inspection and headcount of the Canta *repartimiento* provides a good example of the ways in which larger transformations in Andean colonial society can be verified at the local level. Records of inspections of the Canta *repartimiento* carried out in 1549 and 1553, before Spanish settlements or *reducciones* were implemented, list *ayllu* names and numbers that differ from those appearing on the records formed 100 years later. The *ayllu* names correspond to smaller towns that later became settlements subsidiary to the *doctrina* of Canta.<sup>42</sup> Among the eight *ayllus* of the Canta *parcialidades* listed in 1653, the one that stands out as significantly different is that of the *plateros tributarios*, or silversmith taxpayers. It is known that under Inca rule, artisans were moved between regions to facilitate the formation of new settlements and to make their output more easily available to the elites.<sup>43</sup> The inspections records of 1549 and 1553 do not list silversmiths, which suggest that this kin group of artisans was introduced under Spanish colonial rule. This may have been because they were moved to the *reducción* when Spanish officials set it up in the late sixteenth century, possibly as an attempt to emulate the Inca governmental strategy of transferring specialised workers into a new settlement to accommodate the state's interests.

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41 These *parcialidades* are mentioned in the records of an inspection carried out in 1553. María Rostworowski, "Las visitas de Canta de 1549 y 1553", in *Obras Completas*, 2 (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2002), pp. 289-314.

42 Such as Carhua, Visca and Lachaqui. See map in Rostworowski, "Las visitas", p. 294.

43 Waldemar Espinoza Soriano, "Migraciones internas en el reino Colla: Tejedores, plumereros y alfareros del estado imperial Inca", *Chungará*, 19 (1987), 243-89.

The most salient change in the social structure of the *doctrina* is the inclusion in 1653 of two *ayllus* of *forasteros*, or foreigners whose presence considerably modified not only the social, but also the ethnic composition of the community.<sup>44</sup> The first *forastero ayllu* in the 1653 headcount in Canta included non-Indian males, all of them married to local Indian women. The first person on the list was a Spanish man, married to an elite Indian woman. The others were *mestizo* or mixed race men, a mulatto man, and two single women of African and Indian descent. The second *forastero ayllu* was formed by Indians that had arrived from other towns and places, some of them as far as Cuzco, in the southeast, and Zaña, on the north coast. All the men in this *ayllu* were married to local women. Since adult males in these *ayllus* were exempted from the onerous head tax or paid a lower sum, and were not subject to draft labour (*mita*), it is likely that these circumstances explain the larger number of people of all ages belonging to this *ayllu* (98) as compared to all other kin groups in Canta.

The inspection records show a total of 83 taxpayers in the two *parcialidades* and in the thirteen *ayllus* of the *doctrina*. The whole population excluding foreigners was 512.<sup>45</sup> When compared to the figures listed 100 years earlier, we note a considerable population decline. When interviewed by the inspectors in 1549, Diego Flores, a Spanish man in charge of the *encomendero's* affairs, estimated there were 750 adult males in Canta.<sup>46</sup> That the population of Canta had not collapsed entirely in the following decades was probably due to the arrival of new *forasteros* who, by marrying local women, had gained access to land. Since these foreigners were exempted from paying the head tax or, if they did pay tax this was certainly at a lower rate, they possibly had more opportunities to prosper.<sup>47</sup> When added to the registered population, the approximate total

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44 From very early in the colonial period, Spanish colonial officers aimed to keep the indigenous population separated from Spaniards, mixed-race and Africans, arguing that Indians were thus protected from abuse and bad example. Although this goal proved unattainable in the large urban centres, it is often assumed that such was not the case in small provincial settlements. On Spanish colonial policies about race and racial mixing, see Kathryn Burns, "Unfixing Race", in *Histories of Race and Racism: The Andes and Mesoamerica from Colonial Times to the Present*, ed. by Laura Gotkowitz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 57-71. On the significance of *forasteros* in Andean colonial society, see Nicolás Sánchez Albornoz, *Indios y tributos en el Alto Perú* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1978); and Ann Wightman, *Indigenous Migration and Social Change: The Forasteros of Cuzco, 1570-1720* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).

45 Including the 75 people of all ages found in the inspection of the town of Carcas, subsidiary or annex of the *doctrina* of Canta, a settlement situated further up the valley. The headcount does not provide total numbers, but only for the first *ayllu* of the first moiety registered. According to this view, the number of taxpayers would have been higher, since Escalante incorporated to the headcount those who were absent.

46 Rostworowski, "Las visitas", p. 347. The population losses are appalling. The friars carrying out the inspection in 1549 also noted a number of abandoned houses. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

47 The incorporation of *forasteros* into the registers of taxpayers was not uniform throughout the Andes. It is not apparent from the documents herein studied that *forasteros* were also taxpayers.



The presence of *forasteros* made figuring out the number of people required to form a *doctrina* problematic. The Canta headmen's request was to make the number of taxpayers correspond with the number of heads of households, while the view of the church was to count the total number of *doctrina* inhabitants, independently of age, gender and fiscal status. This was a serious matter of contention because of the crucial issue placed at the core of the petition presented at the start: who was supposed to pay for the priest's salary and what was its rightful source?

As we have seen, the priest's salary was a portion of the taxes the *repartimiento* Indians paid to the *encomendero* and, once the *encomienda* ceased to exist, the payment was due to the *corregidor*. The indigenous headmen from Canta reasoned that if there were not enough taxpayers an additional *doctrina* was not justified. This view was not only based on the manifest decline in population, but also on the understanding that they had a right to be protected from abuse.<sup>48</sup> From the viewpoint of the church, the decision to include every single inhabitant of the *doctrina* — whose souls had to be saved through the administration of the sacraments — was not arbitrary but legally supported by the decrees of the Council of Trent and the Lima church councils.<sup>49</sup>

A closely connected issue in the dispute was the source that provided the funds to pay for the priest's salary. The petitioners challenged the archbishop's decision to use the revenue from the community-owned farm now that the Paríamarca textile mill was closed, arguing that community assets were to be used only for the Indians' own benefit.<sup>50</sup> The fact that revenues from the *obraje* had been assigned to the *doctrina* at the time of its foundation was exceptional, they maintained. The status of Paríamarca, its inhabitants and resources is nevertheless left in the dark. For reasons that remain unexplained, Escalante carried out the headcount in the town of

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48 On the political principles that guided the link between the Spanish king and the indigenous vassals, see Alejandro Cañeque, *The King's Living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico* (London: Routledge, 2004). An excellent discussion about how indigenous people understood and made use of the law under Spanish colonial rule can be found in Brian P. Owensby, *Empire of Law and Indian Justice in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

49 See note 15, and "Autos de la supresión..." f. 44v, where the archbishop's representative argues that even if the population is smaller than the required number of parishioners established by law, ultimately the decision to create or maintain a parish belonged to the bishop.

50 Community assets were meant to provide extra income when resources were insufficient for the maintenance of community members or to acquire the necessary means to pay for the head tax.

Canta and in the subsidiary settlement of Carcas, situated on the same river valley, but apparently he did not visit Paríamarca or the towns nearby (Figs. 8.9 and 8.10). This is intriguing, since Escalante's knowledge of the *doctrina* was far from superficial: before his appointment as priest of the *doctrina* of Quivi, he had been parish priest at Paríamarca.<sup>51</sup>



Fig. 8.9 Cultivated fields in Paríamarca, August 2014. Photo by Évelyne Mesclier, CC BY.

The 1549 and 1553 inspections records of Canta, published by María Rostworowski, shed light on the special circumstances of Paríamarca. At that time, Paríamarca was not described as a village. The indigenous chiefs informed the inspectors in 1549 that it had no inhabitants and that under Inca rule weavers spent limited periods of time there producing *cumbi*, the

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<sup>51</sup> The historical archives of the archdiocese of Lima (AAL) hold the file of a petition Escalante presented in 1640, wherein he describes himself as “el bachiller don Juan de Escalante y Mendoza, presbítero, cura y vicario del pueblo de Paríamarca y sus anexos...”. AAL, Curatos Diversos, 1622-1899, exp. 42v. The reference is found in Melecio Tineo, *Vida eclesiástica, Perú colonial y republicano: Catálogos de documentación sobre parroquias y doctrinas de indios. Arzobispado de Lima, siglos XVI-XX*, 1 (Cuzco: Centro Bartolomé de las Casas, 1997), p. 403.

finest textiles that only elite individuals were allowed to use.<sup>52</sup> The inspectors arriving in 1553 in Paríamarca described it as a place where artisans belonging to the seven moieties of Canta assembled to weave *cumbi*. The inspectors found 29 well-built houses, and cultivated plots of land, but the people they interviewed informed them that there were no permanent residents and the houses they had seen were but temporary dwellings.<sup>53</sup>

The early sixteenth-century inspection records reveal that Paríamarca was a pre-Columbian centre of textile production. That the site did not have a permanent population was not exceptional, as a number of settlements across the Andes were used only temporarily.<sup>54</sup> After the Spanish conquest, Paríamarca became an *obraje* and remained in indigenous hands. When the archbishop of Lima, Toribio Alfonso de Mogrovejo visited the diocese in 1598, Paríamarca was not yet a parish; it was listed in the records as a subsidiary village (*pueblo*) of the *doctrina* of Canta. It appears that because of the *obraje*, Paríamarca's status was exceptional. The headcount carried out during Mogrovejo's inspection yielded a total of 335 people in Paríamarca, but not all of them were included in the total population count of the *doctrina*. The textile mill was mentioned as a place in addition to the subsidiary towns of Canta.<sup>55</sup>

Who exactly were the labourers at the *obraje* is unclear. According to the headmen of Canta that requested the closing down of the *doctrina* in 1653, production at the *obraje* relied on draft labour (*mitayos*);<sup>56</sup> this explains why, once the textile mill was destroyed, the labourers disbanded. The

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52 In the course of the visitation, the inspectors noted sixteen abandoned villages and were informed that artisans lived in them only temporarily. Paríamarca is mentioned in the records as Paron Marca Cambis. Rostworowski, "Las visitas", p. 345. On the role of textiles and especially of *cumbi* in Andean society, see Gabriela Ramos, "Los tejidos y la sociedad colonial andina", *Colonial Latin American Review*, 19 (2010), 115-49.

53 Rostworowski, "Las visitas", pp. 370-71.

54 Mumford, p. 25.

55 José Antonio Benito, *Libro de visitas de santo Toribio de Mogrovejo (1593-1605)* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2006), p. 172. Unfortunately, the inspection records do not provide an explanation for how the headcount was conducted. It is unclear why the *obraje* was noted apart. The omission is probably not entirely Mogrovejo's secretary's fault: the transcription of the pastoral visitations is poorly edited and the errors are so many that scholars must use it with much caution.

56 The Inca used draft labour, regularly levied for several purposes, from agriculture to public works. Spanish colonial officers adapted this system for the benefit of miners, *encomenderos*, farmers, *obrajes*, various entrepreneurs, and urban centres. The system was called *mita* and the labourers were known as *mitayos*. See Mumford, pp. 95-96; and Karen Spalding, "The Crises and Transformations of Invaded Societies: The Andean Area", in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, ed. by Frank Salomon and Stuart B. Schwartz, 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 904-72.



inspections of 1549 and 1553 present a different view, as they suggest that all the Canta *parcialidades*, *ayllus* and settlements periodically sent labourers to Pariamarca to weave cloth. Cloth and clothing were also produced domestically, and the products were taken to Lima and sold to get the cash necessary to pay the head tax.<sup>57</sup>

Finding out the names and number of the *obraje* labourers, as well as where they resided was crucial to determine the boundaries of the parish. If the labourers were from the *doctrina*, then Pariamarca had to continue to exist, as the archbishopric's representative maintained. If they were coming from elsewhere, as the Canta headmen argued, the labourers had already left, their pastoral care was under other parish jurisdictions, and there was little justification for keeping the *doctrina* in Pariamarca.

These issues were difficult to elucidate because, in order to pursue their productive activities and to respond to the demands of the colonial state, the local population was and needed to be very mobile. In fact, many adult men and a smaller number of women moved out from their *doctrinas* never to return, as the case of the *forasteros* living in Canta demonstrates. When Escalante conducted the headcount in 1653, several adult men, a few boys and a couple of women were registered as missing (*ausentes*). Indigenous officers were constantly accused of hiding their subjects to evade tribute payments and, as the case of the non-inhabited, although non-abandoned, villages demonstrates, in the Andes people often made use of their space differently from the way certain Spanish authorities were prepared to understand.

There was more to this case. Having learned about the petition to close down the *doctrina* of Pariamarca, don Francisco Pizarro Caruavilca, the *cacique* of the village of Lachaqui (subsidiary of Pariamarca) requested the archbishopric that, if the Canta headmen were successful, his town of Lachaqui and all others under his authority should not become subsidiary to Canta. Don Francisco adduced that the long distances in between villages, the rough terrain, and the difficulties involved in travelling up the valley, especially during the rainy season, made Lachaqui's attachment to the *doctrina* of Canta inconvenient. He explained that his people spent most part of the year not in Lachaqui, but working in their farms in the low-altitude, warmer sections of the valley, in a location called Mallo. The people of Lachaqui, argued don Francisco, regularly attended mass at Mallo and, when necessary, at Quivi, where they also went regularly to comply with the *mita* or draft labour.<sup>58</sup>

57 Rostworowski, "Las visitas", p. 372.

58 Among a number of duties, Indians complying with the *mita* had to provide services at



Fig. 8.10 A street in Pariamarca, August 2014. Photo by Évelyne Mesclier, CC BY.

If Pariamarca ceased to exist as a *doctrina*, don Francisco and his people would be compelled to travel to Canta to attend a series of unavoidable religious functions, from regular mass and confession to Holy Week and Corpus Christi, not to speak of the contributions in money and labour the curate at Canta was likely to demand from them. This situation would threaten their welfare, for the long and dangerous journeys to Canta would not allow them to look after their farms. The archbishopric requested don Diego de Vergara, a canon in the Lima cathedral chapter and a former parish priest at Quivi, to offer his opinion on the petition. One by one, displaying knowledge about the conditions of the terrain, about the weather, about the villages in the region and the distances between them, Vergara dismissed don Francisco's points. Don Alonso Osorio, also a canon and former parish priest, presented a brief

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inns (*tambos*) located in key points on Andean roads. One of these inns was situated in the town of Quivi.

statement sharing Vergara's views. But these interventions from the high clergy did not dismiss the *cacique's* petition, for both Vergara and Osorio also advised against the closing down of the *doctrina* of Pariamarca.

The canons' involvement in the proceedings had the effect of disempowering the *cacique* by accusing him of misrepresenting the situation, but in an oblique manner, their statements were also a boost for don Francisco, who must have been relieved at the prospect that his people would not fall under the dominance of the curate of Canta and possibly, that of its indigenous headmen.

## Conclusion



Fig. 8.11 A view of the town and valley of Canta, August 2014.  
Photo by Évelyne Mesclier, CC BY.

The file ends rather abruptly, leaving us wondering about the outcome of the proceedings. Once Escalante finished the headcount in Canta, we find don Francisco's petition, followed by Vergara's and Osorio's depositions. The final pages, written three years later in 1656, contain two petitions addressed to the viceregal justice. The first, by the *Protector general de los*

*indios*, or Indians' attorney, and the second by don Phelipe Quispi Guaman Yauri, governor of the Canta *repartimiento*. Both petitions reiterate the request to close down the *doctrina* of Paríamarca and warn about the political costs of keeping a parish that so obviously represented a burden on a population whose numbers continued to decline. We get the impression that the case would hover indefinitely.

The lack of a conclusion to the proceedings is frustrating, although unsurprising. In colonial Spanish America — and Peru was no exception — legal disputes could take years, even decades, without ever reaching a resolution. Historians investigating the social significance of law under Spanish colonial rule maintain that its power resided in the proceedings rather than in the results.<sup>59</sup>

Parish boundaries in colonial Peru represent a complex set of issues. For the church and the Spanish crown, dividing the territory to carry out the evangelising endeavour seemed both appropriate and necessary. Contemporary ideas about Christian duty were combined with the crown's imperative to compensate a number of soldiers, clergymen, entrepreneurs, and bureaucrats for their services to the king. This was no easy amalgam. The Catholic church, at the global and local level, provided the principles guiding the procedure.<sup>60</sup> Implementing these norms involved dealing with the local populations, which held their own religious views and kept their own sacred places, had their own political institutions and systems of authority, in addition to their own ways of controlling and using vital resources such as land and water. In the Peruvian Andes, parish boundaries were linked to aspects such as dwindling population numbers, as well as kinship ties and political alliances that had been severely affected by the Spanish conquest and continued to evolve. As all other parts of the colonial edifice, parishes rested upon indigenous labour. The case studied here exemplifies the extent to which the very existence of the parish, its functioning and reach, concerned perhaps more than any other colonial institution, the lives and livelihood of the people.

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59 See Owensby. On late August 2014, I visited the town of Paríamarca along with friends and colleagues, whose company and support I would like to acknowledge: Évelyne Mesclier, Ana María Hurtado and César Iglesias. From our conversations with the locals, we learned that no one knows today that in Paríamarca there was ever a textile mill. Paríamarca has a church, but does not have parish status. For government administration purposes, Paríamarca is today subordinated to Canta.

60 In 1564 the Spanish crown incorporated the decrees of the Council of Trent as law of the state. On this subject, see Primitivo Tineo, "La recepción de Trento en España (1565): disposiciones sobre la actividad episcopal", *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia*, 5 (1996), 241-96.

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## Archival resource

*Autos de la supresión de la doctrina de Pariamarca en el corregimiento de Canta que se pretende por los indios de dicha doctrina*, in Archives of the Diocese of Huacho (ADH), Curatos, Leg. 2, Exp. 1, 1653.

# 9. Researching the history of slavery in Colombia and Brazil through ecclesiastical and notarial archives

*Jane Landers, Pablo Gómez,  
José Polo Acuña and Courtney J. Campbell*

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This chapter addresses the history of slavery and development in two of the most African locales in colonial South America: the Pacific and Caribbean coasts of modern Colombia and northeastern Brazil. Both modern nations have recognised the historical and civic neglect of the “black communities” within their borders and now offer them legal and cultural recognition, as well as, at least theoretical, recognition of ancestral communal land ownership.<sup>1</sup> The endangered archives digitised under the auspices of the British Library’s Endangered Archives Programme enable researchers, as well as these neglected populations, to know more about their often hard to discover past.<sup>2</sup>

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1 “Ley 70 sobre negritudes”, cited in Aline Helg, *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia, 1770-1835* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 1-2; “Lei No. 7.668, de 22 de agosto de 1988”, [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/leis/L7668.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/L7668.htm); “Programas e ações”.

2 In 2005, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Vanderbilt University launched a major international initiative to begin locating and preserving ecclesiastical and notarial records of Africans in Cuba and Brazil, Ecclesiastical and Secular Sources for Slave Societies (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/esss/index.php>). With funding from the British Library, the project was expanded into Colombia (EAP255, EAP503 and EAP640) and into additional areas of Brazil (EAP627).



Colombia's rich colonial history began in the early sixteenth century when war-hardened adventurers like Alonso de Ojeda, already experienced in the conquest and colonisation of Española (modern Dominican Republic and Haiti) first explored its Caribbean coast in search of gold, Indian slaves, and potential profits.<sup>3</sup> In 1525, after decades of brutal coastal raids, another veteran of Española, Rodrigo de Bastidas, founded Santa Marta using slave labour. However, some of the slaves soon rebelled and burned the fledgling town before running to the rugged interior hinterlands where they formed runaway, or maroon, communities known as *palenques*. Some of these maroon settlements survived for centuries, resisting the Spanish military expeditions that attempted to eradicate them.<sup>4</sup>

Undaunted, in 1533, another émigré from Española, Pedro de Heredia, founded Cartagena de Indias, also on the Caribbean coast of New Granada.<sup>5</sup> Treasure hunters from Cartagena initially employed African slaves to extract gold from looted tombs of the Sinú Indians.<sup>6</sup> As those treasures were depleted, Spanish settlers established plantations, ranches and gold mines in the central valley of Colombia, all of which required large numbers of enslaved African labourers.

The Magdalena River, which runs through the central valley, became Colombia's main artery to the interior and it, too, became a largely African region (Fig. 9.1). Soon enslaved Africans replaced Indian rowers on the boats transporting goods to and from Cartagena and Mompox, which was essentially an inland Caribbean port. Enslaved Africans also built the vast complex of fortifications and public works that protected Cartagena, while

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3 Carl O. Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 104-19 and 161-177; Erin Stone, *Indian Harvest: the Rise of the Indigenous Slave Trade from Española to the Circum-Caribbean, 1492-1560* (Ph.D. thesis, Vanderbilt University, 2014); and Nicolás del Castillo Mathieu, "Población aborigen y conquista, 1498-1540", in *História Económica y Social del Caribe Colombiano*, ed. by Adolfo Meisel Roca (Bogotá: Ediciones Uninorte-ECO, 1994), pp. 25 and 43.

4 Jane Landers, "The African Landscape of 17th Century Cartagena and its Hinterlands", in *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade (The Early Modern Americas)*, ed. by Jorge Cañizares-Ezguerra, James Sidbury and Matt D. Childs (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 147-62.

5 Castillo Mathieu, pp. 43 and 25; Anthony McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence: Economy, Society and Politics under Bourbon Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 17-18; and María del Carmen Borrego Plá, *Cartagena de Indias en el Siglo XVI* (Seville: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1983), pp. 58-61 and 423-35.

6 McFarlane, p. 8.

potentially more fortunate slaves served as domestics in the private homes and the many convents of the city.<sup>7</sup>

Cartagena was designated as an official port of the Spanish fleet system as early as 1537, and became “by far the largest single port of [slave] debarkation in the Spanish Americas”.<sup>8</sup> Most of the early slave shipments into Cartagena originated from Upper Guinea (the Rivers of Guinea) and Cabo Verde. Later shipments through São Tomé brought slaves from Lower Guinea and Angola.<sup>9</sup> David Wheat has used previously unknown port entry records to document 463 slave ships arriving in Cartagena between 1573 and 1640 that disgorged more than 73,000 enslaved Africans who were recorded by port officials.<sup>10</sup> How many more were smuggled into Cartagena cannot be known, but these numbers clearly show that the city and its hinterlands, where even fewer whites resided, quickly took on the aspect of an African landscape. When the slave ships came into port, agents from as far away as Lima descended upon Cartagena to conduct purchases, and a number of the newly arrived slaves were subsequently transported to Portobello (modern Panama) or to the mines of Potosí in modern Bolivia.<sup>11</sup> Many also escaped to form a network of *palenques* encircling Cartagena.<sup>12</sup>

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7 Castillo Mathieu, pp. 44-45; and María del Carmen Borrego Plá, “La conformación de una sociedad mestiza en la época de los Austrias, 1540-1700”, in *Historia Económica y Social*, ed. by A. Meisel Roca (Bogotá: Ediciones Uninorte-ECO, 1994), pp. 59-108 (pp. 66-68).

8 António de Almeida Mendes, “The Foundation of the System: A Reassessment of the Slave Trade to the Spanish Americas in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, in *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, ed. by David Eltis and David Richardson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 63-94.

9 After the union of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns in 1580, the Portuguese Company of Cacheu began to export more slaves from Angola and the Kingdom of Kongo. Borrego Plá, *Cartagena de Indias*, pp. 58-61 and 423-35.

10 David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming), ch. 3. Wheat also participated in the EAP project in Quibdó, EAP255: Creating a digital archive of Afro-Colombian history and culture: black ecclesiastical, governmental and private records from the Choco, Colombia, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP255](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP255)

11 Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin, *From Capture to Sale: The Portuguese Slave Trade to Spanish South America in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); and Borrego Plá, “La conformación”, p. 68.

12 Landers, “The African Landscape of 17th Century Cartagena and its Hinterlands”; Jean-Pierre Tadiou, “Un proyecto utópico de manumission de los cimarrones del ‘Palenque de los montes de Cartagena’ en 1682”, in *Afrodescendientes en las Américas: trayectorias sociales e identitarias: 150 años de la abolición de la esclavitud en Colombia*, ed. by Claudia Mosquera, Mauricio Pardo and Odile Hoffman (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2002), pp. 169-80.



Fig. 9.1 Map of Pacific and Caribbean Colombia, by James R. Landers, CC BY-NC-ND.

Spanish efforts to control Colombia's western Pacific coast were simultaneous to those made on the Caribbean coast, and followed a similar trajectory. Gold-seeking raiders killed hundreds of natives, burned native villages, attempted to establish fortified settlements, and were repeatedly driven away. From

the Isthmus of Panama, the Spaniards moved eastward into the Darién and then eventually pushed farther south into the rugged Chocó, Colombia's northwestern region of dense jungles noted for its hot and humid climate and extreme rainfalls. Hostile native groups with deadly poison-tipped arrows also prevented Spaniards from settling in the area in the early years of exploration.<sup>13</sup> One unhappy Spaniard called the Chocó "an abyss and horror of mountains, rivers, and marshes".<sup>14</sup> Although for many years, Spaniards considered the Chocó a useless and unhealthy frontier, discoveries of gold, silver, and later platinum, attracted miners to the region, and they brought large numbers of enslaved Africans to extract the precious metals.<sup>15</sup> As in other contact zones, smallpox and later epidemics of measles combined with unaccustomed labour led to a dramatic decline among the native populations of the Chocó, and more African labourers were brought in to replace them in the mines and agricultural production. The newly imported African *bozales* arriving in Quibdó and Buenaventura in the eighteenth century lived in small villages or *rancherías* located in the tropical rainforest while working on alluvial mining centers.<sup>16</sup> Independent free prospectors called *mazamorreros* were also drawn to work in the Chocó.<sup>17</sup> The region, therefore, acquired a distinct culture that blended indigenous, African and European peoples and traditions, although people of African descent predominated by the eighteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

In 1654, Spaniards established San Francisco de Quibdó along the Atrato River that leads to the Caribbean and the small village served as the first regional capital of the Chocó (Fig. 9.1). Quibdó remained relatively isolated,

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13 Sauer, *Early Spanish Main*, pp. 161-77, 268-69 and 288-89.

14 William Frederick Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier: The Colombian Chocó, 1680-1810* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), pp. 19 and 13.

15 Vicente Restrepo, *Estudio sobre las minas de oro y plata de Colombia*, 2nd edn. (Bogotá: Banco de la República 1952); Enrique Ortega Ricaurte, *Historia documental del Chocó* (Bogotá: Editorial Kelly, 1954); Helg, p. 72; and Sergio A. Mosquera, *El Mondongo: Etnolingüística en la historia Afrochocoana* (Bogotá: Arte Laser Publicidad, 2008).

16 See William F. Sharp, "The Profitability of Slavery in the Colombian Chocó, 1680-1810", *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 55 (1975), 468-95.

17 On the early establishment of mines in the Chocó and the enslaved miners and *mazamorreros* who worked them, see Mario Diego Romero, *Poblamiento y Sociedad en el Pacífico Colombiano siglos XVI al XVIII* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 1995). For an overview of the historiography of this region see Mónica Patricia Hernández Ospina, "Formas de territorialidad Española en la Gobernación del Chocó durante el siglo XVIII", *Historia Crítica*, 32 (2006), 13-37.

18 On the artistic traditions of the region, see Martha Luz Machado Caicedo, *La escultura sagrada chocó en el contexto de la memoria de la estética de África y su diáspora: ritual y arte* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2011); and Sharp, pp. 20-21.

however, because in 1698, in a vain attempt to curtail contraband trade, officials of the Royal Audiencia of Santa Fe de Bogotá banned commerce on the river. The village of Nóvita, on the San Juan River in the southern Chocó, therefore, became the first important mining center in the region, as well as the Chocó's new regional capital. Although Indian attacks led Spaniards to abandon Nóvita several times, the area's gold deposits always lured them back to re-build it. In 1784, Bourbon reformers re-opened the Atrato River to legal maritime trade, and Quibdó finally gained importance as a commercial center. In the nineteenth century, it again became the regional capital.<sup>19</sup> The abolition of slavery in 1851 disrupted labour supplies for the gold mines of Nóvita causing it to decline in economic importance, but Quibdó's commerce was relatively unaffected.<sup>20</sup> Many of the formerly enslaved in Quibdó had already purchased their freedom with gold mined on days off or stolen from their owners, and by the eighteenth century the Chocó was home to a large free population of African descent.<sup>21</sup>

Still considered an inhospitable locale for its distinctive climate, the Chocó is today also notorious for the activities of leftist and paramilitary groups and drug trafficking organisations including the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), which has been waging war against the Colombian state for more than five decades. An estimated 20,000 Chocoanos, most of African descent, have been displaced by the violence.<sup>22</sup> While creating misery for the local inhabitants of the Chocó, this military conflict has also exacerbated the threat to local history and the remaining archives in the region. Supported by the project EAP255, Pablo Gómez trained students from the Universidad Tecnológica del Chocó "Diego Luis Córdoba" to digitalise some of the most endangered colonial records of the region (Fig. 9.2). The project captured images from the First Notary of Quibdó and the Notary of Buenaventura, a city in the Department of Valle, in southern Colombia. All date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and many have suffered damage from humidity, fungus and lack of attention in poorly maintained storage space.

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19 Orián Jiménez, "El Chocó: Libertad y poblamiento, 1750-1850", in *Afrodescendientes en las américas*, pp. 121-41.

20 Royal orders repeated this prohibition many times over the course of the eighteenth century. Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier*, pp. 10, 14 and 15.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 148-70; and Sergio Mosquera, "Los procesos de manumisión en las provincias del Chocó", in *Afrodescendientes en las américas*, pp. 99-120.

22 Carlos Rosero, "Los afrodescendientes y el conflicto armado en Colombia: La insistencia en lo propio como alternativo", in *Afrodescendientes en las américas*, pp. 547-59.



Fig. 9.2 The Quibdó team examines a notarial register at the EAP workshop.  
Photo by David LaFevor, CC BY.

Africans and their descendants living in Colombia's remote peripheries like Quibdó received little attention either from the colonial or state-building projects and, later, they were largely ignored in Colombia's historical narratives. The records recovered by the EAP255 project allow researchers to reconstruct the history of these largely forgotten regions and populations. Notarial documents from the region include land sales, mortgages, and many slave sales that offer interesting data not only about the age, sex, and profession of each slave, but also, occasionally, information about the slave's past history, physical appearance, characteristics and health.<sup>23</sup> These records contain untapped

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<sup>23</sup> Some published examples appear in Sergio A. Mosquera, *Memorias de los Últimos Esclavizadores en Citará: Historia Documental* (Carátula: Promotora Editorial de Autores Chocoanos, 1996).

information related to the most important economic activity in the region: gold and platinum mining by black slaves, and the social conditions in the towns and mines developed around this enterprise. They hold registers related to the sale and transfer of property (including slaves), certificates of payment and of debt cancelation, wills, ethnic origin of slaves arriving in Chocó and the south Colombian Pacific, and activities of different state and ecclesiastical actors, including visits by the Inquisition office during the eighteenth century.

These sources also provide important data related to the development of independent communities and maroon settlements and their relationships with Emberá-Wounaan groups that inhabited the area for centuries. Indeed, almost every slave inventory from the eighteenth century lists at least one or two slave runaways. Registers of slave manumission in Chocó date as early as 1720, and after buying their freedom former slaves started migrating to places like the Baudo valley where they formed largely black towns with cultural and social characteristics similar to the *palenques* established by escaped slaves.<sup>24</sup>

These communities lived in the most difficult conditions. The Colombian Pacific still has — as it has since reliable records begin — some of the highest morbidity and mortality rates of any place in the Americas. This should not be surprising given the harsh climate of the area, the impoverished conditions in which most of the inhabitants of the region still live, and the violence that has characterised the rise and decline of mining and narcotic plantation booms in the region. Starting in the mid-eighteenth century notarial records, most of the registers of slaves' sales, denunciations for mistreatment, or death registers, also describe the usual roster of diseases that challenged life in the early modern era: yellow fever, malaria, typhus, smallpox, bubonic plague, syphilis and leprosy, among many others. While traveling around the Atrato and San Juan Rivers in the 1820s, French geologist Jean Baptiste Boussingault wrote:

The black sailing my piragua was a magnificent human specimen. However, he had on his thigh an enormous scrofulous, or venereal tumor, a disease that was very common around the places through which we were traveling. [...] At around six in the afternoon we disembarked in a Rancheria close to a place called "Las Muchachas". The blacks who received us were covered in venereal ulcers and disfigured by cancerous afflictions [certainly symptoms of leprosy]. They live very happily as a family when there is a complete nose for ten people. This is a most sad spectacle.<sup>25</sup>

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24 Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier*.

25 As quoted in Sergio A. Mosquera, *Don Melchor de Barona y Betancourt y la esclavización en el Chocó* (Quibdó-Chocó: Universidad Tecnológica del Chocó "Diego Luis Córdoba", 2004), p. 162.

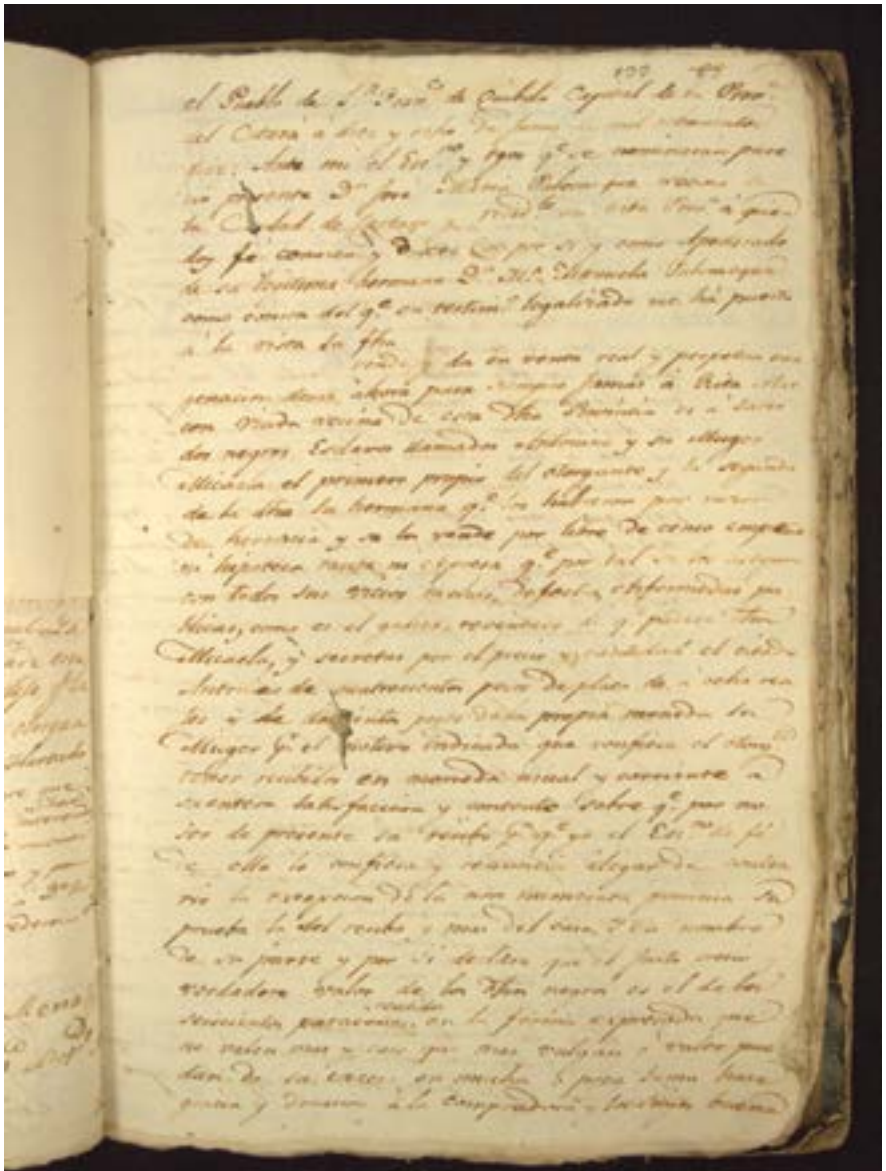


Fig. 9.3 Notarial Document from Quibdó (EAP255/2).  
 Photo by Quibdó team member, CC BY-NC-ND.



The register of slave sales from Chocó and Buenaventura amply confirm Boussingault's observations about the prevalence of leprosy. Among the specific designations uniquely referring to leprosy that appear in the records we have digitalised are "galico reventado, llaga, ahoto, gota coral, and tumors", among others. For instance, Fig. 9.3 provides an example of the sale in 1810 in San Francisco de Quibdó, capital of the province of Citará (today Chocó) of two slaves, Antonino and his wife, Micaela. The seller was José María Palomeque who was registered as a *vecino* (registered inhabitant) of the city of Cartago, but lived in the province of Citará. Palomeque sold the two slaves to Rita Alarcon, also a resident of Citará for four hundred and two hundred pesos respectively. In the sale document, Palomeque expressly took responsibility for "all the vices, tachas [marks or scars], defects, and public diseases, such as it is the *galico reventado* [my emphasis] of which said Micaela suffers and other hidden ones [they might have]".<sup>26</sup>

Hundreds of similar records contain information about the different diseases suffered by communities of free and enslaved blacks, with most of the cases pertaining to leprosy and/or syphilis. The records coming from the Colombian Pacific also illustrate the dynamics of community formation in these *rancherías* that were outside the purview of the state. They add an important chapter to the historiography of public health in the country, centered, in this case, on descriptions of leprosarium and the "*aldeas de leprosos*" (villages of lepers) in the Andes and northern Colombia.<sup>27</sup>

Eighteenth and nineteenth-century slave trading records from Chocó and the Colombian Pacific include cases of masters who had to sell their slaves for a reduced price due to the lesions produced by leprosy. These cases are probably but a fraction of the real incidence of the disease in the population. Except for anecdotal reports coming from travellers like Boussingault, there is virtually no information, outside the records saved by the EAP255 project, regarding the health conditions, or for that matter, economic, demographic and social conditions of the black population of these villages on the banks of

26 Notaría Primera de Quibdo, Libro de Venta de Esclavos 1810-188, Fol. 132r. Notaría Primera de Riohacha Archive, Protocolo 1, Riohacha, 23 March 1831. Notaría Primera de Riohacha Archive, Protocolo 1, Riohacha, 4 May, 1831. Baptism of María Olalla, Book of Baptisms, San Gerónimo de Buenavista, Montería, Córdoba, 20 February 1809.

27 See, for instance, Diana Obregón, "Building National Medicine: Leprosy and Power in Colombia, 1870-1910", *Social History of Medicine*, 15 (2002), 89-108; or Pilar Sabater, "Discurso sobre una enfermedad social: La lepra en el virreinato de la Nueva Granada en la transición de los siglos XVIII y XIX", *Dynamis*, 19 (1998), 401-28; and Abel F. Martínez Martín, *El lazareto de Boyacá: lepra, medicina, iglesia y estado 1869-1916* (Tunja: Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, 2006).

the Atrato and San Juan Rivers at that time. The isolation of most of the towns in the Chocó and the Valle del Cauca gave rise to communitarian models for the perception of disease that emerged spontaneously and preceded mandatory isolationist projects that public health officials enacted during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The early twentieth century saw the consolidation of the Colombian State, the formation of a national bourgeoisie and the inclusion of the nation within the world economy through the expansion of coffee exports. Modernisation of the country became a national priority, for which leprosy was an obstacle. According to nineteenth century publications on the geography of leprosy, Colombia competed with India for primacy in terms of incidence of the disease — a contest that the Colombian elites refused to win. If Colombia was seen by outsiders as a pestilent country, a “leprosarium” in the words of none other than Gerard Amauer Hansen, the Norwegian scientist who discovered the mycobacterium causing the disease, Chocó became increasingly portrayed as a place inhabited by sick black people.<sup>28</sup>

While the Chocó’s early settlers struggled to exploit the gold and platinum mines and survive its hostile environment and inhabitants, the lesser frequented, and less settled northeastern coasts of Colombia, first noted as a source of pearls, became infamous in the later sixteenth century as sites of contraband, piracy and illegal slave importations.<sup>29</sup> Nuestra Señora de los Remedios del Río de la Hacha, later known simply as Riohacha, was said to be “rich only in pearle and cattell”.<sup>30</sup> Its beleaguered governor reported it suffered repeated attacks by “the cruelest Indians of these regions”.<sup>31</sup> Riohacha also suffered frequent attacks by French and English pirates and smugglers. In the 1560s, John Hawkins illicitly sold slaves seized in Sierra Leone to local pearl fishermen and, in 1596, his kinsman, the famous English pirate Francis Drake, sacked Riohacha and sailed away with 100 African slaves as part of his booty.<sup>32</sup> Riohacha remained a smuggling centre in the

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28 Diana Obregón, “The Anti-leprosy Campaign in Colombia: The Rhetoric of Hygiene and Science, 1920-1940”, *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos*, 10 (2003), 179-207.

29 Kenneth R. Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean: Trade and Plunder 1530-1630* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 27-29; Kris E. Lane, *Pillaging the Empire: Piracy in the Americas 1500-1750* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), pp. 27, 36-38, 106 and 117; and K. R. Andrews, *The Last Voyage of Drake and Hawkins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 95.

30 David Laing Purves, *The English Circumnavigators: The Most Remarkable Voyages Round the World by English Sailors* (London: William P. Nimmo, 1874), p. 103.

31 Relación, 24 January 1596, Archivo General de Indias, cited in Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean*, p. 29.

32 Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean*, pp. 49, 84, 118-19, 124-25 and 164-65.

seventeenth century for buccaneers such as Henry Morgan sailing out of newly-English Jamaica.<sup>33</sup>

In this Caribbean port, as in the mines of the Chocó and on the Magdalena River of the central valley, African slaves soon replaced native labourers, working primarily as divers in the coastal pearl fisheries. Conditions were brutal and many of the enslaved, like their counterparts elsewhere in Colombia, soon fled their misery eastward to the La Guajira Peninsula where they joined indigenous rebels fighting their mutual Spanish oppressors.<sup>34</sup>

Although Riohacha's pearl fisheries were eventually exhausted, smuggling continued along Colombia's northern coast throughout the eighteenth century. Riohacha became part of a wider Caribbean and Atlantic commercial network of informal trade and smuggling, centred on nearby Jamaica and Curaçao. The bulk of this highly profitable, but in Spanish law, illicit, trade was in livestock (horses, cattle, mules and goats), textiles and slaves.<sup>35</sup> In 1717, Spain's Bourbon Reformers attempted to regain economic and political control of the region by making Riohacha part of the newly created Viceroyalty of New Granada, but based on his extensive research in Spanish colonial treasury accounts, Lance Grahn argues that "as much if not more, contraband passed through Riohacha than any other single region in the Spanish New World".<sup>36</sup>

East of Riohacha, the La Guajira Peninsula jutted northward into the Caribbean and closer, still, to British commercial centres. The Wayúu Indians controlled the Guajira Peninsula and long resisted Catholic evangelisation and Spanish domination. The peninsula existed in a state of almost permanent war well into the eighteenth century and the beleaguered Spanish governor Soto de Herrera referred to the Wayúu as "barbarians, horse thieves, worthy of death, without God, without law and without a king."<sup>37</sup> A large Spanish force sent from Cartagena in 1771 "to reduce the rebellious Guajiros to obedience

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33 Lane, pp. 27, 36-38, 106 and 117; and Andrews, *The Last Voyage of Drake*, p. 95.

34 Miguel Acosta Saignes, *Vida de los Esclavos Negros en Venezuela* (Caracas, Hespérides 1967), pp. 255-58.

35 Lance R. Grahn, "An Irresoluble Dilemma: Smuggling in New Granada, 1713-1763", in *Reform and Insurrection in Bourbon New Granada and Peru*, ed. by John R. Fisher, Allan J. Kuethe and Anthony McFarlane (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), pp. 123-46. Also see Ernesto Bassi Arevalo, *Between Imperial Projects and National Dreams: Communication Networks, Geopolitical Imagination, and the Role of New Granada in the Configuration of a Greater Caribbean Space, 1780s-1810s* (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Irvine, 2012).

36 Lance Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), ch. 3.

37 Eduardo Barrera Monroy, "La Rebelión Guajira de 1769: algunas constantes de la Cultura Wayuu y razones de su pervivencia", *Revista Credencial Historia* (June, 1990), <http://www.banrepultural.org/blaaavirtual/revistas/credencial/junio1990/junio2.htm>

through respect for Spanish military might” thought better of a fight when met with more than seven times their number of Indians armed with British guns.<sup>38</sup> The fierce Wayúu acquired many of those guns through adept contraband trade in pearls and brazilwood.<sup>39</sup> The Wayúu also acquired contraband slaves from British and Dutch merchants. For example, in 1753, Pablo Majusares and Toribio Caporinche, two powerful Wayúu chiefs living in the northern region of the Guajira Peninsula, owned eight African slaves who they employed in pearl fishing.<sup>40</sup> Other slaves belonging to them were destined for service in the Wayúu’s feared military force.<sup>41</sup>



Fig. 9.4 Project directors and University of Cartagena student team at EAP workshop. Photo by Mabel Vergel, CC BY-NC-ND.

EAP503: Creating a digital archive of a circum-Caribbean trading entrepôt: notarial records from La Guajira<sup>42</sup> enabled students from the Universidad de Cartagena, under the supervision of José Polo Acuña and assistants Mabel Vergel and Diana Carmona to digitalise notarial documents that show that slaves continued to be important in the economy of nineteenth-century

38 Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling*, ch. 3; Helg, *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia*, pp. 27-31 and 43-48; and Eduardo Barrera Monroy, *Mestizaje, comercio y resistencia: La Guajira durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2000), p. 35.

39 José Polo Acuña, *Etnicidad, conflicto social y cultura fronteriza en la Guajira, 1700-1850* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2005). The Wayúu also traded with British and Dutch merchants for gunpowder, knives, slaves, textiles and foodstuffs. Monroy, *Mestizaje, comercio y resistencia*, p. 98.

40 Petra Josefina Moreno, *Guajiro-Cocinas: Hombres de historia 1500-1900* (Ph.D. thesis, Complutense University, Madrid, 1984), p. 188.

41 Ibid.

42 [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP503](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP503)

Riohacha (Fig. 9.4).<sup>43</sup> Documents from the Notaría Primera of Riohacha offer numerous examples of slave transactions. For example, on 23 March 1831, the widow Ana Sierra sold a 25-year-old mulatta slave named Felipa to Maria Francisca Blanchard, a merchant in Riohacha, for 250 pesos.<sup>44</sup> Sometime later, Blanchard sold the same slave to Miguel Machado for 200 pesos, although the documents offer no clues as to why the slave's price dropped.<sup>45</sup> The same Miguel Machado appears again in the notarial documents when he bought a seventeen-year-old slave named Francisco Solano from Maria Encarnacion Valverde for 100 pesos. Francisco was the son of another slave who served in Valverde's household.<sup>46</sup>

These notarial records also document links between merchants in Riohacha and their factors in the islands of Aruba, Curacao and Jamaica, and show how authorities in Riohacha were able to strengthen their grip on the fertile lands located south of the Rancheria River through peace treaties with formerly hostile indigenous groups. Peace allowed for the southward expansion of the agricultural and cattle ranching frontier, increased production for internal consumption and commercial exchange, and the further integration of Riohacha. As Bourbon reformers of the eighteenth century attempted to halt smuggling and encourage development in Riohacha, they also established new towns to help support their most important port of Cartagena de Indias. Some of the new towns located south of Cartagena in the Department of Córdoba were connected to it via the Sinú River, which also connected the southern towns to the Atrato River, Quibdó and the Pacific.<sup>47</sup>

The EAP640 project also enabled teams from the University of Cartagena to digitalise ecclesiastical records from the churches of Santa Cruz de Lorica and San Jerónimo de Buenavista in Montería in the Department of Córdoba in northern Colombia (Figs. 9.5 and 9.6).<sup>48</sup>

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43 José Polo Acuña, "Territorios indígenas y estatales en la península de la Guajira (1830-1850)", in *Historia social del Caribe Colombiano: Territorios, indígenas, trabajadores, cultura, memoria e historia*, ed. by José Polo Acuña and Sergio Paolo Solano (Cartagena: La Carreta Editores, 2011), pp. 45-71.

44 Notaría Primera de Riohacha Archive, Protocolo 1, Riohacha, 23 March 1831.

45 Ibid.

46 Notaría Primera de Riohacha Archive, Protocolo 1, Riohacha, 4 May, 1831.

47 José Polo Acuña and Ruth Gutiérrez Meza, "Territorios, gentes y culturas libres en el Caribe continental Neograndino 1700-1850: una síntesis", in *Historia social del Caribe Colombiano*, pp. 13-44.

48 EAP640: Digitising the documentary patrimony of Colombia's Caribbean coast: the ecclesiastical documents of the Department of Córdoba, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP640](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP640)



Fig. 9.5 Endangered ecclesiastical records from the Iglesia de Santa Cruz de Lorica, Córdoba. Photo by Cartagena team member, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 9.6 Students learn to film endangered records at Vanderbilt's digital workshop at the University of Cartagena. Photo by David LaFevor, CC BY.

Montería was established in the eighteenth century along the Sinú River, which links it to the Caribbean Sea. It is noted as a ranching capital and also an ethnically and culturally diverse region where Zenú Indians and descendants of Spaniards and Africans all interacted. An official history of Montería states that two different delegations of Zenú Indians presented their chiefs' petitions to the governors of Cartagena asking that the Spanish town be established in their territory.<sup>49</sup>



Fig. 9.7 Cathedral of San Jerónimo de Buenavista, Montería, Córdoba.  
Photo by Mabel Vergel, CC BY-NC-ND.

The ecclesiastical records of San Gerónimo de Buenavista (as it was earlier spelled) (Fig. 9.7) provide insights into one of the most ethnically diverse areas of Córdoba. The Catholic church mandated the baptism of African slaves in the fifteenth century and extended this requirement across the Catholic Americas. Once baptised, Africans and their descendants were also eligible for the sacraments of marriage and a Christian burial.<sup>50</sup> Baptism records such as the one below give the date of the ceremony, the name of the priest performing it,

<sup>49</sup> See [http://www.cordoba.gov.co/cordobavivedigital/cordoba\\_monteria.html](http://www.cordoba.gov.co/cordobavivedigital/cordoba_monteria.html). Also see Pilar Moreno de Ángel, *Antonio de la Torre y Miranda Viajero y Poblador* (Bogotá: Planeta Colombiana Editorial, 1993).

<sup>50</sup> Jane Landers, "African 'Nations' as Diasporic Institution-Building in the Iberian Atlantic", in *Dimensions of African and Other Diasporas*, ed. by Franklin W. Knight and Ruth Iyob (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2014), pp. 105-24.

the name of the person baptised (whether child or adult), the parents' names if known, and whether the child or adult was born of a legitimate marriage, or was the "natural" child of unmarried parents. Priests also noted if the baptism was performed "in case of necessity", allowing researchers to track epidemic cycles. The names of the baptised person's godparents are also given in these records. Godparents had the responsibility for helping raise their godchild in the Catholic faith, and in case of the parents' deaths, they were to raise the child as their own. Thus, community networks can be traced through patterns of *compadrazgo* (godparentage).

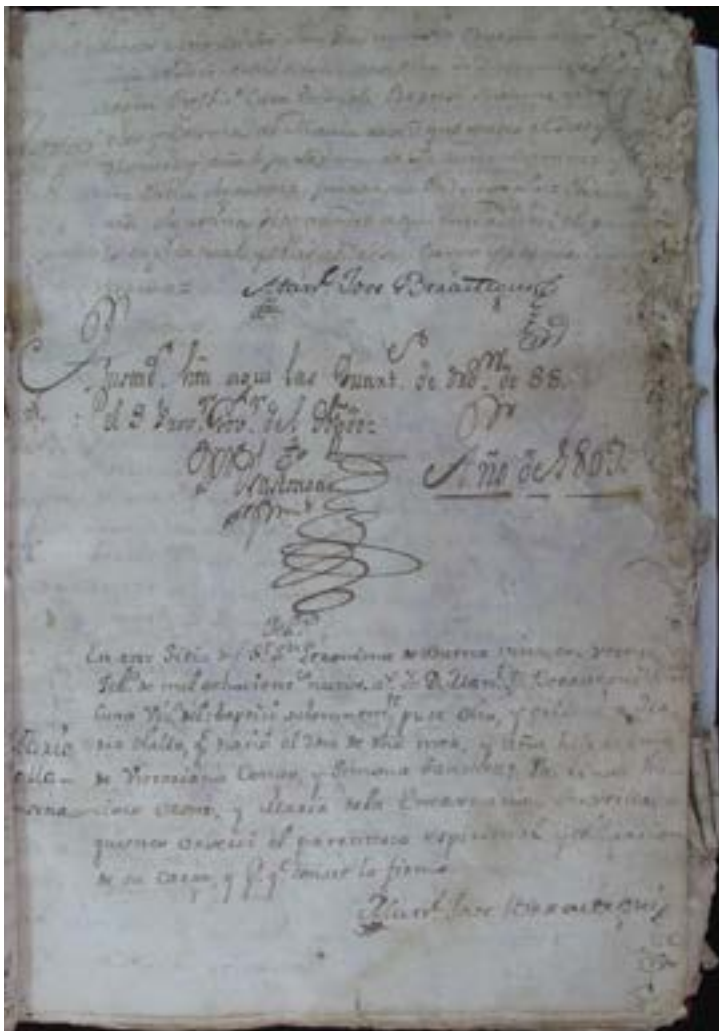


Fig. 9.8 Baptism document of Maria Olalla, San Jerónimo de Buenavista Cathedral, Montería, Córdoba (EAP640). Photo by Cartagena team member, CC BY-NC-ND.



The records of San Gerónimo de Buenavista, unlike those from other Caribbean sites, do not specifically note the race of the person baptised, supporting modern theories about the historical invisibility of Afro-Colombians. However, researchers can at times find racial clues in the names of parents. In Fig. 9.8, the priest, Don Manuel José Beractegui, baptises the legitimate child, María Olalla, born on 12 February 1809 to parents Victoriano Congo and his wife, Simona Sánchez. That the father bore an ethnic surname suggests that he is African-born, or at least not recognised as fully acculturated. However, he is a free man; otherwise his enslaved status would have been noted. A notation to the left of the entry indicates that the baptism was performed as an act of charity, meaning that the parents could not afford the standard ecclesiastical fee.<sup>51</sup>

As Spaniards explored, exploited and finally colonised the northern coast of what is today Colombia, the Portuguese followed similar patterns along Brazil's northeastern coast. Despite challenges from French and Dutch competitors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Portuguese successfully colonised Brazil, transferring techniques of sugarcane cultivation and slaves from West and Central Africa to the coast of Brazil.<sup>52</sup> Brazil's early sugar cultivation concentrated along its northeastern coast.<sup>53</sup> The region's settlers exported sugar and other products and imported goods and enslaved Africans through the major port cities of Recife, Olinda and Salvador, but sugar mills were scattered throughout the countryside and smaller cities also supplied sugar for export. Settlers deep in the *sertão* (backlands) also raised livestock for local consumption.<sup>54</sup>

The history of the state of Paraíba (situated to the north of Pernambuco and to the south of Rio Grande do Norte and Ceará) has received less attention than that of its northeastern neighbours despite its interest and significance for Brazilian and Atlantic World history (see Fig. 9.9 for a map of colonial Paraíba and Fig. 9.10 for a map of modern-day Paraíba).<sup>55</sup> When the Portuguese Crown formed the Capitania of Paraíba in 1574, French settlers still lived in the region,

51 Baptism of María Olalla, Book of Baptisms, San Gerónimo de Buenavista, Montería, Córdoba, 20 February 1809.

52 For an overview of this period, see Marshall Eakin, *Brazil: The Once and Future Country* (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 1997), pp. 7-66. On African contributions to Brazil see Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 49-108.

53 For an annotated bibliography of suggested readings on this region, see Courtney J. Campbell, "History of the Brazilian Northeast", in *Oxford Bibliographies in Latin America*, ed. by Ben Vinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

54 J. Costa Porto, *O pastoreio na formação do Nordeste* (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Cultura, Serviço de Documentação, 1959).

55 José Américo de Almeida, *A Paraíba e seus problemas*, 3rd edn. (João Pessoa: Estado da Paraíba, Secretaria da Educação e Cultura, Diretoria Geral da Cultura, 1980 [1923]), p. 54.

and the competing Europeans soon allied with warring indigenous nations to battle one another.<sup>56</sup> The Portuguese defeated the French and the Potiguar Indians in 1584 and established the city of Nossa Senhora das Neves, which became the political centre of Paraíba, and which is today João Pessoa.<sup>57</sup> After a brief Dutch occupation of some coastal areas of Paraíba from 1634 to 1654, the Portuguese expanded into the interior *sertão* in the late seventeenth century. The names and dates of the first settlers to the region are unknown but they clustered along river routes to raise livestock and routinely battled the Cariri and Tarairiu Indians.<sup>58</sup>



Fig. 9.9 *Nova et Accurata Brasiliae Totius Tabula* made in 1640 by Joan Blaeu. Note the Capitanía de Paraíba, highlighted on the northeastern coast. Ministério das Relações Exteriores do Brasil, Public Domain (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blaeu1640.jpg>).

56 José Octávio de Arruda Mello, *História da Paraíba*, 11th edn. (João Pessoa: A União, 2008), pp. 25-26 and p. 263.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 263. Before acquiring its modern name the town was known as Felipéia de Nossa Senhora das Neves, Frederica, and Paraíba.

58 *Ibid.*, 265. These indigenous groups were later defeated in bloody massacres by *bandeirantes* (a type of scouting explorer). José Leal, *Vale da Travessia*, 2nd edn. (João Pessoa: Editora e Gráfica Santa Fé Ltda, 1993), p. 17.



Fig. 9.10 Map of Paraíba, highlighting São João do Cariri in the interior and João Pessoa on the coast, created by Courtney J. Campbell, CC BY-NC-ND.

The interior town of São João do Cariri received its first official land grant in December 1669 for a place referred to simply as “Sítio São João”, but this land was probably settled prior to this date. Settlers built the town centre near where the Rio da Travessia (now the Rio Taperoá) and the Riacho Jatobá meet. When the parish church was built in 1750, the town was re-named Travessia dos Quatro Caminhos (Crossing of Four Roads).<sup>59</sup> The town’s settlers dedicated themselves to raising livestock (cows, horses,

<sup>59</sup> The town was run by the Coronel and cattleman José da Costa Ramos (formerly Costa Romeu). Leal, p. 25.

sheep and goats) and cultivating cotton, cereals and manioc.<sup>60</sup> The area also developed an important internal market of manioc flour, the liquor known as *aguardente*, and compressed sugar. Traveling salesmen with convoys of donkeys distributed these products throughout the hinterland towns.<sup>61</sup> When the parish of Nossa Senhora dos Milagres da Ribeira do Cariri (later Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri) was founded by the Jesuits in 1750, and its church constructed in 1754, it became the largest parish in Paraíba.<sup>62</sup>

Although we know from church records that São João do Cariri had a significant number of enslaved Africans and people of African descent, there is surprisingly little in the historical literature of the region about this population. That historians have only recently begun to emphasise the importance of reconstructing and analysing the history of this population is not surprising, given their subaltern status. The enslaved Africans of the *sertão* were doubly oppressed: first by the institution of slavery and the slave trade, and then by the cruelty of the recurrent droughts in the region which left their population especially exposed, abandoned and affected. These recurrent droughts killed livestock and slaves and created a cycle of poverty in the region from which, some would say, it has never fully recovered.<sup>63</sup>

To better understand the relationship between the *sertão*, the coastal colonies and the cities in Brazil's colonial and imperial history — and to analyse the role of indigenous and Afro-Brazilian populations in the development of the region's economy, culture and history — researchers must consult the oldest documents remaining in the northeastern region. Unfortunately, as the examples that follow demonstrate, these sources are frequently in poor condition and in danger of disintegrating or disappearing within the next decade. To mitigate this fate, in 2013 a team of researchers supported by the EAP627 project began digitising documents from the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Paraibano (IHGP) in João Pessoa, the Arquivo Histórico Waldemar Bispo Duarte in João Pessoa, and the Paróquia de Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri (Fig. 9.11).<sup>64</sup>

60 Ibid., p. 55; Padre João Jorge Rietveld, *O verde Juazeiro: história da paróquia de São José de Juazeirinho* (João Pessoa: Imprell, 2009), pp. 96-98.

61 Mello, p. 266.

62 Campina Grande superseded it in 1769. Rietveld, p. 98.

63 Ibid., pp. 96-99.

64 EAP627: Digitising endangered seventeenth to nineteenth century secular and ecclesiastical sources in São João do Cariri e João Pessoa, Paraíba, Brazil, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP627](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP627)





Fig. 9.12 *Sesmaria* (land grant) document from Paraíba (EAP627).  
Photo by Courtney J. Campbell, CC BY-NC-ND.

A *sesmaria* was a type of land grant by the Portuguese Crown to petitioners throughout the Portuguese Atlantic World, including Brazil and Angola, from 1375 to 1822.<sup>65</sup> Colonial subjects (who were often already in unofficial possession of the land) had to petition the governor for these land grants. The governor would respond to the petition with a letter determining a period by which the petitioner had to cultivate the land and, once the petitioner had met these requirements, he or she would send a new petition to the King who would confirm the *sesmaria*. These grants came with strings attached: in order to maintain ownership of the land, the landowner had to cultivate

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<sup>65</sup> Carmen Margarida Oliveira Alveal, *Converting Land into Property in the Portuguese Atlantic World, 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century* (Ph.D. thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 2007).

it productively; otherwise, the Portuguese Crown would rescind the grant.<sup>66</sup> Carmen Alveal found that the Crown granted *sesmarias* to “men, women, Indians, *mestiços* [persons of European and indigenous descent], free Africans, clergy, new Christians [that is, Jewish converts to Christianity], soldiers, [and] religious and civil institutions”.<sup>67</sup> The grants affected not only the petitioners and land grantees, but also the free and enslaved labourers who worked the lands.



Fig. 9.13 *Sesmaria* document from Paraíba (EAP627).  
Photo by Paraíba team member, CC BY-NC-ND.

Through further study of these documents, researchers might come to a better understanding not only of the colonial period, but also of the unequal land distribution that persists in Brazil today. For example, the document in Fig.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

9.13 housed at the Arquivo Histórico Waldemar Bispo Duarte, describes a *sesmaria* grant that was “three leagues long and one wide with two springs called Coati and Fricheira in the heathen language in the Sertão do Cariri” to a man named Francisco de Arruda Camara e Salvador Pereira in March of 1735. While these land grants are fairly formulaic, we learn particular details from each. The *sesmaria* above provides the name of the grantee and grantor, the size of the grant, and the ways of measuring the land (“running from sun-up [East] to sun-down [West]”). The frequent mention of the springs on the property demonstrates the importance of water in this arid region and the necessity to register water sources as territory, while the insistence on the names as belonging to the “heathen language” (Tupi-Guaraní), emphasises that, to understand and describe the layout of the territory, not only the Portuguese colonists, but also the Portuguese Crown had to adopt indigenous terminologies. This grant also describes the land as “uncultivated and not used to advantage”, the state of the land as “brush and shrub”, and the purpose of granting as “settlement”. Finally, the inclusion in this letter of handwritten copies of other letters exchanged with various authorities about this particular grant allows the reader to witness the various levels of bureaucracy involved in the granting of one plot of land.



Fig. 9.14 Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri Church (EAP627).  
Photo by David LaFevor, CC BY.



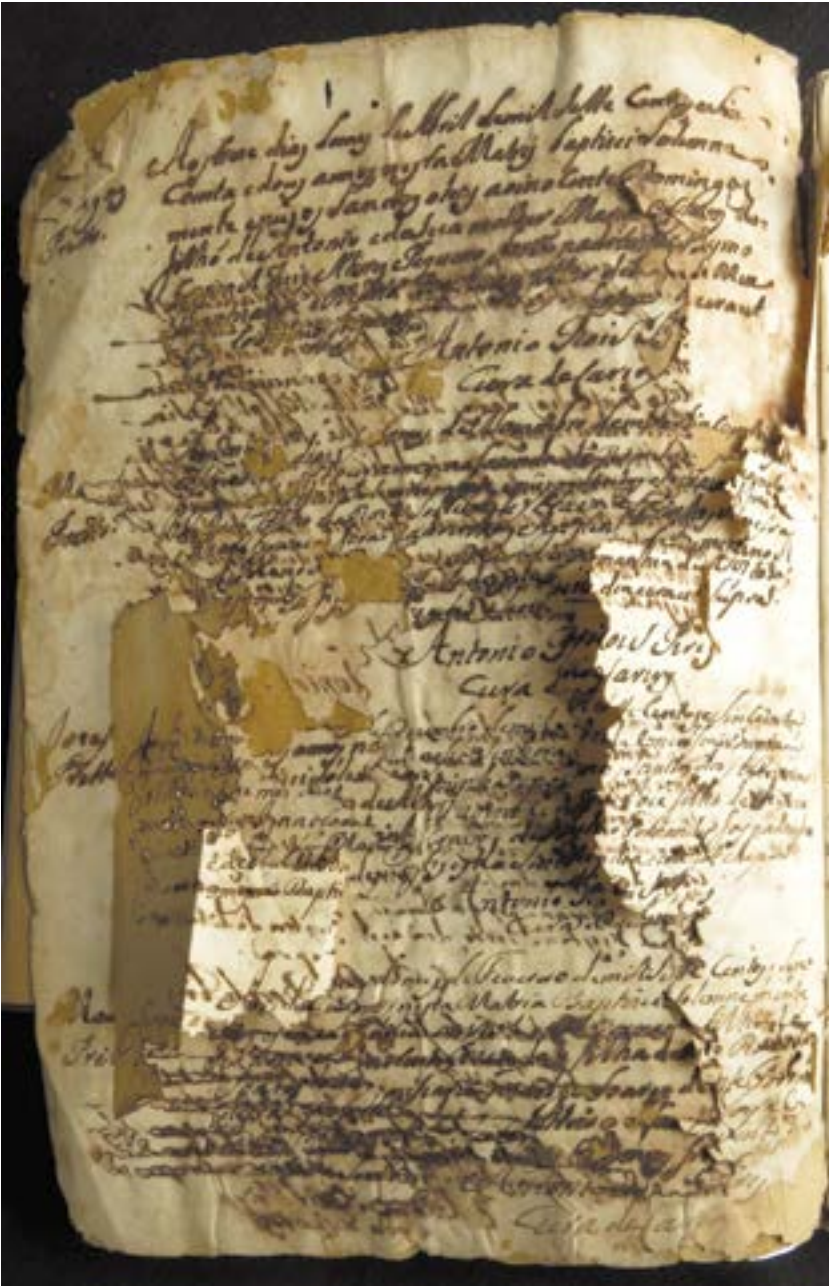


Fig. 9.15 *Book of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths, 1752-1808, from Paróquia de Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri Paraíba (EAP627).*  
Photo by Paraíba team member, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 9.16 Book of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths, 1752-1808, from Paróquia de Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri Paraíba (EAP627). Photo by Paraíba team member, CC BY-NC-ND.

Ecclesiastical documents are also essential sources for studying populations that have not been proportionately represented, including enslaved Africans and Indians, mixed-race and indigenous slaves and labourers, free workers, and poor farmers.<sup>68</sup> The pages above (Figs. 9.15 and 9.16), for example, come from the oldest book of baptisms, marriages and deaths of the Paróquia de Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri, the *Livro 1: Batizados, casamentos e óbitos anos de 1752 a 1808*. This volume is in a particularly damaged state, suffering from both insect damage and oxidation of iron-based ink, with the above page being one of the few that is in one piece and fully legible.

Recognising the historical value of the documents, the church agreed to allow our team to digitise and make available online the 55 volumes they house in a small cabinet in the parish office (Fig. 9.14). The collection at this parish includes bound, handwritten records related to baptisms (1752-1928), marriages (1752-1931), deaths (1752-1931), confirmations (1778-1816) and genealogy (1891-1917) of the white, black, Indian, mixed, free, freed, and slave populations from the region, including Africans from the Mina Coast, “Guinea” and Angola. It also includes documents referring to the parish finances (1766-1861). Of particular interest in this book are the terms used to describe those baptised, married or buried. Baptismal records describe adults and children as enslaved and freed, legitimate or not, Brazilian-born, African, black, “*pardo*” (of mixed ancestry), mulatto, “*cabra*”, “*curiboca*”, “*mestiço*” (of mixed ancestry), and even “*vermelho*” (red), demonstrating the commonplace nature of racial mixing and the very rootedness of miscegenation in the hinterlands of Paraíba in the eighteenth century.

As seen in the legible page above, parish priests baptised not only children (referred to as “innocents”), but also adult Africans. At times, slaves also served as godparents. Marriage records from the same book include marriages between and among free and enslaved men and women from the parish and from outside of it, and include Brazilian-born Africans, Indians from the Nação (nation) Cavalcantes, and Africans from the Coast of Mina, “Guinea” and Angola. We also learn from this document details about the layout of the region, the names of the *fazendas* (ranches), and the names of smaller chapels where burials were also performed.<sup>69</sup>

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68 Citing EAP project documents, Solange Pereira da Rocha demonstrates that using these lesser studied sources, “it is possible to elaborate new understandings of the multiplicity of experiences of men and women that lived the experience of captivity, their perceptions of their condition as slaves, and the ways in which they reconstituted family ties and established links with people from other social groups.” Solange Pereira da Rocha, *Gente negra na Paraíba oitocentista: população, família e parentesco espiritual* (São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2009), p. 66.

69 For comparison, on seventeenth-century church records from Rio de Janeiro see Mariza

Baptismal records have already begun to inform academic research on this region. For example, Maria da Vitória Barbosa Lima examines the meanings of freedom among the free and enslaved black population working in the livestock- and sugar-producing areas of nineteenth-century Paraíba. She demonstrates that slaves often tried to purchase freedom or escape, while the poor black population lived precariously on the edge of freedom and slavery.<sup>70</sup> Solange Pereira da Rocha's study of free and enslaved black populations of nineteenth-century Paraíba analyses baptismal records, focusing on formal and informal kinship and family formation among both free and enslaved black residents.<sup>71</sup> Rocha finds that slaves advanced their positions "with the weapons at their disposal – such as intelligence and astuteness".<sup>72</sup>

One of these weapons was the creation of kinship ties through baptism. Slaves used baptism to establish kinship relations with free people in an attempt to seek freedom, or, at the very least, to create social conditions that eased their survival in captivity.<sup>73</sup> Solange Mouzinho's forthcoming Master's dissertation relies primarily on ecclesiastical records from the Paróquia de Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri digitalised by the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme.<sup>74</sup> Her research examines how enslaved men, women and children in Vila Real de São João do Cariri related with others – whether enslaved, freed or free – through religious life. Mouzinho's research will give insight into the family and social relations that the enslaved population of the region created and influenced, and within which they lived and worked. Through these historical studies, based on ecclesiastical sources, we learn about the lives, social relations and culture of the enslaved African and Afro-Brazilian populations of Paraíba.

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de Carvalho Soares, *People of Faith: Slavery and African Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011).

70 Maria da Vitória Barbosa Lima, *Liberdade interdita, liberdade reavida: escravos e libertos na Paraíba escravista (século XIX)* (Brasília: Fundação Cultural Palmares, 2013). This book won the 2012 Concurso Nacional de Pesquisa sobre Cultura Afro-Brasileira, a national award for research on Afro-Brazilian culture given by the Fundação Cultural Palmares, discussed in more detail below. This recognition demonstrates that the importance of histories based on these endangered sources has gained national attention as Brazilian scholars emphasise the importance of studying the effects of slavery on its multi-ethnic population.

71 Rocha, p. 27.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 294.

73 *Ibid.*

74 Solange Mouzinho, *Parentescos e sociabilidades: experiências de vida dos escravizados no sertão paraibano de São João do Cariri, 1752-1816* (Master's dissertation, Universidade Federal da Paraíba, 2014). Mouzinho used the documents to create a database of the population of São João do Cariri.

Yet, it is not only scholars who are interested in these records. As Brazil struggles to come to terms with the legacies of indigenous displacement and African slavery, *quilombos* (maroon-descended communities) and indigenous groups might draw upon these records to legally establish their lineage or vindicate their rights. The Fundação Cultural Palmares (FCP) — so named after the famed *quilombo* called Palmares in Pernambuco (modern-day Alagoas) that resisted colonial domination for over a century — is an agency of the Brazilian Ministry of Culture dedicated to “promoting the cultural, social and economic values resulting from black influence in the formation of Brazilian society”.<sup>75</sup> The FCP was established by the Constitution of 1988, and has the official mission of “preserving, protecting and disseminating black culture, with the aim of inclusion and for the development of the black population in the country”.<sup>76</sup> Toward this end, one of the FCP’s specific actions is to carry out research, studies and surveys about Afro-Brazilian cultural legacies. The FCP also is in charge of protecting the legal rights of *quilombos* and pulling together the documentation necessary to support their historical justification. Ecclesiastical records, like those used to support the research of Lima, Pereira, and Mouzinho, are fundamental in the preservation of Afro-Brazilian patrimony.

Further, social movements dedicated to restoring lands granted by *sesmaria* to indigenous groups rely on historical documents to make their claims. The best-known of these groups, the Tabajara of Paraíba, have been struggling since 2006 to reclaim lands granted to them by *sesmaria* in the seventeenth century. By combining data from historical sources with GIS and satellite technologies, the Tabajara and socially-dedicated scholars have joined forces with some humble, yet significant successes.<sup>77</sup> Making the records digitalised by the EAP freely available through the Ecclesiastical and Secular Sources for Slave Societies online archive not only preserves historical patrimony, but also offers legal support to groups struggling with the economic, social, cultural and legal legacies of Brazil’s history of colonisation and slavery.

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75 “Programas e ações”, Fundação Cultural Palmares, accessed July 29, 2014, [http://www.palmares.gov.br/?page\\_id=20501](http://www.palmares.gov.br/?page_id=20501)

76 “Lei No. 7.668, de 22 de agosto de 1988”, accessed on July 29, 2014, available online: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/leis/L7668.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/L7668.htm); “Programas e ações”.

77 On the Tabajara movement, see: Ismael Xavier de Araújo, Viviane dos Santos Sousa, Roméria Santana da Silva Souza, Jeremias Jerônimo Leite, Tânia Maria de Andrade, and Rodrigo Lira Albuquerque dos Santos, “Processo de emergência étnica: povo indígena Tabajara da Paraíba”, in *Congresso Norte Nordeste de Pesquisa e Inovação (CONNPEPI)* (2012). Available online at <http://propi.ifto.edu.br/ocs/index.php/connepi/vii/paper/view/2110/1626>

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# 10. Convict labour in early colonial Northern Nigeria: a preliminary study

Mohammed Bashir Salau<sup>1</sup>

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Scholars have developed a lively and fruitful interest in the history of slavery and other forms of unfree labour in early colonial Northern Nigeria. Paul E. Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn have investigated how various measures implemented by the colonial government resulted in the “slow death of slavery”;<sup>2</sup> Chinedu N. Ubah has examined how the end of slave trading came about in three stages;<sup>3</sup> Alan Christelow has emphasised how Emir Abbas of the Kano Emirate dealt with cases involving emancipation and redemption;<sup>4</sup> and Ibrahim Jumare has looked at how the 1936 proclamation marked the beginning of the last phase of domestic slavery in all parts of Northern Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> While the history of slavery has attracted the most critical attention, the history of forced labour has not been neglected.

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- 1 The research for this article was funded by the Endangered Archives Programme and the College of Liberal Arts award from the University of Mississippi. I would like to thank the editor and anonymous reviewers of this volume for their comments and support.
  - 2 See for instance Jan S. Hogendorn and Paul E. Lovejoy, “The Reform of Slavery in Early Colonial Northern Nigeria”, in *The End of Slavery in Africa*, ed. by Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 391-411.
  - 3 Chinedu N. Ubah, “Suppression of the Slave Trade in the Nigerian Emirates”, *Journal of African History*, 32 (1991), 447-70.
  - 4 Alan Christelow, “Slavery in Kano, 1913-1914: Evidence from the Judicial Records”, *African Economic History*, 14 (1985), 57-74. Related to Christelow’s work on the Kano region is Polly Hill, “From Farm Slavery to Freedom: The Case of Farm Slavery in Nigerian Hausaland”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 18 (1976), 395-426.
  - 5 Ibrahim M. Jumare, “The Late Treatment of Slavery in Sokoto: Background and Consequences of the 1936 Proclamation”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 27/2 (1994), 303-22.

Michael Mason, for example, has drawn our attention to the use of forced labour in railway construction,<sup>6</sup> while other general studies on wage labour in Northern Nigeria have made considerable reference to either slavery or forced and bonded labour in general.<sup>7</sup>

Although there is evident interest in the history of slavery and unfree labour in Northern Nigeria, as well as a burgeoning interest in the history of the prison system across Nigeria,<sup>8</sup> I am not aware of any comprehensive study on convict labour in the region. I have referred to the employment of convict labour in agricultural production in early colonial Kano, but in a book that focuses primarily on the pre-colonial period.<sup>9</sup> Other writers have written comprehensive studies dealing mainly with the post-colonial use of convict labour in other parts of Africa.<sup>10</sup> Whereas most extant literature on convict labour focuses on the post-colonial era, Allen Cook's work on convict labour in South Africa, unlike this study, mainly explores the "relationship of the prison labour system to other aspects of apartheid."<sup>11</sup> This paper seeks to add to the growing literature on convict labour in Africa, among the forms of unfree labour, by introducing to the debate colonial records related to the use of convict labour in early colonial Northern Nigeria.

The colonial records used in this study were written by Frederick Lugard, the first Governor of Northern Nigeria, and other colonial administrators in the region.<sup>12</sup> After the British conquest of Northern Nigeria in 1897-1903, Lugard fashioned an administrative system of indirect rule, mainly because

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6 Michael Mason, "Working on the Railway: Forced Labor in Northern Nigeria, 1907-1912", in *African Labor History*, ed. by Peter C. W. Gutkind, Robin Cohen and Jean Copans (London: Sage, 1978), pp. 56-79.

7 See, for instance, Kohnert Dirk, "The Transformation of Rural Labour Systems in Colonial and Post-Colonial Northern Nigeria", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 13/4 (1986), 258-71.

8 Examples of works that focus comprehensively or less comprehensively on the prison system in Nigeria include Viviane Saleh-Hanna, ed., *Colonial Systems of Control: Criminal Justice in Nigeria* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2008); Tanimu Bashir, "Nigeria Convicts and Prison Rehabilitation Ideals", *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 12/3 (2010), 140-52; and T. O. Elias, ed., *The Prisons System in Nigeria: Papers* (Lagos: Lagos University Press, 1968).

9 Mohammed Bashir Salau, *The West African Slave Plantation: A Case Study* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 124-25.

10 See for instance Kwame Frimpong, "Botswana and Ghana"; Gail Super, "Namibia"; and Dirk Van Zyl Smit, "South Africa", in *Prison Labour: Salvation or Slavery?: International Perspectives*, ed. by Dirk van Zyl Smit and Frieder Dünkler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 25-36, pp. 153-68 and pp. 211-40 respectively.

11 Allen Cook, *Akin to Slavery: Prison Labour in South Africa* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1982), p. 3.

12 For more details on Lugard see, for instance, I. F. Nicolson, *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960: Men, Methods and Myths* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); and Margery Perham, *Lugard: The Years of Authority 1898-1945* (London: Collins, 1960).

Britain was not prepared to bear the cost involved in employing a large number of its citizens as administrators in Africa. Under this system, just a few European officials were able to rule through an agency of native administration. These Europeans often lived in separate quarters and enjoyed many privileges. Over time, the administrators in question promoted many policies and programmes such as railway construction, road construction and cash crop production.<sup>13</sup>

The colonial records used in writing this study were largely obtained in 2012 as part of a major digitisation project (EAP535) funded by the Endangered Archives Programme at the British Library.<sup>14</sup> This project targeted materials stored at the National Archives of Nigeria in Kaduna and written during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Hausa, Arabic and English. It succeeded in creating an updated catalogue of materials that focus on the pre-colonial and early colonial history of Northern Nigeria (see Figs. 10.1-10.4 for examples of targeted materials). This catalogue contains 2,376 items dealing with such diverse topics as colonial policies, slavery, religion, forced labour, convict labour, pawning, agriculture and culture.<sup>15</sup> The research team turned all of the physical paper items associated with this catalogue into 62,177 digital files. We have also deposited copies of all the digitised materials at the National Archives of Nigeria and at the British Library.<sup>16</sup>

The research team did not digitise all of the colonial records available in the National Archives or even all of the materials related to the various series mentioned below. The project leader and the relevant officials of the National Archives jointly selected materials for digitisation. Two major criteria for selection were the historical value of the records and the state of their physical preservation.

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13 Examples of works on European administrators and their activities in Northern Nigeria include Robert Heussler, *The British in Northern Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); and Charles William James Orr, *The Making of Northern Nigeria*, 2nd edn. (London: Cass, 1965).

14 EAP535: Northern Nigeria: Precolonial documents preservation scheme - major project, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP535](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP535)

15 The British Library has published the catalogue online at: [http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo\\_library/libweb/action/search.do?dscnt=1&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BL%29&frbg=&tab=local&dstmp=1413822282462&srt=author&ct=search&mode=Basic&dum=true&indx=1&v1%28freeText0%29=EAP535\\*&fn=search&vid=IAMS\\_VU2&fromLogin=true&fromLogin=true](http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?dscnt=1&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BL%29&frbg=&tab=local&dstmp=1413822282462&srt=author&ct=search&mode=Basic&dum=true&indx=1&v1%28freeText0%29=EAP535*&fn=search&vid=IAMS_VU2&fromLogin=true&fromLogin=true)

16 <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP535>

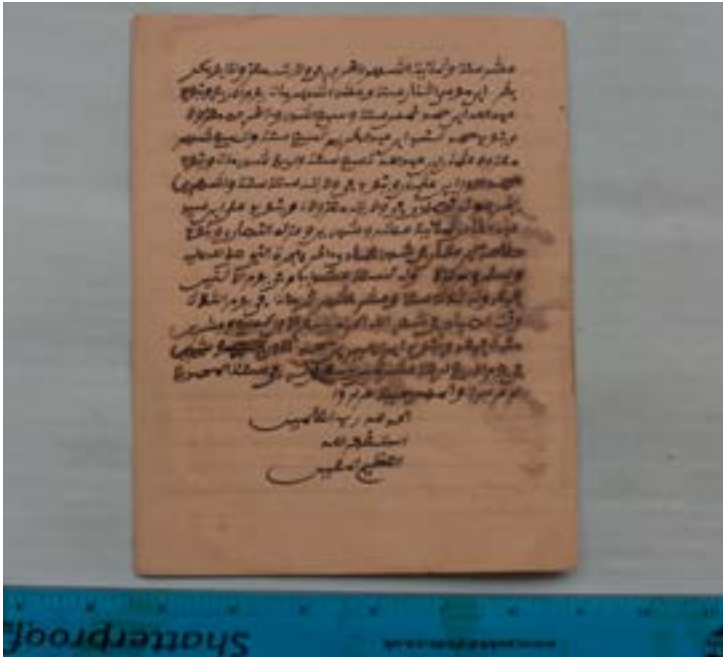


Fig. 10.1 *Kitāb tāriḫ Zazzau* [A History of Zazzu or Zaria Emirate] by B. Ulama-i, 1924. Digitised handwritten Arabic document (EAP535/1/2/3/2, image 2), Public Domain.

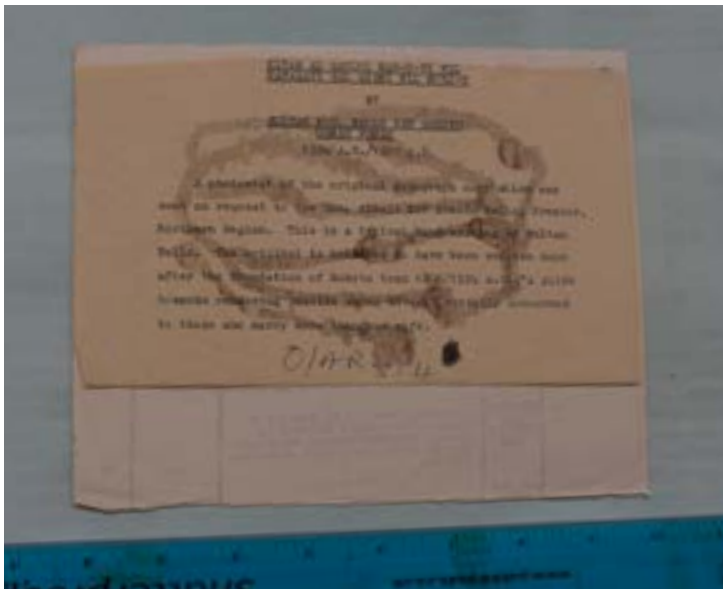


Fig. 10.2 Digitised original file description written in English on an Arabic document by Sultan Muhammad Bello, n.d. (probably 1954-1966). The National Archives, Kaduna (EAP535/1/2/3/3, image 2), Public Domain.

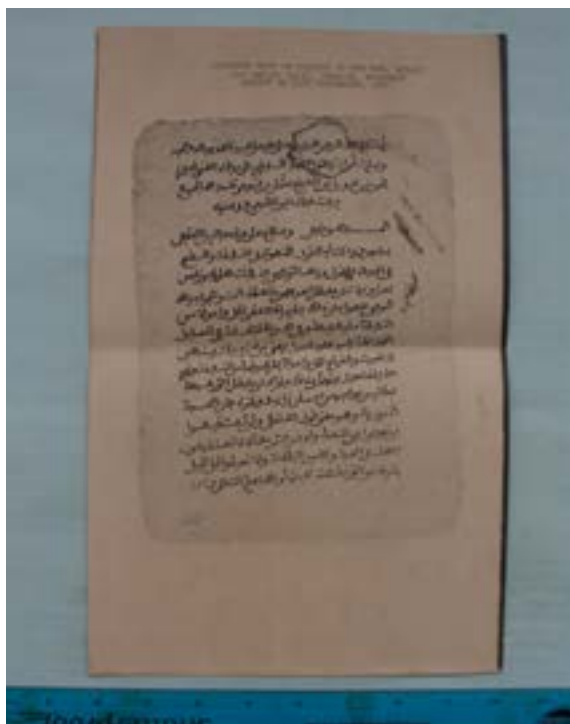


Fig. 10.3 *A Guide to Understanding Certain Aspects of Islam*, by Sultan Muhammad Bello, 1809. The National Archives, Kaduna (EAP535/1/2/3/3, image 3), Public Domain.



Fig. 10.4 *Waqar jami-yah* by Sheikh Ahmadu ti-la ibn Abdullahi, n.d. (EAP535/1/2/19/20, image 2), Public Domain.

The underlying rationale of the project was to provide better access to endangered and unique materials dealing with slavery and unfree labour in Northern Nigeria. The colonial records we digitised in the course of EAP535 are classified in two distinct categories: the EAP535 Secretariat Northern Provinces Record Collection (SNP) and the EAP535 Provincial Record Collection. The first collection has been arranged into six series based on the order in which the records were originally accumulated by the National Archives:

<b>The EAP535 Secretariat Northern Provinces Record Collection (SNP)</b>	
SNP6 Series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1904 to 1912 between the office of the British High Commissioner for the Northern Provinces and other colonial officers in various parts of Northern Nigeria. SNP6 represents the earliest record accumulation transferred from the Office of the Colonial Civil Secretary of Northern Nigeria at Kaduna to the National Archives, while the other series represent materials subsequently accumulated.
SNP7 Series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1902 to 1913 between the office of the British High Commissioner for the Northern Provinces and other colonial officers in various parts of Northern Nigeria.
SNP8 Series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1914 to 1921 between the office of the British High Commissioner for the Northern Provinces and other colonial officers in various parts of Northern Nigeria.
SNP9 Series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1921 to 1924 between the office of the British High Commissioner for the Northern Provinces and other colonial officers in various parts of Northern Nigeria.
SNP10 Series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1913 to 1921 between the office of the British High Commissioner for the Northern Provinces and other colonial officers in various parts of Northern Nigeria.
SNP17 Series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1914 to 1921 between the office of the British High Commissioner for the Northern Provinces and other colonial officers in various parts of Northern Nigeria.

The EAP535 Provincial Record Collection has been organised into seven series by place/geographical areas:

<b>The EAP535 Provincial Record Collection</b>	
Zaria Provincial Records (Zarprof) Series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1904 to 1938 between the office of the Resident of Zaria Province and other colonial officers in various parts of the province in question.
Sokoto Provincial Records (Sokprof) Series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1903 to 1929 between the office of the Resident of Sokoto Province and other colonial officers in various parts of the province in question.
Ilorin Provincial Records (Ilorprof) series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1912 to 1926 between the office of the Resident of Ilorin Province and other colonial officers in various parts of the province in question.
Lokoja Provincial Records (Lokoprof) Series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1917 to 1929 between the office of the Resident of Lokoja Province and other colonial officers in various parts of the province in question.
Makurdi Provincial Records (Makprof) series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1922 to 1938 between the office of the Resident of Makurdi Province and other colonial officers in various parts of the province in question.
Minna Provincial Records (Minprof) Series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1910 to 1928 between the office of the Resident of Minna Province and other colonial officers in various parts of the province in question.



