



THE BRITISH LIBRARY ENDANGERED ARCHIVES PROGRAMME

A Comprehensive Inventory of Archives and Manuscripts in Jimma, Southwest Ethiopia (EAP1644)

I. Executive Summary

This project is a pilot survey and preservation initiative dedicated to identifying, documenting, and assessing the endangered manuscript heritage of Southwest Ethiopia. Conducted between July 2024 and July 2025, the project focused on surveying 100-110 manuscripts located in key heritage centers across the Jimma and Limmu Saqqa zones. Beyond its core documentation objectives, the project aimed to strengthen local capacities in manuscript stewardship and lay a strategic foundation for a future, large-scale digitization effort.

During the first phase (July to December 2024), the team successfully surveyed 50 manuscripts from three key collection centers namely the Abba Fajji Collection (located in Buyyo Mandisi village), the Sheikh Salih Hajj Badru Hajj Bushra Collection (in Atinago Province, Bontu Kebele), and the Shekkota¹ Hajj Jamal Ali Collection (in Dedo province, Sheki Town). This accounted for approximately 50% of the proposed survey target. The remaining surveys were completed during the second phase at the Shekkota Abba Jebal Center in Waro Kolobo. Fieldwork during this phase was supported by collaborative engagement with local custodians and tourism officials, alongside training sessions on preservation awareness. Active and consistent communication with the EAP team, particularly regarding reporting standards, metadata formatting, and survey scope, ensured that the project adhered to international guidelines. The digitization phase, initially considered, was deferred in

¹The term *Shekkota*, widely used across the Jimma area, is the plural form of *Sheikh* and is employed as a respectful designation for esteemed religious leaders. While *Shekkota* is commonly used in Jimma, regional variations exist, particularly in areas such as Wallo, where similar figures may be referred to as *Shekana*, *Shekufa'a*, *Shehochu/Shekochu*, or *Inna Sheikh*.

consultation with EAP advisors in order to focus efforts entirely on completing the manuscript survey component.

The second phase, conducted between December 2024 and July 2025, enlarged the scope of documentation and completed the remaining target, bringing the total number of manuscripts surveyed to 114. This included 12 manuscripts from the Abba Fajji Collection, 40 from Shekkota Hajj Bushra's collection, 15 from Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali's holdings, and 47 from the Shekkota Abba Jebal Center in Waro Kolobo. The documentation process focused on comprehensive inventory work, noting titles, authors or scribes, themes, dates, script styles, binding formats, and current preservation status. Training sessions were conducted across the Jimma Zone to raise awareness about the preservation and conservation of manuscripts and archives. These sessions engaged representatives from the tourism office, local heritage experts, and families who serve as custodians of the collections. Practical, site specific training was also provided at three key locations namely Atinago Province, Bontu Kebele (120 km from Jimma), Saqqa C'oqorsa (9 km from Jimma), and Sheki Town (22 km from Jimma). These sessions focused on manuscript handling techniques, storage practices, and basic conservation methods using locally available materials, and were well attended by caretakers, community leaders, and stakeholders from the surrounding areas.

Despite limited climate control and inconsistent storage conditions, the fieldwork proceeded with minimal logistical challenges. However, on site observations revealed an urgent need for conservation, as many manuscripts exhibited signs of insect damage, ink corrosion, and paper deterioration. Thus, these physical vulnerabilities exacerbated by ongoing environmental pressures shows the critical importance of immediate preservation efforts. In response, the project developed a metadata framework to support future digitization activities, identified the most at risk materials for prioritized treatment, and recommended the initiation of a large scale preservation and digitization initiative.

The outcomes of this pilot survey project affirm the steadfast commitment of both the research team and local stakeholders to the preservation of Ethiopia's endangered manuscript heritage. The active and enthusiastic participation of community custodians has laid a strong foundation for a sustainable, community-driven

preservation model. Accordingly, the project addresses both the feasibility and the urgency of continued intervention, recommending immediate actions such as large-scale digitisation, improved storage infrastructure, and expanded training programs to ensure the long-term accessibility of these invaluable collections. Phase One concludes with the successful fulfillment of all stated objectives and presents a clear road-map for scaling up preservation efforts through strategic partnerships, coordinated planning for a future major digitisation initiative, and deeper regional engagement.

Moreover, the Jimma region was deliberately selected as the focus of this pilot due to its long-standing reputation as a center of Islamic learning, manuscript culture, and religious scholarship in southwestern Ethiopia. Historically, Jimma benefited from a dynamic convergence of trade, religion, and environmental factors that nurtured literary production. Strategically located along three major trade routes eastward via Harar and Zeyla, northward via Massawa to the Arab world, and inland through Sudan to West Africa the region connected local scholars to broader intellectual and Sufi networks, including the Sāmāniyya and Tijāniyya orders, the latter arriving via Bornu-Nigeria. Economically, Jimma flourished through coffee production, fertile land, and a favorable climate, all of which sustained both agriculture and long-distance trade. Religious scholars frequently engaged in commerce themselves, with some preacher-merchants, locally known as *nagadēwoch*, becoming vital to both spiritual and economic life. This unique interweaving of economic vitality and religious scholarship fostered an environment where Islamic intellectual traditions and manuscript production thrived a legacy that continues to live on in family-held collections and community archives.

Last but not least, this project would not have been possible without the generous support of *the British Library Endangered Archives Programme* and *the Arcadia Fund*, whose Pilot Project award made this important work a reality. We gratefully acknowledge their contribution. Special thanks are due to the EAP team particularly Dr. Ruth Hansford and Jody Butterworth for their meticulous guidance, timely feedback, and the invaluable resources and standards they shared throughout the project. We also extend sincere gratitude to the *Dar al-Fikr Foundation* for hosting the project and effectively managing the funds disbursed by *the British Library and Arcadia Fund*. Appreciation is also due to our partner institutions, *the Bilal al-Habesh*

Community Museum and *the Jimma Town Tourism Office*, for their continued collaboration. Most importantly, we warmly thank the custodians of the collections for their generous cooperation, granting us access to their manuscripts, permitting sample digitisation, and expressing enthusiastic support for future full-scale digitisation initiatives. We further acknowledge the contributions of family members, community representatives, zonal and provincial tourism bureau experts, administrators, and individual informants, whose support and engagement were essential to the success of this pilot project.

II. Project Context, Objectives, and Fieldwork Insights

Jimma, located approximately 352 kilometers southwest of Addis Ababa (the capital city of Ethiopia), is one of the administrative zones within the Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia. Geographically, it is bordered to the south by the Southwest Ethiopia Peoples' Region officially established on November 23, 2021, after splitting from the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (specifically from areas including Kaffa Zone); to the west and northwest by Ilubabor Zone; to the east by West Shewa Zone; and to the southeast by the Omo Zone, also formerly part of the SNNPR. The zone lies at approximately 7°40'0" North latitude and 36°49'59" East longitude. Afan Oromo is the dominant language, spoken by 90.43% of the population. Notably, even among non-Oromo residents, 5.33% reported Afan Oromo as their first language. The remaining 4.24% of the population reported speaking other languages such as Amharic, Gurage, and Yemsa, mainly due to the area's multi-ethnic composition and historical trade connections. In terms of religion, Jimma is predominantly Muslim, with 85.65% of the population adhering to Islam. Orthodox Christianity is the second most practiced faith, accounting for 11.18%, while the remaining 2.97% follow other religious traditions (Central Statistical Agency (CSA, 2007).

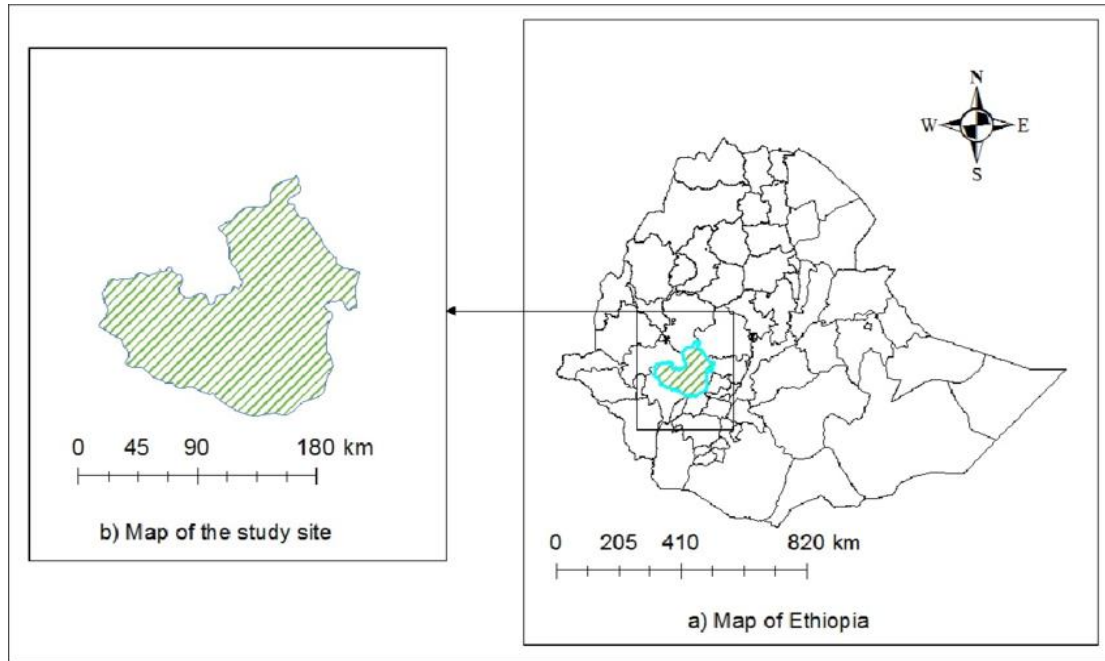


Fig 1: Map of the Study area²

Islam took firm root in Jimma in the early nineteenth century, when Abba Ĵifar I (r. 1830-59) united the warring Digo and Badi clans and invited Muslim traders, saints, and jurists into his newly consolidated kingdom (Abir 1968: 89). Although his own conversion by the itinerant preacher Sheikh ‘Abd al-Ĥakīm appears to have been politically pragmatic (Hassen 1990: 157; Lewis 2001: 41), it opened the court to Islamic influence and created space for mosque construction, Qur’ānic schooling, and the appointment of *Qāḍīs* to adjudicate family law. The process accelerated under Abba Boqa (1859-61), who ordered mosques in every *Qoro* district and endowed the celebrated *Masġid Afurtāmā* (“Mosque of the Forty”) in Jiren- nearby Jimma for the clerics he had settled there (Gemeda 1993: 72; Tadesse 1993: 36). By the long reign of Abba Ĵifar II (1878-1932), Jimma had eclipsed Limmu-Ennarya as the commercial and intellectual hub of the Gibe region, attracting scholars fleeing persecution in Wällo and students from Illubabor, Arsi, Bale and beyond (Endalew 2007: 53, 57).

These developments fostered a vibrant literary culture in the region. Qur’ānic schools (*kuttāb*) proliferated, and advanced circles produced commentaries in Arabic and *Afrabic* (Afan Oromo in Arabic script also known by *Ajemi*). The *Shāfi’ī* school of

² Credit: GADM maps and data: <https://gadm.org/>

jurisprudence introduced predominantly by Wällo scholars dominated, though a smaller *Ḥanaḥī* constituency traced its pedigree to Sheikh ‘Abd al-Ḥakīm (Endalew 2007: 52). Royal patronage extended to *Waqf* land grants that sustained teachers and copyists, ensuring a steady output of devotional texts, secular manuscripts, and personal correspondence. By the early 20th century Jimma was reputed as “the foremost center of Islamic learning predominantly for all Oromo and other ethnic groups in the Horn of Africa” (Hassen 1990: 159).

