

# From Dust to Digital

Ten Years of the  
Endangered Archives Programme



EDITED BY MAJA KOMINKO

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Endangered Archives Programme

*Edited by Maja Kominko*

## Chapter 6



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## 6. In the shadow of Timbuktu: the manuscripts of Djenné<sup>1</sup>

Sophie Sarin

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The ancient mud city of Djenné occupies an island in the Bani, a major tributary to the Niger River at the heart of the Niger inland delta in Mali. Although Djenné is less famous than its “twin sister” Timbuktu, which is situated 220 miles to the north on the edge of the Sahara desert, both cities have been important historical centres of trans-Saharan commerce and Islamic learning from the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Djenné is protected by its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, due not only to its spectacular mud architecture, including the world famous mosque, but also to the important archaeological site of Djenné Djenno.<sup>3</sup>

Modern day Djenné has in the region of fifty Quranic schools in which students (*talibés*) study Arabic and the Quran under the tuition of a *marabout*.<sup>4</sup> Many *talibés* come from destinations as far removed as Ghana or Nigeria to

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- 1 The transliteration of Arabic words in this chapter is based on the LOC transliteration system.
  - 2 For more on the history and location of Djenné, see John O. Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: Al-Sa'di's Ta'rikh al-Sudan Down to 1613, and Other Contemporary Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); and Charlotte Joy, *The Politics of Heritage Management in Mali: From UNESCO to Djenné* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012), pp. 25-30.
  - 3 On Djenné's World Heritage Site status and its problems, see Joy, *The Politics of Heritage Management in Mali*, pp. 51-74 and 75-92. For more on Djenné Djenno, see Roderick J. McIntosh and Susan Keech McIntosh, “The Inland Niger Delta Before the Empire of Mali: Evidence from Jenne-Jeno”, *Journal of African History*, 22 (1981), 1-22; and *Excavations at Jenne-Jeno, Hambarketolo and Kaniana (Inland Niger Delta, Mali): The 1981 Season*, ed. by Susan Keech McIntosh (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).
  - 4 Geert Mommersteeg, “Marabouts à Djenné: enseignement coranique, invocations et amulettes”, in *Djenné: une ville millénaire au Mali*, ed. by Rogier M. A. Bedaux and J. D. van der Waals (Leiden: Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, 1994), pp. 65-75.

study in Djenné, which is still regarded as a centre for Islamic learning. Djenné has therefore over the centuries become an important depository for Arabic manuscripts, which have been copied and stored in the private homes of the ancient Djenné families, many of which have Quranic schools attached.<sup>5</sup>

The Islam practiced in Mali traditionally promotes the veneration of saints and often encompasses elements of Sufi mysticism.<sup>6</sup> During the recent occupation of the north of Mali by militants (April 2012-January 2013), a large number of mausoleums of saints in Timbuktu were destroyed by extremists, and several thousand manuscripts from the Ahmed Baba Institute of Timbuktu were burned.<sup>7</sup> Alongside the traditional dangers such as mould, water, insects and other environmental hazards, a dramatic new menace to manuscripts had suddenly manifested itself in the form of a wilful destruction by fundamentalists. Fortunately Djenné lies 130 miles south of Douentza, the southernmost town occupied by the rebels during their ten-month rule, and was never touched by this destructive force.

Since 2009, with the support of the Endangered Archives Programme, the Djenné Manuscript Library has begun work to survey and create an inventory of the manuscripts of Djenné, and, an effort to digitise the collection has been underway since 2011. The digitisation project carried on regardless of the momentous events that were unfolding only a day's journey further north, and the team never stopped working during this time. When fuel rationing

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5 For a good description of the tradition of contemporary learning in Djenné see Geert Mommersteeg, *In the City of the Marabouts: Islamic Culture in West Africa* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2012); and idem, "L'éducation oranique au Mali: le pouvoir des mots sacrés", in *L'enseignement Islamique au Mali*, ed. by Bintou Sanankoua and Louis Brenner (London: Jamana, 1991). See also Joy, *The Politics of Heritage Management in Mali*, pp. 95-107.