Kano Provincial Records (Kanprof) Series	Official correspondence exchanged from 1913 to 1921 between the office of the Resident of Kano Province and other colonial officers in various parts of the province in question.
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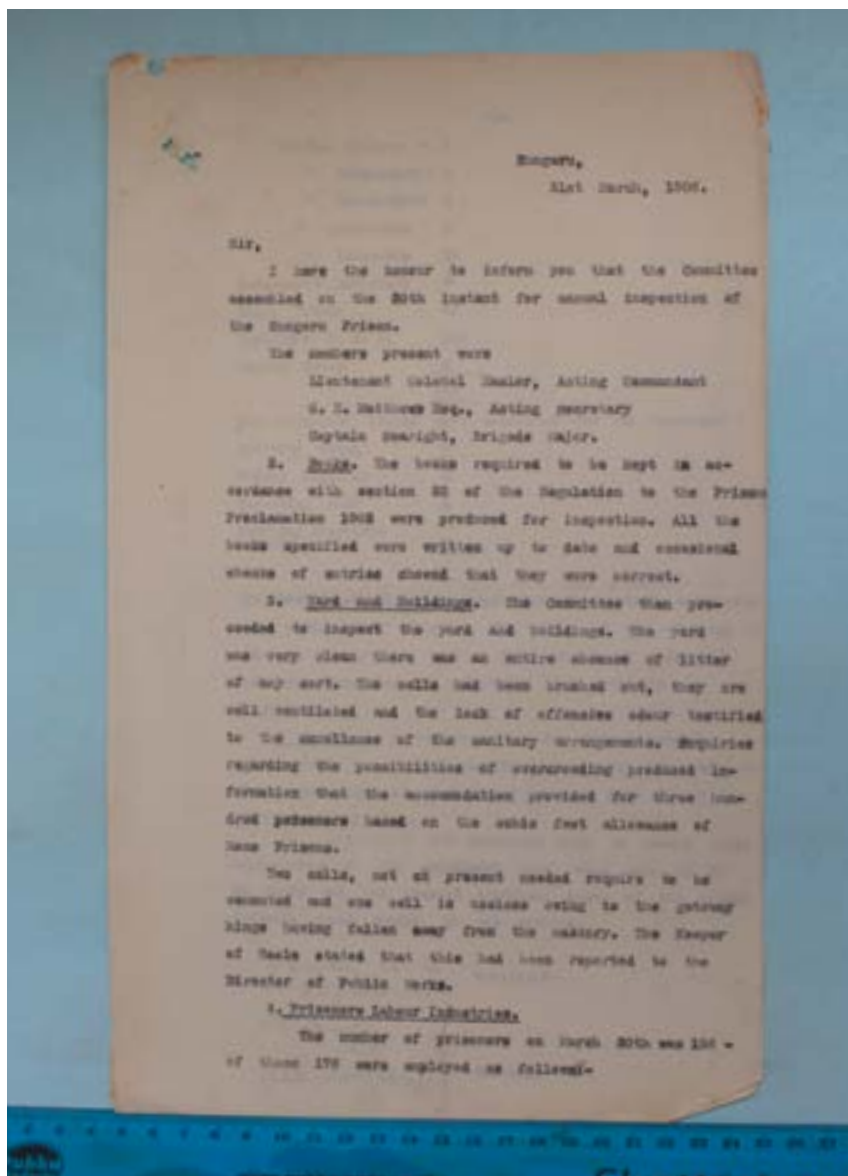
Few of the materials in both the EAP535 collections focus primarily on convict labour. Rather, the majority are in the form of intelligence reports, district assessment and reassessment reports, letters, memoranda, provincial annual reports, provincial quarterly reports and touring reports.

The archival documents digitised in the course of EAP535 present a number of problems. For instance, most of the documents are culturally biased: none of them come from the convicts' viewpoint. In one document, a European official commenting on the colonial police states that: "The fact is that this country does not produce men who can be trusted out of sight of European officers".<sup>17</sup> Implicitly, this statement characterises the local people of Northern Nigeria as incapable of the same strength of character that the policemen are assumed to possess. It reveals a conscious effort to depict Africans as inferior while portraying Europeans as members of a superior race.

The limitations of such materials notwithstanding, they constitute a valuable source of information about convict labour when analysed together. They tell us about the criminal records of convict labourers, the development of the prison institutions in which they lived, the health issues they experienced, their discipline and their work activities (see examples of colonial records that highlight such issues in Figs. 10.5-10.8). Furthermore, the materials demonstrate that colonial records focusing exclusively on the prison institution/convict labourers do indeed exist.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> EAP535/3/7/2/7: Sokoto Province, monthly report no. 25, May and June 1905.

<sup>18</sup> While investigating documents in the National Archives of Nigeria in Kaduna, I discovered that the Prison Department in colonial Northern Nigeria maintained monthly and annual reports. Also, many records in the Public Works Department (PWD), as well as other SNP and provincial files dealing with the late colonial era, contain references to the use of convict labourers. Unfortunately, mainly due to the limited duration of the project, the research team could not digitise all materials related to the use of convict labour during the colonial era.





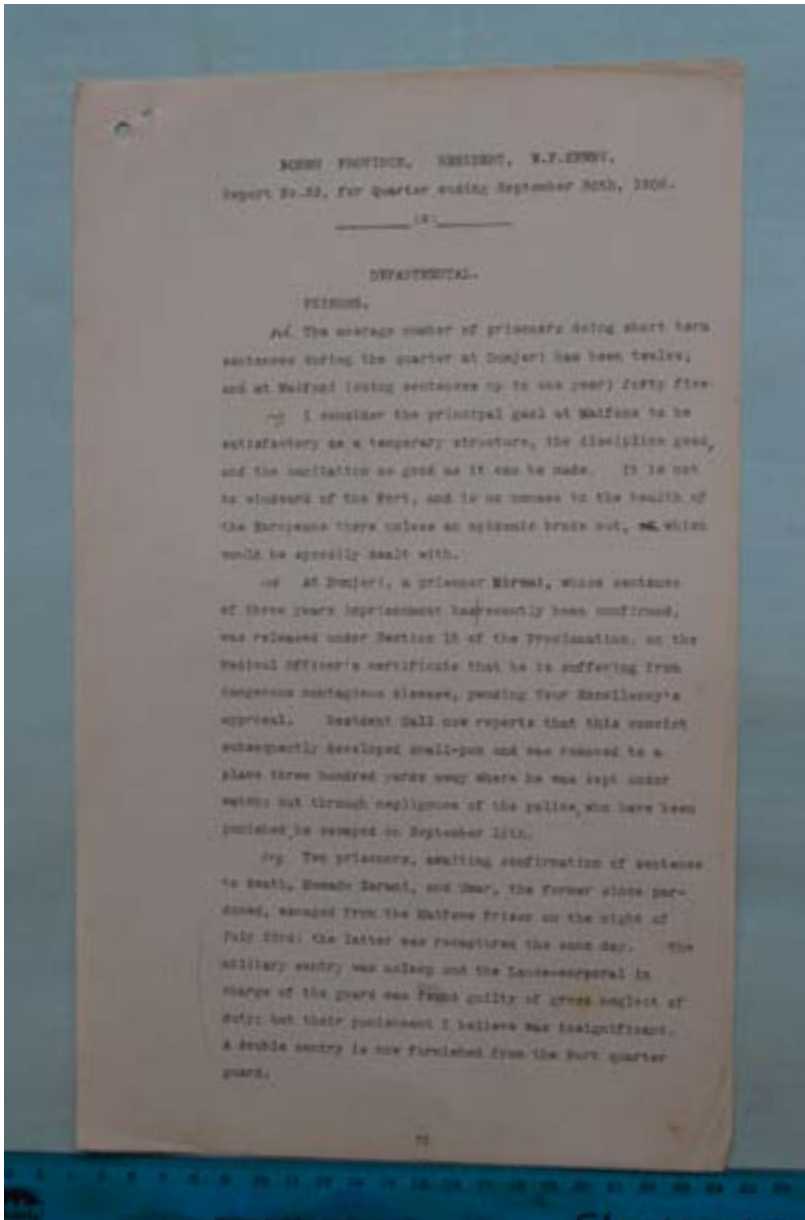


Fig. 10.7 Report on Bornu Province prisons by W. P. Hewby, 1906 [1] (EAP535/2/2/5/16, image 53), Public Domain.

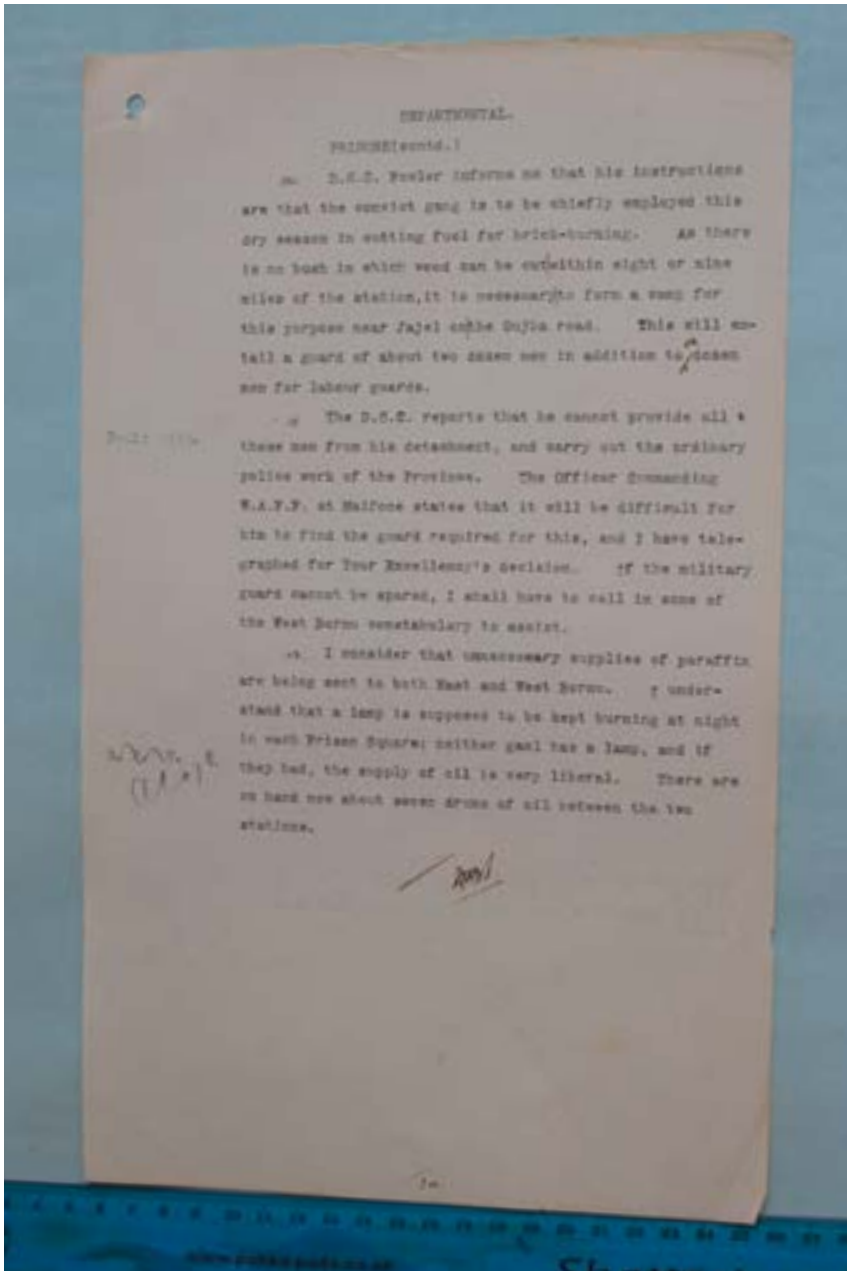


Fig. 10.8 Report on Bornu Province prisons by W. P. Hewby, 1906 [2] (EAP535/2/2/5/16, image 54), Public Domain.

The partially-extant archival documents digitised in the course of EAP535 tell us a great deal about prisons and convict labourers from the first decade of the twentieth century to the 1930s. This chapter will, for clarity of exposition, be predominantly based on materials written within the first two decades of the twentieth century, and it will focus on what these items tell us about the work activities of convicts.

In addition to materials digitised as part of EAP535, I have consulted another body of colonial records, Northern Nigeria Annual Reports, obtained from the Harriet Tubman Institute at York University in Toronto, Canada.<sup>19</sup> These reports were written by the High Commissioner or Governor of Northern Nigeria and addressed to the Colonial Office in Britain. I will focus here on the annual reports from 1902 to 1913. The strengths and limitations of this group of reports are similar to those of other colonial records discussed above. To mitigate these limitations, in particular the colonial European bias, I have also consulted a number of primary and secondary sources, such as oral evidence from the Yusuf Yunusa Collection<sup>20</sup> and published works on slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate and Northern Nigeria.

In my analysis of colonial records, I argue that there are clear connections between convict labour and cash crop production, the construction of public facilities, the cultivation of crops to meet the food needs of both European and African administrators, the cost-effectiveness of colonial administration in Northern Nigeria, and the construction of European hegemony. Before substantiating these arguments, I will discuss the history of the prison system in pre-colonial Northern Nigeria.

## Convict labour in the pre-colonial Sokoto Caliphate

Prisons existed in the Sokoto Caliphate before the British conquest, but little attention has been devoted to examining pre-colonial imprisonment. Nevertheless, it is clear from extant sources that the inmates in Sokoto Caliphate prisons could be classified into three major groups: war prisoners,

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19 The Harriet Tubman Institute probably obtained these materials from the British Library, although such colonial records could be found in other archives based elsewhere.

20 The Yusuf Yunusa Collection consists of interviews recorded on cassette tapes in 1975. The tapes have been deposited at the Northern History Research Scheme of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and at the Harriet Tubman Institute, York University, Toronto. They are also available on CDs or in digital format at the Tubman Institute.

freeborn people imprisoned for political or other crimes, and slaves.<sup>21</sup> Generally, most inmates could be ransomed, executed, enslaved or exchanged. Although many of those enslaved (from all three groups of prisoners) were used as domestic servants, others were sent to *ribats* (frontier fortresses) where they served as soldiers and/or in other roles such as plantation labourers, builders, concubines and weavers.<sup>22</sup>

There is evidence that convicts based within Sokoto Caliphate prisons (including those war prisoners who were yet to be ransomed, executed, enslaved or exchanged) often worked under close supervision on state fields “the entire day before returning to their cells”.<sup>23</sup> Inmates, like many Sokoto Caliphate slaves, frequently experienced physical cruelty and starvation.<sup>24</sup> Even though slave owners mostly punished their own slaves outside the prison, there is evidence that the slaves within Sokoto Caliphate prisons were often sent there by private estate owners or administrators of state holdings.<sup>25</sup>

In the Kano area, the major prison to which recalcitrant slaves were banished was Gidan Ma’ajin Watari.<sup>26</sup> Situated less than a kilometre northeast of the Emir’s palace in Kano city, it was owned by the state and managed by the state official called Ma’ajin Watari. Masters sent defiant slaves,

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21 Salau, pp. 83-84; Northern Nigeria Annual Report (henceforth cited as NNAR) 1902, p. 29; Thierno Bah, “Captivity and Incarceration in Nineteenth-Century West Africa”, in *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*, ed. by Florence Bernault (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), pp. 69-77 (p. 74); and David Killingray, “Punishment to Fit the Crime?: Penal Policy and Practice in British Colonial Africa”, in *Prison and Confinement in Africa*, pp. 97-118 (p. 100).

22 For further details on how slaves were used to foster Hausa-Fulani or Muslim hegemony in the Sokoto Caliphate see, for instance, Salau, pp. 45-54.

23 Bah, p. 74.

24 F. D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1922), p. 199; and Bah, p. 74.

25 Ibrahim Jumare, *Land Tenure in Sokoto Sultanate of Nigeria* (Ph.D. thesis, York University, Toronto, 1995), p. 193; and Hugh Clapperton, *Journal of Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin to Socaccatoo* (London: Frank Cass, 1829), p. 210.

26 Salau, p. 83; Yusuf Yunusa, *Slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Kano* (Bachelor’s dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1976), pp. 23-24; and Paul E. Lovejoy, “Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate”, in *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa*, ed. by Paul E. Lovejoy (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 1981), pp. 200-43 (p. 232). See also the Yunusa Collection at the Harriet Tubman Institute, York University, particularly the testimonies of Muhammadu Sarkin Yaki Dogari (aged 70 when interviewed at Kurawa ward, Kano city, 28 September 1975), Malam Muhammadu (aged 75 when interviewed at Bakin Zuwo, Kano Emirate, 9 October 1975), and Sallaman Kano (aged 55 when interviewed at the Emir’s palace, 20 September 1975). Sallaman Kano was resident at the palace and responsible for the royal holdings at Giwaram and Gogel.

including those whom they did not want to sell or otherwise dispose of, to this prison for reform or, as Yusuf Yunusa puts it, “to be punished and preached to”.<sup>27</sup> On a slave’s arrival at the prison, the master was expected to declare the specific offence the slave had committed and the type of punishment to be meted out. Thereafter, the erring slave was admitted to the facility through two doors, being severely beaten in the process.<sup>28</sup> The conditions at Gidan Ma’ajin Watari were terrible, as an early colonial record indicates:<sup>29</sup>

A small doorway 2 ft. 6 in. by 18 in. gives access into it; the interior is divided by a thick mud wall (with a smaller hole in it) into two compartments, each 17 ft. by 7 ft. and 11 ft. high. This wall was pierced with holes at its base, through which the legs of those sentenced to death were thrust up to the thigh, and they were left to be trodden on by the mass of other prisoners till they died of thirst and starvation. The place is entirely air-tight and unventilated, except for one small doorway or rather hole in the wall through which you creep. The total space inside is 2,618 cu. ft., and at the time we took Kano [1903] 135 human beings were confined here each night, being let out during the day to cook their food, etc., in a small adjoining area. Recently as many as 200 have been interned at one time. As the superficial ground area was only 238 square feet, there was not, of course, even standing room. Victims were crushed to death every night — their corpses were hauled out each morning.<sup>30</sup>

While in prison, a slave was usually subjected to torture by fellow inmates as well as by guards.<sup>31</sup> Masters could occasionally pay a visit to the prison to determine whether or not their slaves should be released. During such visits, the masters often presented their slaves with cowries or food, while the slaves, in turn, would plead for forgiveness. Ultimately, it was the master who decided how many days the slave would spend in the facility.<sup>32</sup>

Whether or not it was standard practice for masters in all parts of the Sokoto Caliphate to send slaves to various state prisons for reform, three facts are clear from the pre-colonial era. First, a prison system existed prior

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27 Yunusa, “Slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, p. 23.

28 Salau, p. 83; and Yunusa, “Slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, pp. 23-24.

29 Northern Nigerian Annual Report 1902, p. 29, as quoted in Lugard, p. 99 n. For a similar description of the deplorable conditions of prisons in the Sokoto Caliphate, see Jumare, *Land Tenure*, p. 193; and Clapperton, p. 210.

30 Lugard, p. 199.

31 Salau, p. 84; and Yunusa, “Slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, pp. 23-24.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24. See also the Yunusa Collection, particularly the testimonies of Muhammadu Sarki Yaki Dogari and Sallaman Kano.



to British conquest in pre-colonial Muslim Nigeria. Second, convicts were sometimes made to work on state fields. Third, for all the physical punishment of convicts, the notion of rehabilitation appears to have been part of the ethos of both the caliphal state and the caliphal slaveholders.

## Convict labour under colonial rule

After the British conquest in 1897-1903, the state established new prisons and maintained some old ones.<sup>33</sup> The vast majority of the current prisons in Northern Nigeria, such as the Kano central prison and the Kazaure central prison, were built during the colonial era.<sup>34</sup> The colonial government saw to it that agriculture emerged as the most important economic activity. This was due to several factors, of which the most prominent were: the growing demand for raw materials like cotton, rubber, groundnuts, palm oil and palm kernel by British industries; the need to make Britain independent of America for its raw cotton; and the need to generate revenue for the administration of the protectorate/colony.<sup>35</sup> Given that colonial economic activities were mainly directed towards satisfying these needs, it is not surprising that the focus of agricultural production was on cash crop cultivation.<sup>36</sup> The state and European firms provided seeds and employed other strategies to encourage owners of small farms to produce mainly groundnuts and cotton.<sup>37</sup> Slave labour on plantations was instrumental to the expansion of groundnut production, as evidenced by the contribution of the royal estate in Fanisau to its development in Kano.<sup>38</sup>

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33 On the maintenance of old prisons, see NNAR 1902, p. 76; and on the construction of new prisons, see Viviane Saleh-Hanna and Chukwuma Ume, "Evolution of the Penal System: Criminal Justice in Nigeria", in *Colonial Systems of Control: Criminal Justice in Nigeria*, ed. by Viviane Saleh-Hanna (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2008), pp. 55-68.

34 For further details on the growth of the prison system in Nigeria, including Northern Nigeria, see *ibid.*, pp. 55-68.

35 NNAR 1904, p. 61.

36 For references to the predominance of cash crops in Nigerian agriculture of the time see, for instance, Jan S. Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut Exports: Origins and Early Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979); F. A. Okediji, *An Economic History of Hausa-Fulani Empire of Northern Nigeria, 1900-1939* (Ph.D. thesis, Indiana University Bloomington, 1972); and Bade Onimode, *Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria: The Dialectics of Mass Poverty* (Lagos: Macmillan, 1983).

37 For further details on such incentives see, for instance, Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut Exports*, pp. 16-35 and 58-76.

38 For further details on steps taken to enhance groundnut production in colonial Northern Nigeria see, for instance, Salau, pp. 122-25; and Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut Exports*, pp. 58-76.

In addition to encouraging the production of cash crops on small holdings and plantations, the state initiated agricultural experimental centres in prisons so as to help determine whether specific regions in Northern Nigeria were suitable for growing specific cash crops. These centres were often located on prison "farmlands," which were also responsible for the production of food.<sup>39</sup> The prison farmlands varied in size, but in general they occupied public land or land owned by the government, rather than land rented, purchased or borrowed.<sup>40</sup> Because of that, the prison farmlands did not face significant obstacles in terms of land use. Consequently, colonial prison administrators could increase the acreage under cultivation at any point and locate farmlands either "on the ground in the immediate vicinity of gaol[s]" or elsewhere.<sup>41</sup> In one report, it was proposed to move a farmland to an area relatively distant from the prison because "The ground in the immediate vicinity of the gaol is not suitable for farming purposes, the ground being very stony, and the crops were not successful".<sup>42</sup>

The evidence discovered among the documents we digitised suggests that, unlike the use of convict labourers for food production, their use in cash crop production was not practised in all the prison farmlands that existed in early colonial Northern Nigeria. Specifically, it suggests that the use of these labourers in cash crop production was limited to several areas in Northern Nigeria including Zungeru, Lokoja, Niger Province, Kabba Province and Nassarawa Province. In these areas, convicts cultivated cash crops that were important both in Europe and also locally. Thus, in Nassarawa Province, convicts cultivated soya beans as well as the Nyasaland and Ilushi types of cotton; in Niger Province, convicts cultivated cotton; in Kabba, convicts cultivated cotton and soya beans; in Zungeru, convicts cultivated ceara rubber and sisal hemp; and in Lokoja, convicts cultivated cocoa and kola.<sup>43</sup> Outside the actual cultivation of cash crops by convicts in these regions, there is evidence

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39 NNAR 1912, p. 10; EAP535/2/2/10/26: Nassarawa Province quarterly report, June 1911; EAP535/2/2/11/18: Niger Province annual report, 1911.

40 For an excellent discussion of colonial land policies in early colonial Northern Nigeria and the problems of land use faced by slaves in particular, see Jan S. Hogendorn and Paul E. Lovejoy, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

41 EAP535/2/2/11/18.

42 *Ibid.*

43 NNAR 1912, p. 18; EAP535/2/2/10/26; EAP535/2/2/11/18; EAP535/2/2/11/8: Kabba Province annual report, 1911.

that the Director of Agriculture advocated the experiment of growing wattle in Zaria Province in 1913, although we do not know whether or not this experiment was conducted.<sup>44</sup>

Although data on the quantity of cash crops produced by convicts are lacking for almost all the regions mentioned above, we do have documents indicating that ten acres of cotton were cultivated in Nassarawa in 1911 and that 150 lbs of cotton were picked in Niger Province in 1911 (Fig. 10.6).<sup>45</sup>

Given this available data, and the fact that convicts represented a small percentage of the colonial workforce, one can assume that the cash crops produced by convicts were generally of little quantitative importance.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the experimental cash crop cultivation on prison farmlands, whether successful or unsuccessful, helped to determine whether the soil and climate of specific regions were suitable for the cultivation of specific cash crops.<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, this experimental cultivation must have been one of the factors that helped to foster the expansion of cash crop production in early colonial Northern Nigeria.

The work done by the prisoners employed in farming was considered “light” in comparison to the work prisoners did elsewhere.<sup>48</sup> Although farm work was ideally meant only for convicts certified as medically unfit for hard labour, there is evidence that convicts employed for “hard” or non-agricultural work were sometimes also employed for farming.<sup>49</sup> The working day could start from 6am-12pm and finish between 2pm-5.15pm, six days per week.<sup>50</sup> Sometimes non-convicts assisted convicts in work on prison farmlands. In Niger Province in 1911, for instance, “Two acres of land were planted on July 4<sup>th</sup> with cotton and on December 13<sup>th</sup> the first picking was done by some of the Resident’s staff. All the labour other than the actual picking, was carried out by prisoners”.<sup>51</sup>

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44 EAP535/2/5/1/81: Zaria Province quarterly report, March 1913.

45 EAP535/2/2/10/26; and EAP535/2/2/11/18, p. 33.

46 It is difficult to determine the precise scale of production of cash crops in Northern Nigeria. However, according to Hogendorn, little more than 50,000 to 100,000 bales of cotton were already grown in the Kano-Zaria region alone by 1907 (*Nigerian Groundnut Exports*, p. 29). Given that a bale of cotton generally weighs about 500 pounds, it is logical to say that the cash crops produced by convicts were generally of little quantitative importance.

47 NNAR 1912, p. 18.

48 NNAR 1908-09, p. 12.

49 EAP535/2/2/10/26.

50 *Ibid.*

51 EAP535/2/2/11/18.

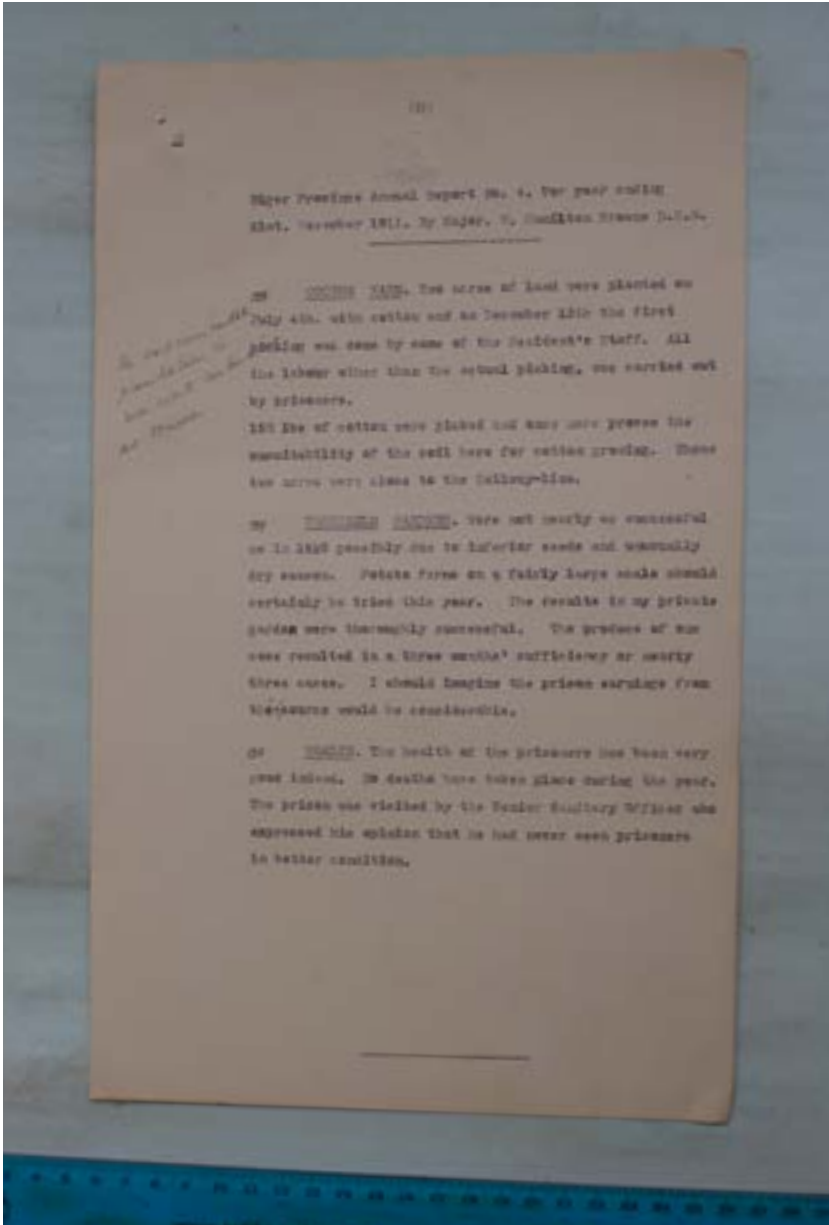


Fig. 10.9 Document from the Niger Province annual report on cotton production for 1911 by Major W. Hamilton Browne, 1912 (EAP535/2/2/11/18, image 58), Public Domain.

Although this is not spelled out, the evidence suggests that convicts relied on the use of traditional implements and technologies (Fig. 10.9). According to one report, cash crop production, and farming in general, was often “undertaken in a really strenuous manner”; moreover, at least in Nassarawa Province before May 1911, the amount of food “originally provided was quite inadequate for men working as hard as they do”.<sup>52</sup> This is not to say that colonial administrators regularly starved the convicts. Indeed, some colonial administrators viewed the productive activities of convicts as important. Consequently they believed that prisoners should be fed at least the minimum amount and quality of food necessary to maintain their productivity. For example, on noting that the “contract agreement”<sup>53</sup> system was responsible for the inadequate amount of food supplied to convicts in Nassarawa Province before his tenure as the Resident of Nassarawa Province in May 1911, Major Larymore discontinued this system. Instead he instituted a prisoner’s food committee consisting of “one clerk, one Political Agent, and the sergeant of police” who eventually saw to it that convicts received “rather more than twice what they did before, under a contract agreement”.<sup>54</sup> Overall, cash crop production, whether or not prisoners received an inadequate amount of food in the course of their activity, was less beneficial to the convicts than the food crops they produced, and the emphasis on cash crop production resulted in convicts being forced into strenuous labour.<sup>55</sup>

## Convict labour in colonial public works

The colonial administrators saw an effective transport system as an indispensable accessory to the task of subordinating the economy of Northern Nigeria and making it serve the needs of Europe. Soon after gaining control, the British began the construction of roads and railroads not only to connect various parts of Northern Nigeria to each other, but also to connect Northern Nigeria in general to Southern Nigeria and its Atlantic ports.<sup>56</sup> This infrastructure made it possible to move cash crops easily and relatively inexpensively to the various ports located along the

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52 EAP535/2/2/10/26.

53 Ibid. It is important to stress that this source seems to suggest that prisons depended on local contractors/merchants for part of their food supplies under the “contract agreement” system.

54 EAP535/2/2/10/26.

55 Ibid.

56 Mason, p. 57.

Nigerian Atlantic coast. It also enabled the colonial government to move troops and other resources easily to various parts of Northern Nigeria in order to reinforce its control over the peoples of this region. Finally, a good transport system meant that imports from Europe, such as European fruits, vegetables and manufactured goods, could be distributed within Northern Nigeria at a relatively fast pace and at relatively low prices.<sup>57</sup>

In colonial Northern Nigeria, as in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, the Public Works Department (PWD) was responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads and railroads. Since its inception, this department was also charged with “the maintenance of public buildings and roads and the extension of electric lighting, telegraphs, piers, public transport, among other things”.<sup>58</sup> To carry out its diverse responsibilities, the PWD relied partly on wage labour. Because of labour shortages and the desire to lower the cost of work, the Department was also compelled to resort to the forced labour of slaves and convicts.<sup>59</sup>

Colonial administrators recorded an example of the use of convict labourers by the PWD in Yola Province in 1906.<sup>60</sup> In that year, a foreman in charge of related government projects could not find local labour to hire. Moreover, he was unable to check the flight of non-convicts who were conscripted into forced labour. To address these challenges, the foreman suggested they import fresh batches of labour. It was in part this foreman’s request for more labourers and in part the recognition that convicts were a cost-effective labour pool, while imported labour “would add greatly to the cost of work”, that caused convict labourers to be employed in the execution of the PWD project in Yola Province.<sup>61</sup> It is equally important to stress that, according to one telegraph, once convict labourers were placed at the disposal of the PWD, the “necessity to import labour” no longer existed.<sup>62</sup>

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57 See, for instance, *ibid.*; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut Exports*, pp. 16-35; and Northern Nigeria Annual Report 1902, p. 58.

58 Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 116; and Matthew M. Heaton, *Black Skin, White Coats: Nigerian Psychiatrists, Decolonization, and the Globalization of Psychiatry* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013), p. 32.

59 For details on land policies and other factors that compelled slaves to take part in infrastructural works in early colonial Northern Nigeria, see Hogendorn and Lovejoy, *Slow Death for Slavery*, pp. 136-58.

60 EAP535/2/2/4/20: Difficulty of obtaining labourers at Yola.

61 *Ibid.*

62 *Ibid.*

The work performed by prisoners employed on projects supervised by the PWD was generally described as hard labour.<sup>63</sup> Convicts involved in hard-labour activities were often certified as being medically fit for the work they did. They were also, in the vast majority, men. Indeed, in line with the late-Victorian attitude that women should take care of domestic responsibilities, the documents declared that “Female convicts are exclusively employed in domestic duties — drawing water, preparing the prison food &c”.<sup>64</sup>

The hard labour done by convicts included “road and railway earthwork construction”,<sup>65</sup> in addition to “ordinary labour connected with the prison”.<sup>66</sup> This “ordinary labour” probably included improving sanitation by clearing bushes around government establishments; planting of hedges and trees; and constructing, extending and maintaining prison facilities and other public buildings. Most of these activities, such as watering shrubs and carrying bricks, stones and sand for public buildings or works, could be undertaken by unskilled labourers. Some, such as brickmaking, roofing, woodworking, finish-plastering, flooring and the like, required skilled or semi-skilled workers.<sup>67</sup> Colonial officials usually described convicts employed on skilled labour activities as “more intelligent”.<sup>68</sup>

To ensure that skilled convict labourers were always available for use on colonial projects, many inmates “who showed any aptitude” were trained in the skills mentioned above, while others were taught “other useful trades and employed as tailors”, shoemakers, mat-makers, rope-makers, weavers and hoe-makers, among other things.<sup>69</sup> While the training of skilled workers may have been meant to help rehabilitate the convicts,<sup>70</sup> the products of this skilled workforce undoubtedly had commercial value that benefitted the prison.<sup>71</sup> Although convicts engaged in manufacturing mainly worked for the benefit of the institution, one colonial report indicates that they

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63 NNAR 1908, p. 31. For a similar classification, see EAP535/2/2/5/4: Report on prisons for year ending 21 December 1905.

64 NNAR 1907-08, p. 31. For a similar entry see, for instance, EAP535/2/2/5/4.

65 NNAR 1908, p. 12; and NNAR 1909, p. 15.

66 NNAR 1908, p. 31.

67 NNAR 1907-08, p. 31; and NNAR 1909, p. 15.

68 See, for instance, EAP535/2/2/11/9: Bornu Province annual report, 1911.

69 NNAR 1903, p. 25.

70 For examples of the use of reform rhetoric by colonial officials see, for instance, NNAR 1906-07, p. 41; and EAP535/2/2/10/38: Nassarawa Province quarterly report, September 1911.

71 Inferred from *ibid.*

could take private commissions from clients. In particular, it reveals that “among other works this gang was lately able to repair an ordinary English snaffle, and the broken dashboard of a four-wheeled Buckboard American trap belonging to Capt Seccombe”.<sup>72</sup>

Convicts employed on projects supervised by the PWD were often divided into gangs. Thus, for instance, while one gang could be employed on station work and improvement, watering shrubs and trees, another gang could be employed in the construction of a road, and yet another gang could be used to carry materials for building operations.<sup>73</sup> Each gang was usually escorted, guarded and supervised by security officials such as police officers, *dogarai*<sup>74</sup> and armed warders.<sup>75</sup> The archival sources do not indicate whether skilled or more experienced and hardworking convicts were given supervisory roles subordinate to those of security officials. Similarly, we have very little information about the treatment of convict workers employed on the PWD’s projects. Nevertheless, one document clearly indicates that the *dogarai* in the Zaria Emirate were ordered to flog prisoners who did not work, even though they were ill (Fig. 10.10).<sup>76</sup> This same document also reveals that prisoners were often chained in pairs while working, and that they “were starved to death, and shown in the records as having died of natural causes”.<sup>77</sup>

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72 EAP535/2/2/10/44: Bornu Province quarterly report, December 1911.

73 Ibid. For further references to the division of convicts into gangs for such productive activities see, for instance, EAP535/2/2/5/16: Bornu Province quarterly report, September 1906; EAP535/2/2/7/39: Kano Province twelve-year report, 30 June 1908; EAP535/2/2/9/1: Sanitation labourers for Katsina Allah; and EAP535/3/7/2/5: Sokoto Province monthly report no. 23, February 1905.

74 *Dogarai* refers to native administration police, some of whom served as each Emir’s guards and messengers.

75 For references on the use of the three category of guards see, for instance, NNAR 1903, p. 23; NNAR 1904, p. 117; NNAR 1908, p. 12; NNAR 1909, p. 14; and EAP535/3/2/2: Kano Province annual report, 1917.

76 EAP535/2/3/6/18: Report of unsatisfactory conduct of Maaji of Zaria. The main report in this file was written by the District Officer in charge of the Zaria Emirate, Y. Kirkpatrick, to the Resident of Zaria Province. This report deals with the conduct of the Maaji, a senior Native Administration official who was responsible for the Emirate’s treasury. Although it focuses mainly on various transactions mostly in connection with the collection of taxes in Zaria Province, it also points to malpractice in the prison system. In addition to issues related to the treatment of prisoners mentioned above, the report provides useful information on convict resistance and on the colonial prison system in Northern Nigeria in general.

77 EAP535/2/3/6/18. For more details on the flogging of prisoners see, for instance, EAP535/2/3/6/9: Flogging in gaols for prison offences: amendment of regulations.



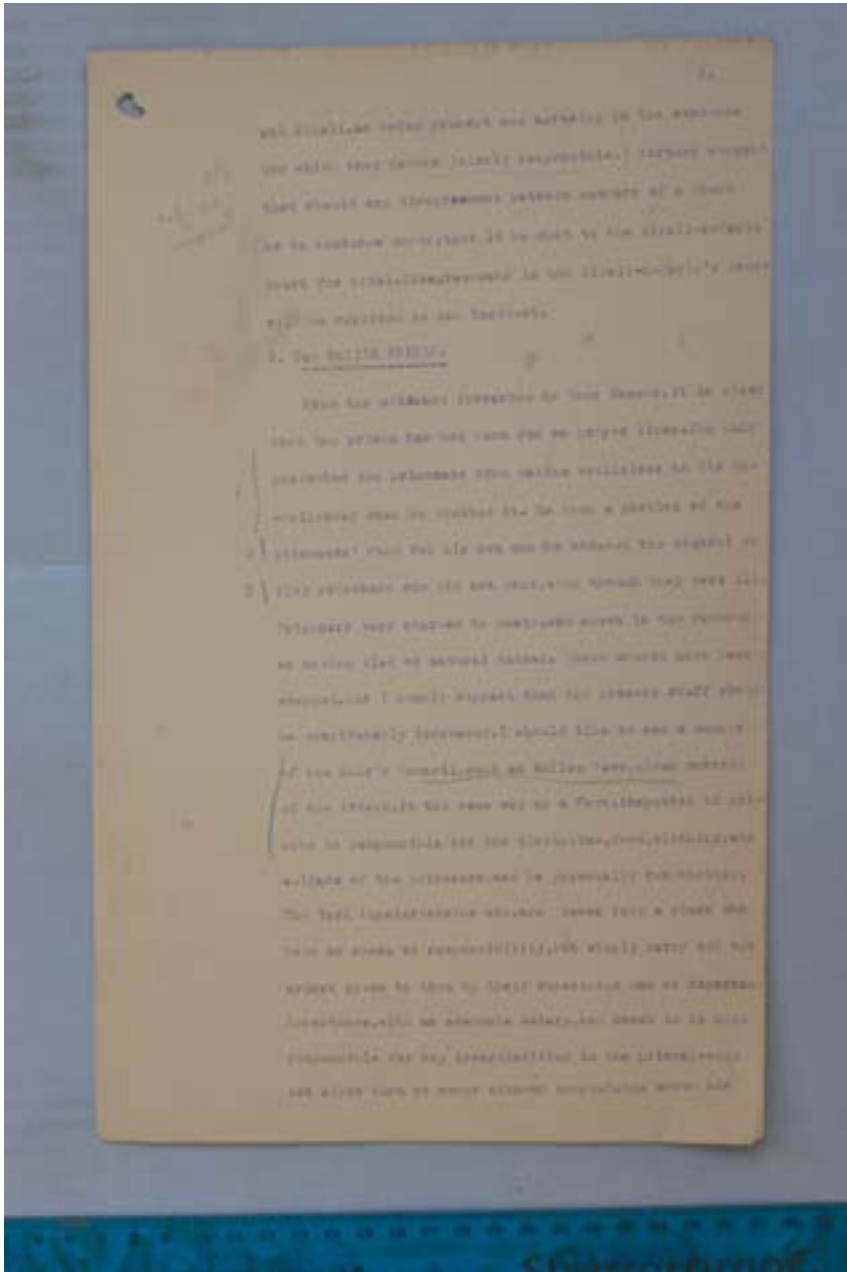


Fig. 10.10 Report on the unsatisfactory conduct of the Maaji of Zaria by the District Officer in charge of the Zaria Emirate, Y. Kirkpatrick, to the Resident of Zaria Province, 1921 [1] (EAP535/2/3/6/18, image 20), Public Domain.

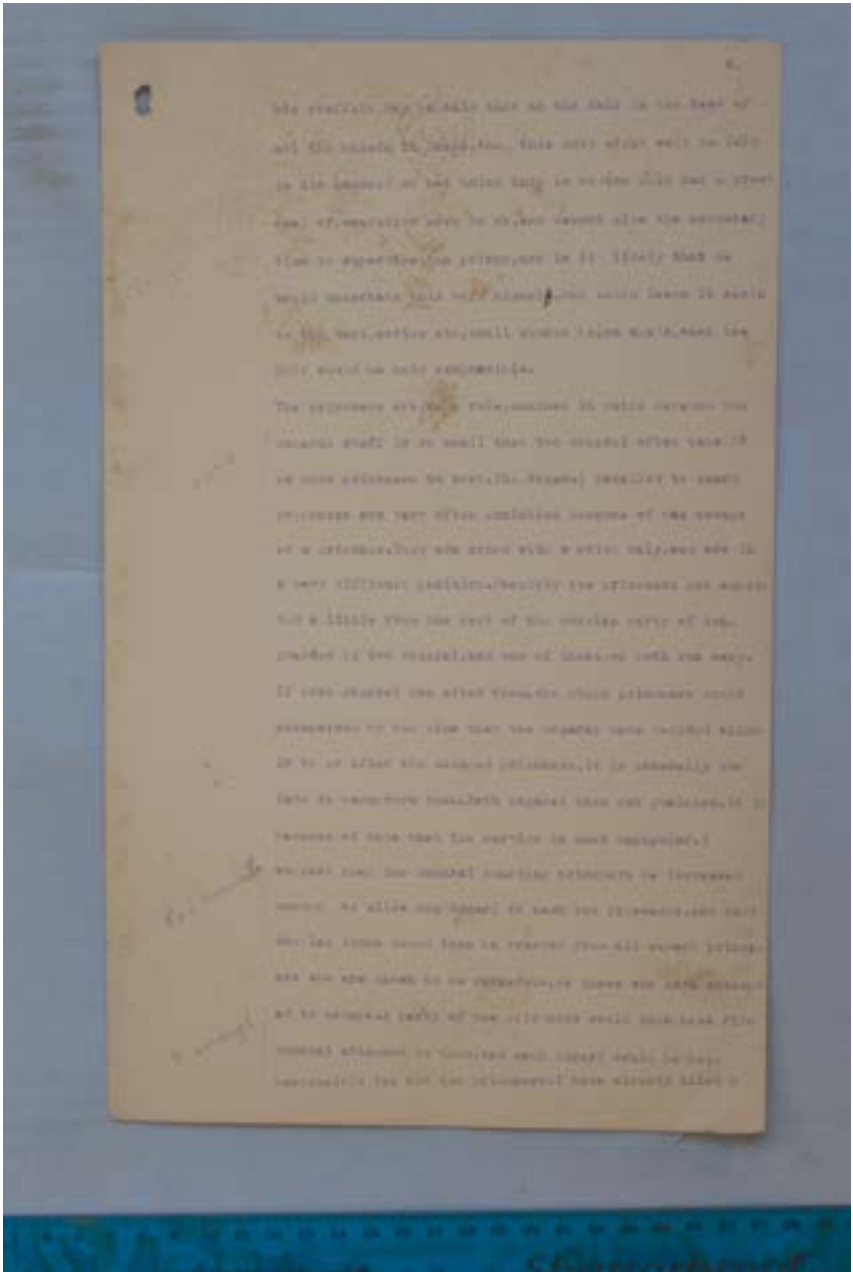


Fig. 10.11 Report on the unsatisfactory conduct of the Maaji of Zaria by the District Officer in charge of the Zaria Emirate, Y. Kirkpatrick, to the Resident of Zaria Province, 1921 [2] (EAP535/2/3/6/18, image 21), Public Domain.

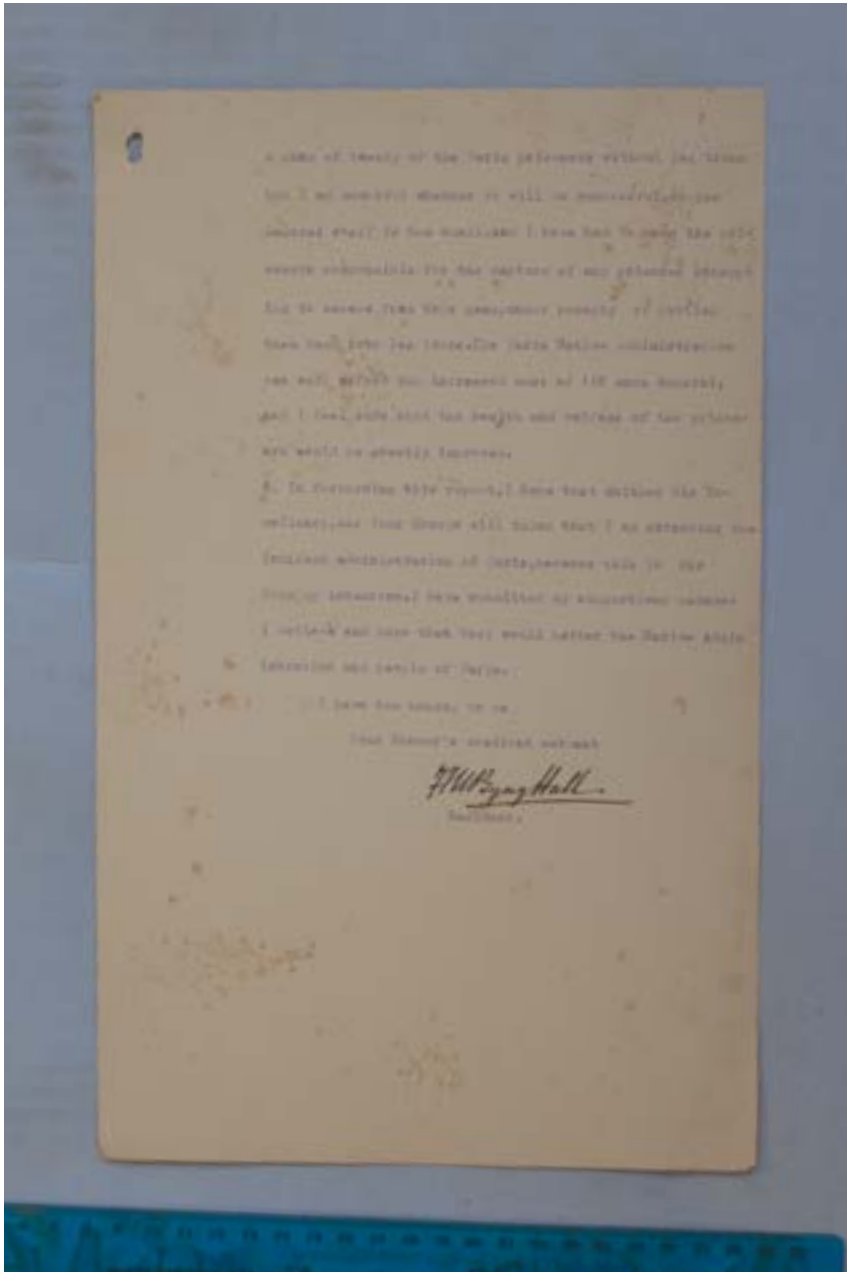


Fig. 10.12 Report on the unsatisfactory conduct of the Maaji of Zaria by the District Officer in charge of the Zaria Emirate, Y. Kirkpatrick, to the Resident of Zaria Province, 1921 [3] (EAP535/2/3/6/18, image 22), Public Domain.

Like the colonial document on Zaria discussed above (Figs. 10.10-10.12), Michael Mason's exploration of the use of forced labour in railway construction also demonstrates that convict labourers employed by the PWD often experienced physical cruelty.<sup>78</sup>

In colonial Northern Nigeria, convict labourers of diverse cultural backgrounds were often accommodated in the same prison, and the prisons themselves were often located in settlements consisting of African immigrants and non-African, mainly European residents. Each of these diverse groups wanted to maintain their own food consumption habits, which required the cultivation of specific crops. It seems that one of the reasons the state allowed some of the prison farmlands in virtually all parts of Northern Nigeria to be used as centres for the cultivation of varieties of food, fruits and vegetable crops was to meet the culinary needs of people from diverse African and European backgrounds.<sup>79</sup> Allowing such use of some of the prison farmlands helped to address the increasing food demand of convicts in many prisons. It also lowered the cost of the prisoners' maintenance and improved the nutritional content of their diet.<sup>80</sup> Crops cultivated in prison farmlands in early colonial Northern Nigeria included yams, potatoes, beans, Indian peas, guinea corn, soya beans, cassava, "tropical fruits and English vegetables".<sup>81</sup> In determining what crop should be grown in each prison farmland, colonial officials sometimes based their suggestions, and probably decisions, on the results of experiments in their private gardens, as the following excerpt suggests:

Potato farms on a fairly large scale should certainly be tried this year. The results in my private garden were thoroughly successful. The produce of one case resulted in three months' sufficiency or nearly three cases. I should imagine that the prison earnings from this source would be considerable (Fig. 10.9).<sup>82</sup>

Fruit and vegetable crop production in these prison farmlands had further advantages. It involved little or no capital investment by the state and it was not related to technological improvements in agricultural techniques. The

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78 Here, forced labourers refer to non-convicts who were conscripted into forced labour. See Mason.

79 NNAR 1912, p. 18.

80 NNAR 1906-07, p. 41; and NNAR 1912, p. 18. For discussion related to the issue of proper nutrition for prisoners, see p. 15.

81 See, among others, NNAR 1906-07, p. 41; EAP535/2/2/11/18; EAP535/2/2/11/8; EAP535/3/6/5/4: Niger Province annual report no. 6, 1913; EAP535/2/2/8/1: Zaria Province quarterly report, December 1908.

82 EAP535/2/2/11/18.

production of the crops in prison was also a great boon to local Europeans, and to many Africans, because it significantly lowered food prices. The additional revenue generated for the prisons allowed them to pay for the provision of other food items to convicts, such as palm oil, fish and salt, or for any other necessary maintenance expenses.

Many prison farms planted with edible crops yielded good results, at least during specific agricultural seasons.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, prison-farm production of crops — whether fruits and vegetables or cash crops — was not without problems. Their production was not cost-free, at least to the convicts; for most of them, the cultivation and care of such crops involved strenuous or “unpleasant” forced labour.<sup>84</sup> Other issues included poor seeds and related planting materials, an inadequate workforce at times when prison labour was moved to other public works, an inadequate supply of water, poor soil conditions, poor supervision by colonial officials, natural disasters and poor farming skills.<sup>85</sup> The colonial administrators recognised that these problems put constraints on the agricultural yields and that poor harvests, in turn, made the cost of feeding the prisoners higher than it should be. In one report, for instance, Lugard noted that:

There has been a general increase in the expenditure on prisoners’ food during the year, particularly at Bornu, Bassa, Kano and Kabba, which is ascribed to indifferent harvests. The maximum rate of 2d. per prisoner per day was exceeded in Bassa and Kabba for a portion of the year. The daily average cost per prisoner during the year was 1s. 5d.<sup>86</sup>

Colonial administrators often took proactive measures to deal with or to alleviate the constraints on the cultivation of all types of crops. For instance, in one case the Resident of Kabba Province, J. A. Ley Greeves, linked the failure of soya bean cultivation in 1911 to bad seeds and the fact that they were planted too late. He then called for the early supply of good seeds in the subsequent farming season. Evidently, he saw “no reason why the beans should not do well” in his province (Fig. 10.13).<sup>87</sup>

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83 For references to successful farmlands see, for instance, EAP535/2/5/1/14: Kabba Province quarterly report, December 1912; and EAP535/3/6/5/4.

84 EAP535/3/7/2/5 and EAP535/2/2/10/26. It is notable that the former also reveals that convicts were often forced to labour in mosquito breeding swamps.

85 NNAR 1913, p. 12; EAP535/2/2/10/26; EAP535/2/2/11/8; EAP535/2/5/1/81; EAP535/3/6/5/4.

86 NNAR 1913, p. 12.

87 EAP535/2/2/10/32: Kabba Province quarterly report, September 1911.

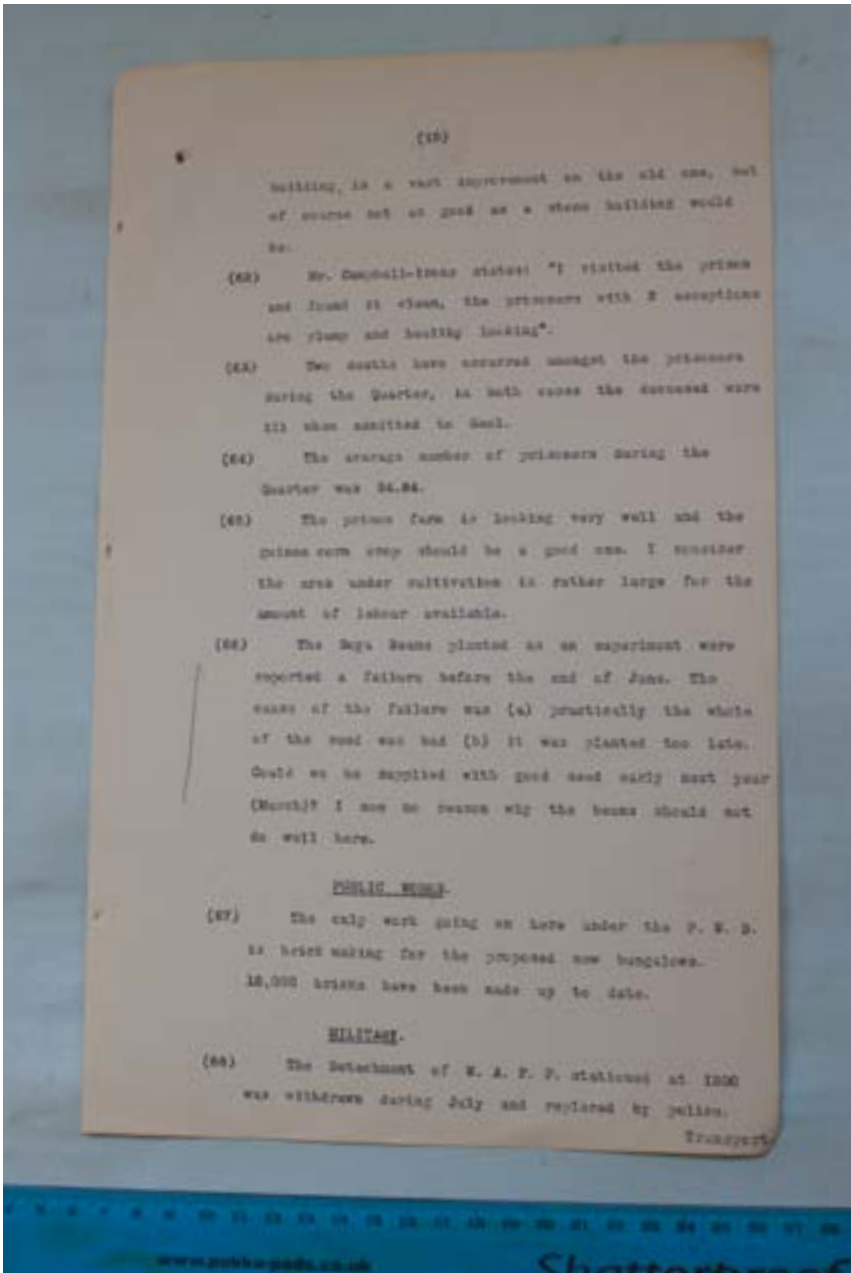


Fig. 10.13 Document from "Report September quarter 1911-Kabba Province" concerning constraints on crop cultivation by J. A. Ley Greeves, 1912 (EAP535/2/2/10/32, image 21), Public Domain.

Similarly, another colonial administrator recognised that good supervision by his subordinates was essential to successful harvests and revealed his strategy for preventing poor supervision thus:

On my return from leave I informed the Makum of Agaei who is in charge of the prison that the prison farm should be promptly cultivated and that after the harvest no further payments would be made from the Beit-al-mal, that the prison should be self supporting, and if it were not, the deficit would be made up by the Makum personally as an insufficient crop would be due to his failure to supervise.<sup>88</sup>

## Cost and cost-efficiency

The British did not overlook the concept of “cost-efficiency” in making decisions of any kind in their administration of Northern Nigeria. They administered a system of indirect rule which allowed them to control the vast region with very few European officials, very little reliance on funds generated in Britain and minimal out-of-pocket costs.<sup>89</sup> The British also made the prisons pay for themselves by using of convicts as labourers and by manufacturing and farming food within the prisons.<sup>90</sup> The evidence also indicates that colonial administrators sometimes hired out convicts to Europeans and Africans, at a nominal charge, to do various tasks, including farming and carrying water. One 1913 report on Muri Province reveals that hiring out convicts enabled the state to cut the cost of feeding prisoners since “the employer provides their food and pays 1d. per man per day wages”.<sup>91</sup> The same report indicates that this payment was considered small, and that this matter of inadequate pay “should be brought up for discussion with the Emir and council”, so that raising payments to 2d in the next farming season might be considered.<sup>92</sup> For comparison, a report on Zaria Province

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88 EAP535/3/6/5/4; and EAP535/3/8/2/12: Zaria Province annual report no. 62, 1913 also indicates that poor supervision resulted in a specific farm failure in Zaria Province in 1913.

89 See Heussler, *The British in Northern Nigeria*, especially pp. 31 and 53.

90 This idea is expressed in, for instance, EAP535/3/6/5/4.

91 EAP535/2/5/1/39: Quarterly report no. 80, December 1912, by Mr. F. H. Buxton. On the hiring out of convicts, see also EAP535/2/2/11/13: Yola Province quarterly report, December 1911; EAP535/2/5/1/46: Muri Province annual report, 1912; and EAP535/3/7/2/7.

92 EAP535/2/5/1/39.

written in the same year (1913) shows that non-convict labourers earned a daily wage of 4d.<sup>93</sup>

Several reports by colonial administrators reveal that significant cost savings were achieved through the use of convict labour. In 1907, for instance, one administrator reported that "All prison clothing has been made on the premises. In the Provinces the prisoners have been principally employed on farm work, conservancy, and making and repairing roads. [...] In Zungeru and Lokoja the prison farms supply sufficient food for the maintenance of the prisoners".<sup>94</sup> Similarly, in 1910, he reported:

Substantial stone workshops, built entirely by prison labour, have been erected in Zungeru. The gaol at Lokoja was considerably enlarged during the year by the addition of a new wing. A considerable saving to the general revenue on this account has been effected, and it is proposed to further extend the system of employing convict labour on such work.<sup>95</sup>

As a cost-saving measure, the British trained convicts in various trades within prisons. As previously mentioned, prison administrators mainly promoted the training of convicts whom they considered "more intelligent" in tailoring, shoe making, brick-making, mat-making and the like. The emphasis on such training often fostered the production of more goods and therefore helped to swell the revenue of the Prison Department.<sup>96</sup> The sale of items produced by convicts allowed the prisons to raise funds to hire non-convict instructors and purchase training/production materials.<sup>97</sup>

The colonial administrators were not shy about arguing for the use of convict labour to maintain public facilities in order to keep costs low. For instance, the governor of Northern Nigeria noted that in 1911 the state made significant cost savings in part because of the use of convicts in public works. He added that:

The value (calculated at two-thirds of the market rate) of prisoners' labour in connection with public works, &c., which would otherwise have had to be paid for in cash, was £3,878. If calculated at the ordinary market rates the value of the prisoners' useful labour would have exceeded the entire cost of the Prison Department.<sup>98</sup>

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93 EAP535/2/5/1/81: Zaria Province report-March quarter 1913.

94 NNAR 1907-08, p. 31; and NNAR 1909, p. 15.

95 NNAR 1910-11, p. 21.

96 Inferred from EAP535/2/2/11/17: Nassarawa Province annual report, 1911.

97 EAP535/2/2/11/9.

98 NNAR 1906-07, p. 41.



## Conclusion: convict labour and European hegemony

Several works on labour history have focused intensively on the relationship between the use of convict labour and the expansion of European hegemony. Examining the transportation of convicts by European powers to various parts of the world, Clare Anderson and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart argue that although the character of convict transportation changed over time, the cost-efficiency of convict labour in colonies explains why it became a “durable and flexible” tool that shaped the expansion of European hegemony worldwide from 1415 to 1954.<sup>99</sup> The connection between cheap convict labour and the economic success of colonies is explored in detail by William H. Worger, in the contexts of Birmingham, Alabama and Kimberley, South Africa,<sup>100</sup> and by Florence Bernault in a broader African context.<sup>101</sup>

The documents investigated for the purpose of this chapter corroborate these conclusions. Britain’s main interest in Northern Nigeria during the colonial era was to make the region an economic appendage of Britain and Europe. To secure this interest, the British initiated infrastructure projects and encouraged agricultural production using cheap convict labour. The availability of such low-cost labour, and the resulting decrease of the cost of infrastructure and agricultural projects, made it possible for the colonial administration to increase the scale of such undertakings. Consequently, the availability of convict labour strengthened European hegemony.

Some of the documents examined for this article show that a prison system existed in the Sokoto Caliphate and that inmates within this prison system were employed in productive activities. Although the Sokoto Caliphate prisons were places of punishment, my analysis suggests that slave owners in the caliphal state sometimes employed the rhetoric of reform or rehabilitation to justify the imprisonment of many individuals. Overall, however, the findings of this project support the claim of existing scholarship that “permanent

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99 Clare Anderson and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, “Convict Labour and the Western Empires, 1415-1954”, in *The Routledge History of Western Empires*, ed. by Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 102-17 (p. 113).

100 William H. Worger, “Convict Labour, Industrialists and the State in the US South and South Africa, 1870-1930”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30 (2004), 63-86.

101 Florence Bernault, “The Shadow of Rule: Colonial Power and Modern Punishment in Africa”, in *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, ed. by Frank Diköter and Ian Brown (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 55-95.

places for holding convicted prisoners or suspects before trial" in centralised states in West Africa, like the Sokoto Caliphate, "did not seek to rehabilitate criminals".<sup>102</sup> Evidence shows that, during the colonial era, convicts worked both within and outside the prisons; there was a direct link between their labour and the specific needs of the colonial state. In this, the colonial prison system in Africa was significantly different from the prison systems of western societies.<sup>103</sup>

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102 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

103 For the view that the colonial prison system in Africa was unique see, for instance, *ibid.*, pp. 59, 71 and 77-79.

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## II. Murid Ajami sources of knowledge: the myth and the reality<sup>1</sup>

Fallou Ngom

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*It is because of divine grace that there is ethnolinguistic diversity.*

— Moussa Ka (1889-1967), Murid Ajami poet

Ajami, the practice of writing other languages using the modified Arabic script, is a centuries-old tradition, deeply embedded in the histories and cultures of Islamised Africa.<sup>2</sup> With roots intertwined with those of the first Quranic schools of Africa, Ajami remains important in rural areas and religious centres where the Quranic school is the primary educational institution.<sup>3</sup> African Ajami traditions go as far back as the sixteenth century to the early days of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>4</sup> They emerged as local scholars understood that they needed to write in local languages texts

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- 1 The transliteration of Arabic words in this chapter is based on the LOC transliteration system.
  - 2 See Helmi Sharaway, ed., *Heritage of African Languages Manuscripts (Ajami)*, 1st edn. (Bamako: Institut Culturel Afro-Arabe, 2005); Meikal Mumin and Kees Versteegh, eds., *The Arabic Script in Africa: Studies in the Use of a Writing System* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); and Moulaye Hassane, "Ajami in Africa: The Use of Arabic Script in the Transcription of African Languages", in *The Meaning of Timbuktu*, ed. by Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council 2008), pp. 115-17.
  - 3 See Frederike Lüpke, "Language Planning in West Africa — Who Writes the Script?", in *Language Documentation and Description: Volume II*, ed. by Peter K. Austin (London: SOAS, 2004), pp. 90-107; Hassane, pp. 109-17; and Fallou Ngom and Alex Zito, "Sub-Saharan African Literature: 'Ajami'", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam III*, ed. by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas and Everett Rowson (Leiden: Brill Online, 2014), [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/sub-saharan-african-literature-ajami-COM\\_26630](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/sub-saharan-african-literature-ajami-COM_26630)
  - 4 David Gutelius, "Newly Discovered 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> c. Ajami Manuscript in Niger Kel Tamagheq History", *Saharan Studies Newsletter*, 8/1-2 (2000), 6.



that could be read, recited and chanted in order to convert people. The materials that emerged represent an essential source of knowledge on the Islamisation of the Wolof, Mande, Hausa, and Fulani in West Africa and the Swahili and Amharic in East Africa, as well as a mine of information on Africa.<sup>5</sup> In South Africa, Muslim Malay slaves produced some of the first written records of Afrikaans in Ajami.<sup>6</sup>

This contribution focuses on the Ajami tradition of the Muridiyya Sufi order founded by Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké (1853-1927).<sup>7</sup> The bulk of the materials discussed here is taken from those digitised with the support of the Endangered Archives Programme.<sup>8</sup> The article addresses Ajami literacy in Africa and the factors that contributed to its flourishing among the followers of Muridiyya. It also explores the religious and secular functions of Ajami and its role in the emergence of the Murid assertive African Muslim identity that perpetually thwarts external tutelage and acculturation. Finally, it outlines the scholarly and practical benefits that could be gained from studying African Ajami systems.

## Ajami literacies of Africa

While illiteracy remains a major problem in sub-Saharan Africa, the official literacy rates of local governments and UNESCO do not reflect the actual literacy rates in Muslim areas where the classical Arabic script has been modified to write local languages for centuries, just like the Latin script was modified to write numerous European languages. In many Muslim

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- 5 R. S. O'Fahey and John O. Hunwick, *Arabic Literature of Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); idem, ed., *Arabic Literature of Africa, Vol. III: The Writings of the Muslim Peoples of Northeastern Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); and Lameen Souag, "Ajami in West Africa", *Afrikanistik Online*, 2010, <http://www.afrikanistik-aegyptologie-online.de/archiv/2010/2957>
  - 6 Muhammed Haron, "The Making, Preservation and Study of South African Ajami Manuscripts and Texts", *Sudanic Africa*, 12 (2001), 1-14.
  - 7 Fallou Ngom, "Murid Identity and Wolof Ajami Literature in Senegal", in *Development, Modernism and Modernity in Africa*, ed. by Augustine Agwuele (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 62-78; Fallou Ngom, "Ahmadu Bamba's Pedagogy and the Development of Ajami Literature", *African Studies Review*, 52/1 (2009), 99-124; Sana Camara, "Ajami Literature in Senegal: The Example of Sëriñ Muusaa Ka, Poet and Biographer", *Research in African Literatures*, 28/3 (1997), 163-82; and Alex Zito, *Prosperity and Purpose, Today and Tomorrow: Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba and Discourses of Work and Salvation in the Muridiyya Sufi Order of Senegal* (Ph.D. thesis, Boston University, 2012).
  - 8 Project EAP334: Digital preservation of Wolof Ajami manuscripts of Senegal, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP334](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP334). The digitised manuscripts are available at <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP334>

areas of Africa, Ajami literacy is more widespread than Latin script literacy, including among women in some cases.<sup>9</sup>

A limited census conducted in the areas of Labé in French-speaking Guinea reveals that over 70% of the population are literate in the local form of Ajami (including 20-25% of women);<sup>10</sup> in Diourbel (the heartland of Muridiyya), Matam, and Podor in Senegal, about 70% are literate in Ajami, and in Hausa-speaking areas of Niger and Nigeria, over 80% of the population are Ajami literates.<sup>11</sup> Though Marie-Ève Humery questions Cissé's rates of literacy in Ajami, and while it is true that Ajami literacy is less developed in Fuuta Tooro,<sup>12</sup> it is undeniable that grassroots Ajami literacy is much higher in West African Muslim communities in general than Latin-script literacy. One need not look any further than in the business records of local shopkeepers to establish the significance of Ajami in West African Muslim communities.<sup>13</sup>

The misrepresentation of Ajami users in official statistics is due to the fact that "literacy" is generally construed for sub-Saharan Africans as the ability to read and write in Arabic or European languages or the ability to read and write African languages using the Latin script. This narrow and prevailing understanding of literacy has perpetuated the prevalent myth of sub-Saharan Africa as a region with no written traditions. This understanding of literacy espoused by African governments and international organisations has excluded the millions of people who regularly use Ajami.<sup>14</sup> The rich

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9 Lüpke, pp. 90-107; Meikal Mumin, "The Arabic Script in Africa: Understudied Literacy", in *The Arabic Script in Africa: Studies in the Use of a Writing System*, ed. by Meikal Mumin and Kees Versteegh (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 41-62; Andy Warren-Rothlin, "West African Scripts and Arabic Orthographies", in *The Arabic Script in Africa*, ed. by Mumin and Versteegh, pp. 261-88; and Fiona McLaughlin, "Dakar Wolof and the Configuration of an Urban Identity", *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 14 (2001), 153-72 (p. 165). For the use of Hausa Ajami by a contemporary female Hausa teacher in Niger, see Ousseina D. Alidou, *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in Postcolonial Niger* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), pp. 52-56.

10 Mamadou Cissé, "Écrits et écriture en Afrique de l'ouest", *Sudlangue: revue électronique internationale de sciences du langage*, 6 (2007), 77-78.

11 Ibid.

12 Marie-Ève Humery, "Fula and the Ajami Writing System in the Haalpulaar Society of Fuuta Tooro (Senegal and Mauritania): A Specific 'Restricted Literacy'", in *The Arabic Script in Africa*, ed. by Mumin and Versteegh, pp. 173-98.

13 See "Business Records of a Fuuta Tooro Pulaar Shopkeeper" and "Business Records of a Wolof Shopkeeper", contributed by Fallou Ngom, Ablaye Diakité, Birane Gassama and Ibrahima Ngom to *Africa's Sources of Knowledge Digital Library*, <http://www.ask-dl.fas.harvard.edu/content/business-records-pulaar-bookseller> and <http://www.ask-dl.fas.harvard.edu/content/shopkeeper-s-financial-records-wolof-ajami-0>

14 For a discussion of some of these issues, see Lüpke, pp. 90-107; Coleman Donaldson,

African Ajami materials refute the pervasive myth of the holistic illiteracy of Africa that is perpetuated by the over-emphasis on African oral traditions in academia.<sup>15</sup> This emphasis has resulted in the omission of Africa's unique sources of knowledge in Ajami in various domains of knowledge production about the continent.

As David Diringer has rightly noted, scripts generally follow religions.<sup>16</sup> Just like the Latin script spread throughout the world through Christianity and was modified to write numerous European languages, so too the Arabic script spread through Islam and was modified to write numerous African languages. Many African Ajami traditions initially emerged as part of the pedagogies to disseminate Islam to the illiterate masses.<sup>17</sup> However, their usage expanded to encompass other areas of knowledge, as for example in Figs. 11.5-11.8, 11.11, and 11.12, just as the Latin script flourished from the church environment to encompass other secular domains of knowledge of different European communities that had modified the script to meet their written communication needs.

African Ajami materials uncovered to date encompass various areas of knowledge. These include prayers, talismanic protective devices, religious and didactic materials in poetry and prose, elegies, translations of works on Islamic metaphysics, jurisprudence, Sufism, and translations of the Quran from Arabic into African languages. The existing secular Ajami writings encompass commercial and administrative record-keeping, family genealogies, as for example in Fig. 11.5, records of important local events such as foundations of villages, births, deaths, weddings, biographies, political and social satires, advertisements, road signs, public

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"Jula Ajami in Burkina Faso: A Grassroots Literacy in the Former Kong Empire", *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, 28/2 (2013), 19-36; and Fallou Ngom, "Ajami Script in the Senegalese Speech Community", *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 10/1 (2010), 1-23.

15 For a discussion on the treatment of Africa as lacking written traditions, see Lüpke, pp. 91-93.

16 David Diringer, *The Alphabet: A Key to the History of Mankind* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948). For a similar discussion, see Ghislaine Lydon, "A Thirst for Knowledge: Arabic Literacy, Writing Paper and Saharan Bibliophiles in the Southern Sahara", in *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa*, ed. by Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 37-38.

17 See Tal Tamari and Dmitry Bondarev, eds., *Journal of Qur'anic Studies: Qur'anic Exegesis in African Languages*, 15/3 (London: Centre of Islamic Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, 2013); Albert Gérard, *African Language Literatures* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1891), pp. 35-47; Fallou Ngom, "Ahmadu Bamba's Pedagogy and the Development of Ajami Literature", pp. 99-124; David Robinson, "The 'Islamic Revolutions' of West Africa on the Frontiers of the Islamic World", February 2008, [http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/rps/islam\\_papers/Robinson-030108.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/rps/islam_papers/Robinson-030108.pdf)

announcements, speeches, personal correspondences, traditional treatment of illnesses (including medicinal plants), incantations, history, local customs and ancestral traditions, texts on diplomatic matters, behavioural codes, and grammar.<sup>18</sup>

African Ajami traditions are varied and old. The oldest material in Wolofal (the local name of Wolof in Ajami script), I found is a bilingual French-Wolof Ajami diplomatic document dating to the early nineteenth century. The document is a treaty negotiation between King Louis XVIII of France and King of Bar of the Gambia of 1817. The negotiation was about a trading post that the King of France desired in Albreda on the northern bank of the River Gambia. The scribes of the two kings wrote down the words of their respective rulers in their separate “diplomatic languages and scripts”. The resulting French and Ajami texts are juxtaposed in the document.<sup>19</sup>

The juxtaposition of the French and Ajami texts in the document reflects the balance of power between the two kings at that time. The document indicates that European rulers recognised local Ajami literacies and their significance in their initial encounters with African Muslim rulers. However, as colonisation unfolded and the balance of power shifted in favour of European rulers, Ajami began to be suppressed and gradually replaced in official transactions by the Latin script, and the myth of the holistic illiteracy of Africans began to be cultivated to legitimise the colonial “civilising mission”.<sup>20</sup>

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18 Hassane, p. 115; Lüpke, p. 101; Tal Tamari, “Cinq Textes Bambara en Caractères Arabes: Présentation, Traduction, Analyse du Système Graphémique”, *Islam et Société au Sud du Sahara*, 8 (1994), 97-121; Xavier Luffin, “Swahili Documents from Congo (19<sup>th</sup> Century): Variations in Orthography”, in *The Arabic Script in Africa*, ed. by Mumin and Versteegh, pp. 311-17; and Matt Schaffer, “‘Pakao Book’: Expansion and Social Structure by Virtue of an Indigenous Manuscript”, *African Languages*, 1 (1975), 96-115. During my fieldwork in the city of Ziguinchor, Senegal, in 2010, I found a Mandinka Ajami text cursing Adolph Hitler written around 1942 by Mamadou Cissé, who was angered by the negative effects of World War II on his community. An image and audio transcript are available at <https://patrickcox.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/mandinka-156-768x1024.jpg>; and <http://www.pri.org/node/12846/popout>. For more Mandinka Ajami texts, see “Mandinka documents”, contributed by Fallou Ngom, Ablaye Diakitè, Birane Gassama, and Ibrahima Ngom to *Africa’s Sources of Knowledge Digital Library*, <http://ask-dl.fas.harvard.edu/collection/Mandinka>. Also, Fallou Ngom, “Ajami in the Senegambia”, <http://aodl.org/islamictolerance/ajami/language.php?l=3>

19 “Palabre de Traité entre le Roi de France et le Roi de Bar [Treaty Palaver between the King of France and the King of Bar]”, 13 May 1817, in *Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer*, Aix-en-Provence, France, Sen/IV/1.

20 For a discussion on the French “civilising mission”, see Alice L. Conklin, *The French Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*, 1st edn. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

Many of the first official transactions signed between Europeans and African Muslim rulers in their initial encounters (when they treated each other as peers) contain traces of Ajami. The King Bomba Mina Lahai of Malagea of Sierra Leone “signed in Ajami” two treaties with the French in May and August of 1854 to allow them to travel and trade in the Melacori River.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, in the collections of Abbé Boilat, a letter dated 1843 of the local Wolof Imam to the mayor of Saint-Louis, Senegal was written in Ajami and translated into French.<sup>22</sup> In 1882, over 1,200 inhabitants of the four towns of Gorée, Dakar, Rufisque, and Saint-Louis in Senegal, traditionally called *les quatre communes* (whose inhabitants acquired French citizenship) petitioned the French government against the mandatory military service. The names of the signatories were written in Wolof Ajami.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the names in the collective letter written by over 25 cantonal chiefs and Wolof notables of Senegal to renew their loyalty to the French colonial government and to express their concerns in 1888 were “signed in Ajami” though the message of the letter was written in Arabic.<sup>24</sup>

Until the 1920s, the information on banknotes in Senegal included Wolof Ajami text explaining their worth. Mamadou Cissé ties the removal of Wolof Ajami writings on Senegalese banknotes to the general neglect of West African Arabic-based writings, which he attributes to the bias against Islam of colonial authorities that post-colonial leaders perpetuated. He argues that both colonial and post-colonial authorities treat Arabic-based writings as a threat to the construction of a secular and multi-ethnic state.<sup>25</sup> Banknotes with Ajami writings also existed in Nigeria. Hausa Ajami appeared alongside English on the Nigerian currency called Naira

21 By “signing in Ajami”, I mean that the signatures contain modified Arabic letters such as the “reversed *dammah*” (or “inverted *dammah*”) attested in San Bambara and Pulaar Ajami writings. See Valentin Vydrin, “Ajami Script for Mande Languages”, in *The Arabic Script in Africa*, ed. by Mumin and Versteegh, pp. 119-224 (p. 222); and “Convention between the Emperor of France and the King of Maligia”, 5 May 1854 and 5 August 1854, in *Archives Nationales d’Outre Mer*, Aix-en-Provence, France, Senegal, IV, 28a.

22 For other secular usages of Ajami in the colonial era, see Abbé David Boilat, “Notes du Fouta Toro”, *Société de Géographie*, Ms 8, pp. 48-49; also see the use of Ajami in ornithology in the late 1890s in Ludovic Besson, “Les Collectes ornithologiques sénégalais de Victor Planchat dans la collection Albert Maës”, *Symbioses nouvelle série*, 30/2 (2013), 2-16; and in Nadia Bougrine and Ludovic Besson, “Décryptage des termes en wolof et soninké utilisés pour les collectes ornithologiques de Victor Planchat”, *Symbioses nouvelle série*, 31/1 (2013), 1-8.

23 *Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer*, Aix-en-Provence, France, FN, SG, SN, XVI, 1.

24 See “Lettre de Diaorine Boul Madeguène Samba, Chef des notables et des hommes libres”, *Archives d’Outre Mer*, Aix-en-Provence, France, SG, SN, IV, 98b.

25 Cissé, “Écrits et écriture en Afrique de l’ouest”, p. 72.

(₦) until the new ₦ 1,000 banknote introduced in 2006, but the new ₦ 20 and ₦ 50 banknotes introduced in March 2007 bear English, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa, all in Roman script.<sup>26</sup> Although the change represents a shift to a national language policy known as *wazobia*, which is construed as a symbol of national unity, Muslims took it as anti-Islamic, while a number of prominent Christians favoured it on the basis that Arabic (for which they had mistaken the Arabic script Hausa) was a foreign language.<sup>27</sup> The existing evidence demonstrates that Ajami was and is not exclusively used for religious purposes. When studied, African Ajami materials will illuminate various aspects of Africa's pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history.

## The flourishing of Ajami in Murid communities

Although many African Ajami traditions began as part of the pedagogies of teaching religious subjects in Quranic schools and learning centres, little is known about the idiosyncratic local factors that account for the flourishing or lack of flourishing of Ajami in specific Muslim communities. It is widely accepted that Ajami thrived in the Hausaland of northern Nigeria particularly because Usman dan Fodio (1754-1817) and his family used Ajami poetry in order to convert people to Islam and to gain their support for their Jihad effort.<sup>28</sup> In Fuuta Jalon in Guinea, Thierno Mombeya used Ajami to spread Islam to the farmers and herders and to express his desire for cultural autonomy.<sup>29</sup> The exceptionally close links of the Fuuta Tooro (the origin of Oumar Tall) with Arabic-speaking centres of learning in North Africa likely prevented the flourishing of Ajami tradition in Fuuta Tooro.<sup>30</sup> But nothing significant is known about why Ajami flourished among the Murids the way it did to become the primary means of written communication and the badge of their collective identity. The factors that contributed to the flourishing of Ajami among Murids are numerous.

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26 Warren-Rothlin, pp. 266-67.

27 Ibid.

28 Gérard, p. 47; David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 145-46; Jean Boyd and Beverly Mack, *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u: Daughter of Usman dan Fodiyo, 1793-1864* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1997); and Anneke Breedveld, "Influence of Arabic Poetry on the Composition and Dating of Fulfulde Jihad Poetry in Yola (Nigeria)", in *The Arabic Script in Africa*, ed. by Mumin and Versteegh, pp. 143-57.

29 Alfâ Ibrâhîma Sow, *La Femme, la Vache, la Foi* (Paris: Julliard Classiques Africains, 1966), p. 15.

30 Gérard, p. 57. This factor could help to explain the "restricted literacy" in Pulaar Ajami in Fuuta Tooro that Marie-Ève Humery reports (pp. 173-98).

Muslims represent over 90% of the Senegalese population.<sup>31</sup> They are distributed among three major Sufi orders: Qadiriyya (whose members are predominantly Moors and Mandinka and their Wolofised descendants); Tijaniyya (which includes four offshoots: the Malick Sy, the Niassène, the Layène branch whose members are predominantly Lebu (a subgroup of the Wolof), and the branch of Oumar Tall whose followers are mostly members of the Fulani subgroup called Tukulóor); and Muridiyya (whose membership was predominantly Wolof but is now increasingly mixed). Both Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya orders originated from the Maghrib and the Middle East.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, Muridiyya is the youngest Sufi movement and the only Sufi order founded by a black man who was born and raised in sub-Saharan Africa. It is with the advent of Muridiyya that a black man (Ahmadou Bamba) had parted with Middle Eastern Sufi orders to claim the status of a founder for the first time in the history of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>33</sup>

The Murid Ajami master poets' lack of direct contact with the Arab world and their focus on conveying Bamba's views and teachings to the masses in their local tongue are two significant factors that partly account for the flourishing of Ajami in Muridiyya. Though other Senegalese orders have produced Ajami materials, their production remains limited compared to that of the Murids. Most of the didactic and devotional literature of Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya orders of Senegal are written in Arabic. In contrast, besides Bamba's classical Arabic odes, the bulk of the readily available Ajami materials in marketplaces and bookstores across Senegambia are produced by the Murids. Despite being the youngest Sufi movements of Senegambia, its Ajami production dwarfs the combined output of the other orders. This significant difference in Ajami materials among the Murids is due to the origin, history, didactic, and ideological orientation of Muridiyya as conveyed in the works of Murid Ajami scholars.<sup>34</sup>

As shown in the previous section, grassroots Wolof Ajami literacy existed before the emergence of Ahmadou Bamba. Like their Hausa

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31 Oxford Business Group, *The Report: Senegal 2009* (Oxford: OBG, 2009), p. 10.

32 For insights on Senegalese Sufi orders, see Khadim Mbacké, *Sufism and Religious Brotherhoods in Senegal*, trans. by Eric Ross, ed. by John Hunwick (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2005).

33 Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853-1913* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), p. 97.

34 Ngom, "Murid Identity and Wolof Ajami Literature", pp. 62-54.

and Fulani colleagues in Hausaland and Fuuta Jalon,<sup>35</sup> Wolof Muslim scholars were bilingual. Many produced didactic and devotional materials in Arabic and Wolof, their native tongue and the lingua franca in Senegambia.<sup>36</sup> One of the most prominent Wolof scholars who wrote both in Arabic and Ajami is the jurist and poet Khaly Madiakhaté Kala (1835-1902) who initiated Bamba in the arts of poetry.

Khaly was a colleague of Bamba's father, Momar Anta Saly (d. 1883). Momar and Khaly served both as Muslim judges and advisors to the last Wolof king, Lat Dior Ngoné Latyr Diop (1842-1886). As part of his pedagogy, Khaly co-authored poems with his advanced students. He often began Arabic, Ajami, or bilingual poems (Arabic and Ajami) and tasked his advanced students to complete them in order to teach them new poetic techniques and to gauge their knowledge of Islamic sciences. One such work is the popular Arabic poem "*Huqqal Bukā'u?* [Should they be Mourned?]" that Bamba wrote in his teenage years. Khaly had begun the poem with the following theological question: since the Quran teaches that heaven and earth did not mourn the death of the unrighteous such as the pharaoh and his followers, should the deceased saints be mourned? He asked Bamba to complete the poem in order to assess both his poetic skills and mastery of the Islamic literature on the issue. Bamba completed the poem and highlighted the reasons why deceased saints ought to be mourned.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, in one bilingual Arabic and Ajami poem entitled in Arabic "*Qāla qāḍi Madiakhaté Kala* [Judge Madiakhaté Kala said]" jointly composed with Bamba before 1883, Khaly wrote the first 22 verses engaging Bamba, his then student, who responded with the sixteen remaining verses of the poem. All the verses of the poem rhyme with a Wolof structure written in

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35 Mervyn Hiskett, *A History of Hausa Islamic Verse* (London: University of London School of Oriental and African Studies, 1975); Beverly B. Mack and Jean Boyd, *One Woman's Jihad: Nana Asma'u-Scholar and Scribe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000); and Sow. For more insights on Fuuta Jalon Ajami scholars, see <http://www.webfuuta.net/bibliotheque/alfa-ibrahim-sow/index.html>

36 For more on Moussa Ka's bilingual competence, see Camara, pp. 164-68. Also see bilingual poems by Samba Diarra Mbaye, written around 1903, in "*Ay Qasiday Wolof ak Arab* [Poems in Wolof and Arabic]" (EAP334/13/2).

37 For a French translation of the poem, see Ahmadou Bamba, "*Huqqal Bukā'u?* [Should they be Mourned?]", [http://khassidaenpdf.free.fr/khassida\\_pdf/Huqqal.pdf](http://khassidaenpdf.free.fr/khassida_pdf/Huqqal.pdf). For an Arabic copy of the poem time-aligned with its chanted version, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KNzA917AmI>



Ajami, including “woppuma” [I am not ill], “ba na ma” [left me], “të na ma” [it is beyond my control], and “meruma” [I am not angry].<sup>38</sup>

With this educational background, Bamba recognised the importance of Ajami before he began his Sufi movement in 1883. The founding of Muridiyya accelerated Ajami literary production in Wolof society, an acceleration that continues today.<sup>39</sup> The establishment of Muridiyya, the life story of Bamba, and his own Arabic writings are fairly well known.<sup>40</sup> His life story as told in hagiographic Ajami sources such as *Jasaawu Sakóor: Yoonu Gééj gi* [*Reward of the Grateful: The Odyssey by Sea*] written between 1927 and 1930 and *Jasaawu Sakóor: Yoonu Jéeri ji* [*Reward of the Grateful: The Odyssey by Land*] written between 1930 and 1935 by Moussa Ka, and *Jaar-jaari Boroom Tuubaa* [*Itineraries of the Master of Tuubaa*] published in 1997 by Mahmoud Niang is poignant and inspirational for Murids.<sup>41</sup>

Bamba was born and raised in Senegambia in the troubled nineteenth century, a period characterised by French colonisation and the destruction of the local traditional political and social structures. He emerged in the national scene in 1883 after the death of his father. Murid scholars regard 1883 as the birthdate of Muridiyya.<sup>42</sup> From 1883 to his death in 1927, Bamba’s life was marked by suffering. He was wrongly accused of preparing a holy war against the French colonial administration and subsequently was exiled to Gabon for seven years (1895-1902).