Furthermore, Sufi brotherhoods played a pivotal role in the region’s intellectual development. The *Qādiriyya* order was the earliest to establish a presence, followed by the Tijaniyya, which was initially introduced by Sheikh al-Ḥājj Yūsuf upon his return from Mecca after receiving initiation. Its expansion was subsequently reinforced by the West African scholar and mystic Sheikh Aḥmad al-Faqīh al-‘Umarī, who emerged as a key figure in the propagation of the *Tijaniyya* order across western Ethiopia during the early 20th century (Endalew 2007: 64; Ishihara 2010: 83; Trimmingham 1959: 236). Operating from rural *Zāwiyas* endowed by the crown, these orders blended orthodox instruction with ecstatic *Dhikr*, healing practices, and regional pilgrimage networks across the southwestern Ethiopian region particularly in Jimma and Benishangul area. Their lodges functioned as cultural way-stations, transmitting Arabic literacy, *Ajami* poetry, and hagiographic lore while adapting Islamic norms to Oromo social realities evident, for instance, in Jimma’s permissive stance on veiling and local beverages (Goshu 1970: 43). Thus, from the strategic Islamization under Abba Jifar I to the intensified spread of the Tijāniyya order in the 1920s, Islam in Jimma developed into a vibrant intellectual tradition, marked by the growth of Islamic scholarship, manuscript production, and the consolidation of Sufi literary practices.

Jimma’s manuscript and archival landscape is strikingly diverse, demonstrating the region’s long-standing role as a center of Islamic teaching and learning. Collections range from single-volume shrines, such as the *Tanbīh al-anam* codex at Abba Arabu’s sanctuary, to sizeable repositories holding dozens of codices in Arabic and Afan-Oromo *Ajami* scripts. Typical genres include Qur’ānic exegesis, *fiqh* compendia, *madh* poetry, herbal medicine, astronomy, and legal licences (*ijāzāt*), emphasizing a curriculum shaped by the *Shāfi‘ī* (and to a lesser extent *Ḥanaḥī*) traditions introduced

during the nineteenth-century Islamisation of the Gibe states (Regourd 2014; Hassen 1990: 52). Several centres such as Qubba Shekkota Abba Jebal near Waro Kolobo (47 manuscripts) and the Warukko *Zāwiya* in Gummyi (34 manuscripts) also preserve family histories and correspondence, revealing the intertwined nature of religious scholarship and local governance.

As part of the pilot initiative undertaken under the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP1644), this project set out to identify, document, and assess a targeted number of endangered manuscript collections located in the Jimma Zone of southwest Ethiopia. With the goal of surveying between 100 and 110 manuscripts, the project ultimately succeeded in documenting 114 manuscripts drawn from four historically and culturally significant collection centers. These included 12 manuscripts from the Abba Fajji Collection in Buyyo Mandisi, 40 from the Shekkot Hajj Bushra Collection under the custodianship of Sheikh Salih bin Hajj Badru bin Hajj Bushra in Atinago (Bontu Kebele), 15 from the holdings of Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali in Dedo, and 47 manuscripts from the Shekkota Abba Jebal collection in Waro Kolobo. Each collection offered unique insights into the region's Islamic literary tradition, including theological, astronomical, grammatical, and poetic texts, as well as family histories and legal certificates.

To carry out this work, the project team followed a methodology consistent with EAP guidelines, combining structured field visits, on-site inspections, and photographic documentation of each sample manuscript. Standardized survey forms were used to record descriptive metadata, while physical condition assessments helped determine levels of preservation and risk. Consent and contextual information were gathered through interviews with local custodians and family members, many of whom have played inter-generational roles in preserving these materials. Training sessions were also integrated into the fieldwork process, delivered both in Jimma Town and at the collection sites themselves. These sessions engaged tourism officers, members of custodial families, and other local stakeholders, with the aim of increasing awareness of archival care and promoting sustainable preservation practices at the community level. Fieldwork locations included Atinago (Bontu Kebele), Saqqa Coqorsa, Sheki Town, and Dedo District areas known not only for their historical significance but also for their continued role in maintaining Jimma's manuscript heritage.

3. Mapping and Survey of Collection Centers

In addition to the four key collection centers selected for detailed inventory and documentation, this project identified seven additional manuscript and archival repositories during the preliminary fieldwork phase across Jimma and its surrounding districts. These collection centers were excluded from the current documentation due to resource constraints and prioritization based on vulnerability. Nevertheless, they represent a rich cultural heritage that deserves further preservation attention and future inclusion in a comprehensive digitization plan.

The first center is the *Jimma Abba Jifar Government Museum*, established in 1973 and located in Jimma town. It holds significant historical artifacts from the reign of King Abba Jifar II, including royal wooden objects, along with fourteen Arabic manuscripts and a unique calligraphic Qur'an poster written in micro-script. While relatively secure within a government institution, the manuscripts still require professional cataloging and climate-controlled preservation.

The second center is the *Qubba of Sheikh Abd al-Hakim*, situated in Tirinyi village near the palace of Abba Jifar II. This shrine and family manuscript collection is associated with the 19th century preacher and missionary Sheikh Abd al-Hakim, credited with the Islamization of Jimma. The center holds thirty-six manuscripts, some dating back to the Sheikh himself, with others added over generations by descendants and affiliated scholars. Despite its spiritual importance and annual visitation by pilgrims, the manuscripts are kept in unstable conditions vulnerable to humidity, insects, and mishandling.

The third center is the *Sheikh Nasir b. Sheikh Jamal Family Collection*, located in the small town of Yachi Guma. This collection, consisting of approximately thirty-four handwritten texts, mainly includes panegyric poetry (*madīh*) and was inherited from a scholarly lineage. The materials are dispersed across living quarters and religious spaces, with no formal storage system, rendering them susceptible to damage.

The fourth center is the *Qubba of Warukko Family Collection*, located in Quda Qunaco village in Gummayi District. This site, which includes a *Zawiya*, mosque, and saint's tombs, is both a religious and educational hub. It preserves thirty-four

manuscripts written in Arabic and *Ajami*, reflecting the family's adherence to the *Shafi'i* school and affiliations with the *Qadiriyya* and *Sammaniyya* traditions. Though respected locally, the collection is not maintained under conservation protocols and is exposed to natural and human threats.

The fifth center is the *Collection of Sheikh Ahmad b. Sheikh Bushra*, found in Ganjo Abbayyi, Dedo District. Established by the current custodian himself, Shaykh Ahmad, the center contains seven manuscripts and several fragments covering topics like Islamic jurisprudence, Qur'anic interpretation, herbal medicine, and *Manzuma* poetry. While the custodian remains active in teaching, the texts are stored domestically without protective measures.

The sixth center is the *Quba Abba Arabu*, situated roughly 8 kilometers east of Jimma town near the Jiren hill. The site is believed to be connected to a saint from Az-Zaqāzīq, Egypt. It contains a single manuscript on *Waqf* law authored by Abba Bulgu Abba Cibbis. Due to its solitary and informal storage, the manuscript is highly vulnerable to loss or deterioration.

The seventh center is the *Shekkota Ellan Collection*, located in Ellan (Bosase District). Founded by Shekkota Ellan-Sayyidi Hajj Muhammednur Ahmed, a follower of the *Tijaniyya* order, the center presently holds fourteen manuscripts, including fragmented texts. The current custodian, Tajiddin Muhammedfatih, oversees both the religious site and the collection, though preservation remains minimal and informal.

Although these seven centers were not included in the current phase of inventory work, they nonetheless hold clear historical, cultural, and intellectual significance. Their future inclusion is vital to fulfilling the broader aim of this project; the safeguarding and revitalization of manuscript heritage across the Jimma region. Each of these sites, with its distinct historical narrative and valuable textual holdings, merits thorough documentation, professional preservation, and digitization before further deterioration or loss occurs.

In addition to these partially surveyed centers, several other family-based manuscript and archival collections were identified through community informants during the fieldwork. Due to time and budgetary constraints, the project team was unable to

conduct field visits to these sites. However, the information obtained indicates that these repositories contain a wealth of manuscripts and archival materials of religious, historical, and cultural value. These collections are highly vulnerable and warrant immediate scholarly attention. Accordingly, they represent strong potential candidates for inclusion in future phases of digitization, conservation, and documentation efforts in Jimma and its surrounding districts.

Among these prospective sites is Masjida Kebire Abba Ayuba, located in Coce Lammi kebele, approximately 47 kilometers from Jimma Town, known to preserve Islamic manuscripts and ritual items. Similarly, Shekkota Gumma, situated in Gumma district, is associated with a long-standing tradition of manuscript learning and religious scholarship. Shekkota Sidiqiyo, located in Sediqiyo kebele of Sokoru district, approximately 155 kilometers from Jimma, is said to preserve early Islamic texts of high significance. Another noteworthy site is Quba Sheikh Nasrallah in Cora Botor, about 118 kilometers from Jimma, which was also identified as a family manuscript center of importance. Lastly, the collection of Abba Mecha Abba Waji, located in Dedo district approximately 25 kilometers from Jimma, is believed to contain valuable religious manuscripts passed down through generations.

Although these centers were not visited or inventoried during the current phase, they offer promising opportunities for future research, preservation, digitization and community engagement. Incorporating them into subsequent project phases will be essential to achieving a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to the conservation of manuscript heritage in southwest Ethiopia.

3.1 Overview of the Surveyed Collections

This section presents a detailed of the four main manuscript and archival collection centers that were selected for detailed inventory under the current project. These centers were chosen based on their historical significance, the vulnerability of their holdings, and the urgent need for preservation. Each site was visited by the research team, and a total of 114 manuscripts were surveyed and documented. The collections vary in size, condition, and thematic content, reflecting the diverse religious, educational, and literary traditions of the Jimma region. Thus, the following overview provides key details on the location and manuscript count of each collection.

1. Shekkota Hajj Bushra Collection

The Shekkota Hajj Bushra collection, located in the province of Atinago in Bontu Kebele, Limmu Saqqa 120km away from Jimma Town, is one of the most intellectually and spiritually rich manuscript centers in the Jimma region. This extensive repository is associated with the prominent Islamic scholar and Sufi Sheikh, al-Hajj Bushra Ṭāhā Ahmad ‘Adnān Qāsim Hashimī al-Harariy ibn al-Sharīf ‘Abdul Aziz al-Gondarī, commonly known as *Hajj Bushra* or Shekkota Hajj Bushra. Born in 1301 Hijri and passing away in 1386 Hijri (roughly 1884-1966 CE), Sheikh Hajj Bushra is remembered as a towering figure in Islamic scholarship and spirituality. His long educational journey led him to study under esteemed scholars such as Sayyidi Abdu Shakur and Sheikh Yunus Darita in Saqqa, Lenca Bashir in Limu Kossa (specializing in Qur’anic studies), Sheikh Muhammad Abba Ruski (who taught theology and Sufi texts), and Hajj Mufti Siraj al-Jabarti in Addis Ababa (from whom he studied Hadith and its sciences).

His commitment to education and spiritual guidance led to the establishment of a well-known Islamic learning center in Cora Botor, near the Qubba of Sheikh Nasrallah. There, he taught for many years, nurturing generations of students from across the region. His spiritual influence was further shaped by his affiliation with multiple Sufi orders. He received the *Sammaniyya tariqa* from Sayyid Abdushakur, as well as seven additional Sufi orders including *Qadiriyya*, *Shaqbandiyya*, *Badriyya*, *Ahmadiyya*, *Shaziliyya*, and *Desuqiyya* from Sheikh Abdussamad al-Anniyi.

