

INTEGRATING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE IN ETHIOPIAN ARCHIVES: MUSIC AND MANUSCRIPTS IN THE COLLECTION OF ABDULAHI ALI SHERIF

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ABSTRACT Since the early 1990s, important examples of Harari tangible and oral cultural heritage were preserved in the private home museum of Abdulahi Ali Sherif in Harar, Ethiopia. The volume and quality of audio recordings of musical and ritual practices, along with the manuscripts from this collection indicate how a resourceful individual, when supported by a community of local patrons, can be instrumental in conserving heritage in a local archive, even in the absence of major funding sources. This case study presents a review of Mr. Sherif's museum collection and explores pertinent challenges in conservation and curatorship of the private holdings. Having followed the transformation of the collection to a public-private partnership, the authors consider the wider implications of collaborations in the management of archives in regional museums in Ethiopia. This research employs examples of various forms of documentation used in the analysis of local Islamic ritual practices to show that local actors are integral to the sustainable management of archives. The collaborations involving the collection of music and manuscripts in the Sherif collection are presented as exemplary of how a community-run museum project can be a particularly appropriate and accessible venue to engage audiences in the legacies found in archives.

Key Words: Community museum; Music; Manuscripts; Harar; Ethiopia.

INTRODUCTION

The city of Harar in eastern Ethiopia is considered by many as a treasured enclave of a thriving Islamic culture that has been cultivated for centuries by the Harari people. Although many cultural groups in greater Ethiopia struggled to not only survive, but also avoid unmitigated displacement and continue to prosper in their traditional homelands during the social and political upheavals in the country in the twentieth century, the residents of Harar managed to do these very things. Today, Harar is the administrative capital of Harari People's National Regional State, and a newly designated UNESCO World Heritage site.

Recent surveys indicate that approximately 21,000 people live within the 0.6 square kilometers of the Jugal wall that encompasses the historic area of the city of Harar, also called Jugol (Gori et al., 2003). The city's population includes persons with ethnic Amhara, Oromo, Harari, Gurage and Somali backgrounds, although Harari consider the city their traditional homeland, thus Harari and related Islamic culture dominates the city. Nonetheless, the different cultures coexist with a relatively high degree of religious tolerance. The daily interactions between

ethnic groups frequently take place especially in areas of commerce and devotional activities (Asante, 2005: 1012).

In the densely populated old city, which houses 82 mosques and scores of shrines, devotion to Islam and the veneration of local saints influence many aspects of daily life—from architecture to landscape design, from mealtime rituals to celebratory gatherings (Gibb, 1999; S. Tarsitani, 2006; Sartori, 2008). An exploration of *zikri* and *Mawlūd*, two ritual traditions in which local manifestations of Islam and saint veneration display unique features, can help us understand the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage in Harar and the importance of preserving documentation of the traditions in locally accessible archives.

DOCUMENTING ISLAMIC RITUAL PRACTICES IN HARAR

Zikri is a devotional activity characterized by singing hymns with lyrics praising Allah, the Prophet Mohammed and the saints. Among the great variety of traditions developed in the frame of Islamic mysticism, *zikri* rituals of Harar convey a rich repertoire of religious poems and their link with the history of this city. The sung melodies and their rhythmic accompaniment, the ritual and social function of their performance developed interesting features (S. Tarsitani, 2006). A tradition related to *zikri* is that of *Mawlūd*. In Harar, the term *Mawlūd* is used to denote the most diffused collection of sacred texts performed to celebrate the birth of the Prophet (*Nabi Mawlūd*) as well as other Islamic feasts and weddings. Every ritual based on the recital of this collection is also called *Mawlūd* (S. Tarsitani, 2007–2008).⁽¹⁾ For the sake of brevity, *zikri* and *Mawlūd* may be generally described as ritualized cultural expressions that, among the other features, present sung, responsorial renderings of written texts, performed by groups that are coordinated by a spiritual leader, often with rhythmic accompaniment of percussion instruments or clapping, that may involve emphatic gesturing and dancing.

The features of the ritual performances and the large body of religious texts associated with *zikri* and *Mawlūd*, evidence longstanding practices in Harar; there are, for example, numerous manuscripts of *zikri* hymns that are more than one hundred years old in various private and public collections of the city, and lyrics from these collections are recited in present-day activities. The following case in point will help illustrate the connection between Islamic devotional practices and cultural continuity, and the connection of tangible and intangible heritages in Harar.