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38 Interview with Sam Niang (archivist at the Bibliothèque Cheikhoul Khadim), Touba, Senegal, 12 July 2014. All interviews were conducted by the author unless otherwise stated. Thanks to Sam Niang for giving me a copy of the poem.

39 Ngom, “Ahmadu Bamba’s Pedagogy”, pp. 99-124; Gérard, pp. 44-45; and Lüpke, p. 102.

40 See Babou; David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and the French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000); John Glover, *Sufism and Jihad in Modern Senegal: The Murid Order* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007); Allen F. Roberts and Mary Nooter Roberts, *A Saint in the City: Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 2003); and Fernand Dumont, *La Pensée Religieuse d’Amadou Bamba* (Dakar: Nouvelles Éditions Africaines, 1975).

41 See Mahmoud Niang, *Jaar-jaari Boroom Tuubaa* [*Itineraries of the Master of Tuubaa*] (Dakar: Librairie Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, 1997); Moussa Ka, *Jasaawu Sakóor: Yoonu Gééj gi* [*Reward of the Grateful: The Odyssey by Sea*] (Dakar: Librairie Touba Darou Khoudoss, 1997); and Ka, *Jasaawu Sakóor: Yoonu Jéeri ji* [*Reward of the Grateful: The Odyssey by Land*] (Rufisque: Afrique Impression, 2006). For a Latin-script transcription and French translation of Ka’s two poems, see Bassirou Dieng and Diaô Faye, *L’Épopée de Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba de Serigne Moussa Ka: Jasaan-u Sakóor-u Gééj gi–Jasaan-u Sakóor Jéeri ji* (Dakar: Presses Universitaires de Dakar, 2006).

42 Interviews with Masokhna Lo (Imam of the Mosque of Diourbel), Diourbel, Senegal, 11 June 2011; Mbaye Nguirane, Diourbel, Senegal, 11 June 2011; and Sam Niang.



Fig. 11.1 Picture of Ahmadou Bamba taken during the 2012 Māggal, the yearly celebration of his arrest in 1895. The Arabic verses read as follows: “My intention on this day is to thank You, God; O You, the only one I implore, The Lord of the Throne”.

Upon his return from his seven-year exile to Gabon, new unfounded accusations were again made against him, which led to his second exile to Mauritania (1903-1907). When he returned from Mauritania, the French administration kept him under house arrests in Thieyène (1907-1912) and in Diourbel (1912-1927) where he died. He is buried in Touba, the holy city of Muridiyya. At the end of his life, however, the French colonial administrators realised that they were mistaken and they attempted to rehabilitate him by awarding him the *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* (Knight of the Legion of Honour), the highest distinction of the French

Republic.<sup>43</sup> Though colonial sources note that Bamba received the award, Murid Ajami sources contend that he did not accept it.<sup>44</sup>

But for Bamba and his followers, the long unjust sufferings he courageously endured and the nonviolent approach he championed have profound religious meaning. They see his ordeals as analogous to the sufferings of the prophets and saints of the Abrahamic religions, so too the price he had to pay to attain supreme sainthood in order to become the saviour and the intercessor of mankind. These narratives pervade Murid Ajami and oral sources.<sup>45</sup>

Bamba stressed in his teachings the equality between all people, work ethic, Sufi education, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency. He also sought to reform the traditional Islamic book-based education to make it more practical, ethics-centred, and to accommodate the varying ethical and spiritual needs of the uneducated crowds who first joined his movement. Because he understood that Ajami is pivotal to communicate his teachings to the masses, he encouraged it and implemented a division of tasks within his movement. He gave orders to some of his senior disciples to separate from him and found their own communities as independent leaders.<sup>46</sup> He encouraged Mor Kairé (1869-1951), Samba Diarra Mbaye (1870-1917), Mbaye Diakhaté (1875-1954), and Moussa Ka (1889-1967), the four initial Murid Ajami poets, to write in Ajami in order to spread his message to the majority of the Wolof people who could not read Arabic.<sup>47</sup>

As the language of the Quran, Arabic letters (including Arabic numerals) have a holy status in African Muslim areas. They are believed to have spiritual potency and are thus regularly used in prayers, Islamic medicine, numerology, and in the making of amulets such as good luck charms and protective devices as documented in Fig. 11.3, discussed below. Arabic has

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43 See Archives du Sénégal, 13 G12, versement 1; and Archives du Sénégal 13 G/12-1, copied in Oumar Ba, *Ahmadou Bamba face aux Autorités Coloniales, 1889-1927* (Abbeville: Imprimerie F. Paillart, 1982), pp. 159-60.

44 Niang, *Jaar-jaari Boroom Tuubaa*, p. 37.

45 See Ka, *Jasaawu Sakóor: Yoonu Gééj gi*, verses 169-70; verses 178-82, and verses 189-91; *Jasaawu Sakóor: Yoonu Jéeri ji*, verses 5-24 and verse 358; Niang, *Jaar-jaari Boroom Tuubaa*, p. 38; and Abdoul Ahad Mbacké, Khalife Général des Mourides (1968-1989), *Waxtaanu Mâggal 1979* (Discussion of the 1979 Mâggal), audio recording, Touba, 1979.

46 Babou, p. 70.

47 Interviews with Cheikh Fall Kairé (grandson of the Ajami poet Mor Kairé), Touba, Senegal, 24 July 2011; and Moustapha Diakhaté (son and representative of the Ajami poet Mbaye Diakhaté's family), Khourou Mbacké, Senegal, 25 July 2011.

also been used as the lingua franca of the elite in Muslim communities. For the illiterate masses (who cannot differentiate Ajami texts from Arabic texts) everything that looks like Arabic is regarded as potent, regardless of whether the material is religious or not. Among educated and semi-educated African Muslims, however, Ajami does not have the potency of Arabic nor its holy status.<sup>48</sup>

Ajami is used primarily for educational and communicational purposes among the Murids. Because of the “de-sacralised” status of Ajami scripts, Murid Ajami materials routinely include western numerals.<sup>49</sup> These numerals are used for different purposes, including in the paginations of Arabic and Ajami educational materials in Murid communities. The use of western numerals in paginations in Murid communities is a post-colonial phenomenon because manuscripts written before Senegal’s independence (1960) do not use numerals for pagination. They utilise “pointers” called *joxoñ* in Wolof. These “pointers” consist of writing the first word of the next page at the bottom of the preceding page. They have largely been replaced by paginations with western numerals in contemporary Murid educational materials.<sup>50</sup>

In contrast, materials used in Islamic medicine, numerology, or potent prayers do not include western numerals. While the instructions to use the medicine, the numerological figure, or the prayer formulae are typically in Ajami and can include western numerals, the formulae themselves are exclusively in Arabic with Arabic numerals due to their perceived potency derived from the sacredness of the Quran.<sup>51</sup>

Related to this issue is the centrality of numeracy among Ajami users, an issue largely overlooked in the literature. Many successful business people, shopkeepers, farmers, fishermen, and merchants in African Muslim communities are Ajami users with good numeracy

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48 See the use of unaltered Arabic letters in talismanic figures in Moukhtar Ndong, *Manāfi’ ul Muslim [Mystical Healing and Protection Manual]* (EAP334/12/2).

49 For an insightful history of western numerals, see Stephen Chrisomalis, *Numerical Notation: A Comparative History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

50 For examples of “pointers”, see “*Alxuraan bu ñu Tekki ci Wolof* [The Quran Translated in Wolof]” (EAP334/6/5).

51 For more insights on the potency of Arabic letters and numerals, see Constant Hamès, ed., *Coran et Talismans: Textes et Pratiques Magiques en Milieu Musulman* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2007).

skills.<sup>52</sup> Ironically, most of them know western numerals but they do not necessarily know the Arabic numerals. This is partly because the western numerals are readily available to them through the local currencies used in their communities.

According to Sam Niang, archivist at the Bibliothèque Cheikhoul Khadim in Touba, who was born and raised in the Murid community, though the traditional Quranic schools do not teach numeracy as a subject matter, students generally acquire numeracy in western numerals through a process that could be termed “currency-derived numeracy”, i.e. through their sustained exposure to the currency used in their communities. His experience taught him that Murid Ajami users learn western numerals primarily from the money that circulates in their communities and schools. These include the coins of 5 francs (*dërëm*), 10 francs (*ñaaari dërëm*), 15 francs (*ñetti dërëm*), 25 francs (*juróomi dërëm*), 50 francs (*fukki dërëm*), and 100 francs (*ñaar fukk*) and banknotes such as 500 francs (*téeméer*), 1000 francs (*ñaaari téeméer*), 5000 francs (*junni*), and 10000 francs (*ñaaari junni*).

When students leave their communities and schools later, they enhance their numeracy skills in western numerals by learning from their supervisors. Thus, an Ajami literate apprentice tailor will learn from his boss how to take measurements and write them correctly and a novice shopkeeper, itinerant merchant, or businessman will improve his numeracy skills in western numerals by learning from his supervisor more arithmetic, how to use modern calculators, keep financial records, and write invoices for local customers who request them.<sup>53</sup>

The learned people who are literate in Arabic and in the local Ajami form are generally those who can use Arabic numerals. Thus, while in general one develops literacy and numeracy in the same language, the case of Ajami users demonstrates that these two skills can be acquired from two different languages, as the Fuuta Tooro Pulaar and Wolof Ajami business records demonstrate.<sup>54</sup>

Because they lack the potency associated with Arabic, Ajami materials are used to communicate both religious and non-religious information in African Muslim societies. The bulk of African Ajami materials consist of poems, which continue to be recited and chanted to the illiterate masses

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<sup>52</sup> See the Pulaar and Wolof business records in Ajami in footnote 12.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Sam Niang. This fascinating “currency-derived numeracy” among Murid Ajami users begs for further scholarly inquiry.

<sup>54</sup> See footnote 12.

to convey the teachings of Islam to this day. Among the Murids, texts by Bamba or Ajami poems of his disciples often offer the occasion for a public performance where the singers and their vocalists sing the lines to a tune that they have adopted.<sup>55</sup> The recitations of Ajami poems followed the tradition of the recitations of the Quran and Sufi poems. But African Ajami poems were also enriched by the local African musical traditions. While the skills needed for Wolof Ajami poets are, among others, mastery of the Ajami script and an understanding of Arabic and Wolof poetic devices, the skills required for singers of Ajami poems include literacy in Ajami, a good voice, and an understanding of appropriate singing styles for each poetic genre (referred to as “*daaj*” in Wolof). Murid Ajami poets and singers draw from the rich Wolof praise-singing tradition in content and form. Their poetry in its musicality and rhythm reflects the localisation of Islam.<sup>56</sup>

In order to execute his pedagogical and religious vision, Bamba focused on writing in Arabic for devotional purposes and to communicate with his peers, while at the same time he specifically tasked some of his senior disciples to communicate his ethos to the masses in their tongue (Wolof) through read, recited, and chanted Ajami poetry. The first four senior scholars he tasked to communicate his ethos to the masses were Mor Kairé, Samba Diarra Mbaye, Mbaye Diakhaté and Moussa Ka, the most famous Murid Ajami poet. All four were learned Muslim scholars who used to produce Arabic poems before Bamba tasked them to convey his teachings using Wolof in the form of Ajami poetry. They are responsible for the expansion of Ajami as a mass communication tool in Murid communities and its use as a badge of identity of their movement. A good example of their poetic work is a poem by Diakhaté illustrated in Fig. 11.4.

The division of tasks that Bamba implemented between him and his senior followers engendered four major categories of Ajamists (Ajami scholars): social scientists; esoteric scholars; poets and singers; and scribes and copyists.<sup>57</sup> The first group consists of professional

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55 Camara, pp. 164-67. One of the most recited and chanted Murid hagiographic Ajami poems is: Ka, *Jasaawu Sakóor: Yoonu Géej gi*. See a recited version of this poem by Ibra Diop-Karamane at [http://www.jazbu.com/Serigne\\_Moussa\\_ka](http://www.jazbu.com/Serigne_Moussa_ka)

56 See Ngom, “Ahmadou Bamba’s Pedagogy”, p. 109; Gérard, p. 73; and Cheikh Anta Diop, *Nations nègres et culture*, 4th edn. (Dakar: Présence Africaine, 1979), pp. 528-32.

57 Ngom, “Ahmadou Bamba’s Pedagogy”, pp. 108-09.

historians, genealogists and biographers such as Habibou Rassoulou Sy (1920-2001).<sup>58</sup> The second consists of scholars whose primary work focuses on esoteric knowledge (such as prayers, protective devices and interpretations that unlock secrets hidden in Bamba's writings and in other religious materials).<sup>59</sup> The works of scholars in these two groups are primarily based upon fieldwork data, i.e. they travel from place to place to study with specialists and collect various types of information, including family histories and genealogies, prayers, and techniques of magical formulae to address particular problems in their communities. They also collect recipes for medical treatment of various illnesses. The third group consists of poets whose job is to compose religious and non-religious poetry to be sung by specialised singers.<sup>60</sup> The last group consists of professional scribes and copyists. Their work ranges from translating Bamba's Arabic poems into Wolof and making copies of important manuscripts, to writing correspondences in Ajami for illiterate customers who want to communicate with their Ajami literate friends or relatives. They also prepare public announcements, road signs and advertisements in Murid areas.<sup>61</sup>

The categorisation of the specialisations of Murid Ajami scholars, however, is not rigid. It is simply meant to reflect the major trends of Ajami scholars and their methods of production and dissemination of knowledge.<sup>62</sup> This is because Ajami scholars are generally eclectic in their approach, and often combine activities and functions of several of the four categories. The following picture, Fig. 11.2, shows one eclectic Ajami scholar, who combines activities of social scientists and religious scholars.

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58 Habibou Rassoulou Sy, *Lawtanug barke [The Flourishing of Baraka]*, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_item.a4d?catId=132928;r=153](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_item.a4d?catId=132928;r=153)

59 For a good example of this category of Murid scholars, see Moukhtar Ndong, *Manāfi'ul Muslim [Mystical Healing and Protection Manual]*, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_item.a4d?catId=132929;r=292](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_item.a4d?catId=132929;r=292)

60 For the works of key Ajami poets regularly chanted in Murid communities, see EAP334. There are numerous popular individuals in Murid communities whose profession is chanting and reciting the Arabic poems of Bamba and those of his Ajami poets. These include Ibra Diop Karaman, Abdoul Ahad Touré, Akassa Samb, Khadim Guèye, Mama Ndiaye, Moussa Guèye-Ndar, Djim Cissé, Khaly Sèye, Cheikh Diop-Baye Fall, Moustapha Gningue, Mountapha Guèye, and Samba Wade, to name only a few.

61 Some of these Murid scribes and copyists can be found at a place called *Keur Serigne bi* in the Sandaga market in Dakar, Senegal.

62 Ngom, "Ahmadou Bamba's Pedagogy", pp. 108-09.



Fig. 11.2 Mbaye Nguirane reading an Ajami excerpt of one of Moussa Ka's poems during an interview with Fallou Ngom on 11 June 2011. Born in 1940 in Diourbel, Senegal, Nguirane is a leading specialist in Sufism, a historian and a public speaker.

Just as Ahmadou Bamba modelled his life on the Prophet Muhammad, his Ajamists also modelled their works on those of the poets who used to praise the prophet. The scholars who followed him also wrote his hagiography and genealogy — as illustrated in Fig. 11.5 — and compiled his teachings in Ajami as the poets and scholars of the prophet once did. To emphasise that he performs the same tasks for Bamba (in this life and the afterlife) as those of the poets of Prophet Muhammad, Ka declares: “on judgment day when Arab poets (who praise Prophet Muhammad) boast about the beauty of their language, I will praise Bamba in Wolof in ways that would dazzle them”.<sup>63</sup>

Additionally, the contemporary prolific Murid social scientist, El Hadji Mbacké, models the ranking of the sources he used to compile his Ajami anthologies of Bamba's sayings and teachings entitled *Waxtaani Sëriñ Tuubaa* [*Discussions of the Master of Tuubaa*] on that of the *Muhaddithun*, Muslim scholars who compiled the *hadith* (sayings and accounts of the

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63 Moussa Ka, *Taxmiis bub Wolof* [*The Wolof Takhmīs*] (Dakar: Imprimerie Librairie Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, [n.d.]), verse 8.



conduct of the Prophet).<sup>64</sup> The Murid Ajami social scientists performed peripatetic travels in local communities and in Gabon and Mauritania where Bamba was exiled to document his experiences and compile his sayings and teachings.<sup>65</sup>

Another important factor that boosted the flourishing of Ajami among Murids is the fact that Bamba was proud of his black African identity. As Ousmane Kane reports, he was proud of being black and African and did not use the customary “principle of genealogical sophistication” to claim to be of Arab and/or *Sharifian* descent, which was an integral part of the system of legitimisation of Muslim leaders of West Africa and beyond.<sup>66</sup> He denounced the racism of the Moor/Arabs who were “notorious for their disapproving attitude toward black Africans”.<sup>67</sup> He noted in his book *Masālik al-Jinān [Itineraries of Paradise]* written between 1883 and 1887 the following: “The best person before God is the one who fears Him the most, without any sort of discrimination, and skin color cannot be the cause of idiocy or lack of knowledge of a person”.<sup>68</sup>

In the hagiographic poems of Murid Ajami scholars, Bamba’s call for racial equality constitutes one of the first major benchmarks of his emergence as a prominent Muslim leader concerned with racial justice within the Muslim community. Murid Ajami scholars interpreted his proud African identity and his views on the claims of Sharifian descent and on racial equality before God within the Muslim community as a call to utilise their read, recited, and chanted Ajami materials in order to cultivate an assertive black African Muslim identity within their communities. They used Ajami as a means of resistance against what

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64 For information on how El Hadji Mbacké’s ranks his sources and accounts of Bamba’s sayings and teachings, which echoes the methodology of hadith scholars, see El Hadji Mbacké, *Waxtaani Sērīñ Tuubaa [Discussions of The Master of Tuubaa]*, 1 (Dakar: Imprimerie Cheikh Ahmadal Khadim, 2005), p. 87. For the methodology of hadith scholars, see Hamza Yuyuf Hanson, “The Sunna: The Way of The Prophet Muhammad”, in *Voices of Islam*, ed. by Vincent J. Cornell, 5 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), pp. 125-47.

65 See Niang, *Jaar-jaari Boroom Tuubaa*.

66 Ousmane Kane, *The Homeland Is the Arena: Religion, Transnationalism, and the Integration of Senegalese Immigrants in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 37.

67 Rüdiger Seesemann, “‘The Shurafā’ and the ‘Blacksmith’: The Role of the Idaw ‘Ali of Mauritania in the Career of the Senegalese Ibrāhīm Niasse (1900-1975)”, in *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa*, ed. by Scott S. Reese (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 72-98 (p. 93). For further insights on the perceptions and treatments of black people by Arab/Berbers in West Africa, see Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, pp. 11-13; and Bruce S. Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

68 Abdoul Aziz Mbacké, *Ways Unto Heaven* (Dakar: Majalis Research Project, 2009), p. 39. This book is a good English translation of *Masālik al-Jinān*.

they perceived as the Arabisation ideology that accompanied Islam in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>69</sup>

Murid Ajami scholars disseminate these views to the masses and defended the legitimacy of Ajami in Islamic discourse. They separated Islamisation from Arabisation by untangling the inferred link between the holy status of Arabic (the language of the Quran) and the presumed superiority of the Arab ethnolinguistic group. A good example of a poem illustrating this effort is Ka's *Taxmiis bub Wolof*. In this work, modelled on the classical Arabic poetic form called *Takhmīs*, structured around five-line verses, Ka challenges the hegemony of Arabic and asserts that the holy prestige of Arabic is derived from its proselytising function, and not from some inherent superiority of Arabic or Arabs over any ethnolinguistic group. He emphasises that just like Arabic, Aramaic (the language of Jesus) and Hebrew (the language of Moses and David) are equally sacred because they were the tongues through which God's message was conveyed. He notes that all languages are equal and that any tongue that is used to convey God's message acquires holy prestige.<sup>70</sup>

Murid Ajami poets strove to demonstrate that Islam does not require acculturation, forsaking one's cultural and linguistic heritage. Instead, they contend that Islam requires exemplary ethical and spiritual excellence.<sup>71</sup> The flourishing of Ajami and the assertive African identity of the Murids are entwined with these narratives in the works of Murid Ajami scholars. But these perspectives are unknown in the external academic literature because they are embedded in the Ajami sources that have been omitted in most studies of Muridiyya.<sup>72</sup>

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69 See Ka, *Taxmiis bub Wolof*. In this poem, Ka praises Bamba, asserts his own proud African Muslim identity, and defends the legitimacy of Ajami in religious discourse. He also rejects the belief in the superiority of Arabs and Arabic over black people and African languages held by some of his peers. He claims that ethnolinguistic diversity is a blessing, a divine grace. For a chanted version of *Taxmiis bub Wolof*, see [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvXI\\_iQOyiU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvXI_iQOyiU). For further insights on the Arabisation ideology and the response of the Berber population in Algeria, see Lameen Souag, "Writing 'Shelha' in New Media: Emergent Non-Arabic Literacy in Southwestern Algeria", in *The Arabic Script in Africa*, ed. by Mumin and Versteegh, pp. 91-94; and Judith Scheele, "Coming to Terms with Tradition: Manuscript Conservation in Contemporary Algeria", in *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade*, ed. by Krätli and Lydon, pp. 292-318.

70 Ka, *Taxmiis bub Wolof*, stanzas 1-4.

71 See the mission statement of Muridiyya, "*Lan mooy Yoonu Murid?* [What is the Murid Way?]", in Niang, *Jaar-jaari Boroom Tuubaa*, pp. 7-8.

72 The work that has lasting impact on the scholarship on Muridiyya, which has omitted Ajami sources and relies primarily on colonial archives, is Donald B. O'Brien, *Mourides of Senegal: The Political and Economic Organization of an Islamic Brotherhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). There is a plethora of works on Muridiyya that has followed his tradition.

The blossoming of Ajami in Murid communities followed the three phases of Bamba's spiritual odyssey: the first decade of his movement (1883-1895); his exile to Gabon (1895-1902); and his exile to Mauritania and house arrests (1903-1927). In the first phase he diverged from the traditional Islamic education system and created three types of schools in rural areas. He created *Daaray Alxuraan* (Quranic schools), *Daaray Xam-Xam* (Knowledge Schools), and *Daaray Tarbiyya* (Ethical and Spiritual Vocational Schools). In the first schools, traditional Quranic instruction was offered. In the second, Islamic sciences were taught. His disciples in these two schools mostly came from learned families. In the third schools new adult disciples who were largely illiterate were given ethical and vocational training (including physical work) combined with gradual study of the Quran and his Arabic poems. These were the largest schools in the initial years of the movement. It is in these early Murid schools that Ajami literacy first began to spread widely and to become later the primary means of written communication among the Murids.<sup>73</sup> The trend continued during the second phase of Bamba's life. But the use was not drastically different from other communities.

But it is during the third phase (1903-1927) that the use of Ajami flourished as the dominant mass communication tool in Murid communities thanks to the works of the Ajami scholars who followed Bamba. The period encompassed Bamba's exile to Mauritania (1903-1907) and his house arrests in Theyèné (1907-1912) and Diourbel (1912-1927). The three Murid Ajami master poets — Kairé, Mbaye and Diakhaté — visited Bamba in Mauritania where they became his disciples. They shifted from writing in Arabic as they did previously to devote the rest of their lives to Ajami. During the period of the house arrest in Diourbel, Ka, the youngest of the Murid Ajami master poets, contributed greatly to the expansion and popularisation of Ajami in Murid communities.<sup>74</sup>

Besides the traditional proselytising function of Ajami, Murid Ajami poets present Bamba as a local African hero and a blessing to humanity just as other saints and prophets were heroes of their people and God's blessings to humanity.<sup>75</sup> They routinely celebrate their proud African

73 Ngom, "Ahmadu Bamba's Pedagogy", pp. 107-08.

74 Interviews with Masokhna Lo and Mbaye Nguirane; Cheikh Fall Kairé; Moustapha Diakhaté; Amyd Moustapha Seck (specialist of Ka's work and professional Ajami singer), Dakar, Senegal, 12 June 2013; and Sam Niang.

75 See Moussa Ka, *Waa ji Muusaa Bul Fàtte Waa ja fa Tuubaa* [Dear Moussa, Do not Forget the Man in Touba] (Dakar: Imprimerie Islamique al-Wafaa, 1995). Ka presents Bamba in this poem as the embodiment of many saints and the saviour of both black and white people. In his worldview, all humanity consists of these two races.

identity and treat their Ajami skills as assets, as the following verse by Kairé illustrates: “[Bamba] you made us erudite till we rival Arabs and compose poems both in Arabic and Ajami”.<sup>76</sup> They produced a rich corpus of read, recited and chanted poems, which conveyed the teachings of Islam and Muridiyya, and reflected an enduring resistance against acculturation into the Arab and western cultures. The contents of their poems continue to resonate with people today, and are still read, recited, chanted and listened to in Murid communities.<sup>77</sup>

During Bamba’s house arrest in Diourbel, Ajami writing, reading and chanting became part of the major activities in Murid communities and schools along with copying, reading, reciting and chanting the Quran and Bamba’s poems. During Bamba’s time in Diourbel, his compound gradually became a centre of Islamic learning and scholarship, and Moorish and Wolof disciples and teachers flocked to the quarter to work as readers of the Quran and scribes, copying Quranic and other religious books destined for students in the new schools that were opened in the area.<sup>78</sup> Translations of Bamba’s poems and other Islamic didactic and devotional materials into Ajami were also part of the regular activities during this period.<sup>79</sup> The activities of copying, translating and chanting didactic and devotional materials continued. They have become important employment-generating activities in Murid communities as illustrated in Figs. 11.9 and 11.10.

Ajami poets such as Ka and Diakhaté used to meet in Diourbel to discuss Ajami poetry and techniques (metric, rhythms and versification) during Bamba’s house arrest there. The joint Ajami poem “*Ma Tàgg Bàmba* [Let me Praise Bamba]” was written during this period by Ka and Diakhaté.<sup>80</sup> An important corpus of Ajami poems written by Bamba’s daughters also exists, but it remains unknown outside Murid

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76 Mor Kairé, “*Ku Dawal Sunu Shaykh ba Daloo Ngërëmam* [If you Serve Our Leader till you Obtain his Endorsement]”, verse 9 (EAP334/14/9).

77 Audio recordings of recitations and songs of Ajami poems can be found online. For chanted poems by Ka, Diakhaté, Mbaye and Kairé, see [http://www.jazbu.com/Serigne\\_Moussa\\_ka](http://www.jazbu.com/Serigne_Moussa_ka); <http://www.jazbu.com/wolofal>; <http://www.jazbu.com/sambadiarra>; and [http://www.jazbu.com/mor\\_kayre](http://www.jazbu.com/mor_kayre)

78 Babou, p. 166.

79 Interview with Bassirou Kane (specialist of Mbaye Diakhaté’s poems and professional Ajami singer), Khourou Mbacké, Senegal, 25 July 2011. See Kane and the research team with trunks containing Ajami materials of his father who served as assistant to Diakhaté at [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP334#project\\_gallery](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP334#project_gallery)

80 For the chanted version of the poem, see *Duo: Mbaye Diakhaté and Moussa Ka*, chanted by Djim Cissé, audiocassette, Touba, recorded by Kabou Fall, 1999. For a digital copy of the recited version of the poem, see [http://www.jazbu.com/Serigne\\_Moussa\\_ka](http://www.jazbu.com/Serigne_Moussa_ka)

communities. Ka and Sokhna Amy Cheikh, a daughter of Bamba, wrote together the popular Wolof Ajami poem entitled “*Qasidak Wolofalu Maam Jaara* [A Wolof Ajami Tribute to Maam Jaara]” to celebrate the virtues of Bamba’s mother, Maam Jaara Buso (or Mame Diarra Bousso in the French-based spelling).<sup>81</sup> According to Sam Niang, Bamba’s daughter Sokhna Amy Cheikh contributed 21 verses to the poem. Niang indicates that Ka routinely assisted Bamba’s daughters in the writing of their Ajami poems.<sup>82</sup> I have collected seven Ajami poems, 72 pages of manuscripts in total, written by Murid women. These include poems by two of Bamba’s other daughters: Sokhna Mai Sakhir (1925-1999) and Sokhna Mai Kabir (1908-1964), and one poem by Sokhna Aminatou Cissé, a contemporary Murid female Ajamist who does not belong to Bamba’s family.<sup>83</sup>

The Murid Ajami poets generally worked with assistants who helped to decorate their poems with colours and designs (Fig. 11.6) and to vocalise them, just as some of Bamba’s senior disciples decorated his Arabic odes and vocalised them.<sup>84</sup> The tradition is derived from the colourful calligraphic copying of the Quran.<sup>85</sup>

Murid Ajami poems are grounded in the local culture. They contain maxims and metaphors drawn from it, as illustrated by the following metaphor in one of Diakhaté’s poems: “If you cannot resist worldly pleasures and your baser instinct for a day, you are no *wrestler* or if you are, you are (nothing but) a *sand-eating wrestler*”.<sup>86</sup> Wrestling is the most popular traditional sport in Senegambia. The image of a wrestler

81 See Moussa Ka and Sokhna Amy Cheikh Mbacké, *Qasidak Wolofalu Maam Jaara* [A Wolof Ajami Tribute to Maam Jaara] (Touba: Ibrahima Diokhané, [n.d.]).

82 Interview with Sam Niang.

83 Sokhna Mai Sakhir wrote a moving Ajami poem between 1974 and 1975 in which she presents her condolences to her husband and family for her daughter, Mame Faty Mbacké-Balla, who died at a young age. See *Al Hamdu li’llāhi Ma Sant Yālla* [Thanks be to God, Let Me Grateful to God] (Dakar: Imprimerie Serigne Saliou Mbacké, 2007), pp. 1-26. Soxna Mai Kabir wrote *Maymunatu, Bintul Xadiim* [Maymunatu, Daughter of The Servant] (Dakar: Imprimerie Serigne Saliou Mbacké, 2007), pp. 27-32. This poem is quite popular in Murid communities. For its chanted version, see *Wolofalu Soxna Maymunatu Mbakke*, audiocassette, chanted by Abdoul Ahad Touré, recorded by Studio Talla Diagne, Touba, 2005. Sokhna Aminatou Cissé is the author of “Maa’u Rahma [Water of Grace]” in *Jaayante ci Ndoxum Tuubaa, Vol. 1*. [Commitment to the Water of Touba, Vol. I] (Touba: SA-Edition Magal 2012), pp. 17-21. There are likely other female Murid Ajami writers to be discovered.

84 Interview with Bassirou Kane. Bassirou Kane’s father, Abdou Kane (1915-2000), was a student and assistant to Diakhaté.

85 For the calligraphic copying of the Quran, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987).

86 Souhaibou Diakhaté, *Xasiday Wolofalu Sériñ Mbay Jaxate: Li War ab Sériñ ak ab Taalube* [Ajami Poems of Mbay Jaxate: Duties of Leaders and Disciples] (Dakar: Imprimerie Issa Niang, [n.d.]), verse 3.

is used to underscore the spiritual potency of religious leaders in the Wolof society. *Mbër muy mëq suuf* (a sand-eating wrestler) is the defeated wrestler thrown down so hard that his face and mouth are filled with sand. Diakhaté uses this local metaphor to refer to religious leaders who lack the appropriate ethical and spiritual credentials.

The recitation and chanting of such materials facilitated the spread of the teachings of Muridiyya and Ajami literacy. Many illiterate people memorised the lyrics of the Ajami poems they heard repeatedly before later learning the Ajami script. Among them are second language speakers of Wolof such as members of the Seereer ethnolinguistic group of the Baol area of Senegal, the birthplace of Muridiyya.<sup>87</sup> Many Seereer of Baol joined Muridiyya in its early days because of the beautiful and inspirational hagiographic songs of Ajami poets they heard. They learned the Ajami script when they joined the movement and became exposed to greater Murid influence.<sup>88</sup>

This was the case of Cheikh Ngom (1941-1996), a Seereer who was born and raised in the Baol area, spoke Wolof as a second language, and acquired Wolof Ajami literacy as a result of his membership to Muridiyya. When he died in 1996, he left over 900 pages of materials in Arabic and Ajami. The Arabic materials consist of Islamic litanies, formulae, and figures used in prayers, medicinal treatment and protective devices. The Wolof Ajami materials, the bulk of his written legacy, encompass his personal records — records of important events in his life, his family and community, and his financial dealings. However, his entire written legacy includes no Ajami text in Seereer, his mother tongue.<sup>89</sup>

The Wolof Ajami songs that attracted many Seereer people of the Baol area to Muridiyya include the two popular masterpieces by Ka, which describe the poignant lived and spiritual odyssey of Ahmadou Bamba.<sup>90</sup> These works recount Bamba's suffering, his confrontations with local

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87 For insights on the Seereer and other Senegalese ethnic groups, see Ethnologue's section on Senegal at <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/SN>

88 Interview with Amdy Moustapha Seck.

89 For samples of Cheikh Ngom's written legacy, see "Wolofal Rare Documents", contributed by Fallou Ngom to *Africa's Sources of Knowledge Digital Library*, <http://ask-dl.fas.harvard.edu/search/node/Cheikh%20Ngom?page=1>. Although Cheikh Ngom wrote exclusively in Wolof Ajami because of the Murid influence on him, other Muslim members of the Seereer ethnic group who live in areas beyond the sphere of influence of Muridiyya have developed grassroots literacy in Seereer Ajami. The script in the few ephemeral Seereer Ajami texts I have seen in the regions of Thiès and Fatick shares features with Wolof Ajami. For example, *p* is written with *bā'* with three dots above or below just like in Wolof.

90 See Ka, *Jasaawu Sakoor: Yoonu Gééj gi*; and idem, *Jasaawu Sakoor: Yoonu Jéeri ji*.

immoral Muslim leaders, traditional rulers, and the French colonial administration, as well as his exemplary virtues, spiritual achievements, and his mission on earth from his emergence as a prominent religious leader in 1883 to his death in 1927.

The fact that some scholars taught Ajami literacy or used Ajami as a vehicle to teach other subjects, including Arabic literacy and Quranic lessons, also boosted Ajami among Murids. The Ajami book *Fonk sa Bopp di Wax li Nga Nâmp* [*Respect Yourself by Speaking your Mother Tongue*] written by the Murid scholar Habibou Rassoulou Sy (1920-2001) specifically teaches Ajami literacy and proposes an indigenous standard for Wolof Ajami users.<sup>91</sup> In contrast, the contemporary Murid Ajami scholar Mouhammadou Moustapha Mbacké Falilou uses French and Ajami to teach Arabic literacy and key concepts of the Quran to Ajami literates who do not know the unmodified Arabic script.<sup>92</sup> Mbacké's audience consists of individuals who have acquired Ajami skills through "music-derived literacy", but are unfamiliar with the original Arabic script. This phenomenon of acquiring Ajami skills without prior literacy in the Arabic script, while unusual, is easy to understand since recitation and chanting pervade Murid communities. Murid disciples were routinely arrested and put in prison for disturbing the peace in Diourbel with their noisy chanting.<sup>93</sup>

The phenomenon of music-derived literacy reveals that there are multiple channels through which Ajami literacy is developed in African Muslim communities. Music-derived literacy in Murid communities is sustained by the largely unknown but remarkable investments that Murids have made in the audio recordings and publishing presses. Today Murids own the largest network of homegrown, private printing presses and media outlets in Senegambia. They produced and disseminated devotional and didactic materials ever since Bamba's house arrest in Diourbel. To make this possible, since the 1950s the Murids have invested in printing presses and recording studios. Their written and verbalised materials pervade the Islamic bookstores in marketplaces in Murid areas and urban centres in Senegal. Many of their textual and audiovisual materials are also available online.<sup>94</sup>

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91 Habibou Rassoulou Sy, *Fonk sa Bopp di Wax li Nga Nâmp* [*Respect Yourself by Speaking your Mother Tongue*] (Kaolack: [n. pub.], 1983).

92 Mouhammadou Moustapha Mbacké-Falilou, *Afdhalul Hiraf-Ta'limu Haraf Ngir Fer ijji* [*The Best Letters-Teaching Letters for Literacy*] (Touba: [n. pub.], 1995).

93 Babou, p. 164.

94 Following is an incomplete list of known Murid television and radio stations, audio recording studios, private presses, and bookstores: Al Mouridiyah TV, Lamp Fall TV,

## Conclusion: the significance of Ajami

Through the discussion of African Ajami traditions in general and the Murid Wolof Ajami materials and their historical context, I have attempted to demonstrate that the prevailing treatment of Africa as lacking written traditions is misleading.<sup>95</sup> It disregards the important written traditions of the continent, which are not taken into account in official literacy statistics and in the works of many historians, anthropologists and political scientists, to name only a few disciplines. Yet, just like written Arabic and European languages hold the Arab and European knowledge systems, so too Ajami sources are reservoirs of the knowledge systems of many African societies.

The omission, dismissal and downplaying of the significance of African Ajami traditions among many scholars — including language planners, and governmental and non-governmental professionals — have perpetuated the stereotypes which have devalued sub-Saharan Africa's people and their languages for centuries. Ka and Frederike Lüpke deplore and trace these stereotypes to the Arab-centric and Euro-centric traditions. While the tendency is to treat stereotypical representations and racial prejudice against the black population of sub-Saharan Africa as an exclusive Euro-Christian problem, the enduring historical facts tell a different story.

The devaluing of sub-Saharan Africans, their languages and cultures are well established in the works of Arab Muslim scholars, including the celebrated Ibn Battuta and Ibn Khaldun. Both were excessively preoccupied with skin colour and believed that sub-Saharan Africa's black people were naturally inferior.<sup>96</sup> Their works and those of like-minded scholars have bequeathed many people with the enduring fallacy that insightful knowledge

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Al Bichri TV, Touba TV, Lamp Fall FM, Sokhna Faty Mbacké FM, Diant Bi FM, Disso FM, Studio Talla Diagne, Studio Kabou Fall, Studio Moustapha Fall-Mouride Sadikhe, Studio Hizbut-Tarqiyyah, Darou Mouhty Éditions, Impression Cheikh Ahmadal Khadim, Impression Keur Serigne Kébé, Imprimerie Librairie Cheikh Abdoul Ahad Mbacké, Imprimerie Librairie Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, Imprimerie Moustapha Guèye, Imprimerie Serigne Issa Niang, Imprimerie Serigne Saliou Mbacké, Imprimerie Touba Darou Salam, Librairie Imprimerie Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, Imprimerie Touba Photo, Librairie Imprimerie Touba Darou Khoudoss, Imprimerie Serigne Fallou Mbacké, and Imprimerie Serigne Massamba Mbacké. The investments that the Murids have made in telecommunication, publishing presses, bookstores, and audiovisual recording of their written and verbalised Arabic and Ajami materials are unmatched among Sufi orders of Senegambia. These investments have contributed to the expansion of the movement in the region.

95 For a criticism of the prevailing treatment of Africa as a continent devoid of writing traditions, see also Lüpke, pp. 91-93.

96 Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 75.



about Africa is either oral or written in non-African languages, especially in European languages.<sup>97</sup>

Because of these misconceptions, many students of Africa continue to disregard the unfiltered voices of millions of people captured in Ajami materials as unworthy of scholarly attention. As Lüpke laments, even the few accounts in the educational literature that mention pre-colonial and ongoing Ajami writing traditions at all tend to stress their marginality.<sup>98</sup> But the voices omitted due to the neglect of Ajami traditions contain illuminating insights that force revisions of various aspects of our understanding of Africa's history, cultures, the blending of the African and Islamic knowledge systems, and the varying African responses to both colonisation and Islamisation (along with its accompanying Arabisation that the Murid Ajami sources challenge relentlessly).

It is encouraging to note a growing interest in Africa's Ajami traditions as the sources cited throughout this chapter demonstrate. The current scholarly efforts on African Ajami orthographies and the new digital repositories of Ajami materials are important steps toward the crucial phase of translating the insights in African Ajami materials into major European languages and Arabic. It would be fascinating to see, for example, what intellectual response Ka's *Taxmiis bub Wolof* would receive in the Arab world, if it were translated into Arabic. This is the work in which he celebrates his Islamic faith but rejects the Arabisation ideology that he believed came along with Islam in sub-Saharan Africa. This is a unique perspective that is only documented in Ajami sources. The translation of Ajami materials into major languages would open new doors for students of Africa across disciplines, giving access into hitherto unknown insights on the thinking, knowledge systems, moral philosophies, and religious and secular preoccupations of many African communities.

In addition to the scholarly potential that African Ajami sources hold, there are practical implications of Ajami in Africa. The Senegalese government in collaboration with UNESCO and ISESCO developed standard orthographies for Wolof and Pulaar in 1987. ISESCO subsequently produced the first Afro-Arabic keyboard and typewriter.<sup>99</sup> The efforts resulted in what

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97 Ousmane Kane, *Les intellectuels Africains non-Europhones* (Dakar: Codesria, 2002), p. 8.

98 Lüpke, p. 95

99 Mohamed Chtatou, *Using Arabic Script in Writing the Languages of the People of Muslim Africa* (Rabat: Institute of African Studies, 1992). For recent materials written with the standardised Wolof Ajami orthography, see *Syllabaire ajami pour lire et écrire le wolof en caractères arabes-Révisé le 6 janvier 2013*, [http://paul-timothy.net/pages/ajamisenegal/je\\_sais\\_le\\_wolofal\\_06-jan-2013\\_a4.pdf](http://paul-timothy.net/pages/ajamisenegal/je_sais_le_wolofal_06-jan-2013_a4.pdf)

is commonly known as the *caractères arabes harmonisés* (harmonised Arabic letters) conceived as a top-down model of standardisation, proposing foreign standardised diacritics to write the idiosyncratic African consonants and vowels that Arabic lacks. This necessitated the introduction of new diacritics proposed to write the Wolof vowels *o*, *e*, *é*, and *ë*. The vowel *o* is represented with a *reversed dammah* above the consonant; *é* with a *dammah* below the consonant; *e* with a reversed *dammah* below the consonant, and *ë* with a crossed *sukūn* above the consonant. In the proposed standardised system, *p* is also written as پ.<sup>100</sup>

With the exception of the reversed *dammah* above consonants attested in Bambara Ajami manuscripts,<sup>101</sup> none of the proposed modified Arabic letters is traditionally used in West African Ajami systems. It has been argued that the local Wolof Ajami letters (so-called *les lettres vieillies*) are found in ancient texts. This suggests that Wolof Ajami letters are rarely or not found in current Ajami materials.<sup>102</sup> This is incorrect. The so-called *les lettres vieillies* remain the most widely used letters in Wolof communities as illustrated by Figs. 11.5, 11.7, 11.8 and 11.12, and by the plethora of Wolof Ajami materials in the digital repositories cited throughout this article.

While *p* is written in Persian, Urdu, Kurdish, Uyghur, Pashto, Sindhi and Osmanli (Ottoman Turkish) as پ,<sup>103</sup> it is never written in this way in West African Ajami traditions. In Wolof and the other local African Ajami traditions, *p* is typically written with a single *bā'* (ب) or a *bā'* with an additional three dots below or above. Similarly, the letter proposed for the voiced velar consonant *g* (گ) is the same as the one used in Persian, Uyghur, Kurdish, Urdu and Sindhi.<sup>104</sup> But this letter is also not used in West African Ajami writing systems. While the proposed approach was reasonable because some of the new characters were already encoded in Unicode, most were unknown in the region prior to the project. Symptomatically, the local Ajami systems that had devised their own diacritics to represent their peculiar vowels and their consonants that do not exist in Arabic, were excluded in the standardisation effort.

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100 Ibid.

101 The vowels *o/ò* are written with a reversed *dammah* in Bambara. See Tamari, "Cinq Textes Bambara en Caractères Arabes", p. 99; and Vydrin, p. 222.

102 See the footnote on page 25 of the document located at [http://paul-timothy.net/pages/ajamiseneal/je\\_sais\\_le\\_wolofal\\_06-jan-2013\\_a4.pdf](http://paul-timothy.net/pages/ajamiseneal/je_sais_le_wolofal_06-jan-2013_a4.pdf)

103 Peter T. Daniels, "The Type and Spread of Arabic Script", in *The Arabic Script in Africa*, ed. by Mumin and Versteegh, pp. 34-39.

104 Ibid.

This approach was also utilised for Senegambian Mandinka. The result is that although books, a keyboard and a typewriter were produced for the standardised Ajami orthographies, there is no single functioning school or community in Senegambia that uses the *caractères arabes harmonisés*. Ajami users continue to utilise their centuries-old Ajami orthographies to which they are loyal for cultural, historical and practical reasons as illustrated in Figs. 11.4-11.8, and 11.12.<sup>105</sup> Most of the documents produced with the *caractères arabes harmonisés* are thus dormant in the offices where they were produced and in the homes of the people who participated in the harmonisation project.

The experience with *caractères arabes harmonisés* shows that great initiatives can fail because of a wrong approach. It demonstrates that standardisation of Ajami scripts must be carried out *bottom up*, and must be grounded in local realities, if it is to be successful. Rather than teaching Ajami users who have been using their local Ajami orthographies for centuries to learn new diacritics and letters they have never seen, the diacritics and letters to be used as standards must be drawn from the pool of those already in use in local communities.

The standardisation of Ajami orthographies, if done well, has great potential for Africa. Given the scope of usage of Ajami in the continent, standardised Ajami orthographies grounded in a bottom-up approach have transformative potentials. They could help to modernise Quranic schools across Islamised Africa and develop curricula for the teaching of such subjects as science, mathematics, geography and history, thereby exposing students to the world outside their communities.<sup>106</sup> Well-harmonised African Ajami systems could also open up new means of communication never possible before, and they could unite Ajami users from the same ethnolinguistic group from different countries segmented by European official languages. They equally have the potential of enhancing access to and communication with millions of Ajami users and improve the work of educators, journalists, public health workers, and local and international NGOs in areas where Ajami is the prevailing medium of written communication.<sup>107</sup>

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105 Also see Sy, *Fonk sa Bopp di Wax li Nga Nâmp*; Ka, *Taxmiis bub Wolof* and the secular and religious materials in the digital repositories cited in the paper.

106 Ngom, "Ajami Script in the Senegalese Speech Community", p. 20.

107 I am indebted to Sam Niang and to all those I interviewed for sharing insights and documents that helped with this article. Thanks also to my colleague Babacar Dieng for reading the initial draft of the article and offering helpful comments, and to the anonymous reviewers and Maja Kominko for their insightful suggestions.

## Appendix: sample of Murid materials

### *A protective device*



Fig. 11.3 This image is the last page of Moukhtar Ndong's Ajami healing and protection manual, *Manāfi' ul Muslim* (EAP334/12/2, image 19), CC BY.

The use of the Arabic numerals inside the design (made with the word *Allāh*) requires skills in Islamic numerology and mathematics.<sup>108</sup> The image illustrates the different roles assigned to Arabic and Ajami in African

<sup>108</sup> For insights into this knowledge system, see Hamès.

Muslim societies. Only Arabic letters and numerals are used in the image because of their purported potencies. Ndong omitted the instructions on how to use the formula. The omission is not accidental, but devised to protect the potent knowledge of the formula. Protection of such potent knowledge is typically done by partial or full omission of information. Though some ingredients or instructions may be provided in Ajami, a crucial piece of information or the entire instruction may be omitted. This is because the authors generally acquired the knowledge through arduous peripatetic learning and they only provide it to deserving individuals.

*Poem: “In the Name of Your Quills and Ink”*



Fig. 11.4 “In the Name of Your Quills and Ink” by the master poet and social critic, Mbaye Diakhaté, written between 1902 and 1954 (EAP334/4/2, image 46), CC BY.

A Wolof transcription of the poem reads:<sup>109</sup>

*Ak darajay say xalima aki say daa, may ma ngëneeli julli yépp ak wirda  
Ak darajay sa loxo lii ngay binde, def ma bu wér sa loxo lii ngay binde  
Ak darajay sa cër yii may ma ab cër, bu rëy ci yaw bu gëna sàkkan bépp cër  
Ak darajay sa bopp bii ngay dox di muur, def ma sa bopp def ma it ku am muur  
Ak darajay sa jàkka jii jëgal ma, tey ak ëllëg te lu ma sib fegal ma  
Ak darajay xam-xam bi ngay defe lu ne, xamal ma ab xam-xam bu may defe lu ne*

*Samaw nit ak sama barab barkeelal, saa jëmm ak sama yëf it barkeelal  
Samab xarit ak barabam barkeelal, yëfam akug njabootam it barkeelal  
Bépp jullit ak barabam barkeelal, njabootam ak yëfam it barkeelal  
Ku may siyaara ka gërëm barkeelal, ku may fexe lor aka wor daaneelal  
Képp ku jóg ngir Yàlla ak yonent ba ak yaw ba ñów fi man, begal ko Bàmba  
Képp ku may sant aka may teral ko, képp ku may diiju aka moy alak ko*

*Na nga ma wër kàpp te def sa ab ñag, ba ku ma bëgga jéema lor daanu ca ñag  
Wàttu ma man sàmm ma it doylul ma, wàllis ñu may sàmm aka wër musal ma  
Ku ma bëggul bu mu faseeti aki naqar, ku ma bëgg it bu mu faseeti aki busar  
Képp ku may fexeeli mbeg dee ko begal, képp ku may fexeeli ay dee ko bugal  
Ku jàpp nak ag jaamburam ci man bu wér, jàppal ma sag jaambur ci moom itam bu wér  
Ku yëngu jëm ci man yëngul te jëm ci moom, te lu mu yéene yan ko far loolale moom*

*Képp ku am yéene ci man dëgg, fabal la mu ma yéene lépp far jox ko mu jël  
Ku xàcci lëf jam ma loola na ko dal tey ak ëlëg, te bu mu dal ku xàcciwul  
Jox nga sa mbir Yàlla mu saytu ko bu wér, jox naa la sama mbir dëgg saytu ko bu wér  
Ku la begal Yàlla begal ko mbeg mu rëy, ku ma begal yaw it begal ko mbeg mu rëy  
Yàlla daa la def sëriñ bu barkeel, na nga ma def man it murid bu barkeel*

*Subhāna rabika rabi'l-‘izzati ‘amā yasifūna wa salāmu ‘alā'l-mursalīna  
wa'l-hamdu li'llāhi rabi'l-‘alamīna*

109 I performed the transcriptions and translations in the contribution. Because the graphemic properties of the Ajami texts are not my focus in this article, I offer a Latin-based transcription of the materials based on the standard Wolof orthography. I comment on the graphemic features when I deem it necessary. For a more detailed discussion on the graphemic traits of Wolofal, see Ngom, “Ajami Script in the Senegalese Speech Community”, pp. 1-23.

An English translation of the poem reads:

In the name of your quills and ink, offer me blessings of all prayers and invocations.  
In the name of your hand you write with, make me your hand you write with.  
In the name of your distinctions, offer me a distinction greater than any distinction.  
In the name of your head you always cover,<sup>110</sup> make me yourself and a fortunate person.  
In the name of your mosque, forgive me now and ever, and save me from things I dislike.  
In the name of your multifaceted knowledge, offer me multifaceted knowledge.

Bless my people and my home and bless my body and my property.  
Bless my friends and their homes and bless their properties and families.  
Bless all Muslims and their homes and bless their families and properties.  
Bless whoever visits and thanks me and subdue whoever seeks to harm and to betray  
me.  
Bamba, make happy whoever comes to me for the sake of God, the Prophet, and you.  
Honor whoever praises and offers me gifts; and curse whoever demeans and offends me.

Surround and fence me so that whoever seeks to harm me falls on the fence.  
Sustain me, protect me, fulfil me, and bring me people who will shield and save me.  
Make ever unhappy whoever dislikes me, and make ever happy whoever likes me.  
Make ever happy whoever seeks to please me, and punish whoever wishes me ill.  
Whoever leaves me alone leave him alone too.  
Whoever threatens me, threaten him, and make his ill-wishes fall back onto him.

Whoever wishes me well, take all his good wishes and give them all back to him.  
Whoever hits me, punished him now and ever and leave alone whoever did not hit me.  
You left your affairs to God Who addressed them, I leave you with mine, address them.  
May God bring joy to anyone who makes you joyful and to anyone who brings me joy.  
God has made you a blessed spiritual leader; make me a blessed Murid disciple.

Your Lord is Sacred and unblemished of all that is alleged against Him; and He is The  
Most Exalted. May God's blessing be upon all His Messengers. All praise belongs to  
God, The Sustainer of all the worlds.

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110 This verse refers to Bamba, as shown in Fig. 11.1.

## Genealogy

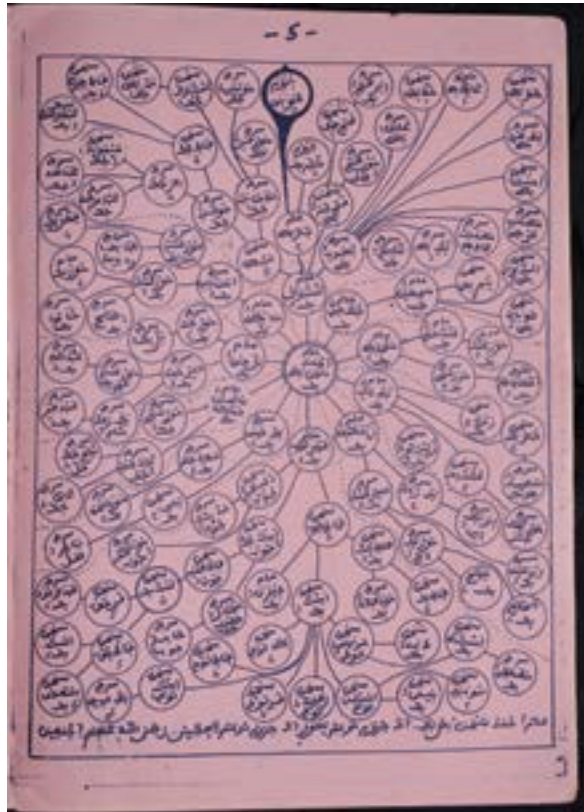


Fig. 11.5 A page from Habibou Rassoulou Sy's *Lawtanuk Barka* [*Flourishing of Baraka*], a genealogy book of the family of *Boroom Tuubaa* (Ahmadou Bamba). Bamba is located in the circle in bold (EAP334/12/1, image 6), CC BY.

The book from which this page is taken describes in great detail the maternal and paternal ancestry of Ahmadou Bamba from its Fulani roots to its full Wolofisation. The page above focuses on Bamba's great maternal grandfather and his descendants. The Ajami note at the bottom of the page reads as follows: "The Grandfather Ahmadou Sokhna Bousso Mbacké and his five sons and five daughters. May God be pleased with them".<sup>111</sup>

<sup>111</sup> For another fascinating African genealogical tradition, see a discussion on the *gargam* genre in Dmitry Bondarev, "Old Kanembu and Kanuri in Arabic Script: Phonology Through the Graphic System", in *The Arabic Script in Africa*, ed. by Mumin and Versteegh, pp. 107-42 (p. 111).



Using chronograms based on Maghrib Arabic numerals, Sy also provides in the book the birth and death dates of Bamba's paternal ancestor (Maharame Mbacké). Sy reveals that he was born in the year *Ayqashi* ( $y+q+sh = 10+100+1000 = \text{AH } 1110/1698 \text{ CE}$ ) and died in the year *Yurushi* ( $y+r+sh = 10+200+1000 = \text{AH } 1210/ 1795 \text{ CE}$ ).<sup>112</sup> This dating system, which is commonly used in Murid Ajami sources, remains unknown in the existing historical studies on Muridiyya.

### *Ajami art*



Fig. 11.6 A work of Ajami art displaying a key Murid maxim: “*Loo yootu jàpp ko* (Seize whatever you reach)” in Mbaye Diakhaté’s “*Yow miy Murid, Seetal Ayib yi La Wër* [You, the Murid, Beware of the Challenges Surrounding You]” (EAP334/8/1, image 29).

<sup>112</sup> For more insights on the use of similar chronograms among Hausa scholars, see Murray Last, “The Book and the Nature of Knowledge in Muslim Northern Nigeria, 1457-2007”, in *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade*, ed. by Krätli and Lydon, pp. 208-11.

The maxim *Loo yootu jàpp ko* (Seize whatever you reach) echoes the pivotal teaching of optimism of Muridiyya. Muridiyya teaches that genuine Murids will achieve their wishes in life as a prelude for their paradise in the afterlife.

### *A shopkeeper's advertisement*



Fig. 11.7 Photo of a shopkeeper's Ajami advertisement in Diourbel, the heartland of Muridiyya, taken in June 2009. The Ajami text reads as follows: "Fii dañu fiy wecciku ay Qasā'id aki band(u) ak kayiti kaamil aki daa" [Poems, audiocassettes, Quran-copying quality paper and ink are sold here]. The word *TIGO* refers to a local mobile phone company.

The image illustrates the digraphia situation in Diourbel where Ajami dominates French literacy. The entire message of the advertisement is in Ajami because it targets Ajami users who represent the majority of the population of the region of Diourbel.

### *A mill owner's advertisement*

Similar to the preceding image, this one also reflects the digraphia situation in Diourbel and the significance of Ajami literacy in the region. The Eastern (*Mashriqī*) *fā'* (ف) and *qāf* (ق) are used for the Wolof *f* and *q* in the Ajami advertisement rather than the usual Western (*Maghribī*) *fā'* (ف) and *qāf* (ق) commonly found in West African Ajami materials.<sup>113</sup>

113 See Ngom, "Ajami Script in the Senegalese Speech Community", pp. 13-14; Vydrin, p. 209; and Warren-Rothlin, p. 275.



Fig. 11.8 A mill owner’s advertisement for grinding grains, including peanuts. The Ajami text reads as follows: “*Ku bëgg wàllu wàlla soqlu wàlla tigadege wàlla nooflaay; kaay fii la. Waa Kër Xaadimu Rasuul* [If you want (your grains) pounded or grinded or peanut butter effortlessly; come here. The People of The Servant of the Prophet (Ahmadou Bamba)]”. Photo taken in Diourbel in June 2009.

The word *tigadege* (peanut butter) is written as *tikidigi*. While these variations constitute challenges for outsiders to read Ajami materials, they do not pose problems for local Ajami users. This is because local Ajami users know the dialectal, sociolectal, idiolectal, and stylistic variations in Ajami materials of their communities. Just like most native speakers and educated people can predict Arabic vowels in a work, so too Ajami users can generally predict the consonant or vowel the author intended based on their knowledge of the contextual and stylistic cues in Ajami materials of their communities. The text also reflects the use of Ajami as the badge of identity among Murids. The owner of this small business asserts his Murid identity with the last phrase of his advertisement: “*Waa Kër Xaadimu Rasuul* [The People of the Servant of the Prophet]”. “*Xaadimu Rasuul* [The Servant of the Prophet]” is one of the most popular names of Bamba, the founder of Muridiyya.

### *Shopping for Ajami texts*



Fig. 11.9 Shopping for Ajami materials in Touba, Senegal during the 2012 Mâggal.

Besides the Ajami materials, the image captures the centrality of work ethic in Muridiyya. The patchwork clothing is a symbol of the group of Murids who emulate Ibra Fall (called “Baye Fall”), the most loyal disciple of Bamba popularly known as the apostle of work ethic. The belt around the man’s waist symbolises “the belt of work ethic”.

### *Shopping for Ajami materials and Murid paraphernalia*



Fig. 11.10 Shopping for Ajami materials and Murid paraphernalia in Touba, Senegal, 12 July 2014.

## An advertisement for the mobile phone company Orange



Fig. 11.11 An advertisement in Ajami for the mobile phone company Orange in a suburb of the Murid holy city of Touba, 12 July 2014.

Similar to image 7 and 8, this image also reflects the digraphia situation in Touba, which is located in the region of Diourbel. It is worth noting that the advertisement is not written with the *caractères arabes harmonisés*, which most people do not know. The Ajami text is written with Eastern Arabic script (*Mashriqi*) which many people now know rather than the *Maghribi* script more commonly used in West Africa. It reads as follows in standard Wolof: “*Jokko leen ci ni mu leen neexee ak Illimix #250#*. *Woote* (below a telephone icon), *mesaas* (below the message icon), and *enterneet* (below the icon @) [Communicate freely with Illimix by dialling #250# to call, send a text message, or access the Internet]”. The Wolof vowel *e* is systematically written with a *kasrah*, which is one way to write the vowel in Wolof Ajami.<sup>114</sup> The phone company understood that Ajami is key for the effective marketing of its product in the Murid areas.

In the region of Diourbel, all important announcements destined to the public — be they public health announcements, calls to action, speeches or official letters of the highest authority of the Murid order (the *Khalife Général des Mourides*) — are first written in Ajami before their subsequent reading on television and radio stations and translated into French for wider national dissemination. Murids nationwide often receive copies of the original announcements in Ajami scripts through their regional leaders. Such a use

<sup>114</sup> See Ngom, “Ajami Script in the Senegalese Speech Community”, pp. 1-23.

of Ajami as a mass communication tool is a uniquely Murid phenomenon in Senegal.<sup>115</sup> The Murid have revalorised Ajami and made it their preferred written communication tool and their badge of identity.

The Orange company is thus ahead of the Senegalese government (which continues to treat Ajami users as illiterate) in acknowledging the large constituent of Ajami users and the economic benefits of engaging with them. With similar efforts of private individuals, NGOs and companies, we hope that African governments will realise the benefits of including Ajami texts in the educational, economic and developmental priorities of their post-colonial states.

### *A public announcement to turn off mobile phones*



Fig. 11.12 A public announcement in Ajami and six foreign languages asking pilgrims who attended the 2011 Mâggal to turn off their mobile phones when entering the Great Mosque of Touba where Ahmadou Bamba is buried, 11 January 2011.

115 See an official letter of the late Khalife Général des Mourides Cheikh Mouhammad Lamine Bara Mbacké (2007-2010) recognising the foundation of the Murid youth organisation in the city of Ziguinchor in southern Senegal: "Formal approval of the birth of a youth Murid organization", contributed by Fallou Ngom to *Africa's Sources of Knowledge Digital Library*, <http://www.ask-dl.fas.harvard.edu/content/formal-approval-birth-youth-murid-organization-wolofal-wolof-ajami>. Despite being far from the traditional sphere of influence of Muridiyya, the order has expanded in the southern part of Senegal thanks to its mass communication system based on written and verbalised Ajami materials.

Because Wolofal (Wolof Ajami) is the primary medium of written communication among the Murids, the announcement naturally begins in Ajami. It starts with the following words: “*Mbokk mi, nga baal ma te fay sa telefonu jiba. Jërëjëf* [Fellow disciple, please turn off your mobile phone. Thank you]”. The prenasal *mb* is written with *bā*’ with three dots above, which is also used to write *p* in Wolofal. The prenasal *ng* is written with a *kāf* with three dots above, which is also used for *g* in Wolofal. The dot below the letter is used for the vowel *e*. The vowel *o* is rendered with a *ḍammah*, rather than a *ḍammah* with a dot inside, which is common in Wolofal texts. The centralised vowel *ë* is rendered with the *fatha* as commonly attested in Wolofal texts. *f* is written with the Maghrib *fā*’, with one dot below the letter at word medial position and without a dot at word final position, as commonly attested in Wolofal.<sup>116</sup>

The second line of the announcement communicates the message of the Ajami text in Arabic. Subsequently, the message is communicated in five European languages: English, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and French.<sup>117</sup> The use of the seven languages in the announcement echoes the global dimension of the Māggal. The goal of the announcement is to communicate with the international body of pilgrims who come from around the world to attend the Māggal. International pilgrims include a substantial number of Murids from the diaspora, comprising North America, Europe, and across Africa. The 2011 Māggal brought more than three million people of all races, ages and genders to Touba from around the world for 48 hours, and attracted an estimated five billion Francs CFA (about U.S. \$10,400,000) exclusively used for the food and expenses of the event.<sup>118</sup>

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116 See Ngom, “Ajami Script in the Senegalese Speech Community”, pp. 1-23.

117 There are likely texts in English, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, French, and other languages written in the Wolof Ajami script by people in the Murid diaspora around the world who know Wolofal and speak these languages but cannot write them. This is because, wherever they are, Murids whose primary socialisation took place in Murid areas would likely use Wolofal to document their lives. I know a Murid in America who writes his numerous passwords in a notebook with Ajami to protect himself from identity theft. The international dimension of Ajami in the Murid diaspora begs further inquiry.

118 See *Monographie sur l’impact socio-économique du grand magal de Touba au Sénégal*, Rapport sous la direction de Moubarack Lo, Emergence Consulting, November 2011, <http://www.majalis.org/news/pdf/549.pdf>, pp. 7, 23-25, 30-36 and 63-72.

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- Bassirou Kane, Khourou Mbacké, Senegal, 25 July 2011.
- Cheikh Fall Kairé, Touba, Senegal, 24 July 2011.
- Masokhna Lo, Diourbel, Senegal, 11 June 2011.
- Mbaye Nguirane, Diourbel, Senegal, 11 June 2011.
- Moustapha Diakhaté, Khourou Mbacké, Senegal, 25 July 2011.
- Sam Niang, Touba, Senegal, 12 July 2014.

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- Recited Ajami poems of Mbaye Diakhaté, <http://www.jazbu.com/wolofal/>
- Recited Ajami poems of Mor Kairé, [http://www.jazbu.com/mor\\_kayre/](http://www.jazbu.com/mor_kayre/)
- Recited Ajami poems of Moussa Ka, [http://www.jazbu.com/Serigne\\_Moussa\\_ka](http://www.jazbu.com/Serigne_Moussa_ka)
- Recited Ajami poems of Samba Diarra Mbaye, <http://www.jazbu.com/sambadiarra/>
- WebFuuta, <http://www.webfuuta.net/bibliotheque/alfa-ibrahim-sow/index.html>



## 12. Digitisation of Islamic manuscripts and periodicals in Jerusalem and Acre<sup>1</sup>

*Qasem Abu Harb*

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This chapter provides an overview of three digitisation projects supported by the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP). The first, EAP119, digitised the collection of historical periodicals in al-Aqṣá Mosque Library in Jerusalem (Al-Quds) in 2007.<sup>2</sup> Two subsequent projects recorded manuscripts in al-Jazzār Mosque Library in Acre (‘Akkā) (EAP399 in 2010) and al-Aqṣá Mosque Library in Jerusalem (EAP521 in 2012).<sup>3</sup> After tracing a short history of the two libraries and outlining the development of the early Arabic press in Palestine, this contribution makes the case for the urgency of digitisation and provides a brief account of the digitisation process along with the challenges that the projects had to overcome.

### The Mosque Libraries of al-Aqṣá in Jerusalem and al-Jazzār in Acre

In Islam, books and book collections have always been seen as a mark of faith, learning and wisdom that lent prestige to their owners. Islamic rulers

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- 1 The transliteration of Arabic words in this chapter is based on the LOC transliteration system.
  - 2 EAP119: Preservation of historical periodical collections (1900-1950) at the al-Aqṣá Mosque Library in East Jerusalem, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP119](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP119)
  - 3 EAP399: Historical collections of manuscripts located at al-Jazzār mosque library in Acre, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP399](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP399) and EAP521: Digitisation of manuscripts at the al-Aqṣá Mosque Library, East Jerusalem, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP521](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP521)

sought to outdo their predecessors by founding libraries with vast collections of magnificent quality, whilst mosques and madrasahs created impressive book collections in order to enhance their reputation as centres of learning, and scholars achieved fame for their private libraries.<sup>4</sup> The late Ottoman Palestine was no different: the mosques and Muslim courthouses contained collections of religious literature and many large private collections were held in the city homes of distinguished families.<sup>5</sup>

The older of the two libraries where the digitisation projects supported by the EAP took place is located in the northern city of Acre. Al-Jazzār Mosque Library (al-Aḥmadīyah) is a part of a *waqf*, a pious foundation of Ahmad al-Jazzār, the eighteenth-century Ottoman governor (*pasha*) of the provinces of Acre. Al-Jazzār's *waqf* was the largest such endowment in the history of Acre. It was the only *waqf* in this city which was publicly administered under the Ottoman Ministry of Waqf and later, during the British Mandate rule, under the Supreme Muslim Council.

The *waqf* was created in May 1786 and the endowment included: a mosque, Jami al-Anwar, "the Mosque of Lights", an Islamic college with fifty rooms for the lodgings for students from the four schools of Islamic law, a large library, a public fountain, an underground water reservoir, a ritual bath, a sundial, a garden and 29 stores surrounding the mosque courtyard.<sup>6</sup> The mosque and adjacent buildings, which were heavily damaged by Napoleon's bombardment in 1799, underwent renovations in the early nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Throughout the rest of the century the library attracted many visitors, not only from the Muslim community since — unlike in the

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4 Houari Touati, *L'armoire à sagesse: bibliothèques et collections en Islam* (Paris: Aubier, 2003); Ami Ayalon, *Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900-1948* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004), pp. 43-44; Youssef Eche, *Les bibliothèques arabes publiques et semi-publiques en Mésopotamie, en Syrie et en Égypte au Moyen-Âge* (Damascus: Institute Français de Damas, 1967); and Abdul Latif Ibn Dohaish, "Growth And Development of Islamic Libraries", *Islamic Quarterly*, 31 (1987), 217-29.

5 Dov Schidorsky, "Libraries in Late Ottoman Palestine between the Orient and Occident", *Libraries and Culture*, 33.3 (1998), 261-76 (p. 263), [https://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~lcr/archive/fulltext/LandC\\_33\\_3\\_Schidorsky.pdf](https://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~lcr/archive/fulltext/LandC_33_3_Schidorsky.pdf); and Ayalon, *Reading Palestine*, pp. 45-47 and 93-103.

6 Bernhard Dichter, *Akko: Sites from the Turkish Period* (Haifa: University of Haifa, 2000), p. 108. Yitzhak Reiter, "The Waqf in Israel Since 1965: The Case of Acre Reconsidered", in *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Confrontation and Co-existence*, ed. by Marshall J. Breger, Yitzhak Reiter and Leonard Hammer (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 104-27 (pp. 112-14).

7 Dichter, *Akko*, p. 109; and Nathan Schur, *A History of Acre* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1990), pp. 173-76.

case of other mosques — Christians were allowed to enter al-Jazzār Mosque and adjacent buildings.<sup>8</sup>

Al-Jazzār Mosque was one of the many buildings damaged by the Egyptian bombardment of Acre in 1831-1832. The mosque's library was looted and the Egyptian army used the yard as a camp.<sup>9</sup> After the defeat of the Egyptians and the liberation of the city, the library was re-opened and remains open to this day.

The newer of the libraries, al-Aqṣá, is located at the heart of the Old City of Jerusalem, in the southwestern corner of the al-Haram al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary) complex. Founded in 1922 by the Supreme Muslim Council in Palestine under the leadership of the *mufti* of Palestine, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the library brought together the books that had been kept in al-Aqṣá and the Dome of the Rock buildings, and gradually also acquired books from private libraries in Jerusalem, in Palestine and even from abroad.<sup>10</sup> In 1923, Adel Jabre became the first director of al-Aqṣá Library and, at the same time, the director of the Islamic Museum. The al-Aqṣá archive preserves his correspondence with the intellectuals in the Middle East and Europe he approached for book donations.<sup>11</sup> The uniquely revered status of al-Aqṣá had brought it endowments of private book collections and book gifts, including publications on modern science and literature and donations of local journals.<sup>12</sup>

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8 Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, *Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Aegypten* (Berlin: Reimer, 1854), pp. 82-83, <https://archive.org/details/ulrichjaspersee03seetgoog>; and Ali Bey al-Abassi [Domingo Badia Y Lebligh], *Travels of Ali Bey in Morocco, Tripoli, Cyprus, Egypt, Arabia, Syria, and Turkey, Between the Years 1803 and 1807* (London: Longman, 1816), <https://archive.org/details/travelsalibeyps01beygoog>, pp. 249-50.

9 Thomas Skinner, *Adventures During a Journey Overland to India*, 1 (London: Richard Bentley, 1837), p. 145, <https://archive.org/details/adventuresduring01skin>; Edward Hogg, *Visit to Alexandria, Damascus, and Jerusalem, During the Successful Campaign of Ibrahim Pasha*, 2 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1835), 1, pp. 162-63. [https://play.google.com/store/books/details/Edward\\_Hogg\\_Visit\\_to\\_Alexandria\\_Damascus\\_and\\_Jerus?id=g9G3dRviOv0C&hl=en](https://play.google.com/store/books/details/Edward_Hogg_Visit_to_Alexandria_Damascus_and_Jerus?id=g9G3dRviOv0C&hl=en),

10 Joseph Asad Dagher dates the library's foundation to 1927 and attributes it to the Superior Islamic Council (Majlis al-'Awqāf al-'Islāmī). See Joseph Asad Dagher, *Repertoire des bibliothèques du proche et du Moyen Orient* (Paris: UNESCO, 1951), p. 68. See also Geoffrey Roper, *World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts* (London: al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1991), pp. 574-76; and Tia Goldenberg and Areej Hazboun, "Old Manuscripts Get Face-Lift at Jerusalem Mosque", *The Big Story*, 31 January 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/old-manuscripts-get-face-lift-jerusalem-mosque>

11 Mona Hajjar Halaby, "Out of the Public Eye: Adel Jabre's Long Journey from Ottomanism to Binationalism", *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 52 (2013), 6-24, [http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/JQ-52-Hajjar\\_Halaby\\_Out\\_of\\_the\\_Public\\_Eye\\_4.pdf](http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/JQ-52-Hajjar_Halaby_Out_of_the_Public_Eye_4.pdf)

12 Ayalon, *Reading Palestine*, p. 94; Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 54.



Al-Aqṣá Library was first housed in Qubbat al-Nahwiyyah, a building that lies in the southwestern corner of the Haram al-Sharif compound and was once home to a thirteen-century school of literature. The library was subsequently moved to the sacred compound, and the manuscripts were stored in a building nearby.<sup>13</sup> The development of the library was also stifled by the events of 1948 and their aftermath, when Palestinian libraries were closed, suspended or had their holdings divided among other institutions. Between May 1948 and the end of February 1949, the staff of the National Library of Israel and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Library collected some 30,000 books and manuscripts that had been left behind by the Palestinian residents of western Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> Of these, about 24,000 were disposed of because they were considered irrelevant or hostile material.<sup>15</sup> The remaining 6000 books have not been returned, despite a clear statement by the 1954 Hague Convention for the Preservation of Cultural Property, and despite the fact that the National Library of Israel — an internationally leading cultural institution and the recipient of many books stolen in the Holocaust — is well-placed to recognise the importance of acts of restorative justice.<sup>16</sup>

After a long period of inactivity from 1948 to 1976, the Waqf Administration decided to revive the library in early 1977. The library's collection was moved from the Islamic Museum to the ground floor of the monumental fifteenth-century Ashrafiyya madrasa.<sup>17</sup> In 2000, the library was relocated

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13 Yusof Natsheh, "Al-Aqṣa Mosque Library of al-Haram as-Sharif", *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 13 (2001), 44-46, [http://www.jerusalemquarterly.org/images/Articlespdf/13\\_Review.pdf](http://www.jerusalemquarterly.org/images/Articlespdf/13_Review.pdf) and Ayalon, *Reading Palestine*, pp. 94 and 128.

14 Gish Amit, "Ownerless Objects? The Story of the Books Palestinians Left Behind in 1948", *Palestine Studies*, 33 (2008), p. 7, <http://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/jq/fulltext/77868>

15 Larry Stillman, "Books: A Palestinian Tale", *Arena*, 120 (2012), 35-39; and Amit Gish, "Salvage or Plunder?: Israel's 'Collection' of Private Palestinian Libraries in West Jerusalem", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 40/4 (2011), 6-23. See The Great Book Robbery project (<http://www.thegreatbookrobbery.org>) to identify books which had been collected by the prestigious Jewish National and University Library (National Library) in 1948 and stamped as "Alien Property". See also PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, *Nakba: The Untold Story of a Cultural Catastrophe*, <http://www.nad-plo.org/userfiles/file/New%20Publications/NAKBA%20BOOK%202013.pdf>

16 Hannah Mermelstein, "Overdue Books: Returning Palestine's 'Abandoned Property' of 1948", *Jerusalem Quarterly* (Autumn 2011), <http://thegreatbookrobbery.org/overdue-books-returning-palestine's-abandoned-property-1948-hannah-mermelstein>. See also Ofer Aderet, "Preserving or Looting Palestinian Books in Jerusalem", *Haaretz*, 7 December 2012, <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/week-s-end/preserving-or-looting-palestinian-books-in-jerusalem.premium-1.483352>

17 Salameh Al-balawi, "Libraries of Al-Quds: from the Ayyubi Conquest to the Zionist Violation", paper presented at the Twelve AFLI Conference, Al-Sharqa University, 5-8

again to its current position, the building of “Jami’ al-Nisa”, or “Women’s Mosque”, between al-Aqṣá Mosque on the east side and the Islamic Museum on the west.<sup>18</sup> The most valuable part of the library’s collection consists of approximately 2,000 manuscripts and 74 historical Arabic newspapers and magazines titles from the region.<sup>19</sup>

## The urgency of digitisation

The digitisation of the holdings of al-Aqṣá Mosque Library and al-Jazzār Mosque Library was urgently needed in order to document the collection and preserve its content. The manuscripts and the newspapers have been deteriorating rapidly due to the poor environmental conditions in libraries which lack proper humidity and temperature control. The lack of a preservation programme, and the shortage of staff trained in conservation and preservation methods were also a serious threats.<sup>20</sup> This issue has now been addressed by the joint project of UNESCO and the Waqf, Jordan’s Islamic authority, initiated in 2014 to restore al-Aqṣá Library’s manuscripts, old maps, Ottoman population and trade registers and hand-written documents from the Mamluk period.<sup>21</sup>

The fragile condition of the documents has been aggravated by scholars and students handling the materials.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, because of the unstable political situation in Jerusalem, the location of al-Aqṣá Library in the Old City presents not only a significant threat to the collection, but also makes access difficult. Palestinians from the West Bank or the Gaza Strip have to obtain permits from Israel to enter Jerusalem. Students and scholars are

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November 2001.

18 Natsheh, “Al-Aqṣá Mosque Library of al-Haram as-Sharif”, p. 45.

19 For the partial catalogues of the collection see Khader Salameh, *Fihris makhtūṭāt Maktabat al-Masjid al-Aqṣá*, 1 (Al-Quds: Idārat al-Awqāf al-‘Āmmah, 1980); idem, 2 (Ammān: al-Majma’ al-Malaki li-Buḥūth al-Ḥaḍārah al-Islāmiyah, 1983); and idem, 3 (London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1996).

20 Majed Khader, “Challenges and Obstacles in Palestinian Libraries”, in *Libraries in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century: An International Perspective*, ed. by Ravindra N. Sharma, 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 425-44 (pp. 432-33).

21 Goldenberg and Hazboun.

22 For a broader discussion of the situation of Palestinian libraries in the early twenty-first century, see Kader, “Challenges and Obstacles in Palestinian Libraries”; Françoise Lefebvre-Danset, “Libraries in Palestine”, *IFLA Journal*, 35/4 (2009), 322-34; and Erling Bergan, “Libraries in the West Bank and Gaza: Obstacles and Possibilities”, paper presented at the 66th IFLA Council and General Conference, Jerusalem, 13-18 August 2000.

frequently unable to access the library because of the curfews imposed due to political unrest in the Old City.

Consequently, all three digitisation projects supported by the EAP had a dual aim: to help the preservation of the materials by creating digital surrogates, and to facilitate access to the materials and make them available to scholars and students in Palestine and worldwide. Each of the three projects created digital photographs in TIFF format. One set remains in al-Aqṣá Library and al-Jazzār Mosque Library, while another has been transferred to the British Library and made accessible via the Internet to scholars worldwide.<sup>23</sup>

## Digitising the collection of historical periodicals in al-Aqṣá Mosque Library

Al-Aqṣá Library contains more than seventy Arabic language newspaper and journal titles, published in Palestine and other Arab countries as well as a selection of periodicals published by the Arab communities in Europe and North and South America. Copies of the historical Palestinian periodicals and newspapers are extremely rare and for many of the titles, the library holds the only copy available in the region.<sup>24</sup>

The region's first privately published journals appeared in Beirut in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. By 1880 new presses opened in Cairo, Alexandria and other Egyptian towns, reaching a total of 627 different newspapers with a circulation of perhaps 100,000 copies by 1908.<sup>25</sup> In Palestine, printing was first undertaken by Christian religious institutions, starting with a Franciscan press established in Jerusalem in 1846. The Armenian and Greek churches followed suit, but in all these cases printing was limited to evangelising materials.<sup>26</sup> The Arabic periodicals first appeared in Palestine only after the Young Turks rebellion in 1908,

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23 See <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP119>, <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP399> and <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP521>.

24 For a discussion of the digitisation project, see Krystyna K. Matusiak and Qasem Abu Harb, "Digitizing the Historical Periodical Collection at the al-Aqṣa Mosque Library in East Jerusalem", in *Newspapers: Legal Deposit and Research in the Digital Era*, ed. by Hartmut Walravens (The Hague: DeGruyter, 2011), pp. 271-91.

25 Ayalon, *Reading Palestine*, p. 48; Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, pp. 54-55 and 227 (note 63); and Ami Ayalon, "Modern Texts and Their Readers in Late Ottoman Palestine", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 38/4 (2002), 17-40.

26 Ayalon, *Reading Palestine*, p. 57.

when political changes in the Ottoman Empire brought about the abolition of censorship.<sup>27</sup> As many as fifteen periodicals appeared in 1908, another twenty were published before the outbreak of World War I, and nearly 180 more before the end of the British Mandate.<sup>28</sup>

Launching a newspaper was easier than sustaining its publication for long, and the majority of papers started in Palestine and elsewhere in the region turned out to be ephemeral.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the presence of Egyptian and Lebanese publications throughout the region resulted in a weakening of local presses, which found it hard to compete with the quality of the products flowing from Cairo and Beirut.<sup>30</sup> In 1936 Zionists attempting to set up an Arabic newspaper to counter anti-Zionist propaganda, acknowledged that it was difficult to compete with the quality of imported Egyptian publications like *al-Ahrām* [*The Pyramids*] and *al-Jihād* [*The Struggle*].<sup>31</sup>

The Zionist settlement represented an additional incentive for the emergence of Arabic publications, many of them opposed to the new Jewish presence in Palestine.<sup>32</sup> The three leading papers of the pre-war period voiced Palestinian Arab emotions and they all were published by the Palestinian Christians. Jurji Habib Hananya's *al-Quds* [*The Holy*, epithet for Jerusalem] was first published in that city from 1908, was moderate.<sup>33</sup> Najib Nassar's *al-Karmil* [*Carmel*, after Mount Carmel] which appeared in Haifa in the same year, and the Jaffa paper *Filasṭīn* [*Palestine*], established by the cousins Yūsuf al-ʿĪsá and ʿĪsá al-ʿĪsá in 1911, were outspokenly anti-Zionist.<sup>34</sup>

With the outbreak of World War I publishing activities in Palestine were suppressed, but re-emerged in 1919 with the establishment of British control over Palestine, and two of the leading pre-war papers, *al-Karmil* and

27 Adnan A. Musallam, "Arab Press, Society and Politics at the End of the Ottoman Era", <http://www.bethlehem-holyland.net/Adnan/publications/EndofTheOttomanEra.htm>

28 Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 66; and idem, *Reading Palestine*, p. 60.

29 Ayalon, *Reading Palestine*, p. 61

30 Ibid., p. 60.

31 Ibid., p. 52.

32 For a discussion of the role of Zionism in the development of Palestinian identity under the British Mandate, see Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, "The Pitfalls of Palestinology", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 3/4 (1981), 404-05.

33 Mary Hanania, "Jurji Habib Hanania History of the Earliest Press in Palestine, 1908-1914", *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 32 (2007), 51-69.

34 Ayalon, *Press in the Middle East*, p. 66; Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), pp. 91-95; and Qustandi Shomali, *The Arabic Press in Palestine: Bibliography of Literary and Cultural Texts, "Filastin" Newspaper (1911-1967)*, 2 (Jerusalem: Arab Studies Society, 1990).

*Filasṭīn*, re-opened. Overall, the publication landscape in Palestine during the British Mandate (1917-1948) was more diverse than in the pre-war period. The press increasingly reflected rising national consciousness and different political factions.<sup>35</sup> By the mid 1930s, according to one survey, over 250 papers in Arabic and 65 in other languages were in circulation throughout the country.<sup>36</sup>

Most of the newspapers appeared weekly and their print run increased gradually. Rather than the few hundred copies of the pre-war era, individual papers in Palestine of the 1920s typically circulated at 1,000-1,500 copies. *Filasṭīn*, the most popular publication, reportedly sold circa 3,000 copies per issue towards the end of the decade.<sup>37</sup> In the 1920s, some twenty papers were established in Jerusalem, most importantly *Mir`at al-Sharq* [*Mirror of the East*] which Būlus Shihādah, a Christian, founded in September 1919, and *al-Jāmi` al-`Arabīyah* [*Arab Union*], the voice of the Supreme Muslim Council, which appeared in December 1927, and was edited by Munif al-Husayni. Around five or six papers were founded in Jaffa in the 1920s in addition to *Filasṭīn*, and approximately twelve in Haifa, with some in Gaza, Tulkarm and Bethlehem.<sup>38</sup>

Although the British adopted the Ottoman Press Law, which required licensing and submitting translations of press extracts to the government authorities, they rarely interfered until 1929.<sup>39</sup> The Buraq Uprising of that year, which was followed by violent confrontations between Arabs and Zionists, brought a radicalisation of the Arabic language press. The most outspoken papers established in the 1930s in Jaffa, were *al-Difā`* [*Defense*], a voice of the Istiqlal Party, and *al-Jāmi`ah al-Islāmīyah* [*Islamic Union*] (Fig. 12.1) which appeared from 1932 to 1937. *Al-Liwā`* [*The Flag*] (Fig. 12.2), representing the dominant Arab Party, was established in Jerusalem in 1933.<sup>40</sup>

35 Ayalon, *Press in the Middle East*, p. 97. See also Adnan Musallam, "Turbulent Times in the Life of the Palestinian Arab Press: The British Era, 1917-1948", [http://www.bethlehem-holyland.net/Adnan/publications/Turbulent\\_Times.htm](http://www.bethlehem-holyland.net/Adnan/publications/Turbulent_Times.htm)

36 Ayalon, *Reading Palestine*, p. 51.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

38 Ayalon, *Press in the Middle East*, pp. 96-97; and Zachary F. Foster, "Arabness, Turkey and the Palestinian National Imagination in the Eyes of *Mir`at al Sarq* 1919-1926", *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 42 (2011), 61-79.

39 Musallam, "Arab Press, Society and Politics"; Ayalon, *Press in the Middle East*, p. 98; and Qustandi Shomali, *Mir`at al-Sharq: A Critical Study and Chronological Bibliography* (Jerusalem: Arab Studies Society, 1992).

40 Adnan Abu-Ghazaleh, "Arab Cultural Nationalism in Palestine during the British Mandate", *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, 1/3 (1972), 37-63; and Ann Mosely Lesch, *Arab Politics in Palestine: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 65-67.



Fig. 12.1 Front page of *al-Jāmi'ah al-Islāmiyah* [Islamic Union] newspaper, 27 July 1937 (EAP119/1/12/480, image 1), CC BY.



Fig. 12.2 Front page of *al-Liwā'* [*The Flag*] newspaper, 16 December 1935 (EAP119/1/17/2, image 1), CC BY.