6 Benjamin Soares, "Islam in Mali in the Neoliberal Era", *African Affairs*, 105 (2006), 77-95; and idem, "Islam in Mali Since the 2012 Coup", *Fieldsights: Hot Spots, Cultural Anthropology Online*, 10 June 2013, <http://production.culanth.org/fieldsights/321-islam-in-mali-since-the-2012-coup>

7 For more on the 2012-2013 conflict in Mali, see Alexander Thurston and Andrew Lebovich, *A Handbook on Mali's 2012-2013 Crisis*, ISITA working paper, 2 September 2013, <http://africacenter.org/2013/09/a-handbook-on-malis-2012-2013-crisis>; Luke Harding, "Timbuktu Mayor: Mali Rebels Torched Library of Historic Manuscripts", *The Guardian*, 28 January 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/28/mali-timbuktu-library-ancient-manuscripts>; and the collection of resources available at Berkeley's Center for Africa Studies website, <http://africa.berkeley.edu/Outreach/Mali.php>. Many manuscripts that were thought to be lost were smuggled out to safety. The reports from the Ahmed Baba's staff indicate that those manuscripts that were lost were destroyed in haste as the only valuable items the rebels could find in the building immediately before their flight, rather than because of their content. See Drew Hinshaw, "Historic Timbuktu Texts Saved From Burning", *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 February 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323926104578276003922396218>

made daytime work impossible, we worked only during night-time hours when electricity was available.

The Djenné Manuscript Library<sup>8</sup> is housed in a handsome two-storey traditional Djenné mud building just to the south of the Great Mosque.



Fig. 6.1 Façade of Djenné library. Photo by author, CC BY.

It was built in 2006 with the support of the European Community Fund and the Embassy of the United States of America. In 2007, a management committee made up of notable Djenné residents was put in place; their task was to ensure that the library remained the property of the whole population of Djenné, and continued to provide a safe repository for the manuscripts from private family collections. The deposited manuscripts remained the property of their owners. The library is therefore a public space housing private collections: an original model, entirely different from that of Timbuktu which has in the region of fifty small separate private family libraries which are housed in the individual homes of the collectors.<sup>9</sup>

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8 <http://www.djennemanuscripts.com>

9 Ismaël Diadié Haidara and Haoua Taore, "The Private Libraries of Timbuktu", in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. by Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), pp. 271-75.





Fig. 6.2 *Tārīkh al-Sudan* [History of the Sudan] manuscript in the library's collection.  
Photo by author, CC BY.

The idea of digitisation first emerged when, after reading the description of the Djenné Manuscript Library on my blog,<sup>10</sup> a reader informed me about the Endangered Archives Programme at the British Library.<sup>11</sup> With its support, we began our pilot project in the autumn of 2009. The project was a collaboration between Mamadou Samake of the Mission Culturelle of Djenné, a Malian government body,<sup>12</sup> Babou Touré, a Djenné school teacher representing the Djenné Manuscript library, and myself. The aim of the pilot project was to survey the manuscripts in Djenné. This work involved visiting private Djenné families, and most of the work was carried out *in situ* in the family houses. Djenné is a close-knit community and people tend to be reluctant to show their manuscripts to strangers. The work was carried out by Garba Yaro and Yelpha Deité, the two library archivists who are both members of ancient Djenné families, and without whose reassuring familiarity the doors would have remained shut. Over the four months, we explored collections in thirteen Djenné family homes, many of which were also Quranic schools. We identified more than 4,000 manuscripts, but we were fully aware that this was only a small portion of the total number preserved in Djenné.

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10 <http://www.djennedjenno.blogspot.com>

11 The academic sponsors of our initiative were Dimitri Bondarev from SOAS, now at Hamburg University, and Constant Hamès from CNRS.