Qasidas (Arabic) are poetic compositions that are often transmitted orally, although antique and contemporary texts contain their verses. Among the oldest *qasidas* written in Harari and performed as *zikri* in the religious rituals, are several manuscripts of the *qasida* “Madh habīb” by Shaykh ‘Abdalmālik written in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (e.g. manuscript CE 327 kept at the Vatican Library). Banti recently identified a testimony of this *qasida* in the Sherif manuscript collection in Harar, which seems to be from the eighteenth century (Banti, 2005). In September 2003, Simone Tarsitani documented a recent version of this text copied by Shaykh Mohammed Jān (Figs. 1–2, Table 1), and recorded its live

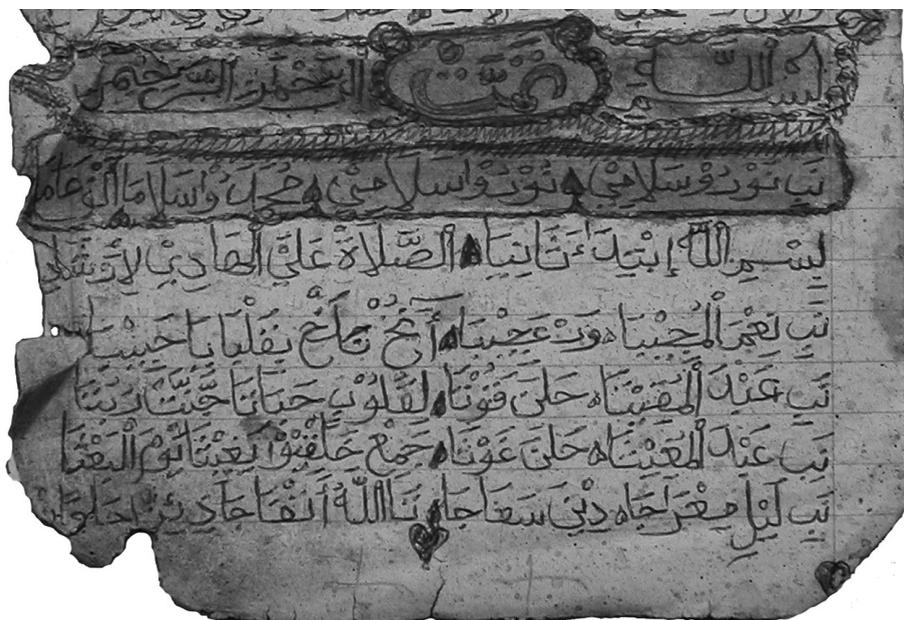


Fig. 1. The refrain and five lines of Shaykh ‘Abdulmālik’s *zikri* are found in this manuscript made by Mohammed Jān.

G = A♭
duration = 15"

soloist

chorus

Na - bi nū - ro sa - lā - mē Nū - ro sa - lā - mē Mu - ḥam - ma - do sa - lā - mā

Na - bi ‘ab - da lMu - ḡī - tā ḥa - la - na ḡa - w - tā ḡam - mi‘

‘al - fa ‘ā - mā

ḥal - qiw ya - ḡī - tā Yaw - ma lBa - ‘ta

Na - bi nū - ro sa - lā - mē Nū -

Fig. 2. Melodic transcription of the refrain and of the fourth line of Shaykh ‘Abdulmālik’s *zikri*, based on the recording made by Simone Tarsitani on 11th September 2003.