The center’s material heritage is equally significant. The collection composes 40 manuscripts, preserved within a broader set of 30 boxes of religious and cultural materials. Among them, three boxes contain traditional clothing, two hold prayer beads (*misbah*), while 25 boxes are dedicated to modern handwritten and old rare printed texts. Of these, four to five boxes contain fragmented manuscripts, and one box preserves texts in relatively good condition. Under the current custodianship of Sheikh Salih al-Hajj Badru al-Hajj Bushra, the center continues to function as a hub of Islamic learning, currently educating around 20 students from Jimma and Wallega in *Fiqh*, *Hadith*, Arabic grammar (*Nahw*), *Tafsir*, and comparative Islamic legal schools (*Madhahib*). The proximity of the tomb of Abba Ayyuba (Sheikh Nasrallah), a site of regional religious pilgrimage, adds further historical and spiritual resonance

to this manuscript center. The collection stands as a living archive of Southwest Ethiopia's Islamic educational legacy and a high-priority site for future digitization and conservation efforts.



Fig 2. A depiction of the fieldwork site during a sample image capturing session conducted by the researchers at the Shekkota Hajj Bushra Collection.



Fig 3. A sample image illustrating manuscript handling practices during sample image capturing activities at the Shekkota Hajj Bushra Collection.

The researcher is shown wearing protective gear, including a face mask and gloves, while working with categorized and prioritized manuscripts. The most endangered items have been identified, separated, and preserved in relatively good condition in preparation for current sample and future major digitization as well.

Physical Condition Assessment at Shekkota Hajj Bushra Collection

The Shekkota Hajj Bushra collection, located in Atinago, Bontu Kebele, is a significant center of cultural memory, Islamic education, and manuscript heritage. It is home to numerous handwritten texts, archival materials, and ritual objects that embody the intellectual and spiritual life of the local Muslim community. Despite its historical and cultural value, the collection is in a severely endangered state due to poor preservation conditions. Materials are preserved in a modest structure lacking

environmental controls, rendering them highly vulnerable to threats such as moisture, pests, improper handling, and fluctuating temperatures.

In line with the goals of the Endangered Archives Programme, this collection exemplifies the urgent need to document, digitize, and conserve vulnerable cultural resources before they are lost to neglect and decay. The current approach, while rooted in traditional knowledge and community rituals such as sun-drying manuscripts every three months cannot substitute for professional preservation practices. These practices include climate-controlled storage, digitization, the use of archival-quality materials, and preventive conservation strategies.



Fig 4. An illustration of demolished manuscripts due to poor preservation and conservation methods.

This image shows the severe deterioration of manuscripts caused by inadequate storage conditions. The fragmented and brittle state of the pages implies the urgent need for professional conservation efforts to prevent total loss. The damage visible here is likely due to prolonged exposure to humidity, pests, and improper handling.



Fig 5. A collection of fragmented, unbound manuscripts kept in a box.

The image shows a box filled with loose, unbound manuscripts, many of which are fragmented. The lack of proper binding or protective enclosures accelerates their degradation. Thus, this emphasizes the need for archival-quality materials, such as acid-free folders and boxes, to organize and preserve these documents.



Fig 6. A sample of manuscripts in endangered condition due to poor handling and preservation

Here, the manuscripts exhibit signs of wear, including frayed edges, stains, and fading ink. The poor handling during use and storage has exacerbated their fragility. Implementing gentle handling protocols and digitization could help preserve their content while reducing physical stress on the originals.



Fig 7. Sample of preservation and conservation methods

This set of images contrasts the current preservation methods, where manuscripts are stored in wooden and steel boxes alongside other material culture items. While the use of boxes is a step toward protection, the lack of climate control and proper padding inside the store leaves the manuscripts vulnerable to damage. The second image shows how the manuscripts are stored in close proximity to other artifacts, which may further contribute to their deterioration.



Fig 8. Multi-pocketed instruments for different colors and special writing instruments

This traditional writing tools, including *Madda* (ink) and *Qalem* (pen), alongside a multi-pocketed pen holder designed for four ink colors: red, black, green, and yellow. These tools reflect the rich tradition of manuscript production in the region and shows the artistic and scholarly practices of Shekkota Hajj Bushra in particular, and the community in the region in general.



Fig 9. Accessibility and usage of manuscripts during community gatherings

The first image shows a community member reciting *Madh* (praises of the Prophet Muhammad) during the *Hadra* (Sufi gathering for collective worship) ceremony held after Friday prayers. This scene reflects the enduring vitality of manuscript traditions, which continue to play a central role in religious and communal life. At the same time, the frequent handling of these manuscripts during such gatherings raises concerns about their long-term preservation, pointing to the need for strategies that balance accessibility with conservation. The second image portrays the custodian actively using a manuscript during the Friday sermon, indicating its continued function in religious leadership and education. The manuscript's presence in such settings affirms its cultural and spiritual significance, yet also draws attention to the physical deterioration that can result from sustained use.



Fig 10. Aerial View of the Shekkota Hajj Bushra Collection and Center (The manuscript repository is situated at the backyard of the mosque, in a modest, standalone building).

This aerial view offers a broader perspective of the collection's setting, showing the simple structure that houses these invaluable artifacts. The depiction underscores the disparity between the cultural significance of the collection and the modest infrastructure supporting its preservation. In this photo, the manuscript preservation is located at the backyard of mosque with minaret and is a small house located in the back of the mosque.

Moreover, the manuscript collection holds profound cultural and religious significance, serving not only as a historical archive but also as a living part of the community's spiritual and educational practices. However, the current preservation methods are inadequate to halt ongoing deterioration. Urgent collaboration with professional conservationists and heritage institutions is essential to introduce advanced preservation techniques, including climate-controlled storage, digitization, and the production of replicas for regular use thus protecting the originals while allowing continued community engagement.

Community involvement remains central to any sustainable preservation effort. Empowering local custodians through training in basic conservation practices and providing appropriate storage materials would enhance grassroots stewardship. At the same time, a thorough documentation and scholarly study of the collection could reveal valuable historical, linguistic, and theological insights, enriching both local and global academic discourses.

2. Abba Fajji Family Collection

Located in Buyyo Mandisi, near Saqqa Coqorsa 9km away from Jimma Town, the Abba Fajji Collection is a family owned manuscript repository that reflects the deep-rooted Islamic scholarly culture in this part of Jimma. The collection is maintained by the descendants of Abba Fajji (‘Abdurrahman), Abba Fit’a (‘Abdulhamid), Abba Jobir, Abba Dula, Abba Rebu, and Abba Magal a lineage revered for its royal family and religious authority and contribution to Islamic knowledge transmission. The current guardians, Ahmed Abba Fajji (son of Abba Fajji) and Maryama Abba Bor Abba Waji (wife of Abba Fajji), continue to protect and manage the collection.

The archive consists of 12 manuscripts, many of which were authored or copied locally and passed down across generations. These texts, covering areas such as Qur’anic interpretation, religious ethics, devotional practices, and possibly legal opinions (*fatāwā*) shaped by local Islamic jurisprudence. Though modest in size, the collection’s cultural value is substantial. As one of the few remaining family collection in the area, it reflects a longstanding tradition of community-based manuscript custodianship. The current custodians have expressed interest in preservation and collaboration. As such, the Abba Fajji collection is not only a

cultural treasure but also a viable candidate for immediate documentation, digitization, and public scholarship initiatives.



Fig 11. The current guardians, Ahmed Abba Fajji (son of Abba Fajji) and Maryama Abba Bor Abba Waji (wife of Abba Fajji).

Physical Condition Assessment of the Abba Fajji Family Collection

As discussed above, the manuscripts in this collection have been passed down from Abba Fajji to the current custodian. Currently, a portion of the manuscripts is stored in a wooden box, while the rest are loosely kept in a sack. The manuscripts stored in the box are somewhat intact, though signs of deterioration are evident due to prolonged exposure to temperature fluctuations and humidity. Some pages have become attached to each other, making it difficult to open them without causing further damage.



Fig 12. An illustration of manuscripts preserved in a wooden box at Abba Faji family collection

The manuscripts stored in the sack are in a much more fragile condition. They are unbound, poorly handled, and highly vulnerable to damage from rain, rodents, insects, and general environmental exposure. Without immediate intervention, there is a high risk of irreversible loss.



Fig 13. Manuscripts stored in a sack and vulnerable to environmental damage

This image illustrates manuscripts loosely stored in a sack, showing clear signs of deterioration caused by exposure to rain and other environmental factors. The manuscripts are unbound and at high risk of being damaged or destroyed by pests such as rodents, insects, and other animals. Their fragile condition implies the urgent need for proper archival storage and conservation intervention.

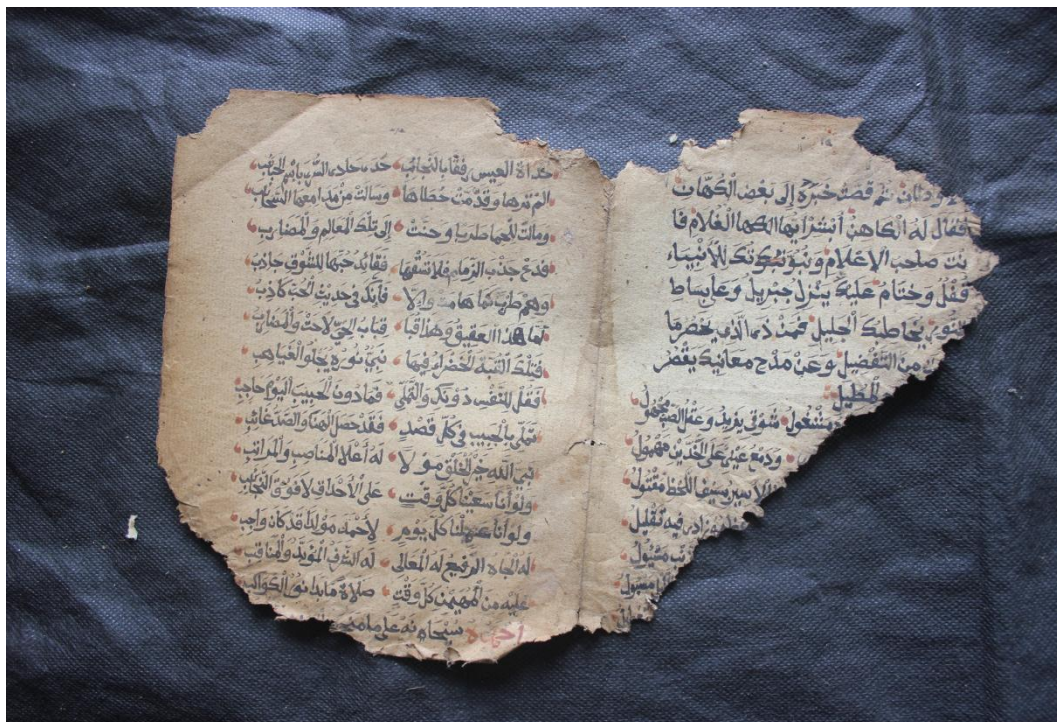


Fig 14. Fragmented Manuscript of *Madh* (in praising Prophet Muhammad) due to poor handling and storage

This image shows a severely fragmented copy of *Madh*, a result of inadequate handling and being stored in a sack without proper protection. The lack of binding, archival support, and environmental safeguards has accelerated its deterioration, underscoring the urgent need for preservation, conservation, and digitization efforts.