12 On Mission Culturelle, see Joy, *The Politics of Heritage Management in Mali*, pp. 32-35.

The survey revealed that the manuscripts contained texts on a whole variety of subjects: along with Qurans, religious texts, grammars, historical texts, correspondence and works of literature there were also esoteric and magical texts. This discovery tallied with the fact that Djenné has traditionally been regarded as a centre for *maraboutage*, an Islamic form of magic which is still practised extensively by the Djenné *marabouts*.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, these magical texts constituted more than half of the surveyed manuscripts. During this phase, the archivists simply noted the theme, and returned the manuscript into the storage chest without entering into further investigation. The existence of a *Tārīkh [History] of the Empire of Macina*, written in Fulfulde was noted; however, this manuscript has not yet been re-located into the library and we are still hoping the owners will bring it in.

The manuscripts held in private family houses varied greatly in terms of the state of their preservation. Most were kept in metal or wooden storage boxes in no discernable order.



Fig. 6.3 Manuscripts storage chest in one of the houses in Djenné.  
Photo by author, CC BY.

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13 See Trevor H. J. Marchand, *The Masons of Djenné* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 7-8, 25, 71 and 74. On *maraboutage* and *marabouts*, see 26, 32, 35, 102-08 and 269-73. See also Geert Mommersteeg, "Allah's Words as Amulet", *Etnofoor*, 3/1 (1990), 63-76; and idem, "Qur'anic Teachers and Magico-Religious Specialists in Djenné", *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) Newsletter*, 3 (1999), 30.

Our archivists identified each manuscript and separated it from the others with a sheet of white paper before returning it to its place in the box. Most manuscripts were found to be incomplete or perhaps only jumbled up — later more thorough investigation would be needed. We were hoping that at a later date we would be able to digitise these codices. The most common damage noted on the manuscripts was from termites and from water, as well as from bad storage and careless handling. The preservation was not helped by the fact that Djenné houses are all made of mud and during the rainy season they often leak.<sup>14</sup>

A large number of Djenné manuscripts have been acquired over the past decades by the Ahmed Baba Institute<sup>15</sup> and SAVAMA in Timbuktu.<sup>16</sup> These institutions had a policy of buying up manuscripts all over Mali in order to centralise the manuscript scholarship to Timbuktu.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, a substantial deposit of Arabic manuscripts in Djenné remained in the city.

Between August 2011 and August 2013, with the support of the EAP, we digitised 2,009 manuscripts in the Djenné Manuscript Library, producing nearly 150,000 digital images<sup>18</sup>. The documents are for the most part undated and many are incomplete. The manuscripts collected and digitised so far are only written on paper, although there are allegedly manuscripts in Djenné written on fish parchment.<sup>19</sup> The majority of the documents are estimated to date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although there are many from earlier times, and the oldest dated manuscript in the Djenné library is from 1394.<sup>20</sup> With the exception of rare manuscripts in French, which have

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14 On the efforts to modernise houses in Djenné and on the lack of funds to maintain them, see Michael Rowlands, “Entangled Memories and Parallel Heritages in Mali”, in *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*, ed. by Ferdinand de Jong and Michael Rowlands (Walnut Creek, CA: West Coast Press, 2007), pp. 71-98 (p. 95); and Charlotte Joy, “Enchanting Town of Mud: Djenné, a World Heritage Site in Mali”, in *ibid.*, pp 145-59 (p. 153).

15 [http://www.tombouctoumanuscripts.org/libraries/ahmed\\_baba\\_institute\\_of\\_higher\\_learning\\_and\\_islamic\\_research\\_iheri-ab](http://www.tombouctoumanuscripts.org/libraries/ahmed_baba_institute_of_higher_learning_and_islamic_research_iheri-ab)

16 It is a well-known fact to everyone in Djenné, including the archivists at the library, that Abdel Kader Haidara has bought manuscripts from the Djenné collections, both for the Ahmed Baba institute when he worked for them and for his own library the Mamma Haidara.

17 Mohammed Ould Youbba, “The Ahmed Baba Institute of Higher Islamic Studies and Research”, in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. by Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), pp. 287-302.