Table 1. Transliteration and translation of refrain and four lines of Shaykh ʿAbdulmālik’s *zikri* made by Giorgio Banti

Transliteration [folio, recto/verso, line]	English translation
1. [f. 1r l. 12] Nabi nūro salāmē Nūro salāmē Muḥammadō salāmā ʿalfa ʿāmā	Peace for the light of the Prophet, peace for (his) light, peace for Muhammad, one thousand times!
2. [f. 1r l. 13] Bismi LLāhi ʾibtidāʾa ṭāniyā aṣṣalāt ʿalā lhādī liʾiršādī	At the beginning there is “In the name of God”, secondly, his blessing upon him who leads me towards spiritual learning.
3. [f. 1r l. 14] Nabi niʿma lmuḡībā war ʿaḡībā ʾanuḡ nalaḡ biqalbā yā ḡabībā	Oh Prophet, how wonderful is (your) marvelous message! let me tell you with (my) heart, oh dear one!
4. [f. 1r l. 15] Nabi ʿabda lmuqītā ḡalana qūtā liqulūbin ḡayātā ḡannat rubutā	Oh Prophet, servant of the Nourisher we have your food it is life for the hearts, it is a guarantee of Paradise.
5. [f. 1r l. 16] Nabi ʿabda lmuḡītā ḡalana ḡawṭā ḡammiʿ ḡalqiw yaḡītā Yawma lBaʿṭā	Oh Prophet, servant of the Helper, we have (his) aid, he will help all the people in the Day of Judgement.
...	...

performance, during a *zikri* ritual led by the shaykh himself.

The above example illustrates several important points. First, the value of archived manuscripts in linguistic and ethnomusicological analysis cannot be underestimated. In this case, researchers gain insight into linguistic variations by comparing manuscripts more than one hundred years old to those produced more recently in Harar. Likewise we can see how one might trace the connections between the legacy of oral traditions and accompanying poetic, musical and dance practices (intangible heritages) and the written records together with digitally preserved audio and video resources (tangible heritages). Furthermore, audiovisual documentation of contemporary ritual practices can benefit 1) the researchers by facilitating the analysis of the relationship between text and performance; 2) the performers when copies of the recordings are shared with them for their own consideration,⁽²⁾ as has often been done with Shaykh Mohammed Jān’s ritual group; and 3) the wider community when copies of manuscripts and recordings are made available to the public in local multimedia archives, like the emerging digital archive of the local Sherif collection.

Research has found that both *zikri* and *Mawlūd* rituals have resulted in a wide repertoire and that local residents have collected (and kept among their private possessions) audio recordings of performances and texts written in Harari, Arabic and other local languages (S. Tarsitani, 2006, 2007–2008). The fact that one can

witness these rituals still being performed today is due in large part to an indigenously initiated cultural revival that began about a decade ago and has resulted in a renewed interest in circulating religious poems and, when available, audio recordings of performances so that the younger generation may benefit from the legacies.

EMERGENCE OF AN AUDIO-VISUAL ARCHIVE

The authors have analyzed elsewhere the impetus behind the recent revival in both musical performance and the distribution of accompanying texts and audio recordings, as well as Harar's community-initiated heritage conservation projects in general (Asante, 2006; B.A. Tarsitani, 2009a, 2009b; S. Tarsitani, n.d., 2006, 2007–2008). Thus, only a cursory summary is given herein; the following section will focus primarily on the case study of Mr. Abdulahi (Abdela) Ali Sherif's holdings as exemplary of the renewed interest in collecting and making archived materials accessible to the local community.

A review of Ethiopian history reveals that the repressive policies of Haile Selassie's empire and later those of the Derg socialist regime, led to the mass out-migration of many cultural groups, including Harari people whose traditional homeland is the setting of the present study. With the coming of the socialist state in the mid-1970s, Ethiopians had their property appropriated with the nationalization of private landholdings. Not only did Harari lose a significant basis of their livelihoods with this policy, but they also suffered from the fear of expressing cultural group identity—a fear rampant among nearly all Ethiopians during that dark time in the nation's history.

As a result of the exodus, which occurred mostly from the 1970s until the early 1990s, Harari are now a numerical minority in the area of Greater Harar. In the national census of 1994, only 22,000 Harari were accounted for in the country, making Harari one of the smallest of Ethiopia's ethnic groups (CSA, 1999). It is likely that more Harari now live abroad than in Ethiopia.

Despite their small population, the Harari have gained prominence as a formidable cultural group, especially due to their lobbying power that supports their claims for preferential political treatment based on both their historical preeminence in the eastern highlands of Ethiopia, and their current minority status. The transformation to a numerical minority, combined with more flexible federal cultural policies since 1991, led to an increased reverence for the cultural heritage of the city.