Therefore, in line with the principles of the Endangered Archives Programme, urgent action is required to preserve this valuable collection. This includes providing training on proper handling, professional conservation, improved storage conditions, and digitization to safeguard the manuscripts for future generations.

3. Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali Collection

The Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali collection, located in Dedo Katta/Sheki town, 22km away from Jimma Town is a family-owned manuscript library that preserves the scholarly legacy of Sheikh Ali, whose educational lineage can be traced to the Islamic learning centers in Dawe-Wollo, a renowned scholarly center. His son, Sheikh Jamal, and now Sheikh Mahmud Hajj Jamal (current custodian), have carried forward this legacy of religious education and manuscript transmission. The collection comprises 15 manuscripts, one of which is a rare fragment of an Afan Oromo vocabulary manuscript (in Arabic script) an important artifact for linguistic and cultural studies in the region.



Fig 15. Sheikh Mahmud Sheikh Jamal Sheikh Ali (the current custodian of Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali Collection)

The intellectual network surrounding this center remains active. According to oral accounts from the custodian, the neighboring center of Shekkota Ellani composed and shared a *Sira* (biography of the Prophet) manuscript, which is still recited during *Mawlid* sermons in Dedo. Furthermore, one significant *Tarikh/Sira* manuscript has been incorporated into the Hajj Jamal family collection through inter-household

manuscript exchange. The center adheres to the *Tijaniyya* Sufi order, renowned for its emphasis on inner purification, devotional chanting, and collective spiritual practice. Its custodians continue to host *Hadra* and *Mawlid* ceremonies in Dedo-Sheki town, making the site a vital hub not only for manuscript preservation but also for sustaining local religious education and spiritual traditions.



Fig 16. Researchers while capturing sample images from the Shekkota Hajj Jamal manuscript collection

Physical Condition Assessment of the Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali Collection

The Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali Collection, located in Dedo-Sheki town, is currently preserved in two separate houses. Approximately half of the manuscripts are stored on a shelf and are in relatively stable condition, thanks to some level of care. However, they remain vulnerable to natural factors such as humidity, temperature fluctuations, dust, and pests. Furthermore, many of these manuscripts continue to be used by the community during religious ceremonies and gatherings (*Hadra* and *Mawlid*), which

while reflecting their ongoing cultural relevance also increases the risk of deterioration due to frequent handling and lack of proper conservation practices.



Fig 17. illustration of manuscripts preserved on shelves at the Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali Collection

This image shows the portion of the collection stored on a shelf. Although this is a positive step toward organization, the lack of climate control, proper enclosures, and handling protocols still presents risks to the manuscripts' long-term preservation.

The remaining manuscripts are kept in a recently constructed house belonging to the current custodian, Sheikh Mahmud Hajj Jamal. Unfortunately, these materials are handled poorly. During our site visit, we observed manuscripts stored under foam mattresses and scattered in various locations without protective support. Such storage

conditions pose a serious threat to their physical integrity and call for urgent intervention.

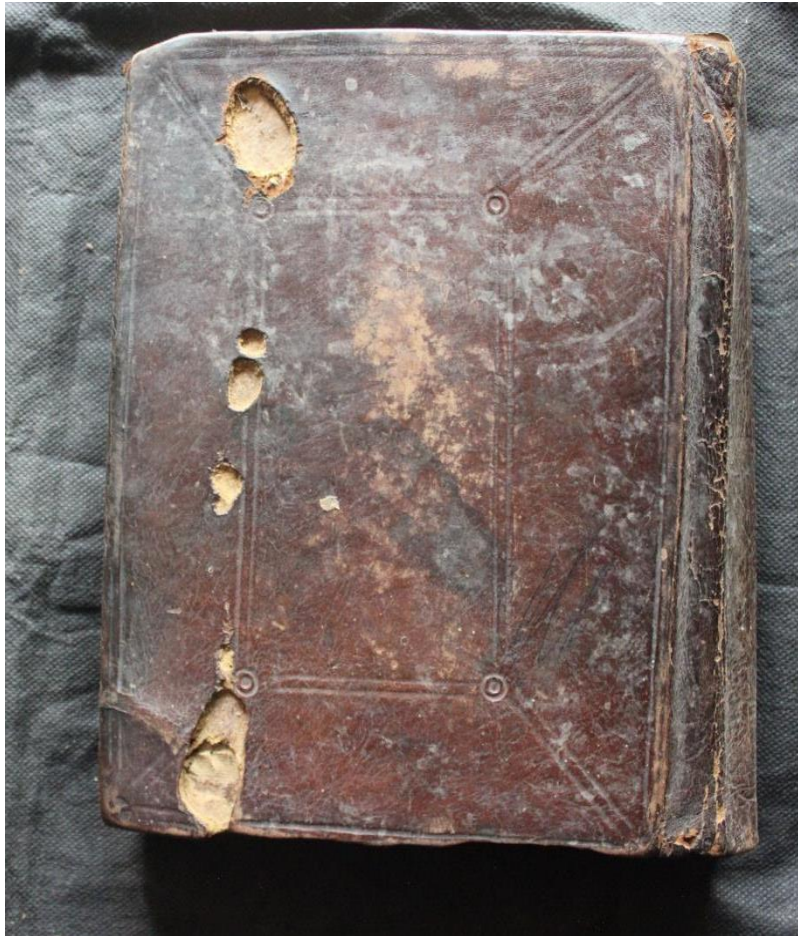


Fig 18. Indication of rodent damage to manuscript cover preserved at the Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali Collection

The image in this figure clearly shows a manuscript with its cover partially destroyed by rodents. This kind of damage is common in environments lacking pest control and secure storage. The compromised binding not only threatens the physical stability of the manuscript but also increases the risk of further internal deterioration. Such conditions emphasize the urgent need for pest management, protective housing, and regular monitoring as well as the importance of digitizing the manuscripts to ensure their preservation for future generations.



Fig 19. Endangered manuscript showing signs of fragmentation and page loss preserved at the Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali Collection

This image captures a fragile, unbound manuscript that is visibly losing pages and at high risk of fragmentation. The absence of binding and protective housing has left the manuscript structurally unstable, making it especially vulnerable to tearing, page separation, and eventual disintegration. Such conditions are typically caused by prolonged exposure to poor handling, fluctuating environmental conditions, and lack of preservation awareness.

Accordingly, this collection requires immediate measures, including training for custodians, improved storage infrastructure, and a systematic digitization effort to safeguard its historical and cultural value.

4. Shekkota Abba Jebal Family Collection

The Shekkota Abba Jebal family collection is located at the Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi (Shekota Abba Jebal) education center in Waro Kolobo, a village in Dedo District,

Jimma Zone. The collection is also referred to as *Qubba Shekkota Abba Jebal*, named after the shrine (tomb) located at the site. With 47 handwritten manuscripts, this is one of the largest collections surveyed during this phase of the project. The manuscripts are preserved in a wooden chest alongside a variety of old printed books, personal correspondence, *ijāza* licenses, and family histories. The texts span a broad spectrum of Islamic knowledge, from Qur’anic exegesis, Arabic grammar, and jurisprudence to Sufi teachings, devotional poetry, and even secular disciplines such as astronomy.



Figure 20. Partial view of the Shekkota Abba Jebal Family collection, setting current preservation conditions.

While some manuscripts are preserved in this box, others are simply placed in a sack without proper protection. Moreover, this collection is especially notable for containing rare works authored or copied by Sheikh Abd al-Hakim b. Kabir Salih, a prominent 19th century Islamic scholar and a key figure in the Islamization of Jimma. The presence of such works elevates the scholarly significance of the site. In addition to manuscripts, the center also functions as a living space of intellectual and spiritual life, where manuscripts are frequently consulted for teaching, ritual, and reference purposes. However, this daily use also exposes the collection to physical deterioration, underscoring the urgency of intervention through digitization and conservation. The Shekkota Abba Jebal family collection at Waro Kolobo center represents not only a repository of Islamic heritage but also an active site of cultural continuity and religious instruction.



Fig 21. The custodian, Abba Widad Shekkota Abba Jebal Abba Temam (right), pictured with the researcher (left) during a fieldwork visit to the manuscript collection center in Waro Kolobo, Dedo District.

The photo captures a moment of discussion on the historical significance of the collection, the custodian's willingness to collaborate on future digitization projects, and the ongoing challenges related to the preservation of the manuscripts preserved at the site.



Fig 22. A sample image depicting the external condition of a manuscript titled *Qāsim Sharḥ Abī Shujāʿ* (Islamic legal text), preserved at the Shekkota Abba Jebal Collection in Waro Kolobo, Dedo District.

The image illustrates physical wear and deterioration caused by pest damage (likely from rats or insects) and poor handling common issues affecting materials stored under traditional, non-climate-controlled conditions.

Physical Condition Assessment at Shekkota Abba Jebal Collection

At the Shekkota Abba Jebal Collection, manuscript preservation and conservation are primarily carried out using traditional, community-based methods. According to the custodian, manuscripts are typically stored in enclosed wooden or wooden shelves alongside printed books to protect them from dust, light, and physical damage. Routine maintenance is the responsibility of the custodians, who regularly clean and air out the manuscripts to minimize the risk of mold growth and insect infestation particularly during the rainy season when humidity levels are high.

For manuscripts that show signs of damage, custodians employ indigenous conservation techniques passed down through generations. These include the use of powdered mixtures made from wheat and *teff* flour, believed to strengthen fragile

folios, and a traditional adhesive substance composed of soil and mud to bind torn pages or covers.



Fig 23. An image showing the internal condition of the manuscript *Faṭḥ al-Wahāb Sharḥ Manḥaj al-Tullāb* (Arabic grammar, 224 folios), showing termite damage. The manuscript is preserved in poor condition.

The manuscript is partially fragmented, unbound, and maintained using traditional conservation methods, including the application of cash crop powder and soil-based materials.

3.2 Typologies, Languages, and Scripts

The surveyed manuscript collections in Jimma namely those of Shekkota Abba Jebal, Shekkota Hajj Bushra, Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali, and the Abba Fajji family represent a

rich depositary of Islamic intellectual, spiritual, cultural and educational heritage in southwestern Ethiopia. These collections encompass a wide range of textual genres, including theology (*‘aqidah*), Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Arabic grammar (*nahw* and *ṣarf*), astronomy (*Ilm al-Falak*), and Sufi chains of transmission (*ijāzāt* and *silsila*). In addition to these, a notable component of the archival material includes historical letters, legal certificates, endowment records, and documented exchanges between prominent local scholars and regional political authorities, materials that offer a rare glimpse into the interface between religious and political spheres in the region. The collections of Shekkota Abba Jebal and Shekkota Hajj Bushra, in particular, contain several such archival documents that testify to the roles played by scholars as intermediaries, advisors, and recipients of gifts from local rulers and even foreign emissaries.