The attitude of the British authorities to the vociferous Palestinian press was initially benign, as they assessed the public impact of newspapers to be minimal. Nevertheless, as the press's radicalisation and impact grew, the British authorities responded with increasingly harsh measures. The new Publication Law, issued in January 1933, gave the authorities powers to deny or withdraw publication permits, suspend or close down papers, and punish journalists, was amended and new regulations were introduced which restricted the freedom of the press even further.<sup>41</sup> Many major newspapers, *Filasṭīn*, *al-Difā'*, *al-Liwā'* and *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* among others, were suspended from circulation for extended

<sup>41</sup> See Ayalon, *Press in the Middle East*, pp. 98-100; and Musallam, "Arab Press, Society and Politics".

periods of time in 1937 and 1938.<sup>42</sup> With the outbreak of World War II and the introduction of new emergency laws, the British ordered the closure of almost all newspapers. Only *Filasṭīn* and *al-Difāʿ* were able to survive by adopting a moderate nationalist tone and publishing closely censored news.<sup>43</sup>

The periodical collection at al-Aqṣá Mosque Library consists of historical newspapers, journals and magazines in multiple formats. We selected 24 of these (thirteen magazines and eleven journals) for digitisation, on the grounds of their rarity and importance of the events they covered.<sup>44</sup> In addition to *Filasṭīn*, we have digitised such papers as *al-Jāmiʿah al-Islāmīyah*, published by Shaykh Sulayman al-Taji al-Faruqī in Jaffa.<sup>45</sup> The newspaper was deemed to be in opposition to the Supreme Islamic Council led by Muhammad Amin al-Husayni. The first issue of the newspaper was published on 16 July 1932, and by the beginning of its second year, the newspaper, which had started on 5 July 1933, had reached issue number 297. *Al-Jāmiʿah al-Islāmīyah* continued to publish its eight-pages for a period of two years. At the end of the same year the newspaper closed with the issue 588, at the order of the British Mandate authorities. We have also digitised *al-Jāmiʿah al-ʿArabīyah* published in Jerusalem from 20 January 1927.<sup>46</sup> The publisher and chief editor was Munif al-Husayni, who worked as a spokesman for the Supreme Islamic Council, which indicates that the Islamic Council was the funder for the newspaper. The slogan of the newspaper, which was written below the title, was a prophetic saying: “If the Arabs are humiliated, then Islam is humiliated (إذا أذيت العرب أذيت الإسلام)”. Amil al-Ghuri joined the editorial staff of the newspaper responsible for the foreign affairs section, and Muhammad Tahir al-Fityani for domestic news. The last issue of the newspaper appeared on 22 July 1934.

The collection of historical newspapers in al-Aqṣá is an important source of information about Palestine, its history, and its people in the first half of the twentieth century. The newspapers constitute important sources on the

42 Aida al-Najjar, *The Arabic Press and Nationalism in Palestine, 1920-1948* (Ph.D. thesis, Syracuse University, 1975), ch. 2; and Ayalon, *Press in the Middle East*, p. 100. See also “Suppression of the Arabic Press During the British Mandate”, *Endangered Archives Blog*, 18 January 2010, <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/endangeredarchives/2010/01/suppression-of-the-arabic-press-during-the-british-mandate.html#sthash.fUYyVklB.dpuf>

43 Ayalon, *Press in the Middle East*, p. 102.

44 For a list of the circulation of Arabic Newspapers in the region, see Ayalon, *Press in the Middle East*, pp. 148-51.

45 Weldon Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation: Arab Nationalists and Popular Politics in Mandate Palestine* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 52 and 143; and Ayalon, *Press in the Middle East*, p. 99.

46 Matthews, p. 82.



Arab nationalist movement, Palestinian reactions to Jewish immigration and the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. They cover many important historical events, such as the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (Fig. 12.3), the 1929 Buraq Uprising (Fig. 12.4), the al-Qassam unrest of 1931 (Fig. 12.5). They discuss Palestinians political parties (Fig. 12.6), the Palestinians armed forces, the 1936 strike, the 1936-1939 revolution (Fig. 12.7), British policy against Arab leaders, The British Mandate policy toward Palestinians journalism (Fig. 12.8) and the region's social, economic and cultural development.



Fig. 12.3 Front page of *Mira'at al-Sharq* [*The Mirror of the East*] newspaper, on the Balfour Declaration, 2 November 1917 (EAP119/1/24/1, image 1), CC BY.



Fig. 12.4 Front page of *al-Jāmi'ah al-'Arabīyah* [The Arab League] newspaper, on the Buraq uprising, 16 October 1929 (EAP119/1/13/260, image 1), CC BY.



Fig. 12.5 Page three of *al-Jāmi'ah al-'Arabīyah* [The Arab League] newspaper, on al-Qassam unrest, 22 November 1935 (EAP119/1/13/1504, image 3), CC BY.



Fig. 12.6 Front page of *al-Iqdām* [*The Courage*] newspaper, on political parties, 30 March 1935 (EAP119/1/23/34, image 1), CC BY.



Fig. 12.7 Front page of *al-Difa* [*The Defence*] newspaper, on the great strike of 1936, 17 June 1936 (EAP119/1/21/169, image 1), CC BY.



Fig. 12.8 Page three of *al-Jāmi'ah al-'Arabīyah* [The Arab League] newspaper, on the Palestinian press under the Mandate, 3 April 1930 (EAP119/1/13/338, image 3), CC BY.

Table 12.1 Selected titles and their publication dates

NO	Transliterated Title	Title in Arabic	Periodical Type	Coverage
1	<i>Majallat Rawḍat al-Ma'ārif</i>	مجلة روضة المعارف	Magazine	1922-1923; 1932; 1934
2	<i>al-Kullīya al-'Arabīyah</i>	الكلية العربية	Magazine	1927-1938
3	<i>al-Ḥuqūq</i>	الحقوق	Magazine	1923-1928
4	<i>al-Muqtabas</i>	المقتبس	Magazine	1907-1912
5	<i>al-'Arab</i>	العرب	Magazine	1933-1934
6	<i>al-Jinān</i>	الجنان	Magazine	1874
7	<i>al-Maḥabbah</i>	المحبة	Magazine	1901
8	<i>al-Ḥasnā'</i>	الحسنة	Magazine	1909-1912
9	<i>al-Zahrah</i>	الزهرة	Magazine	1922-1926
10	<i>Rawḍat al-Ma'ārif</i>	روضة المعارف	Magazine	1326-1327 AH
11	<i>al-Fajr</i>	الفجر	Magazine	1935
12	<i>al-Jāmi'ah al-Islāmīyah</i>	الجامعة الإسلامية	Newspaper	1932-1938
13	<i>al-Jāmi'ah al-'Arabīyah</i>	الجامعة العربية	Newspaper	1932-1938
14	<i>al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm</i>	الصراط المستقيم	Newspaper	1928-1936
15	<i>Ṣawt al-sha'b</i>	صوت الشعب	Newspaper	1928-1930; 1934
16	<i>al-Awqāt al-'Arabīyah</i>	الاقوات العربية	Newspaper	1935
17	<i>al-Liwā'</i>	اللواء	Newspaper	1935-1937
18	<i>Taṣwīr Afkār</i>	تصوير افكار	Newspaper	1909
19	<i>al-Muqtabas</i>	المقتبس	Newspaper	1908-1912; 1915-1916
20	<i>al-Qabas</i>	القبس	Newspaper	1913-1914
21	<i>al-Difā'</i>	الدفاع	Newspaper	1934-1951
22	<i>Filasṭīn</i>	فلسطين	Newspaper	1923-1937; 1947-1951
23	<i>al-Iqdām</i>	الاقدام	Newspaper	1935-1936
24	<i>Mir'at al-Sharq</i>	مرآة الشرق	Newspaper	1922-1936



Fig. 12.9 Damaged page of *Filasṭīn* [Palestine] newspaper, 30 December 1947 (EAP119/1/22/1802, image 1), CC BY.



Digitisation of newspapers is especially challenging because of the large format, complex page layout, and poor quality of print (Fig. 12.9). This often causes the libraries to outsource the scanning process.<sup>47</sup>

The historical nature of the collection and the location of al-Aqṣá Mosque Library meant outsourcing was not an option and the digitisation had to be performed in-house. It is worth noting that due to this location the project had to overcome problems with environmental conditions as well as restrictions from the police at the al-Aqṣá gates. For the scanning process we have followed the guidelines of the National Digital Newspaper Program.<sup>48</sup>

## Digitisation of manuscripts

In 2010, with the support of the EAP, we initiated the project to digitise the historical manuscript collection in the holdings of al-Jazzār Mosque Library (al-Aḥmadiyah), in Acre. The materials selected for digitisation included a collection of 53 Arabic language manuscripts dating from the fourteenth to the twentieth century. The manuscripts cover aspects of the Islamic religion, but also Arabic literature, the Arabic language, logic, mathematics and Sufism (Figs. 12.10-14). They provide a unique insight into centuries of Arabic culture in Palestine. A catalogue of the manuscripts, published in 1983, documents circa ninety manuscripts in the library.<sup>49</sup> The manuscripts are tightly bound and have been damaged through constant use. Due to preservation challenges — and because of their uniqueness and high value — digitisation had to be conducted on the premises of al-Jazzār Mosque Library. The project resulted in the creation of high-quality digital archival copies of 53 rare manuscripts, consisting of 17,965 pages.

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47 See, for example, the State of Michigan's "Guidelines for Digitizing a Newspaper", [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal/GuidelinesForDigitizingANewspaper\\_181557\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal/GuidelinesForDigitizingANewspaper_181557_7.pdf)

48 See the EAP's "Guidelines for Photographing and Scanning Archive Material", June 2014, [http://www.bl.uk/about/policies/endangeredarch/pdf/09guidelines\\_copying.pdf](http://www.bl.uk/about/policies/endangeredarch/pdf/09guidelines_copying.pdf) (accessed 22 October 2014); and the National Digital Newspaper Program's "Technical Guidelines for Applicants", 26 September 2014, [http://www.loc.gov/ndnp/guidelines/NDNP\\_201517TechNotes.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/ndnp/guidelines/NDNP_201517TechNotes.pdf)

49 Mahmoud Attalah, *Fihris Makhtūṭāt Maktabat al-Aḥmadiyah fi 'Akkā* (Amman: Mujma'at al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah al-Urdunnī, 1983).



Fig. 12.10 Damaged paper of *Bāb sharḥ al-shamsīyah*, work on logic, 1389 CE (EAP399/1/23, image 4), CC BY.



Fig. 12.11 *Ashraf al-Wasā'il*, biography of the Prophet, 1566 CE (EAP399/1/12, image 4), CC BY.



Fig. 12.12 *Khālīs al-talkhīs*, on the Arabic language, seventeenth century CE (EAP399/1/42, image 5), CC BY.



Fig. 12.13 *al-Wasilah fi al-Hisāb*, on mathematics, 1412 CE (EAP399/1/14, image 18), CC BY.



Fig. 12.14 *Taṣrīf al-Šāfiyah*, on the Arabic language, 1345 CE (EAP399/1/34, image 85), CC BY.

Table 12.2 List of selected titles (EAP399)

NO	Transliterated Title	Title in Arabic	Dates of original material	Scope and Content	Physical condition
1	<i>Sharḥ al-Muḥallī Matn Jam 'al-Jawāmi'</i>	شرح المحلى على متن جمع الجوامع	1369	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
2	<i>Mu 'rib fī al-Naḥw</i>	معرب في النحو	1706	Grammar	Bad
3	<i>al-Jazā 'īyāt</i>	الجزائيات	1429	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Acceptable
4	<i>Mughannīy al-Labīb 'an Kutub al-A 'ārīb</i>	مغني اللبيب عن كتب الاعاريب	1359	Grammar	Fair
5	<i>Sharḥ al-Quṭr li-Ibn Hishām</i>	شرح القطر لابن هشام	1359	Grammar	Acceptable
6	<i>Ḥāshīyat al-Bājūrī 'alá al-Samarqandī</i>	حاشية الباجوري على السمرقندي	1836	Grammar	Good

7	<i>al-Taṣrīḥ fī Sharḥ al-Tawdīḥ</i>	التصريح في شرح التوضيح - جزء ثاني	1419	Grammar	Good
8	<i>Sharḥ 'Azwāmil al-Jirjānī</i>	شرح عوامل الجرجاني	1081	Grammar	Good
9	<i>Sharḥ al-Alfīyah li-Ibn Mālik lil-'Ullāmah Ibn 'Aqīl</i>	شرح الالفية لابن مالك للعلامة بن عقيل	1367	Grammar	Acceptable
10	<i>Kitāb al-Taḥrīr</i>	كتاب التحرير	unknown	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Acceptable
11	<i>Hāshiyat al-Bājūrī 'alā Maṭwīd al-'Ullāmah Ibn Ḥajar</i>	حاشية الباجوري على مولد العلامة بن حجر	1860	Grammar	Good
12	<i>Ashraf al-Wasā'il ilā Fahm al-Shamā'il</i>	اشرف الوسائل الى فهم شمائل	1566	Prophet's biography	Fair
13	<i>Naẓm al-Khalāfiyāt</i>	نظم الخلافيات	1142	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
14	<i>al-Wasīlah fī al-Ḥisāb</i>	الوسيلة في الحساب	1412	Mathematics	Bad
15	<i>Anwār al-'Āshiqīn</i>	انوار العاشقين	1451	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Good
16	<i>Hāshiyat al-Malawī wa-al-Bājūrī 'alā al-Samarqandīyah</i>	حاشية الملوي والباجوري على السمرقندية	1768	Arabic language	Fair
17	<i>Sharḥ al-Waraqāt: Fuṣūl min Uṣūl al-Fiqh</i>	شرح الورقات - فصول من اصول الفقه	1085	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Fair
18	<i>Hāshiyat al-Ṣabbān 'alā al-Sharḥ al-Ashmūnī</i>	حاشية الصبان على شرح الأشموني - جزء ثاني	1791	Arabic language	Fair
19	<i>Tuḥfat al-Murīd 'alā Jawharat al-Tawḥīd</i>	تحفة المرید على جوهرة التوحيد	1860	Arabic language	Acceptable
20	<i>al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḡhīr</i>	الجامع الصغير	n.d.	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Acceptable
21	<i>Qur'ān Karīm: Muṣḥaf Sharīf 'Uthmānī</i>	قران كريم - مصحف شريف عثمانی	1245	Holy Quran	Fair

22	<i>al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah</i>	الفتوحات المكية - جزء ثاني	1240	Sufism	Fair
23	<i>Bāb sharḥ al-shamsīyah</i>	باب شرح الشمسية	1389	Mantiq (Logic)	Bad
24	<i>al-Fawā'id al-Mus'idīyah fī Ḥall al-Muqaddimah al-Jazarīyah</i>	الفوائد المسعدية في حل المقدمة الجزرية	n.d.	Tafsir (Quranic exegesis)	Acceptable
25	<i>al-Durrah al-Sanīyah 'alā Sharḥ al-Alfīyah</i>	الدرة السنية على شرح الالفية	n.d.	Arabic language	Fair
26	<i>Ḥāshiyat al-Amīr 'alā al-Shudhūr</i>	حاشية الامير على الشذور	1761	Arabic language	Fair
27	<i>al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr</i>	الجامع الكبير ج2	n.d.	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Fair
28	<i>Fath al-Bārī bi-Sharḥ al-Bukhārī</i>	فتح الباري بشرح البخاري - الجزء الثاني	n.d.	Tafsir (Quranic exegesis)	Fair
29	<i>Ḥāshiyat al-Amīr 'alā Matn al-Shudhūr</i>	حاشية الامير على متن الشذور	1359	Arabic language	Good
30	<i>Ḥāshiyat 'alā Sharḥ al-Alfīyah</i>	حاشية على شرح الالفية	17th century	Arabic language	Acceptable
31	<i>Kitāb Adhkār</i>	كتاب انكار	1278	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Bad
32	<i>Ḥāshiyat Fath al-Mujīb wa-al-Qawl al-Mukhtār</i>	حاشية فتح المجيب والقول المختار	n.d.	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Acceptable
33	<i>al-Fawā'id al-Shanshūrīyah fī Sharḥ al-Manzūmah al-Raḥbīyah</i>	الفوائد الشنشورية في شرح المنظومة الرحبية	1591	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Acceptable
34	<i>Taṣrīf al-Šāfiyah</i>	تصريف الشافعية	1345	Arabic language	Good
35	<i>Ḥāshiyat Muhammad al-Amīr 'alā al-Samarqandīyah</i>	حاشية محمد الامير على السمرقندية	n.d.	Arabic language	Good
36	<i>Risālah fī al-Mughārasah</i>	رسالة في المغارسة	n.d.	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Acceptable

37	<i>Hāshiyat al-Baqrī 'alā al-Sabṭ</i>	حاشية البقري على السبط	1733	Arabic literature	Acceptable
38	<i>Matn al-Manāsik fī al-Ḥajj al-Navawī</i>	متن المناسك في الحج –مناسك النووي	1278	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
39	<i>Hāshiyat al-Baqrī 'alā al-Sabṭ al-Mārdīnī: Sharḥ al-Manzūmah al-Rahbīyah</i>	حاشية البقري على سبط المارديني -شرح المنظومة الرحبية	n.d.	Arabic literature	Fair
40	<i>Hāshiyat al-Zayyāt 'alā al-Shanshūrīyah</i>	حاشية الزيات على الشنشوري	n.d.	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Fair
41	<i>Hāshiyat al-Sharqāwī 'alā al-Hudhudī am al-Barahīn</i>	حاشية الشرقاوي على الهددي ام البراهين	1194	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Acceptable
42	<i>Khāliṣ al-Talkhīṣ</i>	خالص التلخيص	17th century	Arabic language	Good
43	<i>Thamarat al-Iḥnām: Manzūmat Kifāyat al-Ghulām</i>	ثمرات الافهام - منظومة كفاية الغلام	n.d.	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
44	<i>Fath al-Mubīn: Sharḥ Manzūmat Ibn al-Imād fī al-Najāsāt</i>	فتح المبين -شرح منظومة بن العماد في النجاسات	1623	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Acceptable
45	<i>Tanbīh al-Anām: Shifā' al-Asqām wa-Maḥw al-Āthām</i>	تنبيه الانام -شفا الاسقام ومحو الاثام	1553	Prophet's biography	Good
46	<i>I'rāb al-Qur'ān al-Karīm</i>	اعراب القران الكريم - جزء ثاني	949	Arabic language	Acceptable
47	<i>Hāshiyat al-Ṣabbān 'alā Sharḥ al-Ashmūnī 'alā al-Alfiyah l-Ibn Mālik</i>	حاشية الصبان على شرح الاشموني على الالفية لابن مالك -جزء 1	1791	Arabic literature	Acceptable
48	<i>al-Mulakhkhaṣ min al-Wāfi bi-Kanz al-Daqāiq</i>	المخلص من الوافي بكنز الدقايق	818	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Acceptable
49	<i>Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Wiqāyah</i>	شرح مختصر الوقاية	949	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Acceptable

50	<i>Kitāb al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān</i>	كتاب الاتقان في علوم القرآن	1505	Tafsir (Quranic exegesis)	Acceptable
51	<i>Qiṣṣat al-Mi'rāj</i>	قصة المعراج	1576	Prophet's biography	Acceptable
52	<i>Jam' al-Jawāmi'</i>	جمع الجوامع	1370	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Bad
53	<i>al-Tuḥaf al-Kayrīyah 'alā al-Fawā'id al-Shanshūrīyah</i>	التحف الخيرية على الفوائد الشنشورية	1236	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Acceptable

In 2012 the 2012 EAP project digitised a collection of 119 manuscripts in al-Aqṣá Mosque Library, dating from the twelfth to the nineteenth century. The selection includes manuscripts from the collections of well-known Palestinian scholars, such as Fayd Allah al-'Alami, the Shaykh Khalil al-Khalidi and from the private collection of Shaykh Muhammad al-Khalili. The digitisation of manuscripts was carried out using the ATIZ BOOK Drive system, with two digital cameras to capture images of manuscripts. The initial output of the ATIZ BookDrive system is in RAW format, which required conversion to TIFF format for archiving purposes.<sup>50</sup> The digitisation guidelines for the project assumed a use-neutral approach and are based on digital library standards, best practices, and general principles for building digital collections. The goal of the project was to build a repository of digital master files in TIFF format for archiving purposes and to provide derivative files in PDF format for current use. Digital, high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) master files were created as a direct result of the scanning process. A consistent file naming convention was established in order to manage the project effectively.<sup>51</sup> Derivative files in PDF format were created for access and are available for browsing and reading.

The project resulted in the creation of high-quality digital archival copies of 119 rare manuscripts ranging in date from the thirteenth to the twentieth century consisting of 33,000 pages (Figs. 12.15-18).

50 The EAP specifications consisted of the following devices and software: Device: Atiz BookDrive Pro; Cameras: Canon EOS 600D + Lens EF-S18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 IS II; Capturing Software: BookDrive Capture; Colour Checker: x-ritecolorchecker Passport; Converting Program: Adobe Photoshop CS6 for converting images from RAW to TIFF; CheckSum: Checksum Tool version 0.7; Storage: External Hard Disk WD My Passport 1TB.

51 File names for digital masters and PDF derivatives were established prior to the scanning process. Each title was assigned a four letter Scan ID. For this digitisation project the following file naming convention has been established: project code\_ three letter Scan ID + \_page numbers (two or three digit page number starting with zero); EAP521\_four letter Scan ID + three digit page number starting with zero, for example: EAP521\_bada\_01 for the first page of the *Badae' al-burhan* manuscript.





Fig. 12.15 *al-Rawḍah*, on jurisprudence and matters of doctrine, 1329 CE (EAP521/1/90, image 4), CC BY.



Fig. 12.16 *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, exegesis, 1437 CE (EAP521/1/6, image 3), CC BY.



Fig. 12.17 *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah*, on history, 1542 CE (EAP521/1/26, image 33), CC BY.



Fig. 12.18 *al-Nawādir al-Sulṭānīyah*, on the history and biography of Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, 1228 CE (EAP521/1/24, image 29), CC BY.

The physical condition of the manuscripts varies from volume to volume, but a significant number of selected titles are in poor condition.

Both projects faced a number of challenges due to external factors, such as political upheavals, as well as those related to digitisation. Among the latter were issues such as quality of the original paper, irregular fonts, text density, torn or smudged pages, and a variation in layout. Although they posed many challenges to the digitisation process, we have been successful in overcoming them. We are proud that this important heritage has been preserved and made accessible to scholars.

Table 12.3 Description of the physical conditions of the manuscripts in EAP521

NO	Transliterated Title	Title in Arabic	Dates of original material	Subject	Physical condition
1	<i>Badā' i ' al-Burhān</i>	بدائع البرهان	18th century	Qirā' ah (Reciting the Quran)	Good
2	<i>Tartīb Zībā</i>	ترتيب زيبا	1713	Quranic Sciences	Acceptable
3	<i>Jāmi ' al-Kalām fī Rasm Muṣḥaf al-Imām</i>	جامع الكلام في رسم مصحف الامام	1650	Quranic Sciences	Bad
4	<i>Aqd al-Durrah al-Muḍī ' ah</i>	عقد الدرّة المضيئة	1682	Quranic Sciences	Good
5	<i>al-Asrār al-Marfū ' ah fī al-Aḥādīth</i>	الاسرار المرفوعة في الاحاديث	1665	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Good
6	<i>Ma ' ālim al-Tanzīl</i>	معالم التنزيل	1437	Tafsir (Quranic exegesis)	Good
7	<i>Silsilat al-Khājkān</i>	سلسلة الخاجكان	1769	Sufism	Acceptable
8	<i>al-Tuḥfah al-Marḍīyah bi-al-Arāḍī al-Miṣrīyah</i>	التحفة المرضية بالاراضي المصرية	18th century	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
9	<i>Ghayth al-Mawāhib</i>	غيث المواهب	1617	Sufism	Acceptable
10	<i>Jāmi ' al-Fuṣūlīn fī al-Furū '</i>	جامع الفصولين في الفروع	1456	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
11	<i>Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Muntahā</i>	شرح مختصر المنتهى	16th century	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good

12	<i>Īdāh Kashf al-Ḍasā'is</i>	ايضاح كئف الدسائس	1466	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
13	<i>Kashf al-Ḍasā'is fī Tarmīm al-Kanā'is</i>	كئف الدسائس في ترميم الكنائس	1466	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
14	<i>Raḥmat al-Ummah fī Ikhtilāf al-A'imma</i>	رحمة الامة في اختلاف الائمة	1697	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Fair
15	<i>Ghunyat al-Mutamallī</i>	غنية المتملي	18th century	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Acceptable
16	<i>al-Shifā'</i>	الشفاء	1788	Prophet's Biography	Good
17	<i>Sharḥ Miftāḥ al-'Ulūm</i>	شرح مفتاح العلوم	1454	Arabic Language	Acceptable
18	<i>Ḍaw' al-Misbāḥ</i>	الضوء على المصباح	17th century	Arabic Language	Fair
19	<i>Hāshiyat al-Qalyūbī</i>	حاشية القليوبي	1712	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
20	<i>Adab al-Kitāb</i>	ادب الكاتب	1693	Arabic Literature	Acceptable
21	<i>al-Iftitāḥ fī Sharḥ al-Miṣbāḥ</i>	الافتتاح في شرح المصباح	1443	Arabic Language	Bad
22	<i>al-Shaqā'iq al-Nu'māniyah</i>	الشقائق النعمانية	17th century	History & Biography	Acceptable
23	<i>Nashq al-Azhār</i>	نشق الازهار	17th century	History & Biography	Fair
24	<i>al-Nawādir al-Sulṭāniyah</i>	النوادر السلطانية	1228	History & Biography	Acceptable
25	<i>al-Muṭṭala'</i>	المطلع	1874	Mantiq (Logic)	Fair
26	<i>Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah</i>	طبقات الشافعية	1542	History & Biography	good
27	<i>'Ināyat Ūlī al-Majd</i>	عناية اولي المجد	1902	History & Biography	good
28	<i>Taḥbīr al-Taysīr</i>	تحرير التيسير	16th century	Quranic Sciences	Fair
29	<i>Ddah Jonki</i>	دده جونكي	1769	Arabic Language	Good
30	<i>Jamīlat Arbāb al-Marāṣid</i>	جميلة ارباب المراد	1566	Quranic Sciences	Fair
31	<i>Sharḥ al-Maṣābiḥ</i>	شرح المصابيح	1350	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Acceptable
32	<i>al-Adab al-Mufrad</i>	الادب المفرد	19th century	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Good

33	<i>Tafrīd al-I 'timād fi Sharḥ al-Tajrīd</i>	تفريد الاعتماد في شرح التجريد	15th century	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Good
34	<i>Sharḥ al- 'Aqā 'id al- 'Aqdīyah</i>	شرح العقائد العضدية	15th century	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Acceptable
35	<i>Sharḥ Qawā 'id al- 'Aqā 'id</i>	شرح قواعد العقائد	1608	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Bad condition
36	<i>al-Musāmarah fi Sharḥ al-Musāyarah</i>	المسامرة في شرح المسايرة	1501	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Good
37	<i>Tahqīq al-Zawrā '</i>	تحقيق الزوراء	1716	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Acceptable
38	<i>al-Madad al-Fā 'id wa-al-Kashf al- 'Ariḍ</i>	المدد الفائض والكشف العارض	1704	Sufism	Good
39	<i>Qūt al-Qulūb</i>	قوت القلوب	1655	Sufism	Good
40	<i>Ḥāshiyah 'alā al-Takwīh</i>	حاشية على التلويح	1672	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
41	<i>al-Nubdhah al-Alfiyah fi al-Uṣūl</i>	النبهة الالفية في الاصول ج 1	1463	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Good
42	<i>al-Nubdhah al-Alfiyah</i>	النبهة الالفية ج 2	1463	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Good
43	<i>Sirāj al-Uqūl fi Minhāj al-Uṣūl</i>	سراج العقول في منهاج الاصول	1397	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Fair
44	<i>Mukhtaṣar Ghumyat al-Mutamallī</i>	مختصر غنية المتملي	1705	Jurisprudence (Fiqh)	Fair
45	<i>Khulāṣat al-Mukhtaṣar</i>	خلاصة المختصر	14th century	Jurisprudence (Fiqh)	Good
46	<i>al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr 'alā al-Jāmi ' al-Ṣaghīr</i>	الشرح الكبير على الجامع الصغير	1746	Jurisprudence (Fiqh)	Fair
47	<i>al-Mubtagḥā fi Furū ' al-Fiqh</i>	المبتغى في فروع الفقه	1464	Jurisprudence (Fiqh)	Fair
48	<i>al-Furūq fi al-Furū '</i>	الفروق في الفروع	1447	Jurisprudence (Fiqh)	Acceptable
49	<i>Fatāwā al-Sabkī</i>	فتاوى السبكي	1347	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
50	<i>Irshād al-Ghāwī ilā Masālik al-Hāwī</i>	ارشاد الغاوي الى مسالك الحاوي	1758	Jurisprudence (Fiqh)	Good

51	<i>Ta'sīs 'alá al-Binā'</i>	تأسيس على البناء	18th century	Arabic Language	Good
52	<i>Sharḥ al-Tuḥfah al-Ḥamawīyah</i>	شرح التحفة الحموية	1640	Arabic Language	Acceptable
53	<i>Taj al-luḡha wa siḥah al-Arabi'a</i>	تاج اللغة وصحاح العربية	1407	Arabic language	Good
54	<i>Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb</i>	شرح مختصر ابن الحطاب	18th century	Falak (Astronomy)	Good
55	<i>'Ujālat al-Bayān fī Sharḥ al-Mīzān</i>	عجالة البيان في شرح الميزان	1653	Arabic Language	Acceptable
56	<i>al-Ṣāfiyah fī Sharḥ al-Shāfiyah</i>	الصفافية في شرح الشافعية	18th century	Arabic Language	Good
57	<i>Sharḥ al-Shāfiyah</i>	شرح الشافعية	1580	Arabic Language	Acceptable
58	<i>Risālah fī al-Khayl</i>	رسالة في الخيل	1902	Arabic Literature	Good
59	<i>Ḥāshiyat Mīrzā Khān</i>	حاشية ميرزا خان	1715	Mantiq (Logic)	Fair
60	<i>Miftāḥ al-'Ulūm</i>	مفتاح العلوم	1347	Arabic Language	Fair
61	<i>al-Dībāj al-Mudhahhab</i>	الديباج المذهب	16th century	History	Acceptable
62	<i>al-Ghunyah li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Haqq</i>	الغنية لطالبي طريق الحق	1500	Sufism	Good
63	<i>Ḍiyā' al-Anwār</i>	ضياء الانوار	1888	History & Biography	Good
64	<i>al-'Ushāriyāt</i>	العشاريات	1461	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Fair
65	<i>Tārīkh Nāzir</i>	تاريخ ناظر	1738	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Good
66	<i>Risālah fī Khalq al-Qur'ān</i>	رسالة في خلق القرآن	1617	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Fair
67	<i>Sharḥ Qaṣīdat Bad' al-Amalī</i>	شرح قصيدة بدء الامالي	19th century	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Good
68	<i>Maljā' al-Quḍḍāh</i>	ملجأ القضاة	1864	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
69	<i>al-Mawlid al-Sharīf</i>	المولد الشريف	1847	History & Biography	Good
70	<i>al-Fawā'id al-Jalīlah</i>	الفوائد الجليلة	1731	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Acceptable
71	<i>Maḥātib al-Ghayb</i>	مفاتيح الغيب	16th century	Sufism	Good

72	<i>al-Fukūk</i>	الفكوك	16th century	Sufism	Good
73	<i>Ijāzāt li- 'Ullāmā' min 'Ā'ilat al- 'Ilmī</i>	اجازات لعلماء من عائلة العلمي	1600	Ijāzāt (certificates of learning)	Fair
74	<i>al-Arīb fi Ma 'ná al-Gharīb</i>	الاريب في معنى الغريب	1174	Tafsir (Quranic exegesis)	Fair
75	<i>Fath al-Rahmān bi-Kashf mā Yaltabisu fi al-Qur 'ān</i>	فتح الرحمن بكشف ما يلتبس في القران	1612	Tafsir (Quranic exegesis)	Acceptable
76	<i>al-Intiṣār li-Samā' al-Ḥajjār</i>	الانتصار لسماع الحجار	14th century	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Fair
77	<i>al-Thulāthiyāt al-Wāqī 'ah fi Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal</i>	الثلاثيات الواقعة في مسند ابن حنبل	1728	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Good
78	<i>Fath al- 'Allām bi-Sharḥ al- 'I lām</i>	فتح العلام بشرح الاعلام	1893	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Fair
79	<i>al-Tanqīḥ li-Alfāz al-Jāmi ' al-Ṣaḥīḥ</i>	التنقيح لالفاظ الجامع الصحيح	1411	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Fair
80	<i>al-Majālis al-Yamānīyah</i>	المجالس اليمانية	1350	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Fair
81	<i>al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ</i>	المسند الصحيح	1239	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Fair
82	<i>Lisān al-Ḥukkām fi Ma 'rifat al-Aḥkām</i>	لسان الحكام في معرفة الاحكام	1681	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Acceptable
83	<i>al-Yawāqīt wa-al-Jawāhir</i>	اليواقيت والجواهر	1548	Tawhid (On Monotheism)	Fair
84	<i>al-Muwaṭṭa'</i>	الموطأ	1721	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Acceptable
85	<i>Ḥādī al-Asrār ilá Dār al-Qarār</i>	حادي الاسرار الى دار القرار	1465	Sufism	Acceptable
86	<i>Dhakhā 'ir al- 'A lāq</i>	دخائر الاعلاق	1644	Sufism	Acceptable
87	<i>Qam ' al-Nufūs wa-al-Raqīyat al-Ma 'yūs</i>	قمع النفوس ورقية المأيوس	1465	Sufism	Fair
88	<i>Ikhtilāf al- 'A 'immah</i>	اختلاف الائمة	1650	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Fair

89	<i>al-Tamhīd fī Tanzīl al-Furū`</i>	التمهيد في تنزيل الفروع	1450	Jurisprudence & Matters of Doctrine (Fiqh & Tawhīd)	Fair
90	<i>al-Rawḍah</i>	الروضة	1329	Fiqh & Tawhīd (Jurisprudence & Matters of Doctrine)	Acceptable
91	<i>Sharḥ al-Mughnī</i>	شرح المغني	1437	Fiqh & Tawhīd (Jurisprudence & Matters of Doctrine)	Bad
92	<i>Fatāwā al-Khalīlī</i>	فتاوى الخليلى	1740	Fiqh & Tawhīd (Jurisprudence & Matters of Doctrine)	Acceptable
93	<i>Fatāwā al-Shaykh al-Khalīlī</i>	فتاوى الشيخ الخليلى	1740	Fiqh & Tawhīd (Jurisprudence & Matters of Doctrine)	Acceptable
94	<i>Fatāwā al-Khalīlī (part two)</i>	فتاوى الخليلى	1740	Fiqh & Tawhīd (Jurisprudence & Matters of Doctrine)	Fair
95	<i>Maḥāli` al-Madhāhib wa-Jawāmi` al-Mawāhib</i>	مطالع المذاهب وجوامع المواهب	1346	Fiqh & Tawhīd (Jurisprudence & Matters of Doctrine)	Acceptable
96	<i>Mu`īn al-Muftī</i>	معين المفتي	1678	Fiqh & Tawhīd (Jurisprudence & Matters of Doctrine)	Acceptable
97	<i>Nukat al-Nabīh `alā Aḥkām al-Tanbīh</i>	نكت النبيه على احكام التنبيه	1388	Fiqh & Tawhīd (Jurisprudence & Matters of Doctrine)	Acceptable
98	<i>Sharḥ Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī</i>	شرح مقامات الحريري	1558	Arabic literature	Fair
99	<i>Asmā` Ruwāt al-Kutub al-Sittah</i>	اسماء رواة الكتب الستة	1738	History & Biography	Acceptable
100	<i>Nuzūl al-Ghayth</i>	نزول الغيث	1607	Arabic literature	Good
101	<i>Hāshiyah `alā al-Mawāhib al-Ladunīyah</i>	حاشية على المواهب اللدنية	18th century	History & Biography	Good
102	<i>Qīṣṣat Ibn Sīnā</i>	قصة ابن سينا	1870	History & Biography	Good



103	<i>al-Kawākib al-Durrīyah fī Tarājim al-Şūfiyah</i>	الكوكب الدرية في تراجم الصوفية	18th century	History & Biography	Bad
104	<i>Murshid al-Zuwwār ilá Qubūr al-Abrār</i>	مرشد الزوار الى قبور الابرار	1605	History & Biography	Fair
105	<i>Manāqib al-Imām ‘Alī wa-Baqīyat al-‘Asharah</i>	مناقب الامام علي وبقية العشرة	1578	History & Biography	Acceptable
106	<i>Nahj al-Taqdīs ‘an Ma ‘ānī Ibn Idrīs</i>	نهج التقديس عن معاني ابن ادريس	1552	History & Biography	Fair
107	<i>al-Asbāb wa-al-‘Alāmāt</i>	الاسباب والعلامات	17th century	Medicine	Acceptable
108	<i>Kitāb al-Aghdhiyah wa-al-Ashribah</i>	كتاب الاغذية والاشربة	1346	Medicine	Acceptable
109	<i>al-Wajīz lil-Ghazālī</i>	الوجيز للغزالي	15th century	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Fair
110	<i>al-Safwah al-Tibbīyah wa-al-Siyāsah al-Şihhīyah</i>	الصفوة الطبية والسياسة الصحية	1679	Medicine	Fair
111	<i>Fī ‘Ilāj al-Amrād</i>	في علاج الامراض	17th century	Medicine	Acceptable
112	<i>al-Wajīz lil-Ghazālī (part two)</i>	الوجيز للغزالي ج2	15th century	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Fair
113	<i>Tuhfat al-Aḥbāb fī ‘Ilm al-Ḥisāb</i>	تحفة الاحباب في علم الحساب	1686	Arithmetic	Fair
114	<i>al-Tadhīb fī Sharḥ al-Tahdhīb</i>	التذهيب في شرح التهذيب	17th century	Mantiq (Logic)	Fair
115	<i>Sharḥ ‘alá Matn al-Silm</i>	شرح على متن السلم	1866	Mantiq (Logic)	Good
116	<i>al-Ilbās fī Funūn al-Libās</i>	الالباس في فنون اللباس	16th century	Clothes	Good
117	<i>Aḥkām al-Awānī</i>	احكام الاواني	18th century	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	Good
118	<i>al-Jāmi ‘ fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur ‘ān</i>	الجامع في علوم القران	15th century	Tafsir (Quranic exegesis)	Acceptable
119	<i>Mabāriq al-Azhār</i>	مبارق الازهار	1718	Hadith (Prophetic traditions)	Acceptable

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# 13. A charlatan's album: *cartes-de-visite* from Bolivia, Argentina and Paraguay (1860-1880)

Irina Podgorny

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In 1998, when we began to reorganise the historic archive of the Museum of La Plata in Argentina, manuscripts, letters and photographs all started to resurface from different departments of the institution. Missed, lost, misplaced, forgotten, discharged or withdrawn from everyday use, they had been rescued from the dustbin by diligent staff members. When the historic archive opened to the public, many of them realised that the memorabilia they had kept on the shelves and desk drawers of their offices could finally have a permanent home. They donated these remnants of past scientific practices to the archive, knowing they would now be kept for future generations.

Among the pieces donated was a relatively small collection of *cartes-de-visite* portraying Andean indigenous peoples and different individuals from Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay.<sup>1</sup> Héctor Díaz, a staff member from the museum's Department of Physical Anthropology, had stored these *cartes-de-visite* for many years.<sup>2</sup> He had saved them from being plundered or discarded, but he had not been able to collect any further information

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1 EAP207/6: "Museo de La Plata, Archivo Histórico y Fotográfico, Colección Cartes de visite [c. 1860-1880]" — 42 documents (a small album of photographic prints mounted on cards 2.5 by 4 inches), comprising full length and torso studio photographic portraits of Andean indigenous peoples and persons of European origin from Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_item.a4d?catId=157500;r=9040](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_item.a4d?catId=157500;r=9040)

2 As we discuss below, the Department of Physical Anthropology was the final destination of Guido Bennati's anthropological collections. If the *cartes-de-visite* were part of an album collected by this Italian charlatan, it is not surprising that they were kept together, or at least held in the same department.

regarding their origins. In the words of the Egyptologist William Flinders Petrie, the *cartes-de-visite* arrived in the archive as mere “murdered evidence”, stripped of all the facts of grouping, locality and dating which would give them historical life and value.<sup>3</sup>

The photographs portray people from several cities and countries — such as Mendoza and Córdoba in Argentina and La Paz in Bolivia — but there is still no certainty as to when these images were taken or collected. When we first came across them, we did not know the name of the collector, nor even if there was a collector in the first place — we thought it possible that they had come together little by little, the result of a chain of contingencies. Some of the cards, however, carry inscriptions, such as the mark of Natalio Bernal, a Bolivian photographer who had established himself in La Paz by the 1860s.<sup>4</sup> Other cards came from the studio of Clemente E. Corrége, a French photographer settled since the 1860s in Córdoba.<sup>5</sup>

Although we still cannot ascertain the identity of the collection’s creator, the *cartes-de-visite* offered us an additional and crucial clue to their origin, namely an inscription on the back of one of them that reads as follows: “*Al Sr. Comendador Dr. Guido Bennati. Prueba de eterna Amistad — Vuestro amigo S. S. Bernabé Mendizábal* [To Mr. Comendador Dr. Guido Bennati. As a sign of eternal friendship — Your friend, Bernabé Mendizábal]” (Fig. 13.1).<sup>6</sup> The hint was not in the name of the Bolivian General Mendizábal, but in the addressee of the dedication. “Knight Commander” Guido Bennati (1827-1898) was an Italian charlatan and president of the so-called “Medical-Chirurgical Scientific Italian Commission”, a spurious commission of his own invention. From the late 1860s onwards, he travelled through South America with his

3 William Flinders Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology* (London: Macmillan, 1904), p. 48; see also Irina Podgorny, “La prueba asesinada: El trabajo de campo y los métodos de registro en la arqueología de los inicios del siglo XX”, in *Saberes locales, ensayos sobre historia de la ciencia en América Latina*, ed. by Frida Gorbach and Carlos López Beltrán (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2008), pp. 169-205.

4 Daniel Buck, “Pioneer Photography in Bolivia: Directory of Daguerreotypists and Photographers, 1840s-1930s”, *Bolivian Studies*, 5/1 (1994-1995), p. 10; see also Anonymous, *Cartes de Visite (Tarjetas de Visita) Retratos y fotografías en el Siglo XIX, Guía de Exposición* (Cochabamba: Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas y Museo Arqueológico, UMSS, 2013), pp. 6 and 16.

5 Efraín Bischoff, “Fotógrafos de Córdoba”, in *Memorias del Primer Congreso de Historia de la Fotografía* (Vicente López, Provincia de Buenos Aires) (Buenos Aires: Mundo Técnico, 1992), pp. 111-15 (p. 112); Juan Gómez, *La Fotografía en la Argentina, su historia y evolución en el siglo XIX 1840-1899* (Buenos Aires: Abadía, 1986), p. 86; and María Cristina Boixadós, *Córdoba fotografiada entre 1870 y 1930: Imágenes Urbanas* (Córdoba: Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 2008), pp. 26-27. I am indebted to Roberto Ferrari for this information.

6 EAP207/6/1.

different successive families, secretaries and associates, offering remedies and displaying his collections of natural history.<sup>7</sup>



Fig. 13.1 *Carte-de-visite* from Bernabé Mendizábal to Mr. Comendador Dr. Guido Bennati (EAP207/6/1, images 27 and 28), Public Domain.

Almost simultaneously, as part of another project,<sup>8</sup> we discovered in the Biblioteca Nacional de la República Argentina (National Library of Argentina)

7 On the identification and listing of the collection, see [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_item.a4d?catId=157500;r=9040](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_item.a4d?catId=157500;r=9040), authored by Máximo Farro, Susana García and Alejandro Martínez (accessed 16 October 2014). The latter identified Bennati as the “creator” of this collection. On Bennati, see Irina Podgorny, “Momias que hablan: Ciencia, colección y experiencias con la vida y la muerte en la década de 1880”, *Prismas: Revista de Historia Intelectual*, 12 (2008), 49–65; and idem, *Los viajes en Bolivia de la Comisión Científica Médico-Quirúrgica Italiana* (Santa Cruz de la Sierra: Fundación Nova, 2011).

8 In 2007, on a Félix de Azara fellowship awarded by the National Library of Argentina, I explored collections of South American pamphlets and journals to track the Argentinian itineraries of Bennati, discovering that he and his companions were visible mostly through the press. I have continued this research in a collective and cooperative way by visiting archives and libraries; by requesting material through the ILL service from the MPI-WG and the collegial goodwill of colleagues; by travelling or working in the places Bennati or his secretaries visited on their trips. Up to now, I have gathered materials and notes published in the press from Mendoza, Salta, Corrientes, Asunción del Paraguay,



two dusty, thin pamphlets. The first was published in 1876 in Cochabamba (Bolivia) and contains the “titles of honors, ranks, and diploma” that adorned the name of Guido Bennati. The second is the catalogue of Bennati’s Museo Científico Sudamericano (South American Scientific Museum). The catalogue displays samples from the three natural kingdoms — plants, animals and minerals — that were gathered by Bennati while travelling through the Argentine provinces, Paraguay, Brazil and Bolivia, and that were exhibited in Buenos Aires in 1883.<sup>9</sup>

The three sets of documents — the *cartes-de-visite*, the catalogue of Bennati’s museum and the collection of letters and certificates published in Cochabamba — indicate a common travel route shared by people, images and objects in a period lasting from the late 1860s to the early 1880s. At the time of our discovery, we knew that the Museum of La Plata had bought part of Bennati’s ethnographic and anthropological collection,<sup>10</sup> transferred at an unknown time to Antonio Sampayo, the man who sold it to the museum.<sup>11</sup> Once these disconnected traces and scattered pieces were put side by side, they revealed the itineraries of Bennati along the southern cone of the Americas, a travel route seemingly reflected in the places and people represented in the *cartes-de-visite*: from Buenos Aires to Mendoza, and from Mendoza to Córdoba, Entre Ríos, Corrientes, Asunción del Paraguay, Corumbá (Brazil), Santa Cruz de La Sierra, Cochabamba, Lake Titicaca and the ruins of Tiahuanaco, La Paz, Tarija, Salta, and then back to Buenos Aires (see Fig. 13.2). With all these elements in view, we developed the hypothesis that the *cartes-de-visite* are likely the remnants of Bennati’s album, collected, bought or received as a present on his South American travels.

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Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Sucre, La Paz, Bogotá and Cali; articles from Colombia, Bolivia, and Guatemala; and manuscripts and letters stored at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF). The compiled materials give a comprehensive view of the continental scope of the travels of Bennati and other itinerant charlatans.

- 9 Guido Bennati, *Museo Científico Sud-Americano de Arqueología, Antropología, Paleontología y en general de todo lo concerniente a los tres reinos de la naturaleza* (Buenos Aires: La Famiglia Italiana, 1883); and idem, *Diplomas i documentos de Europa y América que adornan el nombre del Ilustre Comendador Dr. Guido Bennati, publicación hecha para satisfacer victoriosamente a los que quieren negar la existencia de ellos* (Cochabamba: Gutiérrez, 1876).
- 10 Máximo Farro, *La formación del Museo de La Plata. Coleccionistas, comerciantes, estudiosos y naturalistas viajeros a fines del siglo XIX* (Rosario: Prohistoria, 2009), pp. 102-03; on the museum, see also Irina Podgorny and Maria Margaret Lopes, *El Desierto en una Vitrina: Museos e historia natural en la Argentina, 1810-1890* (Mexico City: Limusa, 2008).
- 11 Roberto Lehmann-Nitsche, *Catálogo de la Sección Antropología del Museo de La Plata* (La Plata: Museo de La Plata, 1910), pp. 64-65, 90-91 and 112; and Antonio Sampayo, *Objetos del Museo* (Buenos Aires: La Nazione Italiana, 1886). See also Irina Podgorny, “Robert Lehmann-Nitsche”, in *New Dictionary of Scientific Biography* 4, ed. by N. Koertge (Detroit, MI: Scribner, 2007), pp. 236-38. In November 1885, Bennati also sold thirteen boxes of fossils to the museum. See Farro, p. 103.



Fig. 13.2 Itineraries of Guido Bennati in South America. Map by Samanta Faiad, Dept. Ilustración Científica del Museo de La Plata, CC BY.

Working from this hypothesis, our chapter focuses on the research that allowed us to bring back to life this collection of *cartes-de-visite*, digitised as part of EAP095 and EAP207, a pilot and a major project undertaken at the Museum of La Plata in the years 2006-2010.<sup>12</sup> The first section is a short introduction to the history of the museum and its archive; the second is devoted to Bennati and his travels in South America. Bennati was not a photographer, but he gathered and displayed photographs in his travelling museum and during his medical performances. At the same time, other members of Bennati's commission bought, resold and dispatched photographs from South America to the European illustrated journals.

Our contribution presents the network of itinerant characters who circulated objects, photographs and knowledge in South America in the 1860s and 1870s. Following the hints provided by the *cartes-de-visite*, the evidence found in other repositories (the local press in particular) and secondary texts on the history of photography in South America, this chapter aims to shed light on the role of travelling comen, quacks and charlatans as agents of the circulation of knowledge. As such, the *cartes-de-visite* accumulated and collected by these agents tell us an important history that can be used as a model for interpreting the flow of images both in the region and on a global scale. At the same time, we want to contribute to the discussion of how historical researchers devoted to the rescue of endangered archives — such as those collected in this volume — can work together to make “murdered” evidence live and speak again.

## The Museum of La Plata: collecting without archiving

The Museum of La Plata was established in 1884 as the general museum of La Plata, the new capital of the province of Buenos Aires, founded in 1882 after the federalisation in 1880 of the city of Buenos Aires, the former capital of

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<sup>12</sup> On this project, see Tatiana Kelly and I. Podgorny, eds., *Los secretos de Barba Azul: Fantasías y realidades de los Archivos del Museo de La Plata* (Rosario: Prohistoria, 2011); and Irina Podgorny and Tatiana Kelly, “Faces Drawn in the Sand: A Rescue Project of Native Peoples’ Photographs Stored at the Museum of La Plata, Argentina”, *MIR*, 39 (2010), 98-113. See also EAP095: ‘Faces drawn in the sand’: a rescue pilot project of native peoples’, photographs stored at the Museum of La Plata, Argentina, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP095](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP095); and EAP207: ‘Faces drawn in the sand’: a rescue project of native peoples’ photographs stored at the Museum of La Plata, Argentina - major project, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP207](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP207).

the province. In 1906, the museum became one of the faculties of the recently established National University of La Plata. As such, it was turned into a school of natural sciences, where zoology, geology, botany, palaeontology, anthropology and archaeology were taught. The extant collections — fossil bones from Patagonia and the Pampas, mineral samples, human skulls and skeletons, dried animal skins, shells, butterflies and herbaria from Argentina, as well as archaeological pottery, moulages and art, maps and photographs — were transformed into materials for scientific training and pedagogical education.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 13.3 Museo de La Plata, c. 1890  
(*Anales del Museo de La Plata*, 1890), Public Domain.

These collections had been amassed — and continue to be gathered — through different strategies: expeditions organised by the museum, donations and purchases, the latter representing an important part of the acquisitions from the period.<sup>14</sup> Collections began to accumulate in the basements and rooms of the monumental building, the first in South America specifically designed for that purpose (Fig. 13.3). As with many museums around the world, the expansion of the collections was not accompanied by the inventory or study of the objects being incorporated.<sup>15</sup> In La Plata, the task of inventory was

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13 On the history and transformations of the museum, see Podgorny and Lopes, *El Desierto*; Farro; and Susana V. García, *Enseñanza científica y cultura académica: La Universidad de La Plata y las ciencias naturales (1900-1930)* (Rosario: Prohistoria, 2010).

14 Farro, ch. 3.

15 See, for instance H. Glenn Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums*

assigned to the designated “*jefes de sección*” (chiefs of section), namely the scientists in charge of the different scientific departments of the museum, who preferred to use their time to work on research and publications rather than on keeping records, filing or preparing lists displaying the museum’s accessions.<sup>16</sup>

The lack of specific administrative staff and the absence of a real budget for the completion of the inventory resulted in the accumulation of things in the repositories and in an incomplete record of both entries and withdrawals. While some departments kept their own records, others did not, depending on the goodwill and interest of officials and the relative independence of each scientific department *vis-à-vis* the regulations that supposedly ruled the whole institution.<sup>17</sup> There was never a single inventory, and no one could assess how many, or which, items the museum actually had and how they were being handled by the staff. However, the museum, as a public office, had to report to its superiors in the Ministerio de Obras Públicas (Ministry of Public Works) of the Province of Buenos Aires, and, starting in 1906, to the Presidency of the National University. For the sake of administration, the Director’s office included a secretary who took care of paperwork, kept the administrative files and recorded the incoming and outgoing correspondence,

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*in Imperial Germany* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), in particular ch. 5. This argument is fully developed in William Flinders Petrie, “A National Repository for Science and Art”, *Royal Society of Arts Journal*, 48 (1899-1900), 525-33; and also Irina Podgorny, *Un repositorio nacional para la ciencia y el arte* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2012).

16 See García, *Enseñanza científica y cultura académica*, ch. 4; and idem, “Ficheros, muebles, registros, legajos: La organización de los archivos y de la información en las primeras décadas del siglo XX”, in *Los secretos de Barba Azul: Fantasías y realidades de los Archivos del Museo de La Plata*, ed. by Tatiana Kelly and I. Podgorny (Rosario: Prohistoria, 2011), pp. 41-65 (pp. 59-64).

17 Thus, late in the nineteenth century, whereas the Department of Geology kept their records and noted all the mineralogical samples and objects coming to the collections, others, such as the Department of Zoology, left their collections unrecorded. In 1908, the Departments of Anthropology and Zoology started an inventory book, following the protocols of the new university. Later, when the Photographic Archive was created, Emiliano MacDonagh and Ángel Cabrera, in charge of the Departments of Zoology and Palaeontology respectively, were two of the few chiefs who donated photographs from their collections to the archive. See García, “Ficheros, muebles, registros, legajos”. What caused this difference in attitude to institutional policies and record-keeping, a difference that characterised the running of the institution for most of its history? Beyond the personalities of the employees, one might consider, first, the structural weakness of the institution in comparison to the weight and relevance of certain individuals (which has its correlative in the weakness of the museum director *vis-à-vis* the “*jefes de sección*”); and second, the micropolitics of the museum, namely the inner alliances and conflicts which may have caused resistance to certain directives emanating from the authorities.

as all administrative public offices were supposed to do.<sup>18</sup> Far from a historic repository, this was a living archive used for institutional administration and management. These papers represent the main collections stored today in the historic archive of the museum.

It was only in 1937 that a memorandum established another kind of archive: a photographic archive to protect the extant photographic materials and to illustrate the museum's collection. All photographic materials — the ones that already existed and the ones that would be produced in the future — were transferred to the new archive along with information that would help in identifying and classifying the images. The archive, located in a photographic lab created in the late 1880s, had to be organised following the names of the scientific sections that, in fact, reflected neither the historic situation nor the disciplinary boundaries of the late nineteenth century, but rather the scientific organisational chart of the museum in the late 1930s. Thus, the historical photographs that were incorporated into the archive were "reclassified" according to the new disciplinary sections created in those years. In this way, both original order and provenance were lost.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, the transfer of photographic collections from the scientific departments to the archive had not been recorded, and there are no documented traces of the implementation of the 1937 memorandum. However, it is clear that, again, the guidelines were only partially followed: whereas many scientific departments deposited their plate negatives in the new archive, others continue to store photographs and negatives following the organisational chart of the museum's foundational years.<sup>20</sup> These images were never given to the archive, which in fact continued to function as a photographic lab rather than as a historical repository. Thus the archive continued to produce photographs for the researchers working in the museum, but it did not comply with the procedures set in 1937.

In one of these back and forths of papers, memoranda and collections, the *cartes-de-visite* purchased or presented at and unspecified date became invisible to curators and officials. Along with many other objects, they started their life as murdered evidence of forgotten facts and events.

One of the administrative files records the purchase of Guido Bennati's collection. The administrator of the Department of Anthropology noted in the early twentieth century that the collections he curated included 44 skulls

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18 García, "Ficheros, muebles, registros, legajos".

19 Podgorny and Kelly, "Faces", pp. 99-101.

20 García, "Ficheros, muebles, registros, legajos", pp. 59-64.

from Bolivia, donated in June 1903 by a certain Señor Zavala, the holder of Bennati's collection.<sup>21</sup> By 1910, in fact, the Department of Anthropology had recorded the existence of skulls, skeletons and a dried foetus, collected in Bolivia in 1878 and 1879 and purchased from Bennati, the good friend of the Bolivian General Bernabé Mendizábal, in the early years of the museum. Most probably, this transaction included the collection of *cartes-de-visite*, which – together with the skeletons – arrived at the department around 1887.

## The travels of Guido Bennati as reflected by the *cartes-de-visite*

Bennati was apparently born in Pisa in 1827. He worked in the fairs and public markets of the Italian provinces and France, where he presented himself as a “Knight Commander” of the Asiatic Order of Universal Morality, a circle of practitioners of animal magnetism established in Paris in the 1830s. Bennati, a professional quack, arrived at the fairs with a parade of horses, musicians and artists, offering miraculous cures for free and for the welfare of suffering humanity. In 1865, Bennati and his associate, an old French physician, were condemned and sued in Lille for dealing in sham remedies.<sup>22</sup>

We do not know why Bennati came to South America, but his first traces on the other side of the Atlantic date from the late 1860s, when he began travelling in those regions with his successive families, his faux remedies and his collections of natural history.<sup>23</sup> Once in South America, he honoured himself with the presidency of the so-called “Medico-Chirurgical Scientific Italian Commission”, an association of his own invention that included a secretary, a physician, and several helpers and servants. With this “Commission” he journeyed through Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia, pretending to be a travelling naturalist sent by Italy to collect data and artefacts and to promote the natural wealth and potential of

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21 Lehmann-Nitsche, pp. 64-66. I thank Máximo Farro for this information.

22 Podgorny, “Momias que hablan”, p. 51.

23 On Bennati's travels and museum, see Podgorny, *Viajes en Bolivia*; idem, “Travelling Museums and Itinerant Collections in Nineteenth-Century Latin America”, *Museum History Journal*, 6 (2013), 127-46; and idem, *El sendero del tiempo y de las causas accidentales: Los espacios de la prehistoria en la Argentina, 1850-1910* (Rosario: Prohistoria, 2009), pp. 271-91.

South America among European investors. Thus, in the Americas, he substituted the “museum of natural history” for the fair spectacle as a means to attract customers for his curative powers.

Bennati arrived in Argentina when the first National Exhibition of industrial and natural products was being organised in the city of Córdoba. Given that he was acting as travelling doctor and naturalist, several provincial governments — such as the government of the province of Mendoza — commissioned him to collect samples from the local environment and to attend, as their representative, the Exhibition in 1870. On this occasion, he — or his secretaries — wrote reports, kept detailed records of the number of people healed on his travels and gave speeches in Italian on the subject of progress. He was applauded by an audience of educated gentlemen who, although they might not have understood a single word of what he said, eagerly greeted the enthusiasm Bennati displayed for the future of the country.<sup>24</sup> Most probably, the experience of the Exhibition and the instructions given by the organisers regarding what and how to collect, taught him which kinds of objects were most valued by governments and politicians.

The collection of *cartes-de-visite* contains a hint as to Bennati's relationship with the people he met in the province of Mendoza and at the National Exhibition in Córdoba: the portraits of Michel-Aimé Pouget, a French agronomist hired in 1853 to manage the agriculture school in Mendoza. Pouget is best known today for his role in introducing the vines and seeds of Malbec to Argentina, a grape of French origin that was once predominant in Bordeaux and Cahors. In 1870, he and his wife, Petrona Sosa de Pouget, were exhibiting in Córdoba many of their economic initiatives, such as their experiments in apiculture and their cultivation and production of vegetal fibres and tissues (Fig. 13.4).<sup>25</sup>

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24 Irina Podgorny, “La industria y laboriosidad de la República: Guido Bennati y las muestras de San Luis, Mendoza y La Rioja en la Exposición Nacional de Córdoba”, in *Argentina en exposición: Ferias y exhibiciones durante los siglos XIX y XX*, ed. by Andrea Lluch and Silvia Di Liscia (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2009), pp. 21-59 (pp. 39-41); and Juan Draghi Lucero, *Miguel Amable Pouget y su obra* (Mendoza: Junta de Estudios Históricos, 1936).

25 See also [http://eap.bl.uk/database/large\\_image.a4d?digrec=1120613;r=4827](http://eap.bl.uk/database/large_image.a4d?digrec=1120613;r=4827) and [http://eap.bl.uk/database/large\\_image.a4d?digrec=1120614;r=5436](http://eap.bl.uk/database/large_image.a4d?digrec=1120614;r=5436)





Fig. 13.4 *Carte-de-visite* from Michel-Aimé Pouget (EAP207/6/1, images 29 and 30), Public Domain.

Bennati, aware of the interest in these initiatives, collected fibres that could be employed as raw materials for several industries, also exhibiting vegetal products in Córdoba and in other places he visited. At the same time, he collected the portraits of people who shared his interests, as evidence of their collegial friendship. In doing so, he was following a fashion that had spread throughout the Americas and Europe: collecting *cartes-de-visite*, as it is well established, became an obsession in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> As Douglas Keith McElroy has noted:

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<sup>26</sup> For Latin America, in particular Peru, see Keith McElroy, *Early Peruvian Photography: A Critical Case Study* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Research Press, 1985), pp. 15–45. See also Robin Wichard and Carol Wichard, *Victorian Cartes-de-Visite* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 1999).

These humble images dominated the economics of photography and social intercourse [...] Every home became a photographic gallery with luxurious albums filled with cartes, and these reflected the society and its values better than any other art of the period. Standardization created a democratic imagery throughout the world [...] The small card was exploited not only for portraiture but also as a vehicle to transport the collector to famous places, to document disasters, and to promote business.<sup>27</sup>

In our case, the cards travelled with the collector and promoted the business of science and quackery. Bennati, as was common among travelling dentists, surgeons and photographers at that time, announced his Commission's arrival in the cities it visited in the newspapers, promoting the services and gifts it offered to the local population and government. Thus, in Paraguay in 1875, he presented fragments of the skeleton of *Megatherium* that had been discovered in the surroundings of the city of Asunción; the remains of this formidable fossil mammal had been considered an icon of prehistoric South America for decades.<sup>28</sup> In January 1875, President Juan Bautista Gill accepted it as a gift with the intention of creating Paraguay's national museum — although this museum was never in fact inaugurated.<sup>29</sup>

It is probable that when Bennati brought his advertisement to the newspaper, he met its editor, the French journalist Joseph Charles Manó, and discovered that they shared common strategies and interests.<sup>30</sup> Bennati invited Manó to join an expedition, covering his travel expenses. Manó, in exchange, would record geological and botanical observations.<sup>31</sup> Together they navigated the Upper Paraguay River up to the Brazilian fluvial port of Corumbá, a gateway to Mato Grosso and the Amazon basin which, with the opening of the Paraguay River after the Paraguayan War of 1864-1870, had become strategically important for international trade. Manó and Bennati travelled and, at the same time, encountered a network of itinerant

27 McElroy, *Early Peruvian Photography*, p. 15.

28 Martin J. S. Rudwick, *Scenes From the Deep Times: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 201-02. See also Irina Podgorny, "Fossil Dealers, the Practices of Comparative Anatomy and British Diplomacy in Latin America", *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 46/4 (2013), 647-74.

29 "Decreto de Creación de un Museo Nacional", in Fernando Viera (comp.), *Colección legislativa de la república del Paraguay* (Asunción: Kraus, 1896), p. 84.

30 Irina Podgorny, "From Lake Titicaca to Guatemala: The Travels of Joseph Charles Manó and His Wife of Unknown Name", in *Nature and Antiquities: The Making of Archaeology in the Americas*, ed. by Philip Kohl, I. Podgorny and Stefanie Gänger (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2014), pp. 125-44.

31 Guido Bennati, "Al Señor Viviani: Encargado de la Legación Italiana en Lima", *El Pueblo Constituyente*, Cochabamba, September 1876.

individuals: exiles, émigrés, disappointed European politicians, anarchists, republicans, revolutionaries, adventurers or simply pretenders who travelled throughout the continent, trying to survive by selling their skills to those who were willing to pay for them. The press, writing, and the supposedly neutral rhetoric of science, nature and progress represented the tools that assured their survival in the New World. During their stay in Paraguay, the Commission collected fossils as well as ethnographic objects, such as calabash gourds for drinking mate, bowls, arrows and bows.<sup>32</sup>

From Paraguay, the collection of *cartes-de-visite* includes a portrait of Juan Vicente Estigarribia, the personal physician of the Paraguayan “Dictador Supremo” Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia and, later, of the López family, also rulers of Paraguay from the 1840s to the 1860s.<sup>33</sup> Although Bennati did not meet Estigarribia (who died in 1869), they share certain connections which may explain the presence of his portrait in the collection (assuming that it is Bennati’s album): Estigarribia, like Bennati, was described as a naturalist by historians and contemporaries, and he was also a doctor interested both in botany and the uses of plants in medicine.<sup>34</sup> Objects bring dead and living people together, and Bennati, in collecting Estigarribia’s portrait, perhaps wanted to be associated with one of the most important physicians of the countries he visited.

Bennati’s Commission arrived in Santa Cruz de la Sierra in 1875, and subsequently continued to other Bolivian cities — Cochabamba, La Paz, Sucre, Potosí and Tarija.<sup>35</sup> In every single city they visited, they were involved in conflicts with different local actors who sought to demonstrate that the Commission was a fraud and that none of its members were actually what they pretended to be.<sup>36</sup> Despite these allegations, members of Bennati’s

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32 Podgorny, *Viajes en Bolivia*, pp. 30-33.

33 See [http://eap.bl.uk/database/large\\_image.a4d?digrec=1120611;r=2995](http://eap.bl.uk/database/large_image.a4d?digrec=1120611;r=2995)

34 Dionisio M. González Torres, *Boticas de la colonia y cosecha de hojas dispersas* (Asunción: Instituto Colorado de Cultura, 1978), pp. 67-78; and Juan Francisco Pérez Acosta, *Carlos Antonio López, obrero máximo, labor administrativa y constructiva* (Asunción: Guaranía, 1948), p. 309. Estigarribia is also mentioned by Augusto Roa Bastos in his historical novel from 1974, *I, the Supreme*. On Roa Bastos, see Roberto González Echevarría, “The Dictatorship of Rhetoric/The Rhetoric of Dictatorship: Carpentier, García Márquez, and Roa Bastos”, *Latin American Research Review*, 15/3 (1980), 205-28; and idem, *The Voice of the Masters: Writing and Authority in Modern Latin American Literature* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1985), in particular ch. 3.

35 Podgorny, *Viajes en Bolivia*.

36 Irina Podgorny, “Coleccionistas de Arena: La comisión médico — quirúrgica Italiana en el Altiplano Boliviano (1875-1877)”, *Antípoda*, 11 (2010), 165-88; and idem, “Momias que hablan”.

commission moved freely in the cities' scientific and literary circles. They were accepted and welcomed by several members of the various political factions and certain members of the Catholic clergy, who dispensed honours to them, supported their initiatives in the fields of public health and science, and gave tokens of their friendship, such as General Bernabé's *carte-de-visite* dedicated to Bennati.

The Commission exhibited its collections in Santa Cruz de la Sierra and undertook excursions to the Inca ruins nearby as a means of proving their interest in the local environment and culture. In Santa Cruz, the Commission produced two publications, *Relación del Viaje de la Comisión Científica Médico-Quirúrgica Italiana por el norte del Gran Chaco y el Sud de la Provincia de Chiquitos* and *El Naturalismo positivo en la Medicina* (1875); and in Cochabamba they published *Compendio de los trabajos ejecutados en este trayecto* and *Diplomas i documentos de honor de Europa y América que adornan el nombre del ilustre comendador Dr. Guido Bennati* (1876).<sup>37</sup> While *Diplomas i documentos* is a transcription of testimonies made by witnesses to Bennati's degrees as a doctor of medicine, the second and the fourth of these volumes were travel descriptions, and the third a compendium of ideas on the most modern methods in medicine. These publications described what the members of the Commission encountered on their travels: fauna, flora, mineral resources, ruins and natives. They also proposed a plan of action for the local government and elite on how to improve their economic situation by means of new roads and encouraging industry and commerce. Probably written by Manó, an expert in the art of propaganda, these pamphlets were printed on low-quality paper, with a very dense typography, in the printing offices of the newspapers in which they worked or in those owned by their protectors.<sup>38</sup>

In November 1876, the Commission arrived in La Paz, allegedly after having completed "The scientific study of the material resulting from their travels with regards to Hygiene, Climatology, Botany, Mineralogy, Geology, Zoology, Industry and Commerce of the Argentinian, Paraguayan and

37 Podgorny, *Viajes en Bolivia*.

38 *Diplomas i Documentos, El Naturalismo positivo* and Bennati's speeches from the *Boletín de la Exposición Nacional de Córdoba* are kept in the National Library of Argentina (the library of Harvard University has another copy of *Diplomas*). The Museo Histórico of Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Bolivia holds *Relación del viaje*, while the Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin has *Compendio de los trabajos*. These works had been previously mentioned and collected by the Bolivian historian Gabriel René Moreno (1836-1908) in his *Biblioteca boliviana, catálogo de la seccion de libros i folletos* (Santiago de Chile: Gutenberg, 1879). The French trial is kept at the BNF (see note 59).

Oriental Republics".<sup>39</sup> They wanted to "publish the most exact work on its Ethnography and the systems of mountains and rivers, questions absolutely related to the problem of Hygiene". They promised to publish a "Descriptive History of the Republic of Bolivia", imitating the propagandistically-minded publications advertising their natural resources that had allowed other Spanish American countries to successfully attract European migration. This work would be integrated in three quarto volumes of more than 400 pages. They were in fact calling for a subscription and also for the provision of data, information and objects.<sup>40</sup>

In La Paz, the Commission installed its offices and museum in a house located in the main square of the city. While the cabinet of Doctor Bennati opened from 7am to 11am, the museum opened from 1pm to 4pm, displaying curiosities and representing the diversity and richness of the nature and arts of South America.<sup>41</sup> The museum was a means to exhibit the commission's collection but also to enrich it further: Bennati and company offered monetary compensation for plants, fruits, fossils, petrifications, furniture, books in all languages or in Spanish from the age of the conquistadors, animals, minerals, artefacts, and everything related to the arts and nature of these regions.<sup>42</sup>

The museum was indeed the centre of a medical-commercial enterprise. Healing was performed in the space of the museum, which, at the same time, exhibited the local medical and industrial products Bennati and his companions had collected on their travels. The museum attracted not only potential patients to the medical cabinet but also artefacts, photographs and books to be resold on a market that would deliver these objects to other places and people. In doing so, the museum also allowed Bennati and his circle to procure documents, materials and exemplars of writing about the topics they had supposedly investigated in the field. In other cities visited by Bennati, the newspapers published extensive descriptions of the interior of his cabinet: the walls were covered by photographs showing the patients before and after being treated by Bennati. The photograph of a "blind invalid man" is possibly the only item remaining from this series.<sup>43</sup>

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39 *El Titicaca*, 9 November 1876.

40 "Historia descriptiva de Bolivia", *La Reforma*, 15 November 1876.

41 "Museo", *La Reforma*, 16 December 1876. For a description of the museum, see Podgorny, *El sendero del tiempo*, pp. 271-91.

42 "Historia descriptiva de Bolivia", *La Reforma*, 15 November 1876; and "Museo Boliviano", *El Ferrocarril*, 7 March 1877.

43 "Solicitada. Al Dr. Bennati. Los jujeños. La verdad", *La Reforma de Salta*, 7 May 1879. The photograph can be seen at [http://eap.bl.uk/database/large\\_image.a4d?digrec=1120599;r=19169](http://eap.bl.uk/database/large_image.a4d?digrec=1120599;r=19169)

None of the members of the so-called Commission was a photographer. The *cartes-de-visite* provide a clue as to how they obtained these pictures: they were purchased at the studio of Natalio Bernal, a Bolivian photographer, settled in La Paz since the 1860s. As several historians of photography in South America have remarked, it was a time when travelling photographers made their living portraying people both alive and dead and creating “typical characters”, such as the types exhibited in the Bolivian *cartes-de-visite*.<sup>44</sup> Objects of collection, exchange and trade, the photographs were purchased by locals and visitors alike. Travelling naturalists, as well as itinerant photographers, multiplied the destinies of these images. As we will see in the following section, some images — not kept in the Museum of La Plata, so we do not know whether they were purchased or stolen — reveal the intricate path of photographs as they were collected and traded, and the difficulties of uncovering their complex histories.

## The ruins of Tiahuanaco and the Bennati Museum

In November 1876, the newspaper *La Reforma* of La Paz published an account of a four-month excursion made by Bennati's Italian Commission to Lake Titicaca and the ruins of Tiahuanaco. The members of the Commission were obliged, they said, to the Bolivian government for “the help and support given to science”, as well as to local authorities in the Titicaca regions, including the priest of the parish of Tiahuanaco and the officials from the Peruvian side of the lake. The craniological and archaeological observations from these explorations demonstrated “that Tiahuanaco had been the cradle and centre of origin of the civilisation of the Americas, which irradiated from the shores of the Titicaca to all the continent”.<sup>45</sup>

In a tomb opened by a previous excavation, the commission noted the co-existence of two different human types among the skulls: one more advanced and similar to the pre-Aztec skulls; the second representing a lower race, probably enslaved by the first and similar to the skulls of the higher families of apes. In 1878, Paul Broca analysed three skulls sent to the School of Anthropology in Paris by Théodore Ber, another French traveller

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44 See, for instance, Douglas Keith McElroy, *The History of Photography in Peru in the Nineteenth Century, 1839-1876* (Ph.D. thesis, University of New Mexico, 1977).

45 La Comisión Italiana, “Excursion a Tiaguanaco y al lago Titicaca”, *La Reforma*, November 1876.

who was in Tiahuanaco at the same time as the Italian Commission.<sup>46</sup> Like the Commission, Broca classified the skulls as belonging to two different human types.<sup>47</sup>

In the meantime, in La Paz, Manó broke with Bennati and returned to journalism. In March 1877, Manó began an association with Eloy Perillán y Buxó, a Spanish anarchist, anti-monarchist and director of the newspaper *El Inca*. Perillán y Buxó had had to leave Spain and go into exile in 1874 due to his provocative writings, time he spent travelling in South America.<sup>48</sup> Like Bennati and Manó, Perillán y Buxó both mocked and profited from the tastes, pretensions and consumption habits of the petite bourgeoisie of Europe and the Americas. All three men were aware of the importance that government officials and the urban bourgeoisie attached to academic titles, collections and scientific rhetoric. Throughout their travels, the men endeavoured to publish records, inaugurate museums and affirm their own scientific expertise. They also sought to establish newspapers and offer their services to the political factions of the troubled South American republics.

Manó and Perillán y Buxó issued a new periodical, *El Ferrocarril* [*The Railroad*],<sup>49</sup> and in March 1877 they announced that they were collecting archaeological pieces to be dispatched and published in *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, an illustrated journal in Madrid.<sup>50</sup> Offering to pay for remittances, they obtained “mummies, Incan pottery, medals, arrows, photographs of ruins and Indian types, idols”.<sup>51</sup> On 22 November 1877, *La Ilustración* published “an engraving with five peculiar views of the Bolivian Republic, based on direct photographs sent by an old correspondent of our periodical”. These “souvenirs of Bolivia”, sent by “Mr. P. y B”, showed several vistas, one of them probably portraying the visit of Bennati’s commission to the ruins and village of Tiahuanaco (Fig. 13.5).

46 Pascal Riviale, *Los viajeros franceses en busca del Perú Antiguo, 1821-1914* (Lima: IFEA, 2000), pp. 145-47.

47 Paul Broca, “Sur des crânes et des objets d’industrie provenant des fouilles de M. Ber à Tiahuanaco (Perou)”, *Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris*, 3/1 (1878), 230-35.

48 Luis Monguió, “Una desconocida novela Hispano-Peruana sobre la Guerra del Pacífico”, *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, 35/3 (1969), 248-54; and Pedro Gómez Aparicio, *Historia del periodismo español: De la Revolución de Septiembre al desastre colonial* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1971), p. 204.

49 Gustavo Torrico Landa and Cristóbal Kolkichuima P’ankara, *La imprenta y el periodismo en Bolivia* (La Paz: Fondo Ed. de los Diputados, 2004), p. 225.

50 “Museo Boliviano”, *El Ferrocarril*, 7 March 1877.

51 “Museo Boliviano”, *El Ferrocarril*, 14 March 1877.



Fig. 13.5 "Souvenirs of Bolivia" (from *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 43 (November 22, 1877), p. 316). © CSIC, Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás, all rights reserved.



In fact, these vistas had been taken by the travelling German photographer Georges B. von Grumbkow who, late in 1876, was hired by the aforementioned Théodore Ber to take photographs of the ruins — photos that Ber wanted to send to France as part of his role as Commissioner of the French Government for collecting American antiquities.<sup>52</sup> However, Grumbkow, once he took the pictures, sold them to the many customers interested in this kind of material. In 1876-77 Tiawanaku received visits not only from Ber and Bennati's Commission, but also from the German geologists Alphons Stübel and Wilhelm Reiss. These two men visited the ruins and purchased a set of the photographs taken by Grumbkow, now stored in the Leibniz Institut für Landeskunde (IFL) in Leipzig (Figs. 13.6 and 13.7).<sup>53</sup>



Fig. 13.6 “The Ruins of Pumapungu”, view to the southwest. © Stübel’s Collections, Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde, Leipzig, all rights reserved.

52 Pascal Riviale and Christophe Galinon, *Une vie dans les Andes: Le journal de Théodore Ber, 1864-1896* (Paris: Ginkgo, 2013). I am very grateful to Pascal Riviale for his hints regarding Théodore Ber and Stübel’s collection.

53 See the IFL’s Archive for Geography at <http://www.ifl-leipzig.de/en/library-archive/archive.html>. On Stübel’s collections, see Babett Forster, *Fotografien als Sammlungsobjekte im 19. Jahrhundert: Die Alphons-Stübel-Sammlung früherer Orientfotografie* (Weimar: VDG, 2013). Another set of Grumbkow’s photographs are kept in the Museo de Arte de Lima; see Natalia Majluf, *Registros del territorio: las primeras décadas de la fotografía, 1860-1880* (Lima: Museo de Arte de Lima, 1997). One of the images dispatched by Perillán y Buxó to Madrid came to be known as the portrait of Alphons Stübel in Tiwanaku. However, as Riviale’s recent research has proven, the man in the picture is not Stübel but M. Bernardi, Ber’s travel companion. The image is available at <http://ifl.wissensbank.com>



Fig. 13.7 "The church of Tiahuanaco". © Stübel's Collections, Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde, Leipzig, all rights reserved.

Less than a year after they were taken, these photographs had travelled far beyond the Andes: dispatched by this dynamic world of itinerant people composed of charlatans, journalists, travellers and photographers, they were soon incorporated into the visual universe of South American archaeology, which was emerging in the same years and through the same agents.

Even though until now we have found no trace of Grumbkow's photographs either in La Plata or in Buenos Aires, textual evidence suggests that they were exhibited in Buenos Aires in 1883, when Bennati presented his collection in the Argentinian capital. The local newspapers celebrated his collections, reporting and describing them in detail. Bennati's museum contained the enormous carapaces of mastodons, mylodons and glyptodonts, in addition to fossils, bones, teeth, petrified plants and fruits, mineral collections, precious stones,

objects from different tribes and from the Bronze Age, musical instruments, dried skins, human skeletons, skulls, mummies, weapons, jewels, seeds, textiles, pottery, bowls, jars, idols, apparel, baskets, feathers, petrified human eyes, vistas, photographs of Indians domesticated by Bennati, landscapes of primitive cities, etc.<sup>54</sup> The collection also included the same *cartes-de-visite* that — as we argue in this paper — came to the Museum of La Plata a couple of years later. As the catalogue states:

To complement this Group (various), we display a large and diverse collection of vistas representing places, buildings, ruins, etc., among which the ruins of the ancient town of Tiaguanacu, with its gigantic monoliths, stand out. *This collection is supplemented by the native attire of nearly all the countries visited.*<sup>55</sup>

This excerpt probably refers to the photographs sold by Natalio Bernal in La Paz, Bolivia — examples of trade and type photographs that, as McElroy has said, “usually represented professions and socioeconomic roles typical or distinctive to a given local culture”.<sup>56</sup> These types or roles, McElroy suggests, were often posed or dramatised in the studio rather than taken from life. *Carte-de-visite* portraits of Indians are numerous and most often fall within the *costumbrista* tradition of recording distinctive costumes and activities associated with native culture rather than capturing portraits of individuals.<sup>57</sup>

But it was the photographs that we suppose to be Grumbkow’s that attracted the attention of most reporters and visitors to Bennati’s exhibition as the clearest evidence of the antiquity of the civilisations of the New World.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the Buenos Aires press described what they “saw” in the photographs:

Tiahuanaco, this portentous city, with its colossal ruins connects us with the primitive continent, it is very close, in the North of the Republic.

What do these tremendous ruins tell us?

A vanished race, a missing civilisation and a missing history, what was left?

54 “El Museo Bennati, Reportage transeunte”, *La Patria Argentina*, 24 January 1883.

55 “Como complemento de este Grupo (diversos) se ha colocado una variada y gran colección de vistas fotográficas, que representan diferentes lugares, edificios, ruinas, etc. entre las que sobresalen las del antiquísimo pueblo de Tiaguanacu, con sus gigantescos monolitos. *Está completada esta colección con los trajes naturales de casi todos los países recorridos*”. Bennati, *Museo Científico*, p. 10. Italics and translation are ours.

56 McElroy, *Early Peruvian Photography*, p. 26. The photographs are available at [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_item.a4d?catId=142284;r=30106](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_item.a4d?catId=142284;r=30106)

57 McElroy, *Early Peruvian Photography*, p. 28.

58 Grumbkow’s photographs are available via the IFL’s catalogue at <http://www.ifl-leipzig.de/en/library-archive/online-catalogue.html>

Let's observe the photographs displayed at Museo Bennati and let's compare the facts. Huge monoliths, eight metres high and four wide, had been reshaped by the elapsing of time and the action of wind and rain, to become thin needles, just a metre high and eroded on their top.

The palaces, the temples, the circuses and the megalithic masonry keep, however, their mightiness. There one can observe how the monoliths were used, as well as the arts, crafts and power of those thousands of men that had erected them.

Carving, transporting them to a place where there were no mountains, building a city around an "artificial hill", where the temple of the Sun was located; having this enormous city destroyed, forgetting that this cyclopean city had ever existed, having the wind modelling its monoliths ... many centuries, hélas, many centuries must have gone by!

Tiahuanaco! Up there we have its colossal ruins, whose dimensions — as well as those from Palenque — would scare any Londoner.

The Islands of the Sun and the Moon, the temple of the virgins, they lay over thousands of shells left in the mountains by the ancient Titicaca lake with a former circumference of 2650 leagues, today reduced to 52 length and 33 width!

Tiahuanaco, despite all the heresies committed against her, such as the new temple built with her stones, recalls to us the sorrow already caused by the Coliseum "quod non fecerunt barbaros fecit Barberini", and exhibits one of the oldest civilisations from the Americas.

Is that all?

No! We have photographs in front of us that reveal something still more spectacular.

Bennati dug at Tiahuanaca, searching the tombs of those ancient beings.

Did he find them?

Six metres below Tiahuanaca, under a triple layer of topsoil, clay and sand, he found the vestiges of an older city, with great monuments, superb monoliths, mighty buildings, still more powerful than those from *modern* Tiahuanaca or Tiahuanacú (the reconstruction of the name is still uncertain). The excavation was not very extensive, the city but partially revealed; however it is enough to confirm its existence, as well as the existence of its monuments, as seen and photographed by Bennati.

When Bennati presented his collections in Buenos Aires, the Museum of La Plata did not exist and the objects that his museum exhibited had never been seen before in South America. The unknown reporter finished his chronicle by strongly encouraging the Argentinian government to purchase Bennati's collection for Argentinian public institutions, which indeed they did in the

years to follow. In this way, a collection that was amassed to accompany a quack doctor's cabinet became part of the Museum of La Plata. Some of the objects were put on display, while others, such as the *cartes-de-visite*, were put aside, treated as worthless and, finally, forgotten. However, all of them originated at the crossroads of itinerant people moving through the Americas and carrying with them things, ideas and different devices: photo machines, photographs, collections, newspaper articles and travelling museums.

Manó and Bennati's travels were propelled by the conflicts in which they were involved, even though they would describe their frequent departures as preconceived plans to survey the natural resources of the places they visited. Bennati represents one of the many itinerant characters — travelling dentists, photographers, journalists, magicians, circus artists, and impresarios of popular anatomical museums — journeying through the Americas, from town to town, from country to country, from one side of the Atlantic to the other, from north to south, from east to west. Historians still have to learn how to deal with the history of travelling people; their traces are elusive to national and institutional histories. The charlatans and photographers did not tend to keep written records, and they were continually on the move. They carried news, propagated modes, discourses and objects, and then disappeared from the scene. However, their traces are there: forgotten, misplaced, almost invisible. So were the *cartes-de-visite* in the Museum of La Plata, the gateway — among many others — that we have chosen to cross the barrier of South American historiographies and enter into the world of travelling charlatans.<sup>59</sup>

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# 14. Hearing images, tasting pictures: making sense of Christian mission photography in the Lushai Hills district, Northeast India (1870-1920)

Kyle Jackson<sup>1</sup>

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If today the sky were to thunder and the local church bell to peal in the mountaintop village of Aithur in Northeast India's Mizoram state, the resident Christian Mizo villager would simply pack an umbrella to church. However, a century ago the same soundscape would have held radically different meaning for most listeners.<sup>2</sup> Thunder was not a sonic shockwave devoid of transcendental meaning, but rather evidence of the god and healer Pu Vana — Grandfather of the Sky — as he dragged a bamboo plate about the heavens. The church bell would have rung out in direct contravention of the village headman's strict order for its silence. Its sound was thought to bring pestilence upon Aithur, whose tiny minority of first Christian converts were far from welcome and farther still from representing the near total majority that Christians would enjoy a century later, when the first converts were long dead and Pu Vana long forgotten.<sup>3</sup>

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1 I wish to thank Roberta Bivins, Luke Clossey, Lindy Jackson and Joy L. K. Pachuau for comments on an earlier draft.

2 R. Murray Schafer coined the term "soundscape" to refer to a "sonic environment", the auditory equivalent of a landscape, in his seminal *The Tuning of the World: Towards a Theory of Soundscape Design* (New York: Destiny, 1977), pp. 274-75.

3 Haudala, "A Lushai Pastor on Tour", *The Herald: The Monthly Magazine of the Baptist Missionary Society* (London, 1916), p. 63. All quoted editions of *The Herald* and *The Missionary Herald* were viewed in the Angus Library and Archive, Regent's Park College, Oxford, UK (hereafter ALA).

In the last decade, the field of sensory history — or the “habit” of writing sensory history, the term historian Mark M. Smith employs to refer to its overarching utility — has made great strides in advancing our understanding of historical and cultural articulations of human ways of knowing.<sup>4</sup> While this body of scholarship has been helpful in broadening our understanding of the complex history of the human sensorium, it nonetheless treats the continents with an uneven hand. For example, the bibliography of Smith’s recent overview of scholarship sensitive to the history of the senses reveals a ratio of roughly 8.5:1 for studies of the west to those of the wider world.<sup>5</sup>

Historians attentive to non-western countries have yet to examine in depth the hill tribes of India’s Northeastern frontier and the history of their ways of knowing. In 1935, many Northeastern hill areas were formally deemed “excluded areas” by the British Raj; until 2011, Mizoram itself remained a region restricted to visitors. Entire textbooks on the history of the subcontinent have been written with only a scant sentence or two reserved

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4 Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), p. 5; a partial list of essential works by historians and anthropologists of the senses would include W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter, *Medicine and the Five Senses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993); Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside*, trans. Martin Thom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kalui Expression* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); Peter Charles Hoffer, *Sensory Worlds of Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); David Howes, *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003); David Howes, ed., *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (New York: Berg, 2005); Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*; Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Mark M. Smith, *How Race is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

5 As historians Luke Clossey and Nicholas Guyatt have shown, Europe, Canada and the U.S. together command over three-quarters of all historical research done in North America and Britain, as of 2012. The UK and Ireland, with only 1% of the world’s population, command close to 20% of the historical research done in Britain and North America. See Clossey and Guyatt, “It’s a Small World After All: The Wider World in Historians’ Peripheral Vision”, *Perspectives on History*, 51/5 (May 2013), <http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2013/its-a-small-world-after-all>

as a quota for the tribes of the comparatively less populated Northeast.<sup>6</sup> Only of late, with the publication of works like James C. Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed*, a special issue of *Journal of Global History*, Andrew J. May's study of the Khasi Hills and Indrani Chatterjee's monograph on debt and friendship, is scholarly attention turning to this kaleidoscopically diverse, borderland region.<sup>7</sup> The present chapter, a preliminary "history through photographs", mobilises historical sources only recently located and digitally preserved in Mizoram (known in colonial times as the Lushai Hills District), allowing us to begin not only to see, but also to smell, taste, hear and feel an entirely new scene in upland Northeast India. By paying special attention to the human sensorium, we pry open some crawlspace towards a thicker and more context-specific understanding of how Christianity in the Lushai Hills became a specifically and overwhelmingly Lushai Hills Christianity.

## Sources and method

A vast chasm separates the supersaturated world of images that we inhabit today from the visual world of those creating photographs in historical Lushai Hills. As historian Robert Finlay points out, someone surfing the internet or walking down a supermarket aisle sees "a larger number of bright, saturated hues in a few moments than [would] most persons in a traditional society in a lifetime".<sup>8</sup> Save for exceptions like "beetles, butterflies, and blossoms", the world of nature reaches the

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6 Characteristic examples include John Keay, *India: A History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2000); and Sunil Khilman, *The Idea of India* (London: Penguin, 2012).

