



AID TRANSPARENCY (DAKAR, SENEGAL) / SAVAMA-DCI (TIMBUKTU, MALI)

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESERVING AFRICA'S ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS

Addis Ababa, 17-19 December 2010

Background

Aid Transparency successfully convened in Dakar (20-23 April, 2008) a regional meeting with relevant stakeholders (African librarians, conservators, researchers and decision takers) to prepare a regional Conference on Managing and Analyzing Africa's Ancient Manuscripts. This High Level Contact Group Meeting was attended by some of the most senior public and private managers of manuscripts as well as historians and Islamic scholars. Several important decisions were taken with regard to the setting up of an inter-institutional information exchange mechanism, the venue and date of the conference, the list of participants and specific panels and thematic areas as well as the anticipated publication of a book on ancient manuscripts in Africa.

West Africa is by far the largest reservoir of ancient 7th-19th century manuscripts in the Africa region. Most of these manuscripts are kept in disastrous conditions and need special care in the areas of conservation, microfilming, digitalization, cataloguing and content analysis. There is renewed interest from the part of Africana scholars and culturalists with regard to Africa's written treasures kept in closed family circles, mosques and Islamic centers. The convening of an international conference on the subject matter as well the publication of a landmark book on the conservation and analysis of ancient manuscripts in Africa will play a critical role for setting in motion a larger issue related to the preservation and promotion of Africa's cultural heritage and historical treasures. Until recently, the Timbuktu manuscripts were completely ignored at world level. Thanks to several stakeholders' interest and The Ford Foundation's pioneering engagement in this field, many of these ancient manuscripts were systematically collected and catalogued while Timbuktu's main public and private libraries were empowered to build capacities in the areas of cataloguing, preservation, translation of Arabic material and restoration.

Objectives

1. To organize an international conference on the status of Africa's Ancient Written Patrimony:
 - a. To publish a landmark book;
 - b. To set up an Africa-regional information exchange and learning network that will also coordinate an Africa-wide training and learning mechanism after the conference;
2. To edit, document and disseminate relevant protocols developed for cataloguing, training, interpretation of content and advocating from the initial phase of the work as appropriate, especially, to strengthen the West Africa focus.

3. To launch a feasibility study for the establishment of an African Training Mechanism for Ancient Manuscripts Conservation.

Coordinating Mechanisms

+ The High Level Contact Group

Aid Transparency successfully convened in Dakar (20-23 April, 2008) a regional meeting with relevant stakeholders (African librarians, conservators, researchers and decision takers) to prepare a regional Conference on Managing and Analyzing Africa's Ancient Manuscripts. This High Level Contact Group Meeting was attended by some of the most senior public and private managers of manuscripts as well as historians and African heritage scholars. Several important decisions were taken with regards to the setting up of an inter-institutional information exchange mechanism, the venue and date of the conference, the list of participants and specific panels and thematic areas as well as the anticipated publication of a book on ancient manuscripts in Africa. HLCCG are:

Egypt

Prof. Dr. Youssef Ziedan, Director, Manuscripts Center & Manuscripts Museum; The Library of Alexandria; Tel: + 2010 1704466; Fax: + 203 4820461; Ziedan@ziedan.com

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+ **International Conference**

The International Conference on Preserving Ancient Manuscripts in Africa (17-19 December, 2010, Addis Ababa) is a joint collaborative initiative between Aid Transparency, a regional policy think tank specialized in social governance, Mali's Association for Preserving Ancient Manuscripts and Promoting Islamic Culture (Savama-Dci), the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, African museums, Librarians and research centers with The Ford Foundation's generous financial and strategic support.

A small team of eminent members of the research and knowledge management community will be responsible for the Conference's scientific coordination. Advice and specific missions will be sought from HLCCG members.

+ **International Exhibition**

The International Exhibition on Ancient Manuscripts and Writing Systems in Africa will be inaugurated on 17 December 2010 in Addis Ababa. It will take place in the historic halls of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa in close cooperation with Ethiopia's Ministry of Culture, Council of Churches, Islamic Council, Institute of Ethiopian Studies and national museums.

African and international cultural heritage institutions as well as multilateral organizations will fully participate in the operationalization of this most comprehensive exposition of Africa's endogenous writing systems and ancient manuscripts (from the highest antiquity to the XIXth century), thus, dispelling the unfair myth that Africa never produced written historical records.