18 EAP488: Major project to digitise and preserve the manuscripts of Djenné, Mali, [http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_project.a4d?projID=EAP488](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP488)

19 This information has been provided by Yelpha Deité and Garba Yaro, our two archivists.

20 The manuscripts are dated by the colophones.

not yet been digitised and which contain legal papers and certain official documents such as diplomas from medersas (madrasas) or tax receipts dating from colonial times, the manuscripts are all written in Arabic script.

The library also contains, as of July 2014, 122 manuscripts with sections in the local languages of Songhai, Bozo, Fulfulde and Bamanan written in Arabic script.<sup>21</sup> These sections are sometimes explanations in the margin of difficult Arabic words in the text, or in the case of esoteric manuscripts concerning traditional medicine the names of plants and trees used are often written in Bamanan. There are only few manuscripts written entirely in a language different from Arabic: two in Fulfulde, a theological tract and a document on natural medicine; one manuscript contains "Praise to the Prophet" in Songhai and another one preserves esoteric texts in Bamanan.<sup>22</sup>

The large majority of the Djenné manuscripts were copied in Djenné, and only a small proportion were brought in from elsewhere. The names of the copyist are known, and these are often ancestors of the collector's families. This is possible to ascertain, to a certain degree, by consulting the family genealogy, of the sort preserved in the manuscript EAP488/1/2/15, *Quissatou Baloukiya: History*. This undated text contains an account of the well-known legend of Quissatou Baloukiya, a virtuous woman, and was copied in Djenné by Imam, son of Ousman. He is found seven generations down in the genealogy of the Yaro family. Similarly, the manuscript *Kitāb nuzhat al-khawāṭir fī uṣūl sharḥ al-dagā'in* [*The Book of the Excursion into the Ideas about the Sources Explaining the Hatred*] (EAP488/1/7/24) is a traditional Arabic grammar in verse, copied in Djenné in 1836 by Aquadi Ahmed, who forms part of the line of *marabouts* which served the family Djeite. In this case the genealogy goes back seven generations: Alqadi Ahmed, son of Imam Mohamed, son of Baha, son of Amar, son of Moussa, son of Mahmoud, son of Ousmane, son of Mohamed, son of Babou Almoustafa Attawate. Another locally transcribed manuscript is a handsome volume, *Dalā'il al-khayrāt wa-shawāriq al-anwār fī dhikr al-ṣalāt 'alā al-nabī al-mukhtār* [*Directions to the Benefits and Shining Lights: On the Benediction over the Chosen Prophet*] (EAP488/1/1/1). It was copied in the Hausa calligraphy in 1899 by Bakaina, son of Alpha Sidi, son of Mohamed Cheick, son of Cheick

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21 On the practice of writing other languages in the Arabic script, so-called Ajami, see for example, Moulaye Hassane, "Ajami in Africa: The Use of Arabic Script in the Transcription of African Languages", in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, ed. by Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), pp. 109-22.

22 Information provided by the project archivist, Yelpha.

Boubacar, who is an ancestor of the present owner. Bakaina is an ancient and traditional Djenné name.



Fig. 6.4 *Prayers to the Prophet* from the Maiga family collection.  
Photo by author, CC BY.

This differs from Timbuktu, which seems to have had a more energetic trade in manuscripts, not only in recent times but also back in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, at the height of its importance as a centre for trade and learning before the trans-Saharan trade routes shifted as a result of the development of shipping along the West African coast.<sup>23</sup> Many of Timbuktu's treasures have been copied in the Maghreb or in the Middle East and then brought to Timbuktu as valuable merchandise. Djenné, on the other hand, appears to have been less cosmopolitan in its manuscript trade, which is why the majority of manuscripts were copied locally. The Djenné scribes were nevertheless influenced by different calligraphic styles. With the Moroccan conquest in the sixteenth century, the Maghreb style was copied in Djenné, just as later the Hausa style became adopted, inspired by the arrival of students from northern Nigeria to the Djenné Quranic schools.<sup>24</sup>

