

## FONTES HISTORIAE AFRICANAE

An International Meeting held in Accra, University of Ghana, Legon, 28-31 January, 2002.

Report by Viera Pawlikova-Vilhanova, International Director of the FHA Project.

### *Participants*

#### *a) FHA national committees*

Belgian Committee: Jean-Luc Vellut

British Committee: Robin Law

Danish Committee: Ole Justesen

Ghanaian Committee: Reginald Fraser Amonoo and Irene Odotei

Slovak Committee: Viera Pawlikova-Vilhanova (International Director of the FHA Project)

#### *b) African scholars attending as observers*

Cameroun: Thierno Mouctar Bah

Mali: Ousmane Sow

Nigeria: Anthony I. Asiwaju

Senegal: Ibrahima Thioub

A USA-based Ghanaian scholar (Emmanuel Akyampong) attended as an unofficial observer for the American Association for the Publication of African Historical Sources.

*Publications*

Robin Law, the Chair of the British Committee tabled a list of FHA publications to date, comprising 24 volumes, with two further volumes forthcoming. It was noted that all volumes since 1990 had been published by the UK Committee. However, other national committees reported current publication plans, as follows:

*Belgium*

1. *Le prédications de Simon Kimbangu*, by J.L. Vellut.
2. *Mémoires du Capitaine Van Haverbeke*, by J. Everaert.
3. *Carnets de campagne de l'adjudant Jean-Joseph Cajot (1871-1897)*, by P. Salmon.
4. *Correspondance du Gouverneur Général Ryckmans*, by J. Vanderlinden.
5. *Corpus de documents sur l'origine de Lourenço Marques (Compagnie asiatique d'Anvers)*.

*Denmark*

1. *Danish documents on Ghana 1657-1754*, by Ole Justesen.

*Great Britain**Volumes in press:*

1. *Arabic Medieval Inscriptions of the Republic of Mali*, edited by Paulo Fernando de Maraes Farias. Forthcoming 2002.

*Volumes in preparation:*

1. *The History of Ashanti Kings and the Whole Country Itself: Agyeman Prempeh's Asante History*, edited by T.C. McCaskie &al.
2. *The Goggam Chronicle* (Ethiopia), by Girma Getahun.
3. *Al-ghayth al-wabl* (Political Writings) by Sultan Muhammad Bello of Sokoto (Nigeria), by Omar Bello.

*Projects with the FHA Committee:*

1. *Arabic Historical Literature among the Tuareg*, by H.T. Norris.
2. *Gonja Drum History*, by Jack & Esther Goody.
3. *Conquering the Nuer: Documents and Texts from the Pacification of the Southern Sudan 1898-1930*, by Douglas Johnson.

*Proposed Projects:*

1. *Correspondence of King Kosoko of Lagos*, by Kristin Mann.
2. *Lawson Family Papers (Aneho, Togo)*, by Adam Jones & Peter Sebald.
3. *Zulu Intellectuals and African Nationalism in Natal in the Inter-War Period*, by P. la Hausse de Lalouvière.
4. *Douala Petitions*, by Andreas Eckert.

*Russia:**Volumes in press:*

1. *The Comintern and Africa*. A volume of archival previously top secret documents.

*Volumes in preparation:*

1. *History of Tropical and Southern Africa in Documents*. In three volumes, vol. 1, 1870-1918; vol. 2, 1918-1960; vol. 3, 1960-2000. It contains, particularly vol. 1, previously unpublished documents mainly from Russian and African, but also from German, British and French archives, many in African languages. All volumes will be published in Russian; however, Russian colleagues are seeking the possibility of publishing at least one volume both in Russian and English.
2. *Documents in Swahili from German archives, 1888-1935*, by A. Balesin. A manual for students containing original sources and a study on sources, archives, etc.

*Slovakia:*

*Volume in preparation:*

1. Count Morice Benyowsky, *Sources Relating to his Activities on the Island of Madagascar kept in Great Britain, France, USA, Madagascar and Slovakia*. A two-volume critical edition of unpublished documentation, put together by V. Pawlikova-Vilhanova.

### *African participation*

a) The Ghana national committee, which had been non-operational since 1996, had now been revived.

b) In the case of African countries which do not have functioning Academies, alternative arrangements for their institutional representation in the project should be explored.

c) At the same time, contacts should be maintained with interested individual African scholars, including their attendance as participants or observers at international FHA meetings.

d) In the case of scholars from African countries without FHA national committees, it was noted that it was possible for them as individuals to make proposals through other national committees (works by African scholars had in fact been accepted for publication by the UK national committee), and that there was also the possibility of seeking recognition from the FHA international committee, in case the latter would have in future some resources to finance actual publication.

