

The Chukkunga Qur'an of Adamawa, Nigeria

The project had three aims:

- 1) Stabilize the Chukkunga Qur'an's ink corrosion and folio edge damage
- 2) Provide additional conservation training for four Nigerian nationals –
Malam Musa Muhammad, Archivist at Arewe House, ABU, Kaduna
Malam Ahmadu Girei, Librarian at Centre for Trans-Saharan Studies, University of Maiduguri
Akachukwu Iga, Library Assistant at American University of Nigeria Library
Aliyu Yerima, Technical Officer of Fombina Palace Museum, NCMM
- 3) Complete a codicological assessment of the Chukkunga

The stabilization of the Qur'an and conservation training took place 10-21 May, 2010, in Yola, Nigeria. Timing was critical. By early May the daily *harmattan* has ceased yet the daily torrential downpours of the rainy season, and the resultant very high humidity, have not begun. During spring 2010 whilst in the U.S., Biddle had purchased all supplies, cut materials to size for ease of packing and to maximize the work time available for the stabilization. Each and every procedure was timed from brush cleaning, ink corrosion paper (ICP) fabrication, to mending edge tears. Malam Musa made arrangements for workspace in Yola.

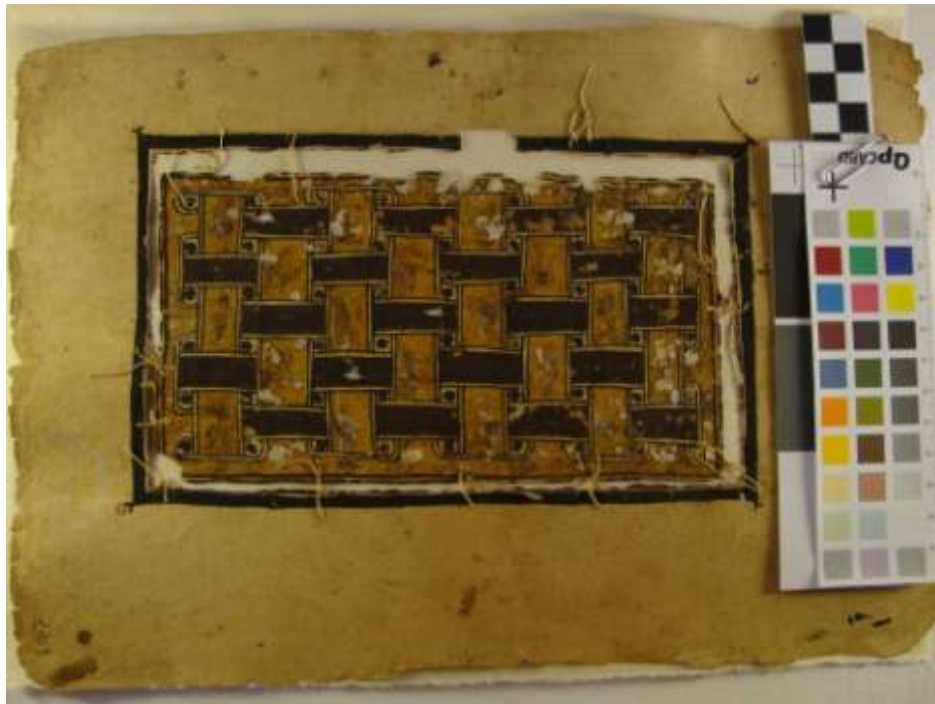
It was fortunate that there had been a preliminary run-through of procedures because Aliyu Yerima was appointed Director of the Sukur World Heritage Cultural Site in late April and therefore could not participate in the project. NCMM requested that Hassan Kasim, Technical Officer of Fombina Palace Museum, substitute for him. In addition, Akachukwu Iga, currently studying for a MA degree, found that his final exams conflicted with the project. Therefore he was able to participate only during the mornings of the second week. This left the project seriously understaffed. Head Librarian Martha Speirs, AUN Library, and my host, generously lent two enthusiastic library assistants for the project – Sunday Sambo and Abigail Dauba. Kasim, Sambo and Dauba had no paper conservation training and little familiarity with preservation basics, which meant there was unplanned-for, and continuous, training during the project. Whilst it is usual to start beginning students cleaning and repairing less valuable materials, these three started differently.

Malam Musa and Malam Girei collated the Qur'an and was found to be complete. Malam Girei paginated it and then they both selected the pages for ink corrosion treatment. All folios were brush cleaned. All participants made ink corrosion paper (ICP), a time consuming process, but it soon became clear that Kasim's ICP paper was superior due to the evenness and thoroughness with which he applied the adhesive (2% Klucel G in Nigerian bottled Swan Water pH7.4). He therefore made the majority of the ICP.



1) Iga and Kasim unrolling screening on top of the *sonegami tunjucho* paper. The *sonegami* is thin at 5gsm and takes considerable practice to be able to roll out the screen in without wrinkling the paper.

Approximately 300 pages were treated for ink corrosion, the majority of which had the ICP (activated by Nigerian Methylated Spirits “95% Isopropynol”) applied to both sides of each folio. ICP was not applied to pages with *zayyana* except in those few instances where *zayyana* were on both sides of a folio.