7 James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); *Journal of Global History*, 5/2 (2010); Andrew J. May, *Welsh Missionaries and British Imperialism: The Empire of Clouds in North-East India* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Indrani Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends: Monks, Marriages, and Memories of Northeast India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Joy L. K. Pachuau's forthcoming monograph *Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming in 2015). A story from Sir George Abraham Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* (1927) highlights the staggering diversity of India's Northeast: "One of the witnesses [to a crime] was a woman who knew only the Khami language. This was translated into Mrū, which was then translated into Arakanese, which was again translated into the local dialect of Bengali, from which version the Magistrate recorded the quadruply refracted evidence in English". George Abraham Grierson, ed., *Linguistic Survey of India, Volume 1, Part 1: Introductory* (Calcutta: Government of India, 1927), p. 21.

8 Robert Finlay, "Weaving the Rainbow: Visions of Colour in World History", *Journal of World History*, 18/4 (2007), 383-431 (p. 398).

human eye “chiefly in browns and greens beneath a sky of unsaturated blue”.<sup>9</sup> Today, the supersaturated colours of synthetically-produced objects artificially overexcite the human visual cortex, demanding for the first time in human history the full biological potential of human colour vision. Meanwhile, the modern ubiquity of camera devices (there are seven in various guises within a four-metre radius of the desk at which I write) has turned modern photographs into ephemeral “snapshots”.

By contrast, late-nineteenth-century Lushai Hills was a world in which a group of Mizo villagers walked for miles to the colonial headquarters of Aijal, hoping to see a colonial official’s family photographs.<sup>10</sup> Photography here was not part of an everyday “dull catalogue of common things”.<sup>11</sup> For whatever reasons, photographs could be a destination in themselves. Only by leaving our modern baggage at the door can we begin to appreciate the extraordinary in what might otherwise seem a bunch of old “snaps”: photographs were in fact the most concentrated human-made visual object then available in the Lushai Hills, unmatched in detail, realism, resolution and novelty.

It is in part to experiment with a methodology of wide-eyed wonder that this chapter on the visual history of the Lushai Hills eschews a typical photo-album approach (where one photograph after another appears ordered by chronology, typology or geography). Here, we instead purposefully engage with rarity — indeed primarily with a single photograph. Taking as our base unit a circa-1913 photograph of the interior of Aijal’s flagship Mission Veng Church (*biak in*), we sidestep the question of whether, in history-writing, images support texts or texts support images, to instead bring together a range of contemporary textual, oral and visual sources as equals in the analysis of a single image.<sup>12</sup> We thus take a page from the methodological playbook of French author Raymond Queneau, whose *Exercices de style* (1947) retells the same short story in 99 different literary styles.<sup>13</sup> I organise the analysis here into six sedimentary

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9 Ibid., p. 402.

10 N. E. Parry, *People and Places in Assam*, n/d, Cambridge Centre of South Asian Studies Archive, Cambridge, UK (hereafter CSAS), Parry Papers, Microfilm Box 5, No. 40, p. 250.

11 Finlay, “Weaving”, p. 430.

12 Patricia Uberoi, discussant for the workshop “History Through Photographs: Exploring the Visual Landscape of Northeast India”, Delhi, 31 October 2013.

13 Raymond Queneau, *Exercices de style* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1947). I am grateful to

layers — the different styles, for our purposes — of human knowing: hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, touching and, as a wild card, the Mizo *harhna* (or “awakening”). The senses are far from quarantined into these analytical containers, nor is this list exhaustive. With the inclusion of a sixth “sense” — the non-biological but still sensory-charged world of the historical Mizo *harhna* — we can attempt to approach the earliest Mizo Christians on their own terms, remaining attentive both to the diversity of sense broadly defined and to the potential hamfistedness of traditional western models of sense when applied without due reflexivity to sensory cultures in the wider world.<sup>14</sup>

## Listening in the *biak in*

From 1911-1912, the people living in what the British Raj knew as the Lushai Hills District suffered *mautam* (bamboo death). As entire mountainsides of bamboo simultaneously flowered, seeded and died, jungle rat populations skyrocketed in number with the mass availability of protein-rich seeds. Exhausting these, the rodents turned next to village rice crops and grain stores; as the colonial government in Aijal, as well as Baptist and Welsh Calvinistic Methodist foreign missionaries in Aijal and Serkawn village, scrambled to distribute meagre relief loans of rice, villagers subsisted on jungle roots.<sup>15</sup> Within such a context of hunger and desperation, Christian converts in Mission Veng, Aijal borrowed the fundraising concept of *buhfai tham* (handful of rice) from Khasia-Jaintia and Garo churches in the neighbouring Khasi Hills, and began donating precious handfuls of rice towards the construction of a new chapel. Our central photograph (Fig. 14.1) depicts the result: the Mission Veng *biak in*, constructed in 1913.

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historian Carla Nappi, whose ongoing project, *Qing Bodies: Exercises in Style*, brought Queneau to my attention.

14 On Asia-normative history-writing and the challenging principle that written histories should seek to be empathetic, meaningful and understandable to their historical subjects, see Luke Clossey, “Asia-Centered Approaches to the History of the Early Modern World: A Methodological Romp”, in *Comparative Early Modernities: 1100-1800*, ed. by David Porter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 73-98.

15 J. H. Lorrain, “Amidst Flowering Bamboos, Rats, and Famine: Report for 1912 of the B.M.S. Mission in the South Lushai Hills, Assam”, reprinted in *Reports by Missionaries of Baptist Missionary Society (B.M.S.), 1901-1938* (Serkawn: Mizoram Gospel Centenary Committee, 1993), p. 88.



Fig. 14.1 Mission Veng Church, c. 1913-1919,  
Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod Archive, Aijal, Mizoram, India.

Like the life-sustaining jungle tubers, sound was far more important to people in early-twentieth-century Lushai Hills than it is in Mizoram today.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, life and death were literally at stake in the audible realm, for malevolent forest phantasms (*ramhuai*) lived in the forest, listening to and seizing those people careless enough to utter the names of humans, certain animals or *ramhuai* aloud. Mizos, too, interacted with this forest world through auditory channels. *Lasi Khal* was the hunter's chanted sacrifice to the female forest spirit Lasi, who decreed his success or failure in the hunt; the auspicious crow of the rooster informed a village headman's surveyors as to whether a given clearing was healthy and thus habitable; the tap of a metal knife (*dao/chempui*) on fallen bamboo shafts betrayed the position of protein-rich worms (*tumlung*) to the careful listener.<sup>17</sup>

16 Rath, *How Early America Sounded*, p. ix.

17 Interview, M. S. Dawngliana, Serkawn, Mizoram, 29 March 2014 (all interviews were conducted by the author).

The jungle offered up only occasional instances of sonic uniqueness: the onomatopoeic *huk* of the barking deer, the throaty *chawke* of lizards, the *kaubupbup* of jungle birds, the *kek* and *kuk* of monkeys and gibbons were all infrequent interruptions of the otherwise “constant hum or whirl of the insect world”.<sup>18</sup> The human village added voices to the soundscape: women’s voices in public at certain times, travelling to the water source or to the *jhum* field, men’s voices at others, setting out on early morning hunts.<sup>19</sup> Spikes in volume were unusual and unpredictable, save for the assured din of domesticated animals waking at sunrise, the thunder claps of the rainy season and the singing and dancing at periodic festivals (*kut*).

The early Christian church was an acoustic outlier in the typical village soundscape. The interior of the church in our central photograph has its own sonic signature, one unique in the Lushai Hills. Mizo structures were always constructed in bamboo weave, their thatched and layered design highly reminiscent of the noise control panels preferred in acoustic design today. One need only step into a thatched bamboo home in a modern Mizo village to hear the difference: the bamboo weave radically reduces reverberation time, diffusing and absorbing sound waves like an anechoic chamber. But though this traditional construction technique is alluded to aesthetically in the 1913 church walls, the structure is primarily made of great planks of acoustically-reflective hardwood, likely teak harvested locally.

The pulpit raised a central speaker so the congregants could hear his voice.<sup>20</sup> The elders (*upa*) seated in the individual chairs visible in the photograph, facing the congregants, had the poorest view of the platform, but by far the best sound from it. Speech loses six decibels in sound level each time the distance in metres is doubled from speaking mouth to listening ear. Hence, those nearest the Welsh Calvinist and Mizo preachers, whose doctrine emphasised hearing the Word of God, were not only the most senior in the hierarchical church structure as *upas*, but also most privy to the *sound* of the Word itself. In Mizo terms, they were the most *bengvar* (literally, “quick hearing”, or informed).<sup>21</sup>

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18 E. Lewis Mendus, *The Diary of a Jungle Missionary* (Liverpool: Foreign Mission Office, 1956), p. 74 (“constant hum”). For historical Lushai onomatopoeia, see J. H. Lorrain, *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (Shillong: Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1898); and idem, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1940).

19 Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, p. 231.

20 Rath, *How Early America Sounded*, p. 100.

21 David Vumlallian Zou, *The Interaction of Print Culture, Identity and Language in Northeast India* (Ph.D thesis, Queen’s University, Belfast, 2007), p. 75; and E. L. Mendus, “Editorial”, *Kristian Tlangau*, Aijal, September 1932, p. 188.



Regardless, however, of where one sat, the room depicted in the photograph was the largest and most reverberative single space in the region, encouraging human voice and song in ways hitherto unheard in the Lushai Hills. The church structure employed the type of high, gabled ceiling that, as the historian of hearing Richard Rath notes, “sonically fortif[ies]” congregants’ singing, praying and audible verbal and non-verbal responses.<sup>22</sup> In inherently promoting such a uniquely live acoustic space, this built environment could itself have been a catalyst for the “noisy” *hlimsang* Mizo revivalist song and dance that so worried stoic missionaries throughout the early history of Christianity in the region. In a very real sense, this particular church was not just a building. It was also an instrument.<sup>23</sup>

The church resounded outwards too. Alain Corbin’s pioneering work on the social history of the church bell in rural France resonates in colonial Lushai Hills, for here also the Christian community was inherently reliant on the church’s brass gong.<sup>24</sup> Residents in the model Christian village of Mission Veng had to live within earshot to know when to attend mandatory services – the invisible “acoustic horizon” of the gong defined the physical range of the community.<sup>25</sup> In Mission Veng, a handbell announced schoolchildren’s classes, while a brass gong heralded church services. Tone and frequency thus attended concepts of time and punctuality.<sup>26</sup> Such human-made sonic tools were second only to guns in the range and volume of their report.

Within this new auditory milieu, foreign missionary preachers still fought for their own brand of sonic discipline. Physical walls served their obvious structural function, but they also acted as sonic barriers against what missionaries heard as the “unruly” sounds of the village and of agents of Satan, the “evil spirits” who disturbed outdoor preaching tours by making livestock “cackle”, “squeal”, “bark”, “bleat”, and human babies “cry”.<sup>27</sup> Part of the missionary project within the church’s walls was an imposition of what historian Andrew J. Rotter calls “respectable, mannerly sound”.<sup>28</sup>

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22 Rath, *How Early America Sounded*, p. 110.

23 Ibid.

24 Corbin, *Village Bells*.

25 Smith, *The Acoustic World*, p. 51.

26 D. E. Jones, *A Missionary’s Autobiography – D. E. Jones (Zosaphluia)*, trans. by J. M. Lloyd (Aijal: H. Liansailova, 1998), p. 54.

27 Lorrain, “Our New Mission: Touring in the South Lushai Hills”, *The Missionary Herald*, July 1904, p. 343.

28 Andrew J. Rotter, “Empires of the Senses: How Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching Shaped Imperial Encounters”, *Diplomatic History*, 35/1 (2011), 3-18 (p. 11).

Early missionary preaching seems to have baffled the Mizo, who repeatedly interrupted sermons with unrelated questions and diversions. The central pulpit in our photograph points to a new way of ordering communication and sound. Verbal communication in the hills had no precedent for the monologue, the expectation of silence lasting “twenty or thirty minutes” while a single speaker stood in front of a seated group.<sup>29</sup> Mizo communal meetings were more casual, held in what the missionaries would have called an informal manner on verandahs or at the entrance to villages.<sup>30</sup> In song, too, Mizo congregants had difficulty with the Welsh fourth and seventh scale degrees, their efforts sounding flat or “plaintive” to western ears. Traditional Mizo musical languages operated in five-note pentatonic registers, whereas Welsh mission music assumed an eight-note, or diatonic, scale.<sup>31</sup>

In many ways, then, Christianity arrived packaged as a bafflingly foreign sonic cacophony. Missionaries record that it was only when they started promoting Jesus less as a redemptive saviour from sin and more as an ally (*Isua Krista*, the “vanquisher” of the *huai*) that Mizos suddenly started listening.<sup>32</sup> This *Isua Krista* claimed power to intervene in the ancient aural regime of the ever-listening *huai*. The very radicalness of the Mission Veng church’s aural practices — jarringly foreign scales, tempos, bells and monologues — would thus have been wholly consistent with the arrival of the missionary’s sonic revolutionary, *Isua Krista*.

## Tasting in the *biak in*

Here, our central photograph demands some imagination, for it does not depict anything particularly taste-worthy. Following on from our discussion of hearing, one way towards taste is to imagine inhabiting the photograph, with its congregation in song. Song in the Lushai Hills had always been tied to drink, and the ear to the taste bud. An oft-quoted missionary report records that early Christian hymns were frequently met with confused questions

29 John Meirion Lloyd, *On Every High Hill* (Liverpool: Foreign Mission Office, 1952), p. 30.

30 Dorothy Glover, *Set on a Hill: The Record of Fifty Years in the Lushai County* (London: Carey Press, 1944), p. 12.

31 Joanna Heath, “Lengkhawm Zai”: *A Singing Tradition of Mizo Christianity in Northeast India* (Master’s dissertation, Durham University, 2013), p. 59; interview, Joanna Heath, Aijal, Mizoram, 25 May 2014; Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, p. 302 (“plaintive”).

32 J. H. Lorrain, “After Ten Years: Report for 1912 of the B.M.S. Mission in the South Lushai Hills, Assam”, reprinted in *Reports by Missionaries*, p. 88.

of, “Where is the *zu*?”.<sup>33</sup> Communal singing demanded rice beer. Indeed, this link was so strong that missionaries soon felt compelled to institute a twelve-month probationary period on all candidates for baptism: new Christians had to keep the Sabbath Day for a year, abstaining from both *zu* and sacrificing animals for health.<sup>34</sup> Missionary translations tiptoed around inconsistencies in their message. In a purposeful lexical distancing, the wine of the Last Supper and Communion was translated into Mizo from English partly phonetically, as *uain tui* (wine liquid), while sweetened water was used in the ritual itself.<sup>35</sup> Taste was policed with a watchful eye and a discerning tongue, with alcohol banned from communion cups and missionary print media alike.

Such missionary authority over taste could become even further entwined in everyday life, as when missionaries were granted the government monopoly over the local distribution of salt. Then as now a favourite condiment of the Mizo diet, salt sustains both health and life, particularly in such a hot climate.<sup>36</sup> Colonial records from the 1880s and 1890s reveal a sellers’ market: brokers were making 100% profit, trading salt from the plains for rubber from the Mizo hills; marching British Raj soldiers were being stopped by Mizo villagers hoping to trade foodstuffs not for money, but for salt; and in Mission Veng, too, missionaries paid for construction labour with the popular condiment.<sup>37</sup> Mizos craved salt for medicines to treat goitres and to soothe burns, and, of course, for food, particularly *bai* — bean or pumpkin leaves boiled with vegetables and fermented pig fat (*sa um*).<sup>38</sup> The first

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33 Glover, *Set on a Hill*, p. 12 (“Where is the beer-pot?”).

34 Peter Fraser, *Slavery on British Territory: Assam and Burma* (Carnarvon: Evans, 1913), p. 33; Lady Beatrix Scott, “Indian Panorama”, CSAS, Lady B. Scott Papers, Box 1, p. 165.

35 C. L. Hminga, *Christianity and the Lushai People: An Investigation of the Problem of Representing Basic Concepts of Christianity in the Language of the Lushai People* (Master’s dissertation, University of Manchester, 1963), p. 136 (“*uain tui*”); and J. H. Lorrain, *Logbook*, 25 January 1904, Baptist Church of Mizoram Centennial Archive, Lunglei, Mizoram, India (hereafter BCMCA), p. 92.

36 J. S. Weiner, and R. E. van Heyningen, “Salt Losses of Men Working in Hot Environments”, *British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 9 (1952), 56-64.

37 G. A. Way, *Supplementary Report on the North-East Frontier of India* (Simla: Government Central Branch Press, 1885), p. 29; R. G. Woodthorpe, “The Lushai Country”, 1889, The Royal Geographical Society Manuscript Archive, London, mgX.291.1, p. 24; and David Kyles, *Lorrain of the Lushais: Romance and Realism on the North-East Frontier of India* (London: Stirling Tract Enterprise, 1944), p. 13. See also the Endangered Archives Programme (hereafter EAP) website and in particular EAP454/6/5 ([http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_item.a4d?catId=183501;r=12382](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_item.a4d?catId=183501;r=12382)).

38 H. Buanga, “Old Lushai Remedies”, 13 June 1940, India Office Records (hereafter IOR), British Library, London, Mss Eur E361/24, pp. 1 and 3.

letter written by a Mizo — in 1897, from the village headman Khamliana to *Kumpinu* (Company Mother) Queen Victoria herself — explained, “we have become your subjects now and in this distant land *live by your rice and salt*”.<sup>39</sup>

Thinking of our central photograph and attuned to our sense of taste, we suddenly see the pulpit at the front of the church as occupied not only by foreign pastors, but also by salt barons, whose open- or close-fistedness meant everything to anyone with burns or goitres, or indeed anyone with food they wished to cook. Imported salt in the Lushai Hills would also become an “unmistakably modern” good, first in terms of its gradual devolution (imported salt — as opposed to the salt-spring varieties of “Lushai salt”, available in small quantities — was the first luxury foodstuff to become prevalent amongst the general populace), and second in terms of its trade (salt was also the first luxury foodstuff “to become considered essential by the people who had not produced it”).<sup>40</sup> Modernity had its own attendant tastes.

Sometimes the sheer foreignness of the Welsh missionaries’ taste preferences met with baffled amusement. For instance, one Mizo from Aijal is recorded as deeming the missionaries’ toast altogether too “noisy” for human consumption.<sup>41</sup> However, certain equally foreign conventions of missionary-normative taste and tasting could have a much deeper significance. Viewed on its own, the missionary pattern of serving food on individual plates or communion sweet-water in individual bamboo cups, promoted for hygienic reasons to Mizo congregants, might seem inconsequential enough at first blush.<sup>42</sup> But these patterns were a part of a whole gamut of colonial practices that worked to promote the individual. New names and individual identities grew increasingly real as they were repeated in public and written into “property deeds, tax returns, and school registration forms”,<sup>43</sup> while Christianisation began to imbue old names with new Christian undertones.

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39 Khamliana to *Kumpinu*, 16 June 1897, EAP454/23/3; translation in P. Thirumal and C. Lalrozami, “On the Discursive and Material Context of the First Handwritten Lushai Newspaper ‘Mizo Chanchin Laishuih’, 1898”, *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, 47/3 (2010), 377-404 (p. 399), emphasis mine.

40 Sidney W. Mintz, “Time, Sugar, and Sweetness”, in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 91-103 (p. 93, “unmistakably modern”); Lorrain, *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, pp. 75, 80 and 181 (“Lushai salt”); and Smith, *Sensing the Past*, p. 84 (“to become”).

41 Kitty Lewis to Mother and Father, 27 April 1923, *Letters of Kitty Lewis to her Family, 1922-1923*, J. M. Lloyd Archive, Aijal Theological College, Durtlang, Mizoram (hereafter JMLA), p. 2.

42 Lorrain, *Logbook*, 25 January 1904, BCMCA, p. 92.

43 Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 289.

By the time our central photograph was taken, the Mizo names of Lalrinawma and Lalliani would have denoted “the Lord is trustworthy” and “the Lord is great” respectively, whereas only decades earlier they had referred not to *Lal Isua* (Lord Jesus), but to a historical *lal*, or village headman.

As a digitisation team from the British Library’s Endangered Archives Programme (EAP),<sup>44</sup> we travelled around Mizoram in 2011, following thick webs of kinship connections and uncovering in Mizo homes an array of individual forms and certificates that were issued by colonial institutions long before the rise of any predominantly literate public sphere.<sup>45</sup> These historical collections were maintained as often by professional and amateur Mizo historians as by the rural and urban descendants of historical village headmen or by those early educated Mizos who had lived in the mission centres and beyond. Everywhere, the act of colonial documentation had generated new identities that apparently needed to be preserved.<sup>46</sup> Many such colonial files are still used in legal battles over land entitlement today.<sup>47</sup>

The broader encounter with the colonial state worked to pull individuals out of communitarian social networks. In a world where people were normally defined within networks of indebtedness (of marriages, friendships, oaths or a variety of possible fealties to a village headman, any of these potentially spanning generations), colonial bureaucratic practices did not document existing individual identities so much as create them.<sup>48</sup> Networks, village identities and multi-generational debts were irrelevant to the matrices of standardised, individualised files on which colonial bureaucracy and surveillance in Aijal depended.

As Adam McKeown has shown in the case of China, the act of bureaucratic documentation can be a powerful force towards individualisation.<sup>49</sup> In the Lushai Hills, the two mission stations demanded individual hospital in-patient names, dispatched myriad certificates for Sunday School, recorded the

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44 See EAP454: Locating and surveying early religious and related records in Mizoram, India, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP454](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP454). The digitised documents are available at <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP454>

45 According to historian J. V. Hluna, literacy rates in the Lushai Hills during the period under discussion were 0.93% in 1901, 3.98% in 1911, 6.28% in 1921, and 10.70% in 1931. J. V. Hluna, *Education and Missionaries in Mizoram* (Guwahati: Spectrum, 1992), p. 225.

46 McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, p. 353

47 For instance, our digitised collection “EAP454/2: Pi Lalengliani collection of Chaltlang chief R. D. Leta’s materials [1906-1929]” could not preserve certain historical material deemed legally sensitive by the custodian to an ongoing land-ownership case.

48 Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends*; and McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, pp. 10, 12, 269.

49 McKeown, *Melancholy Order*.

names of individual congregants in vast registers and offered salvation on a person-by-person basis, devoid of any ancestral or familial articulations. Government authorities took individuals' thumbprints; offered and monitored individual loans during famines; licensed individuals to own shops and guns, and individual chiefs to own property (via standardised *ramri lekha* forms); restricted individual mobility; stationed writers in each village to record individual births and deaths; granted individual savings books and passbooks; and counted up all individuals in the district in 1901 and every decade thereafter. In 1902, the Sub-Divisional Office in Lungleh was keeping 49 separate register books, including books for house tax, guns, periods of leave, criminal cases, obituaries and lists of Mizo "coolies".<sup>50</sup>

The Mizoram State Archives today are bursting with colonial papers that assumed and mapped individual identities, and with emotive appeals to such papers by village headmen who were quickly made to understand the need to work within the matrices of these files, lest they forfeit rights to the land, jungle and village headship. One's qualifications were no longer the sole purview of a flexible village memory, embedded within matrices of family, bride price, oath, debt, personal and familial deeds, and local history. Missionary tastes and standards of right eating and drinking must be viewed as a part of a much larger colonial challenge to everyday ways of living, knowing and being known. It was within a very specific and atomising colonial context that Mizos learned to eat from individual plates, to drink from individual cups, to abstain from communal pots of rice beer and, indeed, to believe in only one soul inhabiting each human body. Mizos before had always had two.

## Smelling in the *biak in*

Following our noses into our central photograph, we learn that Christians in the Mission Veng *biak in* were intended by missionaries to be differentiated by smell. Specific rules were applied to the residences immediately surrounding the church in order to ensure that this was so: stipulations included a separate latrine for each home and separate buildings to house animals. In addition, converts patronised the weekly day called *Puan suk ni* (washing-up day) — a missionary translation into Mizo of the noun "Saturday", implying ideas

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50 "List showing the registers kept in the Sub-Divisional Office at Lungleh other than the treasury account book", Mizoram State Archives (hereafter MSA) CB-2, H-28, n/p.

of both hygiene (the godliness and healthiness of washing) and time (the concept of a named day in a seven-day week).<sup>51</sup>

A common thread running through the missionary literature is disgust with the smell of the unredeemed Mizo. Mizos lived in “squalid hovels”, their “hair matted with clay”.<sup>52</sup> In contrast, the mission station served as a “model of order [and] cleanliness”, and missionaries who lived there filled their accounts with praise for the exemplary Christian Mizos and, by association, for the transformative power of their god: “our [Mizo student] children are much cleaner than any other children”.<sup>53</sup> The link between Christianity, cleanliness and olfactory neutrality was portrayed and manufactured as self-evident as much as it was insisted upon. When one Lushai woman came to see Pu Buanga (J. H. Lorrain) and professed to be a Christian, the missionary told the “abominably filthy” woman he would not believe it “until she made herself cleaner”.<sup>54</sup>

The manufacture and continuous repetition of such a sensory stereotype was an important part of the missionaries’ civilising mission and of the construction of a Mizo “race”, seeking to protect the senses against affront as defined by a missionary-normative nose. In an offhand comment in 1891, a colonial superintendent pointed out that the Mizo ideas of “disagreeable smells are not ours”; arriving three years later, missionaries worked at bringing the Mizo sense of smell around, towards sensing in “right” ways.<sup>55</sup> The olfactory was thus ideological. Missionaries had a self-imposed duty as “more sensorily advanced westerners to put the senses right before withdrawing the most obvious manifestations of their power”.<sup>56</sup>

Missionaries lived among and smelled the Mizos with whom they worked on a daily basis — Mizos who in their eyes looked and smelled filthy and, worse, did not know it. Early on, an exasperated Pu Buanga noted that “to teach the inseparableness of Godliness and cleanliness... seems to be

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51 Lloyd, *On Every High Hill*, p. 61.

52 Lorrain, *Logbook*, 20 June 1894, BCMCA, p. 35.

53 F. W. Savidge, “A Note from the Lushai Hills”, *The Missionary Herald*, 31 May 1910, p. 284 (“model of order”); E. Chapman, clipping entitled “Day by Day in Darzo”, n/d, ALA IN/65, p. 140 (“our children”); Mendus, *The Diary of a Jungle Missionary*, p. 33.

54 Lorrain, *Logbook*, 23 April 1903, BCMCA, p. 82.

55 “Diary of Captain J. Shakespear for the year ending 17<sup>th</sup> October 1891”, IOR Photo Eur 89/1, p. 1. Brojo Nath Shaha also pointed to the cultural articulation of pleasant smells when noting, “Lard is pleasant to the smell. (So it is to the Lushai)”, in his *A Grammar of the Lushai Language* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1884), p. 26.

56 Rotter, “Empires of the Senses”, p. 5.

the hardest doctrine of any for them to understand or act upon".<sup>57</sup> Over a decade later, the missionary was still frustrated that local Mizos remained unconcerned with washing.<sup>58</sup> The righting of this sensory wrong provided significant justification not only for the white missionary "staying on", but also for the non-devolution of his authority. In terms of pure subjectivity, the white missionary nose was the most powerful nose (indeed, which Mizo was ever qualified to disagree?), powerful enough even to ignore its own hypocrisy. In one instance, in early private letters home, two missionaries told of not bathing for two weeks on account of a water scarcity, apparently oblivious to the human effort required to transport water in the hills (by way of bamboo tubes generally carried in baskets on Mizo women's backs).<sup>59</sup> While foreign missionaries handed out cakes of soap as school prizes, Christmas gifts and tokens of attendance, there could not have been enough soap to lift contemporary Mizos up to olfactory equality.<sup>60</sup> The extension of soap and right-smelling were potent and highly visible symbols for the missionaries of "improvement" and of civilisation, yet missionary racial and sensory stereotypes simultaneously barred Mizos from full membership of this civilisation, no matter how much the converts washed.<sup>61</sup>

The question of what made a smell "good" or "bad" was culturally subjective in a radical sense. Using the visual orientation of our central photograph as a perspectival thinking tool, we can in fact bend historians' usual assumptions about the missionaries' civilising mission back on themselves. As early as 1903, a new compound noun had crystallised in the Mizo lexicon: "the foreigners' smell", used to refer to the missionaries' use of soap.<sup>62</sup> The deprecating label had gained some traction in the Hills, and J. H. Lorrain heard it across multiple villages. In one instance, he was baffled when the Mizo owner of a house at which the missionary was staying "ran over to the other side of the street muttering, 'I can't stand the smell any longer!'".<sup>63</sup> When asked by Pu Buanga what she meant, a passerby seemed surprised

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57 Lorrain, "Miscellaneous Notes", *Logbook*, c. 1903, BCMCA, p. 82.

58 Lorrain to Lewin, 16 October 1915, University of London Archives and Manuscripts, London (hereafter ULAM), MS 811/IV/63, p. 6.

59 Smith, *How Race is Made*, p. 67; and Lorrain, *Logbook*, 29 January 1894, BCMCA, p. 28.

60 Smith, *Sensing the Past*, p. 71.

61 On Indian converts' integration (as subordinates) into a localised Christian mission's "public sphere", see David Hardiman, *Missionaries and their Medicine: A Christian Modernity for Tribal India* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

62 Lorrain, "Miscellaneous Notes", *Logbook*, c. 1903, BCMCA, p. 74.

63 *Ibid.*



at having to explain what appears to have been a smell as familiar as it was unpopular: “Why! The foreigners’ smell — the smell of soap!”<sup>64</sup>

Here, the repulsive personal habits of the missionaries made *them* disgusting and unacceptable. Useful analyses of the “other” have appeared in recent historiography where the “other” generally refers to “non-Europeans, as seen through European eyes”.<sup>65</sup> Seated in the Mizo congregant pews of our central photograph, facing the missionary leaders rather than peering over their shoulders, we perform an about-face: if indeed the Mizo themselves ever thought in such generalising terms, the foul-smelling “other” could equally be European. As anthropologist Constance Classen points out, the dominant classes in a society often define themselves in positive olfactory terms against their perceived subordinates.<sup>66</sup> In 1903 Lushai Hills, who was subordinate seems to have depended upon who was doing the smelling.

## Touching in the *biak in*

A clear hierarchy of physical comfort is visible in our central photograph. The chairs of the elders (*upa*) and pastors face the congregants. They use at least twice the wood per seated person as the pews opposing them; the leftmost chairs are designed with top- and lower-rails, as well as three vertical spindles offering support in line with the *upa*’s spine. The mid-backs of general congregants were supported crosswise, a single bar bisecting the spinal cord. We see that the pastors, sitting in the finest seats of all behind the central table, benefited from the ergonomic elasticity of pressed sheet cane backings for their chairs, these sheets (almost certainly machine-woven by this time) pressed and glued into grooves at the back of the chair’s frame. The glare on the rightmost of these two chairs in the photograph reveals careful sanding and softer edges. For their part, the edges on the congregants’ benches are sharp and unfinished, devoid of even the curved visual ornamentation that elaborates the arms of the *upas*’ chairs. This was a gendered hierarchy of tactility, for only men (white men and those chosen Mizo trainees and pastors closest to them) would have ever occupied the frontmost chairs, or

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64 Ibid.

65 Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 6.

66 Classen, *Worlds of Sense*, p. 81.

enjoyed their comparative comfort during church services that lasted for “hours on end”.<sup>67</sup>

Colonial stereotypes about the Mizo often had the haptic at heart, and acted as catalysts for a broader human exhaustion in early-twentieth-century Lushai Hills that did not exclude lay members of the Mission Veng *biak in*. In the colonial archive, Mizos are above all characterised as lazy (“the Lushai will always scheme out of his work if he can”) and incapable of hard work (their “laziness can only be got over by good supervision”).<sup>68</sup> Though comparatively light on the ground in terms of actual manpower, colonial officials were uncompromising in their demands, overseeing what historian Indrani Chatterjee has called “government by terror”.<sup>69</sup> Mizo households groaned under the imposition of heavy taxes (*chhiah*) payable in cash or rice, even in times of famine, and the ten days’ forced “coolie” (*kuli*) hard labour that required men to travel and work anywhere in the Lushai Hills District with meagre or no pay.

The district was explicitly intended to be governed with more flexibility and less accountability, and colonial impositions were only more resented as they were further abused.<sup>70</sup> Assistant political officer C. S. Murray demanded sexual corvée from Mizo village women until his removal following a village riot in protest; the records of Superintendent John Shakespear’s assistant nonchalantly report the burning of tens of Mizo villages (“We burnt the village and returned to Serchhip”); village headmen begged for relief from the crippling debt of loans extended by the government in times of scarcity.<sup>71</sup> In a private letter dating from 1938, retired officer Shakespear boasts to the contemporary incumbent about the corruption, profiteering and misuse of human labour under his superintendentship decades earlier:

I gather that matters are not as casual now as they were in my day. We had lots of ways of wangling a few rupees when we needed them. That very fine

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67 Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity and Subaltern Culture: Revival Movement as a Cultural Response to Westernisation in Mizoram* (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2006), p. 213.

68 John Shakespear to the Commissioner of the Chittagong Division, 14 August 1895, MSA CB-4, G-47, p. 3.

69 Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends*, p. 308.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 271.

71 On C. S. Murray, see Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends*, pp. 294-96, 299 and 301; on burning villages see, for example, “The Story of Dara, Chief of Pukpui”, IOR MSS Eur E361/4, p. 5, and J. Shakespear, “Landmarks of history”, IOR MSS E361/6; on loans, see “Annual Report on the Administration of the Lushai Hills, 1916-17”, MSA CB-18, G-219, n/p (“anything they earn or make... is required to pay off the Government loans”).

retaining wall and the parapet along the terrace in front of your house represents the result of a raid by Cole, who was acting for me, on the Aijal-Champhai road estimate. The plough cultivation in Champhai, was started by Loch & myself misusing government bullocks and coolies supplied for transport purposes. Then there was the Political Fund, at my uncontrolled disposal. I also instituted a "Political Bag", into which fines for political offences were put to be used for just things as your rugs. Alas I fear that I should find the Superintendents [*sic*] job far harder than it was in my day.<sup>72</sup>

Within such a context of state violence and the rhetorical stereotypes of lazy, savage Mizo "tribesmen" necessary to underwrite it intellectually, *kuli*-impressed labour was presented as good for the Mizo male. The Mizo skin was to be thickened and the Mizo condition improved through the imposition of a new work ethic — work towards civilisation that, as Shakespear once told a group of gathered males, "you are too lazy to do except under compulsion".<sup>73</sup> In forced labour and in punishment, Mizo bodies thus bore the physical brunt of a colonial stereotype that saw them as too soft. In 1897, a letter from E. A. Gait, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, specifically aimed for the extension of the Whipping Act, VI of 1865 into the Lushai Hills District under the Scheduled Districts Act, XIV of 1874. The act granted the superintendent power to sentence Mizos, including juveniles and female tea-plantation workers, to punishments of whipping.<sup>74</sup> In 1909, Superintendent H. W. G. Cole had to intervene in what seems to have become a culture of violence in local government itself, issuing a standing order to stop government workers from assaulting Mizos with "light canes etc".<sup>75</sup> To consider the tactile dimensions of our central photograph in the Mission Veng church we must first situate the benches in their haptic context, as filled with exhausted human bodies.

The "improvement" of Mizo tactility extended to the handshake. Earlier this year in Mission Vengthlang, I was taken on a short walk down the hill from the religious tel atop which sits the latest incarnation of the Mission Veng church, to visit Pu Thangliana, the great-grandson of the famous Mizo Christian named Challiana. The family's history is full of human hurt. The colonial archives tell us clearly that Challiana was born in the 1890s out of travelling political officer C. S. Murray's demands for sexual corvée.

72 Shakespear to McCall, 28 August 1938, IOR Mss Eur 361/5, p. 4.

73 Shakespear quoted in Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends*, p. 308.

74 E. A. Gait to the Secretary to the Government of India, "Proposals for the Administration of the Lushai Hills", 17 July 1897, MSA CB-5, G-57, p. 3.

75 H. W. G. Cole, "Standing Order No. 10 of 1909-10", 19 July 1909, MSA CB-14, G-169, p. 1.

The child was raised by his mother, unbeknownst to Murray, until village rumour of a boy *sap* reached missionaries J. H. Lorrain and F. W. Savidge in Serkawn. The mother was made to bring the child, and Challiana was taken away from her in the missionaries' firm conviction that no Mizo could raise a (half) white boy. Under Savidge's bungalow roof and tutelage, and with Murray's discreet financial support from abroad, the boy was groomed as a translator, church pastor and medical assistant. He smoothed out the Mizo language translations of his new, missionary fathers and even visited England with Savidge (Fig. 14.2).



Fig. 14.2 Challiana, seated second from right, with F. W. Savidge, seated second from left, and others, n.d., British Library (EAP454/16/1), CC BY.

The archives' version of things is not discussed publicly in Serkawn or Mission Venghlang today. The family's genealogy stops at Challiana, for atrocity is sometimes easier to forget than to articulate. But Pu Thangliana's family photographs and carefully circumscribed memories of his grandfather depict

a staunchly Europeanised man.<sup>76</sup> Challiana would insist on eating with a fork and knife as well as on handshakes — indeed on careful tactility. At the time, these habits were all strange to his grandson.<sup>77</sup> Family photographs digitised under the EAP depict a man dressed impeccably in western clothes — a trope common throughout mission photography of students and chiefs under mission tutelage. As in the cases of cutlery or handshaking, we might be tempted to see a primarily visual marker of difference in such mission photographs (see Figs. 14.3 and 14.4).

But clothes have a crucial haptic dimension, too. Smith reminds us that “the quality and feel of the clothing on the inside, how it was understood to either caress or rub the skin of the wearer” can also suggest something “about the wearer’s skin and [thus] about his or her worth and social standing”.<sup>78</sup> Christian leaders like Challiana first had to be deemed, and then had to see themselves as, meritorious of wearing softer, imported, luxury dress — clothing that would have caressed Mizo skin, the human body’s largest sense organ, with a thread count higher and a weave tighter than any *puan* produced by the Mizo handloom.<sup>79</sup> Westernised Christian male leaders wearing softer clothes (Sunday School teachers, medical men and evangelists) were those uplifted individuals on whose behalf missionaries applied for the treasured *kuli awl* — exemption from the colonial regime’s hated demands for male Mizo labour.<sup>80</sup> Changes in Mizo uses and perceptions of tactility, whether via a softer collared shirt or a civilised handshake, said much about politeness, *hmasawwnna* (“cultural progress”) and one’s broader place in society, even as polite conversation today about the same must stop short — must have tact — in discussions about some of these pasts.<sup>81</sup>

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76 Interview, Thangliana, Mission Vengthlang, Mizoram, 16 May 2014.

77 For a Europe-focussed history of table manners and etiquette, see Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners, Volume 1: The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

78 Smith, *Sensing the Past*, p. 107 (“the quality and feel”) and p. 106 (“about the wearer’s skin”).

79 Smith, *Sensing the Past*, p. 106; on clothing and hapticity, see also Michael Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy: A History of Men’s Dress in the American Republic, 1760-1860* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

80 J. H. Lorrain to J. Hezlett, 13 September 1913, pp. 2-3, and J. H. Lorrain to J. Hezlett, 19 November 1913, pp. 1-5, MSA CB-16, G-204.

81 On *hmasawwnna*, see Joy L. K. Pachuau, “Sainghinga and His Times: Codifying Mizo Attire”, paper presented at the workshop *History Through Photographs: Exploring the Visual Landscape of Northeast India*, Delhi, 1 November 2013.



Fig. 14.3 Wedding at Mission Veng Church, n.d., British Library (EAP454/12/1 Pt 2), CC BY.



Fig. 14.4 Church leaders at Mission Veng Church, 1919, British Library (EAP454/13/22), CC BY.

## Seeing in the *biak in*

Early textual records from the Lushai Hills explain how the typical Mizo house was windowless — a widespread security precaution that prevented the *huai*, or the malevolent phantasms of the forest that caused human sickness, from entering the dwelling.<sup>82</sup> Beliefs about health thus dictated architectural design, since windows were portals to suffering. When missionaries made windows mandatory in multiple Christian model villages, not all Mizo Christians were ready to accept such rules.<sup>83</sup> Some were convinced that “great misfortune” would befall the village that allowed Christians to so recklessly entice the *huai*.<sup>84</sup> Folk tales were the security cameras of the Lushai Hills, and they recorded *huai* entering homes through holes in the wall — *huai* real and physical enough to pull occupants out and slam their heads through the soil.<sup>85</sup>

Our central photograph, then, allows us to glimpse just how far early missionary architecture transgressed Mizo norms. By switching our perspective from the missionaries to the Mizo, we can here begin to see the extraordinary in what would otherwise just be a source of light or a hole in a wall: windows were dangerous designs from abroad that were ill-suited to the Hills. Photographs show that the Mission Veng *biak in* was no less than a seventeen-window-sash offender (see Figs. 14.1 and 14.5).<sup>86</sup>

Bamboo chapels, mission school buildings, the central mission bungalow and the mission dispensary at Aijal all featured windows extraordinary to Lushai belief and building custom.<sup>87</sup>

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82 Entitlement to a window only came with fantastic social and spiritual status. Indeed, only those who had performed the elaborate and expensive *khuangchawi* ceremony at communal feasts were permitted a window, presumably because through the ceremony they attained their own security. See Grace R. Lewis, *The Lushai Hills: The Story of the Lushai Pioneer Mission* (London: Baptist Missionary Society, 1907), p. 25; Lloyd, *On Every High Hill*, p. 60; McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*, pp. 118 and 167; and John Hughes Morris, *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' Foreign Mission, to the End of the Year 1904* (Carnarvon: C. M. Book Room, 1910), p. 230.

83 Interview, B. Lalthangliana, Aijal, trans. by Vanlalchawna, 25 April 2006. See also J. H. Lorrain, “South Lushai”, *Annual Reports of the BMS*, 118th Annual Report, 1910, ALA, p. 62.

84 Lloyd, *On Every High Hill*, p. 60.

85 McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*, p. 92.

86 *Baptist Missionary Society: London Baptist Mission, South Lushai Hills*, handwritten annual statistics book, “Plan of Mission Bungalow, 1903”, ALA BMS Acc 250, Lushai Group IN/111, p. 10.

87 Kitty Lewis to Parents, 22 November 1922, JMLA, p. 4; John Meirion Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram: Harvest in the Hills* (Aijal: Synod Publication Board, 1991), p. 111; “Mission Cottage at Aijal, blueprints by District Engineer, Lushai Hills”, 29 September 1905, *Llyfngell Genedlaethol Cymru*/National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth (hereafter LLGC/NLW), CMA 27 300.



Fig. 14.5 Liangkhaia at Mission Veng Church, 1919,  
British Library (EAP454/13/22), CC BY.

The Mizo in-patient at a mission dispensary thus had in a real sense to ignore or endure the health risk inherent in the very structure itself. So when a missionary made the offhand jest that, between Christ and windows, “more than one kind of light has come ... into Lushai”,<sup>88</sup> he was actually touching upon a massive chasm between missionary and Mizo ideas of both health and architecture. For the missionary, an open window letting in air and sunlight was healthy. For the Mizo, it endangered the pursuit of health.

Turning in our central photograph from the windows to the tables, we can make out seven books —three thin (perhaps the New Testaments first printed in 1916, since the complete Bible in Mizo did not appear until the 1950s) and four thick (likely the *Kristian Hla Bu*, or “Christian Hymn Book”).<sup>89</sup> Like the church windows, the church’s New Testaments were not immune to the infiltration of the *huai*. In the Mizo-language Gospel of John, one of the first books of the Bible to be translated, Jesus’s response to a crowd’s accusation is “*Ramhuai zawl ka ni lo ve* [I am not possessed by a *ramhuai*]”.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Lloyd, *On Every High Hill*, p. 60.

<sup>89</sup> The broader history of print media in the region is to be taken up in David Vumlallian Zou’s monograph *Bible Belt in Babel: Print, Identity and Gender in Colonial Mizoram* (New Delhi: Sage, forthcoming in 2015).

<sup>90</sup> J. H. Lorrain, *Chan-chin tha Johana Ziak* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1898), p. 40; John 8:49.



While other words without Mizo equivalents (like “crown”) were simply kept in their English form, the demons of Galilee literally became the *huai* of Northeast India in this text.<sup>91</sup>

Meanwhile, the song books pictured would have been hot off the press, for updated volumes of the *Hla Bu* were released in 1913, 1915 and 1919. The *Hla Bu* was a living text, with ten versions appearing between 1899 and 1922. The 1919 version was the heftiest and most indigenised at that time, featuring some 558 songs, many by Mizo Christian composers and some, written after the *mautam* famine of 1911-1912, characterising the world as a place of suffering.<sup>92</sup> The *Kristian Hla Bu* was in fact crystallising around the historical moment these texts were photographed here: no edits followed for twenty years after the 1922 version. By 1919, young Mizo composers like Kamlala (1902-1965) and Huala (1902-1995) started penning lyrics that included elements of the traditional, poetic register of the Mizo language — a lexicon that until then had been largely banned in the church along with traditional drumming, dance and drink.<sup>93</sup> That the *Hla Bu* stabilised at the same time as traditional Mizo drumming and poetic vocabulary made their debuts within Mizo Christianity is no coincidence. Christianity in the Lushai Hills was becoming a vernacularised Lushai Hills Christianity. The Mission Veng *biak in*, the historical headquarters for the Welsh Calvinistic missionaries, was henceforth one of only two churches in the district where congregants were barred from hearing the traditional drum (*khuang*) in worship.

As knowledge about literacy, and then literacy itself, spread throughout the early 1910s, Mizo interpretations of the power of the written word abounded. Some realised its potential to transform ephemeral oral and aural declarations into edicts of greater permanency: one *lal*, or village headman, demanded that the missionary *Daktawr Sap* (Dr. Peter Fraser) confirm the *lal*'s declaration so “that it may not be destroyed for ever. I want you very much also to kindly write it in a book”.<sup>94</sup> Others decoupled missionary claims about the inherent truth of God’s word while assisting

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91 Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. xvii and 109-10.

92 Tlanghmingthanga, *An Appraisal of the Eschatological Contents of Selected Mizo-Christian Songs with Special Reference to Their Significance for the Church in Mizoram* (Master’s dissertation, Serampore College, 1995), pp. 86 and 94.

93 *Ibid.*, p. 88; and Heath, “*Lengkhawm Zai*”, p. 34.

94 Fraser, *Slavery*, p. 59.

with the translation of it: one Mizo co-translator of the Gospels — not self-identifying as a Christian himself at the time — was known to argue with Mizo converts, claiming that he knew “more about the Gospel than [the converts]” for he had “helped to make it up!”.<sup>95</sup> Others saw books as talismans for missionary soothsayers, in the register of traditional Mizo *puithiam* healers: one Mizo father whose daughter had run away demanded the missionaries “consult their books” to tell him whether she would return to Aijal or run to Silchar.<sup>96</sup>

Whatever the interpretations, by the time our central photograph was taken, the New Testament had become a mandatory photographic prop in all Mizo Christian circles (see Figs. 14.4, 14.6 and 14.7). Captions on such photographs regularly single out individuals such as the one “sitting in the middle holding books”<sup>97</sup> or the one “on the right holding books”.<sup>98</sup> Those with books sometimes placed themselves (or were placed) in conspicuous positions of prominence, their tomes emphasised and open, or displayed prominently against their bodies. Mizo Christians, known in the hills as “Obeyers of God” (*Pathian thuawi*), were under strict injunction to transgress traditional Mizo norms. These could be as emotive as where to bury dead family members, as fundamental as which actions were socially acceptable or as conceptually diverse as ideas about marriage, gender or entry to the afterlife. In doing so, Obeyers of God met with much opposition at this time.

Most likely, Christians held the New Testament especially close in photographs as a visible marker both of difference and of real and genuine personal conviction. Perhaps, too, the burgeoning Mizo literacy was seen as the key conduit to greater Mizo roles in the expanding church and colonial government, for the 1910s witnessed the ordination of the first trained Mizo pastors, the commissioning of the first Mizo Bible Women and the paid employment of the first Mizo evangelists, all while groups of Mizo graduates began to assist the colonial bureaucracy in Aijal. Reading could and did provide Christians with a route around social persecution via colonial brokership.

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95 Lloyd, *On Every High Hill*, p. 30.

96 Lorrain, *Logbook*, September 1894, BCMCA, p. 39.

97 “Wives of the Soldiers in Lungleh”, loose photograph in J. H. Lorrain’s file, c. 1938, ALA BMS Acc. 250.

98 “Some of the mothers who live in Lungleh”, loose photograph in J. H. Lorrain’s file, c. 1938, ALA BMS Acc. 250.



Fig. 14.6 Suaka Lal, Veli and Chhingtei at Durtlang, 1938, British Library (EAP454/3/3 Pt 2), CC BY.



Fig. 14.7 "Wives of the Soldiers in Lungleh", c. 1938, loose photo in J. H. Lorrain's file, BMS Acc. 250, Angus Library and Archive, Regent's Park College, Oxford.

Before noticing the books in our central photograph, the congregant's eye would have been drawn to the pulpit and, above it, to the visual centrepiece of the church interior: the signboard proclaiming *chibai* (greetings). The prominence of this Mizo word is significant, for it seems to have undergone a revolution in both meaning and usage in the early colonial Lushai Hills. In the late nineteenth century, *chibai* was in fact part of the vocabulary of human health, employed by a highly specialised Mizo practitioner (*puithiam*) when he approached forest spirits (*ramhuai*) with offerings on behalf of the sick.<sup>99</sup> *Chibai* thus functioned as a sort of inter-species pidgin, a human attempt at communication with powerful non-human beings. The word had seemingly little or no public life of its own; the earliest English dictionaries and grammars of the Mizo language ignore it entirely, despite their impressive breadth (Brojo Nath Shaha's 1884 work spans 93 pages; T. H. Lewin's 1874 work teaches 1609 phrases) and their emphasis on the basic vocabulary typical of a phrasebook.<sup>100</sup> Lewin and Shaha equip readers to ask "What is your name?" but offer no words of greeting.

To contemporary officials (and to our modern ears), the question "What is your name?" may have sounded innocuous enough. But attempting to listen to the question with historical Mizo ears, we can begin to hear the discordant echoes of conceptual chasms that existed between Mizo and colonial, western modes of interpersonal communication. These differences are key to the history of *chibai* — the word which would come to be elevated to the quintessential personal greeting in colonial Lushai Hills and in today's Mizoram, catapulted into public use and onto 1930s church platforms. For an historical Mizo, the seemingly mundane question "What is your name?" was actually rather grave, for it would have involved an acute assessment of risk. Personal names were directly related to personal health. Intentionally unattractive names were sometimes given to Mizo children as a precautionary measure against their being stolen by the *ramhuai*.<sup>101</sup> Names were thus an asset that cost nothing and yet could pay back in spades: a properly given name could be an important prophylactic against ill health.

Since names had transcendental value, they could prove a battlefield between the physical world of the Mizo and the spirit world of the *ramhuai*. *Thla ko* was the verb for calling back a Lushai soul (*thlarau*) that had escaped

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99 McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*, p. 74.

100 Brojo Nath Shaha, *A Grammar of the Lushai Language* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1884); and T. H. Lewin, *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect of the 'Dzo'* or *Kuki Language* (Calcutta: Calcutta Central Press Company, 1874).

101 Lloyd, *On Every High Hill*, p. 20.

its two-souled human body only to be seized by the *ramhuai*.<sup>102</sup> Losing one's *thlarau* meant sickness. The responsibility then fell to the grandfather (*pu*) of the sick person to call aloud the name of his grandchild at the abode of the *huai* — an experience harrowing in itself. The lost soul could then be escorted home safely to its body, whereupon the afflicted person could recover.<sup>103</sup>

Names were thus to be jealously guarded, “since the name of a being also encapsulated the [*thlarau*] of the being”.<sup>104</sup> Historian Indrani Chatterjee notes that for a Mizo to be addressed by her childhood nickname “constituted a public invitation to seizure” by the *ramhuai* who continually eavesdropped on human conversation.<sup>105</sup> In 1912, Superintendent Shakespear noted that there was “a strong and general dislike among all Lushais to saying their own names”,<sup>106</sup> this perhaps not least because anti-*huai* names could be embarrassingly unattractive. Mizos in the early twentieth century would instead introduce themselves via a cautious triangulation of nouns, as the son of a father, or as the friend of a friend.<sup>107</sup>

Taken together, a keynote feature of Mizo interpersonal communication in the Lushai Hills was that personal names were seen less as simple, semiotic referents and more as actual verbal embodiments of the person — the signifier was the signified.<sup>108</sup> This connection seems to have been taken literally: in one case, a Mizo man remembered first identifying as a Christian when “as a boy his Day School Teacher wrote his name down as a Christian.”<sup>109</sup> If we attempt to turn towards this Mizo perspective where names are deeply significant, the missionaries’ requirement that the Mizo register their names upon seeking conversion — or the government’s myriad bureaucratic registers, or the grammars informing arriving officials and missionaries of phrases like “What is your name?” — becomes deeply imbued with meaning. It is highly likely that the missionaries employed Mizo terminology in their frequent references to the approaches of new potential converts who, in all the reports, “give their names”, “gave their names” or “have given their names” (all

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102 Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, p. 476.

103 *Ibid.*

104 Indrani Chatterjee, “Slaves, Souls, and Subjects in a South Asian Borderland”, paper presented at the Agrarian Studies Colloquium, Yale University, 14 September 2007, p. 14.

105 *Ibid.*

106 John Shakespear, *The Lushei-Kuki Clans* (London: Macmillan, 1912), p. 19.

107 Interview, H. Vanlalthruaia, Champhai, Mizoram, 22 June 2014.

108 Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends*, p. 14.

109 E. L. Mendus, “A Jungle Diary” draft, n/d, LLGC/NLW HZ1/3/46, p. 4.

variants of the Mizo *hming an pe*) to become Christians.<sup>110</sup> To “give” one’s name — indeed, one’s self — was likely for the Mizo an act of faith much more meaningful than even the missionaries ever realised.

The history of *chibai* played out against this backdrop of radically different interpersonal modes of communication. Upon the arrival of missionaries in the late nineteenth century, the word *chibai* featured in the chants and forest negotiations of the village *puithiam*, the complexities and nuances of which were disparaged by missionaries as mere “demon worship”. Once only an oral and aural word, *chibai* came to be written down in missionary writings with connotations of the English word “worship”. In the Gospel of John, the Christian worshippers (in spirit and in truth) are translated as *chibai an buk* (givers of *chibai*, or worship).<sup>111</sup> With the reach of schools gradually expanding under missionary leadership, and with a tertiary economy opening to young Mizo graduates in the colonial bureaucracy, *chibai* accrued new meaning over the ensuing decade.

By 1914, the *Mizo leh Vai Chan Chin Bu* [*Mizo and (Indic) Indian News*] — a monthly government newspaper launched in 1903 to disseminate government rulings, district news and western knowledge in vernacular Mizo to an increasingly literate public — gave explicit guidance on new protocols of respect expected in interpersonal communication, particularly with regard to colonial government servants. A September 1914 article entitled “The New, Admirable Rules” pointed out that government employees and first-generation students in Aijal greeted one another, and asserted that this was an “admirable practice among the foreigners (Sap [British] and Vai [Indic Indians])”.<sup>112</sup> The article informed villagers that the foreigners “appreciate it when we greet them”, and taught the new pleasantries such as *khawngaih takin* (if you please), *ka lawm e* (I thank you) and *chibai* (greetings) preferred by government officials and students, or the moderns of contemporary society.<sup>113</sup>

110 Fraser to Williams, 11 July 1910, LLGC/NLW CMA 27 314, p. 9 (“give”); Fraser to Williams, 28 March 1912, LLGC/NLW CMA 27 318, p. 6 (“gave”); Fraser to Williams, 10 March 1909, LLGC/NLW CMA 27 315, p. 4. See also Fraser to Williams, 25 September 1909, LLGC/NLW CMA 27 315, pp. 3 and 4 (“have given”).

111 John 4:24; Lorrain, *Chan-chin tha*, n/p (“‘Jihova Thlarao ani e, a chibai buk-tute’n thlarao leh ti tak zet-in chibai an buk tûr ani,’ a ti a”). See also E. Rowlands, *English First Reader: Lushai Translation* (Madras: SPCK Press, 1907), p. 7.

112 “*Dan Thar Mawite* [The New, Admirable Rules]”, *Mizo leh Vai Chan Chin Bu*, September 1914, p. 148.

113 Ibid.

In another article, one Thangluaia (who was employed by the colonial government) urged villagers to show respect to government employees and to the Aijal students, for those in power would in turn help the villagers and not treat them badly.<sup>114</sup> Mizo historian Lalpekhluia notes that, at this time, Mizo men who had once had long hair cut it, “put on long pants, and began to say, ‘*Ka pu, chibai*’ [Good Morning, Sir]”.<sup>115</sup> In the context of a burgeoning vernacular print culture, and of the expectations of verbalised respect for colonial officials and a missionary-educated Mizo *nouveau* elite, the word *chibai* became publicly heard, its meaning fettered and exported through print, as the new and enduring personal greeting of the most modern people in the district, and of those villagers who wished to greet such people in hopes of being treated well by them.

Like an epoxy, through the twin injection of a missionary-controlled education system and a booming vernacular print culture, *chibai* seems to have spread, stabilised and crystallised. By 1922, missionary Kitty Lewis could write home that “everybody shakes hands in this country — people you meet casually on the road, and everybody else. They say ‘*chibai*’ ...”.<sup>116</sup> By the late 1930s, *chibais* were used in letters both as goodbyes and as fond hellos, in missives from Mizos in Serkawn to retired missionaries in Britain.<sup>117</sup> The authoritative 1940 dictionary published by the missionary J. H. Lorrain included the stabilised *chibai* as a “salutation, greeting, or farewell, equivalent to Good Morning, Good Afternoon, Good Evening”.<sup>118</sup> In a final coup evident only in visual sources, missionaries used “CHIBAI” signs to welcome Christian congregants to “Harvest Thank Offerings”, and indeed to the Mission Veng *biak in* itself — the very epicentre of church power in the North Lushai Hills.<sup>119</sup> Once merely the specialised pidgin of village *puithiams* approaching forest spirits, a word unnoticed even by colonial grammarians, *chibai* was over a half-century co-opted and elevated literally to the front-piece of the missionaries’ flagship church, to the outset of all polite and modern conversation.

114 February 1914, *Mizo leh Vai Chan Chin Bu*, p. 23. I am grateful to Rohmingmawii for bringing to my attention the above two articles from *Mizo leh Vai Chan Chin Bu*.

115 L. H. Lalpekhluia, *A Study of Christology from a Tribal Perspective* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Auckland, 2005), p. 116.

116 Kitty Lewis to Mother and Father, 20 November 1922, JMLA, p. 4.

117 *Thu dik ziak ngama* [One who dares to write the truth] to McCall, 26 December 1937, IOR Mss Eur E361/20, p. 8; and Challiana to Wilson, 27 January 1938, ALA IN/56, p. 2.

118 Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, p. 88.

119 Lloyd, *On Every High Hill*, p. 64 (“Harvest”).

In a sense, the history of *chibai* parallels the history of *hello*, for both were elevated to their current prominence in part by technology — the early-twentieth-century rise of Mizo vernacular print culture for *chibai*, the late-nineteenth-century rise of the telephone for *hello*.<sup>120</sup> But in the Lushai Hills, *chibai* also provided a malleable tool for the colonial import of several basic tenets of interpersonal communication: that one person greets another person, that one person asks another's name, and that these exchanged names are inherently devoid of transcendental value. Only by approaching this photograph in context — and by leaving aside our modern, western assumptions about communication — can we see the extraordinary in what would otherwise just be a church welcome sign.

### *Harhna* in the *biak in*

We could say that *harhna* was, for historical Mizos, the physically felt and enacted “sense” of being awakened spiritually — a process that manifested itself amidst the whole gamut of physical senses. Here, we stretch the term *sense* elastically, in an approach purposefully open-minded and sympathetic. Taking the supramundane sensory worlds of our subjects seriously can reward us with new insights into their subaltern pasts, even as it reminds us that we operate today in a world radically removed. *Harhna*, like the sense of hearing, was completely involuntary: just as Mizos had no earlids to block out unwanted sound, those with this “sensory” ability were unable to block out *harhna*. “To have the spirit” or “to receive the spirit” (*thlarau chan*) was to have *harhna*; “to not have the spirit”, “to quench the spirit” or to be “anti-spirit” was not to have it — the binary of this distinction closely paralleled those of sensory ability and disability, *sighted* or *blind*, *hearing* or *deaf*, *tasting* or *ageusia*.<sup>121</sup> *Harhna* was often characterised as an involuntary moving under and of God's spirit — something like a proprioception attuned to the supernatural. Translated, the term evokes “being awakened”, “enthusiasm” or, out of historical context and rendered in terms familiar to Mizo Christians today, “revival”.<sup>122</sup>

120 Rath, *How Early America Sounded*, p. 148.

121 Lalrinawma, *Impact of Revivals on Mizo Christianity, 1935-1980* (Master's dissertation, Serampore College, 1988), p. 29; Lalsawma, *Revivals the Mizo Way* (Mizoram: Lalsawma, 1994), p. 72.

122 Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, p. 1.



Around the time of this photograph, *harhna* was characterised by sensory overload, both of the person with *harhna* doing the sensing and of those around her or him. In contemporary missionary reports, those Mizos “with the spirit” engaged in “singing, dancing, quaking, swooning” and “trembling”; they “stiffened”, “stretched”, “shivered” and “fell”.<sup>123</sup> In Welsh missionary eyes, such Mizos were “quite out of control”, as they practiced “singing, simultaneous prayer and dancing and jumping all the time”.<sup>124</sup> As with the human senses of overwhelming physiological pain (nociception) or overwhelming heat (thermoception), *harhna* demanded an immediate physical response: Mizo church historian Lalsawma relates how the “whole body quaked and could be brought under control by no other means than dancing. [...] Refusal to dance might result in pains in the head, throat, or stomach, or it might even turn to paralysis of the whole or parts of the body”.<sup>125</sup> Contemporary observers highlight this compulsion as characteristic: “Those who danced did not merely dance because of a sense of joy but because they were shaking and could not but dance”.<sup>126</sup>

As with the other human senses, a distinct physical process appeared to be at work. As an odour might spread through a room, or the front of a cold wind blow across a city, so did it seem that the “quaking might pass to the one in the back row, and to the middle row, and then the corner” in contiguous fashion.<sup>127</sup> For their part, Mizos seem to have valued those with “awakening” as uniquely spiritual guides, their special sense offering an uplink to another realm, not unlike the *zawlnei* — the women seers in their past. Missionaries complained that congregants often valued the words and revelations of those “that danced or jumped or fell in a swoon” (in other words, those attuned to *harhna*) more than the “words of the Scriptures or preacher or common sense”.<sup>128</sup> *Harhna* was a credible sense to the Mizo, its revelations as physically real as, and arguably of greater import than, those of the biological senses.

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123 D. E. Jones, “The Report of the North Lushai Hills, 1923-1924”, in *Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram, 1894-1957*, ed. by K. Thanzauva (Aijal: The Synod Literature and Publication Boards, 1997), p. 67; Lalrinawma, “Impact of Revivals”, p. 35 (“trembling”, “stiffened”, “stretched”, “shivered”).

124 D. E. Jones, “A note on ‘The Revival’”, 24 April 1913, LLGW/NLW CMA 27 318.

125 Lalsawma quoted in Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, p. 253.

126 Lloyd, *History of the Church*, p. 192.

127 Lalsawma quoted in Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, p. 253.

128 Jones to Williams, 22 May 1913, quoted in Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, p. 205.

The battle over *harhna* (over who sensed what from the spirit of God, how and in what sensory ways these revelations should be manifested) played out in the myriad texts of mission reports, in conflicts in meetings (as when Savidge screamed, “Stop dancing!”, during a meeting in Muallianpui village) and, turning to our photograph, apparently also in the layout of the mission’s most important church.<sup>129</sup> By the time this photograph was taken, the *lam tual* was an important feature of most chapel architecture in the Lushai Hills — a central area made between the pulpit and the pews for a circle of processional dancing. However, the interior of the Mission Veng *biak in*, the centre of mission power pictured at the height of a wave of *harhna* in the Lushai Hills, is altogether unaccommodating. The placement of pews cannot have been accidental; from a contemporary Mizo perspective, they are “anti-spirit” and authoritative, crowding out both the quintessential Mizo sense of the movement of God’s spirit and any chance for the attendant dancing which was, as contemporary accounts suggest, a bodily reaction of self-preservation as innate as pulling away from a hot flame.

## Conclusion: interpretation, method and visual sources of mission history

Historian Andrew J. May has rightly argued that by reading historical photographs alongside textual sources about often heavy-handed missionary demands for “moral compliance”, historians can discover codes of “indigenous symbolism and modes of resistance”.<sup>130</sup> However, there is a danger that when historians attempt to recover, without explicit evidence, the motives of missionary photographers or the agency of the colonised from their camera’s “gaze”, they run the risk of imprisoning missionaries and missionised alike in their own interpretive frameworks or historiographical dogmas. Without explicit evidence, can we conclude that the blurry Mizo woman in Fig. 14.8 is resisting colonial power by exploiting the slow shutter speed of the missionary’s camera?<sup>131</sup> Do the women in Fig. 14.9 necessarily assert agency by “denying the gaze” of the missionary’s camera?<sup>132</sup>

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129 H. Sangchema, “Revival Movement”, in *Baptist Church of Mizoram Compendium: In Honour of BMS Mission in Mizoram, 1903-2003* (Serkawn: Centenary Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, 2003), p. 53 (“stop dancing”).

130 May, *Welsh Missionaries*, p. 240.

131 Loose photograph bound with J. H. Lorrain’s file, ALA BMS Acc. 250.

132 *Ibid.*; and May, *Welsh Missionaries*, p. 240 (“denying the gaze”).



Fig. 14.8 “Some of the mothers who live in Lungleh”, c. 1938, loose photo in J. H. Lorrain’s file, BMS Acc. 250, Angus Library and Archive, Regent’s Park College, Oxford.



Fig. 14.9 Two Mizo nurses in Serkawn, c. 1924, British Library (EAP454/6/1), CC BY.

This chapter instead uses the historical mission photograph as a thinking cap. The material scarcity, wonder and feel of photography in the historical Lushai Hills might break down in the modern, supersaturated visual world from which historians must visit the historical Mizo. But we can seize on this breakdown as an opportunity, even pulling it on board as a methodological organising principle, gazing again and again at the same photograph. By simultaneously attending to the human sensorium in all its cultural and historical articulations, we take a human pulse in an historical moment of real, tumultuous and lived religious change.

Here, we move beyond the post-colonial critiques in mission studies that have focused on one-way cultural hegemony and conquest. These perspectives, while useful in shining the brightest light possible onto questions of subordination, can also wash out the complex collisions, contestations and, indeed, cooperations that arose in the mission field. In extreme cases indicative of a broader trend, we find modern post-colonial assertions that would have baffled their historical subjects, missionary or missionised. For instance, historian Emma Anderson claims that the “official purpose” of missionaries baptising converts was “rendering the exotic, dangerous ‘other’ familiar”; Christopher Herbert claims that missionaries taught converts to read simply as “a means of reordering the mind itself and putting it in thrall to new institutions”.<sup>133</sup>

Thinking with and making sense of photographs can help us move beyond clunky categorisations of domination to explore the many layers of cross-cultural action, reaction, discourse and everyday lived experience inherent in the missionary enterprise, landing us on the interesting “ambivalent ground between missionary versions of their roles and relationships with [locals], and the ways in which indigenous converts refashioned and subverted these expectations”.<sup>134</sup> Extending goodwill and empathy to our historical subjects by endeavouring to approach them on their own sensory terms allows us to see old stories in new ways — “to see the strange as familiar so that the familiar appears strange”.<sup>135</sup> Suddenly windows and wooden benches and gabled roofs are wholly astonishing. Unlocking a fuller research potential for mission photographs might just take a little less looking at photographs and a little more savouring of them.

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133 Anderson quoted in Luke Clossey, “Review of Emma Anderson, ‘The Betrayal of Faith’”, *International History Review*, 30 (2008), 828-29 (p. 829); and Christopher Herbert, *Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1991), p. 167.

134 Patricia Grimshaw and Andrew J. May, “Reappraisals of Mission History: An Introduction”, in *Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Exchange*, ed. by Patricia Grimshaw and Andrew J. May (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), p. 96;

135 Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), p. 22.

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# 15. The photographs of Baluev: capturing the “socialist transformation” of the Krasnoyarsk northern frontier, 1938-1939<sup>1</sup>

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and Craig Campbell*

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The craft of photography played an important role in the construction of early Soviet society. In western Europe and the Americas, the early Soviet period is associated with repressions and the blacking-out and forced amnesia of portraits and other representations.<sup>2</sup> It is less known that photographers and photographic equipment were widespread, not only capturing faces for identity documents and staged, instructive scenes, but also giving glimpses of a new society and new subjectivities coming into being. The photographs of the period should not be read merely as superficial political instruments, although they were also undoubtedly used that way. We argue that some photographers, or at least some photographers some of the time, strove to capture the aspirations and tensions experienced by people living in rapidly changing times. To this end, we present a selection of photographs from a

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1 In this chapter we employed a simplified version of the Library of Congress transliteration system without diacritics. In cases where there is a recognised standard English-language equivalent for a place or ethnonym (Krasnoyarsk, Yenisei River), we use this version in the text, but not in the references or citations.

2 Alain Jaubert, *Le Commissariat aux archives* (Paris: Barrault, 1986); and David King, *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan, 1997).

relatively unknown photographer who assembled a portfolio of images of everyday life in what was then a remote corner of the Soviet Union in the time of the great repressions and political dramas of the Stalinist period. In the photographs — which we have selected from what is a large archive — we demonstrate the difficult yet successful balance that this artist struck between documenting “topics” and depicting personalities.

Ivan Ivanovich Baluev was employed as a staff photographer at the Krasnoyarsk Territory Regional Museum (*Krasnoiarskii Kraevoi Kraevedcheskii Muzei*, or KKKM) through the worst of the Stalinist period, from 1934-1941. During this time, 1,951 of his images were added to the collection of the museum, illustrating a broad range of subjects from the industrialisation of the city of Krasnoyarsk to, more typically, the lives and living conditions of a variety of rural peoples across the vast central Siberian district where he worked. His name is usually cited in the tradition of realist ethnographic photography that was, for example, published by N. N. Nekhoroshev in the *Turkestanskii al'bom*, or associated with N. A. Charushin's work in Zabaikal'e.<sup>3</sup>

Portions of Baluev's mostly unpublished archive of fragile glass-plate negatives came to our attention only recently during a broader thematic research project, supported by the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP), to digitise and safely preserve a vast number of plate negatives featuring images of indigenous peoples across central Siberia.<sup>4</sup> At that time we digitised, annotated and posted on the internet 297 examples of Baluev's work on this topic plucked from the larger set, the existence of which we were for the most part unaware. His haunting images captured our attention and, indeed, at the end of the project his work emerged as by far the most prolific of any individual photographer on our stated topic. With the exception of a few images, his work has never been published or discussed in Russian or in English.

For the purposes of this discussion, we decided to focus on one particular chapter in his career — his participation in a nine-month expedition from 1938 to 1939, called the “Northern Expedition”, through some of the most

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3 On Nekhoroshev, see Heather S. Sonntag, *Genesis of the Turkestan Album 1871-1872: The Role of Russian Military Photography, Mapping, Albums and Exhibitions on Central Asia* (Ph.D thesis, University of Wisconsin, 2011); and A.L. Kun, editor *Turkestanskii Al'bom: po razporiazheniu Turkestanskogo general'nogo gubernatora K.P. fon Kaufman* (Tashkent: n. pub., 1872). On Charushin, see Sergei Aleksandrovich Morozov, *Russkie puteshestvoenniki-fotografi* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo geograficheskoi literatury, 1953). pp. 38-40.

4 EAP016: Digitising the photographic archive of southern Siberian indigenous peoples, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP016](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP016). The digital images are available at <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP016>

remote regions of the central Siberian district (which is still known today as Krasnoyarsk Territory). Using the same equipment and skills provided by the EAP, we consulted, catalogued and digitised an additional 91 of his glass-plate negatives and catalogue annotations to produce what we assume to be a near-complete series of 711 images.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, we found and transcribed his diary of travels during the Northern Expedition.<sup>6</sup> We also consulted and partially photographed a thin folder of archived reports and correspondence about the expedition, and consulted the scattered references in the secondary published literature on the expedition. Perhaps most ambitiously, we linked the photographs to diary entries — which was a Herculean task given the sometimes unhelpful ways that images are sorted and catalogued in Soviet-era museum archives. For a variety of reasons, the images and diary entries were linked by date and are quoted as such in this chapter.<sup>7</sup> Our discussion further focuses on a four-month section of his travels between 7 November 1938 and 17 February 1939 for reasons we discuss below.

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- 5 In this chapter, the glass-plate images digitised by the EAP are referenced with a two-part number which represents the box number within which they were found as well as their ordinal number with the box (EAP125-020). This is the reference which links to copies displayed online and held on microfilm in the British Library. The newly digitised images are referenced with a four digit number which is hand-written on the negatives and which corresponds to an older cataloguing system, now lost (KKKM 3604). We have no hard evidence to prove that the 711 images form a complete unbroken series since there is no archival record of how many images Baluev took; neither do the hand-written numbers consistently correspond to a series. We assert that the set must be more-or-less complete due to the fact that it would be hard to imagine Baluev carrying many more plates back to Krasnoyarsk. The older cataloguing system corresponds to a single-sentence description of the item which we have called an annotation. While it stands to reason that Baluev must have composed this annotation, we cannot be sure. It may have been another member of the expedition or indeed any other museum worker.
  - 6 I. I. Baluev, “Dnevnik ekspeditsii museia na sever krasnoiarskogo kraia v 1938-1939”, KKKM-Nauchnyi arkhiv, 7886 Pir 222 (in three separate notebooks). The archived notebooks are not consistently paginated and all references herein are therefore by date.
  - 7 In Soviet-era museum practice, collections are curated by topic, not by date or collector. Further inventory numbers are assigned sequentially to any object that is added to the collections and therefore do not necessarily sequence items in a particular collection. To add more complexity, inventory numbers are regularly redone and the records of the previous inventory discarded. Baluev’s images were re-numbered thrice (and for the EAP a fourth time). It is extremely difficult to see a logic in the older numbering system. Indeed, our EAP system was also topical and not universal. For this article we reassembled the entire collection according to date by linking the images to the diary by their attributions, in many cases by viewing the images and making a judgement as to which place or nationality was represented, and then often arranging the images in order by one or another of the older numeric codes. We cannot be sure that we have reconstructed the exact sequence of photographs, but we are confident that we sorted most photographs accurately by date, place and subject.

In this chapter we have decided to address what we call the documenting of “socialist transformation”, which is based on the somewhat loose translation of the headline term in the surviving documents of this expedition. What came to be known as the Northern Expedition was originally outfitted as the “Expedition [documenting] socialist construction [*sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo*] in the North of Krasnoyarsk Territory”.<sup>8</sup> The Soviet concept of *stroitel'stvo*, directly translated as “construction”, is an active concept which should be more accurately, but clumsily, translated as “building”. The term implies that a new socialist society is being erected in an empty space. While the northern taigas of central Siberia were undoubtedly thought to be more empty than most places in the Soviet Union at that time, the fact of the matter was that, even here, socialist society was by necessity reassembled from the already existing traditions, lifestyles and infrastructures of both indigenous dwellers and settler Russians in the region.

The “struggle” to build socialism was often commented upon at the time, and one of the goals of the expedition was to document for the KKKM those ways of life which were being replaced. We have therefore coined the term “socialist transformation” in order to represent the conflicted, ironic, but nonetheless creative way that many of Baluev’s photographs represent the old being turned into something new. Our argument is based on a selection of seventeen images which we find to be evocative of this theme during this particularly intense period in his life. In their own time, Baluev’s expeditionary images, although unpublished, were displayed in museum exhibitions, perhaps mixed in with the work of other photographers, perhaps on their own.<sup>9</sup> This term represents, therefore, our attempt to use an early

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8 In Russian: “Ekspeditsiia po sotsialisticheskomu stroitelstvu Severa Krasnoiarskogo Kraia”. B. Dolgikh, 1937.12.28, “Plan ekspeditsii etnograficheskogo kabineta Krasn., Gos. Muz., 1938g” p/n 1842, op. 01, d. 599, ll. 4-5; and idem, “Programma raboty ekspeditsii po sotsialisticheskomu stroitelstvu Severa Krasnoiarskogo Kraia”, KKKM, f.1842 op. 1 d. 599, ll. 24-25. All translations are ours, unless otherwise stated.

9 The records of the exhibitions of this time do not survive and therefore we cannot comment on how Baluev or his colleagues selected images from this expedition for public presentation. There is some commentary which suggests that this collection may have been out-of-step with the times. As late as the end of the 1920s, it was common to present expeditionary images in large photograph albums. See Morozov, *Pervye russkie fotografy*, pp. 52-55; and David G. Anderson, “The Turukhansk Polar Census Expedition of 1926/27 at the Crossroads of Two Scientific Traditions”, *Sibirica*, 5 (2006), 24-61. According to Sergei S. Savoskul, until 1938 there had been a tradition of ethnographic displays in the KKKM, which in that year was subjected to criticism and the exhibits were taken down. World War II also, of course, had a great effect on publication plans, and Savoskul lists the number of manuscripts stemming from the Northern Expedition

twenty-first century logic to look back on what has become a mythic time, to see if we can sense and touch elements of choice, insight and agency in circumstances that are thought to be dark with intrigue.

Our study has yet another goal in terms of trying to reach beyond stereotypes and myths to reveal people caught up in difficult processes. This archive helps us see through what might at first glance seem like the overwhelming “provincialism” of one man’s story, caught as it was in a network of relationships so very far away from Moscow and Leningrad, the so-called centres of political and cultural life. Baluev’s life and work seems ephemeral when set beside the relatively rich biographies of aristocrats and revolutionaries in the capital cities. This is why we tried to provide more detail about his life before he became a photographer and then after he left the museum. Similarly to what has been often done for the great figures of this time, we attempted to follow Baluev’s life through a trail of correspondence and reports in local newspapers.

While our attempts to find this material and to provide this global context are admittedly tentative and partial, what emerges in this study is a snapshot of the man as he was known by the museum which employed him. All the materials which we discovered on Baluev are in the personnel files, the manuscript collections or the photographic collections of the KKKM itself. After Baluev left the museum his trail vanished and faded from view. We do not know where or when he died, but again this is not uncommon in the traumatic period on the eve of World War II. This tale is therefore also the tale of an archive — a repository which has given us a brief bright window onto the life of a creative person. In the theoretical terms in which we have framed this chapter, early Soviet institutions not only transformed people but represented them, leaving us with material records of their lives which allow us to think through the events they experienced.

## Ivan Ivanovich Baluev

Baluev was in many ways a product of the Soviet project of social advancement (Fig. 15.1). In his *Avtobiografiia* — a standardised list of dates and events filed as part of his personnel records in the museum — he records that he was born into a peasant family in the village of Karatuz on 23 September 1905

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which never went to press for that reason. Sergei S. Savoskul, “Etnograf Krasnoiarskogo muzeia B. O. Dolgikh v 1937-1944 gg.”, *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 1 (2009), 100-18 (p. 112).



(6 October 1905 NS) on the eve of the revolutions which would transform the Russian Empire.<sup>10</sup> This village was a centre for the Yenisei Cossacks,<sup>11</sup> and was one of the largest Cossack villages in the south of Yenisei province. After the October Revolution this social group would come to be labelled as suspect, due in part to their wealth as well as to the role that many Cossacks played in the civil war resisting Bolshevik power.



Fig. 15.1 Baluev writing in his journal in Dudinka, 1938.  
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10 I. I. Baluev, 1935.06.15, "Avtobiografiia. KKKM-Nauchnyi arkhiv", op. 02 d. 44: 2-3.

11 For an English introduction to Siberian Cossacks in the early twentieth century, see Peter Holquist, "From Estate to Ethnos: The Changing Nature of Cossack Identity in the Twentieth Century", in *Russia at a Crossroads: History, Memory and Political Practice*, ed. by Nurit Schleifman (London: Frank Cass, 1998), pp. 89-124. For specific references to this region and the oppression of Cossacks, see V. P. Trut, "Tragediia raskazachivaniia", in *Donskoi vremennik. God 2004-i: Kraevedcheskii al'manakh*, ed. by L. A. Stvdaker (Rostov-on-Don: Donskaia gosudarstvennaia publichnaia biblioteka, 2004); A. V. Marmyshev and E. G. Eliseenko, *Grazhdanskaia voina v Eniseiskoi gubernii* (Krasnoyarsk: Verso, 2008); L. I. Futurianskii, "Problemy kazachestva: raskazachivanie", in *Vestnik OGU*, ed. by V. P. Kovelevskii (Orenburg: Orenburgskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2002) pp 43-53. S. A. Kislitsyn, *Gosudarstvo i Raskazachivanie, 1917-1945 gg.: Uchebnoe posobie po speskursu*, ed. by E. I. Dulimov (Rostov-na-Donu: Nauchno-issledovatel'skii tsentr kul'tury, istorii Dona im. E. N. Oskolova, 1996).

Baluev studied in the Karatuz local school and upon completion of his studies was trained as a photographer in the provincial capital Minusinsk between 1926 and 1928. He married Zinadia T. Toropova in 1928, and then went to work in the Rembrandt photographic company in the same city, most likely doing portraiture for private clients. In 1930 he tried to change careers by retraining as an accountant (*ekonomist*). However, due to a lack of money he was unable to finish his studies and took a job as a casual labourer. Between 1930 and 1931, he resumed photographing at the Slavgorod invalid commune. Again, it is not entirely clear what his duties were in the commune. These organisations were formed to help improve the lives of handicapped people through selling handicrafts or through repairing shoes or watches. It is possible that he took photographs to advertise the work of the organisation, or taught photography to the organisation's clients. From 1931 to 1934, he became one of the main accountants in the Alma-Ata biochemical factory. While there are many details in his autobiography, it is silent on one point: it seems that his family was repressed. In a book documenting repressions in Krasnoyarsk, he and his wife are listed as victims of political repression along with his father, mother, brothers and sisters. According to this source, the entire family was exiled to Slavgorod.<sup>12</sup>

Baluev moved to Krasnoyarsk in 1934, possibly at the time that his exile was annulled. First he worked from 1934 to 1935 as a planner in the worker's trade organisation KraRAIORS (*Krasnoiarskii Raionnyi Otdel Rabochego Snabzheniia*), and then as a planner in the Education Department. In the autumn of 1935, he returned to photography at the KKKM. His wife joined him there in the summer of 1938, also as a photographer, and they worked together until the war, at which point his fate is not clear. Baluev's personal biography is only faintly outlined in the museum's records. However, his brick home still stands in the city of Krasnoyarsk at number ten Oborony Street, and the world he saw through his camera is registered in hundreds of photographs.

Baluev's photographic portfolio is archived by the KKKM, which in 2005 was a partner in the EAP project. The museum was founded in 1889 at the initiative of a group of intellectuals who wished to bring together

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12 O. A. Karlova, ed., *Kniga pamiati zhertv politicheskikh repressii Krasnoiarskogo kraia* (Krasnoyarsk: PIK Ofset, 2012), p. 90.

objects and collections held in private hands.<sup>13</sup> Between 1903 and 1920, it came under the sponsorship of the Krasnoyarsk section of the Eastern Siberian Division of the Russian Geographical Society, which outfitted many expeditions to outlying regions, greatly increasing its collections of objects and photographs. The work of the museum in this respect did not depart from the already widely-documented work of the Russian Geographical Society in this period.<sup>14</sup> It would be fair to say that the majority of the collecting concerned the Turkic peoples to the south and the Tungusic peoples in the near north along the Angara River. Arctic collections were few and far between for reasons of distance, but also due to the fact that they were administered from different towns such as Eniseisk or Turukhansk.

The Egyptian-style building in which the photographs are currently housed was designed between 1913 and 1914 and completed in 1930. In 1934, following the merging of former Tsarist-era territorial divisions, the museum came to be responsible for representing the entire territory of the newly-joined entities which made up Krasnoyarsk Territory (*krai*).<sup>15</sup> This included the Evenki National District, the subject of most of the images analysed here (Fig. 15.2). From 1934 onwards, the KKKM was therefore given a new mandate to represent a regional territory that had in fact quadrupled through annexation to the north. It is within the context of this new Soviet mandate to depict a vast and newly acquired frontier that Baluev's collection should be interpreted.

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13 V. M. Iaroshevskaja, "Muzei vchera, segodnia, zavtra", in *Vek podvizhnichestva*, ed. by V. I. Parmononova (Krasnoyarsk: Krasnoyarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1989), pp. 3-15.

14 Morozov, *Pervye russkie fotografy*, pp. 89-103; and Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 2005), ch. 1.

15 Krasnoyarsk Territory is a long central Siberian political district which extends from the Sayan Mountains on the border between Russia and Mongolia to the uppermost islands in the Arctic Ocean. The territory roughly follows the Yenisei River, which flows from south to north. The internal political territorial division of this region is unusually complicated: it has been divided up into local administrative districts in entirely different ways by every administration in the late Imperial period, the Soviet period, and the present period of the Russian Federation. Today the region is still a single administrative region known as Krasnoyarsk Territory (*krai*) with its capital in the city of Krasnoyarsk. Before the Revolution, the same space was primarily encompassed by the Yenisei guberniia with the capital in Eniseisk. At the time of the Northern Expedition, the region had just been freshly assembled into two "national" districts which were given a certain amount of regional autonomy *vis à vis* the new capital in Krasnoyarsk: the southerly Evenki National District, with its capital in the newly established settlement of Tura, and the northerly Taimyr (Dolgano-Nenets) National District, with its headquarters in older settlement of Dudinka.



Fig. 15.2 Map of the Evenki National District. Photo by I. I. Baluev (EAP016/4/1/223).  
© Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved.

Baluev's contribution to the 1939 Northern Expedition is his most famous portfolio of work — 711 images taken across an enormous territory in difficult conditions. The images are still admired by local museum curators today for their clarity and honesty of composition. In 1937, prior to the expedition, Baluev contributed a set of photographs to the Khakas villages along the Chernyi lius, Belyi lius and Mana rivers. After the end of the expedition, Baluev made another 300 images for the museum. These include a 1940 photographic essay of the Sovrudnik gold mine in the North Yenisei district, another set of essays on three state farms in the northern part of the district and a 1941 photo essay on the Janus Darbs collective farm in Uiar district. In 1941 he was also asked to re-photograph (duplicate) a set of images of Stalin and Sverdlov, and a set of images of World War I. All of these collections are housed in the KKKM.

## The Northern Expedition

The Northern Expedition of the Krasnoyarsk Territory Regional Museum (1938-1939) was organised by the famous ethnographer Boris Osipovich [Iosovich] Dolgikh,<sup>16</sup> and led by the young communist party activist Mark Sergeevich Strulev (Fig. 15.3).<sup>17</sup> The team travelled in the late autumn downstream from Krasnoyarsk to the mouth of the Yenisei River at Dudinka, on the last navigation before the winter set in. They then travelled overland across the southern portions of the vast continental peninsula of Taimyr using hired reindeer porters, and then southwards through the taiga interior of this territory back to Krasnoyarsk. The majority of the work took place in the Evenki National District. The expedition would encounter and document the lives of peoples known today as Enets, Nenets, Nganansan, Dolgan (Yakut) and Evenki, as well as local Russians.

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16 Savoskul, "Etnograf Krasnoyarskogo muzeia", pp. 100-18.

17 V. A. Danileiko, "Gosudarstvennaia etnografiia, ili otrazhenie protsessa sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva na Prieniseiskom Severe, v rabotakh etnografov kontsa 1930 gg. (k postanovke voprosa)", in *Vestnik Krasnoyarskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta im. V. P. Astafeva*, ed. by N. I. Drozdov (Krasnoyarsk: Krasnoyarskii gosudarstvenii pedagogicheskii universitet, 2011), pp. 122-27.



Fig. 15.3 The first camp after crossing the border between Taimyr and Evenkia with all three expedition members: Baluev, Dolgikh and Strulev.  
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## An expedition of Socialist discovery

The goals and styles of Northern Expedition fit within a long history of state-sponsored research on the lives and ethnography of northern peoples. To some degree, these surveys of indigenous dwellers did not differ in style from those conducted by great empires the world over. Travellers, be they Imperial-era Orthodox priests or Scottish geologists crossing the Canadian North, tended to note the difficulties of their journeys, the exoticness of the food and clothing, and the harshness of the taiga and tundra they travelled through. Russian ethnographic expeditions differed from those of other empires in one important sense: they surveyed a “near” frontier.