### *Priorities for future publications*

a) It was noted that the established policy of concentration on the pre-colonial period was not appropriate for some national committees, especially for the case of Belgium, where the bulk of source material related to the colonial period. A shift of emphasis has been also noticeable in the past years from Arabic and Ajami sources to European historical materials.

b) It was noted that actual publication was organized by the national committees, the International Director having only a coordinatory role, and recognised that the priorities of different national committees would inevitably vary.

c) The African representatives generally wished to see more emphasis placed on oral as well as written sources.

d) There are three categories of sources for African history that await publication:

—*I. Arabic and Ajami historical materials relating to Africa*

There are huge collections in many African countries. The Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Historiques Ahmad Baba (CEDRAB) in Timbuktu, Mali, contains some 14,000 Arabic manuscripts (a five volume handlist of the first 9,000 items has been published by the Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation). One of the largest private libraries in Timbuktu, the Mamma Haidara Memorial Library, houses over 6,000 volumes of manuscripts that the Haidara family has been collecting since the sixteenth century. The library rivals the Ahmad Baba Centre for the sheer volume of ancient material it holds. To this day, there remain about 60 private collections, ancient reminders of Timbuktu's once golden past as a centre of Islamic learning. Another important centre in Mali is Jenne. Many manuscripts are kept by *marabout* families. The problem is that they do not want to give them up, and some sell the manuscripts to foreign tourists. The policy is to conserve the manuscripts in their care.<sup>1</sup>

There are huge collections of Arabic manuscripts in other African countries as well, in the Nigerian National Archives, Kaduna, Senegal, Ghana, Cameroun, Niger, etc.

Thierno Mouctar Bah from Cameroon has recently published an Arabic manuscript, *Un manuscrit arabe sur*

1 John Hunwick notes that in August 2002 a symposium called 'Ink Road' was held in Mali with the objective of establishing an International Association for the Conservation of Arabic Manuscripts in Africa. A report on this will appear in a future issue of *SAJHS*.

*l'histoire du royaume Peul de Kontcha dans le Nord-Cameroun (XIXe-XXe siècle* (texte établi, annoté et commenté par Hamadou Adama & Thierno Mouctar Bah. Rabat: Royaume du Maroc, Université Mohammed V-Souissi, Institut des Études Africaines / Ngaoundéré-Anthropos, Université de Ngaoundéré, Cameroun. Série: Textes et Documents 8, 2001), and is preparing another volume.

—II. *Oral historical Sources*

Much research has been done in many African countries and many projects are still in progress, in Ghana (Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon), Senegal (Centre de Recherche Ouest-Africaine, l'IFAN Cheikh Anta Diop), Cameroun (Université de Yaoundé & Université de Ngaoundéré), Mali (Institut des Sciences Humaines, Département Histoire-Archéologie). The CERDOTOLA (Centre Régional de Recherche et de Documentation sur les Traditions Orales et pour le Développement des Langues Africaines) integrates all countries of its sub-region (Central Africa): Angola, Burundi, Cameroun, Congo, Gabon, Guinée Equatoriale, République Centre-Africaine, République Démocratique du Congo, Rwanda, São Tomé et Príncipe, Chad. It was founded in 1979 and its seat is in Yaoundé.

There are some collections of oral traditions ready for publication, e.g.:

Senegal: *Corpus de cartes historiques relatives à la Sénégalie*. Some 600 maps and a special text on the historical cartography of the Senegal river valley.

*Rapports dus à des administrateurs coloniaux français (XIXe-XXe siècle), consacrés à diverses régions sénégalaises.*

Mali: *Les biographies des personnalités célèbres du Mali.*

There is a considerable repository of facts and photographic documentation that merely requires publication.

—III. *European source materials related to pre-colonial and colonial periods.*

*Problems of dissemination*

a) It was noted that the limitations of distribution, and especially the high cost, of previous FHA volumes restricted their availability to scholars within Africa.

b) There was some discussion of the possibility of UNESCO purchasing FHA volumes in bulk for distribution to African institutions, but some scepticism was expressed about the likely effectiveness of UNESCO in such a role.

c) In the long run, Internet publication might resolve or at least reduce this problem, but given the current state of Internet access in Africa this would not be an effective answer for the foreseeable future.

d) It was agreed that the most effective approach to this problem was likely to lie in arrangements for co-publication between FHA National Committees outside Africa and local publishers in Africa. New directions should be also explored by the Fontes Committees, namely a closer association with ongoing work by African colleagues.