This International Exhibition will be travelling throughout Africa and the world. The following cities will be targeted: Brazil; China; Egypt; France; Ghana; Great Britain; Japan; Liberia; Mali; Mauritania; Nigeria; Sierra Leone; Senegal; and South Africa; United States.

The exhibition will cover the following areas: 1/ Evolution of Africa's writing systems (rocks; cave paintings; parchments; scrolls; papyrus; paper); 2/ Presentation of ancient manuscripts from a wide range of African countries dating back – 4 000 years to the XIXth century; 3/ Presentation of relevant original or copied ancient manuscripts, photographs and artifacts; 4/ demonstrations of calligraphic skills by African crafts men and women; 4/ sale of copies of ancient manuscripts and rare books provided by participant private libraries as well as some of the latest books published on Africa's ancient manuscripts and history.

A selected number of librarians and crafts men and women will be sponsored so that they can showcase their ancient manuscripts and artifacts.

A Steering Committee of 4 members will coordinate the organization of this Exhibition.

Networks

African and international networks of librarians, keepers of ancient manuscripts, museums, knowledge industries, think tanks, universities, private sector and African public decision-takers at the highest level will participate in an unprecedented effort to re-assess the fate of Africa's ancient manuscripts, to analyze on a significant scale the content of these ancient written treasures, to empower the private keepers of ancient manuscripts in whose care most of these early written records remain, and to develop sustainable preservation and financial strategies and support systems in order to optimize the life span and utilization of Africa's ancient manuscripts.

Partners

International bilateral and multilateral institutions, regional cultural organizations, international and African private and philanthropic sectors, African and international research institutions and museums will be asked to bring different kinds of financial and technical support.

The 2010 International Conference

- **Conference Highlights**

The International Conference on Preserving Ancient Manuscripts in Africa will bring together African and international senior librarians/information sciences managers, researchers, private and public managers of ancient manuscripts, knowledge industries, decision takers, civil society and international organizations.

This wide array of expertise will set itself the task of analyzing the most salient issues raised by Africa's ancient written treasures and historical records. In addition, it will suggest concrete solutions and set up mechanisms aimed at building professional and financial capacities of private libraries and closed family circles who are the keepers of most of the continent's ancient manuscripts. Several international gatherings have already called the international community's attention on the dismal state of Africa's written ancient manuscripts whether in the East Cost, the Sudanic-Sahelian area, the Chadian basin, the Maghreb in its diversity and a myriad kingdoms and empires scattered throughout one of the largest continents in the world.

Africa is the fountain source of the earliest and most complete types of writing systems and alphabets. It still retains several alphabets including newly created ones. Since the highest antiquity, African Pharaonic Egypt revolutionized mankind's evolution through the most startling inventions including elaborate hieroglyphs at least 5000 years old way before its appearance in other cultural cradles.

Africa's written treasures kept in adverse conditions are at present in great danger of being lost forever if bold action is not undertaken now to preserve ancient manuscripts, offer manuscripts keepers sustainable ways for generating income from their cultural treasures, taking appropriate legal steps to protect this cultural heritage and promote innovative ways for involving private and philanthropic institutions as well as the international community of donors and States.

The rehabilitation of these most endangered world cultural heritage sites and written treasures deserves special attention because they are the repositories of ancient knowledge still vital for an understanding of Africa and world civilization's past, present and future. They represent a key platform for a genuine dialogue of civilizations in a global era dangerously threatened by all kinds of challenges.

- **Background**

Over the past decades several meetings were held on the preservation and analysis of ancient African manuscripts either in Africa (Senegal; Ghana; Ethiopia; Egypt; Timbuktu, Mali; Cape Town, South Africa; Morocco; etc) or elsewhere (Paris, London, New York, Washington, D.C., Belgium; Spain; Oslo, Norway; etc). Many international institutions including the Unesco, Al Furqan, the International Association of Librarians, Ilesco, Isesco, The Ford Foundation, The Mellon Foundation and academic institutions in Africa and throughout the world also called on global attention on the alarming state of ancient manuscripts in Africa. A few stakeholders started cataloging, indexing and seldom restoring manuscripts in most need of repair and utmost care.