The Russian Empire was inland and contiguous. Rather than travelling for weeks and months across oceans, most travellers already had a pre-formed impression of the people they were to encounter.<sup>18</sup>

Early Soviet expeditions adopted many of the time-tested techniques of earlier expeditions; there was, however, a distinct new quality — one of our co-authors has described it elsewhere as a spirit of “discovery”.<sup>19</sup> Briefly put, if in the Imperial period there was always a consciousness that settler Russians were surrounded by non-Christian “alien” peoples (*inorodtsy*), these peoples were of little concern to the Russians busy with cultivating the taiga and building new settlements. After the Revolution and extended civil war, however, there was a new sense that all residents of the Soviet Union enjoyed a common citizenship and that qualities once dismissed as cultural differences were now recognised as matters requiring improvement: hence the early Soviet-era battles against backwardness and illiteracy. Although northern Siberians had been in regular contact with Russians since the seventeenth century, this mid-twentieth-century expedition was nevertheless one of discovery, since these Soviet museum workers were travelling to encounter people and places in a new way. With reference to standard Soviet rhetoric and roles, they literally saw themselves as “pioneers”.<sup>20</sup>

The blending of older methods of expeditionary work with new assumptions can be best illustrated by two formal aspects of the expedition. As already mentioned, Baluev, Dolgikh and Strulev followed trails and roads which were already well-established. This autumn-winter clockwise expedition route from the Yenisei through the taiga had been followed routinely by state servants for the past half-century if not longer. Within the ethnographic literature we can compare the itineraries of the missionary

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18 For an overview of the stereotypes which framed Russian Eurasian exploration, see Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine, *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (New York: St. Martins, 1993); and Mark Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 274-82. For an overview of debates surrounding middle Yenisei aboriginal peoples, see Craig Campbell, *Agitating Images: Photography against History in Indigenous Siberia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); and Elena Kovalaschina, “The Historical and Cultural Ideals of the Siberian Oblastnichestvo”, *Sibirica*, 6 (2007), 87-119.

19 David George Anderson, “First Contact as Real Contact: The 1926/27 Soviet Polar Census Expedition to Turukhansk Territory”, in *Recreating First Contact: Expeditions, Anthropology and Popular Culture*, ed. by Joshua A. Bell, Alison K. Brown and Robert J. Gordon (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2013), pp. 72-89.

20 We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this observation.

Innokentyi Suslov in 1870,<sup>21</sup> the Polar Census expedition led by Dolgikh in 1926 and 1927,<sup>22</sup> and then two expeditions headed by Andrei A. Popov in 1930-1931 and 1936-1938.<sup>23</sup> Dolgikh himself repeated the same route as a territorial formation worker, mapping the boundaries of newly-collectivised economic enterprises in 1934.<sup>24</sup>

Although the route was traditional and well-worn, the group travelled across the boundaries of the newly created socialist districts, and focused their attention in a different way. In the preliminary proposal for the expedition, Dolgikh stressed the importance of documenting the lives of the “new” administrative districts they would be visiting. The route was justified by the need to visit both the new Taimyr National District and the new Evenki National District.<sup>25</sup> The window of entry across these “new” territories corresponded to deep winter (November-February) — this is the period of time that we focus upon almost exclusively in this article.

The material artefacts produced by the expedition also followed many of the standard protocols set up in the Imperial period. Roughly stated, the task of the Party-appointed leader Strulev was to collect statistical data on the population, much as his Orthodox predecessor Innokentyi Suslov might have counted pagan and Christian souls. However, in Strulev’s case, the task was to count people and animals collectivised into farms, and the numbers of indigenous people being trained for new occupations, which a nineteenth-century Orthodox priest would not have done.<sup>26</sup> Dolgikh’s contribution was clearly aimed at the collection of folklore texts and genealogies, much like a nineteenth-century ethnologist, although as he would describe his work in his final report, the genealogies gave him

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21 David G. Anderson and Natalia Orekhova, “The Suslov Legacy: The Story of One Family’s Struggle with Shamanism”, *Sibirica*, 2 (2002), 88-112.

22 Sergei S. Savoskul and David G. Anderson, “An Ethnographer’s Early Years: Boris Dolgikh as Enumerator for the 1926/27 Polar Census”, *Polar Record*, 41 (2005), 235-51. Sergei S. Savoskul, “Vpervye na Severe: B. O. Dolgikh — registrator pripoliarnoi perepisi”, *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 4 (2004), 126-47.

23 Andrei Aleksandrovich Popov, “Poezdka k dolganam”, *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, 3-4 (1931), 210-13; and idem, “Iz otcheta o komandirovke k nganasanam ot Instituta Etnografii Akademii Nauk SSSR”, *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, 3 (1940), 76-95.

24 Savoskul, “Etnograf Krasnoiarского muzeia”, p. 101.

25 Dolgikh, “Plan ekspeditsii”, pp. 4-5.

26 Danileiko, pp. 122-27; and M. S. Strulev, 1938, “Materialy sotsstroitel’stva po Evenkiiskomu natsional’nomu okrugu”, *Statisticheskie dannye, KKKM, O/f 7886/PIr* 223.



insight not into an individual's past, but into "the details of the historical development of one or another people".<sup>27</sup>

Finally, Baluev's task was to take images of people and landscapes using a type of camera which required careful choreographing, planning, posing and staging. The level of light and his equipment would have limited the angles he could choose and his opportunities for "spontaneous" portraiture. Therefore he worked within the constraints and guidelines of a nineteenth-century traveller working for the Russian Geographical Society.<sup>28</sup> He nevertheless departed from the canon by photographing objects (usually structures) which represented institutions and by capturing new forms of association (usually represented as groups of people engaged in specific tasks), as we will describe in detail below.

The interweaving of old and new ways of life seems to have been part of a long process of negotiation. Indeed, the expedition was planned over a period of a year. In the summer of 1939, Dolgikh had just taken charge of the ethnographic "cabinet" of the museum, assigning himself the broad goal of documenting the "social and economic structure [*stroï*] of the people of the North of Krasnoyarsk Territory".<sup>29</sup> The term "structure" is misleading in the sense that what was meant was a process. The data that the team gathered — be they narratives, images or statistical tables — spoke not to how people saw themselves, but instead of their trajectories in space and time, from the past to the present, and from the present to the future. In the plan for the expedition, filed on 28 December 1937, Dolgikh listed the following subjects as important to describing these destinies. The intangible sense of

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27 B. Dolgikh, "Predvaritel'nyi otchet etnografa Severnoi ekspeditsii Krasnoiarskogo kraevogo muzeia", 1938-39, gg. KKKM, 1843-1-600, p. 1.

28 We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this analysis and comparison. According to Sergei Aleksandrovich Morozov, the very first use of photography for scientific ethnography was by I. A. Lopatin on his 1866 expedition in the same region visited by Baluev (then known as Turkhansk District). Morozov, *Russkie puteshestvenniki-fotografi*, p. 160. For further information on the guidelines of ethnographic photography, see Elena Barkhatova, "Realism and Document: Photography as Fact", in *Photography in Russia 1840-1940*, ed. by David Elliot (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 42-43; and for the list of rules, translated and quoted below, see Anonymous, "Nastavleniia dlia zeliiausichikh izgotovliat fotograficheskie snimki na polzu antropologii", *Izvestiia Imperatorskogo Russkego Geograficheskogo Obshestva*, 8 (1872), 86-88. For short descriptions of the work of several late nineteenth-century photographers, see Morozov, *Russkie puteshestvenniki-fotografi*, especially his sections on D. N. Anuchin (folkloric costumes and landscapes), pp. 52-55; and M. P. Dmitriev (Volga River portraits and landscapes), pp. 82-83.

29 Savoskul, "Etnograf Krasnoiarskogo muzeia", p. 101.

what people were becoming is evident in the words “social development”, “extension”, “Sovietisation”, “dawn”, “transformation” and “movement”:<sup>30</sup>

1. [Documenting] industrial development (the activities of the Main Administration of the Northern Sea Route and of *Sevpoliarles* [the state forestry company]);
2. The activities of the Northern Sea Route Administration {in general} in {the exploitation of} the north of Krasnoyarsk Territory and in contributing to social development (transport, trade, scientific work and political enlightenment work, among others);
3. The extension of agriculture into the north;
4. The Sovietisation of the northern national districts;
5. The dawn of cultural and primary school education among the peoples of the north;
6. The {sedentarisation and} transformation of the lifestyle [*byt*] of the peoples of the north;
7. The collective farm movement and the collective farms of the peoples of the north;
8. A presentation of talented individuals among northern peoples;
9. {Folklore};
10. {History and Ethnography}.

We will return to this list in the next section when we analyse the types of images Baluev took.

The team was also guided by an official document from the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) that provided a list of subjects to be photographed in the north.<sup>31</sup> In this document, the Commissariat instructed them to photograph intangibles such as “further education of the population” or “the work of teachers liquidating illiteracy”, as well as tangibles such as industry, factories and collective farms.<sup>32</sup>

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30 Dolgikh, “Plan ekspeditsii”, pp. 2 and 4. The categories in curled brackets were added by Dolgikh in pencil to the second draft of this document (p. 4).

31 Antsiferova, 1938.06.02, “Spisok raboty po fotosnimki Krasnoyarskogo kraevogo muzei ekspeditsii eduiushie na Sever”, KKKM 1842-1-599, p. 26.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 26

## An expedition in the time of “terror”

Knowing what we know today about the late 1930s in the Soviet Union, it is difficult to write about a scholarly or artistic endeavour as if it were an open-ended creative process. To this end, Baluev’s diaries and photographs offer us a unique opportunity to contextualise a time now remembered darkly. Both an earlier published account of this expedition<sup>33</sup> and an unpublished report by our co-author Mikhail Batashev make a strong and convincing argument for how state terror provided a centrifugal inspiration for northern ethnography: people simply wanted to escape the epicentres of political intrigue and hide as far away as possible in the most remote corners of the Soviet Union. Such “little corners of freedom”, as historian Douglas Weiner has called them, became the places where ethnographic and artistic intuition were cultivated during these trying times.<sup>34</sup>

There is indeed a lot of evidence for this argument. Two of the participants in the expedition, Baluev and Dolgikh, had both suffered personally from the repressions. Baluev, as stated above, was forced into exile to support his parents, who had likely been exiled due to their family heritage. This experience probably gave him a certain shrewdness, and caution can be read in the passages of his diary which we quote below. The life history of Dolgikh is much better documented. With his long-standing interest in the lives and fate of indigenous taiga peoples, Dolgikh developed a critical attitude to the strict methods used to remove property from the rich. He voiced criticisms to others in a student dormitory in Moscow; his dissent was overheard and reported to the authorities. As a result, Dolgikh was expelled from university and exiled for four years, beginning in 1929, to the village of Krasnoiarovo on the Lena River in the northern part of Irkutsk province.<sup>35</sup> Although it was at this time he was to write some of his better-known earlier work, and eventually gain a position in Krasnoyarsk as a museum ethnographer, it is likely that this experience bred in him an element of caution reflecting the stressful and dangerous times. It is perhaps noteworthy that, after his return from exile, Dolgikh legally changed his Jewish-sounding patronymic from

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33 Savoskul, “Etnograf Krasnoiaroskogo muzeia”.

34 Douglas R. Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachëv* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

35 S. I. Vainshtein, “Sud’ba Borisa Osipovicha Dolgikh: cheloveka, grazhdanina, uchenogo”, in *Repressirovannye etnografy*, ed. by D. D. Tumarkin (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 1999), pp. 284-307 (p. 289).

Iosevich to the Russian sounding equivalent Osipovich. He is best known by the later middle initial and name.

According to Sergei Savoskul's reading of the archival records, Dolgikh's idea was to organise an expedition in the North, ostensibly to "diplomatically" investigate "socialist transformations", but in reality to collect texts for the museum and to document the clan structure and ethnogenesis of northern peoples.<sup>36</sup> The stated goal of the expedition, in Savoskul's opinion, was a convenient mask for the actual work of ethnography, which was subversive to some degree. Despite Dolgikh's role as the initiator of the expedition, Savoskul notes that a much younger and less experienced man, Strulev, was appointed expedition leader.<sup>37</sup> Instead of having credentials as a seasoned traveller and a speaker of indigenous languages, Strulev was an approved Komsomol member who could be trusted to represent the expedition politically.

It is striking that there is not much sense of fear in the diaries of either Baluev or Dolgikh. True to form, Dolgikh's manuscript diary seems obsessed with kinship terminology and structural debates over the evolution of indigenous native groups in this region. His manuscript report of the expedition is full of flow-charts showing how one clan group merges into another, eventually leading to the creation of distinct nations. This manuscript would anticipate his famous works on ethnogenesis.<sup>38</sup> The dominant tropes in Baluev's diary, which can be read in the excerpts selected below, are homesickness, frustration with working conditions and, interestingly, a sense of resistance to some of the tasks set before him.

In many places Baluev reveals a sense of caution and irony regarding the instructions given to him by his superior. In one of the strongest passages, which admittedly follows a rather gruelling trip in rough conditions, Baluev questions Strulev's instructions to photograph a recently expropriated state enterprise.

**January 24, 1939.** At noon we arrived at a camp after having travelled fifty km. At this camp I took a few photographs. While I was taking them it somehow entered the heads of my colleagues, and especially Mark Sergeevich [Strulev], to go to the Reindeer State Farm and photograph it. Nothing that I could say to the effect that photographing an immense quantity of reindeer under these conditions was pointless had any effect on the stubbornness of my boss. In

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36 Savoskul, "Etnograf Krasnoiarskogo muzeia", p. 102.

37 Ibid., p. 104.

38 Boris Osipovich Dolgikh, *Rodovoi i plemennoi sostav narodov Sibiri v XVII veke* (Moscow: Nauka, 1960); and idem, "Proiskhozhdenie dolgan", in *Sibirskii etnograficheskii sbornik*, ed. by Boris Osipovich Dolgikh (Moscow: Nauka, 1963), pp. 92-141.

order that nobody could ever say that I refused to photograph the State Farm I agreed to go. In the evening a worker from the State Farm escorted me [...]

Elsewhere we can read his worry about the privileges of the political leadership vis-à-vis the workers he was documenting. In one incident, the team travels to a remote hunting camp to photograph the heroic Stakhanovite squirrel trappers who had exceeded their quota of animals hunted for the state (Fig. 15.4). Here, he represents the heroic workers almost as second-class citizens. After several days of illness, Baluev writes:

**January 19, 1939.** I woke in the middle of the night in terrible shape. The people inhabiting the rooms given to the Stakhanovites were the leaders of the Nomadic Soviet and the Simple Production Unit. The Stakhanovites themselves had collapsed on the dirty floor near the door. The leaders were sleeping on their beds.



Fig. 15.4 Stakhanovite hunter, Stepan N. Pankagir, on the hunt for squirrels. Uchug, Evenki National District, 17 January 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1264). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved.

In other fragments of this late Stalinist description of everyday life we get a picture of the banal — of taking the opportunity to leaf through a newspaper

when one finds it, to play the card game *préférence*, to enjoy sleeping late or to read a novel by Pushkin, Dostoevsky or Balzac that one might discover lying about even the most remote camp. The terror certainly disrupted lives and careers, but it also left space for mundane being in which certain routines, fascinations and relationships remained relatively stable. In viewing these photographs it is the impression of routine and stability that comes through most strongly.

## Photographing northern transformations

The photographic archive of Ivan Baluev provides us with one of the more reliable insights into how a “socialist transformation” was perceived in 1939. The texts surviving from this time — full of calls to “enlightenment”, a “new dawn” and political inclusion — contain pointers to an implicit collective knowledge of what people hoped would come to be, but few clues as to what these transformations might look like. In the case of the indigenous peoples of Siberia, their lives were often framed as a “leap” from primitive communism to proper communism. All state and scholarly academic interactions with them reflected this aspiration.<sup>39</sup> This article is one of the first published attempts to assess how photography participated in building this sense of transformation. After reviewing some of the technical challenges to making photographs in this sub-Arctic setting, we identify six transformational themes in the Baluev collection.

The creation of this collection of black and white glass plate negatives — ultimately gathered together as an archive — was in itself a difficult task requiring great discipline and inventiveness on the part of the photographer. The team travelled in open-air reindeer sledges and often spent their nights in tents. The fragile glass plates had to be protected from damage and mishap. While their vulnerability to damage was evident, the benefit of dry plate glass negatives was superior image quality and greater stability in cold conditions than flexible cellulose film, which would become brittle in low

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39 The foundational text describing the “non-capitalist path” for Siberians is Mikhail Alekseevich Sergeev, ed., *Nekapitalisticheskii put' rasvitiia mal'yx narodov Severa* (Moskva: Nauka, 1955). The ideology as it applied to Siberia is described and criticised in David G. Anderson, “Turning Hunters into Herders: A Critical Examination of Soviet Development Policy among the Evenki of Southeastern Siberia”, *Arctic*, 44 (1991), 12-22; Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); and more generally in Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

temperatures.<sup>40</sup> Once exposed, the glass plates were often developed in the field — an effort that required preparing temperature-sensitive chemicals and having different equipment to hand. Finally, the photographer was burdened with heavy but fragile cameras, as well as cumbersome tripods.<sup>41</sup>

The photographic glass plates Baluev used were not unlike small windowpanes coated with a dried chemical solution that was extremely sensitive to light. The vast majority of negatives in the KKKM collection are 9 x 12 cm (roughly 4 x 5 inches). A box of negatives can be seen on the table in front of Baluev as he works on his journal (Fig. 15.1). Exposure to light outside the camera would render the chemical coating on the plates unusable, producing a negative that was uniformly black. To make his pictures, Baluev would have loaded each precious frame into a light-tight cartridge. These loaded cartridges would then have been stored in a box or leather pouch, ready for exposure. It is not clear how many cartridges the photographer would have had, though we estimate that it was not more than a dozen or so (commercially available pouches appear to have held five to ten cartridges).<sup>42</sup>

When his camera was ready, Baluev would load the cartridge into its interior, which did not admit any light whatsoever. Once in the camera, a cover was removed from the cartridge where the plate — opposite the camera's lens — was ready for exposure. After taking measurements and adjusting the camera to let more or less light through the lens, and deciding upon the duration of the exposure, he would open the shutter for the selected exposure time. The cover of the cartridge was then re-inserted and the cartridge itself removed, placed in a pouch or box of cartridges containing exposed plates and saved until it could be developed in chemicals.

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40 Kodak, "Photography Under Arctic Conditions", October 1999, <http://www.kodak.com/global/en/professional/support/techPubs/c9/c9.pdf>, p. 1.

41 For detailed information on the procedures for working with glass plate negatives and cameras, see Georgi Abramov, "Etapy razvitiia otechesvennogo fotoapparostroeniia", <http://www.photohistory.ru/index.php>. For other general notes concerning historical photo-technical processes, see Bertrand Lavedrine, Michel Frizot, Jean-Paul Gandolfo and Sibylle Monod, *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation*, trans. by John P. McElhone, 1st edn. (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Conservation Institute, 2009). See also the discussions on equipment and the problems of using tripods and available light in Morozov, *Pervoye russkie fotografy*; see especially Morozov's sections on P. K. Kozlov in Mongolia (1899), p 160, and on M. P. Dmitriev and the Volga River (1886-1929), pp. 82-83.

42 For a similar description of the difficulties of working in the Russian Arctic and the use of pouches, see Morozov on the work of the Arkhangel'sk photographer A. A. Bunan on Novaia Zemlia. Morozov, *Pervoye russkie fotografy*, pp. 173-75.

If the plate was exposed to light prior to development, the image would be obliterated. Photographers until this time appear to have been technicians as much as they were artists. They learned their craft through a mixture of training, shop theory and experience.<sup>43</sup>

Baluev notes in his diary that he is using a “Compound” shutter.<sup>44</sup> This style of shutter (also known as Kompur) was typically affixed to “Fotokor” cameras. The Fotokor (short for Photo Correspondent) was a highly portable rangefinder camera. It used a bellows system which collapsed into a small box. This kind of camera is referred to as a “folding bed plate camera”. In the portrait of Baluev where he is writing in his diary, you can see a case that is very similar in appearance to the kind used to hold these cameras when they are folded up. The Fotokor cameras were produced by GOMZ (*Gosudarstvennyi Optiko-Mekhanicheskii Zavod*/State Optical-Mechanical Factory) in Leningrad.<sup>45</sup> The bellows and compartments in Baluev’s Kompound camera were no doubt brittle and stiff in the cold. Working with the plates and camera mechanisms must have been a great challenge with numb fingers. Nonetheless, Baluev produced hundreds of images both inside and out, in all conditions, even temperatures cold enough to freeze mercury — not to mention skin — upon exposure.

The process of developing the negatives required chemicals, water and a completely dark room or tent. Darkness in the long winter nights in northern Siberia was probably not difficult to come by. Indeed it was light that was more likely to be a concern. While daylight was critical for exposing the images, Baluev also had flash equipment and used magnesium powder for interior shots. By the 1930s the magnesium powder formula was so refined and the flash so quick that the photographer could take more or less candid shots in darkened spaces.<sup>46</sup> According to his journals, he attempted to use available light whenever possible, implying perhaps that his magnesium stock was in short supply. The challenges of using this equipment in Arctic conditions are thoroughly documented in his diary:

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43 Erika Wolf, “The Soviet Union: From Worker to Proletarian Photography”, in *The Worker-Photography Movement, 1926-1939: Essays and Documents*, ed. by Jorge Ribalta (Madrid: Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2011), pp. 32-50 (p. 34).

44 Baluev, “Dnevnik ekspeditsii”, 4 December 1938.

45 *The Worker Photography Movement, 1926-1939: Essays and Documents*, ed. by Jorge Ribalta (Madrid: Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2011).

46 Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography, from 1839 to the Present Day* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1964), p. 140. Newhall suggests that the magnesium powder flash was “hardly more than a way of creating enough illumination to take snapshots in dark places” (p. 157).



**7 November 1938, Kamen'.** Today is the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution. I got up at 8.00, went outside, and an entire herd of reindeer ran up to me. I took some salt out of my bag and began to feed them. [...] Today was a lightly cloudy day, and therefore it was difficult for me to make spontaneous [*momental'nye*] photographs. [...] My camera froze and the shutter took exposures much longer than the meter was showing. [...].

**26 December 1938, Tura.** I guess I have finally caught cold from all of these severe frosts [minus 48]. This evening I felt very poorly. My legs hurt and my head is beginning to hurt. The cold is creating ice fog which makes it impossible to take pictures outside. And now I am running out of photographic plates. Today I went around the village of Tura looking for replacement plates. The veterinarian has some, and he promised to give me a few. I wasn't able to photograph anything today [...].

**29 December 1938, Tura.** The cold is not particularly bad but it still does not allow me to do my work. I took a picture of the meteorological station and the post office. I am really fed up with Tura. And the worst is that it [the village] does not allow me to take any pictures. Also there is nowhere to develop the negatives because it is so cold. The room where we live is warm only when the stove is burning at full blast, and then only in that corner where the stove is sitting. If I developed the negatives then there would be no place to dry them. At night it is horribly cold in the room despite the fact that it is packed with people.

**30 December 1938, Tura.** My nerves are fraying from the fact that it is not possible to photograph the subjects that interest me. I can only take pictures inside and then with magnesium [*magniiia*]. Today I took a picture of the cafeteria with the delegates of the Ilimpi region conference.

One surprising revelation of Baluev's diaries is the balance between the difficulties of managing glass-plate photographic technology in the alien environment of the far north and the fact that photographic technology was apparently present nevertheless in every small corner of this northern frontier. Although Baluev complains of difficulties in replenishing his photographic stocks, it was not impossible. During his one-month stay in the village of Tura he came to distinguish local stocks of photographic plates by type and quality — at one point rejecting some plates held in the school and accepting a set from the government administration. There are numerous mentions in the diary of the fact that, as he moved southwards, the team was successful in procuring replacement stocks in other settlements. The 1930s may have been a time of strict political control, but Baluev's diaries suggest that access to image-making technology was widespread in these communities.

One of the strongest themes in the Baluev collection is the representation of indigenous people in the setting of modern institutions. One finds photographs of young Evenki children learning to read, or of white-coated doctors examining Yakut patients. In other images we see representatives of the nomadic populations standing in front of newly-built structures or before machines. These compositions have a strong sense of irony to them. In most, the subject in the foreground, perhaps dressed in furs, contrasts strongly with the clean lines of a newly-hewn log building or a metal machine in the background. This sense of social distance is often amplified by the somewhat static pose adopted by the subject, who was undoubtedly asked to remain motionless for the rather long periods of time needed to take a photograph during the polar night.

Baluev's representations of indigenous people applying themselves to study or tasks recall some of the guidelines published for ethnographical portraiture in the nineteenth century. In 1871, the Imperial Russian Geographical Society evaluated ethnographic portraiture as being different from physical anthropological portraiture in that it "opens up a wider field for the artistic inclinations of the photographer". The society then provided a list of subjects and contexts:<sup>47</sup>

Of particular importance is the subject's clothing, one or another of their typical poses, their weapons or other equipment [*utvar*], and equally [importantly], scenes which show how one or the other of these things are used. In addition [one should photograph] dwellings, cities, villages, riverine landscapes, scenes of public life, and specialised domestic animals.

These rules of thumb are clearly visible in most of the photographs selected here (see especially Figs. 15.3 and 15.6). However, Baluev's work distinguishes itself from the late Imperial canon by what might be described as a photographic essay documenting particular enterprises or institutions such as a school, a collective farm, trading posts, or a hunting party (see especially Figs. 15.5, 15.8, 15.12 and 15.15). Here what nineteenth-century photography might describe as the habitual background is replaced with posters or backdrops revealing public scenes to be fully organised and contained by a particular institution. In these photographs we feel the force of another list, like the one written by Dolgikh and quoted above, demanding portraiture which captures "the dawn of [...] primary school education" or "the collective farm movement".<sup>48</sup> To this end, Baluev brought with him

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<sup>47</sup> Anonymous, p. 88.

<sup>48</sup> Dolgikh, "Plan ekspeditsii", p. 4.

particular skills, both technical and compositional. It would seem that his training in portraiture as well as his previous experience in working for small enterprises gave him the skills and the imagination to photograph something as intangible and fragmented as a “collective farm”.

The photographic conventions practised by Baluev presented a stable and recognisable world. His camera was oriented according to the horizon. His backgrounds were critical for the recognition of individuals. Architectural features were used to locate the viewer in space to help make sense of the scene. When he photographed people, he usually placed a clearly defined subject in the centre of the frame. Landscape photographs tended to be composed to maximise the perception of key features like rivers, cliffs, ridges and forest clearings. Pictorial representation as a conventional photographic technique dominated Baluev’s photography, which, unlike more revolutionary types of photography, was more concerned with documenting socialist transformation than formally instigating it.

What enlivens Baluev’s work on this topic is what we could perhaps define as an “aspirational” quality and what some readers might call propagandist. We would argue that the term propaganda is a heavy one, castigating more than it enlightens. The term implies that the visible engagement of subjects in the photographs is forced or somehow legislated in order to legitimate an unpopular policy goal. Although the late 1930s were over-determined by rather arbitrary policy goals, we must also bear in mind that many of the institutional public settings that Baluev photographed were new. They brought together people united by a particular skill set and class profile; they might have never worked together before. In that vein, these enterprises were experimental, organised with a sense of destiny or hope that they could improve the lives of people in a single state-constructed community.<sup>49</sup> This intangible sense of aspiration — what we theorise here as a sense or feeling of transformation — is what comes across in Baluev’s photographs, and what may have made him a favourite photographer for commissions over a five-year period at the start of the Stalinist era.

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49 For a critical overview of the history of new labour units in this region of Siberia, see David G. Anderson, *Identity and Ecology in Arctic Siberia: The Number One Reindeer Brigade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Craig Campbell, *Agitating Images: Photography against History in Indigenous Siberia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); and Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, “Bear Skins and Macaroni: The Social Life of Things at the Margins of a Siberian State Collective”, in *The Vanishing Rouble: Barter Networks and Non-Monetary Transactions in Post-Soviet Societies*, ed. by Paul Seabright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 345-61.

## Ironic Compositions



Fig. 15.5 Prize-winning hunter Ivan K. Solov'ev (a Yakut) shows his award to his wife. Next to her is V. V. Antsiferov. Kamen' Factory, 7 November 1938 (EAP016/4/1/1913). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved.

Moving beyond Baluev's aspirational public photographs, we can also detect in this archive a set of images and notes-to-self in his diary which are ironic or perhaps even critical of what he was witnessing. A strong candidate for an ironic interpretation is a photograph of a ceremony in which a prize was given to a hunter (Fig. 15.5). Here we can clearly see a roll of wool fabric being presented to the Stakhanovite hunter who is identified in the attribution as Ivan Solovev; the date is specified as 7 November, Soviet Army Day. In the background there is a typical northern Taimyr Dolgan *balok* — a box-shaped caravan containing a stove, table, bed and belongings, designed to be pulled by a set of reindeer. Over the door a socialist banner celebrates the occasion. To the left, a woman and a man in fancy beaded clothing are offering the gift. The hunter receiving the present is standing in blindingly bright, newly tanned leggings and smoking a cigarette. While these ceremonies were part of the fabric

of Soviet life, the Kamen' group of Yakut-speaking Evenki hunters portrayed in this photograph were not particularly well-known for their loyalty to the Soviet project. Two years prior to Baluev taking this picture, kinsmen of those photographed incited a rebellion against collectivisation.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the photograph seems to denote stability, acquiescence and participation.

Counterpoising other photographs with Baluev's diary entries shows a deeper conflict between Soviet expectations and local ways. There is, for example, an interesting set of photographs taken in late January in the Kataramba River region of Baikit district. Here two female squirrel hunters caught the eye of Baluev, and he took a photograph that was likely to illustrate gender parity within a productive trapping regime (Fig. 15.6).



Fig. 15.6 Female hunters. From the left, Mariia L. Mukto and Mariia F. Chapogir hunting for squirrels in the forest. Evenki National District, 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1323).

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However this encounter was soon recorded in Baluev's diary with puzzlement and disappointment at the productive logic of the region (Fig. 15.7):

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50 Anderson, *Identity and Ecology*, pp. 49-50 and 69-70.



Fig. 15.7 Icefishing with reindeer fat. Evenki National District, 1939.  
© Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia (KKKM 3684), all rights reserved.

**20 January 1939, Kataramba River.** In the morning after having tea, I got to work. Here I found two women squirrel hunters, and took their picture. Around noon I travelled with the camp owner to go fishing. Among his fishing equipment I found a fishing lure that was not in any way alluring [*nekliziuzhe*]. It was like a branch that would likely frighten any fish set before it. At the end of the lure the fisherman set a huge cube of fat weighing about 25 grams. He threw it into the water, waited for half an hour and then decided that there were no fish. He then turned around and went back to the lodge. He tried to convince me that on this lure, the hook of which was as thick as an index finger, he catches fish. Fishing with such equipment is called *khinda*.

The passage reveals Baluev's lack of faith in the traditional ecological knowledge of local Evenkis and his sense of knowing better than them how production should be organised. Reading this passage today, in an era when ideologies of production are not sacrosanct, allows us to interpret this encounter as a clash of worldviews. From the perspective of an average urban Russian of this time, the point of fishing would be to catch fish, with success being quantified and

measured by the number of fish caught. Such a Russian would assume that fish would have to be lured into a fish trap or onto a hook.

However, within many northern indigenous cosmologies, including those of the Evenkis, animals are attributed with agency and are expected to come to hunters of their own will.<sup>51</sup> Approaching the task from this point of view, a fisherman would not try to lure the fish onto a subtly concealed hook but instead strive to advertise his or her presence to give the fish an opportunity to present itself. If a fish did not turn up on the hook, it would mean that it did not want to provide itself for food, or “that there were no fish”. It is not entirely clear why Baluev took the time to comment on a fishing strategy that he found to be inefficient. He may have been expressing a frustration with the impossibility of the Soviet project that aimed at including all nationalities equally in a common economic project of building socialism.<sup>52</sup> It would seem that here he notes the impossible distance between the utopia of a fully efficient productive society and the level of education of the citizens in this region.

## Making boundaries real

As has been well-documented, a major aspect of Soviet modernisation was the inscription of more or less arbitrary boundaries and then the insistence that these boundaries had meaning in everyday life.<sup>53</sup> Jurisdictional boundaries were made relevant by the fact that subsidies and opportunities flowed within them. The population was expected to receive their employment and the right to groceries, healthcare and education only within the orbits of specific regions. Within the new redistributive economy, families became tethered to these specific places so that it was difficult — if not impossible — to survive outside the spatial domains where one was registered.

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51 A. Irving Hallowell, “Ojibwa Ontology, Behaviour, and World View”, in *Culture in History: Essays in Honour of Paul Radin*, ed. by Stanley Diamond (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); Tim Ingold, “From Trust to Domination: An Alternative History of Human-Animal Relations”, in *Animals and Human Society: Changing Perspectives*, ed. by Aubrey Manning and James Serpell (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 1-22; and Anderson, *Identity and Ecology*, ch. 6.

52 Hirsch, pp. 273-308; Anderson, *Identity and Ecology*, ch. 3; and V. N. Uvachan *Perekhod k sotsializmu malykh narodov Severa* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1958).

53 Petr Evgen'evich Terletskii, “Natsional'noe raionirovanie Krainego Severa”, *Sovetskii Sever*, 7-8 (1930), 5-29; Anderson, *Identity and Ecology*, ch. 4; Gail Fondahl and Anna Anatol'evna Sirina, “Working Borders and Shifting Identities in the Russian Far North”, *Geoforum*, 34 (2003), 541-56. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Francine Hirsch, “Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities”, *Russian Review*, 59 (2000), 201-26; and Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *L'empire éclaté: la révolte des nations en URSS* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978).

While many of these compact civic domains were built upon existing patterns of trade and movement in the south, the north was quite different. Here local peoples, with their knowledge of how to identify subsistence resources as they moved and with their domesticated reindeer, were not necessarily tied to one particular place, although to claim that they were completely nomadic would also be an exaggeration. Engineers of socialism put a lot of energy into inscribing “national autonomous districts” across the river valleys and mountain escarpments of the northern part of Krasnoyarsk Territory where they had very little relevance.

One consistent quality in Baluev’s work is his attempt to make these newly created districts appear solid and real. As Savoskul noted following his short survey of Baluev’s collection: Baluev had a remarkable interest in capturing geography lessons, in which children would follow these ephemeral boundaries with their fingers (Fig. 15.8).<sup>54</sup>



Fig. 15.8 Geography lesson in grade seven at the Russian School. Evenkii National District, Tura Settlement, January 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1546). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved.

<sup>54</sup> Savoskul, “Etnograf Krasnoiarskogo muzeia”, p. 105.



There are many such staged photographs taken in different parts of this vast region. One might add that Baluev also had an interest in maps. In many cases, he simply photographed paper maps wherever he found them — perhaps to help document the expedition, or to provide a reference copy for himself when he returned home (Fig. 15.2). It must be understood that these maps were undoubtedly rare, having been freshly printed, and that even the intellectuals in Krasnoyarsk might not be too sure where the boundaries of one district ended and another began.

One remarkable exercise, in which he invested a lot of effort, was photographing the exact place where one district turned into another. Baluev created an entire series of photographs attempting to document the division between the northerly Taimyr National District and its southern neighbour, the Evenki National District. On one photograph (Fig. 15.9), he notes with irony that the trapper Nikolai Nikloaevich Botulu, who traps from a collective farm within Taimyr, actually sets his deadfalls for Arctic foxes within the Evenki National District.



Fig. 15.9 The Yakut Nikolai N. Botulu (Katykhinskii) with a polar fox caught in the jaws of a trap. He was from Ezhova, Taimyr National District, but his traps were located in the Evenki National District, 1938 (EAP016/4/1/315).

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This comment draws attention to the arbitrariness of these divisions. On 9 February 1939, at another border, between Evenkia and Boguchan County, he desperately tries but fails to find the frontier among the trees (Fig. 15.10). He captures the same scene in his diary:

Today we crossed the border between Evenkia and Boguchan County. I had an idea to capture the exact place where the [National] District became a County, but neither my guide nor the people in the postal caravan we met on the road could give me an exact answer as to where the border was. I took a photograph of the place that B. I. [Boris Iosofich Dolgikh] indicated for me. We are now travelling in a mixed forest.



Fig. 15.10 Krasnoyarsk *krai* forest on the border of the Evenki National District, Boguchansk Region, February 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1646).  
© Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved.

## Built structures

A second marked feature of the Baluev collection is the photographer's attention to institutional architecture. In every named, populated place he made a concerted effort to photograph every government building and note the institution it held. If poor weather prevented him from taking photographs, he held the images in his head until the weather cleared, and then he would quickly "photograph the place". Unfortunately, his diary does not give much insight into how he made his selection of what to photograph. It is tempting to conclude that Baluev was checking off either a formal or implicit list of all the institutions that made up Soviet civic order. In every named place we have photographs of schools, collective farms, nursing stations, boats and other vehicles, as if these were the architectural grammar from which a civilised place was constructed. His choice of objects is presented as self-evident:

**3 January 1939, Tura.** I tried today to photograph the village, but as with the previous days my efforts were not rewarded with success. [...] The cold is the main thing that is freezing my work.

**4 January 1939, Tura.** In the evening I photographed students of Evenkia's primary school in their school.

**6 January 1939, Tura.** At noon I walked around Tura glancing at interesting subjects to photograph, but it was impossible to photograph them since the fog was covering everything.

**8 January 1939, Tura.** The temperature rose to minus 38. The fog thinned and I took advantage of the opportunity to run around Tura to take a picture of whatever I could.

**9 January 1939, Tura.** I got up at 10.00 and after breakfast went to photograph [different] means of transport in Tura. Yesterday I made arrangements that all the automobiles and horses would be ready. The reindeer, to my great fortune, were standing in front of the School of Political Enlightenment [*politprosvet shkola*], although their antlers were unattractive [Fig. 15.11]. I dropped the idea of photographing the reindeer and instead went to the place where all the Tura vehicles are concentrated. After doing 'the transport' I went to the Fur Exchange [Fig. 15.12].



Fig. 15.11 Three modes of transport: reindeer, sleigh and truck. Evenki National District, Tura, 1939. © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia (KKKM 3767), all rights reserved.



Fig. 15.12 Evenki hunter Danil V. Miroshko trading furs. The head of the exchange is Luka Pavlovich Shcherbakov. Tura, January 1939. © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia (KKKM 3822), all rights reserved.

By documenting this architectural grammar, Baluev allows the viewer to think that even this remote corner of the Soviet Union has a familiar feel and function, just like every other corner. However, there are also points of resistance and even cynicism. We already cited above his dissatisfaction and sense of frustration towards Strulev, who diverted the expedition from their homeward journey to photograph the newly formed state farm (*sovkhos*) at what is today Surinda (Figs. 15.13 and 15.14).



Fig. 15.13 A reindeer herd with herder from the Reindeer *Sovkhoz* (state farm), NKZ. Evenki National District, February 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1341).  
© Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved.

The same diary entry continues:

[It was] another 15km to the headquarters of the state farm. It was dark. I was terribly tired not having slept for two nights being on the road all the time. And now I was travelling again at night. The state farm reindeer were weak. They barely pulled us. [...] The reindeer did not run in a straight line but would escape into the metre-deep snow, or the thick brush, and we would have to stop to retrieve our sleds. [... 25 January] I got up at 6.00, looked around the camp, dried my reindeer-skin leggings [*bakhari*] and ordered the men to harness the reindeer. [...] I went around photographing

what I could. This morning the sun reflected off the snow and burned our eyes. [...] Taking pictures of reindeer is very clumsy.



Fig. 15.14 Headquarters for the Reindeer *Sovkhoz* (state farm), NKZ. A *chum* (conical tent) is in the foreground, a new home for Evenki labourers in the background.  
© Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia (KKKM 3706), all rights reserved.

Here, aside from venting his dissatisfaction at the reality of travel in this region, Baluev indicates a dislike for collective subjects like reindeer herds — subjects of great scale and variety. This observation resonates with the character of his portfolio; with the exception of this one image, all of his other images feature a single building, a portrait or a rather strictly posed group of people. It seems that in his aesthetic view there were limits to the demands of state authorities on what should be photographed.

Within his chosen frame of the intimate subject, however, there was room for personal interest and visual juxtaposition. After filing dozens of photographs of imposing log structures with multiple smoking chimneys, he liked to add photographs of how modest people lived. One particularly striking image captures a hastily-constructed Yakut tent pitched in among the grid-like structures of the capital of the Evenki National District, Tura (Fig. 15.15).



Fig. 15.15 Yakut tent in Tura in the winter. Evenki National District, Tura settlement, January 1939 (EAP016/4/1/1556). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved.

## Reinvented traditions

Soviet transformation was often illustrated with depictions of rituals reinvented for a new era. In Baluev's portfolio, a series of photographs portray the reconfiguration of a traditional Slavic New Year's celebration as a "tree celebration" (*elka*). The entry in his diary seems to suggest that Baluev documented the celebration simply because at the darkest time of year it was difficult to take any pictures outside.

**1 January 1939, Tura.** Today we allowed ourselves to relax in our sleeping bags as long as we wished. We got up at 12 o'clock. It was a clear day, minus 51 degrees. Tura was sitting in clouds of steam and smoke. The visibility was not more than 70-100 *sazhen*. In the sky one could see that the sun was peeking up far away (but it didn't warm us). By 2 o'clock there was the fog before the sunset and by 3 o'clock people were already lighting lamps in their flats. It is very boring. At 4pm the procurator came by to visit. [...] at 7pm I photographed the New Year's tree in the school.



Fig. 15.16 New Year's tree celebration at the secondary school.  
© Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, (KKKM 3759), all rights reserved.

In Fig. 15.16, we see a group of children standing before the festive tree adorned in an array of costumes representing various nationalities (Cossack militiamen, Russian peasants and possibly Uzbeks), iconic labourers (such as a sailor), as well as animals from fairy tales (a fox or wolf, etc.). This looks like a relatively familiar spectacle of organised youth theatre in the winter holiday season. The Soviet New Year tradition eclipsed the old Orthodox Christmas, which was celebrated on 7 January. The festival culture of the officially atheist state was an important element in the production of everyday Soviet socialism that stripped old festivals of their religious symbolism and remade them as non-spiritual celebrations of human community and national patriotism. The costumes in this photograph appear to be part of a staged programme, perhaps in part celebrating the communist international – an aspirational community of happy communist nationalities. The calendric marker of the decorated tree and the masks demarcate a carnival time defined by collective celebration even at the most remote edges of the Soviet empire.



## Conclusion

Although overtly focused on documenting Soviet futures, Baluev's images from the Northern Expedition came, more often than not, to be consulted by historians, museum workers and anthropologists in an effort to document the vanishing past. The two enterprises are of course linked, since a view to the past can give an impression of the tremendous distance a society has travelled. Savoskul's Russian-language overview of the Northern Expedition has done the most to document the way that Baluev's images were circulated and cited. Savoskul's interest in the development of the security state leads him to note that

[...] the photographs of I. I. Baluev even came to the need of the employees of the GULAG. In December of 1954, the Museum received a letter on the letterhead of the Political Division of the NKVD Noril'sk Labour Education Camp. It turned out that in preparation for the publication of a book celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Komsomol [the agency] was lacking photographic material on the life and living conditions of the 'indigenous population of the Taimyr National District which was absolutely necessary to illustrate the introduction to the collection'.<sup>55</sup>

Baluev's images began to circulate among anthropologists and museum workers, specialists in the representation of cultural traditions. In 1939, the Russian Ethnographic Museum requested copies of the material from the Northern Expedition, perhaps including photographs.<sup>56</sup> A selection of his photographs was sent in 1941 to the Museum of Ethnography and Anthropology in Leningrad in order to enrich their collections on the native peoples of central Siberia.<sup>57</sup> At least one public exhibit was organised in Krasnoyarsk from the materials of the Northern Expedition to illustrate "the progressiveness of Leninist-Stalinist Nationality policies in the backward regions of the USSR".<sup>58</sup> In all cases it was others who selected and circulated the images on Baluev's behalf.

Although the use of these images to create a sense of distance from the past is quite understandable, we feel that it misrepresents the spirit of this collection. In this article we placed our emphasis on how this photographer tried to balance inherited styles of field photography, the difficult technical challenges of winter work in the sub-Arctic and a rather strict laundry-list

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55 Savoskul, "Etnograf Krasnoyarskogo muzeia", p. 116 (note 9).

56 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

58 The date and content of this exhibit unfortunately is not known, although one would expect it to have taken place the early 1940s. KKKM, 1842-1-599, pp. 4, 6.

of requisite topics with an element of intuition and style. We argue that this particular photographer during this troubled time felt limitations and saw opportunities, and that this comes out strongly in his images. For example, one of Baluev's photographs was published in an early twenty-first century English-language monograph documenting the effects of the redistributive state on the psychology and ways of life of forest hunters (Fig. 15.17).<sup>59</sup>



Fig. 15.17 Children performing exercises under a portrait of Stalin (a small portrait of the assassinated Bolshevik leader, Sergei Kirov, is behind the teacher's head) (EAP016/4/1/1246). © Krasnoyarsk Museum, Siberia, all rights reserved.

<sup>59</sup> Nikolai V. Ssorin-Chaikov, *The Social Life of the State in Subarctic Siberia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

This photograph, taken in the boarding school in Tura, portrays a group of young school children happily conducting their lessons under a gigantic image of Josef Stalin in the background. In the book it was selected to evoke a sinister Orwellian tone. However, when taken in context with the rest of the collection, the photograph was likely composed to illustrate a comforting form of social inclusion.<sup>60</sup>

This particular exercise also illustrates a human side to one of the more technocratic institutions of modern life — the archive itself. As we mentioned several times in this chapter, there are few social memories or material remains of the life and work of Baluev other than his photographs and the personnel files housed in the KKKM. Without the archive itself, and indeed without the intervention of the EAP, the vision and words of this artist might have disappeared. Just as his glass-plates provided a window onto vanishing lives, the archive has given us an important window onto Baluev's work and life.<sup>61</sup>

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60 David G. Anderson and Craig Campbell, "Picturing Central Siberia: The Digitization and Analysis of Early Twentieth-Century Central Siberian Photographic Collections", *Sibirica*, 8 (2009), 1-42 (p. 30, Fig. 17).

61 The digitisation of the Baluev archive was primarily funded by a grant from the Arcadia Foundation administered by the British Library as part of the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP016). The work on the attributions and the writing of this article was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC ES/K006428/1), "Etnos: A Life History of the Etnos Concept Among the Peoples of the North". We are very grateful to the Krasnoyarsk Territory Regional Museum for permission to reproduce all the images in this article. We would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers and the volume editor for their highly detailed comments, which greatly improved the manuscript. Finally, we would like to thank Zoe Todd for her last-minute help in formatting and proofing the chapter.

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## 16. Archiving a Cameroonian photographic studio

David Zeitlyn

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In 2005, I helped to organise an exhibition of the work of Joseph Chila and Samuel Finlak, two Cameroonian studio photographers, at the National Portrait Gallery, London.<sup>1</sup> This arose from my then twenty-year involvement as a social anthropologist working in Cameroon. Chila later introduced me to his “patron”, Jacques Toussele, who had taught him photography in the early 1960s (Figs. 16.1-16.4). Together we made several visits to “Photo Jacques” in Mbouda, Western Province, and I was shown the pile of boxes containing what I now know to be approximately 45,000 medium format negatives and some uncollected prints: the legacy of Toussele’s forty-year career.<sup>2</sup> The collection is an unparalleled archive of local photographic practices spanning several decades. Among the negative archives of the studios, as well as administrative (identity) photographs, we found marriage photographs, family groups, new babies and young couples. Others mark funerals and in some cases illness. Road traffic accidents and buildings under construction are among the other types of image.

With the help of the British Library’s Endangered Archives Programme (EAP), the negatives have been scanned and catalogued.<sup>3</sup> This was the first step in ensuring their long-term survival and making them available for a wide

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1 See *Joseph Chila and Samuel Finlak: Two Portrait Photographers in Cameroon*, ed. by Ingrid Swenson (London: Peer, 2005).

2 No glass plate negatives — as used in the 1960s in the camera shown (Fig. 16.1) — have survived, although a very small number of plastic plates were found and have been scanned. The archive covers the period from approximately 1970 to 1990.

3 EAP054: Archiving a Cameroonian photographic studio, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP054](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP054).



range of different research purposes to scholars in Cameroon and elsewhere. I prepared an application to the EAP after discussing the possibility with Toussele, who was bleak about the prospects for black-and-white photography. The archive project gave him and his photographs a new lease of life as well as the hope of a renewed income. At the time of writing in 2014, the negatives remain in Toussele's personal possession, and thus the archival story has not yet finished. The project is unlike cases of "digital repatriation" in that the images never left Cameroon; however, most Cameroonians, even in the Mbouda area, had and have no idea that the negatives survive. Therefore, digitisation will open the collection to wider access in the longer term, with parallels to some of the earlier "repatriation" projects such as *Digital Himalaya*.<sup>4</sup>



Fig. 16.1 Jacques Toussele with a plate camera in 1965.  
© Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND.

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4 See the *Digital Himalaya* website at <http://www.digitalhimalaya.com>. See also Mark Turin, "Born Archival: The Ebb and Flow of Digital Documents from the Field", *History and Anthropology*, 22 (2011), 445-60.



Fig. 16.2 Jacques Toussele in 2001. Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND.

More than a bare collection of negatives, Toussele's photographs offer a rare archive of local photographic practices, now documented with his assistance (Toussele still lives in the community where these photographs were taken). In its relative completeness and range of subject matter, the archive provides a way of contextualising the work of the few internationally famous African photographers. For all their achievements, we should not let Seydou Keïta, Malick Sidibé and a few others stand for the whole of Africa.<sup>5</sup>

Since its pioneering work began in the late 1970s,<sup>6</sup> there has been an explosion of both art historical and anthropological interest in African photography. Exhibitions such as *In/Sight* at the Guggenheim, New York in 1996, and similar displays in Paris and the United Kingdom, are the proof.<sup>7</sup>

5 See *Seydou Keïta*, ed. by André Magnin (Zurich: Scalo, 1997). For parallels from Togo and Ivory Coast, see Jean-François Werner, "La photographie de famille en Afrique de l'ouest: une méthode d'approche ethnographique", *Xoana*, 1 (1993), 35-49; and idem, "Twilight of the Studios in Ivory Coast", in *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography*, ed. by Pascal Martin Saint Léon and N'Goné Fall (Paris: Revue Noire, 1999), pp. 92-103.

6 For example, Stephen Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves", *African Arts*, 12 (1978), 52-59.

7 For more on the Paris exhibition, see Anne-Marie Bouttiaux, Alain D'Hoogue and Jean

Several books published in the 1990s attest to widening interest among art historians and other researchers in non-western photography. For example, Christopher Pinney discussed colonial and Indian influences on image-making in India, while Deborah Poole considered ideas of race and image in the Andes; Elizabeth Edwards provided an overview of the uses of anthropological photographs soon after.<sup>8</sup> The publications of the 1990s represent the beginning of a true art history of African photography. This research continues to examine the social roles that photographs play and the different ways in which they can be studied.<sup>9</sup>

## The cultural context of photography in Cameroon

Professional black-and-white photography in Cameroon had been under threat from colour since the 1980s. Following the introduction of new identity cards in 1998, it has now all but disappeared. The cards were issued complete with instant photographs, removing the need for black-and-white, 4cm by 4cm “passport photographs” (Figs. 16.5 and 16.8-16.9). Such black-and-white “wet photography” had meant that images could be produced easily without much technology or infrastructure (whereas printing colour images, whether film or digital, requires more complex and expensive equipment). Rural photographers could process and print the film without access to electricity. Throughout West Africa, therefore, a small supporting industry of photographers (whose ranks included Sidibé, Augustt and Keïta, mentioned above) has effectively been destroyed by the computerisation of national identity cards and the arrival of cheaper 35mm colour processing in the cities. Toussele is among many such photographers to have lost their livelihoods in Cameroon.

Although these photographers were sustained by administrative requirements (for example, the need for ID photographs), such requirements did not fully determine the kinds of images they could take. Bureaucratic

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Loup Pivin, *L'Afrique par elle-même: un siècle de photographie africaine* (Paris: Revue Noire, 2003). For the UK exhibition, see Kobena Mercer, *Self-Evident* (Birmingham: Ikon Gallery, 1995). An overview is presented in *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography*, ed. by Saint Léon and Fall.

8 See Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs, Envisioning Asia* (London: Reaktion, 1997); Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

9 See work in collections such as *The African Photographic Archive*, ed. by Darren Newbury and Christopher Morton (London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming in 2015); *Photography in Africa: Ethnographic Perspectives*, ed. by Richard Vokes (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012); and *Portraiture and Photography in Africa: African Expressive Cultures*, ed. by John Pepper and Elisabeth L. Cameron (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013).

demands provided a secure economic basis for the studios and rendered the cost of other photographs affordable for clients (Figs. 16.5 and 16.17).



Fig. 16.3 The studio in 1973 (EAP054/1/123/56).  
© Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 16.4 The studio building in 2006. Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 16.5 A street seller (EAP054/1/54/58). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 16.6 Portrait for an ID card (EAP054/1/94/167). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 16.7 Portrait of an elderly man with spear and pipe (EAP054/1/68/125).  
© Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 16.8 Portrait for an ID card (EAP054/1/177/24). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 16.9 Portraits for school ID cards. Double exposure on a single negative (EAP054/1/52/144). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND.

To give a more concrete idea of the relative frequency of the different kinds of photographs found in the archive, just over half of the total of 46,504 are passport-style photographs for national identity cards. Recreational images include many groups of family or friends (3,522 images contain more than two people) as well as photographs of babies. I note that there are almost as many images of road traffic accidents (191) as there are of weddings (212). There are also a small number of photographs taken in hospital showing bandaged patients recovering after surgery. I have done other such counts with Cameroonian contemporaries of Toussele, and the relative percentages are similar.<sup>10</sup>

It must also be noted that even identity card photographs are of considerable research interest, especially when one examines the entire negative and not just the head and shoulders which were printed for the passport-style image. This raises a host of problems and issues about representation and analysis (by whom and of what) which, to my mind, gives this project a dynamic tension. The analysis of individual photographs or groups of photographs

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<sup>10</sup> I surveyed the work of Samuel Finlak and Joseph Chila, as well as a smaller sample of negatives from Photo Royale, Banyo.

are problematic in many different senses. They are transformed by being archived and viewed as part of “a collection” in, variously, the Cameroon national archives, the university archives or a photographer’s shop.<sup>11</sup> There is a dynamic of appropriation, not only by the researcher but by the state and the photographer as well — for older identity card photos, the negatives were left with commercial photographers or the sitters (see below). Now that identity cards are digitised, there are no negatives and only government representatives can make and “own” these important images. There is no longer the possibility of reusing them for other non-bureaucratic purposes.

Between client and photographer a delicate negotiation, often unspoken, took place about props, backcloth and pose. The photographers I have interviewed are insistent that although they made suggestions and delicate adjustments, the choices of poses and props were made by the clients.<sup>12</sup> Many different conventions become visible when one compares images of similar categories taken by different photographers. In other papers I discuss some of the tropes at play, but here I am concerned more with the archival side of the project.<sup>13</sup>

## Uses of photographs

The images had many uses and these often changed over time. If the single most common reason for commissioning a photograph from one of the studio photographers was to get a passport-style print for the national identity card (or school cards for secondary school pupils), then there were also many casual or recreational uses. Photographs of families, babies, weddings and friends were taken for display, storage or discussion when albums were passed around.<sup>14</sup> Weddings, funerals, official meetings, hospital treatments and traffic accidents are among the different sorts of images found in photographers’ collections of negatives.

In some cases, a single print or image could serve different purposes over time: the ID photos of the elderly are in many cases the only surviving

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11 For further discussion, see David Zeitlyn, “Redeeming Some Cameroonian Photographs: Reflections on Photographs and Representations”, in *The African Photographic Archive*, ed. by Newbury and Morton.

12 The main interviews were with Toussele, Chila and Finlak, but I also spoke with several other photographers in Adamaoua, Central, Northwest and West Regions of Cameroon.

13 My other papers include David Zeitlyn, “A Dying Art?: Archiving Photographs in Cameroon”, *Anthropology Today*, 25/4 (2009), 23-26; and idem, “Photographic Props/The Photographer as Prop: The Many Faces of Jacques Toussele”, *History and Anthropology*, 21 (2010), 453-77.

14 For an early description of how albums were used to introduce families to strangers, see Janheinz Jahn, *Durch Afrikanische Türen: Erlebnisse Und Begegnungen in Westafrika* (Frankfurt: Fischer Bücherei, 1967 [1960]), pp. 169-72.



photographs of grandparents. After a death, the identity card may be copied for an enlarged print to be displayed on the wall. Such photographs are also on show in funerary celebrations, the so-called “cry-dies” which are widespread in west Cameroon.<sup>15</sup> Photographs were sent by villagers to relatives in town (e.g. for secondary education). Those at school together in the towns exchanged photographs before they graduated and scattered, some returning to their villages of origin, others moving to other cities in search of employment.

Sometimes prints were brought back to the studio to be copied (in literal photocopies). Where these were Jacques’ own work, we can sometimes compare the original negative with the copy of the original print. This comparison can reveal a great deal about his dark-room practices, and about the ways in which the negatives (which were scanned full-frame) were actually used to create prints.



Fig. 16.10 A photocopy of a print of a man standing, showing how the original negative was cropped (EAP054/1/4/145). © Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND.

<sup>15</sup> See the film *Funeral Season (La saison des funérailles): Marking Death in Cameroon*, dir. by Matthew Lancit (2010).



Fig. 16.11 Original negative for the print shown in Fig. 16.10 (EAP054/1/50/562).  
© Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND.

## Copyrights and permissions

The convention among studio photographers in Cameroon (and elsewhere in West Africa) was a two-tier pricing structure. Clients paid a certain amount per print but had to make an additional payment if they wanted the negative as well. The archiving project is therefore strictly concerned with the negatives the clients chose not to redeem. Moreover, it is impossible to get permission from the people who commissioned the photographs: Toussele did not keep records of his clients, hence we have no means of contacting them. As is conventional in photographic copyright law, the assumption is that the owner of the negative holds the copyright, and this has been reserved by Toussele. He signed a licence with the EAP allowing the negatives to be scanned and the scans to be distributed for non-commercial purposes only. All commercial rights are reserved by

him, and the London-based charity, Autograph ABP, are acting as his commercial agents.

## Vulnerability

Until our project began, Toussele's collection was vulnerable.<sup>16</sup> It was stored in a back room of the studio under a leaking roof. When I opened several boxes at random they showed signs of deterioration and damage — some negatives had stuck together (Figs. 16.12 and 16.13). The negatives are of medium format and mainly high quality (good contrast and well-fixed). Many were very dusty and had suffered from the damp; it was necessary to wash them before copying. This work was undertaken by Emmanuel Noupembong, a former apprentice of Toussele who had recently retired from service as a photographer for the Cameroonian government.

Toussele is ageing and not in the best of health. He collaborated with the project team of four people to provide basic documentation. He was also able to recognise some of the people in the photographs, enabling future research to be undertaken and thus greatly enhancing the importance of the archive. However, it should be noted that recognising someone is not the same as knowing their name — often all we could record was that this person came from that village.

Nonetheless, it is anticipated that the archive will enable scholars to raise a wide range of issues about the presentation of self, changing fashions and global patterns of influence as mediated by local norms of appropriate behaviour in public. An example might be the influence of magazines such as *Vogue* and *Paris Match* which in the 1970s led some young women to be photographed in daring mini-dresses, and some men to be pictured parading in trousers known locally as "*patte d'éléphant*" ("elephant's foot"), the widest of flares. The Toussele archive permits a systematic examination of modes of displaying "modernity" and of being fashionable. I look forward to a new generation of African historians and scholars exploring the archive in ways I cannot imagine.

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16 It is very likely that, had I not been in touch with Toussele, the collection of negatives would have been burnt or discarded when he left his studio. I have met many photographers from his generation who have not retained their black-and-white negatives. Many reasons are given, the most common being that "since no one is interested any more, there is no money in it".



Fig. 16.12 Baptism. Damaged negative (EAP054/1/44/45).  
© Jacques Toussele, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 16.13 Negatives before scanning. Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND.

## Archival realities

Originally it was proposed to use digital SLR cameras to copy the negatives, but further consultation and testing persuaded me that higher quality could be achieved with dedicated negative scanners. Moreover, during the initial phase of the project an Epson scanner was available which could scan direct to a memory card without an intermediary computer. It was originally planned that Toussele and Chila would copy the collection, but this proved impossible in practice. Between the application's submission and its acceptance, the owner of the studio building in Mbouda decided to redevelop, and so Toussele was given notice to quit by his landlord. My arrival was fortuitous, and I was able to help him clear out the studio. In the end, the negatives were temporarily taken from the studio to the British Council Library in Yaoundé, where they were scanned by an operator trained specifically for the project.

After scanning, the memory cards were used to make duplicate DVDs in a standalone burner. Of the DVDs, one went to the British Library where it was eventually made available online, and the other went back to Toussele so that he has his own set of the scans. A Cameroonian coordinator made prints from the DVDs on an ordinary laser printer; these were then sent with data forms back to Mbouda, where a small team worked with Toussele to produce basic documentation of the images (Fig. 16.14). The results were typed up in a database (the basis of the archive's catalogue).



Fig. 16.14 The documentary team at work in Mbouda.  
Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND.

The project produced a reference digital archive, licensed for free educational use, based on the surviving negatives and reference prints in Toussele's studio.<sup>17</sup> Copies on hard drives were deposited at the National Archives in Yaoundé (which supported the project from the outset), at the University of Dschang (which is the nearest university to Mbouda), and at the University of Ngaoundéré (which already has experience of archiving digital photographs through its collaboration with the University of Tromsø on the archives of the early Norwegian missionaries), as well as at the British Council Library in Cameroon.

## Looking to the future

Now completed, the archive provides raw material for a wide range of different research projects. An example of what is possible may be found in the work of Katie McKeown, who made a brief visit to Mbouda when studying for her master's degree in 2007.<sup>18</sup> Her research led to a small exhibition of Toussele's work at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford in 2007-2008. As this book goes to press in 2015, a documentary film made by Régis Talla about Toussele and his peers is in production, and a research student (funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in collaboration with the British Library) has started field research in Cameroon.

I hope Toussele's collection will inspire other archiving work and enable many different new research projects. Moreover, as was indicated at the beginning of this essay, I hope that such archives allow the history of African photography to be written on the basis of a large and representative sample rather than a few exemplary cases.<sup>19</sup>

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17 The archive is available at [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP054](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP054)

18 Katie McKeown, "Studio Photo Jacques: A Professional Legacy in Western Cameroon", *History of Photography*, 34 (2010), 181-92.

19 The project could not have taken place without the generous support of the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme. In Cameroon, the Yaoundé office of the British Council have provided invaluable logistical support to the NGO "AAREF", which has dealt with the everyday running of the project. The Cameroon National Archives have also encouraged the project from its inception. At the University of Kent (where I was based while the archiving took place), staff in the university's photographic unit were extremely helpful in helping me move from theory to practice. An earlier version of this article appeared as David Zeitlyn, "Archiving a Cameroonian Photographic Studio with the Help of the British Library 'Endangered Archives Programme'", *African Research and Documentation*, 165 (2009), 13-26.

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# 17. Music for a revolution: the sound archives of Radio Télévision Guinée

*Graeme Counsel*

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I first travelled to West Africa in 1990. With little money and even less experience I crossed the Sahara via Morocco and spent a few weeks in Mauritania before returning home. This brief voyage had given me just a glimpse of the region, but it was sufficient to drive my determination to return. I was compelled to go to West Africa because of my interest in the origins of the Blues, and my research led me on a journey to trace its roots via the trans-Atlantic slave trade from Africa to the New World.<sup>1</sup> Through my research I had discovered the music of West Africa's Mandé *griots*, and this inspired my broader enquiries into the music of the region.

The Mandé are one of the largest ethnic groups in West Africa. Descendants from the formation of the Empire of Mali in the thirteenth century AD, today they number approximately twenty million people with significant populations in the nations of Mali, Senegal, Guinea Bissau and The Gambia. In Guinea they are known as *Maninka*. A *griot*<sup>2</sup> is a member of one of the Mandé's endogamous social groups, the *nyamakala*, which includes blacksmiths, weavers and potters. *Griots* fulfil a multiplicity of roles in Mandé communities, including that of genealogists, arbiters, and masters of ceremonies at life events (births, circumcisions, weddings and

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1 Graeme Counsel, *Mande Popular Music and Cultural Policies in West Africa: Griots and Government Policy since Independence* (Saabrücken: VDM Verlag, 2009).

2 *Griot* is the French term for these musicians. It denotes a male musician, with *griotte* referring to a female musician. In this text it is used in a non-gender specific sense. Local terms for *griots* include *djely* and *djelymoussou*, for the male and female musician respectively.



funerals). They have been described as “singer-historians”,<sup>3</sup> and they maintain an extensive repertoire of oral histories which are passed from one generation to the next. These histories are often performed as songs.<sup>4</sup>

During a trip through Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire in 1994, I purchased a wide variety of local recorded music. The age of vinyl recordings had long since passed in West Africa, with newer mediums such as the audio cassette being the format of choice throughout the region at this time. In Guinea, however, I came across many local vinyl releases produced by a company called Syliphone, the national recording label of Guinea. I started to collect Syliphone’s vinyl discs from markets, locals, and wherever I could find them. The catalogue numbers of the discs indicated that more than 100 recordings had been released.

The Syliphone 33.3 rpm and 45 rpm discs that I was collecting had many features that set them apart from other African recordings of the era. A lot of care had gone into their production: the cover art was high quality glossy colour; the lyrics of the songs were often provided; the musicians were named; and lengthy annotations providing a musicological analysis were featured on many of the back covers. Another remarkable feature was the excellent quality of the audio. The sound engineer’s positioning of the microphones, the subtle use of echo effects, and the fidelity of the production were of the most exceptional standard when compared with recordings of a similar type. Such high quality audio had captured Guinea’s musicians at their best, and they clearly rivalled, if not surpassed, the great singers and groups from neighbouring Mali and Senegal.

Upon returning to Australia, I discovered that not only was scholarly research concerning the music of Guinea almost non-existent, but that of the few published discographies of West African music none could produce a complete list of Syliphone recordings.<sup>5</sup> It became apparent that the only way to discover more about Syliphone was to obtain more of its catalogue. As my Syliphone collection began to grow, so did my efforts to re-create the

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3 Debra DeSalvo, *The Language of the Blues: From Alcorub to Zuzu* (New York: Billboard, 2006), p. 116.

4 Thomas A. Hale, *Griots and Griottes: Masters of Words and Music* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1998); Eric Charry, *Mande Music: Traditional and Modern Music of the Maninka and Mandinka of Western Africa* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000); and Counsel, *Mande Popular Music*.

5 Ronnie Graham, *Stern’s Guide to Contemporary African Music*, 2 vols (London: Pluto Press, 1988 and 1992); John Collins, *West African Pop Roots* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992); and Charry, *Mande Music*.

complete discography. I returned to West Africa on subsequent occasions to continue my research, and each time I sought Syliphone recordings. I began to publish my discographies<sup>6</sup> and research,<sup>7</sup> and had made contact with African music collectors and experts, including John Collins, Günter Gretz, Stefan Werdekker and Flemming Harrev. Of all of Africa's major recording labels we held Syliphone in very high regard.

During my doctoral fieldwork in Guinea in 2001, I met with personnel from the sound archives of the national broadcaster, Radio Télévision Guinée (RTG). Enquiries concerning Syliphone revealed that a significant section of the RTG's audio collection had been destroyed during an attempted coup in 1985. The building had been bombed by artillery and the collection of Syliphone discs was lost. I was shown some audio recordings on reel-to-reel magnetic tape that consisted of unreleased recordings by Guinean orchestras of the Syliphone era. I surmised that these were the master tapes for potential Syliphone releases. A handwritten list of some fifty of these audio reels was produced, which I understood to be the archive's complete holdings. The idea of a project to preserve these reels came to mind: a project that would not only re-create the complete recording catalogue of Syliphone but preserve its extant master tapes. I had been informed of the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) through a colleague, so I began to formulate a project proposal.

## The project context

On 28 September 1958, Guineans voted in a referendum to choose between total independence from France or autonomy within a confederation of French administered states. Guineans voted overwhelmingly for independence, and on 2 October 1958 they became the first of France's colonies in Africa to become independent.<sup>8</sup> Guinea's bold demand for freedom defined the

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6 In addition to the Syliphone catalogue, I have created discographies of major West African recording labels including N'Dardisc, Mali Kunkan, Volta Discobel, Safie Deen, Djima, Club Voltaïque du Disque and Société Ivoirienne du Disque. These are located at my web site, Radio Africa, <http://www.radioafrica.com.au>

7 Graeme Counsel, "Popular Music and Politics in Sékou Touré's Guinea", *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 26/1 (2004), 26-42; and idem, "Music in Guinea's First Republic" and "The Return of Mali's National Arts Festival", in *Mande-Manding: Background Reading for Ethnographic Research in the Region South of Bamako*, ed. by Jan Jansen (Leiden: Leiden University Department of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, 2004).

8 Ruth Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964).

nation in the post-colonial era, though it came at a high cost. In a systematic and calculated process, France withdrew all assistance and support, and introduced a range of punitive economic measures that both impoverished and isolated the new nation.<sup>9</sup> In a spiteful exercise, medical equipment, blueprints for the electrical and sewerage systems, electrical wiring, office fittings, uniforms for the police, rubber stamps, and cutlery, amidst a host of other items, were also removed or destroyed.<sup>10</sup> Guinea had been made an example of, and though greatly disadvantaged from its inception, the nation nevertheless entered into independence full of optimism and hope, energised by its youthful and charismatic leader, President Sékou Touré.

One of the immediate challenges for the new leader of Guinea's First Republic was the promotion of national unity.<sup>11</sup> Touré was a strong proponent of the ideology of pan-Africanism, which sought the political union of all Africans. He believed that regionalism and tribalism had been exploited by the French in order to divide Guineans, and saw the task of developing indigenous cultures as fundamental to the challenge of ridding his people of the vestiges of the colonial mentality.<sup>12</sup> Touré sought the "intellectual decolonization"<sup>13</sup> of his nation, with the idea that Guinean culture must be revitalised, restored and re-asserted:

Marx and Ghandi have not contributed less to the progress of humanity than Victor Hugo or Pasteur. But while we were learning to appreciate such a culture and to know the names of its most eminent interpreters, we were gradually losing the traditional notions of our own culture and the memory of those who had thrown lustre upon it. How many of our young schoolchildren who can quote Bossuet are ignorant of the life of El Hadj Omar? How many African intellectuals have unconsciously deprived themselves of the wealth of our culture so as to assimilate the philosophic concepts of a Descartes or a Bergson? How many young men and young girls have lost the taste for our traditional dances and the cultural value of

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9 Claude Rivière, *Guinea: The Mobilization of a People*, trans. by Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff (London: Cornell University Press, 1977).

10 Counsel, *Mande Popular Music*, p. 73; and Don R. Browne, "Radio Guinea: A Voice of Independent Africa", *Journal of Broadcasting*, 7/2 (1963), 113-22 (pp. 114-15).

11 Victoire du Bois, *Guinea: The Decline of the Guinean Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 122-23.

12 Elizabeth Schmidt, "Emancipate Your Husbands! Women and Nationalism in Guinea, 1953-1958", in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, ed. by Jean Allman, Susan Geiger and Nakanyike Musisi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 50.

13 Sékou Touré, "The Political Leader Considered as the Representative of a Culture", *Blackpast.org*, 1959, <http://www.blackpast.org/1959-sekou-toure-political-leader-considered-representative-culture>

our popular songs; they have all become enthusiasts for the tango or the waltz or for some singer of charm or realism.<sup>14</sup>

In the prelude to independence Touré's political party, the *Parti Démocratique du Guinée* (PDG), utilised music as a means of disseminating its policies. Women were instrumental in this role, and from the local markets to the train stations, from the public water taps to the taxi stands, songs were the primary means of communication to the PDG's non-literate constituencies.<sup>15</sup> Upon independence, music became the focus of the government's efforts to develop an indigenous culture, and a few weeks after assuming power, the PDG created its first orchestra, the Syli Orchestre National.<sup>16</sup> The orchestra was composed of the nation's best musicians, hand-picked by the government.<sup>17</sup> Touré decried Guinean musicians who played only foreign music, stating "that if one could not play the music of one's country, then one should stop playing".<sup>18</sup> He issued a decree which banned all private orchestras from performing, and foreign music, in particular French music, was also removed from the government's radio broadcasts.<sup>19</sup> All spheres of local musical production were targeted, with the orchestra of the Republican Guard instructed to drop their colonial-era military marches and adopt the "warlike melodies, epic songs and anthems of ancient kingdoms and empires in Africa".<sup>20</sup>

In the capital, Conakry, the government supported the members of the Syli Orchestre National to form their own groups, such as Orchestre de la

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14 Ibid.

15 Schmidt, "Emancipate Your Husbands!", p. 287; and idem, *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-1958* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), p. 74.

16 African "orchestras" of this era should not be confused with concepts of classical music orchestras. Rather, they should be considered as "dance orchestras" (a widely used local term) in the vein of jazz-style or Cuban-style groups, first popular in the 1930s, whose instrumentation includes: a brass section comprising of alto and tenor saxophones, and trumpets; three to four electric guitars, including bass; timbales; congas; claves; and a drum kit. Ten or more musicians and singers comprise an average orchestra in the African context. See Collins, *West African Pop Roots*; Charry, *Mande Music*; and Counsel, *Mande Popular Music*.

17 Guinean National Commission for UNESCO, "Cultural Policy in the Revolutionary People's Republic of Guinea", in *Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies*, 51 (Paris: UNESCO, 1979), p. 80; and Jean-Jacques Mandel, "Guinée: La long marche du blues Manding", *Taxiville*, 1 (1986), 36-38.

18 Sékou Camara, "Sékou Camara dit le Gros, membre-fondateur du Bembeya Jazz National de Guinée", interview by Awany Sylla, *Africa Online*, 20 December 1998.

19 Browne, "Radio Guinea", pp. 114-15; and Gérald Arnaud, "Bembeya se réveille", *Africultures*, 1 November 2002, <http://www.africultures.com/php/?nav=article&no=2626>

20 Wolibo Dukuré, *La festival culturel national de la République Populaire Révolutionnaire de Guinée* (Conakry: Ministère de la Jeunesse des Sports et Arts Populaire, 1983), p. 58 (translation mine).

Bonne Auberge, Camara et ses Tambourinis, and Orchestre du Jardin de Guinée.<sup>21</sup> The government encouraged these new orchestras to compose songs that befitted the era of independence, as demonstrated by a series of ten LPs released from 1961 to 1963 by the American label Tempo International. These discs represent the first commercial recordings of Guinean music of the independence era, and were titled “Sons nouveau d’une nation nouvelle [New Sounds from a New Nation]”. Guinea’s musicians were encouraged to incorporate rhythms and melodies from the traditional musical repertoires into their new compositions, and thus transpose traditional Guinean music to a dance-orchestra setting.<sup>22</sup>

The Guinean government’s proactive approaches to creating orchestras and directing music broadcasting are early examples of policies of cultural nationalism. These became formalised when the government adopted *authenticité* as its official cultural policy. *Authenticité* was a philosophy that promoted a return to the values, ethics and customs found in “authentic” African traditions. Where its predecessor, *négritude*, sought “a symbiosis with other cultures”,<sup>23</sup> the proponents of *authenticité* rejected such overtures as pandering to the West. *Authenticité* was entirely Afrocentric, and it called for “a self-awareness of ancestral values”.<sup>24</sup> In Guinea this was achieved under the catchcry of “*regard sur le passé* [look at the past]”, a phrase that gained wide currency in the region following the release of a Syliphone LP recording of the same title.<sup>25</sup> Under *authenticité*, Guinea’s musicians were encouraged to research the musical folklore of their regions and incorporate aspects such as the melodies, lyrics and themes into their new compositions. In effect, they were being asked to “look at the past” for their artistic inspiration, and thus re-connect Guinean society to its cultural and political history. Through this practice, the Guinean nation could advance

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21 Interview with Linké Condé, *Chef d’orchestre* Keletigui et ses Tambourinis, Conakry, 24 December 2013. All interviews were conducted by the author, unless otherwise stated.

22 Bertrand Lavaine, “Independence and Music: Guinea and Authenticity. A Politicised Music Scene”, *RFI Music*, 3 May 2010, [http://www.rfimusique.com/musiqueen/articles/125/article\\_8351.asp](http://www.rfimusique.com/musiqueen/articles/125/article_8351.asp); and Mandel, pp. 36-38.

23 Leopold Senghor, cited in Stephen H. Grant, “Léopold Sédar Senghor, Former President of Senegal”, *Africa Report*, 28/6 (1983), 61-64 (p. 64).

24 Michael Onyebuchi Eze, *The Politics of History in Contemporary Africa* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 120.

25 Bembeya Jazz National, *Regard sur le passé* (Syliphone, SLP 8, c. 1968). See also Lansiné Kaba, “The Cultural Revolution, Artistic Creativity, and Freedom of Expression in Guinea”, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14/2 (1976), 201-18.

because, as Touré declared, “each time we adopt a solution authentically African in its nature and its design, we will solve our problems easily”.<sup>26</sup>

Having banned all orchestras, the PDG set about creating new groups. The Guinean state is divided into more than thirty regions, and in each regional capital city the government created and sponsored an orchestra.<sup>27</sup> Select musicians from the Syli Orchestre National were given the task of training the musicians of the new orchestras in the basics of composition and performance.<sup>28</sup> The entire programme was state-sponsored, with musical instruments and equipment provided free of charge to all musicians in the orchestras. Those who were members of the national orchestras were placed on the government payroll, with such investment in culture coming at a great financial cost. Musical instruments and equipment, such as saxophones, amplifiers, electric guitars, drum kits, microphones, etc., could not be obtained locally, so the government flew a senior musician to Italy. There he purchased the equipment for all of the orchestras in Guinea, which by the mid-1960s had grown to over forty.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the creation of orchestras, in each regional capital the government also created theatrical troupes, traditional music ensembles, and dance groups, who together formed artistic companies who represented their region.<sup>30</sup> To encourage their endeavours and to showcase their talent, the government built or redeveloped performance venues in each regional capital.

The creation of troupes and venues was supported by the establishment of annual arts festivals. The first of these were held in 1960 and were known as the *Compétition Artistique Nationale*. The format of the festivals saw troupes from Guinea’s regions compete against each other in performance categories, such as ballet or theatre. The competition rounds took place over several months and culminated in a series of finals which were held in Conakry. In 1962, orchestras performed at the festivals for the first time, and the following year the competition expanded into a two-week event,

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26 Cited in Ladipo Adamolekun, *Sékou Touré’s Guinea: An Experiment in Nation Building* (London: Methuen, 1976), p. 365.

27 Counsel, *Mande Popular Music*, pp. 281-83; Nomi Dave, “Une Nouvelle Révolution Permanente: The Making of African Modernity in Sékou Touré’s Guinea”, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 45/4 (2009), 455-71; and Philip Sweeney, “Concert Review”, *Rock Paper Scissors*, 29 June 2003, [http://www.rockpaperscissors.biz/index.cfm/fuseaction/current.articles\\_detail/project\\_id/102/article\\_id/885.cfm](http://www.rockpaperscissors.biz/index.cfm/fuseaction/current.articles_detail/project_id/102/article_id/885.cfm)

28 Interview with Balla Onivogui, *chef d’orchestre* Balla et ses Balladins, Conakry, 14 August 2001; and Lavaine, “Independence and Music”.

29 Interview with Onivogui.

30 Dukuré, *Le festival culturel national*.

thus becoming the *Quinzaine Artistique et Culturelle Nationale*. Prizes were awarded in the categories of orchestra, ballet, choir, theatre, ensemble instrumental, and folklore.<sup>31</sup> When Guinea organised its *Premier Festival National des Arts, de la Culture, et du Sport*, over 8,000 committees at the district level sent delegates to compete, resulting in more than 10,000 competitors taking part in the festival. Guinea thus proclaimed its place as “the uncontested metropolis for the rehabilitation and development of the African cultural personality in all of its authenticity and its eminent human riches”.<sup>32</sup>

On 2 August 1968 the Guinean government announced a “Cultural Revolution”. This “third and final phase” of the transformation of the Guinean state<sup>33</sup> called for renewed efforts towards modernisation,<sup>34</sup> and it saw the transformation of Guinea’s education system through the establishment of *Centres d’Education Révolutionnaire* throughout the country. Coupled with the 2,500 *Pouvoir Révolutionnaire Locales* (local committee groups that formed the basis of the PDG’s pyramidal structure), the government had extended its influence into almost all aspects of daily life.

The Cultural Revolution further centralised cultural production in Guinea. All media was monopolised by the government, including the daily newspaper, *Horoya*, the radio broadcasts via *Radio Guinea*, and, from 1977, television via the RTG. The Guinean government had also formed its own film company, Syli-Cinema; its own photography unit, Syli-Photo; and Syliart, a regulatory body overseeing the production of literary works.<sup>35</sup> The prevalence of the word “syli” is due to its derivation from the local Susu word for “elephant”, for the elephant was the party symbol and emblem of the PDG. Guinea’s currency was re-named the syli, and so pervasive was the use of the term “syli” that Guineans lit their fires with Syli brand matches. This merging of the Guinean nation with the *syli* illustrates the totalitarian nature of Touré’s regime, an autocracy that was further embedded by the Cultural Revolution.

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31 Interview with Mamouna Touré in Ibrahima Kourouma, “Des productions artistiques a caractere utilitaire pour le peuple”, *Horoya*, 14 September 1967, pp. 1-2.

32 Annotations to *Disque souvenir du Premier Festival National de la Culture. Conakry – du 9 au 27 mars 1970. Folklores de Guinée* (Syliphone, SLP 18, 1970).

33 Anonymous, “De la Révolution Culturelle”, *Horoya*, 30 August 1968, p. 2.

34 Dave, “Une Nouvelle Révolution Permanente”, p. 465.

35 Mohamed Saliou Camara, *His Master’s Voice: Mass Communication and Single Party Politics in Guinea under Sékou Touré* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005); and Manthia Diawara, *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992).

As with its other industries, Guinea's recording industry was operated entirely by the state. In 1968 this was formalised when the government announced the creation of Syliphone, its national recording company responsible for the reproduction and distribution of Guinean music.<sup>36</sup>



Fig. 17.1 The logo of the Syliphone recording company. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY.

By the late 1960s, Guinea's cultural policy had successfully created a network of orchestras and musical groups throughout the nation. Some of the groups, such as Les Ballets Africains, were gaining international recognition. Having performed in various guises since 1947, Les Ballets Africains were nationalised following independence, and under the PDG they evolved to become the foremost dance troupe in the country, touring the world to broad acclaim.<sup>37</sup> Other Guinean artists also gained international popularity, such as Kouyaté Sory Kandia, who was promoted as the "voice of Africa", and Demba Camara, lead singer of Bembeya Jazz National.

Another star was Miriam Makeba, who was among the most successful African singers of the 1960s. Exiled from South Africa, Touré had invited her to Guinea in 1967 to attend a cultural festival. Of Guinea's *authenticité* cultural policy, she "liked the fact that the people were going back to the roots of their music and their culture".<sup>38</sup> Touré gave Makeba and her husband Stokely Carmichael a residence, and Makeba lived in Guinea from 1969 until 1986. Touré appointed her one of Guinea's best modern groups, the Quintette Guinéenne, with whom she performed Guinean songs.<sup>39</sup>

36 Anonymous, "Création en Guinée d'une Régie d'édition et d'Exploitation du disque 'Syliphone'", *Horoya*, 16 May 1968, p. 2.

37 Joshua Cohen, "Stages in Transition: Les Ballets Africains and Independence, 1959 to 1960", *Journal of Black Studies*, 43/1 (2012), 11-48.

38 Miriam Makeba and Nomsa Mwamuka, *Makeba: The Miriam Makeba Story* (Johannesburg: STE, 2010), p. 120.

39 The Quintette Guinéenne was comprised of musicians allocated from the national orchestra Balla et ses Balladins.



Guinea's orchestras, too, were also very popular on the international stage, and many were sent on tours to Eastern Bloc nations, Europe, and the United States. Their impact was greatest, however, on the African continent, where they toured extensively and played for dignitaries (as the official group representing the president) and citizens alike. Their influence was furthered by Syliphone, who presented their recordings on 33.3 rpm and 45 rpm vinyl discs.

In the 1960s West Africa's recording industry was in its infancy. Many nations lacked professional studio facilities and Guinea's fledgling broadcasting infrastructure had been sabotaged by the departing French.<sup>40</sup> Touré directed funds towards the improvement of Guinea's radio network, and by the mid-1960s Guinea had one of the largest radio transmitters in West Africa. With the assistance of the West German government, a new building was constructed which housed four recording studios and was the centre for radio (and later television) production and broadcasting. It was named the *Voix de la révolution* and it was here that Syliphone recordings were made.<sup>41</sup>

Guinea's cultural policy of *authenticité* was thus being broadcast via radio, concert tours, and commercial recordings. It had a considerable influence in the region, with Mali and Burkina Faso adopting similar approaches to national cultural production.<sup>42</sup> By the late 1960s it had spread further, with Zaïre<sup>43</sup> and then Chad also adopting *authenticité* as their national cultural policy. By the mid 1970s, *authenticité* had blossomed into a movement, and Syliphone was one of the primary mediums through which it was promoted.

From circa 1967 to 1983 Syliphone released a catalogue of 160 vinyl discs that were distinctive in content, format and style. The lyrical content of the music was often overtly political and militant in theme, and featured songs that critiqued colonialism and neo-colonialism,<sup>44</sup> extolled the virtues of socialism by exhorting citizens to unite and work for their country,<sup>45</sup> or borrowed from themes and legends found in traditional African musical repertoires.<sup>46</sup> Musically, the styles represented on the recordings were eclectic,

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40 Browne, "Radio Guinea", pp. 114-15.

41 Ibid., p. 115.

42 Robin Denselow, "Sound Politics", *The Guardian*, 3 July 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2003/jul/03/artsfeatures.popandrock>

43 Bureau Politique du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution, *Authenticité, l'Etat et le parti au Zaïre* (Zaïre: Institut Makanda Kabobi, 1977).

44 L'Ensemble Instrumental et Choral de la Radio-diffusion Nationale, *Victoire à la révolution* (Syliphone, SLP 29, 1971).

45 Balla et ses Balladins, *Fadakuru* (Syliphone, SLP 47, 1975).

46 Orchestre de la Garde Républicaine, *Tara* (Syliphone, SLP 6, c. 1967).

with the musicians adapting elements from Cuban music,<sup>47</sup> jazz,<sup>48</sup> and African popular music<sup>49</sup> to create new musical forms.<sup>50</sup> The label was progressive in presenting modern music that successfully incorporated traditional instruments, songs and melodies into an orchestra setting. In the 1960s and 1970s, Guinea's musicians were at the vanguard of contemporary African music — they were “the lighthouse to music in Africa”<sup>51</sup> — and Syliphone captured them at the peak of their abilities and recorded their music in state of the art studios. The influence of the recording label on the development of African popular music was profound, and felt throughout the region.

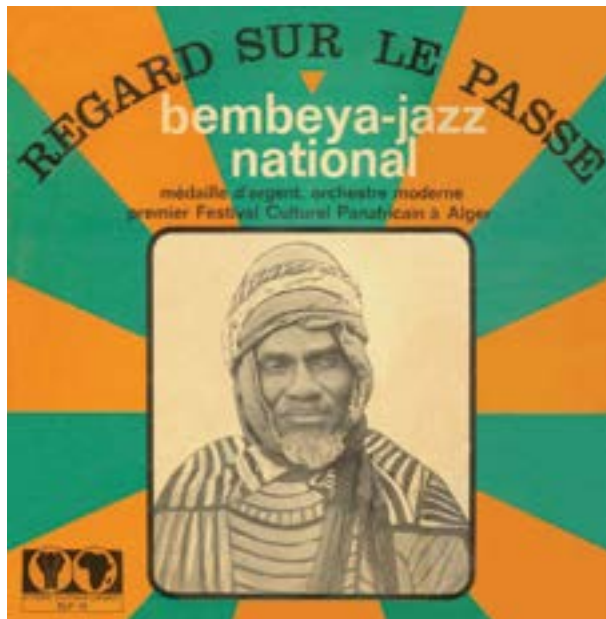


Fig. 17.2 Bembeya Jazz National, *Regard sur le passé* (Syliphone, SLP 10, c. 1969). The photo depicts Samory Touré, grandfather of President Sékou Touré, who led the insurgency against French rule in the late nineteenth century. The orchestra's version of the epic narrative in honour of his life earned them great acclaim; when it was performed at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival, held in Algiers in 1969, it won Guinea a silver medal. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY.

47 Bembeya Jazz National, *Sabor de guajira* (Syliphone, SYL 503, c. 1968); and Sweeney.

48 Diaré Ibrahima Khalil, annotations to Keletigui et ses Tambourinis, *JRDA/Guajira con tumbao* (Syliphone, SLP 519, 1970).