*Future of the project*

a) The International Director reported that the UAI had requested clarification of the intended duration of the project. According to Robin Law, Chair of the British Committee, the British Academy had raised similar concerns. It was agreed that the concept of 'completion' of the project of publication of source material for African history, or even of an agreed list of priority texts, was not applicable to a venture which was by its nature open-ended. Unless sufficient alternative outlets for source publication became operational (Internet publication etc.), there seemed little prospect of the FHA project in its current form becoming redundant in the foreseeable future.

b) It was noted that financial assistance provided by the UAI (and CIPSH) in the last few years did not support actual

publications, which were organized and financed through the national committees, but related solely to the organization of international meetings. It was agreed that such meetings were of great value in facilitating the exchange of information about activities and ideas about priorities not only among FHA Committees, but also between the FHA and other institutions involved in source publication, especially in Africa, in order to promote complementarity and avoid duplication of effort. The UAI was therefore requested to continue its support for such meetings; if the idea of an indefinite duration of the project caused difficulty, the UAI might be asked to continue its support for a fixed period of five years, with the possibility of renewal for further such periods, in the light of progress achieved and ongoing plans reported.

It was noted that some ways of financing African projects should be sought, i.e., some financial assistance should be provided by the UAI and/or CIPSH to support actual publications prepared by individual African scholars. According to the International Director, the publishing house of the Slovak Academy of Sciences could publish such volumes provided some financial assistance could be advanced by the UAI and/or CIPSH.

c) It was noted that the holding of the meeting in an African country had been successful in facilitating African participation, and agreed that the practice should be continued. Subject to continued UAI support, the next meeting should be held within two to three years, also in Africa, and preferably in a francophone country.

### *2001 Text Prize*

In November 2001, the African Studies Association (ASA) announced the winner of its 2001 Text Prize. The Text Prize honours the translator, compiler, or editor of the best critical

edition or translation into English of primary source material on Africa.

The winner was John Hunwick, the former International Director of the FHA Project:

— Hunwick, John (ed. and trans.): *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: Al-Saʿdī's Taʾrīkh al-sūdān down to 1613 and other Contemporary Documents*. Leiden: E.J. Brill 1999.

The honourable mention was:

— Winsnes, Selena Axelrod (ed. and trans.): *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea (1760) by Ludewig Ferdinand Romer*. London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy (Fontes Historiae Africanae New Series: Sources of African History, 3) 2000.

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NOTE BY JOHN HUNWICK, FORMER DIRECTOR OF FHA  
AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF ITS *SERIES ARABICA*

Although the UAI web site (<[http://www.uai-iaa.org/english/projects/proj\\_XXII\\_en.htm](http://www.uai-iaa.org/english/projects/proj_XXII_en.htm)>) states that the *Series Arabica* has only published four volumes, the last issue (9/10) of the FHA *Bulletin d'Information* (1984/5) lists numbers I-IX, though no number II is listed, and none was ever published. The list is as follows:

- I *Bayān wujūb al-hijra*, by ʿUthmān b. Fūdī, edited and translated by F.H. Elmasri; pp. xi, 194, 147 (Arabic text). Khartoum: Khartoum University Press / London: Oxford University Press 1978.
- III *Land in Dār Fūr: Charters and Related Documents from the Dār Fūr Sultanate*, translated with an introduction by R.S. O'Fahey and M.I. Abū Salīm; pp. xv, 165. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983. Arabic texts of

- the documents published as *al-Ard fī Dār Fūr* by the University of Bergen, Department of History, Middle East Section, Occasional Paper, no. 6.
- IV *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History*, translated by J.F.P. Hopkins, and edited and annotated by N. Levtzion and J.F.P. Hopkins. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1980.
- V *Sharīʿa in Songhay: the Replies of al-Maghīlī to the Questions of Askia al-Ḥājj Muḥammad*, edited and translated with an introduction and commentary by John O. Hunwick; pp. xv, 165, 48 (Arabic text). London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy 1985.
- VI *Muḥammad al-Qādirī's Nashr al-Mathānī*, edited and translated by N. Cigar; pp. lxxi, 320. London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy 1980.
- VII *Tombouctou au milieu du XVIIIe siècle d'après la Chronique de Mawlāy al-Qāsim B. Mawlāy Sulaymān*, texte arabe édité, traduit et annoté par Michel Abitbol; pp. xii, 85, 18 (texte arabe). Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose 1982.
- VIII *Voilà ce qui est arrivé: Bayân mâ waqaʿa d'al-Ḥāğğ ʿUmar al-Fûtī*, traduction et commentaire de Sidi Mohamed Mahibou et Jean-Louis Triaud; pp. 261, 58 (texte arabe). Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 1983.
- IX *Chronicles from Gonja: a Tradition of West African Historiography*, edited, translated, and commented upon by Ivor Wilks, Nehemia Levtzion and Bruce M. Haight; pp. xii, 258. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986.