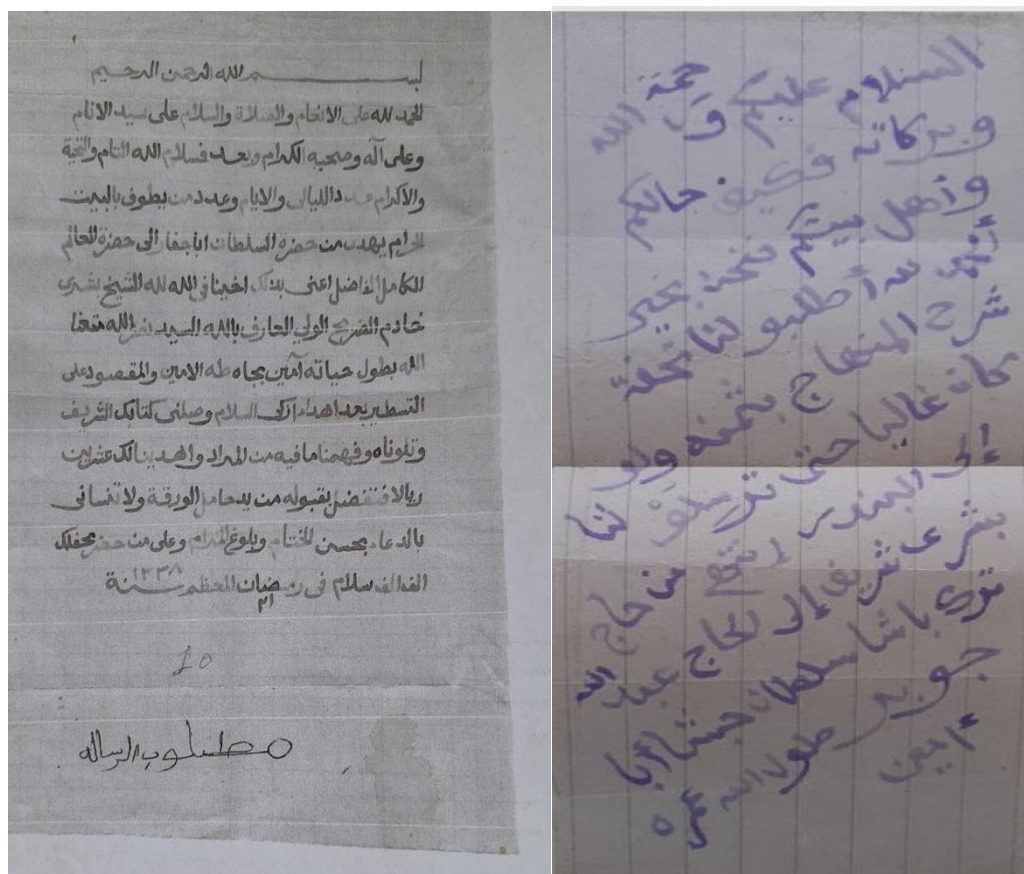


Fig 24: Sample letters from the Shekkota Hajj Bushra Collection, reflecting correspondence between Sayyid Bushra and the royal family of Abba Jifar II (r.1878-1932).

The first letter, dated 20 Ramadan 1337, was sent by Sultan Abba Jifar II (r.1878-1932) to Sheikh Hajj Bushra in response to an earlier request, acknowledging it with a

gift of 20 Ethiopian birr. The second letter, authored by Sayyid Hajj Bushra, was addressed to Sultan Abba Jobir (reigned 1932, was the last kingdom of Jimma), requesting assistance in obtaining and sending him a copy of the book *Tuhfa*. These letters demonstrate the close intellectual and political ties between Sayyid Hajj Bushra and the ruling elite of the Jimma kingdom, indicating the integration of scholarly and royal networks in early 20th century southwestern Ethiopia.

Moreover, linguistically, the majority of the manuscripts are written in Arabic, utilizing both the classical calligraphic styles and local handwriting traditions. Some portion is also composed in Afan Oromo using the Arabic script, commonly known as *Ajami*. This dual linguistic presence reflects both the deep roots of Arabic literacy in Islamic scholarship and the adaptation of script to local languages to ensure broader accessibility and pedagogical relevance.

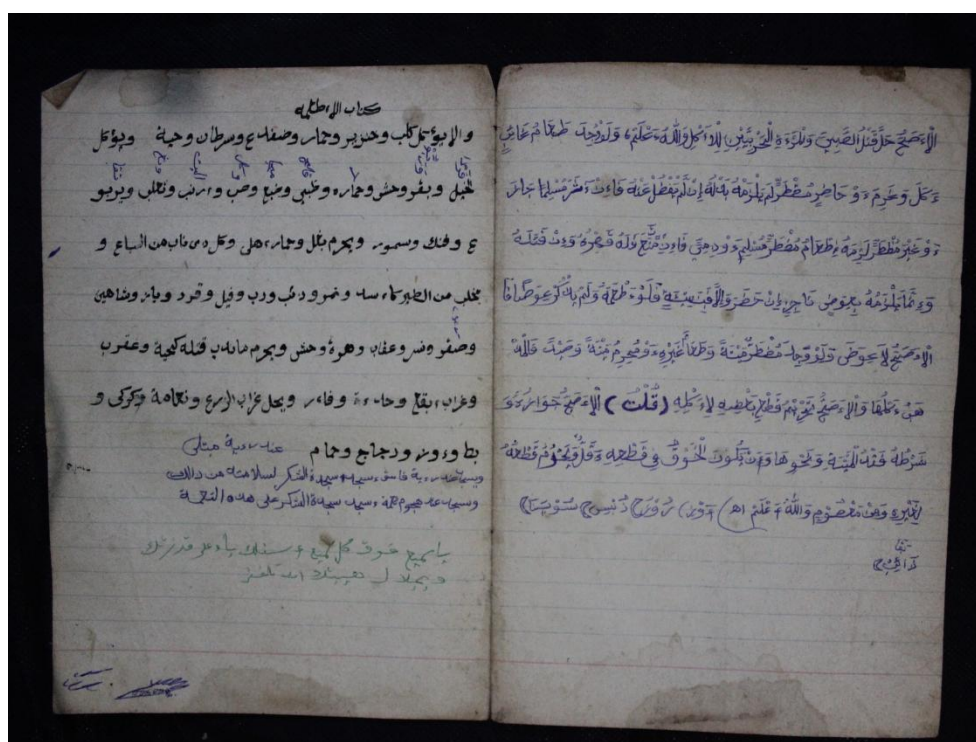


Fig 25. *Ajami*-Afan Oromo vocabulary sample from the Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali Collection.

This illustration shows a rare vocabulary list written in Afan Oromo using *Ajami* script. Likely used for educational purposes, it indicates how local scholars supported Islamic learning by translating key Arabic terms into the vernacular.

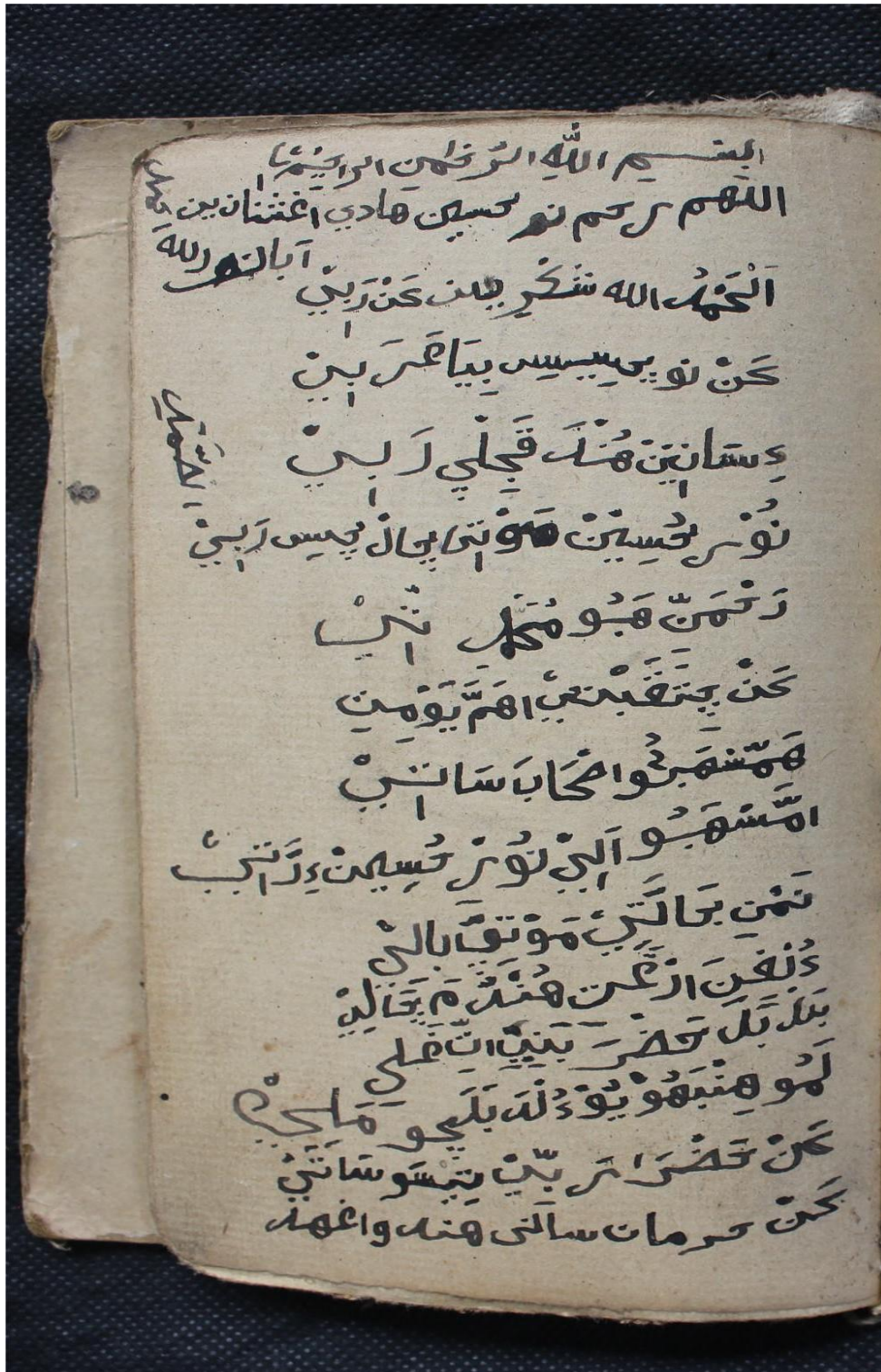


Fig 26. A Sample of Afan Oromo *Ajami* manuscript in praise of Sheikh Hussein of Bale- Horn African Saint, preserved in the Shekkota BushracCollection

This image presents a rare and culturally significant example of Afan Oromo written in *Ajami* script (Arabic script adapted for the Oromo language). The manuscript is dedicated to the praise (*madh* or *Istigathah*) Sheikh Hussein of Bale- a well known

Horn African Saint and reflects the deep devotional and poetic traditions cultivated in the region. Such manuscripts were often recited during religious ceremonies like *Mawlid* and *Hadra*, demonstrating the integration of local language, spiritual expression, and Sufi identity. In this regard, the use of *Ajami* not only illustrates the localization of Islamic knowledge but also affirms the community's agency in preserving and transmitting Islamic teachings in their native tongue.

Another noteworthy manuscript from the Shekkota Hajj Bushra collection shows the religious and moral virtues of coffee. Written in Arabic, it reflects the cultural and spiritual importance of coffee in the region, blending religious praise, Sufi reflection, and local values. Its existence points to the integration of economic life centered on coffee cultivation and trade with religious and literary traditions. In Jimma, where coffee holds economic and ceremonial significance, such manuscripts reveal how local livelihoods inspired scholarly expression and enriched the region's manuscript culture.



Fig. 27: A sample of an Arabic manuscript on the virtues of coffee, preserved in the Shekkota Hajj Bushra collection.