23 See, for example, Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

24 On script styles from West Africa, see Mauro Nobili, "Arabic Scripts in West African Manuscripts: A Tentative Classification from the de Gironcourt Manuscript Collection",

In order to embark on the digitisation project, we had to create a new workroom with three digital cameras and lighting units. We also bought and installed computers and, most importantly, hired new staff to work in the library. This latter task proved to be more problematic than anticipated due to the system of family connections in Djenné. We all agreed that the new staff should be local, but Samake and I insisted on good Arabic knowledge, a good general level of education and knowledge of French. Other members of the team, however, regarded family connections as more significant than qualifications. To work successfully in Djenné, it is necessary to come to viable compromises, and therefore the workroom staff were chosen by the library management committee. With regards to the digitisation workers, Samake and I insisted that at least one of the team should have a good knowledge of Arabic, French and English. Ultimately, we were able to hire Mohammed Diallo from the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* in Bamako. After the staff were finally assembled, a month or so of training took place before the work proper began in the autumn of 2011.

Fundamental for digitisation was the painstaking work to survey the manuscripts, carried out by Garba and Yelpha, our archivists. An important part of their task was raising awareness among the manuscript owners about the importance of their manuscripts. The increased availability of printed material meant that, over the last century, the manuscripts were increasingly seen as not valuable and even redundant. Gradually, these efforts began to bear fruit and a steady trickle of Djenné notables started depositing their manuscripts for safekeeping in the Djenné Manuscript Library. Soon after the project started, we noted that the documents brought to the library were often different from those we were allowed to see on our visits to family homes. The families who chose to bring part of their collections would often select manuscripts that were regarded to have a high status, and these were most likely to be Quranic or traditional Islamic texts. We decided that it was necessary to introduce a rule that allowed for only one Quran per family to be sent for digitisation. Otherwise, we would have run a risk of producing a digital collection consisting predominantly of Qurans, thus misrepresenting the types of manuscripts present and produced in the city. Fortunately, there were also significantly high numbers of other types of

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*Islamic Africa Journal*, 2/1 (2011), 105-33; and idem, "Manuscript Culture of West Africa, Part 2: A Survey of Scholarly Production Dedicated to Local Collections of Manuscripts", *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter*, 3 (Jan 2012), 11-17.

texts being brought, and we decided to continue the digitisation work at the library instead of displacing moveable units into the family houses.

The reason for the steady and growing trickle of new deposits at the library must also be linked to the fact that the manuscript owners receive 3000FCFA (around £4) per day during the time that the team are digitising their manuscripts. This amount, although not very large, is nevertheless three times the wage for a day-labourer in Mali, and it is a welcome addition to the family budget in a town which has precious few opportunities for earning money.

A few months into the digitisation project, we encountered serious difficulties that continue to be a matter of concern. The initiative for the construction of the library had come from the Imam of Djenné, who successfully raised funds for this project from the European Union and the American Embassy. Although locals believed that the library was built for the benefit of the whole town, once it was constructed, the Imam appropriated it for himself. This caused a serious schism and the Imam withdrew his manuscripts from the library. He decided to build his own private library, which he did with the assistance of SAVAMA-DCI,<sup>25</sup> an association for the promotion of manuscript culture from Timbuktu. The head of SAVAMA-DCI, Abdel Kader Haidara, has been widely recognised for his work to safeguard the manuscripts of Mali. His work has involved the opening of small libraries with the help of external funding – a model that has been rejected in Djenné because it is against the philosophy of its library.<sup>26</sup> The schism between the Imam and the town of Djenné became serious enough to call in the then Minister of Culture, Cheick Oumar Sissoko, and it was he who put the management committee in place in 2007.