In fact, as soon as cultural policies were relaxed, Mr. Abdulahi Ali Sherif began his quest to gather and preserve what would become the largest collection of music recordings and manuscripts in Harar. In 1991, at the age of 37, Mr. Sherif started collecting reel and cassette tapes of songs for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Haywan Mugad, an association of young Harari men gathered to sing together in leisure-time and especially during weddings. At the beginning he intended to collect only recordings of the music of his own group, which was perhaps the most important youth association of male singers in Harar. He borrowed

tapes from his friends and started transferring them from reel-to-reel to cassette tapes, recording the sound of the reel tape player through a microphone sheltered by a blanket. In a few years he succeeded gathering more than 600 recorded songs. After a while, with the encouragement of many Harari (most notably Abdulmuheimen Abdunassir), Mr. Sherif started widening the boundaries of his interests and began collecting all kinds of musical repertoires, old manuscripts, and other cultural artifacts. In time, his reputation for collecting and preservation became well known and in May 1996 the regional government granted him an official Certificate of Permission for Collecting, which he renewed again in 1997. Then, in 1998 he was granted permission to open the Sherif Private Museum on the premises of his home.

In an August 2006 interview, Mr. Sherif described to us his early motivations for collecting music:

When I was in my secondary school, [I asked myself]: what is our history? I asked this to our elders and they told me that we had [history], but for the time being we haven't [any]. [Later] I began collecting these songs. I asked [my elders] and they told me: we have [cultural history] now and we will give [it] to you. So I said: Why didn't you tell me when I asked you in the past? They answered that at that time they were afraid because they didn't want to lose two children: one is us [their progeny], the other is our history and heritage. At that time, if we gave [it] to you, you would have been in prison or killed. This was true for all Ethiopians. Haile Selassie and the military [Derg] government didn't allow any tribes, even the ruling class, to collect their history. They wanted to turn Ethiopia into one language, one religion and one tribe. For this reason I had a crisis in my mind. To get mental satisfaction, I began my hobby, which is also my wife's [Saada Towfik] hobby.

Over the years Mr. Sherif's musical collection has expanded to include about 60 reel tapes (mostly from the 1970s), more than 100 cassette tapes, modern recordings of women's songs from the ethnomusicologist Ilaria Sartori, 650 handwritten and 300 printed manuscripts. Within this collection are Qur'anic passages, and religious texts that are chanted during the Harari *zikri* and *Mawlūd* recitals. One finds a diversity of form, context and languages in this collection.

Although rich in content, this collection of musical heritage is not without complications. Many of the reel tapes are damaged and corrupted; the portion that was copied to cassette tapes resulted in deteriorated sound. Moreover, there is a generally low quality in the original recordings (often due to improper storage of the tapes), and many tapes are broken or twisted. Because of the many difficulties of this work Mr. Sherif granted permission to Simone Tarsitani to bring part of his reel tape collection to Italy for digitization. Upon returning the reel tapes together with their digital copies in August 2006, the authors met with Mr. Sherif to discuss which recordings were more culturally valuable than others, and began the process of going through the digitized recordings of reel tapes trying to contextualize the tracks and also to discern which ones should have



Fig. 3. Simone Tarsitani presents Abdulahi Ali Sherif a reel tape player in August 2006.

priority for future editing.

At the end of this process, we presented Mr. Sherif with a reel tape player of his own (Philips 4 track reel tape player, Model 4308) and, after installing Steinberg Wavelab audio-editing software in his computer, the ethnomusicologist (S. Tarsitani) taught him the basics of digitizing and editing audio, while the anthropologist (B.A. Tarsitani) inventoried a portion of the museum collection (Fig. 3).

The work that was started in 2006 is still in the early stages: more editing, and archiving must be done before the work of analysis, and comparison of the old recordings with the recent recordings of contemporary performances can begin. However, the example of the cooperation between scholars and Mr. Sherif in the previous section gives tantalizing hope for the prospects of future collaborations between researchers and this archive. Thus far, collaborations with the Sherif collection have shown that indigenous custodianship, and scholarly analysis of musical and literary forms can be complementary. What is most critical for this union is that all parties are cognizant of the importance of archiving and digitization of the recorded sound and manuscripts, each viewing their task as a contribution to a legacy that is locally owned, but globally shared. When working with the indigenous collector, we believe that it is important for researchers to aid in building the capacity of the local curator by providing material components and, more importantly, offering skills training as a first step towards increasing sustainability of this indigenously initiated collection of musical heritage.