49 Pivi et les Balladins, *Manta lokoka* (Syliphone, SYL 549, 1972).

50 Quintette Guinéenne, *Massané Cissé* (Syliphone, SLP 54, c. 1976).

51 Interview with Métoura Traoré, *Chef d'orchestre* Horoya Band National, Conakry, 21 August 2001.

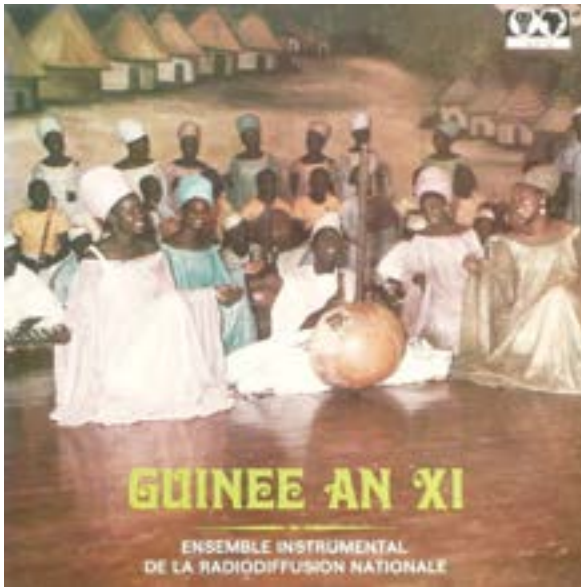


Fig. 17.3 Ensemble Instrumental de la Radiodiffusion Nationale, *Guinée an XI* (Syliphone, SLP 16, 1970). Guinea's premier traditional ensemble displays the prominence of the *griot* musical tradition, with two *koras* (first and second rows, centre) and a *balafon* (second row, far left). © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY.

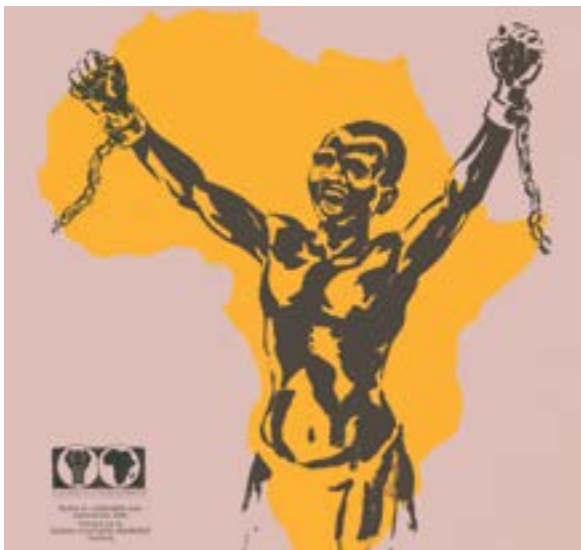


Fig. 17.4 The *verso* cover of a box set of four Syliphone LPs (Syliphone, SLP 10-SLP 13, 1970), released in recognition of the performances of Guinea's artists at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival, held in Algiers in 1969. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY.



Fig. 17.5 Bembeya Jazz National/Horoya Band National, *Concerts des Orchestres Nationaux* (Syliphone, SLP 27, 1971). Political doctrine was reinforced through Syliphone. Here the cover depicts an enemy combatant, his boat blasted, surrendering to the JRDA (*Jeunesse de la Révolution Démocratique Africaine*, the youth wing of the PDG) and the APRG (*Armée Populaire Révolutionnaire de Guinée*). © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY.



Fig. 17.6 Édition spécial de la régie Syliphone. Commémorant le 1<sup>er</sup> anniversaire de la victoire du peuple de Guinée sur l'Impérialisme International (Syliphone SLPs 26-29, 1971). A box set of four LP discs ("*Coffret special aggression*") released to celebrate Guinea's victory over the Portuguese-led forces which invaded the country in 1970. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY.



Fig. 17.7 *Horoya Band National* (Syliphone, SLP 41, c. 1973). Many of Guinea's orchestras featured the band members wearing traditional cloth. Here, an orchestra from Kankan in the north of Guinea wears outfits in the *bògòlanfini* style associated with Mandé culture. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY.



Fig. 17.8 Various Artists, *Discothèque 70* (Syliphone, SLP 23, 1971). Tradition and modernity: a compilation of music by Guinean orchestras is promoted by images from local cultural traditions. Here, a Fulbé woman is depicted. © Editions Syliphone, Conakry, under license from Syllart Records/Sterns Music, CC BY.

From around 1967, Syliphone began to release the first of its 750 songs recorded on 12-inch (33.3 rpm) and 7-inch (45 rpm) vinyl discs.<sup>52</sup> Many of the recordings would become classics of African music. Of note is the 1969 recording by Bembeya Jazz National, “Regard sur le passé”,<sup>53</sup> which presents the life of Almami Samory Touré, a national hero who fought against French rule in the nineteenth century. The orchestra’s version of his life story, performed in a style closely associated with that of the traditional *griots*, extended to over 35 minutes and used both sides of the LP — a first for a modern African recording. The group’s performance of the song (as the Syli Orchestre National) at the *Premier Festival Cultural Panafricain* held in Algiers in 1969 earned them a silver medal. In 1970 the Académie Charles Cros awarded its *Grand Prix du Disque* to a Syliphone LP by Kouyaté Sory Kandia,<sup>54</sup> a recording which featured the mezzo-soprano performing traditional *griot* songs on side A of the disc and accompanied by the modern orchestra Keletigui et ses Tambourinis on side B.

Few other African nations could demonstrate a commitment to musical culture to the extent of the Guinean government’s. Its national cultural policy of *authenticité* and of “looking at the past” had created dozens of state-sponsored orchestras who released hundreds of songs that were at the cutting edge of African music. Guinea’s musicians and arts troupes toured Africa and the world, and were a feature of the nation’s cultural festivals where they were joined by thousands of other performers. Syliphone was at the centre of this cultural movement. It was emblematic of Africa’s independence era, and captured a moment in African history when a new nation asserted its voice and placed music at the forefront of its cultural identity.<sup>55</sup>

As the voice of the revolution, Syliphone recordings also served as a bulwark for Touré’s leadership. There were many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of songs that were recorded which praised the president, thus illustrating the personality cult that was being created around the *Le Responsable Suprême et Stratège de la Révolution*, as Touré had become

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52 Guinea’s national newspaper, *Horoya*, announced the creation of Syliphone on 16 May 1968, though the vinyl discs went on sale much earlier. Advertisements in foreign magazines advertised Syliphone LPs for sale in Paris from July 1967 (*Bingo*, 1967, p. 37), and in December of that year Merriam noted that they were for sale in Dakar. Alan P. Merriam, “Music”, *Africa Report*, 13/2 (1968), 6. Personal correspondence with Geoff Bale (16 February 2014) indicates an early Syliphone disc (SLP 4) in his collection, with a handwritten date of 3 December 1966 on the *verso* cover.

53 Bembeya Jazz National, *Regard sur le passé* (Syliphone, SLP 10, c. 1969).

54 Kouyaté Sory Kandia (Syliphone, SLP 12, 1970).

55 Graeme Counsel, Annotations to *Keletigui et ses Tambourinis: The Syliphone Years* (Sterns, STCD 3031-32, 2009), p. 5.

known. “Kesso”, by Keletigui et ses Tambourinis, is one example.<sup>56</sup> The *chef d’orchestre* of the group and its lead guitarist, Linké Condé, explained the meaning of the song:

The title can be translated as “home” and it is dedicated to Sékou Touré. It says that a person will never be defeated by the words of an enemy. It compares the Guinean nation to a woman who needs to be married, so in effect the people of Guinea are married to the President. Many different praises are used in the song. It names many towns that are ready to receive the President and welcome him.<sup>57</sup>

This kind of positive imagery extended beyond praise of the president to portrayals of a utopian lifestyle. “Soumbouyaya” is a case in point, whereby a rotund and popular mythological character is associated with the bounteous wealth that is found in Guinea under the PDG: “Since the world has been created, I have not seen a country like Guinea [...] My people, the country will flourish thanks to commerce”.<sup>58</sup> The annotations to a Syliphone recording describe it as “a nourishing disc”, with its songs, such as “Labhanté”, proclaiming “Artisans, peasants, students, workers! Only work liberates! Transform the world through our work!”,<sup>59</sup> while “M’badenu” on the same disc informs the listener that “nothing is more beautiful” than to be working for your country.<sup>60</sup>

The reality of life in Guinea during the First Republic of Touré (1958-1984) was, however, far removed from that depicted on the Syliphone recordings. A weakening economy had fed discontent with the PDG and its leadership as early as 1960, when the so-called “Ibrahima Diallo” plot was uncovered.<sup>61</sup> It was the first in a long series of purported “fifth columnist” plots and subversions which were used by Touré to quell dissent and centralise power. Opposition to the president’s authority was not tolerated, with opponents of the government risking arrest, imprisonment, torture, or a death sentence in the notorious Camp Boiro prison. Others simply

56 Keletigui et ses Tambourinis, *Kesso / Chiquita* (Syliphone, SYL 513, c. 1970).

57 Interview with Linké Condé, Conakry, 18 September 2009.

58 Balla et ses Balladins, *Soumbouyaya* (Syliphone, SLP 2, c. 1967).

59 Justin Morel, Jr., Annotations to Camayenne Sofa, *A grand pas* (Syliphone, SLP 56, c. 1976) (translation mine).

60 Ibid.

61 Mohamed Saliou Camara, Thomas O’Toole and Janice E. Baker, *Historical Dictionary of Guinea*, 5th edn (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), p. 88; Alexis Arieff and Mike McGovern, “‘History is Stubborn’: Talk about Truth, Justice and National Reconciliation in the Republic of Guinea”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 55/1 (2013), 198-225 (p. 201).

disappeared. These efforts to eliminate opponents of the regime were aided by informants and loyalists who comprised some 26,000 party cells that were located in Guinea's villages, towns and cities.<sup>62</sup> Although Touré had entered the presidency with a popular mandate, Guineans were now unable to dislodge their leader.

On 22 November 1970, a Portuguese-led invasion force attacked Conakry. Although it was repelled by government and local forces, it provided the president with the concrete evidence needed to support his claims of destabilisation. The attempted invasion was followed by a wave of arrests, and the show trials and public hangings which followed did not spare members of Touré's inner circle. As the decade progressed, Guinea's economy contracted further. New laws were introduced which banned all private trade and made the smuggling of goods punishable by death. In 1976 a new plot was announced by the PDG, the "Fulbé plot", whereby members of Guinea's largest ethnic group were accused of being the enemies of socialism.<sup>63</sup> With a history of opposition to the PDG, Fulbé candidates had stood against Touré in the prelude to independence. The president now threatened their entire ethnic group with annihilation: "We have respected them, but as they do not like respect, we present them with what they like: brute force! [...] We will destroy them immediately, not by a racial war, but by a radical revolutionary war".<sup>64</sup>

By the end of the decade, approximately 25% of Guinea's population had fled to escape persecution and the rigours of life under the PDG. Such matters, however, were never referred to on Sylliphone recordings. There are no songs of dissent or any that offer even the mildest of criticisms, with all broadcast material vetted by censors prior to release to ensure conformity. There were no private groups in Guinea to voice protest, no private studios to record them, and no private media to transmit their material.

This lack of political dissent in Guinean music has recently been addressed by Nomi Dave, who notes the dominance of *griot* performance practices and their influence on Guinean music.<sup>65</sup> One of the key aspects of *jeliya*, as the *griots'* artistry is known, is the practice whereby *griots* sing praise

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62 Du Bois, *Guinea*.

63 Arieff and McGovern, "'History is Stubborn'", pp. 200-01.

64 Sékou Touré, "Le racisme Peulh, nous devons lui donner un enterrement de première classe, un enterrement définitif", *Horoya*, 29 August-4 September 1976, p. 34 (translation mine).

65 Nomi Dave, "The Politics of Silence: Music, Violence and Protest in Guinea", *Ethnomusicology*, 58 (2014), 1-29 (p. 4).



songs to their patrons. For musicians of the First Republic, their patron was the state, hence their repertoires contained numerous examples of songs which praised government figures, industries, campaigns and policies.<sup>66</sup> This alignment to political doctrine had been embedded by the nationalist political campaigns of the 1950s, whereby musicians had been mobilised to disseminate party ideologies.<sup>67</sup> Such appropriations stifled creativity and silenced the voices of protest, particularly in Guinea where performers operated within the narrowest of political confines.

A further factor that contributed to the “silence” of protest was cultural: direct criticism in West African society is considered ill-mannered to the extent of it being a social *faux pas*. It is also highly unusual for *griots* to directly criticise their patrons; any criticism is offered obliquely via analogy and metaphor. Bembeya Jazz National’s “Doni doni”,<sup>68</sup> for example, with its lyrics “Little by little a bird builds its nest, little by little a bird takes off”, caused some consternation at the highest levels as to its allusive potential *vis à vis* the large numbers of citizens fleeing Guinea.<sup>69</sup> The nation’s censors, however, were in less doubt about the *double entendre* contained in Fodé Conté’s song “Bamba toumani”,<sup>70</sup> which described a caterpillar, and how its head eats everything: the song was never released by Syliphone, and Conté fled Guinea shortly after recording it. Such musical examples are extremely rare, and few musicians dared to express anything but solidarity with the Guinean regime. The socio-political situation of the era required the artists’ creativity and conscience to be silenced, lest they risk their lives.<sup>71</sup>

Guinea’s Cultural Revolution came to a close on 26 March 1984 when Touré died suddenly of a heart attack. A week later a military coup ousted his regime and set about dismantling the cultural policies of the First Republic. It was the end of Syliphone, the end of funding for the orchestras and performance troupes, the end of the cultural festivals, and the end of *authenticité*. Colonel Lansané Conté was Guinea’s new president, and he would rule for a further 24 years. Such were the demands of allegiance on musicians that, long after Touré’s death, many

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66 Counsel, *Mande Popular Music*, pp. 91-101.

67 Ruth Schachter, “French Guinea’s RDA Folk Songs”, *West African Review*, 29 (August 1958), pp. 673, 675, 677, 681; Djibril Tamsir Niane, “Some Revolutionary Songs of Guinea”, *Presence Africaine*, 29 (1960), 101-15; and Kaba, “The Cultural Revolution”.

68 Syliphone, SLP 24, c. 1971.

69 Mohamed Saliou Camara, *His Master’s Voice*, pp. 164-66.

70 EAP catalogue number Syliphone4-165-01.

71 Cheick M. Chérif Keita, *Outcast to Ambassador: The Musical Odyssey of Salif Keita* (Saint Paul, MN: Mogoya, 2011), p. 64.

who served his government still choose to deflect rather than answer enquiries related to his rule.<sup>72</sup> Although the era of the one-party state and of Cultural Revolution has passed, the “silence” persists. It is reinforced by severe and ongoing economic hardships which make it imprudent for musicians to criticise contemporary figures, for they are tomorrow’s potential benefactors. As Dave indicates, it is a silence which allows musicians to accommodate the political regimes and to manage their lives in highly volatile contexts.<sup>73</sup>

From 1984 until 2008, under President Conté, the vast majority of the music of the First Republic was never broadcast on Guinean radio. The RTG employed censors who vetted recordings prior to broadcasting. It was a practise initiated by Touré’s regime, and during Conté’s presidency it rendered large parts of the audio collection to gather dust in the archives. Songs which praised Touré, the PDG, its leadership, or its policies were taboo, thus effectively silencing the music of the revolution. Though attempts by the Conté government to rehabilitate the era and legacy of Touré commenced in 1998,<sup>74</sup> such actions were uncoordinated, low-key and sporadic. Efforts to reconcile the Guinean nation with its past were far from a priority for Conté’s government, whose descent into nepotism, corruption and the drug trade has been well documented.<sup>75</sup> Access to the National Archives was unreliable and limited; its director explained to one researcher: “We cannot allow the public to go leafing through these documents. Can you imagine the kinds of social disruption this would cause? For the sake of peace in Guinea, those documents must not be consulted”.<sup>76</sup>

As historical documents, the audio recordings of the RTG archives could have provided a meaningful contribution to the rehabilitation process, but for 25 years this did not occur. Rather, a silence was imposed whereby it was politically expedient to erase the recordings from the cultural memory. Little effort was directed towards the preservation of the audio materials, which lay dormant in far from suitable conditions. Perhaps the RTG’s audio archive was regarded by the authorities as a tinderbox, one that was so

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72 Interview with Sékou “Bembeya” Diabaté in Banning Eyre, “Bembeya Jazz: Rebirth in 2002”, *Rock Paper Scissors*, 2002, [http://www.rockpaperscissors.biz/index.cfm/fuseaction/current.articles\\_detail/project\\_id/102/article\\_id/708.cfm](http://www.rockpaperscissors.biz/index.cfm/fuseaction/current.articles_detail/project_id/102/article_id/708.cfm)

73 Dave, “The Politics of Silence”, p. 18.

74 Tierno Siradiou Bah, “Camp Boiro Internet Memorial”, *Camp Boiro Memorial*, 2012, [http://www.campboiro.org/cbim-documents/cbim\\_intro.html](http://www.campboiro.org/cbim-documents/cbim_intro.html)

75 Alexis Arieff and Nicolas Cook, “Guinea: Background and relations with the United States”, Congressional Research Service Report 7-5700/R40703 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010).

76 M. Coulibaly, cited in Arieff and McGovern, “History is Stubborn”, p. 211.

imbued with a kind of political *nyama* (a powerful force conjured by *griots* during their performances) that it must remain hidden from the public, lest the revolution takes hold and rises from the ashes. In a political landscape that had scarred so many, the RTG's archives contained materials that would very likely reignite passions and debates. Its capacity for both harm and good resonates with attitudes to similar documents from Guinea's First Republic, insofar as they are seen to have the potential to both cleanse and destabilise society.<sup>77</sup> Whatever the government's motivation, or lack of it, the inactivity of the Conté years (1984-2008) resulted in a generation of young Guineans being denied the music of their nation's independence era. If successful, the EAP projects would bring to light that which had been hidden in the RTG's archives for decades.

## The 2008 EAP project

I arrived in Guinea in August 2008 to commence the project EAP187: Syliphone – an early African recording label.<sup>78</sup> The project worked in partnership with the *Bibliothèque Nationale de Guinée* (BNG), and was given excellent support through its director, Dr Baba Cheick Sylla. During the Touré era, Guinea had its own press, the *Imprimerie Nationale Patrice Lumumba*, and the government had established one of the best-resourced libraries in West Africa. After Touré's death, however, many of the official documents and archives were destroyed, damaged, or left scattered in various locations. Dr Sylla had spent many years gathering the materials and saving them from destruction.<sup>79</sup> The RTG had not been spared either, and following its bombing in 1985 it was thought that the collection of Syliphone recordings was permanently lost.

The aim of the EAP project was two-fold: to re-create the complete Syliphone catalogue of vinyl discs and archive the recordings in digital format; and then to locate any surviving Syliphone-era studio recordings and archive and preserve them. The project involved the cooperation of two ministries, the *Ministère de la Culture des Arts et Loisirs*, who presided over the BNG, and the *Ministère de la Communication*, who administered the RTG.

Over a period of fourteen years, I had gathered many Syliphone vinyl recordings, but not all of the collection was in good condition. Vinyl recordings scratch very easily, and Guinea's climatic extremes produced annual abundances of mould in the wet season and *harmattan* dust in the

<sup>77</sup> Arieff and McGovern, "History is Stubborn", p. 209.

<sup>78</sup> [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP187](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP187)

<sup>79</sup> Aaron Sampson, "Hard Times at the National Library", *Nimba News*, 22 August 2002, pp. 1 and 6.

dry, which caused many recordings to be in a far from pristine condition. Musicians, technicians and government officials were contacted in order to assist in the search for the best quality discs for the project. A full colour catalogue was printed, which featured each Syliphone vinyl recording with its cover both *recto* and *verso*, and which was presented to Minister Iffono and his culture ministry.

Politically, Guinea had been enduring a prolonged period of instability. Decades of corruption, cronyism and mismanagement in the government had relegated the country to the lowest reaches of the United Nation's Human Development Index. In 2007, nation-wide strikes and related protests had left dozens dead. President Conté, now in his seventies, was rumoured to be bed-ridden and close to death. On 2 October 2008, Guinea would achieve fifty years of independence, yet it was unclear how such a momentous occasion would be celebrated. Preparations were very low-key, though the *Ministère de la Culture des Arts et Loisirs* had organised for the EAP project to open for a week-long exposition at the National Museum. It remained to be seen how the project, with its large catalogue of performances by Guinea's most acclaimed and revered musicians — who faithfully exalted Touré in their songs and who lavished praise on his ideals for the nation — would be integrated into the independence festivities.

The EAP project was due to open on 29 September 2008, and to generate interest amongst the public, the RTG broadcast a television commercial for the event.<sup>80</sup> All of the Syliphone vinyl recordings had been collected, archived and catalogued by the opening date, and they were now digitised and displayed in the National Museum's exhibition centre. A large media contingent attended the opening of the exhibition, and the event was well received. With the first part of the EAP project completed, my attention now turned to the RTG sound archives. Formal enquiries had failed to deliver access to the archives, however the success of the Syliphone exposition had helped to propel the requests, and on 6 October the *Ministère de la Communication* agreed that the second stage of the archival project could commence.

Based upon a hand-written catalogue that I was shown in 2001 when conducting my doctoral research, I estimated that the RTG held approximately fifty audio reels of Syliphone era recordings. However, when I gained entry to the sound archive I saw what appeared to be thousands of reels scattered amongst rows of shelving from floor to ceiling. Many of the reels were in poor physical condition, and their preservation and digitisation were urgent.

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<sup>80</sup> *Syliphone exposition — RTG commercial* (YouTube video), uploaded by Radio Africa, 2 April 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWTPbY6Lck4>

I set to work, transferring the magnetic reels of tape to a digital medium. Recordings by Guinea's national and regional orchestras were prioritised, and with many reels at over seventy minutes, the collection represented a very large volume of work.

The EAP project was now focused on preserving music from the *Syliphone* era that had not been commercially released but which had been broadcast on its original magnetic tape format on Guinea's national radio network. As the archival project continued, the true extent of the *authenticité* policy was revealed. Audio recordings by groups and performers from every region of Guinea were uncovered.<sup>81</sup> It was apparent that the archive held great significance, not only as a resource for musicological research but also for the social sciences more broadly. Given the extent of the audio archives, however, it became clear that it would be impossible to complete the project within its timeline. In December 2008, the project concluded. 69 reels of recordings had been archived, and these contained 554 songs by Guinean orchestras.



Fig. 17.9 The Radio Télévision Guinée (RTG) offices in Boulbinet, Conakry.  
Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND.

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<sup>81</sup> A complete catalogue of all archived materials from the RTG sound archive is available at *Radio Africa*. [http://www.radioafrica.com.au/RTG\\_catalogue.html](http://www.radioafrica.com.au/RTG_catalogue.html)



Fig. 17.10 Audio reels stored in the RTG's "annexe".  
Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 17.11 Some of the audio reels were in urgent need of preservation.  
Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND.



Fig. 17.12 Archiving the audio reels and creating digital copies.  
Photo by author, CC BY-NC-ND.

## Subsequent EAP projects

In order to complete the 2008 archival project, a further application for EAP funding was made, and I returned to Guinea in July 2009.<sup>82</sup> President Conté had died on 22 December 2008, an event which heralded a military coup led by Captain Moussa “Dadis” Camara.<sup>83</sup> The *Ministère de la Culture des Arts et Loisirs* was now combined with the *Ministère de la Communication* into a single ministry, which was led by Justin Morel, Jr. This bode extremely well for the project, as JMJ (as he is colloquially known) was a former journalist who was responsible for the annotations on many of the Syliphone discs.

I estimated that the RTG held approximately 1,000 reels that required digitising and preservation. The EAP project commenced in August, under the

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82 EAP327: Guinea’s Syliphone archives, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP327](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP327)

83 Following the coup, the RTG continually broadcast the song “Armée Guinéenne” on the radio. This Syliphone recording was later used by the regime as a theme song, with the first few bars heralding its radio and television announcements. Graeme Counsel, “Music for a Coup — ‘Armée Guinéenne’: An Overview of Guinea’s Recent Political Turmoil”, *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 31.2 (2010), 94-112.

shadow of a disintegrating security situation. Public discontent with President Camara had led to street protests which were violently quelled by the military. The protests culminated on 28 September 2009 with an anti-government rally held at the national football stadium. Tens of thousands attended, only to be attacked by several units of fully armed soldiers and presidential guardsmen. Nearly 200 people were killed and more than 2,000 injured. Witnesses stated that Fulbé protestors at the rally were singled out and murdered by the military,<sup>84</sup> and there were rumours of a split in the army and of civil war. The RTG did not report any of these events, but as news of the massacre spread, people prepared to flee Conakry. It became apparent that conducting research and working at the RTG in such an environment would be impossible. The building and office complex lies at the centre of government communications and it had previously been the focus of military actions. Many governments were advising their nationals to depart, and with this the EAP project was abandoned. Before this abrupt end, the project had successfully digitised and archived 229 reels of music containing 1,373 songs.

The United Nations announced an International Commission of Inquiry into the “stadium massacre”, as it had become known, with charges of crimes against humanity to be laid on those responsible. These events caused considerable internal friction within the Guinean military government, and on 3 December 2009 an assassination attempt was made on President Camara in the small army barracks which adjoins the RTG. Camara survived, and was flown to Morocco to recuperate. After several months of convalescence, Camara was ready to return to Guinea and reclaim the Presidency, however Guinea’s interim leader – Gen. Sékouba Konaté – forbade his return. Rather, Konaté led Guinea towards democracy, and in 2010 the nation held its first democratic elections. These brought Alpha Condé to the presidency, and with stability restored, the EAP projects could recommence. Further funding to complete the archival project was granted, and it resumed in August 2012.<sup>85</sup>

Due to the uncertainty and volatility of the political situation, the project focused on preserving and archiving the oldest materials available. These audio reels required intensive conservation, for the original magnetic tape of the recordings had become brittle with age. The audio fidelity of the music, however, was still remarkably good. The EAP project’s scope had also been

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84 Anonymous, “Guinea: September 28 Massacre was Premeditated”, *Human Rights Watch*, 27 October 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/10/27/guinea-september-28-massacre-was-premeditated>

85 EAP608: Guinea’s Sylliphone archives - II, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project\\_a4d?projID=EAP608](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project_a4d?projID=EAP608)



expanded to include a small building adjacent to the RTG, known as the “annexe”. Accessing the annexe was problematic, however, for the RTG authorities had initially denied its existence. I had been inside this small archive previously and seen hundreds of audio reels, and once this was conveyed it was confirmed that the archive did in fact exist, but it contained no music, only speeches. It was only after persistent enquiries that I was permitted access to the annexe, which was perplexing. Consisting of one large room, with no climate control and water above one’s ankles when it rained, the annexe contained numerous shelves of audio reels of music stored in an *ad hoc* fashion. The purpose of the annexe, however, appeared to be to house many hundreds of reels of speeches by Sékou Touré, all stored in neat rows, the preservation of which was unfortunately outside the parameters of the project.

A further remarkable aspect of the annexe was its unusually high percentage of audio recordings by Fulbé artists. My research of Syliphone recordings had indicated a strong bias towards Maninka performers at the expense of Fulbé artists. It had been my contention that the idea to “look at the past” for cultural inspiration was in fact an invitation to look at Guinea’s Maninka past, primarily, and that figures and events associated with Maninka history were invariably the subject of songs and praise. Moreover, I claimed that Guinea’s representations of national culture as expressed through Syliphone invariably depicted a Mandé cultural aesthetic, which over time had come to dominate the (cultural) politics of the era and which was the *façade* of nationalism.<sup>86</sup> Songs performed in Maninkakan accounted for over 70% of Syliphone recordings, while those sung in Fulfulde (the language of the Fulbé, Guinea’s largest ethnic group) accounted for just 3%. In the RTG’s annexe, however, approximately 20% of the recordings were performed in Fulfulde.

In January 2013 the archiving of the audio reels held at the RTG and its annexe was completed. The EAP project had preserved, digitised, archived and catalogued 827 audio reels containing 5,240 songs. Together, the three EAP projects archived a total of 1,125 reels which contained 9,410 songs, or some 53,000 minutes of material. The RTG’s collection frameworks the entire development of Guinean music following independence, from the birth of a new style in the early 1960s to the year 2000. 90% of the material dates to the era of the First Republic of Sékou Touré. The earliest recordings archived were two reels from 1960, both of which featured *griots* (Mory and Madina Kouyaté)<sup>87</sup>

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86 Graeme Counsel, “The Music Archives of Guinea: Nationalism and its Representation Under Sékou Touré”, paper presented at the 36<sup>th</sup> Conference of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific, Perth, 26-28 November 2013, [http://afsaap.org.au/assets/graeme\\_counsel.pdf](http://afsaap.org.au/assets/graeme_counsel.pdf); and idem, *Mande Popular Music* and “Music for a Coup”.

87 EAP catalogue numbers Syliphone4-681-01 to Syliphone4-681-04.

and Ismaila Diabaté<sup>88</sup>). The earliest recordings by an orchestra presented the Orchestre Honoré Coppet from 2 February 1963,<sup>89</sup> a recording which presaged the musical styles which would later define Guinean music. Pre-Sylyphone recordings of the Syli Orchestre National,<sup>90</sup> Balla et ses Balladins,<sup>91</sup> Orchestre de la Paillote,<sup>92</sup> the 1ère Formation de la Garde Républicaine,<sup>93</sup> and Kébendo Jazz<sup>94</sup> are also in evidence.

17.1 Orchestre Honoré Coppet, “no title” (1963), 4’40”. Sylyphone2-068-02.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/no-title>

17.2 Syli Orchestre National, “Syli” (c. 1962), 4’33”. Sylyphone3-248-3.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Syli>

17.3 Balla et ses Balladins, “PDG” (c. 1970), 5’22”. Sylyphone2-089-08.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/PDG>

These early orchestra recordings reveal the strong influence of Cuban and Caribbean music, with songs performed as mambos, meringues, pachangas,

88 EAP catalogue numbers Sylyphone2-038-01 to Sylyphone2-038-04.

89 Catalogue numbers Sylyphone2-068-01 to Sylyphone2-068-07. Linké Condé suggested that the orchestra’s name had been mislabelled and was actually the Orchestre Mamadi Kourouma. Interview, 21 September 2012.

90 EAP catalogue numbers Sylyphone3-248-01 to Sylyphone3-248-11.

91 EAP catalogue numbers Sylyphone4-717-01 to Sylyphone4-717-05.

92 EAP catalogue numbers Sylyphone2-060-01 to Sylyphone2-060-06; Sylyphone4-739-01 to Sylyphone4-739-07.

93 EAP catalogue numbers Sylyphone2-067-01 to Sylyphone2-067-06; Sylyphone4-007-01 to Sylyphone4-007-06; and Sylyphone4-105-01 to Sylyphone4-105-06.

94 EAP catalogue numbers Sylyphone2-052-01 to Sylyphone2-052-04; and Sylyphone2-064-02 to Sylyphone2-064-03.

boleros, beguines, rumbas and boogaloes,<sup>95</sup> many of which were sung in less-than-fluent Spanish. Of particular interest are two reels, recorded by the Orchestre de la Brigade Féminin on 8 November 1963<sup>96</sup> and 7 November 1964.<sup>97</sup> This group was Africa's first all-female orchestra,<sup>98</sup> who would later gain worldwide fame as Les Amazones de Guinée. These, their first recordings, predated their commercial releases by twenty years.

17.4 Orchestre de la Paillote, "Dia" (1967), 3'48". SyliPHONE4-358-10.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Dia>

17.5 Orchestre de la Garde Républicaine 1ère formation,  
"Sabougnouma" (1964), 4'25". SyliPHONE2-067-02.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Sabougnouma>

17.6 Kébendo Jazz, "Kankan diaraby" (1964), 3'20". SyliPHONE2-052-03.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Kankan-diaraby>

17.7 Orchestre Féminin Gendarmerie Nationale,  
"La bibeta" (1963), 3'41". SyliPHONE4-382-08.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/La-bibeta>

95 Orchestre de la Garde Républicaine perform many of these on EAP catalogue number SyliPHONE4-354-01 to SyliPHONE4-354-11.

96 EAP catalogue numbers SyliPHONE2-053-01 to SyliPHONE2-053-05.

97 EAP catalogue numbers SyliPHONE4-382-01 to SyliPHONE4-382-13.

98 Also archived were recordings by a hitherto unknown all-female orchestra, Orchestre Féminin de Mamou. EAP catalogue number SyliPHONE3-213-06 to SyliPHONE3-213-10.

The greater part of the music archived by the EAP projects was recorded at the *Voix de la Révolution* studios at the RTG, although a significant number of live concert recordings were also archived. Of particular interest are recordings of concert performances by Guinean orchestras, few of which appeared on Syliphone discs due to the length of the performances exceeding the practicalities of the vinyl medium. Among the concerts are performances by the legendary Demba Camara, the lead singer of Bembeya Jazz National, who died in 1973.<sup>99</sup> Live concerts by Myriam Makeba are also in evidence.<sup>100</sup> All of Guinea's 36 regional orchestras and eight national orchestras are represented in the archive, with many recorded between 1967 and 1968.<sup>101</sup> Recordings of orchestras of the post-Touré era are also present, with numerous examples from groups such as Atlantic Mélodie, Super Flambeau and Koubia Jazz.

17.8 Syli Authentic, "Aguibou" (c. 1976), 7'04". Syliphone2-077-01.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Aguibou>

17.9 Koubia Jazz, "Commissaire minuit" (1987), 5'40". Syliphone4-022-03.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Commissaire-minuit>

17.10 Bembeya Jazz National, "Ballaké" (c. 1972), 8'02". Syliphone2-091-01.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Ballake>

<sup>99</sup> EAP catalogue numbers Syliphone2-028-01 to Syliphone2-028-07.

<sup>100</sup> EAP catalogue numbers Syliphone4-698-01 to Syliphone4-698-06.

<sup>101</sup> Graeme Counsel, "Guinea's Orchestras of the 1st Republic", *Radio Africa*, 2006, <http://www.radioafrica.com.au/Discographies/Origin.html>

Performances in the modern styles, however, are not restricted to the large-scale orchestras, with a wealth of material by smaller groups and popular artists present in the collection. Of note are unreleased recordings by Kouyaté Sory Kandia, recorded with a traditional ensemble.<sup>102</sup> Mama Kanté, the powerful lead singer of l'Ensemble Instrumental de Kissidougou, is known internationally by just one track which appeared on Syliphone,<sup>103</sup> yet the RTG archive contains dozens of her recordings. One of Guinea's most popular singers was Fodé Conté, an artist who did not appear on a single Syliphone release. The RTG archive contains over 100 of his recordings, including his last sessions before fleeing Guinea.<sup>104</sup>

17.11 Kouyaté Sory Kandia, "Miniyamba" (c. 1968), 2'24". Syliphone4-380-05.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Miniyamba>

17.12 Kouyaté Sory Kandia, "Sakhodougou" (c. 1973), 8'26". Syliphone3-168-4.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Sakhodougou>

17.13 Mama Kanté avec l'Ensemble Instrumental de Kissidougou,  
 "JRDA" (1970), 4'37". Syliphone4-251-12.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/JRDA>

17.14 Fodé Conté, "Bamba toumani" (c. 1978), 3'33". Syliphone4-165-01.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Bamba-toumani>

102 EAP catalogue numbers Syliphone3-042-01 to Syliphone3-042-05; and Syliphone4-202-01 to Syliphone4-202-03.

103 "Simika", *Victoire de la révolution* (Syliphone, SLP 29, 1971).

104 EAP catalogue numbers Syliphone4-165-01 to Syliphone4-165-10.

The acoustic guitar tradition for which Guinea is well-known is also represented through a number of excellent recordings by Manfila Kanté (of Les Ambassadeurs) and Manfila “Dabadou” Kanté (of Keletigui et ses Tambourinis). Kemo Kouyaté also presents several instrumental recordings (some of which feature a zither accompaniment),<sup>105</sup> while Les Virtuoses Diabaté provide further material which augments their Syliphone vinyl recordings.<sup>106</sup> The audio collection also features several versions of popular Guinean songs, with multiple examples of “Diaraby”, “Malamini”, “Kaira”, “Soundiata”, “Wéré wéré”, “Kémé bouréma”, “56”, “Armée Guinéenne”, “Toubaka”, “Tara”, “Douga”, “Nina”, “Minuit”, “Mariama”, “Lannaya” and “Malisadio” performed by solo artists and orchestras alike, thus providing significant resource materials for comparative analyses.

17.15 Les Virtuoses Diabaté, “Toubaka” (c. 1971), 4’22”. Syliphone4-047-04.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Toubaka>

17.16 Kadé Diawara, “Banankoro”(c. 1976), 4’25”. Syliphone4-446-10.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Banankoro>

17.17 M’Bady Kouyaté, “Djandjon” (c. 1974), 7’35”. Syliphone4-322-03.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Djandjon>

More than half of the recordings in the collection are examples of traditional Guinean music. Many of these feature artists performing within the Maninka *griot* tradition, such as Kadé Diawara and Tö Kouyaté, who were the lead singers of the Ensemble Instrumental National. Instrumentalists such

<sup>105</sup> EAP catalogue numbers Syliphone3-091-01 to Syliphone3-091-05.

<sup>106</sup> EAP catalogue numbers Syliphone4-047-01 to Syliphone4-047-04.

as M'Bady Kouyaté, one of Guinea's foremost *kora* players, are also well represented. The Maninka material is augmented, however, by hundreds of recordings from Guinea's other ethnic groups, including music by Susu, Guerzé, Kissi, Toma, Sankaran, Baga, Diakhankhé, Kônô, Wamey, Landouma, Manon, Lokko, Lélé, Onëyan and Bassari performers. The archive contains many unique recordings by these, and other, ethnic groups.

17.18 Femmes du Comité Landreah, "Révolution" (1964), 2'54".

Syliphone3-068-3. Sung in the Susu language.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Revolution>

17.19 Musique Folklorique du Comité de Guèlémata, "Noau bo kui kpe la Guinée ma" (1968), 2'33". Syliphone3-088-3. Sung in the Guerzé language.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Noau-bo-kui>

17.20 Sergent Ourékaba, "Alla wata kohana" (c. 1986), 2'10".

Syliphone4-755-06. Sung in the Fulfuldé language.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Alla-wata-kohana>

It is also important to note the quantity of Fulbé music. Marginalised politically and under-represented culturally, the RTG archive contained over 1,000 songs sung in Fulfuldé by popular singers such as Binta Laaly Sow, Binta Laaly Saran, Ilou Diohère, Doura Barry, Amadou Barry and Sory Lariya Bah. Perhaps the most popular of all Fulbé artists was Farba Tela (real name Oumar Seck), who was an influence on Ali Farka Touré. No commercial recordings of his music were released, with the 45 songs recorded at the RTG representing his complete catalogue to date.

17.21 Binta Laaly Sow, "56" (c. 1986), 5'01". Syliphone4-581-09.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/56>

17.22 Farba Téla, "Niina" (1979), 7'52". Syliphone3-097-2.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Niina>

This breadth of diverse recordings from Guinea's ethnic groups spans forty years and underscores the significance of the RTG audio collection. At the conclusion of the EAP project the *Ministère de la Culture, des Arts et du Patrimoine Historique* organised a ceremony held at La Paillote, one of Guinea's oldest music venues. All of the surviving *chefs d'orchestre* of the national orchestras attended, and Les Amazones de Guinée and Keletigui et ses Tambourinis, two of Guinea's *grands orchestres*, performed.<sup>107</sup> A large media presence documented the event.

## Conclusion

The archiving of the audio collection held at Radio Télévision Guinée represents one of the largest sound archival projects conducted in Africa. For a generation, most of its 9,410 songs were considered too politically sensitive to be broadcast and were hidden from public view. Interest in the recordings, however, especially in the international market, had been growing, led by a renewed awareness of the importance of the Syliphone recording label in the development of African music, and of its symbolic role as the voice of the Guinean revolution. To date, over fifty CDs of Syliphone material have been released.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>107</sup> *Les Amazones de Guinée – Live at La Paillote* (YouTube video), uploaded by Radio Africa, 29 January 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHIDKJqS57c>

<sup>108</sup> Graeme Counsel, "Syliphone Discography", *Radio Africa*, 1999, <http://www.radioafrica.com.au/Discographies/Syliphone.html>



It is germane that the RTG's audio collection is now available for the Guinean public to access and for Guinean radio to broadcast, for it comes at a time when Guinea is implementing democratic reforms and multi-party government for the first time. The success of the EAP projects through the cooperation of several Guinean ministries signals a willingness by the government to engage with Guinea's past, and to reconcile the political aspirations and motivations of its leaders with those policies and practices which had failed its citizens.

It is within this spirit of national reconciliation that the sound archive will greatly contribute to our understanding of Guinea's journey. For Guineans it will demonstrate the tremendous value that their first government placed on rejuvenating and promoting indigenous culture. It will also indicate the extraordinary depth of talent of Guinea's musicians, and it will remind us all of the concerted efforts of a young nation to develop culture, to restore pride and dignity to culture, and to promote African identity.

*In recognition of his Endangered Archive Programme projects and his contribution to culture, the Guinean government bestowed on the author Guinea's highest honour for academic achievement, the gold medal of the Palme Académique en Or, and a Diplôme d'Honneur.*

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Linké Condé, *Chef d'orchestre* Keletigui et ses Tambourinis, Conakry, 18 September 2009 and 24 December 2013.

Balla Onivogui, *Chef d'orchestre* Balla et ses Balladins, Conakry, 14 August 2001.

Métoura Traoré, *Chef d'orchestre* Horoya Band National, Conakry, 21 August 2001.

# 18. Conservation of the Iranian *Golha* radio programmes and the heritage of Persian classical poetry and music<sup>1</sup>

Jane Lewisohn

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The *Golha* (“Flowers of Persian Song and Music”) radio programmes broadcast on Iranian National Radio for 23 years from 1956 through 1979 comprised approximately 850 hours of programmes. They were made up of literary commentary with the declamation of poetry, and featured singing with musical accompaniment interspersed with solo musical pieces. The programmes were the brainchild of Davud Pirnia, a one-time Assistant Prime Minister, enthusiastic patriot and scholar who harboured a deep love for Persian culture and its rich literary and musical traditions.<sup>2</sup>

The foremost literary, academic and musical talents of the day offered Pirnia their collaboration and support, and the greatest Iranian vocalists of the twentieth century saw their careers launched on his radio programmes.<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 The transliteration in this chapter is based on a modified version of the LOC transliteration system for Persian, without diacritical marks, combined with the system for Persian used by the third edition of the Encyclopaedia of Iran. Please refer to <http://www.golha.co.uk/en/about/transliteration#.VLT1Wt7hWqM>
  - 2 Davud Pirnia was the son of Mushir al-Dawla (d. 1935), a very popular Prime Minister who flourished during the constitutional period in Iran. He retired from political life in 1955, and for the next eleven years devoted himself to producing the *Golha* programmes. Pirnia received his early education at home from some of the most eminent intellectuals of the day. He went on to study at the French École St. Louis in Tehran, later going to Switzerland to study Law. Personal communication from Bizhan Pirnia (son of Davud Pirnia), Tehran, 12 September 2005. See also Mansura Pirnia, *Ardashir Zahidi, farzand-i khandan-i Zahidi va Pirnia: afkar va andisha, ravayat-i Ardashir Zahidi* (North Potomac, MD: Mehr Iran, 2004), pp. 36-38. For an overview of Pirnia’s life and times, see Jane Lewisohn, “Flowers of Persian Song and Music: Davud Pirniā and the Genesis of the *Gollhā* Programs”, *Journal of Persianate Studies*, 1 (2008), 79-101.
  - 3 Scholars and poets such as ‘Ali Dashti, Badi’ al-Zaman Furuzanfar, Jalal-al-Din Huma’i, Lutf-‘Ali Suratgar, Zia’-al-Din Sajjadi and Rahi Mu’ayyiri provided commentaries for the





Fig. 18.1 Davud Pirnia (on the right) and Rahi Mu'ayyiri (on the left) at the radio in Tehran, c. 1950. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain.

programmes. Composers and songwriters such as Habibu'llah Badi'i, Ghulam-Husayn Darvish, Mahmud Dhu'l-Funun, Farhad Fakhradini, Mihdi Khalidi, Ruhullah Khaliqi, Humayun Khurram, Murtaza Mahjubi, Jahangir Murad (Husam al-Sultana), Murtaza Nay-Dawud, Faramarz Payvar, 'Arif Qazvini, Anushir Ruhani, Abu'l-Hasan Saba, 'Ali Akbar Shayda, 'Ali Tajvidi, 'Ali-Naghi Vaziri and Parviz Yahaqqi featured in the *Golha* programmes, along with the finest singers of classical singing (*avaz*) and popular ballads (*tarana*) vocalists such as 'Abbas 'Afifi, Darvish Amir-Hayati, Iqbal Azar (Iqbal-al-Sultan), Marziya, 'Ahdia Badi'i, Sima Bina, Vigan Dirdirian, Ilahi (Bahara Ghulam-Husayni), Nadir Gulchin, Husayn Khwaja-Amiri (Iraq), Nahid Da'i-javad, Hayida, Mahasti, Nasir Mas'udi, Parvin, Puran, 'Izzat Ruhbakhsh, 'Abd al-Wahhab Shahidi, Muhammad-Riza Shajarian (Siyavush) and Kurush Sarhangzada. Likewise, some of the most talented contemporary lyricists wrote songs for the *Golha* programmes, including the likes of Jamshid Arjumand, 'Ali Ashtari, Muhammad-Taqi Bahar (Malik-al-Shu'ara), Hushang Ibtihaj, Parviz Natil-Khanlari, Rahi Mu'ayyiri, Manuchihir Mu'in-Afshar, Rahim Mu'ini-Kirmanshahi, 'Imad Khurasani, Isma'il Nawwab-i Safa, Muhammad-Husayn Shahriyar, Munira Taha, Bijan Taraqqi, Abu'l-Hasan Varzi, Kayumars Vusuqi, Bahadur Yagana and Zuhra (Mansura Atabaki). See Bizhan Taraqqi, *Az pusht-i divarha-yi khatira*, 2nd edn. (Tehran: Badraqa-yi javidan, 1386 A.Hsh./2007), pp. 146-47; Habibu'llah Nasirifar, *Gulbang-i Golha: shi'r va musiqi*, 2 vols (Tehran: [n. pub.], 1377 A.Hsh./1998).



Fig. 18.2 Parviz Yahaqqi (on the right) and Bijan Taraqqi (on the left) composing a song for the *Golha* programmes. Tehran, late 1950s. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain.



Fig. 18.3 Rahim Moini-Kermanshahi (on the right) and 'Ali Tajvidi (on the left) composing a song for the *Golha* programmes. Tehran, mid-1950s. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain.

Besides having such a rich pool of talent at his fingertips, Pirnia had the support of the Director of the Iranian National Radio (1950-1960s), Nusratu'llah Mu'iniyan, who transformed the radio from a commercial advertising platform for entertainers and a parking place for relatives of political elites into a respected and influential vehicle for the preservation and promotion of Persian culture.<sup>4</sup> The *Golha* programmes became bywords of excellence in the sphere of Persian music and literature, setting standards that are still looked up to in Iran today; scholars and musicians often refer to them as being an encyclopaedia of Persian music and poetry.<sup>5</sup> Most of the great ballads and classic songs in contemporary Persian poetry were commissioned and composed specifically for these programmes.<sup>6</sup>

Pirnia produced five different radio programmes: "Perennial Flowers" (*Golha-yi javidan*, up to 157), "Particoloured Flowers" (*Golha-yi rangarang*, 481), "A Green Leaf" (*Barg-i sabz*, 312), "A Single Rose" (*Yik shakh-i gol*, 465) and "Desert Flowers" (*Golha-yi sahra'i*, 64).<sup>7</sup> Each featured choice selections from

4 On the basis of interviews that I conducted with the *nay*-player Hasan Nahid, the poet and radio producer Hushang Ibtehaj, the female vocalist Sima Bina, as well as information gleaned from the personal archive of Mahmud Zulfunun, it is clear that all the participants in the *Golha* programmes — whether singers, composers, musicians, conductors, poets or lyricists — were under contract to the National Radio. Their contracts varied between being commissioned to perform in a set number of programmes, or present a certain number of programmes monthly. Participants and performers were paid either upon the delivery or performance of a certain song or poem, or, in the case of a monthly contracts, at the end of the period. The notes and lyrics for the songs along with a copy of the programme were then deposited and preserved in the central Radio Tehran archive. For further information on this, see Anonymous, "Yek tahavvul dar tarikh-i Radio ya pardakht fi al-majlis", *Majalla-i Radio – Radio-yi Tihiran: Nashriyya-i idara-i kull-i intisharat-i Radio*, 2 (Mehr 1335 A.Hsh./1956), 3-4.

5 Humayun Khurram, "Ghughha-yi sitaragan", *Farhang u pazhuhish, Vizha-yi hunar (Musiqi)*, [Culture and Research Magazine: Special Issue on Art (Music)], 198 (13 Murdad 1384 A.Hsh./4 August 2005), 20-21.

6 We'll mention here only a few such famous "hit" songs: Raftam (lyrics: Navab Safa; composer: 'Ali Tajvidi; singer: Hayida), <http://www.golha.co.uk/en/programme/1485#.VBq2n0vxaqM>; May-i nab (lyrics: Hafiz; composer: Ruhullah Khaliqi; singer: Banan and Puran), <http://www.golha.co.uk/en/programme/1269#.VBq3I0vxaqM>; Nava-yi nay or Bang-i nay (lyrics: Rahi Mu'ayyiri; composer: Murtaza Mahjubi; arrangement Ruhullah Khaliqi singer: Banan), <http://www.golha.co.uk/en/programme/1338#.VBq3fkvxaqM>; Sang-i khara (lyrics: Mu'ini Kirmanshahi; composer: 'Ali Tajvidi; singer: Marziya), <http://www.golha.co.uk/en/programme/1264#.VBq3uUvxaqM>; Sariban (lyrics: Sa'di, composer: Javad Ma'rufi; singer: 'Abdul-Wahab Shahidi), <http://www.golha.co.uk/en/programme/1272#.VBq4CkvxaqM>; Baz-amad (lyrics: Mu'ini Kirmanshahi; composer: Javad Ma'rufi; singer: Ilahi), <http://www.golha.co.uk/en/programme/1316#.VBq4RUvxaqM>; Ghurub-i kuhistan (lyrics: Jahanbakhsh Pazuki; arrangement: Javad Ma'rufi; singer: Nahid Da'i-javad), <http://www.golha.co.uk/en/programme/399#.VBq4kkvxaqM>; Man-i bidil (lyrics: Rahi Mu'ayyiri; composer: Murtaza Mahjubi singer: Marziya). See Habibu'llah Nasirifar, *Golha-yi javidan va Golha-yi rangarang* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Nigar, 1982 A.Hsh./2003), 15-17.

7 The *Golha* programmes are available at <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP088>

the lyrics of the great classical and contemporary Persian poets, combining song and declamation with musical accompaniment, learned commentary and Persian folk music.

18.1 *Golha-yi javidan* 85, broadcast between 1956 and 1959.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Golha-yi-javidan>

18.2 *Golha-yi rangarang* 158, broadcast between 1956 and 1972.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Golha-yi-rangarang>

18.3 *Barg-i sabz* 23, broadcast between 1956 and 1972.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Barg-i-sabz>

18.4 *Yik shakh-i gol* 196, broadcast between 1956 and 1972.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Yik-shakh-i-gol>

18.5 *Golha-yi sahra'i* 14, broadcast between 1960 and 1972.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Golha-yi-sahrai>

There were three main aesthetic purposes underlying Pirnia's establishment of the *Golha* programmes: to make classical Persian poetry available to the general public; to demonstrate the intimate, inextricable association of classical

Persian poetry with music; and to demonstrate that aesthetic appreciation of music combined with poetry can allow one to better savour and appreciate both art forms.<sup>8</sup> The inspiration for establishing a radio programme combining poetry and music came from the private gatherings held in the early 1950s at the homes of some of the leading members of the Sufi Order founded by Safi Ali Shah (d. 1898), which was known as the “Fraternal Society” (*Anjuman-i ukkhuwwat*),<sup>9</sup> and included ‘Abdu’lloh Intizam, Nizam al-Soltan Khwajanuri and Pirnia himself.



Fig. 18.4 Vigin Derderian, one of the most popular pop singers from the 1950s. He sang several Armenian tunes for the *Golha* programmes. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain.

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8 Ibid., pp. 15-17.

9 Interview with Daryush Pirnia (son of Davud Pirnia), Maryland, U.S., 17 August 2005. Unless otherwise stated, all interviews mentioned herein were conducted by the author. Davud Pirnia also began producing a “Children’s Programme” (*Barnama-i kudak*) on Tehran Radio in 1956, which had an immensely important artistic and cultural impact. See Isma’il Navabsafa, *Qissa-yi sham: khatirat-i hunari* (Tehran: Nashr-i Paykan, 1384 A.Hsh./2005), p. 586.

## The socio-cultural impact of the *Golha* programmes in Iran

The *Golha* programmes were a product of the peculiar cultural and political atmosphere in Iran in the early twentieth century. During the reign of the first Pahlavi monarch, Reza Shah (1921-1941), music, cinema and western-style theatre were viewed favourably as having a modernising influence on Iranian society.<sup>10</sup> Although the Shah himself did not directly support these activities, his modernist political policies created a suitable atmosphere in which they could flourish. In 1932, Reza Shah banned the performance of the traditional Shiite passion plays (*ta'ziyeh*),<sup>11</sup> which had previously been a major source of entertainment for the general public. Their removal from the artistic and religious scene left a vacuum that was quickly filled by cinema, theatre and musical concerts. Another significant event was the decree issued in 1936 by Reza Shah prohibiting women from wearing the *chador* — an all encompassing black garment which also included a mask-like cloth (*ruband*) covering their face — in public spaces. This paved the way for women to participate in the public sphere physically, intellectually and artistically.<sup>12</sup>

Another significant occurrence took place on 14 April 1940 when Iranian National Radio initiated its very first broadcasts,<sup>13</sup> which soon became the major source of information and entertainment for the general public. Many

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10 One typical example of this attitude appears in a letter (dated 11 July 1931) written by the director of the Tehran branch of His Master's Voice record company to their head office in London, encouraging them to expand their operations in Iran, which states: "the Persian Government considers that the two great factors for the popularisation of modern education are the cinema and the phonograph" (His Master's Voice's Archives for Persia, housed in EMI Group Archive Trust, Hayes, Middlesex, UK). Abbas Milani likewise describes how "the government [of Iran under Reza Shah] was firmly supportive of Vaziri's efforts [at modernising Persian music]. Some of his songs became a mandatory part of the curriculum in all schools, and the government paid for the publication of his three-volume magnum opus, *The Theory of Music*. Abbas Milani, *Eminent Persians: the Men and Women Who Made Modern Iran, 1941-1979*, 2 (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008), p. 1032. See also Keivan Aghamohseni, "Modernisation of Iranian Music During the Reign of Reza Shah", in *Culture and Cultural Politics Under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran*, ed. by Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (London: Routledge, 2014), 73-94.

11 Willem Floor, *The History of Theater in Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage, 2005), 197; M. Ali Issari, *Cinema in Iran, 1900-1979* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989), pp. 63-64.

12 "Emancipation of women was one of Reza Shah's most effective weapons in diminishing the power of the clergy who had traditionally exerted a great deal of power over women's lives and their freedoms". Hamideh Sedghi, *Women and Politics in Iran: Veiling, Unveiling, and Reveiling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 66.

13 Sipihri, "Radiyu dar 20 sal [20 Years of Radio]", *Radio-yi Iran*, 32 (1338 A.Hsh./1959), 3-5.

of these broadcasts featured both male and female vocal and performing artists.<sup>14</sup> Certain events in the external political sphere also had a huge impact on the artistic scene in Iran at this time. At the height of World War II, after refusing to break his ties with Nazi Germany, Reza Shah abdicated in September 1941 in favour of his young son Muhammad Reza Pahlavi. On the pretext of defending and supplying the Russian front against the German invasion, the Allies took complete control of Iran.<sup>15</sup> Although this was a period of great economic hardship for the general public in Iran,<sup>16</sup> new theatres were opened and musical concerts thrived due to a general lack of censorship and the fact that the Allies supported this kind of entertainment in order to win favour with the Persian people.<sup>17</sup>

During World War II and its aftermath, popular foreign styles began to exert their influence on Persian music and performance art in general. Western, Arabic, Turkish and Indian influences began to affect the development of Persian music. As a result, the native classical “art music” of Iran came under threat of disappearing or becoming so distorted as to be no longer recognisable.<sup>18</sup> Compounding this crisis of survival of Persian classical music was the taboo against the performance of serious art music in public, since “the predominant trend in Islamic culture was anti-musical ... When music was practiced at all it was directly in the face of social and religious disapproval”.<sup>19</sup>

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14 Tooka Maliki, *Zanan-i musiqi-yi Iran: az ustura ta imruz* (Tehran: Kitab-i Khurshid, 1381 A.Hsh./2002), p. 227.

15 Donald N. Wilber, *Iran: Past and Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 105-06.

16 Interview with Iranian historian Bastani Parizi, Tehran, 13 December 2007.

17 Floor observes that “during World War II, theater and concerts thrived as the young Shah was weak and the Allies didn’t mind criticism if it was not directed at them. The Allies also supported local cultural activities in order to gain the support of the people.” Floor, *The History of Theater in Iran*, p. 263.

18 Ella Zonis’s description of the situation a decade later in Iran is applicable to this period as well: “Once again, as in the time of her contact with ancient Greece, Persia is undergoing heavy cultural pressure from the West. This has greatly stimulated musical activity, and the long quiescence that preserved Persia’s centuries old music has come to an end. However the danger exists here, as it does all over Asia, that native art music either will be replaced by Western Music or will be so westernized as to lose all connection with the native tradition”. Ella Zonis, “Contemporary Art Music in Persia”, *The Musical Quarterly*, 51 (1965), 636-48 (p. 647).

19 Zonis points out that “the most devout [Iranian Muslims] rejected music [...] The effect of the religious prohibition has considerable impact on musical life. On religious holidays (most of which are days of mourning for the death of martyrs such as Ali, Hasan and Hussein, early Imams of Islam), there is no music on the radio and no public musical events or rehearsals, even if these are days on which other sorts of business take place. There appears to be a strong feeling on the part of the populace that even rehearsals

In this respect, it should be underlined that musicians in Iranian society in general occupied the lowest rung of the social ladder. Even Colonel 'Ali-Naghi Vaziri (known as the "Father of modern Iranian Music")<sup>20</sup> had to constantly move his music club from one premise to another, as the landlords would evict him on various pretexts. He explained that the real reason behind their persecution was that music in general was frowned upon as religiously forbidden (*haram*) by the conservative elements of society. Whether music was taught or performed by men or women, the neighbours, prodded by angry local mullahs, would make trouble for any landlord who allowed musicians access to their premises.<sup>21</sup>

During the period of the Allies' occupation of Iran in the 1940s and its immediate aftermath, down to the Musaddiq crisis of 1953, Iran was virtually free of any serious censorship.<sup>22</sup> Vigorous debates flourished in the field of literature. Radical modernist thinkers like Ahmad Kasravi and poets such as Nima Yushij viewed many of the classical traditions in Persian literature as exemplifying apathy, fatalism and impediments to modernisation and social progress. They championed new forms of Persian prose and poetry and advocated for a politically engaged literature. The majority of the Iranian intellectuals of this period were strongly influenced by Soviet communist ideology and dogmatically stressed the need for a new kind of Persian literature that was socially committed.<sup>23</sup> They despised and rejected the introspective and meditative classical tradition of Persian poetry as socially irresponsible and politically irrelevant to modern society. They denounced and jettisoned the classical tradition as an idle, outdated romanticism of no use to their modern progressive, rationalist worldview. In the opposing

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should not be held; for example, some musicians (of Western music) have told me that while they themselves had no objection to rehearsing on at least minor holidays, they did not like to be seen carrying a musical instrument in public. Similarly, on such holidays the music department of the University of Tehran is closed, while other departments hold classes" (ibid., 637). See also similar comments in Bruno Nettl, "Attitudes Towards Persian Music in Tehran, 1969", *The Musical Quarterly*, 56/2 (1970), 183-97.

20 Hamid Raja'i, "Ali Naghi Vaziri: pidar-i musiqi-yi nuvin-i Iran", in *Guzarish-i musiqi* [Music Report], 1/6-7 (Tehran 1386 /A.Hsh.2007), 64-68. See also Milani, 2, p. 1033.

21 Sasan Sapanta, *Chishmandaz-i musiqi-yi Iran* (Tehran: Mahur, 2004), p. 185; and Floor, p. 239.

22 By "Musaddiq crisis", I refer to the events of the summer of 1953 during which an oil embargo on Iran was imposed by the British. In a coup orchestrated by Britain and the U.S. intelligence services, Prime Minister Muhammad Musaddiq (who had nationalised the Iranian oil industry) was overthrown and deposed, and Muhammad Reza Pahlavi returned to the throne. See Homa Katouzian, *The Persians: Ancient, Medieval and Modern Iran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 245-52.

23 Iraj Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran (1866-1951)* (Bethesda, MD: Ibex, 2003), pp. 41 and 59.



camp stood traditionalist writers such as Muhammad Ali Furughi, Badī' al-Zaman Furuzanfar, Muhammad Taqi Bahar and others, who defended the importance and relevance of classical Persian literary traditions to modern Iranian society.<sup>24</sup>

Although Pirnia belonged largely to the latter camp, he was well acquainted with all the major modernist intellectuals and writers. His family mansion was situated just off Lalihzar Avenue, where all the theatres, music halls and fashionable coffee houses were located – in its day it was Tehran's equivalent to New York's Times Square or London's Leicester Square. He would have heard and seen all these new and foreign forms of entertainment performed in the immediate vicinity of his home. This caused him great alarm as it did to most of the classical Persian musicians.<sup>25</sup> During this same postwar period, one finds many articles appearing in various Iranian music journals written by prominent musicians expressing their concern for the future of Persian art music. They not only bemoaned its decadence and decline, but also complained of the Ministry of Culture's apathy towards the situation, lack of support and involvement in the development of national music (*musiqi-yi milli*).<sup>26</sup> Mushir Humayun Shahrदार, who served as Director of Music at Iranian National Radio during the early 1950s, described the lamentable situation of Iranian music during this period:

Persian Music was not only being impacted by influences coming from vulgar pop music from abroad, but the influence of Arabic music had caused Persian music to decline as well. Singers and musicians on the radio were largely imitating international music styles, performing songs and tunes that not only had nothing to do with authentic Persian music, but did not follow the norms of world music either.<sup>27</sup>

On the public institutional level, there were several organisations that had a lasting impact on the development of Persian music in the nineteenth and

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24 See M. A. Jazayeri, "Ahmad Kasravi and the Controversy Over Persian Poetry. Part 2: The Debate on Persian Poetry between Kasravi and His Opponents", *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 13/3 (1981), 311-27.

25 Davud Pirnia's son, Bijan Pirnia, told me a story that on returning from a visit to the home of his friend Mr. Vusuqi, his father decided that he had to do something to combat the ongoing corruption of Persian music and literary traditions. Shortly after that, he inaugurated the *Golha-yi Javidan* series of radio programmes. Interview with Bijan Pirnia, Tehran, Iran, 12 September 2005.

26 See Ruhullah Khaleqi, "Hadaf va ravesh-i majalla", *Majalla-yi chang*, 1 (1325 A.Hsh./1946), 3; and idem, "Yek pishnehad-i mofid", *Majalla-yi chang*, 2 (1325 A.Hsh./1946), 3. See also *Majalla-yi musiq* and *Majalla-yi musiqi* (Tehran: 1956-1966), *passim*; and Nettl, "Attitudes", pp. 183-97.

27 Mushir Humayun Shahrदार, "Qadamha-i kih barayi bihbud-i musiqi-yi Irani Radio bardashta shuda-ast", *Majala-yi Radio*, 1 (Shahrivar 1335 A.Hsh./1956), 13.

early twentieth centuries. The first of these was the *Dar al-Funun* (Technical College) in Tehran, founded in 1868, in which Alfred Jean-Baptiste Lemaire taught music classes that were largely devoted to providing the Iranian army with a grounding in military music.<sup>28</sup> Secondly, there was the Advanced School for Music Studies (*Madrasa-yi 'ali-yi musiqi*), founded by Colonel 'Ali-Naghi Vaziri in 1923. Thirdly came the National Conservatory of Music (*Hunarestan-i musiqi-yi milli*), founded by Ruhu'llah Khaliqi in 1949, and fourthly the Centre for the Preservation and Promotion of Music (*Markaz-i hifz va ashaya-yi musiqi*), founded by Daryush Safwat in 1968.<sup>29</sup>



Fig. 18.5 Ali Akbar Shanazi teaching his pupil Pirayeh Pourafar at the Centre for the Preservation and Promotion of Music in Tehran, in 1977. Courtesy of Pirayeh Pourafar, Public Domain.

28 Even before Lemaire, wax cylinder recordings and phonograph records had made it possible for people to listen to quality professional music, whether western or Persian. However, these were luxury items only to be found in well-to-do households. A phonograph player would have cost about £1,500 in today's money and each record would have cost the equivalent of £20. See Sasan Sapanta, *Tarikh-i tahavvul-i zabt-i musiqi dar Iran* (Tehran: Mahur, 1998), p. 67.

29 Owen Wright, *Touraj Kiaras and Persian Classical Music: An Analytical Perspective* (London: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 3-4.

All of these institutions made important contributions to the shaping of modern Persian music, but their audience was limited and mostly composed of music specialists. No one but a few members of the urban elite could afford the price of tickets to their occasional concerts.<sup>30</sup> In this context, the institution that had the most far-reaching and inclusive effect on Persian music and music appreciation was the Iranian National Radio. Broadcast for free throughout the whole nation, music on the radio was avidly followed. Even if at first radios were expensive, people gathered to listen to them in each other's homes or in coffee houses.

Unfortunately, influence-peddling, favouritism and nepotism eventually led to a chronic decline in the standards of music broadcast. In an interview given on Iranian radio in the 1950s, Mushir Humayun Shahrदार explains that the radio effectively became an advertising platform for certain performers, enabling them to hawk their artistic wares and benefit from their fame financially by performing at private functions and weddings.<sup>31</sup> In the period directly after the Musaddiq crisis of 1953,<sup>32</sup> a radio station belonging to the Air Force began broadcasting popular tunes (*ahang-i kucha-bazar*) with weak lyrics set to fast Arabic dance beats. These lyrics — sung by pop singers like Mahvash, Affat and Jibili, who were not formally trained in classical Persian singing — soon became very popular among the general public. Seeing that he was losing his listeners to the Air Force radio station, Mr. Khudayar, who was the assistant to Parviz Adl, the Director of National Iranian Radio, invited these singers to perform on the National Iranian Radio.

Khudayar's disastrous bias towards cheap popular music was coupled with a nepotistic managerial policy that freely handed over all the important jobs and programmes to close family members, and put on the payroll names of people who had never set foot in the radio station. This, along with the above-mentioned philistine commercial attitudes and conduct of some of the National Radio's singers, alienated many of its serious musicians such as Abu'l-Hasan Saba, Banan, Khaliqi, Adib Khwansari and 'Ali Tajvidi. Not wanting to have their names associated with this kind of tawdry music and

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30 During the Reza Shah period, censorship was tightened and cultural activities that did not support the drive towards modernisation were banned. Satire was tolerated, but only if it was directed towards the discredited Qajar regime. Armenian theatrical performances were banned in 1927. As Floor argues, "The majority of the population was poor and could not afford the luxury of the price of a ticket to benefit the football club and other elite institutions" (pp. 258-59).

31 Interview with Shahrदार that was re-broadcast on Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) on 25 August 1999.

32 On these events, see Katouzian, pp. 245-52.

unbecoming behaviour,<sup>33</sup> they resigned their positions at the National Radio and returned to pursue private teaching duties.<sup>34</sup>



Fig. 18.6 Ghulam Hosain Banan (on the left) and Navab-Safa (on the right) working on a song for the *Golha* programmes. Tehran, late 1950s.  
Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain.

It is at this juncture that Pirnia began his work with the radio and inaugurated the *Golha* programmes. Around the same time, Nusratu'llah Mu'iniyan was

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33 The following description by Nettl of the situation a decade or so later was by and large typical of the 1940s-1950s as well: "Western popular music is performed both by Iranian and foreign performers in nightclubs in Tehran of the same sort that one finds in large European and American cities. The language of the singing was normally English, French, or Italian. Popular music in the various Persian styles ... is most typically heard in large music halls which in Tehran are concentrated in one district whose center is Lalezar Avenue. These music halls, in contrast to the modern night clubs, are patronized almost exclusively by men and each of them has a clientele by an occupation". Bruno Nettl, "Persian Popular Music in Iran 1969", *Ethnomusicology*, 16/2 (1972), 218-39.

34 Interview with Nikukar, Los Angeles, U.S., 25 July 2010. Nikukar was one of the original sound technicians employed by the National Radio from the 1940s down to the early 1980s.

appointed Director of the Radio. A man with refined tastes in classical Persian music and literature, he completely overhauled the whole organisation, changing it from a chaotic, shady institution into a highly disciplined, efficient and respectable one that even began to generate income through advertising.<sup>35</sup> With the help of President Harry Truman's "Point Four Program", designed to give technical assistance to developing countries recovering from the devastating effects of World War II, the Iranian National Radio, better known as "Radio Tehran", was able to make much-needed technological improvements like the building of professional sound studios and the installation of modern recording and broadcasting equipment.<sup>36</sup>

Pirnia's personal prestige as a scion of a famous former Prime Minister, and his literary and musical genius in designing these high quality radio programmes, combined with Mu'iniyan's disciplined restructuring of the radio organisation and brilliant managerial talents, proved immediately effective. When the major artists and great maestros, virtuosos and divas who left in disillusionment a few years earlier were invited back to perform, they gladly accepted.<sup>37</sup> Soon the radio became a favourite medium for introducing serious Persian music to the nation. In the words of Farhad Fakhradini, composer, conductor and founder of the Iranian National Orchestra:

The *Golha* programmes were the most successful radio programmes produced in Iran those days [...] The programmes made people appreciate music much

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35 Mu'iniyan's efforts are described in detail in Shahrardar, "Qadamha".

36 Interview with Bijan Farazi, Tehran, Iran, 7 September 2005. Farazi was a friend and colleague of Davud Pirnia. Thomas Ricks notes, "On September 22, 1949, Secretary of State Dean Acheson wrote the Iranian Ambassador to the United States, Hussein Ala, that Iran would receive both economic and military assistance including technical advisors in agriculture, public health, education, and industrial training under the Smith-Mundt and Point Four programs". Thomas Ricks, "U.S. Military Missions to Iran, 1943-1978: The Political Economy of Military Assistance", *Iranian Studies*, 12/3-4 (1979), 163-93 (p. 176). The "Point Four Program" provided 7,000,000 rials for a purpose-built building to house the offices and studios of Radio Tehran and a further \$55,000 for recording and other technical equipment. This money also paid for the training of Iranian technicians in the U.S. See Anon, "Istudiyu-yi jadid-i radio-yi Tihiran [A New Studio for Radio Tehran]", in *Majala-yi Radio*, 1 (Shahrivar 1335 A.Hsh./1956), 15. The "Point Four Program" also provided a fifty-kilowatt radio transmitter for Iran that enabled the radio broadcasts to be heard even in the most far-flung hamlets of Iran, and \$18,000 for American experts to train the Iranian radio engineers. For further details about the history of the development of Radio Tehran, see Anonymous, "Suda-yi Tihiran: Bih zudi ba bih-kar uftadan-i dastgah-i jadid-i panjah-kiluvati bih-tawr-i vuzuh dar sarasar-i Iran shinidih khwahad shud [The Voice of (Radio) Tehran: How Shortly a New Fifty-Kilowatt Plant for Radio Tehran Will be Established and Broadcast Loud and Clear Throughout Iran]", *Majala-yi Radio*, 1 (Shahrivar 1335 A.Hsh./1956), 8 and 22.

37 Ruhullah Khaliqi, "Ba in 'ilal dar Radio-yi Iran qabul-i mas'uliyat kardam [An Explanation of Why I Accepted [a Post of] Responsibility at Radio Iran]", *Majalla-yi Musik-i Iran*, Year 7, 4/76 (Shahriyar 1337 A.Hsh./1958), 18.

more and attracted people to good music, and developed the populace's taste and appreciation for classical Persian music. All the artists who participated in the creation of the *Golha* programmes, such as Abu'l-Hasan Saba, Murtaza Mahjubi, Tajvidi, Davud Pirnia and Rahi Mu'ayyeri, were people of high culture and extraordinary individuals. It should be emphasised that we didn't have any other entertainment besides the radio in those days. One might go to the movies once a week, but there was no TV for us to watch. We would turn on the radio, and the best programme of all at the time was the programme of "Perennial Flowers" (*Golha-yi javidan*), after which came that of "Particoloured Flowers" (*Golha-yi rangarang*). At the start, Messrs. Tajvidi, Mahjubi, and Saba worked on these programmes. They were soon followed by Ruhullah Khaliqi, who had a good-sized ensemble, and who was, in fact, himself the founder-director of the *Golha* Orchestra.<sup>38</sup>

Akbar Gulpayigani, one of the most colourful and beloved vocalists in Persian music, who sang in all the different *Golha* programmes from a very early age,<sup>39</sup> describes the educational effect of the programmes on Iranian culture at large as follows:

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38 Interview with Farhad Fakhradini, Tehran, Iran, 3 October 2005.

39 Ali Akbar Gulpayigani was born in 1933 into a religious family of preachers and Quran-reciters who sang the praises of the Prophet and the Shi'ite Imams. He was educated as a professional surveyor. He studied the modal system of classical Persian singing with Nur 'Ali Khan Burumand (1905-1974) and later sang in various *Golha* radio programmes with the support of Pirnia. He created a new style in Persian classical vocals that attracted the general public to Persian classical singing. His method was to strip off the intricate and complex sophistication of the Persian vocal art, transforming classical singing into something simple, appealing, and easy for music lovers to commit to memory; in this manner, he filled the glaring gap that lay between the solemnity of classical Persian vocal art and popular lyrical singing, forming a bridge between the two. He taught classical singing (*avaz*), became a popular singer on Iranian television, a celebrated performer in concerts abroad, the founder of the earliest cassette recording companies, and a cabaret and nightclub owner and performer, where he showed a clever knack for administrative management. He had an eye for commercial profitability and a genius at introducing a kind of Hollywood-like attractiveness into the music scene in Iran. He even enjoyed a brief acting career in Iranian commercial films between 1967-1974. His performances were geared to suit each occasion, such that he performed on the *Golha* programmes in one way, in another manner on television, in still other ways in private gatherings, in public concerts, in cabarets and nightclubs, etc. Gulpayigani trod his own way and has thus enjoyed the warm welcome of Persian society over the past fifty years. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that over the past thirty years (since the Iranian revolution of 1979), he has been banned from holding public concerts in Iran and from performing or having his songs played on Iranian radio and TV. From 1980 onwards, his activities have been limited to either private teaching at home, performance in concerts abroad, or releasing cassettes, albums and CDs that have enjoyed a wide circulation. He himself considers that he owed the illustriousness of his career in the *Golha* programmes largely to Davud Pirnia's expert directorship and refined tastes in music. During his travels abroad, he obtained many decorations, medals, an honorary Ph.D. degree, as well as other honours and titles. Musicologists today regard him as the Frank Sinatra of Persian music. For more on Gulpayigani's career and influence, see 'Ali Riza Mir'ali Naqi's account of the singer at <http://www.golha.co.uk>

One of the biggest effects of the *Golha* was to immortalise the names of any artist who performed in them. [...] Ask anyone today involved in Persian music in any capacity what the best exemplar of Persian music is – they will invariably reply: “the *Golha* programmes”. The *Golha* had their own particular inimitable fragrance which makes their place in the history of Persian music irreplaceable. ... In Persian literature, we have grandees such as Hafez, Sa’di and Rumi, but the *Golha* programmes introduced the public to poets of all the ages. Anyone who bothered to assemble a collection the *Golha* programmes in their home also necessarily collected the works of most of the Persian poets.<sup>40</sup>



Fig. 18.7 Akbar Golpaygani (on the left) and Farhang Sharif (on the right) in the late 1960s. Courtesy of Alireza Mirnaghabi, Public Domain.

Iran’s greatest living classical vocalist, Muhammad-Reza Shajarian, had this to say about the legacy and significance to the *Golha* programmes:

Persian music owes a huge debt to Davud Pirnia in my opinion. At a crucial moment in the history of Iran he effectively rescued our music from perdition. If it were not for his efforts, Arab music, Turkish music, or Western pop music would have all but drowned out and obliterated Persian music. In establishing the *Golha* programmes, Mr Pirnia created a sanctuary where Persian music could survive and flourish amongst all these debilitating and corrupting

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Akbar Gulpayagani, Tehran, Iran, 2 October 2005.

influences, so that even today the *Golha* programmes are still cherished among the populace at large.<sup>41</sup>

In short, the effect of the *Golha* programmes on Persian literature and literary appreciation cannot be underestimated. However, we should also consider the effect of the *Golha* programmes within the context of the entertainment and education industries in mid-twentieth-century Iran. According to studies carried out by UNESCO, the official illiteracy rate in Iran was somewhere around 85-90% in the 1950s.<sup>42</sup> For the largely rural population of Iran, the only form of mass media available was the National Radio. The modernisation programmes launched earlier in the century by Reza Shah had discouraged most of the other traditional pastimes such as coffee-house recitation (*Qahva-khana naqqali*) and town-square (*maydan*) entertainments like theatrical storytelling (*pardihdari*), juggling and puppet shows (*shu'bada-bazi*, *khaymih-shabbazi*) and magic tricks (*ma'rikigiri*) as being backward and old-fashioned.<sup>43</sup> A few of the larger towns had cinemas, but for the majority of the rural population of Iran, radio was one of the only form of entertainment and information at their disposal.<sup>44</sup>

With the introduction of battery-powered transistor radios in the 1960s, even the most remote villages and tribal areas — many of which did not have electricity at the time — began listening to the radio.<sup>45</sup> The *Golha* programmes suddenly became a national fad. Families would arrange their schedules to make sure they were home in time to listen to the *Golha* programmes on the radio, while those who did not have radios — either because they could not afford them or because of the religious convictions

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41 Interview with Mohammad-Reza Shajarian, London, United Kingdom, 5 November 2005.

42 See *World Illiteracy at Mid-Century: A Statistical Study*, UNESCO Monographs on Fundamental Education, 11 (Paris: UNESCO, 1957), p. 39.

43 Peter Chelkowski, "Islam in Modern Drama and Theatre", *Die Welt des Islams*, 23/4 (1984), 45-69.

44 Amin Banani, "The Role of the Mass Media", in *Iran Faces the Seventies*, ed. by Ehsan Yarshater (New York: Praeger, 1971), pp. 325-28.

45 Mohammad Ali Issari refers to the spread of cinema entertainment throughout Iran during this period. However, the backward socio-cultural situation also led to the prominence and importance of the radio in peoples' lives. Two events occurred in Iran that made cinema the foremost source of mass entertainment for the people. The royal decree prohibiting *Ta'ziyih* and a decree banning *chador* contributed to the growing role of cinema as a source of mass entertainment. From 1936 until 1978, men and women could sit next to each other in cinemas, a freedom denied them even during such religious ritualistic gatherings as *Rawzih* and *Ta'ziyih*. See Issari, pp. 63-64 and 71.



and opposition of their elders — would go to their neighbours' and relatives' houses to listen to them.<sup>46</sup>

The *Golha* programmes introduced to the general public approximately 700 Persian poets from the Samanid dynasty (819-999) down through the Pahlavi monarchy (1925-1979). The programmes combined literary commentary with singing and declamation of their poetry, all accompanied by the finest Persian music. Because the radio was freely accessible to all, whether literate or not, this had a very positive effect of raising the awareness and literary appreciation of both the intelligentsia and the general public:

The *Golha* programmes served to preserve the classical tradition of Persian music and poetry which was under threat from forces that wished to modernise, and — in some cases — eradicate the love and cultivation of traditional Persian music and poetry in Iran. However, because of the airing of these programmes, interest in classical Persian literature was revived so that the *Divans* of poets that had been out of print for years, or never properly edited and published before, suddenly became in high demand and booksellers were astounded at the demand for and sale of these classics.<sup>47</sup>

The quality and sophistication of the *Golha* raised the bar for all other radio programmes, and helped to bring about what many refer to as the “Golden Age of Iranian Radio”, a period that lasted a little over a decade from 1954 to 1967. After this time, public radio and television merged into a single organisation: the National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT).

#### 18.6 *Golha-yi taza* 200, broadcast between 1972 and 1979.



To listen to this piece online scan the QR code or follow this link:  
<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/media/978-1-78374-062-8/Golha-yi-taza>

<sup>46</sup> In my interviews with Fakhradini and Shajarian (London, 4 November 2006), both described how, despite not having radios in their own homes during their youth, they would go daily to their cousins' and neighbours' houses to listen to the *Golha* programmes. Both told me that *Golha* programmes constituted the chief inspiration for them to pursue careers in music.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Prof. Shah-Husayni, Tehran, Iran, 6 November 2007. Shah-Husayni served as Director of the Literary Committee under Davud Pirnia at the Iranian National Radio during the production and broadcasting of the *Golha* programmes. He was also editor of the journal *Radio-yi Iran* from 1956 to 1967.



Fig. 18.8 Left to right: Shaf'i Kadkani, Hushang Ebtehaj and Bastani Parizi. They were all poets whose work was featured in the *Golha* programmes, c. 1970. Courtesy of Alireza Mirnaghbi, Public Domain.

In the words of Hushang Ebtehaj, one of the most important contemporary Persian poets and the producer of the “Fresh Flowers” (*Golha-yi taza*) programmes:

Davud Pirnia was extremely successful in promoting both Persian music and poetry. He did something very important, which was by combining poetry with music, he made people pay closer attention to poetry itself. At that time, there was nobody else except for him who was thinking about or paying attention to these matters. The National Radio pervaded Iranian social life in an all-inclusive manner. With the turn of a knob on the dial one could broadcast music throughout the whole country. With his attention to detail, his enthusiasm, dedication and passion for the subject, Mr Pirnia tried to select the very best repertoire of poems and to choose the very best musicians for participation in the *Golha* programmes.

In both respects he was quite successful, gathering all the best musicians around him to produce the *Golha* programmes. Beyond these programmes, we didn't hear much other music of high quality. There was some popular music being broadcast, but since it started at a level suitable to the masses, it soon degenerated into cheap music of the lowest quality. The *Golha* programmes played a very important role in the development of the musical and literary culture of Iran during the particular historical moment that they appeared. The *Golha* programmes were not without faults – faults that we can see plainly now with hindsight. That is to say, there were some things missing and other things that could have been added to or improved on – but at that time there was nothing better around. One could say that the *Golha* programmes were the very best our culture had to offer the world. In his day, Mr Pirnia made the best possible imaginable contribution to Persian music.

After experiencing the impact of the *Golha* programmes, looking back now in retrospect, we can recognise their faults and shortcomings in light of what subsequently came after them. But at the time when the *Golha* programmes were broadcast, all the participants were of the highest calibre and they enjoyed a very high place and were held in high esteem by the greater public.<sup>48</sup>

I have given such a long quotation from Ibtehaj because he was one of the main advocates of the neoclassical movement (*bazgasht*) in Persian music. In his capacity as the producer of the *Golha-yi Taza* programmes in the 1970s, this great modern Persian poet had aimed to revive styles of Persian music performed *before* the introduction of western musical notation by Colonel Vaziri. Despite the fact that many followers of the *bazgasht* movement criticised the *Golha* programmes for including western elements of harmony, polyphony and counterpoint, as well as other “innovations” in some of its ballads and orchestral pieces, Ibtehaj’s remarks clearly indicate that the *Golha* programmes were nonetheless still largely understood as a force for the preservation of traditionally “native Iranian” values and “classical Persian” music in all their authenticity.



Fig. 18.9 Mohammad Reza Lutfi (on the left) and Hushang Ebtehaj (on the right) in the mid-1970s. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain.

In an interview, Nasir al-Din Shah-Husayni, who directed the Literary Committee that vetted the contents of the *Golha* programmes at the Iranian

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48 Interview with Hushang Ibtehaj, Tehran, Iran, 19 November 2009.

National Radio, related how popular the *Golha* became throughout Iran. His office typically received thousands of letters from *Golha* fans every week, many of whom requested copies of various poems they had heard on a particular programme. Although it was impossible to answer them all, the committee devoted two centre pages of the *Radio-yi Iran* monthly journal to publishing the transcripts of the *Golha-yi Javidan* and the *Golha-yi Rangarang* programmes.<sup>49</sup>



Fig. 18.10 Text of the *Golha-yi javidan* and *Golha-yi rangarang* programmes printed in the *Radio-yi Iran* journal. *Majala-yi Radio*, 16-17 (1335 A.Hsh./1956), Public Domain.

The standards of the *Golha* were so high that all the musicians and singers wanted to participate in them,<sup>50</sup> and many of them became famous due to

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Shah-Husayni. My own research indicates that no copies of these journals are currently available in any public library in Iran, although stray copies of various issues can be found in the British Library, the Library of Congress and Princeton University Library. Complete copies of all numbers of these journals are currently housed in my own private collection.

<sup>50</sup> In my interview with Shajarian (2006), he informed me that the reason he came to Tehran from his birthplace of Mashhad, was that “there were no musicians to speak of in

their participation.<sup>51</sup> Everyone knew that Pirnia did not invite just anybody to participate in the *Golha*, and that he chose the participants according to their artistic merits, not because of the strings they could pull for him or in return for favours.<sup>52</sup> Due to Pirnia's personal integrity, reputation and the quality and sophistication of the programmes, the musicians and singers in the *Golha* programmes soon acquired a social "star" status and respect that helped in turn to elevate the status of musicians and singers in the eyes of the general public in Iran. 'Abd al-Hamid Ishraq, one of the editors of the journal *Musik-i Iran (Iran Music Magazine)*,<sup>53</sup> explained to me that in 1953, when he was a young man, he was quite an accomplished musician who played the *tar* in the National Radio's orchestra with well-known performers like Dardashti, Muluk Zarrabi and Bahram Siyah. This was a few years before the inauguration of the *Golha* programmes. Despite his talent, he was discouraged from playing music by the merciless taunting and mockery of passers-by: when they saw him waiting for the bus with his *tar* in hand, they would ridicule him so much that he abandoned playing music altogether. However, once the *Golha* programmes hit the airwaves, public attitudes shifted dramatically, such that music suddenly became a respectable, even envied profession to pursue.<sup>54</sup>

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Mashhad at that time. I actually wanted to come and participate in the *Golha* programmes and to work with their musicians. I was a high school teacher at that time. I struggled to get myself transferred to work in Tehran. However, my main aim was to work with the *Golha* musicians – artists such as Mr. 'Ibadi, Mr. Shahnaz, Mr. Badi'i and Majd. So with great difficulty, I got myself transferred to Tehran. I was still teaching in high school when I began singing in the *Golha* programmes".

51 Interview with Gulpayagani.

52 Parviz Yahaqqi notes that "Mr. Pirnia never allowed himself to be influenced by anyone when it came to the *Golha*. It wouldn't matter if his father, mother or even the Shah recommended someone for participation in the *Golha*. If he did not think their talents were up to the standard of the *Golha*, he would not accept them". Interview with Parviz Yahaqqi Tehran, Iran, 9 September 2005. Yahaqqi, who died in 2012, was one of Iran's major violin virtuosos and a composer for the *Golha* programmes.

53 This was a monthly journal published between 1952-1963, produced by Bahman Hirbud, and edited by 'Ali Reza Rashidi and 'Abd al-Hamid Ishraq.

54 'Abd al-Hamid Ishraq notes that "Everyone in the Radio was jealous of the popularity of Mr. Pirnia and the *Golha* programmes. Everyone wanted to be in them. Yet he insisted on focusing on the general quality of the *Golha* programmes and hardly gave the time of day to anyone who did not have talent. There were some singers like Bahram Siyah who, although had a good number of fans, were disappointed not to be chosen for the *Golha*. There were many other singers who tried to gain admittance among the performers on the *Golha* programmes, but Pirnia, who placed great emphasis on a singer's ability to convey both the poetic meaning and the rhythmical ambience of the poems, wouldn't accept them. And he was right—not everyone was up to that". Interview with 'Abd al-Hamid Ishraq, Paris, France, 30 May 2008. Ishraq is an architect and historian of Iranian music.

## Conservation of the *Golha* programmes through the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme

I first became aware of the socio-cultural and artistic significance of the *Golha* programmes during my undergraduate studies at Pahlavi University in Shiraz in the early 1970s. I lived with a well-educated and cosmopolitan Iranian family who were regular weekly listeners to these programmes, and we constantly discussed and debated their contents and merits during our conversations about Persian literature and poetry. I had to leave Iran in 1979, and I took with me a substantial collection of cassette recordings of the *Golha*.

In 2004, I began exploring the possibility of collecting and digitising the *Golha* programmes. Much to my surprise, I found that almost no information about them was available, and no in-depth studies had been undertaken.<sup>55</sup> Given the ambiguous social and religious position of music and musicians in Iran after the 1979 Islamic revolution,<sup>56</sup> it was unclear how much of the archive of the *Golha* programmes held at the Iranian National Radio had survived. It seemed highly likely that, due to the enormous popularity of the programmes, good copies of them might have been preserved in private collections in Iran and abroad.