Moreover, the surveyed manuscripts span a broad chronological range, with some dating back to the early nineteenth century (see Fig. 28), a period that coincides with the reign of Abba Jifar I (r. 1830-1859). His efforts to consolidate the Jimma kingdom included inviting Muslim traders, saints, and jurists, laying the foundation for a flourishing Islamic manuscript culture in the region. This period marked a turning point in the region's religious and intellectual landscape. In addition to these early works, the collections include personal notebooks, marginalia, and certificates from more recent decades, reflecting both the continuity of manuscript use and the evolving nature of Islamic scholarship in the area.

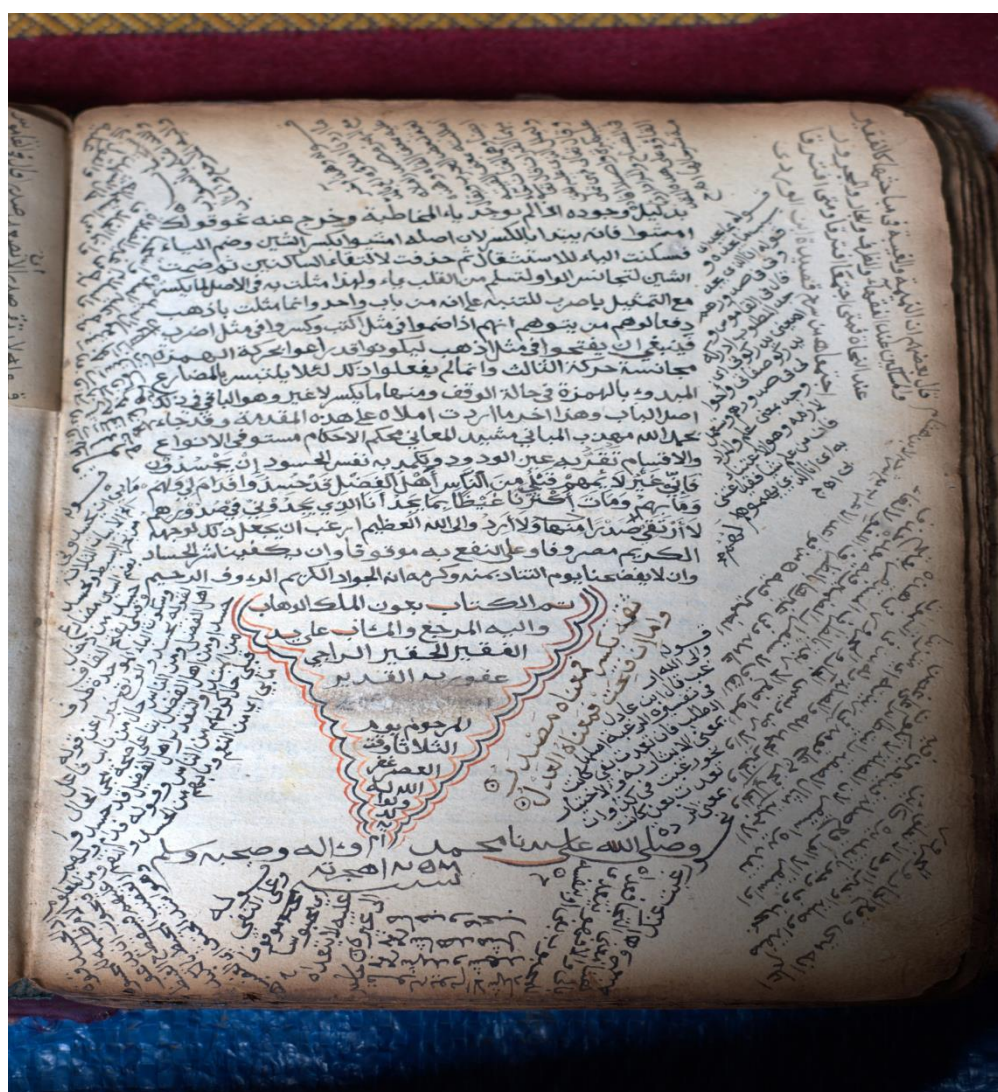


Fig. 28: 19th century manuscript of *Sharḥ Qaṭr al-Nadā* preserved in the Shekkota Abba Jebal collection.

This classical Arabic grammar text, authored by Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī, comprises 160 folios and is dated 1256 AH (1840/1841 CE). It offers a detailed commentary on

foundational grammatical principles and exemplifies the scholarly engagement with Arabic linguistic sciences in southwestern Ethiopia.

Moreover, the educational function of these collections is especially evident in the variety of written forms present. In both the Shekkota Hajj Bushra and Shekkota Abba Jebal collections, one finds a considerable number of handwritten notes, instructional texts, and rare booklets that were integral to local learning systems. These documents were often unbound and used in various teaching settings. In contrast, poetic compositions, particularly those intended for religious ceremonies such as *Mowlid* celebrations are more prominent in the Abba Fajji and Shekkota Hajj Jamal collections. These texts, frequently written on modern paper and sometimes decorated with color, were designed for public recitation during gatherings like *Hadra* and *Mawlid*, demonstrating both devotional creativity and performative tradition.

Each collection also carries a distinct identity shaped by its institutional role. The Shekkota Hajj Bushra and Shekkota Abba Jebal collections are most renowned for their longstanding roles in Islamic education and transmission of knowledge, serving as centers for learning that trained generations of students. In addition to this, the Shekkota Hajj Jamal collection, while containing valuable manuscripts, is better known as a center for hosting religious events, particularly *Mawlid* celebrations and *Hadra* gatherings. Furthermore, the Abba Fajji family collection is primarily known for its ceremonial use, with manuscripts frequently employed during communal rituals and recitations. Notably, the manuscript *Mukhtasar Tanbīh al-Anām* (focuses on praising Prophet Mohammed) is often featured in such events, reflecting its continued spiritual and performative relevance within the community. During our field visit to this collection center, the custodian requested that a manuscript be retrieved from a neighboring household, as it had been temporarily borrowed for use during a *Mawlid* ceremony held there.

Beyond textual heritage, these centers also preserve significant material culture. The Shekkota Hajj Bushra collection stands out for its extensive holdings of gifts and ceremonial objects presented by local communities, regional rulers, and foreign dignitaries. These artifacts range from personal items and ritual tools to imported goods and documents of political relevance. The collection includes both locally

produced and externally acquired items that were used in spiritual practice as well as everyday life.



Fig 29. Sample picture of material culture at Shekkota Hajj Bushra Collection

This material dimension enriches our understanding of the social and political networks in which the manuscript custodians operated. Similarly, the Shekkota Abba Jebal collection also holds valuable material cultural items, particularly those used in religious contexts, further underscoring the multidimensional role of manuscript heritage in this region. Thus, all surveyed collections present exceptional opportunities for deeper study, systematic documentation, and digitization, in line with the objectives of the Endangered Archives Programme, which aims to preserve not only textual traditions but the broader cultural ecosystems in which they are embedded.

4. Training and Awareness Initiatives for Collection Custodians and Local Communities

As part of the project, a series of training and awareness-raising initiatives were conducted to engage key stakeholders in the preservation and documentation of manuscript and archival collections. These activities were strategically designed to enhance local capacity, promote community engagement, and align preservation practices with international standards.

Awareness sessions were delivered to representatives of the Jimma Zone Tourism Office, focusing on the cultural significance of the surveyed manuscripts, their current state of vulnerability, and the urgent need for preservation, conservation, digitization, and the eventual establishment of a local museum to preserve these invaluable materials.



Fig 30: Awareness session by the researchers held at the Jimma Zone Tourism Office with local officials, addressing the cultural importance, fragile condition, and preservation needs of the region's manuscript collections.

A similar session was held for officials from the administrative and tourism offices of Atinago Province, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding the region's documentary heritage.



Fig 31: Awareness session by the researchers with officials from the administrative and tourism offices of Atinago Province, held at the Bontu Province Administration Office.

In addition, targeted training was conducted for local community members at grassroots levels, including religious leaders and elders, to promote awareness about the value of manuscript heritage and the practical steps required for its conservation. One such training took place at the mosques of Bontu Kebele, where discussions addressed the relevance of manuscripts to local identity, and inter-generational knowledge transfer.



Fig 32: Training and awareness session by the researchers held at the mosques of Bontu Kebele during Friday prayers, engaging local community members, including religious leaders and elders, on the importance of manuscript preservation.

Further sessions were arranged at specific collection centers with custodians and family members responsible for the care of manuscripts and archives. These included training in Atinago Province, Bontu Kebele (located approximately 120 km from Jimma), Saqqa C'oqorsa (9 km from Jimma), and Dedo/Sheki Town (22 km from Jimma). The training addressed practical aspects of preservation, including storage, handling, basic documentation, and environmental considerations. Therefore, these training and awareness initiatives have laid a foundational framework for sustainable manuscript preservation in the Jimma region. By involving both institutional stakeholders and local custodians, the project has fostered a sense of shared responsibility and strengthened the community's role in safeguarding their

documentary heritage. The knowledge and skills imparted during these sessions not only support the immediate goals of conservation and inventory but also contribute to the long-term cultural resilience and continuity of manuscript traditions in Southwest Ethiopia.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This pilot project has successfully achieved its core objective of identifying, surveying, and documenting 114 endangered manuscripts across four major collection centers in the Jimma and Limmu Saqqa zones. The project was meticulously planned and executed over a one-year period (July 2024-July 2025), combining fieldwork, community engagement, physical condition assessments, and metadata documentation in accordance with the objective of the projects.

The collections surveyed including those of Shekkota Hajj Bushra, Shekkota Abba Jebal, Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali, and the Abba Fajji Family collections. Manuscripts ranged in subject matter from Qur'ānic exegesis and jurisprudence to devotional poetry, astronomy, herbal medicine, and historical correspondence. Notably, there are texts were composed in Afan Oromo using *Ajami* script, reflecting the adaptation of Islamic knowledge to local linguistic and cultural contexts.

Despite the resilience of custodial families and the continued spiritual and educational use of these manuscripts, the collections are gravely endangered. Field observations revealed widespread deterioration due to insect damage, ink corrosion, humidity, improper storage, and handling. These conditions pose a serious threat to the survival of these materials.

Importantly, the project also delivered community-based training and awareness initiatives, engaging tourism officials, religious leaders, and custodians through site-specific sessions. These trainings helped to build local capacity for manuscript care and stimulated broad interest in preservation work. The collaborative spirit between the research team, community stakeholders, and the Endangered Archives Programme was vital in ensuring the project's success and compliance with EAP's standards.

Above all, this pilot survey has laid a strong and strategic foundation for a major projects of digitization and conservation initiative, and offers a scalable model for community-driven preservation in the region.

Moreover, building on the accomplishments of this pilot survey, and in alignment with the goals of the Endangered Archives Programme, the next phase of the project should prioritize the plan of a major digitization initiative. Immediate digital preservation of the most vulnerable manuscripts is essential to prevent further deterioration. This effort should include high-resolution imaging, standardized metadata creation, and long-term access via open platforms such as the EAP digital repository. Digitization will not only secure the content of these endangered materials but also reduce the physical handling of fragile originals and significantly enhance access for both academic researchers and local communities.

In parallel, improving physical preservation and storage infrastructure must be addressed. Many of the manuscripts are currently preserved in wooden chests, sacks, and domestic environments lacking climate control or protective enclosures. The provision of archival-quality materials such as acid-free folders, insect-proof boxes, and humidity control mechanisms is crucial. Where feasible, the establishment of localized manuscript repositories or small heritage museums would enhance preservation and allow for safer community engagement with the materials.

Equally important is the scaling-up of training and capacity-building efforts. While the pilot phase delivered effective introductory workshops, the next phase should incorporate more advanced and hands-on training modules for custodians, heritage staff, and community stakeholders. These modules should cover topics such as digital archiving, preventive conservation techniques, environmental monitoring, and metadata management. Building local expertise will ensure the sustainability and continuity of preservation efforts beyond the project life-cycle.