Especially in light of historical policies that infringed upon cultural rights, it

is certainly a positive sign that there is a renewed interest by the community to gather all those items of precious heritage that were not confiscated by previous governments, and to present those items in such a way that subsequent generations of indigenous peoples have access to their cultural history.⁽³⁾ The sustained curatorial cultivating activities, which attempt to bridge the gap between living cultures of the city with the historically significant objects found in the museum, can provide a model for other museums in Ethiopia. For example, Mr. Sherif is the last bookbinder in the city and practices his self-taught craft at the museum. The crafting of manuscript bindings using traditional technologies, compliments his vast collection of ancient manuscripts. Likewise, since 2006, Mr. Sherif is no longer content to simply digitize his collection of recorded sound. He recently began transcribing the lyrics to *zikri* recordings in his museum using Ethiopic script so that he may distribute and help to popularize these legacies in the community.⁽⁴⁾ Mr. Sherif is thus working to develop a museum setting where the outstanding historical experiences and contemporary practices meet.

Given this concentration of objects and the dedication of the founding curator, it is not surprising that local residents and the regional government, not to mention the throngs of scholars and international organizations that have shown interest in accessing and promoting his museum, hold Mr. Sherif's collection in high regard. The community has especially shown their support of his endeavors, through their visits to the museum, and even more, through their donations of objects and funds.⁽⁵⁾ In a 2006 interview, Mr. Sherif claimed that as much as forty percent of his collection was given to him in trust.

Certainly this trust was a special accolade, acknowledging the integrity and dedication of an esteemed private citizen, who was entrusted with the maintenance of the objects. In some cases, like that of precious manuscripts, or music recordings, the items were not given [outright] but lent to Sherif, with the resultant expectation that they would remain the property of the donor. This special relationship that Sherif built up with his community helped his museum collection grow when other collections like that of the Ada Gar Museum suffered from stagnation after the initial large donations by [community] groups (B.A. Tarsitani, 2009a: 13).⁽⁶⁾

With the success and popularity of the Sherif family's Private Museum well-established, the regional government became involved in the enterprise and began the process to transfer the collection to a public-private partnership under terms requiring Mr. Sherif to loan his collection to the partnership for fifty years.

In order to bolster Mr. Sherif's collection, the Harari National Regional State contacted UNESCO requesting its assistance for the transformation of the Sherif Private Museum into the Sherif Harar City Museum. In recognition of his lifetime dedication to the safeguarding of Harar's cultural heritage, the Harari National Regional State provided the Ras Tafari House (built c. 1911) as a new venue for the collection (Tarsitani & Abdulahi, 2008: 7).



Fig. 4. A small portion of the collection of illuminated manuscripts in Sherif Harar City Museum.

The new Sherif Harar City Museum, located in the center of Jugal, opened in 2007 to much fanfare. A UNESCO/Norwegian Funds-in-Trust project contributed to the renovation of the new museum, inventorying the collection, purchasing equipment and training local museum staff (Fig. 4).⁽⁷⁾

The collection of the Sherif Harar City Museum exemplifies the high potential of indigenous resourcefulness in creating opportunities not only for preservation, but also for public presentation of folk customs in a museum setting that is easily accessible to and frequently accessed by the local community.⁽⁸⁾ Mr. Sherif's willingness and initiative to effectively work with community members in conservation efforts, collaborate with scholars in research activities, and engage government and donor agencies in development projects, in order to preserve, digitize and study his collection evidences his interest in cultural continuity, and serves as a positive prototype for future local-level conservation initiatives dealing with musical legacies.⁽⁹⁾

CONCLUSION

As noted at the beginning of this paper, the community of Harar has an excellent reputation in Ethiopia for preserving its cultural heritage despite social and economic upheavals that have devastated many other communities in the last century. The authors' combined formal and informal surveys of hundreds of local residents suggest that the values the Harari community places on the objects housed in local museum (archival) collections derive meaning, in part, from the object's symbolic reflection of the communal ability to display, honor and cultivate

heritage, especially in light of historical and political activities that limited manifestations of cultural identities in Ethiopia.