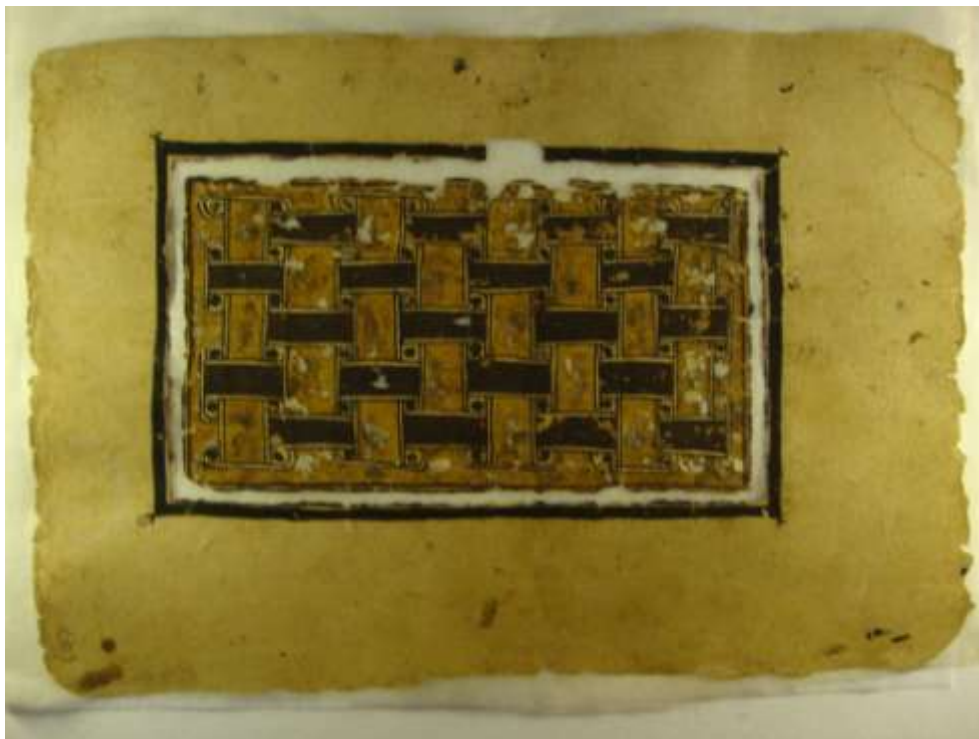


2) Page 647 - Before traditional mends were removed and ink corrosion paper was applied



3) Biddle removing traditional thread mends prior to applying ink corrosion paper

After Biddle demonstrated ICP application procedures, each of the project participants were given the opportunity to apply several sheets of ICP but, due to time constraints, Biddle applied the majority of the ICP.



4) Page 647 – Sewing threads removed and ink corrosion paper applied to reverse side.

Notice the impressions left by the thread along the lower edge of the border ruling.



5) Page 648 (reverse of page 647) – ICP applied but not yet trimmed



6) ICP applied to both sides of a folio and trimmed to its approximate original contours - as a reminder to viewers of this Qur'an's travails.

All of the participants engaged in mending each of the 700 folios' edge tears. Malam Ahmadu trimmed all ICP and edge mends.



7) Mohammed, Iga and Kasim mending edge tears.

The team was asked to make a presentation about the Chukkunga Qur'an Project to AUN faculty, students and staff on Thursday afternoon, 20 May. The audience was equally divided between ex-pats and Nigerians and all were impressed by the Chukkunga and the project. They asked many questions.



8) Kasim, Dauba, Girei, Biddle, Mohammed and Sambo at AUN (Iga not present).

Folios with full page *zayyana* were placed in *kitakata* folders to minimize future handling.

The Qur'an was returned to its Fombina Palace Museum exhibit case on May 21, where the team members proceeded to lecture the museum staff about the importance of cleanliness and keeping sunlight from the manuscript exhibit cases.



9) Fombina Palace Museum staff with Malam Musa and Malam Ahmadu (center in scholarly *babban riga*) in front of manuscript exhibit cases

All remaining supplies and the tool kits, all of which are unobtainable in Nigeria, were distributed to Malam Musa Muhammed for Arewe House, whose manuscript collection is growing; Malam Ahmadu Girei for the Centre for the Trans-Saharan Studies manuscript collection; and Technical Officer Hassam Kasim for the Lamido Palace Museum manuscript collection.

The Qur'an is the property of the Lamido (Emir) of Adamawa and is on continuous exhibit in the Lamido's Fombina Palace Museum in Yola. The Qur'an and its exquisite *tadarishi* and *gafaka* are on display. The Qur'an pages will soon be placed in four e-flute boxes (to lessen the weight on the lower folios and to protect them from dust and light). Those four e-flute boxes will then be placed in a single double tray clamshell box, at the insistence of the Malams, labeled in both English and Arabic. I am currently fabricating the boxes and will mail them to Nigeria on completion. The Fombina Palace Museum is administered and operated by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) in consultation with the Fombina Palace Council. The NCMM and the FPC graciously provided work space at the recently constructed Lamido Zubaira Educational Center. We experienced the usual, and expected, challenges of inadequate electrical service – on a good day we would have four hours of electricity; heat – temperatures varied from 35 to 49 degrees C; fine and pervasive dust and lack of running water. At the end of each work session all materials had to be covered whilst in the morning every surface had to be dusted twice. We washed our hands in a bucket with water brought to the site.



10) Lamido Zubaira Educational Center – Yola, Adamawa Province, Nigeria.

Malam Musa, Malam Ahmadu and I are currently working on a journal article concerning the Chukkunga Qur'an's codicology and history, which, in good time, and at the suggestion of TIMA Director Davidson MacLaren, we will be submitting to the new TIMA journal for possible publication.

Respectfully submitted,

Michaelle Biddle

1 July 2010