Another key recommendation involves the documentation of additional manuscript centers identified during the pilot phase. Seven important repositories were located but not surveyed due to time and funding limitations. These centers contain materials of clear historical and cultural value, and their inclusion in the next phase is critical for a more comprehensive understanding of the manuscript landscape in Jimma and

its surrounding areas. Mapping and preserving these collections would also support heritage policy development and community-based conservation strategies.

To ensure long-term sustainability, the project must also deepen institutional and governmental partnerships. Collaboration with Ethiopian universities, national and regional heritage institutions, and cultural bureaus will be essential in garnering support, sharing resources, and integrating manuscript preservation into broader cultural policy frameworks. Advocacy and awareness campaigns should also be pursued to secure governmental endorsement and potential funding support.

As a next step, the successful completion of this pilot survey under EAP1644 provides a solid foundation for the next critical phase of a major digitization project. Based on the findings and recommendations of the current initiative, we are now preparing a comprehensive proposal for submission to the Endangered Archives Programme. This forthcoming major project will focus on the large-scale digitization, preservation, and accessibility of the most endangered manuscripts identified in this survey. The groundwork laid by this pilot through meticulous documentation, community engagement, and condition assessment has not only demonstrated the feasibility of such an undertaking but has also confirmed the urgent need for intervention. With continued support from the EAP and in collaboration with local custodians, institutions, and heritage authorities, the proposed major project aims to safeguard the documentary heritage of Jimma for future generations, while advancing international access to one of Ethiopia's richest and most understudied manuscript traditions.

Appendix: Inventory

As discussed in the main body of the report, the project set out with the goal of surveying between 100 and 110 manuscripts. Ultimately, it succeeded in documenting a total of 114 manuscripts from four historically and culturally significant collection centers. These include 12 manuscripts from the Abba Fajji Collection in Buyyo Mandisi, 40 manuscripts from the Hajj Bushra Collection under the custodianship of Sheikh Salih Hajj Badru in Atinago (Bontu Kebele), 15 manuscripts from the Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali Collection in Dedo-Sheki town, and 47 manuscripts from the Shekkota Abba Jebal collection in Waro Kolobo. Accordingly, the detailed inventories of each collection are presented in the sections that follow.

Appendix: Inventory of Surveyed Manuscripts and Archival Collections

I. Inventory of the Shekkota Hajj Bushra Collection

NO.	Name of the collection	Name of the custodian	Title	Author of the manuscript	Date	Scope and content	Language and script	Physical description
1	Hajj Bushra Collection	Sheikh Salih Hajj Badru Hajj Bushra	Umdat al Salik wa Uddat al Nasik	Ibn Naqib	Late 19 th c.	Fiqh Jurisprudance	Arabic	98 FF. This is well spread text in traditional school for the study of fiqh. The text endowed to Sheikh Bushra by certain Abba Bushra.
2			Fragments of Various Prayer and tawassulat on loose paper which did not bond together and not on proper lines. One-page poems entitled Hibat al Rahman composed in 1234/1818 AD.	Hajj Bushra	Copied in Early 20 th century.	Arabic literature	Arabic	The papers are not well prepared in standard size; it is various sizes. One page contains Gujarati handwriting. A poem composed in 1818 teaches basic Islamic creeds and prohibits cigarette or tobacco

3			Al- Umdat al Salik wa Uddat al Nasik	Ibn Naqib	1271/1854	Jurisprudenc e	Arabic	154ff. The colophon contains waqf statement by Dawud bin Muhammed in 1299 or 1300/1882
4			Poetry of Zubad, a book on jurisprudence	Ahmad ibn Raslan	19 th c.	Deductive poetry of jurisprudence	Arabic	21ff. Jurisprudence text used for memorization
5			Fiqh by unknown author	Unknown	19 th c.	Jurisprudenc e	Arabic	53ff. Incomplete but binded in a single manuscript.
6			Salawat and Afan Oromo Ajami on praise of Sheikh Hussien	Haj Bushra		Sufi literature	Arabic (Ajami)	35ff. it is praise of the prophet & saint Sheikh Hussein in Afan oromo in Arabic script
7			Collection of poems	By various composers such as Abu Bakar Aidarus of Yemen , Abdurahim al Burai	Copied 19 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	26ff. This includes about coffee and praise of great saints
8			Al-Siraj al wahhaj fi	Unknown	Late	History	Arabic	22ff.

			Ajaib al isra wa al-mi'raj by unknown author		19 th c.			It owned by Bushra bin taha
9			Tawhid and Salawat	Unknown	20 th c.	Creeds and literature	Arabic	54ff.
10			Awurad and Salawat Owned by a certain Abdurahman. It was copied by Muhammed Nur ibn Shaykh Ahmed al-Infrazi, in 1927 A. D	Unknown	1927	Azkar and Sufi literature	Arabic	172ff.
11			Various fragmented Tawassulat	Hajj Bushra	Early 20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	It contains tawassulat to Hajj Adam, Abba Arabu, Sayyid Nasrallah, Nur Hussein. It contains also Ijazat of Sheikh Bushra in al- Qadiriyya order and genealogy of Sayyid Sharafadin of Dagar and various tawassulat written by Sheikh Bushra
12			Virtue of month of Rajab and	unknown	20 th c.	Virtue of Islamic	Arabic	18ff. This shows how people respect the

			Tawassulat			month		month of Rajab.
13			Tawassulat bi-asmaillah al-husna and Salawat by Sheikh Ali al-Jabarti	Sheikh Ali al-Jabarti and Hajj Bushra	19 th c.	Sufi literature, genealogy and ijazat	Arabic	18ff. Some poems composed by sheikh Ali Gondar
14			Umdat al-Salik wa uddat al-nasik by ibn Naqib	Ibn Naqib	19 th c.	Jurisprudence	Arabic	85ff. it is well spread text book of Shafi mazhab in Ethiopia
15			Tawassulat of Sayyid Nasrallah Allahumma irham nasrallah	Muhammad Shafi	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	7 ff.
16			Dua and Awurad	Unknown	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	29 ff.
17			Tawassulat bil Awuliya, Sheikh Hussen and others in Arabic and Afan Oromo	unknown	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Mixed (Arabic and Afan Oromo/Aj ami)	The paper are not well arranged
18			Miscellaneous fragmented collection notes	Haj Bushra and others	20 th c.	Praise of the Prophet, jurisprudence	Arabic	101 ff. They are fragmented papers and

			including salawat			e,		compose many title. One of its title is Mimiyya fi al rutab aliyyah
19			Qur'an	Unknown copyist	19 th c.	Qur'an	Arabic	232ff. The binding, ink making, and handwriting are very helpful for local bookmaking studies
20			Tawhid al Asha'riyyah,	Unknown	20 th c.	Creeds of Islam	Arabic	6ff.
21			Tawassulat to Abba Ayyuba,	Hajj Bushra	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	18ff. Praise of Hajj Nasrallah, and other notes which seem to be a sermon of Jum'a prayer.
22			Traditional Herbal and Majic	Unknown	20 th c.	Traditional medicine	Arabic	251ff. It is written in poor Arabic which shows its local contribution.
23			Incomplete book of Fath al- Habasha	Arab Faqih	Late 19 th C.	The conquest of Abyssinia- History of Ethiopia in 16 th century	Arabic	70ff. It is not completed. The beginning and the end are missing. This shows local circulation and use of Fath al- Habasha.
24			Hagiography and Tawaasulat to	Hajj Bushra	20 th c.	Local hagiography	Arabic	24ff. The text is not well written but, it

			Sayyid Nasr - Allah					tells some miracles that performed by Nasra Allah and the first place that he stations in limmu Innaria-Jimma zone
25			Matn mulhaṭ al 'irab	Usman al-Hariri	20 th c.	Arabic grammar	Arabic	80ff. It is well known Arabic grammar text for beginners.
26			Ilm al- Nujum	Jamal al-Din Al-Anni	20 th c.	Astronomy	Arabic	8ff. The writing date is in 19 th c. but the copying is 20 th c. This is an introductory text to astronomy written by well-known local scholar (From Wollo), Jamal al- Din al Anni and copied
27			Fragments of notes: tawassulat and other	Some works written by Haj Bushra	20 th c,	Sufi literature	Arabic	Many local and non-local saints were mentioned. The text is left unbonded which causes for disappearance of some text.
28			Tanbih al-Anam	Abd al-Jalil Al Qayrawani	20 th c.	Sufi literature.	Arabic	234ff. The text is well spread in Ethiopia and read on all Sufi gatherings in group.
29			Qur'an	Qur'an by	18 th c.	Qur'an	Arabic	273ff.

				unknown copyst				The first part is well decorated which is useful for the study of local art.
30			Fragmented Traditional medicine and Majic	unknown	19 th c.	Majic	Arabic	133ff. It is mainly on Qur'anic verses which known as Ruqya and combines also Majic type.
31			incomplete text of Mawlid	Unknown	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	63ff. It imitates mawlid books such as Barzanj and Munawi.
32			Tanbih al-Anam	Abdul jalil al-Qayrawani	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	231ff.
33			Tanbih al-Anam	Abdul jalil al-Qayrawani	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	157ff.
34			Tanbih al-Anam	Abdul jalil al-Qayrawani	19 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	191ff. It contains ownership notes by Bushra Taha Ahmed Ali Nur Qasim Hashim Basha Sharif Abdulaziz.
35			Fragmented Tawassulat bi Sayyid Nasrallah	Hajj Bushra	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	308ff. Various notes. Not well-organized papers.
36			A commentary text	Hajj Bushra	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	26ff. It has ownership notes: owned by

								Suada, bin Sheikh Taha bin Ahmed bin Nuraddin bin Ali bin Qasim ibn Sharif Yaqub.
37			Al-Siraj al Wahhaj fi Ajaib al isra wa al-mi'raj	Faqih Hijazi ibn Ali al- Misri	20 th c.	Virtue of month of Rajab	Arabic	20ff. It seems rare manuscripts.
38			Tanbih al-Anam	Abdul jalil al-Qayrawani	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	110ff. It contains ownership notes by a person from Toba namely Imam.
39			Quran	Unknown copyst	19 th c.	Qur'an	Arabic	It contains nice decoration which help for local art.
40			Small Qur'an	Unknown copyst	19 th c.	Qur'an	Arabic	142ff. The first part of the manuscript is well decorated.

II. Inventory of the Abba Fajji Family Collection

NO	Name of the collection	Name of the custodian	Title	Author of the manuscript	Date	Scope and content	Language and script	Physical description
1	Abba Fajji Collection in Buyyo Mandisi	Ahmed Abba Faji and Maryam Abba bor Abba waji	Manzumat Asmaallah al-Husna Alzu kalami al-mar	Said al-Muqahtari al-Bagdadi	1375H	Sufi literature	Arabic	28ff. The book owned by Abba Jihad Abba Macha Abba Dula Abba Rebu (Royal family of Jimma Kingdom)
2			Tawassulat to abi al-hassen	unknown but copied by Abba Jihad	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	28ff. It praises Faqih Ahmed Umar, a saint from Nigeria who settled in western Ethiopia and spread Tijani order
3			Samar al-Jannat fi madh sayyid Ali al-Gondari and Madh of Sayyid Abd al-Hakim	unknown	19 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	18ff. Other scholars of Jimma also mentioned in this praise.