The Ford Foundation assisted the Ahmed Baba Centre in Timbuktu, the Lamu library in Kenya, the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Abeba, Arewa House in Kaduna, Cape Town University in South Africa, Northwestern University in the United States of America and a Malian network of private non professional librarians in setting up their first electronic data bases and cataloguing, restoring and analyzing some of the ancient manuscripts kept in West Africa. In the past three years, The Ford Foundation supported Timbuktu's private libraries with technical backstopping provided by Aid Transparency.

- **Thematic areas**

This three-day International Conference will bring together respected scholars, field specialists and practitioners raising central issues and suggesting practical solutions for promoting manuscripts keepers and preserving existing collections. The program will be comprised of three parallel sessions: a/ Research related to ancient manuscripts content and historical significance; b/ Preservation, cataloguing, digitization and restoration issues; c/ Knowledge management and financial capacity building.

- **Conference Format**

The Conference will host 3 keynote lectures and will select a maximum of 15 presentations and 6 session chairs and rapporteurs. During the first day, maximum interaction amongst participants will be encouraged. On Day 2, there will be a Philanthropy Dinner Award honoring best practices on manuscripts preservation and scholarship. A Jury of Peers will select candidates who will be eligible for the Award (a plain bronze sculpture and a check). On the second day rapporteurs will present summaries of discussions and participants will present their amendments and final recommendations during the final plenary session.

Participants will have the opportunity to attend the inauguration of an International Exhibition on Ancient Manuscripts and Writing Systems in Africa at Un-Eca in Addis Ababa. At this exhibition they will be able to interact with African craft men and women specialized in manuscripts copying, calligraphic art, books binding and cultural artifacts. They will also be given an opportunity to visit a few cultural sites in Addis Ababa.

Simultaneous interpretation in English, Arabic and French will be available.

- **Participants**

There will be a maximum of 60 invited participants and perhaps more depending on the availability of financial sponsoring. Invited librarians and speakers from Africa will be sponsored (return tickets, accommodation and food).

- **Accommodations**

Participants will benefit from preferential rates in two hotels (Intercontinental Hotel and Jupiter Hotel) at walking distance from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa where the Conference and Exhibition will take place.

- **Call for papers**

This announcement will be circulated as widely as possible in relevant institutions. Contributors will be asked to send a CV and an abstract of 200 words summarizing salient methodological and analytical approaches. The deadline for abstracts submission is **30 October 2009**. All documents should be sent to the Steering Committee at the following email address: Scommittee@africanmanuscripts.org. Selected authors will be informed and will receive information on the editorial format they will be using. Deadline for papers submission will be **30 March 2010**. Commissioned papers will cover research expenses and honoraria. All papers will be peer-reviewed and published in a book format that will be available prior to the International Conference.

- **Steering Committee Members**

1. Professor Djibril Tamsir Niane, Historian, former co-Coordinator of UNESCO's General History of Africa and Chancellor, University of Conakry (Guinee; Conakry)
2. Professor Aboubacry Moussa Lam, Senior Egyptologist and Historian, Department of History, Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar, Senegal
3. Professor Dr. Youssef Ziedan, Director, Manuscripts Center and Manuscripts Museum; The Library of Alexandria, Egypt
4. Prof. Benebine Ahmed Chaouqui, Director, Royal Library; Royal Palace; Rabat ;
5. Professor Mahmoud Hammane; Prof. of History, Director Arewa House, Ahmadu Bello University, Kaduna, Nigeria.
6. Dr. Abla Abd El Salam, General Director of Conservation, Egyptian Museum, Cairo;
7. Mr. Demeke Berhane, Director Manuscripts Section, Institute of Ethiopian Studies; Addis Ababa;
8. Dr. J. Habib Sy, Professor of Communications, Director, Aid Transparency, Dakar, Senegal

Special Advisor

9. Professor Ali A. Mazrui, D.Phil., (Oxon), C.B.S.; Director, Institute of Global Cultural Studies, Binghamton University, SUNY

- **Contacts**

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DRAFT Conference Schedule

Day 1

Registration (starts at the airport)

Pre-Conference Sessions

Closed Sessions

- Representatives of Networks of Private Manuscripts Keepers
- High Level Contact Group Brainstorming
- Strategic and Sustainable Capacity Building and Financial Partnership Brainstorming: Existing Support Programs, Financial Mechanisms and Pledges

Day 2

8:30 am *Opening Ceremony: International Exhibition on Ancient Manuscripts in Africa*

- Welcome Address
- Brief Speeches
- Keynote address

9:30 am Official Opening of the International Exhibition on Ancient Manuscripts and Writing Systems in Africa