In the current era of relative liberalization towards cultural expressions, there is a renewed interest by the community to publicly present the objects of their cultural heritage. Today, the revitalization of the cultural milieu of the city has as much to do with reviving legacies of old as it does with celebrating modern cultural practices. Comparable processes are taking place throughout Ethiopia, all “in response to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia’s mandate through ethnic federalism to promote multi-ethnic tolerance and the celebration of cultural diversity as key building blocks of the nation-state (B.A. Tarsitani, 2009b: 74).” In the present political environment, ethnic pluralism of the nation has become a tool that the ruling coalition, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), sees as an asset, especially in terms of encouraging international investment in heritage conservation. It is not surprising, considering the marked contrast between the current political climate and that of the earlier socialist regime, that the community’s appraisal of the value of cultural objects, as defined by themselves and not by the centralized state, has helped guide their intention to preserve and publicly display such objects openly.

The case study of the Sherif collection has shown that, even with initial limited access to resources and personnel, self-initiative and commendable resource management can result in effective modes of management by local actors. Thus far, the capacity of Harari regional government administrators (who have ancestral and other cultural links with the city) to actively seek alliances with such knowledgeable individuals as Mr. Sherif has been an important factor in establishing projects in the heritage management sector. Given the modest history of the establishment of the Sherif collection, the subsequent impressive establishment of the Private Museum, the successful relocation of the museum collection, the provision of better display cases and security measures, and the recent training programs offered to all of the city’s curators, it is clear that the institutional housing of cultural heritage in Harar’s newest archive has been commendable not due to any singular actor (or group thereof), but because of successful alliances and innovative actions of pertinent parties. In the face of recent disputes to claims of ownership and rights to proceeds all parties would do well to keep this consideration in mind.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the future of regional archives and similar cultural institutions in Ethiopia is uncertain, it is hoped that sustainable programs will be developed that promote the community engagement in heritage preservation and the maintenance of indigenous systems of alliances that have proven to be integral to the development of these institutions. With this in mind, the following recommendations are made:

1. *The cultural policy of Ethiopia should be amended to provide greater allowances for the protection of the rights of individuals in heritage management and make concessions for communal possession of artifacts in certain exceptional cases.*

By mandate, the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCCH) is responsible for licensing individuals who wish to keep items in a museum (Negarit Gazeta, 2000: Part 1, 6.6; Part 2, 15). However, in practice the bureaucracy involved in this process is daunting, not in least part because even the paperwork required for such authorization may have few or no precedents in existence. As a result, the regional bureaus have to work to creatively extend permission on a periodic basis for citizens to maintain private museum collections, as was the case for the Sherif Private Museum. Furthermore, although permission may be granted for such a venture, the federal government has the right of expropriation for items deemed important to national heritage (Negarit Gazeta, 2000: Part 2, 25.1–25.2). This policy—which also states that persons in possession of important heritages must prove (in written form) the route of inheritance of such objects—should only work to discourage citizens from sharing the object in a public forum.

Furthermore, increased financial, infrastructural, and technical support of local initiatives should be made available beyond the World Heritage Sites of the country. Whereas ARCCCH with its financial resources and expertise has an obligation to manage these important sites, smaller urban and rural areas also have cultural projects, which should be encouraged and supported from the central government. In fact, as the case of the walled city of Harar has shown, there is currently a growing number of Ethiopians who want to get involved in heritage management. The actions of Abdulahi Ali Sherif have certainly contributed to the rise in local interest in museums in Harar and beyond. In a 2005 interview, Mr. Sherif noted how young people often inquire about starting their own collections.

Seeing me [my efforts], something happened in Harar. They care for the books, which they used to throw in the storage places. [Now] they ask me to renew them for preservation. They learnt that heritage is valuable and [locals] who can't keep [their items] well, began to bring them to me, by selling or by [donation]. Some young people now also began to collect songs, coins, stamps and books. Still none of them is organized. But I tell them: you need 10 or 20 years to get organized. Don't hesitate! Go forward! One day you will be more than me.

With the interest in collecting and creating museums growing in the country,⁽¹⁰⁾ greater allowances should be made whereby the federal government gives recognition—in policy and its true implementation—of the right of local actors to register and receive permission in these respects.

