

Wesleyan University

From the Selected Works of Michaelle Biddle

2009

The Modibbo Ahmadu Fufore (1885-1960) Collection

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Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/mbiddle/3/>

The Modibbo Ahmadu Fufore (1885-1960) Collection

When first surveyed in March 2008 the collection had been in storage for over four decades. It was not collated and there was evidence of pervasive insect infestation (spiders and dry wood termites being particularly common), rodent and water damage, edge embrittlement, general wear and tear, and general soiling. It was initially estimated that there were at least 200 separate manuscripts ranging from one to over 500 folios in size. The manuscripts dated from the late-18th century to the mid-20th century. There were at least two manuscripts of several hundred folios uniquely measuring 35 cm in height.



Modibbo Ahmadu Fufore Collection - March 2008

During 9-20 March 2009 I headed up a nine-person conservation team at Barde Lodge, Government House in Yola. We cleaned, stabilized, housed and boxed the collection prior to its transfer to historic Arewa House Kaduna, history research centre of Ahmadu Bello University.

Conservation Team members:

Hamidu Aminu Alkali, representing the Fufore Family

*Malam Musa Mohammad, Archivist, Arewa House – ABU, Kaduna

Uzoma Nwosu, Curator and Chief Conservator NCMM – Yola was unable to join the team as planned due to the upcoming emirate bicentennial celebrations but provided invaluable advice, counsel and moral support.

*Sa'adu Iya Yola, Technical Officer, Fombina Palace Museum, Yola

*Ahmadu Girei, Librarian, Trans Saharan Centre, University of Maiduguri

*Akachukwu Igu, Library Assistant, AUN, Yola

Iliya M. Amade, Aliyu Musa Yerima, and Zakari Tanko, National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Yola

(*Students in my August 2008 "Conservation in a Box" class).



Modibbo Fufore Conservation Team led by Michaelle Biddle

Prior to March 2009 Malam Musa Mohammad spent several months collating the MS and compiling a preliminary catalogue. This invaluable service enabled efficient foldering and boxing of the collection.

A preliminary survey of the collection indicated that each folio would need to be brush cleaned. Wrappers and boards would need vacuuming and brush cleaning. It was decided that traditional mends done with sewing threads would be left in place but adjacent pages would be protected by Tenjucho interleaves as necessary. Edge folds would be treated with a water alcohol solution prior to flattening. Tears and large lacunae were so pervasive that it was decided to focus on mending tears threatening text.



Many manuscripts suffered large losses. This loss is due to bodily fluids from a rodent's decomposition. Losses from dry wood termite infestation were more common.

Alhaji Sa'id Modibbo Ahmed's selection of the Guest Lodge as a treatment site was an inspired choice. We were able to confine cleaning activities, which was dirty, dusty work, to

the dining room and the lower sitting room. Once the manuscripts were cleaned the finishing work of foldering, page mending and boxing, was done in the upper sitting room which was maintained as a “clean” room.

At the end of the first week we found one cubic foot of materials that had been temporarily boxed with manuscripts having an active mold bloom. The manuscripts with an active mold bloom, approximately three cubic feet, were segregated and boxed separately and await further treatment. These manuscripts should not be cleaned until the mold is dormant. Due to health concerns the manuscripts that had been housed with the moldy ones, but were themselves not moldy, were cleaned outside under a shady tree.

As materials were brush cleaned, paper flags were inserted indicating pages were edge tears threatened text and therefore needed immediate mending. All work stations were set up adjacent to windows to take advantage of natural light when the electricity failed.



Brush Cleaning Fufore Manuscripts – dining room, Barde Lodge



Brush Cleaning Fufore Manuscripts – under an acacia tree, Barde Lodge



Page Repair Work Station – Upper Sitting Room, Barde Lodge



Portfolio - Folder Fabrication Work Station – Upper Sitting Room, Barde Lodge

All work surfaces were covered with large sheets of unprinted paper, to protect the tables and to provide a cushion for the manuscripts. At the end of each work day all work surfaces and manuscripts were covered with additional sheets of unprinted paper to provide protection against the harmattan.

It took over 800 work hours to complete the project. 370 manuscripts were cleaned, mended, foldered and boxed. An additional 30-50 were cleaned, mended and boxed. These latter manuscripts require collation and cataloging. Malam Musa Muhammad's cataloging of the entire collection should be completed by the end of May.



Modibbo Ahmadu Fufore Collection – March 2009

Materials used:

Sheep wool brushes
Battery operated Mini Vacuums
Surgical masks
Vinyl gloves
Unprinted paper

Swan Bottled Water pH 7.4

1:1 Swan Water: Methylated Spirits (85% Isopropynol) Solution

Paper tears mended with 1:11 Methyl Cellulose:Swan Water adhesive & Tenjucho 7 gsm tissue tinted with dilute Liquitex acrylic. Kizukishi 20 gsm layered for infills

Ink corrosion treated with Klucel G coated Tenjucho activated with methylated spirits

Reemay
Blotting Paper
Plexiglass sheets
Marble weights

Acid free photocopy paper for foldering and interleaving
E-flute board and acid free photocopy paper cartons for boxes
Adhesive used in box making – white glue “Bond All”

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