10:30-10:45 **Break**

Parallel Sessions

10:45-12:15: Presentations

12:15-12:45: Discussions

Thematic Area 1: Conservation

Panel 1: Radioscopy of Collections and the Challenges of Preservation (cataloguing; restoration; digitization)

Chair: ; **Rapporteur:** ; **Panelists:**

Working Papers:

North Africa: Egypt; Libya; Morocco; Sudan

West Africa: Cameroun; Ghana; Guinea Conakry; Liberia; Mauritania; Mali; Niger; Nigeria; Senegal; Sierra Leone

Central Africa: Chad

Horn of Africa: Ethiopia

East Africa: Kenya; Tanzania

Institutions of Oriental and African Studies: London School of Oriental Studies; CNRS, Paris; African Studies Dept, Univ. of Pennsylvania; University of Cape Town, South Africa

Panel 2: Existing Conservation Protocols and Learning Tools/Local Responses to Conservation Challenges and Intellectual Property Rights

Chair: ; Rapporteur: ; Panelists:

Working Papers

a/ Presentation of a Training Manual for African Private Libraries;

b/ Review of UNESCO Manuscripts Protocols

c/ Cultural Heritage Legal Frameworks in West Africa: A Comparative Assessment

Lunch Break

12:45-14:00

Thematic Area 2: Research

Parallel Sessions

14:00-15:30: Presentations

15:45-16:30: Discussions

Panel 3: Research, Transliteration and Content Analysis of Ancient Manuscripts

Chair: ; Rapporteur: ; 5 Panelists:

Working Papers

a/ Arabic scriptures and Ajami: Chad; Ghana; Mali; Mauritania; Niger; Nigeria; Senegal; Sudan; Kenya

b/ African scriptures: Cameroun; Congo; Egypt; Ethiopia; Liberia; Sierra Leone; Ivory Coast

c/ Africa's intellectual and scientific achievements: A historical Survey; Heritage Literature in a selected number of countries (Ethiopia; Egypt; Mali; Mauritania; Morocco; Nigeria and Senegal)

d/ Case Studies on Ancient Manuscripts in Ethiopia; Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Niger, Kenya

e/ Bibliographic Survey on Ancient Manuscripts in Africa:

Tea/Coffee Break

15:30-15:45

Thematic Area 3: Sustainable Financial Capacity Building

1/ Ancient Manuscripts in Africa: A Blind Spot in International Grant Making: Chair: ; Rapporteur ; Panelists:

Working Papers

a/ Feasibility Study on Setting Up a West African Training Centre for Manuscripts Preservation.

b/ Integrating the Content of Ancient Manuscripts in Existing Educational Systems.

e/ Capacity building in transliterating ancient manuscripts: operational models

- d/ A Strategic Framework for Sustainable Financial Support For Ancient Manuscripts Preservation
- e/ International Partnership and the African Archival Crisis: A Road Map for Coherence, Innovation and Dialogue
- f/ Museums: A Case for Renewed Partnership With Libraries
- g/ Empowering Small Libraries: A Key to Sustainable Preservation
- h/ Private Sector Involvement: Which Way Forward?

17:00-19:00: Visit of Cultural Sites in the Addis Ababa Area (Optional)

**Philanthropy Dinner and Awards
20:00-23:00**

- Introduction
- 15 minutes Video Show on Imperiled Ancient Manuscripts Throughout Africa
- Traditional Ethiopian Musical Show
- Brief speeches by a selected number of private librarians and researchers (3 minutes per speaker)
- Ancient Manuscripts Best Practice Preservation Awards by a Jury of Peers
- Keynote address

Day 3

Plenary Sessions

9:00-11:30: Rapporteurs' Reports and Recommendations

**Tea/Coffee Break
11:30-11:45**

11:45-12:30: Adoption of an African Charter on the Preservation of African Manuscripts

12:30-13:00: Adoption of a Strategic Plan for: a/ Training on Preserving Ancient Manuscripts in Africa; b/ Information Exchange and Analysis on Ancient Manuscripts in Africa; c/ Sponsorship for the Restoration of Ancient Manuscripts in Africa

Closing Session (Final Speeches)

13:00-13:30

Lunch

13:30-15:00

Cultural touring, Addis Ababa (optional)

AFRICAN UNION



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AREWA HOUSE (KADUNA, NIGERIA)



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