2. *Further research should be done on the collections in local museums, with priority to be given to manuscript and audio collections.*

Timely action is needed for manuscript and digital media preservation and training of curators in Ethiopia in relevant conservation techniques. Manuscripts of paper and parchment and fragile reel tapes, all of which are susceptible to humidity variations and pests, are currently overly exposed to such conditions due to the lack of suitable housing required for long-term conservation of the items. A lack of training (until recently) in international standards have led local curators to use creative, but perhaps irrevocably damaging methods of emergency conservation, leading to the need for immediate intervention with these precious items of heritage.

Furthermore, it has been suggested by Pankhurst (2005) that the digitization of antique or rare Ethiopian manuscripts, and by Tarsitani (n.d.) that audio recordings of Harari music—both within the country and in collections abroad—be systematically inventoried and archived.⁽¹⁾ Certainly digitization and the establishment of databases would allow for public access by Ethiopians to their oral legacies, and such work would also assist indigenous and foreign researchers in evaluating and translating these manuscripts. However, Pankhurst's (2005) recommendation that digital copies be kept in Addis Ababa at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) is too modest of a vision. IES does not afford free or readily approachable access to its collections (excepting those glass encased items which are on display in the galleries at any given time). The authors believe, instead, that once digital documents are available, as many Ethiopians as feasible should have a chance to access these works. Likewise, a selection of digital copies of important manuscripts and audiovisual recordings could be distributed to all Ethiopian secondary schools and cultural centers, including museums, that have access to computers, so that students and the wider community can interactively discover this aspect of their history through expanded multimedia educational programming.

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NOTES

- (1) For more on *Mawlūd* tradition in Harar, see Alessandro Gori's contribution in these workshop proceedings.
- (2) Audio recordings of live *zikri* rituals were not new to the community. Simone Tarsitani has collected copies of these rituals that were made by local practitioners as early as the 1970s.
- (3) Case studies of the four museums of Harar, with an emphasis on community participation

in museum activities and vernacular arts collections have been presented elsewhere (B.A. Tarsitani, 2009a). It is interesting to note here, however, that of the various heritage objects inventoried between 2005 and 2006 in Harar's four museums, the Sherif collection had more than thirteen times the number of manuscripts than any of the other museums. Moreover, the Sherif collection was the only one to include an archive of audio recordings.

- (4) It is interesting to note that Mr. Sherif's effort is not unique in Harar. Simone Tarsitani documented similar activities of transcription of *zikri* texts in the ritual group of the *Nabi gār* (typical Harari devotional place) of Aw Basor.
- (5) Mr. Sherif's extended family and the Harari community, as well as Mohammed Hussein Al Amoudi, the embassies of France, Sudan and the USA have granted practical and financial assistance over the years.
- (6) In an inventory of the objects on display at Sherif Private Museum in 2005 and 2006, B.A. Tarsitani found that there were 726 folk crafts, 4,104 historical objects (including 950 manuscripts), and 7 farming instruments. Much of the collection was in storage at other facilities and was therefore not included in the inventory.
- (7) For more on UNESCO's contributions to the Sherif Harar City Museum, see Fumiko Ohinata's contribution to these workshop proceedings.
- (8) The variety of objects in the Sherif collection includes textiles, jewelry, basketry, farming instruments and modern paintings. Some of the treasures of the collection include nineteenth century military insignia, locally minted Harari coins and imperial regalia (Tarsitani & Abdulahi, 2008).
- (9) Simone Tarsitani's ethnomusicological research in Harar, for example, could not have been as thorough without the assistance and interdisciplinary collaboration over several years of Mr. Sherif, and also Giorgio Banti and Alessandro Gori, both of whom likewise benefited from Mr. Sherif's collection.
- (10) The Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA) reported that the number of regional museums doubled between 2004 and 2006 (CSA, 2005; 2006).
- (11) Giorgio Banti has been working for several years on the project "Harari Manuscripts," sponsored by Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (ISIAO), which consists in the collection of digital photos of old *‘ajami* manuscripts in Harari to be indexed on CD-ROM. In 2004, with the assistance of Simone Tarsitani, he photographed the collection of Harari manuscripts of Mr. Sherif.

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