In the Autumn of 2005, I began a pilot project sponsored by the British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS) and the Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF) in London. My goal was to investigate the whereabouts of the *Golha* recordings in private or public collections both in Iran and the west, in an effort to find out whether or not it might be possible to reassemble the whole archive. During an initial trip to Iran in 2005, I managed to establish contact with almost all the leading musicians, vocalists and participants who had starred in the *Golha* programmes — at least those still living in Iran. Among them were Farhad Fakhradini, Farhang-i Sharif, Firidun Hafizi, Giti Vaziritabar, Akbar Gulpayigani, Hushang-i Zarif, Muhammad Isma'ili, Muhammad Zarif, Javad Lashgari, Humayun Khurram, Hasan Nahid, Mansur Narimun, Ophelia Partaw, Parviz Yahaqqi, Muhammad Zulfunnun, Farimarz Paywar, 'Ali Tajvidi, 'Alireza Izadi, Ravin Salih (Zarif), Simin Behbehani, Darvish Amir-Hayati and Husayn Dehlavi.

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55 All that existed was the article by Daryush Pirnia and Erik Nakjavani, "Golhā, Barnāma-yi", in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 16 vols (New York: Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 2003), 11, pp. 92-95.

56 Ameneh Youssefzadeh, "The Situation of Music in Iran since the Revolution: The Role of Official Organizations", *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 9/2 (2000), 35-61 (p. 39).



Fig. 18.11 Faramarz Payvar (on the left) and Hosain Tehrani (on the right), at the Tomb of Hafiz, Shiraz Arts Festival, c. 1970. Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain.

During the same trip, I established contacts with several of Davud Pirnia's sons, and some of his closest collaborators and friends, including Bijan Faraz and Mu'in Afshar. I also contacted — and in many cases interviewed — eminent Iranian musicologists and leading figures in the field of Persian music, such as Daryush Safwat, Shahin Farhat, Habibu'llah Nasirifar, Shahrukh Nadiri, Muhammad Sarir, Sa'id Mir-'Ali Naqi, Fatima Va'izi (Parisa), Khatim Asghari and Pari Banan.<sup>57</sup> Out of these conversations emerged some 28 hours of taped interviews, from which I learned that many private individuals as well as several institutions possessed substantial collections of the *Golha* programmes.

Collecting and digitising the entire archive of the *Golha* programmes now became a distinct possibility. I also discovered that there were four private collectors with major collections of Persian music including the *Golha* programmes, as well as phonograph records and recordings of private performances. Four of these collectors had had a personal or professional relationship with Pirnia. It was Pirnia's custom to supply recordings to

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<sup>57</sup> The wife of Ghulum Husayn Banan, one of the original singers in the *Golha* programmes.

friends who admired a certain *Golha* programme and provided their own blank tapes.<sup>58</sup>



Fig. 18.12 Left to right: Turaj Nigahban, Gulshan Ibrahimy and Humayun Khuram.  
Courtesy of Forugh Bahmanpour, Public Domain.

In July 2006, I received a grant from the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) to collect and digitise the *Golha* programmes and to deposit a copy of all materials in the British Library's World Sound Archive, where they would be preserved and made available to all.<sup>59</sup> Through the generous support of the EAP and the backing of the Music Department of the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, I made several more trips to Iran and also travelled to Germany, France, the United States and Canada to consult with collectors and exchange *Golha* programmes with them.

I was able to hire the necessary research assistants, technicians and secretarial support to properly collect, research, record, digitise and index the entire vast *Golha* archive. I managed to collaborate with three of the major surviving collections of Persian music, as well as with the archive housed at the Iran National Radio.<sup>60</sup> In addition, many private collectors of Persian music

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58 Interview with Mu'in Afshar, Tehran, Iran, 28 September 2005. Afshar was a colleague and personal friend of Pirnia, who had produced the *Barnama-yi kudak* ["Children's Programme"] at Tehran Radio.

59 EAP088: The *Golha* radio programmes (Flowers of Persian Song and Poetry), [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP088](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP088)

60 Three major collections in Tehran have been digitised. One, the collection of Gulshan



in Iran, France, Germany, Canada and the United States (whose names are unfortunately too many to mention here) generously shared the recordings held in their personal archives with the project. In May 2008, the entire digital archive accompanied by a complete index of the *Golha* programmes was delivered to and deposited in the British Library's World Sound Archive.

## The *Golha* Project Website

All the programmes in the *Golha* archive were numbered consecutively. However, some numbers were skipped due to a singer or musician not appearing in the studio for a performance.<sup>61</sup> Enthusiastic collectors of the *Golha* programmes would then sometimes take the initiative of piecing together various parts of other programmes and present these as a missing programme corresponding to one of the blank numbers. In order to discern whether each and every newly discovered programme was in fact genuine, I compiled a detailed searchable index of the whole archive against which I could check any new programmes that resurfaced.<sup>62</sup>

My index of the *Golha* programmes proved to be a very useful tool for putting this vast archive in order. The need to compile a large searchable digital index of the archive soon became evident. In this fashion, the concept of a *Golha* website was born. In 2008, a generous grant from the Iran Heritage Foundation in London (the largest and most effective organisation in the western world

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Ibrahimi, an amateur musician who enjoyed collegial relationships with all the leading musicians of his time is preserved in the Museum of Music. The other, the collection of Murtaza 'Abdu'l-Rasuli, a master calligrapher, a friend of Pirinia and all the major musicians and literary figures of the day, is preserved in the House of Music. The third major collection was compiled at the same time as the broadcasting of the *Golha* programmes by Mr Mahmudi, a railroad employee with a passion for music collecting. He was a friend of Pirnia and would receive from him copies of the *Golha* programmes. His archive remains in private hands. There was also a fourth collection belonged to Ahmad Mihran whose house was a favourite gathering place for all the musicians and singers as well as the poets. It contained not only recordings from the radio, but also recordings of private performances of his friends, recorded in his home. Unfortunately, his archive did not survive his death. Concerning the Mihran Archive, see Furugh Bahmanpur, *Cheraha-yi mundagar-i taranaha va musiqi*, 1 (Tehran: Javidan, 1382 A.Hsh./2003), 108-11.

61 Occasionally, due to sickness or accident, a performing artist did not appear in studio. Consequently, numbered programmes whose recording had been pre-planned were postponed to a later date. If such a programme was never rescheduled and recorded by the producer, its number remained blank.

62 In this task I was graciously assisted by many lovers of the *Golha* programmes. I remain in the debt of Sayyid 'Ali Reza Darbandi's research, both published and unpublished, as well as his many private communications. See his *Golha-yi taza: pazhuhishi dar siri-yi barnamaha-yi Golha-yi taza* (Tehran: Nashr-i Paykan, 1384 A.Hsh./2005).

sponsoring Iran-related subjects) allowed me to begin the project. In early 2009, together with a team of research associates (mostly based in Iran), we began working with computer programmers and technicians in the west to construct an online platform. The construction of the website took three full years of constant work. Over these years (2009-2012), the project generated a great deal of media interest, as a result of which it has been featured countless times on television, radio, and in the print media in Iran, Europe and North America.

The upshot of this project was the creation of a dedicated portal, the *Golha* Project Website,<sup>63</sup> that has made not only the audio files for the complete *Golha* archive freely available over the Internet, but has also provided a searchable, relational database for all the *Golha* programmes. The sound files of each and every programme are searchable, and the website is completely bilingual (Persian and English). The site also includes biographical data for all 700 poets from the tenth to the twentieth centuries mentioned in the *Golha* programmes, biographies in both Persian and English of all the performers in the *Golha* programmes, transcriptions of all the songs and poetry, as well as the sheet music for the popular ballads (*tarana*) stored in the archive. The archive is searchable by eighteen different rubrics: programme name; number; singer of the *avaz* and *tarana*; song writer; poet of the *avaz*; first line of the song or poem sung; name of the song; instrument; musician; composer; name of poet whose poetry is sung or declaimed; poetic genre; musical mode (*dastgah* or *avaz*) and musical melody (*gusha*) of the music performed; name of the commentators and announcers; and names of the sound technicians. It is also equipped with a radio player that allows the compilation of bespoke playlists of chosen programmes.

Since its launch in 2012, the *Golha* Project Website has received over three and a half million visitors; as of 2014 it has over 29,000 registered users. In 2012 it was awarded the prize for the best Persian music website by the House of Music (*Khana-yi musiq*). From the launch of the pilot in 2005, people from all over the world have been sending in their precious archives of Persian music produced in Iran prior to the Revolution, with the hope that they can be preserved and made publicly accessible to future generations.

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63 <http://www.golha.co.uk>

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'Abd al-Hamid Ishraq, Paris, France, 30 May 2008.

Mr Nikukar, Los Angeles, U.S., 25 July 2010.

Bastani Parizi, Tehran, Iran, 13 December 2007.

Bijan Pirnia, Tehran, Iran, 12 September 2005.

Daryush Pirnia, Maryland, U.S., 17 August 2005.

Professor Shah-Husayni, Tehran, Iran, 6 November 2007.

Mohammad-Reza Shajarian, London, United Kingdom, 5 November 2005; and  
London, 4 November 2006.

# 19. The use of sound archives for the investigation, teaching and safeguarding of endangered languages in Russia

*Tjeerd de Graaf and Victor Denisov*

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In Russia many old sound recordings remain hidden in archives and in private collections where the quality of preservation is not guaranteed. This chapter presents the results of two projects concerning the safeguarding and preservation of endangered-language sound recordings in Russia, and discusses several other endeavours relating to these historical materials. We focus on the activities and outcomes of our Endangered Archives Projects, EAP089: Reconstruction of sound materials of endangered languages in the Russian Federation for sound archives in Saint Petersburg, and EAP347: Vanishing voices from the Uralic world: sound recordings for archives in Russia (in particular Udmurtia), Estonia, Finland and Hungary.<sup>1</sup> We place these activities in the context of earlier initiatives, such as the research programme “Voices from Tundra and Taiga” (2002-2005), which facilitated the safeguarding of other sound recordings and made these materials available to indigenous communities, helping them preserve their native tongues. After reporting the results of the EAP089 and EAP347 projects, we illustrate the importance of this work for the study of historical events in Russia and the possible revitalisation of disappearing languages. Finally, our discussion emphasises the need to safeguard languages and to modernise the Russian Federation’s archiving activities.

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1 See [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP089](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP089) and [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP347](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP347) respectively.

## Language endangerment and the use of historical data

We are presently experiencing a dramatic loss of linguistic diversity around the globe. Linguists estimate that by the end of this century at least half of the 7,000 languages spoken today will have fallen silent. Speakers all over the world are giving up their languages and shifting to more prestigious dominant languages. A number of factors are responsible for this development, including globalisation, urbanisation and climate change. Migration, national unification and economic advantages — such as access to education and employment — lead speakers to adopt a dominant language and to relinquish their own. While language shifts and changes are normal, the modern developments of globalisation and urbanisation have sped up the process dramatically. In the same way that humanity is losing the Earth's biological diversity, its linguistic diversity is also diminishing. Estimates place the loss of bio-cultural diversity on the order of the mass extinction of the dinosaurs.<sup>2</sup>

There is a pressing need to document endangered languages before they disappear over the next few decades. Language loss leads to the irrevocable loss of our cultural heritage, against which we must safeguard the world's remaining cultural diversity as expressed in the continued existence and use of many different languages. Some linguists estimate that in most regions around 90% of local languages may be replaced by dominant languages by the end of the twenty-first century.<sup>3</sup> What makes this dramatic loss worse is that the majority of these dying languages have never been recorded or described: they are vanishing without a trace. Humankind is not only losing its diversity but also a record of the unique human ability for language.

Several vanishing languages were recorded in the twentieth century, but the recordings are buried in private collections, inaccessible archives or on forgotten shelves in universities. These are invaluable historical records of languages as they were once spoken. For languages of which all the speakers

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2 Jonathan Loh and David Harmon, "Biocultural Diversity: Threatened Species, Endangered Languages", report commissioned by WWF-Netherlands, Zeist, June 2014, [http://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/biocultural\\_report\\_june\\_2014.pdf](http://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/biocultural_report_june_2014.pdf)

3 For details of the problems relating to this loss of languages, see Peter Austin and Julia Sallabank, *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Nicholas Evans, *Dying Words: Endangered Languages and What They Have to Tell Us* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley, *Endangered Languages: Language Loss and Community Response* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Mark Janse and Sijmen Tol, eds., *Language Death and Language Maintenance: Theoretical, Practical and Descriptive Approaches* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2003).

have died, or only few elderly speakers remain, these recordings provide our only window into the language. For speech communities, such records can provide a source of pride in their cultural heritage; for linguists, they help document and explain processes of language contact, shift and change. Finding, preserving and making these records digitally accessible is an important measure in stemming the tide of language loss.

A language is in danger when its speakers no longer use it, employ it in fewer communicative domains, or cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. The process of endangerment is determined by a number of factors, which have been described in a report by an expert group assembled by UNESCO.<sup>4</sup> According to the report, the major factors that affect whether a language survives include: 1) intergenerational language transmission; 2) absolute number of speakers; 3) proportion of speakers within the total population; 4) trends in existing language domains; 5) response to new domains and media; and 6) materials for language education and literacy. The last factor is key to the central theme of this article: languages should be well documented, and the documentation resulting from linguistic fieldwork of earlier times — which is often hidden in endangered archives — should be uncovered and preserved.<sup>5</sup>

At the time when the first sound recordings of language and folklore were made in Europe, it became obvious that central facilities were needed to preserve the valuable data which had been collected. Around the beginning of the twentieth century, this led to the establishment of sound archives (called phonogram archives), the earliest and the most important of which was founded in Vienna in 1899. Soon similar institutions started their own collections of sound recordings in Berlin (1900) and St Petersburg (1908). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the phonogram archives of three important European empires (Austria, Germany and Russia) were in regular contact with each other and with institutions elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> For example, during the Jesup North Pacific Expedition in 1900, data on the peoples of northeast Siberia were collected, and advanced equipment for speech recording was introduced to Russian researchers of northern languages and cultures. In the

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4 UNESCO, *Language Vitality and Endangerment*, a document adopted by the International Expert Meeting on the UNESCO programme “Safeguarding of Endangered Languages”, Paris, 10-12 March 2003, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/language-vitality>

5 Jost Gippert, Nikolaus P. Himmelmann and Ulrike Mosel, eds., *Essentials of Language Documentation* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006); Eva A. Csató and David Nathan, “Multimedia and Documentation of Endangered Languages”, in *Language Documentation and Description*, ed. by Peter K. Austin, 1 (London: SOAS, 2003), pp. 73-84.

6 Suzanne Ziegler, *Die Wachsylinder des Berliner Phonogramm-Archivs* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2006).



course of this expedition, Waldemar Bogoraz, Waldemar Jochelson and other Russian scholars received guidance from western experts such as Franz Boas concerning methods of fieldwork. Copies of the recordings and fieldwork notes from this expedition are stored in St Petersburg. In the 1980s they provided the basis for a joint publication on the cultures of Siberia and Alaska by Russian and American scholars.<sup>7</sup>

This cooperation was one of the first international joint projects that involved Russian scholars following their half-century of isolation after the Revolution. Further instances include the participation of the Phonogrammarchiv of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in various joint European projects initiated jointly with St Petersburg University and the Russian Academy of Sciences.



Fig. 19.1 The Pushkinskii Dom in St Petersburg. Photo by V. Denisov, CC BY.

The sound archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, located nowadays in the Institute of Russian Literature (the Pushkinskii Dom) in St Petersburg, contains more than 6,000 wax cylinders made for the Edison phonograph and 350 old wax discs (Fig. 19.1). In addition, it holds an extensive fund of gramophone records and one of the largest collections of tape-recorded

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7 William W. Fitzhugh and Aron Crowell, *Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 1988).

Russian folklore (Fig. 19.2). Collectively, these recordings represent the history of Russian ethnography and contain a wide range of materials gathered by well-known Russian ethnographers and linguists, such as W. I. Jochelson, S. M. Shirokogorov, L. Ya. Shternberg, V. K. Shteinitz, A. V. Anokhin, V. I. Anuchin, N. K. Karger, Z. V. Evald, Y. V. Gippius, S. D. Magid, B. M. Dobrovolsky and V. V. Korguzalov.<sup>8</sup> These materials preserve the folklore of the peoples of the north in Siberia and the far east of Russia. They were recorded on phonograph cylinders (1900-1940) and magnetic tapes (1950-1990). The sound archive is further supplemented by metadata and by dictionaries in Russian and the national languages. This material is particularly rich in the Finno-Ugric, Samoyed, Turkic, Tungus-Manchu and Paleo-Siberian languages of the Russian Federation.



Fig. 19.2 The phonogram collection in St Petersburg. Photo by V. Denisov, CC BY.

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8 See Tjeerd de Graaf, "The Use of Sound Archives in the Study of Endangered Languages", in *Music Archiving in the World: Papers Presented at the Conference on the Occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv* (Berlin: VWB, 2002), pp. 101-07; and idem, "Voices from Tundra and Taiga: Endangered Languages of Russia on the Internet", in *Lectures on Endangered Languages 5: Endangered Languages of the Pacific Rim C005*, ed. by Osamu Sakiyama and Fubito Endo (Osaka: Osaka Gakuin University, 2004), pp. 143-69.

## New sound collections for the Pushkinskii Dom

Between 1995 and 2005, we participated in a series of collaborative projects to explore, digitise and publish online the collections of the Pushkinskii Dom (Pushkin House).<sup>9</sup> During this period we realised that there are many important private collections which are even more endangered than the material stored in official archives. Our first project, EAP089: Reconstruction of sound materials of endangered languages in the Russian Federation for sound archives in Saint Petersburg (2006-2008), aimed at addressing this urgent problem. We have digitised seven collections of endangered-language recordings made between the 1960s and 1980s.<sup>10</sup> These include three collections of endangered Siberian languages: Udeghe, Samoyed and Kerek.<sup>11</sup> We have also digitised a collection of recorded Russian Siberian folklore, resulting from research work done in the 1970s and 1980s by students of linguistics and ethnology at Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the Siberian collections, we have digitised Yevsei I. Peisakh's collection of the folklore of his native Krymchak people in Crimea,<sup>13</sup> a collection of the Tajik and Wakhi

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9 The projects "The Use of Acoustic Databases in the Study of Language Change" (1995-1998) and "St Petersburg Sound Archives on the World Wide Web" (1998-2001) were financially supported by the International Association for the Promotion of Cooperation with Scientists from the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union (INTAS). A third project, "Voices from Tundra and Taiga" (2002-2005), was supported by The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). This last project resulted in the publication of a catalogue: Aleksei Burykin, Albina Girfanova, Aleksandr Kastrov, Yuri Marchenko and Natalia Svetozarova, *Kollektsii Narodov Severa v Fonogrammarkhiv Pushkinskogo Doma [Collections on the Peoples of the North in the Phonogram Archive of the Pushkinskii Dom]* (St Petersburg: University of St Petersburg, 2005). For more information on these projects, see De Graaf, "Voices from Tundra and Taiga".

10 For a complete list of materials, see <http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP089>

11 These are the collections of 1) Albina Kh. Girfanova, who between 1983-1984 recorded eighteen speakers of Udeghe; her collection includes fairy-tales, folk-tales, legends, life stories and songs (improvisations, "personal" songs, imitations of "personal" songs by other individuals as well as shamanistic incantations, and also phonetics and syntax questionnaires); 2) Marina D. Lyublinskaya's collection of recordings made between 1985 and 2000, most of them in northern Russia; and 3) Peter Y. Skorik's collection entitled *Fairy Tale of the Kereks*, which contains unique 1960s sound recordings of the Kerek people in the Bering region of the Chukotka Autonomous District of the Russian Federation.

12 This collection includes unique sound recordings from 35 Russian villagers of East Siberia, living in areas together with the native peoples. They consist of stories, personal memories and songs in local Russian dialects, in which the code switching and interference with other languages are notable.

13 Fifteen people were recorded in Crimea and Abkhazia between 1963 and 1974; through lyrical songs, wedding performances, comic songs and folk tunes they provide specimens of their language (belonging to the Turkic language family) and culture (based on Judaism).

languages,<sup>14</sup> and a collection of languages and dialects from Afghanistan.<sup>15</sup> Importantly, our EAP project was the first initiative in the Russian Federation to take into account the recommendations of the International Association of Sound Archives, made in the reports IASA-TC 03 and IASA-TC 04.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the copies deposited with the EAP, we have provided digital materials to the phonogram archive of the Pushkinskii Dom, the St Petersburg Institute for Linguistic Studies and the Austrian Phonogrammarchiv. These collections, amounting to around 111 hours of sound, provide invaluable documentation of the earlier life of endangered languages.<sup>17</sup>

## Sound archives of Udmurt and other Finno-Ugric languages

Our engagement with Russian archives made us aware that the phonogram archive of the Pushkinskii Dom held a number of historical recordings of the Finno-Ugric languages of the Russian Federation, most of which are now severely endangered.<sup>18</sup>

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14 Recordings made by Ivan M. Steblin-Kamensky during his archeological and ethnolinguistic expeditions in Tajikistan, in Pamir and in the south of the Ural Mountains. The 25 recordings on open reel tapes contain stories and songs in Tajik and Vakhani (Wakhi), recorded between 1966 and 1970.

15 Recordings of Dari, Pashto, Vakhani, Balochi, Mendzoni, Shughni, Tadzhik, Parachi, Vaygali, Pashtai, Kati, Colonial German and Russian made by Alexander L. Grünberg between 1966 and 1992. The collection also includes sound recordings of traditional Afghan and Indian music, and fragments of scientific seminars and conferences. The materials in this collection were used by the collector in scientific publications: A. Grünberg and I. M. Steblin-Kamensky, *The Languages of East-Hindukush* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976); and A. Grünberg, *A Sketch of the Afghan Language (Pashto)* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1987).

16 Dietrich Schüller, "The Safeguarding of the Audio Heritage: Ethics, Principles and Preservation Strategy", IASA Technical Committee, IASA-TC 03, 3 December 2005.

17 See the catalogue resulting from EAP089: Victor Denisov, Tjeerd de Graaf and Natalia Svetozarova, *New Sound Collections in the Phonogram Archive of the Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkinskii Dom) in Saint Petersburg* (St Petersburg: Institute for Linguistic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 2009).

18 See Victor Denisov, "K voprosu o sozdanii edinoi fonoteki Udmurtskikh arkhivnykh zapisei: printsipi, metody i tekhnologii [On the Creation of a United Record Library of Udmurt Archival Records: Principles, Methods and Technologies]", *Yearbook of Finno-Ugric Studies*, ed. by N. I. Leonov, 1 (Izhevsk: Udmurt University, 2010), pp. 109-17; Tjeerd de Graaf and Victor Denisov, "Sokhranenie zvukovogo nasledii narodov Udmurtskoi Respubliki: opyt vedushchikh zvukovykh arkhivov mira [Preservation of the Sound Heritage of the Peoples of the Udmurt Republic: The Experience of the World's Leading Archives]", in *Rossii i Udmurtii: istoriia i sovremennost' [Russia and Udmurtia: Past and Present]* (Izhevsk: Udmurt University, 2008), pp. 866-78; and György Nanovfszky, ed., *The Finno-Ugric World* (Budapest: Teleki László Foundation, 2004).



Fig. 19.3 The catalogue of sound recordings in the Pushkinskii Dom.

As a result, in 2010, we began EAP347: Vanishing voices from the Uralic world: sound recordings for archives in Russia (in particular Udmurtia), Estonia, Finland and Hungary. Within the framework of this project, we prepared a preliminary description of all other Udmurt sound collections kept in the Pushkinskii Dom,<sup>19</sup> in the Folklore Archive of the Estonian Literary Museum (Tartu) and in the Berlin and Vienna phonogram archives.<sup>20</sup> We have also

19 Victor Denisov, "Zapisi Udmurtskogo iazyka i folklora v Fonogrammarkhive Instituta Russkoi Literatury (Pushkinskii Dom) [Recordings of the Udmurt Language and Folklore in the Phonogram Archive of the Institute of Russian literature (Pushkinskii Dom)]", in *Rossii i Udmurtiia: istoriia i sovremennost' [Russia and Udmurtia: Past and Present]* (Izhevsk: 2008), pp. 879-84. It is worth mentioning the Udmurt collections recorded between 1929 and 1940 during a series of linguistic and ethnological expeditions by well-known researchers such as Kuzebai Gerd, J. A. Eshpai, M. P. Petrov, V. A. Pchelnikov, Z. V. Evald, V. Y. Vladykin and L. S. Khristolybova: V. Y. Vladykin and L. S. Khristolybova, *Istoriia etnografii Udmurtov: kratkii istoriograficheskii ocherk bibliografiei [History of Ethnography of the Udmurts: A Short Historiographic Sketch with Bibliography]* (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1984); V. S. Churakov, "Obzor folklorno-lingvisticheskikh i arkhеologo-etnograficheskikh ekspeditcii, rabotavshikh sredi Udmurtov v 20-30-e gody XX veka [Review of the Folklore, Linguistic, Archeological and Ethnographic Expeditions among the Udmurts in the 1920s and 1930s]", in *Yearbook of Finno-Ugric Studies*, ed. by N. I. Leonov, 2 (Izhevsk: Udmurt University, 2010), pp. 102-15.

20 The Udmurt recordings in the Phonogramarchiv in Berlin were made in 1917 by German

digitised important recordings of the Udmurt language and folklore held in Izhevsk, the capital of the Republic of Udmurtia (Fig. 19.4).<sup>21</sup> As a result, the sound recordings in the Udmurt archives are now accessible for research and teaching. Specimens on CD or DVD are available to scholars; they can also be used for educational purposes, which might stimulate the revitalisation of the Udmurt language.



Fig. 19.4 The sound laboratory in Izhevsk. Photo by V. Denisov, CC BY.

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researchers who worked with prisoners of war from Russia. See Robert Lach, *Gesänge russischer Kriegsgefangener* (Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1926).

- 21 These collections are mainly located in two leading scientific and educational institutions: the Udmurt State University and the Udmurt Institute for History, Language and Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Ural Branch). During this project, 657 sound collections in the Udmurt Institute were digitised. The total volume of digitised recordings amounts to 600 hours, 20 minutes and 53 seconds. They include songs, narrations, prayers and incantations. In total they feature 2,560 performers representing nine regions of the Russian Federation: the Udmurt Republic, the Republic of Tatarstan (formerly the Tatar Republic), the Republic of Bashkortostan (formerly the Bashkir Republic), the Republic of Mari-El (formerly the Mari Republic), the Kirovsky Region, Permsky Krai (formerly the Permsky Region), Krasnoyarsky Krai, the Tomsky Region and the Tyumensky Region. 143 collectors, mainly from the Udmurt Institute and the Udmurt State University, participated in the expeditions.

One of the most important conditions for this preservation and revitalisation of the Udmurt language has been the attitude of the Udmurt people towards their native culture. From our experience, the availability of numerous publications and the widespread public accessibility of historical recordings (via radio and television) inspire great interest and even pride.<sup>22</sup> We hope that the revitalisation of the Udmurt language will contribute to the safeguarding of the broader cultural heritage of the Russian Federation.

## Wolfgang Steinitz's historical sound recordings of Khanty

While working in the Pushkinskii Dom, we discovered recordings of an endangered Siberian language that provide insight into some historical events of the Soviet period. This collection was made by Wolfgang Steinitz, a German scholar who in 1935 was working at the Institute for the Peoples of the North in Leningrad. In that year he undertook a field trip to Siberia in order to investigate the language and folklore of the Khanty (Ostyak) people. Their language belongs to the Ugric branch of the Finno-Ugric family and is related to Hungarian.<sup>23</sup> The scientific results of this expedition were published in Steinitz's report *Bericht an das Institut für Nordvölker (INS) über eine Studienreise in den Kreis der Ostjaken und Wogulen im Jahre 1935*, and in his diary.<sup>24</sup> In these documents, Steinitz describes his use of a phonograph and the material he recorded, including the number of wax cylinders, the location of the recordings and their contents.<sup>25</sup>

In 1937, during the Stalinist repression, Steinitz was forced to leave the Soviet Union and move to Sweden. Although he was allowed to take most

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22 De Graaf and Denisov, "Sokhranenie Zvukovogo"; Victor Denisov, "Istoricheskie zvukovie kolleksii fonogrammarkhivov Evropy kak istochnik dlia issledovaniia iazyka i folkloru Finno-Ugorskikh narodov [Historical Sound Collections in the European Phonogram Archives as a Resource for the Study of the Language and Folklore of Finno-Ugric Peoples]", in *Language and Language Behavior 2010-2011*, 11 (St Petersburg: St Petersburg University, 2011), pp. 78-80.

23 See Andrew Wiget and Olga Balalaeva, *Khanty, People of the Taiga: Surviving the Twentieth Century* (Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 2011).

24 Wolfgang Steinitz, *Ostjakologische Arbeiten, Band 4: Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft und Ethnographie* (Den Haag: Mouton, 1980), pp. 397-435.

25 Natalia D. Swetosarowa, "Verschollen geglaubte Feldforschungsaufnahmen: Zur Sammlung Wolfgang Steinitz im Phonogrammarchiv St. Petersburg", in *Die Entdeckung des Sozialkritischen Liedes*, ed. by John Eckhard (Münster: Waxmann, 2006), pp. 49-60.

of his fieldwork data and other scientific material with him, he had to leave the phonographic cylinders.<sup>26</sup> Until recently, western scholars studying the Finno-Ugric languages assumed that these early recordings of the Khanty language had been lost, possibly destroyed in Leningrad during the war.<sup>27</sup> However, over the course of our project, we learnt that Steinitz's recordings were kept as a separate collection within the archive at the Pushkinskii Dom.

There are thirty wax cylinders in this collection, though Steinitz mentions 31 items in his written account of the expedition. These recordings were documented and copied onto analogue tapes, but somehow the collection slid into oblivion. This can be explained by the fact that, since its establishment, very little information about the rich collections of the St Petersburg phonogram archive has been accessible.<sup>28</sup> The only complete inventory of the archive was published by Sophia Magid in 1936.<sup>29</sup> Magid's inventory, however, does not mention Steinitz's collection, probably because these materials were initially stored at the Institute for the Peoples of the North and later in the Folklore Section of the Institute for Anthropology and Ethnography.<sup>30</sup>

In 2005, within the framework of the international research programme "Voices from Tundra and Taiga", the complete catalogue of the recorded materials was finally published (Fig. 19.3).<sup>31</sup> Here, the Steinitz recordings are described under number 127 as "phonographic cylinders with sound material from the Khanty (Ostyaks) in Siberia, which were made in 1935 by Wolfgang Steinitz (1905-1967) and obtained from the Institute of the Peoples of the North in Leningrad". These thirty wax cylinders contain 44 sound recordings altogether, mostly of songs, such as bear songs, but also of two fairy tales and four shaman performances.

A document from the collection of manuscripts in the phonogram archive provides a description of the material from the expedition. This list, which was probably produced by Steinitz himself, allows a more precise identification

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26 Steinitz, *Ostjakologische Arbeiten*; and Swetosarowa, "Verschollen geglaubte Feldforschungsaufnahmen".

27 Ibid.

28 Burykin et al., *Kolleksii Narodov Severa*; and Swetosarowa, "Verschollen geglaubte Feldforschungsaufnahmen".

29 Sofia Magid, "Spisok sobranii Fonogramarkhiva Folklornoi sektiis IAE Akademii Nauk SSSR [List of the Collections in the Phonogram Archive of the Folklore Section of the Institute for Anthropology and Ethnographics, Academy of Sciences of the USSR]", *Sovetskii folklor*, 4-5 (1936), 415-28.

30 Swetosarowa, "Verschollen geglaubte Feldforschungsaufnahmen".

31 Burykin et al., *Kolleksii Narodov Severa*.



of the sound recordings and their contents. One of the tasks of “Voices from Tundra and Taiga” has been the addition of metadata such as descriptions of the title, kind, size, place and time of recordings, as well as the tone quality and duration of the separate sound documents. In this way, the catalogue was completed with a database on CD-ROM containing copies of the original recordings together with all the relevant data.<sup>32</sup>

From the available data we were able to reconstruct some of Steinitz’s experiences during his fieldwork in the Soviet Union. He started recording on the day after his arrival in the Khanty village of Lokhtokurt in July 1935. He made the following note in his diary:

*Abends kommt Matvej Kitvurov, Musikant [...] Er bringt sein Instrument [...] Spielt “Programm Musik” [...] ich will Aufnahme machen: Wir schicken die Kinder raus, ich stelle den Phonographen genau ein (100 Drehungen). [In the evening Matvej Kitvurov arrives, a musician ...he brings his instrument and ... plays “programme music”. ... I want to make recordings: We send the children outside, I switch on the phonograph at exactly (100 rotations)].<sup>33</sup>*

The expedition to the Khanty people was originally planned to last for a period of six months but, probably as a result of the political situation in the Soviet Union, it was shortened to fewer than three. At the end of his stay, Steinitz had to hurry to catch the last boat:

*Kann leider Arbeit nicht beenden [...] Bis  $\frac{3}{4}$  8 Uhr gearbeitet, dann alles liegen lassen, zu einer Sitzung im Pedtechnikum gelaufen [...] Los, über den Berg nach Samarov, zum letzten Dampfer. [Unfortunately I cannot finish the job ... Until 7:45 I was working, then I left everything behind, hurried to a session of the pedagogical technical college ... Then, over the mountain to Samarov, to the last steamboat].<sup>34</sup>*

The results of our reconstruction work will allow further comparisons of the acoustic database with the text of his diary. They will allow us to learn more about the way Steinitz worked with Khanty informants in that difficult period of Soviet history, and to understand the significance of his contributions to the field of Finno-Ugric studies.<sup>35</sup> At present there are few speakers of Khanty left and the historical data of the Steinitz collection are important for the reconstruction of the language in its earlier form and for its chances of being passed on.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> In collection 127, this recording of 31 July 1935 has the cylinder number 4080.

<sup>34</sup> Steinitz, *Ostjakologische Arbeiten*, 431, quoted after Swetozarova, 52.

<sup>35</sup> Swetosarowa, “Verschollen geglaubte Feldforschungsaufnahmen”.

## The use of data from sound archives and fieldwork for language revitalisation

In recent years, the relationship between the documentation of endangered languages, pedagogy and revitalisation has become an important issue.<sup>36</sup> A good illustration of the connection between historical collections and language revitalisation is provided by the historical recordings of Nivkh, a critically endangered language native to the island of Sakhalin (eastern Russia). One of the collections digitised by the EAP089 project is Lev Yakovlevich Sternberg's 1910 recordings of Nivkh, Nanai, Negidal and Evenki in eastern Russia, preserved in the Pushkinskii Dom.<sup>37</sup> Sternberg collected his material at a time when most speakers of Nivkh spoke only their own language; it exhibits the language in its original form without interference from Russian.

Since then, the Nivkh language has been drastically diminished, as illustrated by a historical population shift. In the first all-Russian census in 1897, the total number of people belonging to the Nivkh ethnic group on Sakhalin was listed as 1,969, all of whom named Nivkh as their mother tongue — most of them were probably monolingual.<sup>38</sup> In the second census of 1926, which was the first organised in the Soviet Union, the total number of Nivkh people shrank due to the fact that the inhabitants of the Japanese south of Sakhalin — which was not a part of the Soviet Union — were not counted. Practically all of them still identified Nivkh as their mother tongue.<sup>39</sup> Since that year, however, there has been a decrease in the percentage of Nivkh speakers, even while the total number of Nivkh people on Sakhalin has remained more or less stable. In 1989, more than 80% of Nivkh people named Russian as their first language.<sup>40</sup> The most recent census, in 2010, shows that many minority groups have moved from being monolingual

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36 Mari C. Jones and Sarah Ogilvie, *Keeping Languages Alive: Documentation, Pedagogy and Revitalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

37 Lev Sternberg was an important Russian figure in the field of anthropology. With the help of Vladimir Bogoraz, he established the first Russian ethnographic centre at St Petersburg State University after the Russian Revolution of 1917. See "Pamjati L'va Jakovlevicha Sternberga [In Memory of Lev Yakovlevich Sternberg]", in *Sbornik Museja Antropologii i Etnografii*, ed. Y. F. Karsky. Band 7 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1928) pp. 1-70.

38 N. B. Vakhtin, *Iazyki narodov severa v XX veke: ocherki iazykovogo sdviga [Languages of the Northern Peoples in the Twentieth Century: Outline of a Language Shift]* (St Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2001).

39 Ibid.

40 Tjeerd de Graaf, "The Languages of Sakhalin", *International Journal on the Sociology of Languages*, 94 (1992), 185-200.

in their local language to monolingual in Russian.<sup>41</sup> This has led to several northern languages becoming extinct.

The transition from Sakhalin Nivkh to Russian can be explained in a number of ways. After the capitulation of Japan in 1945, the southern half of Sakhalin was conquered by the Red Army and the whole island became Soviet territory. This had enormous consequences for its ethnographic and linguistic situation: practically every Japanese inhabitant left Sakhalin for Japan, together with many of the Sakhalin Ainu and Nivkh.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, many new immigrants arrived from all parts of the Soviet Union in order to exploit the natural resources (oil, coal, wood, fish, caviar). These people were not only Russians, but also sprang from other ethnic groups — such as Ukrainians, Estonians and Tatars — and most of the time spoke Russian.<sup>43</sup> Previously, the Nivkh people had lived as fishermen and hunters in their small villages, but from that time onwards they increasingly came into contact with the immigrants, who also started an active policy of Russification of the aboriginal inhabitants of the eastern parts of the Soviet Union.<sup>44</sup>

More recently, since 1990 in particular, efforts have been made to protect and preserve the native languages and cultures of small minorities in the Russian Federation such as the Nivkh.<sup>45</sup> There have been several attempts to revive the Nivkh language, for example by introducing Nivkh language classes in the villages of Chir-Unvd, Nekrasovka and Nogliki. Sound recordings are very useful for the preparation of the necessary learning methods and materials, in particular when — as in the case of Nivkh — very few native speakers are left.<sup>46</sup> The historical recordings of Nivkh which present the

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41 Preliminary data of the 2010 census in the Russian Federation, [http://www.gks.ru/free\\_doc/new\\_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis\\_itogi1612.htm](http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm)

42 John J. Stephan, *Sakhalin: A History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

43 Tjeerd de Graaf, "The Languages of Sakhalin".

44 Tjeerd de Graaf, "The Status of Endangered Languages in the Border Areas of Japan and Russia", in *On the Margins of Nations: Endangered Languages and Linguistic Rights*, ed. by Joan A. Argenter and R. McKenna Brown (Bath: Foundation for Endangered Languages, 2008), pp. 153-59.

45 Tjeerd de Graaf and Hidetoshi Shiraiishi, "Capacity Building for Some Endangered Languages of Russia: Voices from Tundra and Taiga", in *Language Documentation and Description*, ed. by Peter K. Austin, 2 (London: Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project, 2004), pp. 15-26.

46 Tjeerd de Graaf, "Data on the Languages of Russia from Historical Documents, Sound Archives and Fieldwork Expeditions", in *Recording and Restoration of Minority Languages, Sakhalin Ainu and Nivkh*, ed. by Kyoko Murasaki (Kyoto: ELPR, 2001), pp. 13-37.

language in its original form, without interference from Russian, provide important data for this revitalisation process.

The support of the EAP has been of great importance for our work with sound archives and with the documentation and revitalisation of endangered languages in the Russian Federation. We hope to continue this work and apply our results to teaching methods and to further efforts of safeguarding these languages. At present, the main problems for most Russian sound archives stem from a lack of financial support and technical specialists for preserving and describing the collections. Moreover, there are neither good local standards for this work, nor sufficient levels of international exchange and support. Access to the collections still needs to be improved, and it is vital to develop a national programme for supporting these important archives. Finally, to ensure compatibility with other archives worldwide the work in Russian archives should take into consideration IASA requirements and UNESCO recommendations.<sup>47</sup>

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47 Schüller, "The Safeguarding of the Audio Heritage". UNESCO, *Language Vitality and Endangerment*.

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# Index

---

- Acre 377-416  
  al-Jazzār Mosque 378  
  al-Jazzār Mosque Library 377-379,  
  381-382, 396-403
- Addis Ababa 92
- Adl, Parviz 598
- administration  
  colonial  
    Andean 227-231, 231-232, 246-247.  
    *See also* parishes (Andean)  
    Brazil 280-282  
    Colombia 261-264, 270-271  
    Guinea 549-550  
    India 456-457, 461-462  
    Northern Nigeria 294-325, 322  
    Palestine 382-387  
    Senegal 336  
  indigenous 227, 246
- advertising 334, 346, 365-366, 368, 561,  
600
- African identity 561, 580
- African Muslim identity 136, 348. *See*  
  *also* Murid communities
- African photography 531-545
- African Rock Art Digital Archive 15
- Afrikaans 332
- afterlife 74, 79, 83-84
- agriculture  
  Andes 227  
  Northern Nigeria  
    cash crops 308-312  
    convict food crops 319  
    prison experimental centres  
    309-310  
  Tadrart Acacus 22, 24-25
- aguardente* (liquor) 279
- Ahom Kingdom 35, 43
- Ahom Lexicography project 32, 60. *See*  
  *also* Tai Ahom
- Aijal (Aizawl) 449
- Ai Seng Lau* (Tai Ahom) prayer 53-57
- Ajami 179, 331-376. *See also* Wolof:  
  Ajami (Wolofal) *and* Swahili: Ajami  
  advertising 365-366, 368  
  art 364, 364-365  
  *caractères arabes harmonisés* 356-357,  
  368  
  genealogy texts 363, 363-364  
  letters and diacritics 46, 356-358  
  literacy 332-337, 344, 346, 353-354  
  manuscripts 139, 153, 156, 167, 169,  
  171, 179, 343, 346, 352  
  modified Arabic script 356  
  poetry 339-340, 344-345, 348, 350-354,  
  360, 361-362  
  public announcements 369, 369-370  
  scholars (Ajamists) 345-350, 352, 354
- Aksum 122
- al-Aqṣá Mosque Library 377, 379-381,  
382-383, 387, 396, 403-412
- Alexandria 382
- Alexandria, Library of *lvii*
- al-Jazzār Mosque Library 377-379,  
381-382, 396-403
- Amharic 332
- amulets 342-343
- Anderson, Clare 324
- Andes 225-258
- anthroponymy 16
- aqbas* (passageways) 7, 17, 20, 21, 24-25
- Arabic  
  manuscripts 138-161, 164-172, 173-  
  185, 396-412  
  numerals 342-344  
  script 342. *See also* Ajami
- Arabisation 349, 356
- Aramaic 349
- archaeology  
  Africa *lvii*, 3-4, 23  
  South America 429, 433-434



- architecture  
 missionary 466-467, 477  
 Mizo 451-452  
 photography of 518-521
- archives *xlix*  
 accessibility of *xxxvii-xxxviii, xliii-xliv, xlix, l, liv-lv, lvi, lviii-lix, 32-33, 183-185, 280, 288, 382, 566, 613*  
 colonial 264, 271-272, 294-305, 454, 456, 461  
 contested ownership *lvii*  
 cultural bias 300  
 ecclesiastical 225, 272-276, 279-280, 286-287  
 Islamic 138-142, 174-180, 378-380, 399-403, 406-412  
 monastic 89-90, 93  
 national and state *lviii*, 200, 205, 295  
 objectivity of records *lv-lvi*  
 periodicals 380, 382-383, 394  
 photographic 425, 489, 524, 526, 531-533, 542  
 private collections 36, 73, 174, 175, 181-182, 456, 610-611, 618  
 sound 549, 565-566, 567-568, 579-580, 611-613, 623, 631  
 phonogram 619, 621, 623-631  
 threats to *xlvi*  
 civil unrest 174, 264  
 environmental 95, 178, 264, 279-280, 381, 542  
 politically motivated destruction 380  
 vandalism *xlvi*, 25, 26  
 wear and tear 71, 381
- Argentina 417-444  
 Buenos Aires 420, 422, 437, 439  
 Medical-Chirurgical Scientific Italian Commission 418, 427-428. *See also* Bennati, Guido  
 Mendoza 418, 427  
 Museum of La Plata 417, 420, 422-426, 438, 439-440
- Arquivo Histórico Waldemar Bispo Duarte, João Pessoa 279-280, 283
- Asiatic Order of Universal Morality 426. *See also* Bennati, Guido
- Assam. *See* Tai Ahom
- Assemani, Elias *l-li*
- Assemani, Joseph *li*
- astrology 80, 81-83, 82, 84
- Asunción 429
- Atrato River 263-264, 266, 269
- Australia, aboriginal records *lviii-lix*  
*authenticité* (cultural policy) 552-564, 568  
*avaz* (Persian classical singing) 601, 613
- Badawi, Ahmad (Ahmad b. Šāliḥ Jamal al-Layl) 144
- Badi'i, Habibu'llah 588
- Bā Kathīr, 'Abd Allāh 140, 143, 169, 171
- Balfour Declaration 388
- Ballets Africains, Les 555
- Baluev, Ivan Ivanovich 487-526, 492  
 Diary of the Northern Expedition 489, 503-504, 508  
 Northern Expedition 496-505  
 personal history 491-496  
 photographic collection 509-523  
 photographic techniques 505-508  
 publication and exhibitions of images 524-526
- Bamba (Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké) 332, 338-342, 345, 350, 363
- Banan, Ghulam Hosain 598, 599
- Baol 353
- Bā Šafar, b. Yusallim b. 'Awaḍ 156-158, 165, 166, 169, 170, 172
- Baudo valley 266
- Baye Fall 367
- Beirut 149, 383
- Bembeya Jazz National 555, 557, 559, 561, 575
- Bennati, Guido 418-422, 426-439. *See also* Medical-Chirurgical Scientific Italian Commission  
 itineraries 420-421
- Berlin phonogram archives 619, 624
- Bernal, Natalio 418, 433, 438

- Bernault, Florence 324  
 Ber, Théodore 433, 436  
 Bethlehem 384  
 Bhutan *lx*, 67-88  
 Bible  
   *Codex Sinaiticus* *li*  
   Gospel of John 218, 467, 473  
   Mizo Bible Women 469  
   New Testament 467, 469  
   Old Testament 194  
   Polyglot Bibles *l*  
 bilingual texts 7, 42, 139, 335, 339, 613  
 Bloch, Marc *lvi*  
 Bolivia 261, 417-444  
   Cochabamba 420, 430, 431  
   La Paz 431-432, 438  
   Medical-Chirurgical Scientific Italian  
     Commission 430-433  
   Santa Cruz de la Sierra 430-431  
   Tiahuanaco ruins, La Paz 433-440  
*bóngthings* (shamans) 73, 74  
*bozales* (African slaves) 263  
 Brazil *lxii*, 185, 259-292, 420. *See*  
   *also* parishes (Andean)  
   Corumbá 429  
   Paraíba 276-283, 286-287  
   Portuguese colonists and slavery  
     276-288  
 British colonists. *See* Northern Nigeria  
   *and* India  
 British Library *xl*, *xliv*-*xlvi*  
   Lepcha manuscripts 72  
   sound archives 611  
 Buddhism 43-44, 56  
   *and* Lepcha 68, 74, 83-84  
 Buenaventura (Notary of) 264  
 Buenos Aires 420, 422, 437, 439  
 Bulgaria 189-224. *See also* Roma  
   State Archives 200, 205  
 Buraq Uprising 384, 388, 389  
 Cairo 145, 146, 149, 382  
 Camel phase (rock art) 24  
 cameras  
   for digitising 33, 73, 403, 544  
   ubiquity of 448  
 Cameroon  
   identity cards 534, 539  
   photographic studio archive project  
     531-545  
 Canta 226, 237, 240, 242-254  
 Carcas 247, 250  
 Carhua 246  
 Carirí Indians 277  
 Cartagena 260-261, 270, 272  
*cartes-de-visite* 417-419, 420-422, 427-  
   429, 430, 431, 433, 438, 440  
 Caruavilca, don Francisco Pizarro 252  
 Cavalcantes Indians 286  
 Ceará 276  
 censorship 201, 382-386, 563, 564-565,  
   594, 595, 598  
*çeribaşi* (Roma chiefs) 191, 192  
 Challiana 462-464  
 Champai 462  
 chanting 346, 351, 353, 354  
   Lepcha 70, 76, 83  
 chicken bone augury 35, 42, 44-45  
 Chippindale, Christopher 17  
 Chocó, Colombia, slavery in 262-269  
 Christ  
   *Isua Krista* 453  
   Jesus 109, 217, 453, 456, 467  
   *Lal Isua* 456  
 Christelow, Alan 293  
 Christianity. *See also* missionaries  
   Baptism records 275, 276, 286-287  
   Catholic Church in South America  
     227-228, 230, 274-275  
   church building 233-234  
   communion 280, 454-455  
   conversion to 227, 230, 232, 233  
   Eastern Christianity *l-liii*  
   Roma evangelical churches 217-218  
 Chuksung Lepcha 73  
 church archives. *See* ecclesiastical  
   archives  
 Chwaka 138  
 Cochabamba 420, 430, 431  
*Codex Sinaiticus* *li*

- Cole, H. W. G. 462
- Colombia *lxii*, 259-292, 420. *See*  
*also* parishes (Andean)
- Cartagena 260-261, 270, 272
- Chocó 262-269
- Córdoba 264, 272, 274-276
- ecclesiastical archives 272-276
- Montería 274
- notary records 264-268, 271-272
- Quibdó 263-268
- Riohacha 269-270, 272
- slavery 260, 261, 263, 265, 266, 268,  
 269-272, 274
- Spanish colonists 260-265, 270-271,  
 274, 276
- colonialism
- administration
- Andean 227-232, 246-247. *See*  
*also* parishes (Andean)
- Brazil 280-282
- Colombia 261-264, 270-271
- Guinea 549-550
- India 456-457, 461-462
- Northern Nigeria 294-325
- Palestine 382-387
- Senegal 336
- bureaucracy 456-457
- “civilising mission” 335
- colour, saturated 447-448
- commerce
- Ajami business records 333, 344
- Bennati’s pamphlets 431
- Colombia and Caribbean 264,  
 270-271
- India 454-455
- trade routes 25, 119, 148, 180
- trans-Saharan trade 173, 180
- Comoro Islands 135, 142
- compadrazgo* (godparentage) 275
- Conakry 551, 553, 563, 571
- convict labour
- colonial public works 312-319
- colonial records project 293-300,  
 324-325
- information recorded 299-304
- in pre-colonial Sokoto Caliphate  
 305-308
- under colonial rule 308-312, 319-323
- Cook, Allen 294
- Coptic manuscripts 109, 118, 120
- copyists. *See* scribes
- copyright 541
- Córdoba
- San Jerónimo (earlier Gerónimo) de  
 Buenavista 272, 274-276
- Santa Cruz de Lorica 272
- Universidad Tecnológica del Chocó  
 “Diego Luis Córdoba” 264
- Corrège, Clemente E. 418
- corruption 212-213, 461-462, 565, 567
- Iranian National Radio 598
- Corumbá 429
- Cultural Revolution (Guinea) 554-564
- Däbrä Libanos Monastery 90
- dance
- Les Ballets Africains (Guinea) 555
- Mizo 476
- Danish National Archives *lviii*
- Dar-es-Salaam 138
- Darjeeling 67
- dastgah* (Persian musical mode) 613
- Deir al-Surian Monastery *l-li*, *lii-liiii*
- Dendrup Adyenmú Lepcha 73
- Diakhaté, Mbaye 342, 345, 350, 351,  
 352, 360
- dictionaries 33, 41, 60-62, 75, 471, 474,  
 621
- digitisation 32-34, 36-39, 105, 544
- benefits *xxxvii-xxxviii*, *lvii*, 184, 280,  
 288, 381-382
- digital repatriation 532
- digital unification *liii*
- early efforts *liii*
- equipment 92-93, 181, 403
- location challenges 91-94
- methodologies 95-96, 181, 396
- opposition to 32-33, 91-92
- selection criteria 295, 298, 387
- Diourbel 333, 354, 365-366, 368
- discrimination 203-204

- Djenné *lxi*, 173-188  
 manuscript ownership 175-176  
 Djenné Manuscript Library 173-185,  
 175  
*doctrinas* (Indian parishes) 228. *See*  
*also* parishes (Andean)  
*dogarai* (native police) 315  
 Dolgikh, Boris Osipovich (Iosovich)  
 496, 497, 499, 500, 502-503  
 Dome of the Rock 379  
 Ecclesiastical and Secular Sources for  
 Slave Societies Digital Archive 288  
 ecclesiastical archives 225. *See*  
*also* parishes (Andean)  
 Colombia 272-276  
 Paraíba, Brazil 279-280, 286-287  
 Edison phonograph 620  
 education. *See also* schools  
 Christian 218, 473-474. *See*  
*also* missionaries  
 Guinean music 553  
 Islamic 137, 138, 142, 331-332, 350.  
*See also talibés* (Quranic school  
 students)  
 Persian music 601-602  
 Egypt  
 Alexandria 382  
 Cairo 145, 146, 149, 382  
 Deir al-Surian Monastery *l-li*, *lii-liii*  
*Oxyrhynchus lvii*  
 Embera-Wounaan Indians 266  
*encomiendas* (colonial legal authority)  
 229-231, 233-235, 249  
 Endangered Archives Programme  
 (EAP)  
 focus *xxxix-xli*  
 projects  
 EAP016 487-526  
 EAP054 531-545  
 EAP067 189-220, 224  
 EAP088 609-613  
 EAP089 617-631  
 EAP095 417-440  
 EAP119 377  
 EAP187 566-568  
 EAP207 417-440  
 EAP255 264-268  
 EAP265 1-26  
 EAP281 67-88  
 EAP285 189-220, 224  
 EAP327 570-571  
 EAP333 225-255  
 EAP334 331-370, 375  
 EAP347 617-631  
 EAP373 31-64  
 EAP399 377, 396-412  
 EAP454 456  
 EAP466 135-161, 164-172  
 EAP488 173-185  
 EAP503 271-272  
 EAP521 377, 382-396  
 EAP526 89-131  
 EAP535 293-325, 328-329  
 EAP608 571-579  
 EAP627 279-288  
 EAP640 272-276  
 EAP690 184  
 Endangered Languages  
 Documentation Programme  
*xxxix-xli*  
 Eritrea 90  
 Escalante y Mendoza, don Juan de  
 242-243, 250  
 Estigarribia, Juan Vicente 430  
 Estonian Literary Museum 624  
*etaghas* (post-flood farmland) 7, 20, 22,  
 23, 25  
 Ethiopia *xlili*, *liii*, *lx*, *lxi*, 89-134. *See*  
*also* May Wäyni Monastery  
 Addis Ababa 92  
 Däbrä Libanos Monastery 90  
 Mekelle 89, 91  
 Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm  
 Library (EMML) 92  
 Ethiopian manuscripts 89-131  
 ethnoarchaeology 4, 25  
 ethnography 5, 503, 621  
 ethnolinguistics 617-631  
 ethnomusicology 547-580, 594, 596-597,  
 601-602, 606, 613

- Evenki  
 language 629  
 people 496  
 Evenki National District 494, 495  
 photographs 511-526  
 exile  
 Baluev, Ivan Ivanovich 493, 502  
 Bamba (Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké) 340-341  
 Dolgikh, Boris Osipovich (Iosovich) 502  
 Perillán y Buxó, Eloy 434  
 Fakhradini, Farhad 600-601, 604, 609  
 famines 457, 461, 468  
 Fanisau 308  
 al-Faruqi, Shaykh Sulayman al-Taji 387  
 Fazzan, Libya. *See* Tadrart Acacus  
 Febvre, Lucien *lvi*  
 Flores, Diego 247  
 folklore  
 Krymchak people 622  
 Lepcha 70  
 musical 552  
 Russian 499, 621, 622, 624-626  
 Udmurtia 624-627  
 Foning, Arthur 71, 73, 77  
*forasteros* (foreigners) 247-249, 252  
 forced labour  
 colonial public works 312-319  
 colonial records project 293-300, 324-325  
 information recorded 299-304  
 in pre-colonial Sokoto Caliphate 305-308  
*mita* (draft labour) 251, 252  
 under colonial rule 308-312, 319-323  
 France  
 Gambian treaty negotiation (French and Ajami text) 335  
 Imperial Archives *xlix*  
 withdrawal from Guinea 549-550  
 Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) 264  
 Fulani 332, 338-339, 363  
 Fulbé musicians 572, 578  
 Fundação Cultural Palmares (FCP) 288  
 Fuuta Jalon 337  
 Fuuta Tooro 333, 337  
 Gabon 340-341, 348, 350  
 Gait, E. A. 462  
 Gambia 335, 547. *See also* Senegambia  
 Garamantian kingdom 1, 3, 24, 25  
 Gaza 381, 384  
 genealogy 16, 142, 143, 179, 286, 363  
 indigenous Siberians 499-500  
 geomorphology 7  
*Gergyovden* (St George's day) 194  
 Ghat 3, 7  
 Giyorgis, Qäsäla 90  
 Global Dimensions of Scholarship and Research Libraries *xlv*  
*Golha* radio programmes 587-613  
 archive project and website 609-613  
*Barg-i sabz* 590, 591  
*Golha-yi javidan* 590, 591, 596  
*Golha-yi rangarang* 590, 591, 601, 607  
*Golha-yi sahra'i* 590, 591  
*Golha-yi taza* 604, 606  
 socio-cultural impact 599-608  
*Yik shakh-i gol* 590, 591  
 Greeves, J. A. Ley 320, 321  
*griots* 547-548, 558, 561, 563-564, 566-567, 572  
 Grumbkow, Georges B. von 436-437, 438  
*gueltas* (rock pools) 7, 20, 22, 25  
 Guinea 333, 337, 547-586  
*authenticité* (cultural policy) 552-564, 568  
 Bibliothèque Nationale de Guinée 566  
 Conakry 551, 553, 563, 571  
 Cultural Revolution 554-564  
 Fulbé plot 563  
 independence from France 549-551  
 Labé 333  
 Radio Télévision Guinée (RTG) 549, 554, 565-566, 567, 568, 571-572, 578-580

- Gujarati traders 119  
 Gulpayagani, Akbar 601, 602  
 Gypsy. *See* Roma
- Habib Saleh (Ṣāliḥ b. 'Alawī Jamal al-Layl) 135-138, 144, 156, 159  
 al-Ḥaddād, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alawī 141  
*hadith* (accounts of the Prophet) 347-348, 406, 407, 409, 410, 412  
 Ḥadramawt 136, 138, 142, 147-148  
 hagiography 75, 340, 345, 348, 353  
 Hague Convention for the Preservation of Cultural Property 380  
 Hajj Amin al-Husseini 379  
 Harriet Tubman Institute 305  
 Hausa 179, 180, 332, 333, 336-337, 338-339  
 Hausaland 337  
 Haussonville, Joseph d' *lv*  
*hDas-log* 79  
 health 191, 268, 300, 514. *See also* Mizo:  
   healing customs  
   notary records in Colombia 266-269  
 Hebrew 349  
 Hebrew University of Jerusalem 380-381  
 al-Ḥibshī, 'Alī b. Muḥammad 136-138, 144  
 Hinduism 35, 43  
 Hogendorn, Jan S. 293, 310  
 Huacho diocese, Peru 225, 237  
 al-Husayni, Munif 384, 387
- Ibn Battuta 355-356  
 Ibn Khaldun 355-356  
 Ibra Fall 367  
 Ibtehaj, Hushang 590, 605-606  
 illiteracy 332-334  
 Imperial Archives of France *xlix*  
 impressed labour. *See* forced labour  
 indexes (in manuscripts) 156  
 India 445-486  
   Assam 35  
   British Raj 446-447, 449  
   Darjeeling 67  
   Kalimpong 73  
   Khasi Hills 447-448, 449  
   Lushai Hills 447-448, 455, 456-457  
   Mizoram 446-447, 456  
   Northeast India 445-486. *See also* Mizo; Tai Ahom  
   Serkawn 449, 463  
   Sikkim 67, 69, 74. *See also* Lepcha  
 Indian Ocean 120, 137, 141  
 indigenous people 270, 272, 277, 279, 288, 417  
   administration 227, 246  
   Christianity 286, 449-477  
     conversion to 227, 230, 232, 233  
   culture 5, 74, 513-514, 550-551, 580  
   faith 74, 85  
   photography of 417, 487-526, 509  
   Soviet ethnographic studies 496-497, 503  
 Institute for Anthropology and Ethnography 627  
 Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkinskii Dom) 620, 622-623, 627  
 Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Paraibano (IHGP) 279-280  
 International Association of Sound Archives (IASA) 623, 631  
 Iran *xl, lxiv*, 587-616. *See also* *Golha*  
   radio programmes *and* Persian music  
   radio listening 603-604  
   twentieth-century cultural politics 593-599  
 Iran Heritage Foundation 612  
 Iranian National Orchestra 600  
 Iranian National Radio 587, 590, 593-594, 598-600  
 ISESCO 356  
 Ishraq, 'Abd al-Hamid 608  
 Islam  
   conversion to 337  
   importance of books and book collections 377-378  
   Islamic sciences 339, 350  
   Islamisation 332, 356

- Islamic education 137, 138, 142, 331-332, 350. *See also talibés*
- Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) 148, 152, 164, 165, 167, 334, 404, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412
- Islamic manuscripts 138-161, 164-172, 173-185, 343, 346, 352, 396-412
- Israel, National Library of 380-381
- Jabre, Adel 379
- Jakarta (Batavia) 149, 150
- al-Jazzar, Ahmad 378
- Jerusalem 377-416
  - al-Aqṣá Mosque Library 377, 379-381, 381-382, 387, 403-412
  - Haram al-Sharif 379
  - Hebrew University of Jerusalem 380-381
  - National Library of Israel 380-381
- Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1900) 619-620
- Jihad 337
- João Pessoa 277, 278, 279-280
- Kairé, Mor 342, 345, 350-351
- Kalimpong 73
- Ka, Moussa 331, 339, 340, 342, 345, 347, 349, 350, 351-352, 353, 355, 356
- Kano Emirate 293, 300, 306-307, 308
- Kasravi, Ahmad 595
- Kel Tadrart Tuareg 5, 19-23, 25
- Kenya *lx, lxi*, 135-172. *See* Riyadhha Mosque
- Khaliqi, Ruhullah 590, 597, 598-599, 601
- Khaly Madiakhaté Kala 339
- Khamliana 455
- Khanty people 626-628
- Khasi Hills 447-448, 449
- Khasi Hills, India 449
- Khudayar 598
- Khurram, Humayun 609
- Kijuma, Muhammad 159-160
- King of Bar 335
- Koran. *See* Quran
- Krasnoyarsk 493
- Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University 622
- Krasnoyarsk Territory (Krai) 489, 494, 625
- Krasnoyarsk Territory Regional Museum (KKKM) 488, 493-496, 526
- Krymchak people 622
- Labé 333
- Laborde, Léon de *xlix, lv*
- labour
  - coolie (*kuli*) 457, 461, 462
  - forced
    - colonial public works 312-319
    - colonial records project 293-300, 324-325
    - information recorded 299-304
    - in pre-colonial Sokoto Caliphate 305-308
    - mita* (draft labour) 247, 251, 252
    - under colonial rule 308-312, 319-323
- La Guajira Peninsula 270-271
- Lakni cycle (calendar) 39-40, 41
- Lamu *lxi*, 135-172. *See* Riyadhha Mosque
- landscape
  - Baluev's photography 500, 509-510
  - geomorphology 7
  - human relationship 24-25, 227, 234
  - photography 500, 510
  - rock inscriptions 17, 20
- languages. *See also* translations
- Afghanistan languages and dialects 623
- dominant 618, 629-630
- endangered 35, 52, 67-68, 617, 618-621
- Evenki 629
- Finno-Ugric 621, 623, 626-628
- holy 342-343, 349
- Kerek 622
- Nivkh 629-631
- Paleo-Siberian 621
- revitalisation 625-626, 629-631
- Samoyed 621, 622
- Shan 47-48, 49, 51-52, 62
- Tai 34-35, 46-47
- Tajik 622-623

- Tungus-Manchu 621  
 Turkic 621  
 Udeghe 622  
 Udmurtia 624-626  
 Wakhi 622-623  
 La Paz 431-433, 438  
 Lat Dior Ngoné Latyr Diop 339  
 Latin American newspapers 433-434  
 Layène 338  
 al-Layl, Aḥmad b. Šālih Jamal (Aḥmad Badawi) 144  
 al-Layl, Ḥasan b. Muḥammad Jamal 140-141, 143  
 al-Layl, Šālih b. 'Alawī Jamal (Habib Saleh) 135-138, 144, 156, 159  
*Lazóng* (Lepcha orthography) 69-70  
 Leibniz Institut für Landeskunde (IFL) 436  
 Leiden University, Netherlands 72  
 Lemaire, Albert Jean Baptist 597  
 Lepcha 67  
   archive project 67-88  
   astrological texts and horoscopes 81-83  
   folklore 76-78  
   funerary texts 83-84  
   geographical distribution of manuscripts 72-73  
   language 67-68  
   manuscripts 71-74  
   orthography 69-71  
   popular texts and genres 70-71, 74-79  
   prayer and ritual ceremonies 74, 76  
   religious beliefs 68, 74  
   resurrection texts 79-80  
 leprosy 266, 268-269  
 Lewin, T. H. 471  
 lexicon. *See* dictionaries  
 libraries  
   al-Aqṣá Mosque Library 377, 379-381, 382-383, 387, 396, 403-412  
   al-Jazzār Mosque Library 377-379, 381-382, 396-403  
   as a mark of prestige 377  
   Bibliothèque Nationale de Guinée 566  
   British Library *xl, xliii-xlvi*, 72, 611  
   Djenné Manuscript Library 173-185  
   Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (EMML) 92  
   National Library of Israel 380-381  
   philosophy and policies 182  
 Libyan-Italian Archaeological Mission 4  
 Lima 252  
 Lima Church Council 233, 235, 242, 249  
 Limbu script 69  
 linguistics. *See also* languages  
   documentation 618, 629-631  
   Tai Ahom 46-47  
 literacy  
   Ajami script 332-333, 344, 346, 353-354  
   Latin script 332-333  
   Mizo, India 468-469  
   music-derived 354  
   Soviet-era Siberia 498, 501  
   statistics 332, 603  
   teaching 334, 350  
 Loccha 246  
 Lorrain, J. H. (Pu Buanga) 458-460, 463, 474  
 Louis XVIII 335  
 Lovejoy, Paul E. 293  
 Lugard, Frederick 294-295, 320  
 Lungleh (Lunglei) 457, 470, 478  
 Lushai Hills 447-448, 455, 456-457  
 Lybia 1-30  
 al-Maddī, Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf 158-159  
 Magdalena River 260  
 Māggal 341, 369, 370  
 Maghrib/*Maghribī* 338, 364, 365, 368, 370  
 Mahjubi, Murtaza 590, 601  
 Makeba, Miriam 555, 575  
 Mali *lx, lxi*, 6, 16, 173-188, 547, 548, 556.  
   *See also* Djenné Manuscript Library  
 Mallo 252  
 Mandé 332, 547, 560, 572. *See also* Maninka  
 Mandinka 335, 338, 358



- Maninka 547, 572, 577-578. *See also* Mandé
- Manó, Joseph Charles 429-430, 431, 434, 440
- manuscripts. *See also* Ajami:  
 manuscripts; Arabic:  
 manuscripts; *Codex Sinaiticus*;  
 Coptic manuscripts; Ethiopian  
 manuscripts; Islamic manuscripts;  
 Lepcha: manuscripts; Oriental  
 Christian manuscripts; Syriac  
 manuscripts; Tai Ahom:  
 manuscripts
- bindings 97, 101, 109-120, 121, 126  
 tools and tooling 120-130
- colophons 71-72, 160
- conservation 95, 96-97, 102, 104-106,  
 131, 381
- copying. *See* scribes
- covers 95, 102, 103, 117, 118, 120-121,  
 128-131
- dating of 35, 60, 71, 90, 178
- decoration 107-109
- digitisation 32-34, 36-39, 73, 95-96,  
 105, 403
- paper 33, 34, 37-38, 71, 114, 117, 160
- parchment 89, 97, 98-99, 101, 115
- storage *xli*, *lviii*, 90, 96-97, 177-178,  
 183
- maraboutage* (Islamic form of magic)  
 173, 177, 179
- Mashriqī* 365, 368. *See also* Maghrib/  
*Maghribī*
- Mason, Michael 293-294, 319
- Matam 333
- Mauritania 341, 348, 350
- Maxwell-Stewart, Hamish 324
- May Wāyni Monastery 89-134  
 book and manuscript construction  
 106-120  
 tooled leather decoration 120-130
- digitisation project 89-131
- manuscripts  
 decoration 107-109  
 ownership 92  
 repairs (traditional) 102-106  
 storage 96-97
- Mbacké, El Hadji 347-348
- Mbaye Diakhaté. *See* Diakhaté, Mbaye
- Mbaye Nguirane. *See* Nguirane, Mbaye
- Mbaye, Samba Diarra 342, 345, 350, 351
- McKeown, Katie 545
- Mecca 16, 138, 142, 143, 146, 147-148,  
 148, 149
- Medical-Chirurgical Scientific Italian  
 Commission 418, 426-427. *See  
 also* Bennati, Guido
- medicine 81, 179, 342-343, 346, 454. *See  
 also* Mizo: healing customs  
 Bennati, Guido 430-431
- Mekelle (Tigray) 89, 91
- Mendizábal, Bernabé 418, 419, 426
- Mendoza 418, 427
- metadata  
 manuscripts 45, 52-63, 94, 95  
 need to understand content 45  
 open access 32  
 sound recordings 621, 628
- Michelet, Jules *lxv*
- microfilm *liii*, 92
- microhistory *lvi-lvii*, *lxii*
- missionaries  
 Baptist missionaries 445, 449  
 churches of 450, 451-452, 460, 466-  
 467, 477  
 education 473-474  
 hygiene rules 457-460  
 model villages 466  
 Welsh Calvinistic missionaries 449,  
 468
- Mission Veng Church 450, 465, 467
- mita* (draft labour) 247, 251, 252
- mitayo* (draft labourer) 251
- Mizo  
 architecture 451-452  
*chibai* (greeting) 471, 473-475  
 composers 468  
*harhna* (awakening) 449, 475-477  
 healing customs 454, 467, 471-472  
*lal* (village headmen) 456, 468  
 language 467, 471  
 naming practices 471-473  
 newspapers 473  
 people 453, 455-457  
 salt uses 454-455

- spirituality and spirits (*ramhuai*) 450, 471-472
- Mizoram 446-447, 456. *See also* Lushai Hills
- Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod Archive 450
- mobile phones 365, 368, 369, 370
- Mogrovejo, Toribio Alfonso de 251
- Mombeya, Thierno 337
- Monteria 272-276
- Mu'ayyiri, Rahi 588, 601
- Muhammad, Prophet 135, 137, 142, 347-348
- Muhammad Reza Pahlavi 594, 595
- Mu'iniyan, Nusratu'llah 590, 599, 600
- mukhtar* (chief) 191-193
- múng* (evil spirits) 84
- mun* (shaman) 74, 83
- Murid communities
- Ajami, use of 337-350
  - education 354
  - poets 350-353
- Muridiyya Sufi order 332, 338, 340.
- See also* Bamba (Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké)
- Murray, C. S. 461, 462-463
- Musaddiq crisis (1953) 595
- Museum of La Plata 417, 420, 422-426, 438, 439-440
- museums
- Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu 624
  - Krasnoyarsk Territory Regional Museum (KKKM) 488, 493-496, 526
  - Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna 72
  - Museum of La Plata 417, 420, 422-426, 438, 439-440
  - Soviet-era policies 489
- music
- African
    - Murid Ajami 345, 354
    - Syliphone archive project 547-580, 585
  - as political medium 551, 559
  - censorship 563, 564-565, 594, 595, 598
  - Guinean 552-564
  - Mizo 453
  - orchestras (African) 551
  - Persian 594, 596-597, 601-602, 606, 613. *See also* Golha radio programmes
  - prohibition 594-595
- Namchu, Óng Tshering 73
- Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, India 73, 74
- Napier Expedition (1868) 94
- Napoleon Bonaparte *lv*, 378
- Napoleon III *lv*
- Nash, George 17
- National Archives of Nigeria 295
- National Archives of the United States *lviii*
- National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT) 604
- National Library of Israel 380-381
- Ndong, Moukhtar 346, 359, 360
- Nepal *lx*, 67-88
- newspapers
- Latin America 433-434
  - Mizo 473
  - Palestine 382-396
  - press law and censorship 201, 382-386
  - Roma 199, 200, 203, 205, 212-214, 217, 219
- Ngom, Cheikh 353
- Nguirane, Mbaye 347
- Niang, Mahmoud 340
- Niang, Sam 340, 344, 352
- Niassène 338
- Niger 333
- Nigeria *lxii*, 173, 293-325. *See also* agriculture; colonialism; National Archives of Nigeria; Northern Nigeria *and* slavery
- banknotes 336-337
  - Kabba province 309, 320-322
  - literacy 333
  - National Archives 295
  - Northern Region, convict labour 293-325
- Nivkh language 629-631

- NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) 501
- Northern Expedition (Baluev) 488-490, 496, 524  
 aims 501  
 organisation 496-505  
 political interference 502-504
- Northern Nigeria  
 convict labour 293-325  
 pre-colonial and early colonial records 294-305  
 transportation links 312-313
- notary records 264-268, 271-272  
 Paraíba 280-283
- numeracy, currency-derived 343-344
- numerology 342-343, 359
- orality  
 oral culture 618-619  
 oral history 305, 548  
 oral literature 619-621, 622, 627
- orchestras (African) 551
- Oriental Christian manuscripts *l-liv*.  
*See also* Coptic manuscripts;  
 Ethiopian manuscripts *and* Syriac manuscripts
- orthography  
 Lepcha 69-71  
 Pulaar 356-357  
 Wolof 356-358
- Osorio, don Alonso 253
- Ottoman Empire 190-192, 378
- Ottoman Press Law 384-385
- Oumar Tall 337, 338
- Oxyrhynchus *lvii*
- Pahlavi monarchy 604. *See also* Muhammad Reza Pahlavi *and* Reza Shah Pahlavi
- palenques* (maroon communities) 260, 261
- Palestine. *See also* Jerusalem  
 Bethlehem 384  
 British Mandate 382-387  
 newspapers 382-396  
 political parties 391  
 Supreme Muslim Council 378, 379, 384
- Paraguay 417-444. *See also* Bennati, Guido  
 Asunción 429  
 Medical-Chirurgical Scientific Italian Commission 429-430
- Paraíba  
 ecclesiastical archives 279-280, 286-287  
 João Pessoa 277, 278, 279-280  
 maps 277, 278  
 Nossa Senhora das Neves 277  
 Nossa Senhora dos Milagres da Ribeira do Cariri (later Nossa Senhora dos Milagres do São João do Cariri) 279, 280, 283, 287  
 notary records 280-283  
 Portuguese colonists 276-283  
 slavery 276, 279, 280, 282, 286-288  
 Universidade Federal da Paraíba 280
- Paríamarca 236, 237-242, 249-250, 253, 255
- parishes (Andean) 225-258  
 boundaries 225, 232, 255  
 historical records 237-254  
 pastoral visitations 234, 251
- Parti Démocratique du Guinée (PDG) 551, 553-555, 559, 562-565
- Pashov, Shakir 195-214, 215, 216
- pastoral visitations 234, 251
- Payvar, Faramarz 610
- Perillán y Buxó, Eloy 434, 436
- persecution 214, 563, 595
- Persian music 587-613. *See also* *Golha* radio programmes
- Peru *lxii*, 225-258, 428. *See also* parishes (Andean)  
 Canta 226, 237, 240, 242-254  
 Carcas 247, 250  
 Huacho diocese 225, 237  
 Lima 252  
 Loccha 246  
 Mallo 252  
 Paríamarca 236, 237-242, 249-250, 253, 255  
 Quivi (Quives) 242, 250, 252
- Petrie, William Flinders 418
- phonogram archives 619, 621, 623-631

- photographic archives 425, 489, 524, 526  
 photographic studio archive project 531-545  
 photographic techniques 505-508  
   image manipulation 487  
 photography  
   African 531-545  
   architecture 518-521  
   as novelty 448  
   *cartes-de-visite* 417-419, 420-422, 427-429, 430, 431, 433, 438, 440  
   copyright and permissions 539, 541-542  
   documentary photography 488, 500  
   ethnographic 488, 500, 509-510  
   identity photographs 538  
   landscape 500, 509, 510, 517  
   maps 516  
   of manuscripts 32-34, 36-39, 73, 95-96, 105, 403  
   portraits 500, 507, 509-510, 539-540.  
     *See also cartes-de-visite*  
 Pirmia, Davud 587, 588, 590-591, 596, 599-603, 605, 608  
 Podor 333  
 Portuguese colonists 276-283  
 post-colonial theory 479  
 Potiguar Indians 277  
 Pouget, Michel-Aimé 427, 428  
 Pouget, Petrona Sosa de 427  
 prayer  
   Ahom 43, 53-57  
   Lepcha 76  
   Riyadha Mosque manuscript collection 141-142  
 preachers. *See also* missionaries  
   evangelical Roma 217-218  
 prejudice (racial) 300, 348, 355-356, 458, 461, 462  
 primary sources, importance of 189-190  
 printing presses  
   effect on manuscript culture *liv*, 149-152  
   Murid communities 354-355  
   Palestine 382  
 prisons  
   administration 305-306, 309, 310, 314, 319-322  
   colonial archives 294-305  
   forced labour 309-312, 322-323  
   rehabilitation 308, 324-325  
   skills training 314-315, 323  
 Pulaar 337, 344, 356  
 Pushkinskii Dom 620, 622-623, 627  
 Pu Vana 445  
  
 al-Qaḥṭānī, Muḥyī al-Dīn 139  
 quackery 422, 426-427, 429  
 Quibdo 263-268  
*quilombos* (maroon-descended communities) 288  
 Quivi (Quives) 242, 250, 252  
 Quran 144, 181, 342. *See also* schools  
  
 racial equality 203-204. *See also* prejudice (racial)  
 Radio Tehran. *See* Iranian National Radio  
 Radio Télévision Guinée (RTG) 549, 554, 565-566, 567, 568, 571-572, 578-580  
*Radio-yi Iran* 604, 607  
 al-Raḥmān, Sayyid Maṣṣab b. ‘Abd 138, 144-145, 159  
*rancherías* (villages) 263, 268  
 Ranke, Leopold *liv-lvi*  
*reducciones* (grid settlements) 231-232, 233, 242  
 Reiss, Wilhelm 436  
*repartimientos* (Iberian forerunner to *encomiendas*) 229, 233-235  
 Reza Shah Pahlavi 593-594, 598, 603  
*ribats* (frontier fortresses) 306  
*ribats* (religious schools) 137  
 Riohacha, slavery 269-270, 272  
 Riyadha Mosque  
   foundation 135-138  
   manuscript collection 138-161, 164-172  
   aquisitions 149-152  
   catalogue 138-142  
   development 142-145, 147-148  
   provenance 153-159

- waqf* (pious endowment)  
donations 145-147
- rock art 3, 15, 17, 24
- rock inscriptions (Tifinagh) 5, 7, 15-26
- Roma 189-224
- Communist rule in Bulgaria 200-213
- culture and education 208-212
- Egyptian Nation 190, 192-195
- elsewhere in Europe 218-220
- evangelical churches 217-218
- importance of primary source  
research 189-190
- Kipti* (Copts) 190, 193-194
- newspapers 199, 200, 205, 212-214,  
217, 219
- organisation
- Egyptian Nation 190-195
- Ekhipe* (United General Cultural  
Organisation of Gypsy  
Minorities) 201, 203-206, 208,  
209
- Istikbal* 197-200
- Istiklyal* 208-209
- Society Egypt 197
- Pashov's book manuscript 195-201,  
204
- religion 194-195
- Roma Theatre 209-213
- Róngkup, Chong 73
- Rostworowski, María 250
- RTG (Radio Télévision Guinée) 549,  
554, 565-566, 566, 567, 568, 571-572,  
578-580
- Russia *lii, lxiii, lxiv, lxv*, 487-530,  
617-634. *See also* schools and Soviet  
Union
- Russian Academy of Sciences 620
- Russian Geographical Society 494, 500,  
509
- Saba, Abu'l-Hasan 598, 601
- Safī 'Alī Shāh 592
- Safwat, Daryush 597, 610
- Sahara *xlili*, 1-30, 173, 180, 331, 547
- archaeological remains 3. *See  
also* Tifinagh rock inscriptions
- trade 25, 173, 180
- Sakhalin, Japanese exodus from  
629-630
- Salazar, don Gerónimo de 238, 240, 242
- Samanid dynasty 604
- Samoyed language 621, 622
- Sampayo, Antonio 420
- sanglyon* (funeral rituals) 83
- San Juan River 264, 266, 269
- Santa Cruz de la Sierra 430-431
- Sapienza University of Rome 1, 4
- Savidge, F. W. (Sap Upa) 463, 477
- School of Oriental and African Studies  
72
- schools
- Christian 218, 452, 473-474. *See  
also* missionaries
- knowledge 350
- Quranic 173-174, 176, 180, 331, 344,  
350, 358
- Roma 208, 218
- Soviet/Russian 509, 515, 523, 525, 526
- vocational 350
- Scott, James C. 447
- scribes 131, 153-159
- Djenné 179
- Kijuma, Muhammad 159-160
- tradition of copying texts 36-37, 55,  
71
- Wolof Ajami 346, 351
- Seereer 353
- Senegal 336, 338, 547
- Baol 353
- Senegambia 338-340, 352, 354-355
- senses, among the Mizo 449
- harhna* (awakening) 475-477
- hearing 449-453
- sight 466-475
- smell 457-460
- taste 453-457
- touch 460-466
- sensory history 445-479
- Serkawn 449, 463
- Shaha, Brojo Nath 471
- Shahrdar, Mushir Humayun 596, 598
- Shajarian, Mohammad-Reza 602, 604,  
607

- Shakespear, John 461-462, 472
- shamanism 69, 74, 622, 627
- Shan languages 47-48, 49, 51-52, 62
- Sharif, Farhang 602, 609
- Sharifian descent 135, 348
- al-Shātīrī, Abū Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar 148
- Shihada, Bulus 384
- Siberia 487-530
  - endangered language recordings 619-623, 626-628
  - folklore 522-523
  - genealogy 499-500
  - literacy 498, 501
  - photographic archives of indigenous peoples 487-526, 530
- Sierra Leone 269, 336
- Silchar 469
- slavery
  - Brazil 276-288
  - Colombia 260, 261, 263, 265, 266, 268, 269-272, 274
  - health and disease 266, 268-269
  - Northern Nigeria 293-294
  - records of 264-268, 271-272, 279-288
  - slaves in prison 305-307
  - transportation and purchase 260-264
- Sokhna Amy Cheikh 352
- Sokhna Mai Kabir 352
- Sokhna Mai Sakhir 352
- Sokhna Aminatou Cissé 352
- Sokoto Caliphate 305-308, 324-325
- sound archives 549, 565-566, 567-568, 579-580, 611-613, 623, 631
  - phonogram 619, 621, 623-631
- sound recordings
  - linguistic 619-631
  - media
    - audio cassette 548
    - Edison phonograph 620
    - magnetic tapes 549, 621
    - phonograph cylinders 621
    - phonograph records 597, 610
    - vinyl records 548, 566
    - wax cylinders 597, 620, 626-627
    - wax discs 620
  - music 548, 571-578, 573-579. *See also* Syliophone
  - radio 565, 567-568, 570, 591, 604. *See also* *Golha* radio programmes
- soundscape 445, 450-451
- Soviet Union 202, 490, 487-530, 502, 620, 626, 628-630
  - collective farming 499, 501, 509-510
  - communist ideology 498-499, 514, 595
  - internal boundaries 514-517
  - socialist transformation 487, 490-491, 500-501, 503, 505, 510
- Spanish colonists
  - Colombia 259-264
  - Peru 227-231
- spirit calling 35, 47-49
- Stalin, Josef 496, 525-526
- Steinitz, Wolfgang 626-628
- Sternberg, Lev Yakovlevich 629
- St Petersburg
  - Institute for Linguistic Studies 623
  - Pushkinskii Dom 620, 622-623, 627
- Strulev, Mark Sergeevich 496, 497, 499, 503, 520
- Stübel, Alphons 436
- Sucre 430
- Sufism 135-136, 142
  - mysticism 174
  - Sufi orders 135-136, 332, 338, 340, 592
- Supreme Muslim Council 378, 379, 384
- sustainable development 4-5, 25-26
- Swahili 136-137, 159, 332
  - Ajami 139, 153, 156, 167, 169, 171
- Sy, Habibou Rassoulou 346, 354, 363, 364
- Syli Orchestre National 551, 553, 561, 573
- Syliophone 548-549, 555, 556-557, 561-562, 563, 564
  - EAP projects 566-580
- syncretism. *See* Lepcha
- Syriac manuscripts *lii-liii*
- Tabajara Indians 288

- Tadrart Acacus 1-30. *See also* Tifinagh rock inscriptions  
 archaeological significance 3-5  
 human geography 24-25  
 water 7
- Tai Ahom 31-66  
 Assam manuscripts project 31-64  
 chicken bone augury 35, 42, 44-45  
 language 34-35, 40, 42-43, 46-47, 62-63  
 manuscripts  
     categorisation 40-42  
     histories (*Buranjis*) 42-43  
     mantras and prayers 41, 53-57  
     predictions and augury 44-45  
     spirit calling texts 41, 47-51  
     stories 41, 58-60  
 chronology 35, 60  
 storage 36  
 rituals 35, 53-57  
 Tai Ahom-Assamese lexicons  
     *Bar Amra* 41, 60-62  
     *Loti Amra* 41  
 translation process 47-48, 49-53
- Tajvidi, 'Ali 587, 589, 598, 609  
*takhmis* (poetic form) 349  
*talibés* (Quranic school students) 173  
 talismans 334, 343, 469
- Tamyong Lepcha 73
- Tantavilca, don Gabriel 243, 246  
*tarana* (popular ballads) 613
- tax 178  
 Andean doctrina 242, 249  
 collection (Roma) 192  
 collection (Spanish colonists) 227, 230-231  
 Mizo *chhiah* 461
- Tehran  
 Advanced School for Music Studies 597  
 Centre for the Preservation and Promotion of Music 597  
 National Conservatory of Music 597  
 Technical College 597
- Theyène 341
- Tiahuanaco ruins 433-440
- Tibet  
 Buddhism 68, 74-75, 83-84  
 literature 68, 75-76, 78  
 resurrection texts 79  
*Tibetan Book of the Dead* 83
- Tifinagh characters 5, 6  
 Tifinagh rock inscriptions 5, 7, 15-26  
     chronology 18, 20, 22-24
- Tigray 89, 92, 97-98
- Timbuktu 173, 174, 175, 180, 182, 184
- Titicaca, Lake and regions 433, 439
- Touré, Sékou 550, 561-562, 564, 572
- Toussele, Jacques 531-533, 540, 542, 545
- trade routes 25, 119, 148, 180. *See also* commerce
- translations  
     difficulties 5, 7, 40, 42-43, 46-47, 75, 85  
     methodologies 47-48, 49-53
- Trent, Council of 225, 232, 249
- Tsigani* (Gypsies) 190. *See also* Roma
- Tuareg. *See* Kel Tadrart Tuareg
- Tukulóor 338
- Ubah, Chinedu N. 293
- Udmurtia, language revitalisation 624-626
- Udmurt State University 625
- UNESCO  
     language endangerment 619, 631  
     literacy rate statistics 332, 603  
     orthography 356  
     World Heritage sites 3, 173
- Unicode  
     Ajami exclusions 357-358  
     Tai Ahom script 60, 62  
     Wolof Ajami 357
- United States  
     Bureau of Indian Affairs *lviii*  
     National Archives *lviii*
- University of Leicester 1
- Usman dan Fodio 337
- Vatican Library *l-li*
- Vaziri, 'Ali-Naghi 593, 595, 597, 606

- Vergara, don Diego de 253-254  
 Victoria, Queen 455  
 Vienna  
   Museum für Völkerkunde 72  
   phonogram archives 619, 624  
 Virgin Islands *lvii*
- wadis* (valleys) 17, 20  
*waqf* (pious endowment) 150, 151, 152,  
 161  
   al-Jazzār Mosque Library 378  
   Riyadha, Lamu 138, 142, 145-147, 147  
   Roma 198, 208  
 Wayúu Indians 270-271  
 Welsh Calvinistic missionaries 449, 468  
 Westernisation 463-464  
 Whipping Act, VI (1865) 462  
 Wolof 332  
   Ajami (Wolofal). *See also* Ajami  
     business records 344  
     manuscript digitisation project  
       331-370, 375  
     manuscript types 334  
 Wolofisation 363  
 women  
   Ajami poetry 352  
   exploitation 461, 462-463  
   Iranian 593  
   prison labour 314  
   seers 476  
   shamans 74  
   squirrel hunters 512  
 Worger, William H. 324
- Yakut people 496. *See also* Evenki  
   National District  
 Yenisei 492, 496
- Zanzibar 138, 142, 149  
 Zionism (and anti-Zionist propaganda)  
   383-385





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## Ten Years of the Endangered Archives Programme

Maja Kominko (ed.)

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