4			-Hizb al Sayfi -Hizb al-Mugni -Hizb al- Bahar -Jaliyat al-Kadar	Various	20 th c.	Sufi Literature	Arabic	14ff. Modern paper It contains Tijani Awrads and Azkar
5			Poems praising the prophet in Afan Oromo	unknown	20 th c.	Sufi literature in Afan Oromo	Ajami/Afan Oromo in Arabic script	28ff.
			Abu Layth in Hanafi jurisprudence	Abu Layth, Nasr ibn Muhammad al- Samarqandi	20 th c.	Hanafi jurisprudence	Arabic	59ff. Owned by certain named Ali bin Muhammad al Gisha. It is interesting to find Hanafi text in Shafi dominant area.
7			Jami' al- Asrar wa al- Anwar fi al- Salat ala Annabiyyi al-mukhtar	Ibn Yrakan? Chuluq (The name is not clearly legible)	1380H/1960	Sufi literature	Arabic	53ff. It was owned by Abdallah Yusuf of Wollo and copied in 1380H/1960.
8			Al-Buradat ashafiya	Sayyid ala ba, Sayyd Bushra of	19 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	11ff. It contains also

				Gata				virtue of reading this Dua and Salawat
9			Hizb al- Nasr	Abi al Hasan al-Shazili	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	9 ff. It is not completed.
10			Tanbih al-Anam	Abduljalil al-Qayrawani	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	Covered by very old leather
11			Part of Qur'an ajza	Qur'an	19 th c.	Qur'an	Arabic	Owned by Sittina bint Shanta wife of Abba Rebu
12			Miscellaneous fragmented notes	Unknown	19 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	It contains part of praise for Aba Mahmud and mention also Sheikh Hashim and sheikh Ali Gondar

III. Inventory of the Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali Collection

NO.	Name of the collection	Name of the custodian	Title	Author of the manuscript	date	Scope and content	Language and script	Physical description
1	Shekkota Hajj Jamal Ali Collection	Sheikh Mahmud Hajj Jamal Ali	Zubdat al-Kharidah ala al-Yaqutat al-Faridah,	Al-Nazifi And copied in Jimma in 1348H	20 th c.	Hagiography of Ahmad al-Tijani written in poetry. It also contain introductory verses of Alfa Hashim and Qasida of Baya bin Ahmad	Arabic	40ff. This manuscript was copied from a printed book.
2			Burda	Al-Busiri	19 th c.	Sufi Literature	Arabic	23ff. The text was commented by the reader.
3			-Bad'atu bi zikrillah madhan muqaddaman -Ahaqu ibadillah bil majd wal ulaa -Samara al- Suud fi nashr zikr qamar al wujud -other poems	Al- Taraifi Copied by unknown in 1375H	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	132ff. It is a collection of Qasidas by various scholars local and non-local

4			Al- irshadat al- Rabbaniyya bi al futuhat al ilahiyya ala matn al hamziyya	Sheikh Ali	20 th c.	It is commentary on Hamziyya of Busiri	Arabic	133ff. The <i>Hamziyya</i> is a widely circulated <i>qasida</i> . This commentary shows its presence in educational institutions, extending beyond its recitation during special events.
			Various praise poems	Sheikh Ahmad al- Tijani	1394H			
			-Durar al la a'li completed in 1394 -Riyad al muna fi madh Sayyid abna al azal -Takhmis qasidat qawl al haq by Sayyid Sulayman bin Mahmud al Tijani	Sayyid Sulayman al Tijani				
5			Ibkar al afar Tkhmis al Qasida al Taraifi	Abi Abd allah Abdulkarim Dirgam al Taraifi (853)	19 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	35ff. This text is well spread in Ethiopian traditional Islamic school and taught to students interested in Madih. It is

								not completed.
6			<p>Tawassulat</p> <p>Various notes</p> <p>Matn al Zubad by Ibn Raslan</p> <p>Qissat al mawlid al nabawiyyat</p> <p>Various qasidas</p>	Unknown but various works	20 th c.	Sufi literature, jurisprudence and various notes	Arabic	<p>96ff.</p> <p>Modern paper. One of the Tawassulat is about Ahmad Tijani and his family and disciples.</p>
7			Alfiyyat ibn Malik	Ibn malik	Late 19 th c.	Arabic grammar	Arabic	<p>45ff.</p> <p>Completed and bind in a single manuscript</p>
8			Qasida aby Shekota Ellani	Shekota Elleni	1389 H.	Sufi literature	Arabic	<p>22ff.</p> <p>it was copied by Muhammad Nazif bin Muhammad Tayyib in 1389 H.</p>
9			Hamziyya	Al-Busiri	20 th c.	Sufi literature		<p>21ff.</p> <p>The Qasida is sung in various</p>

								gathering.
10			Bab al Wusul Ila nayl jami al-maqasid fi tarjamt Abi ligab	Unknown	20 th c.	Local Biography	Arabic	51ff. Biography of Faqih Ahmad Umar al Tijani
11			Salawat in prose and various Qasida	Unknown	20 th c.	Salawat	Arabic	55ff. It is a type of Salawat that is used among Tijanis
12			Sharh al- talkhis al Miftah	Sa'ad al- Tafatanzani	1331H	Arabic rhetoric	Arabic	135ff. Well written, bonded and completed in 1331 by the hand of Ahmed Sheikh Usman Abbinas
13			Miscellaneous including Awfaq and notes	Unknown	20 th c.	Various subjects	Arabic	119ff. It appears to be a daily notebook, not for recording activities, but for noting down

								information
14			Miscellaneous	Unknown	20 th c.	Various topic	Arabic	It also discusses the Mawlid celebration and how it was initiated based on the advice of his master.
15			Miscellaneous manzumah	probably for Shekota Elllani	20 th c.	Sufi literature	Arabic	It is a big text & bound in a single ms.

IV. Inventory of the Shekkota Abba Jebal Family Collection

NO.	Name of the Collection	Name of the Custodian	title	Author of the Manuscript	Date of copying	Scope and Content	Language and Script	Physical Description
1	Shekkota Abba Jebal Collection	Abba Widad Shekkota Abba Jebal and Sheikh Abdulmuin	Tanbih Al-Anam	Abduljelil Al-Qeyrawan	1419 H/1991	Salawat	Arabic	240ff; ownership: Hajj Abba Tamam bin Abil Fadl
2			Qur'an	-		Qa'ima (Fatiha-Tabarak)	Arabic	256 ff.
3			Kash al-Niqab	Al-Fakihi	1327H	Arabic grammar	Arabic	98 ff; copied in 1327H.
4			Fath al-Wahab	-	1349H	Fiqh, 4 th Volume	Arabic	240ff.
5			I'rab Mulhatu al-I'rab	-		Grammar	Arabic	123ff. Copiest name: Ahmed Nur At-Tijani bin Hajj Yusuf
6			Fath al-Wahab Sharh Manhaj al-Tullab	-		Arabic grammar	Arabic	224ff; Damaged by termite
7			Mulhat al-I'rab	-			Arabic	18 ff.
8			Untitled Fragments	-		Fragments	Arabic	-
9			Kashf Al-Niqab	Al-Fakihi		Notes on Hajj Yusuf	Arabic	116ff.
10			Kitab Ra'ihat al-Jannat Bisharh Ida'at adojuunat	-		-	Arabic	145ff; Copied at Mosque of Shonke, Wollo
11			Nazzih al-Tarf	-		Poems	Arabic	8ff.

		Firiyad al-mani					
12		Two Compiled Manuscripts	-	1392H	1. Defense of Tijani Order; 2. Du'ai	Arabic	78ff; Date of copy:1392H.
13		Al-Fawa'id al-Diyaiyya	-	1342H	-	Arabic	246ff copied for Hajj Yusuf Khalifa
14		Five Compiled Texts	Multiple	1269H, 1271H	Sufism, Adab, Azkar	Arabic	560 ff; Dates incl.1269H, 1271H
15		Compiled Manuscripts	Multiple		Fiqh, Tawhid, I'rab, Hadith	Arabic	46ff; Cover restored
16		Sharh Qatr al-Nada	Abu Abdallah al-Ansari	1257H.	Grammar	Arabic	160ff.
17		Qasim Sharh Abi Shuja'	-		Shafi'iy Fiqh	Arabic	262ff; Written in Aggaro & Ganda Wajjo
18		Fath al-Wahab	-		Fiqh	Arabic	241 ff; Waqf
19		Fath al-Wahab	-		Fiqh	Arabic	110 ff.
20		Untitled <i>Manzuma</i>	-		Praise of the Prophet	Arabic	42 ff.
21		Untitled	-		Biography of Sheikh Ahmed al-Tijani	Arabic	4 ff.
22		Fath al-Aqfal	-		Explanation of Lamiya	Arabic	168 ff; Purchased 1938H
23		Ilm Al-Falak	-		Astronomy	Arabic	12 ff.
24		Untitled	Probably al-Jawzi		Virtue of Ethiopia	Arabic	38 ff; Not compiled
25		Nasr al-Durar wa Bath al-Zahr	Abba Jabal b. Abdulkarim		Biography of Sheikh Ahmed Attijani	Arabic	18 ff.
26		Kitab filsalat 'ala Kheyri al-bariyah	-		Salawat in Tariqah Tijani	Arabic	100 ff; Includes blank folios
27		Dua'i	-		Supplication	Arabic	16 ff; Not

						completed
28		Compiled Manuscript	-		Love Poetry & Astronomy (Jimma area)	Arabic 48 ff.
29		Al-Sirru al-Akbar wa Al-Nur al-Abhar	Hajj Ibrahim b. Hajj Abdallah al-Tijani		Sufism	Arabic 304 ff.
30		Muktasar al-Shafi	Al-Dumhur	1322H	-	Arabic 136 ff; Date: 1322H.
31		Dua'i and Salawat + healing	-		Herbal medicine	Arabic 58 ff; Not completed
32		Manzuma Tijaniyah	-		Praise of Tijaniyah Scholar	Arabic 266 ff.
33		Tawhid	Sheikh Abdulhakim b. Salih	1390H	Theology	Arabic 12 ff; Date of copy: 1390H
34		Compiled Manuscript	-		Various Titles	Arabic -
35		Sharf Latifal-musamat bigaw haratal-kamal	-		Explanation about the Prophet	Arabic 210 ff.
36		Untitled	-		About Mi'raj	Arabic 26 ff.
37		Al-Falak	-		Astronomy	Arabic 56 ff.
38		Untitled	-		Poems about Sheikh Ahmed al-Tijani	Arabic 44 ff.
39		Compiled Manuscript	-	1346H	Advice on Tariqah Tijaniyyah	Arabic 89 ff; copied at Shumkur Fara (shonke)
40		Compiled Manuscript	Sheikh Ahmed Al-Hadi		Biography of Al-Qurra' al-'Ashara & Tawasul	Arabic 24 ff; Many blank folios
41		Al-Nafhat Al-	Muhammed		Biography of	Arabic 82 ff

		Qudsiyya	Alwan		Sayyid Ahmed al-Tijani		
42		I'rab Al-Mulhat	-		Grammar	Arabic	70 ff.
43		Compiled Texts	-		Poems on Fiqh & Laylat al-Nisf Sha'iban	Arabic	34 ff.
44		Compiled Manuscript	Muhammed b. Sayyid al-Mukhtar		Poems & Notes	Arabic	270 ff.
45		Untitled	-		Notes on prose and poems	Arabic	4 ff.
46		Mahabbat Geyrallah	Sheikh Abdulhakim	1270H	-	Arabic	10 ff; Date: 1270H
47		Igathat al-Lahfan	-		About Ruhaniyyah	Arabic	-