At this point, the problem seemed to have been contained. However, with the arrival of the support from the EAP project, this old feud re-emerged with renewed vigour. A few months into the project, we were scheduled to begin making protective acid-free carton boxes in which to store up to 300 manuscripts. The material for the boxes was imported from the UK. I had hired a van and driver to deliver this bulky shipment to Djenné, and I arrived at the library with the van just after sunset prayers on a Friday in January

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.savamadci.net>

<sup>26</sup> For a selection of the recent press coverage recognising Abdel Kader Haidara's role in the preservation of Mali's manuscripts, see Joshua Hammer, *The Brave Sage of Timbuktu: Abdel Kader Haidara*, The Innovators Project, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/innovators/2014/04/140421-haidara-timbuktu-manuscripts-mali-library-conservation>

2012, having travelled the ten-hour journey from Bamako. In front of the library, there was a gathering of some twenty people, including the Imam. As I attempted to alight from the lorry and begin the unloading, the Imam said to me: "I forbid you to ever set foot in this place again!" To avoid a physical confrontation, I returned to my hotel with the truck and the material. During the course of the evening, each of the eleven town councillors of Djenné contacted me to insist that I return to the library the following morning and to assure me that I would come to no harm. The next day, I returned to the library, and we began to work on preparing boxes, after a short period of instruction from a professional box maker from Timbuktu.<sup>27</sup>



Fig. 6.5 Two manuscript storage boxes made for the library. Photo by author, CC BY.

Although this incident had a positive conclusion, it cannot be denied that there is a strong antipathy towards the project from the Imam, a powerful figure on a national scale in Mali, and even beyond, and a small but powerful section of the Djenné community. This antipathy can at least partially explain certain rumours and attempts to bring the project into disrepute. These attempts, which draw their venom from the eventual free Internet access of the digitised images, were taken seriously enough by the Prefect of Djenné to jeopardise the very existence of the project. When I was called to the Prefect's

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<sup>27</sup> Garba Traoré is the Head Conservator at the Ahmed Baba Institute. The project relied on him several times for teaching and lecturing.



office to explain in detail the free Internet access, he expressed his critical view of the matter, likening it to the French colonial appropriation of the large collections of Malian manuscripts, now found in the French National Library.<sup>28</sup> It was impossible to convince him that the project is not at all similar in that it does not remove the original manuscripts from the Djenné library.

Digitisation has only recently come to be recognised as a way to preserve manuscripts in Mali. Timbuktu has received significant support to digitise its entire collection, with large funding from, amongst many other sources, the Government of South Africa.<sup>29</sup> Yet, only a small percentage of the manuscripts were digitised at the time of the destruction of the Ahmed Baba Institute. The pace of the digitisation and the recognition of its value have increased in the aftermath of the Timbuktu events. There is still some reluctance towards digitisation and, in particular, towards free Internet access to digitised manuscripts. We should bear in mind, however, that the open access movement and notion that access to knowledge should be free, are relatively new phenomenon even in the western world. Moreover, in Mali there is a deep mistrust towards foreign philanthropy, which is seen as having a veiled interest. Indeed, we have often heard that the British Library is using the digital collection from Djenné to make money, and nothing can be done to dissuade the majority of people that this is not the case.<sup>30</sup>

The EAP requires free Internet access to all digitised collections. In Djenné, this has become a major bone of contention and ultimately, in order to continue the project, we were forced to negotiate a compromise. With the permission of the EAP, we delayed the online publication of the Djenné collection until 2018. We convinced the manuscript holders in Djenné that this would give us five years to promote the Djenné library and find new sponsors before the collection went online. The compromise, reached in 2013, proved to be the key that unlocked the impasse. The same year we were awarded a new grant from the Programme that allows us to continue our digitisation efforts.<sup>31</sup> By

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28 Nouredine Ghali, *Inventaire de la Bibliothèque 'umarienne de Ségou, conservée à la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Édition du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1985).

29 <http://www.tombouctoumanuscripts.org>. For other initiatives, see Dmitry Bondarev, *Safeguarding the Manuscripts from Timbuktu: A Report on the Current Situation and a Proposal for a Larger Preservation Project*, Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, Hamburg, 9 May 2013, [http://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/cal-details/Safeguarding\\_Timbuktu\\_Manuscripts\\_2013.pdf](http://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/cal-details/Safeguarding_Timbuktu_Manuscripts_2013.pdf)

30 On an ongoing local perception that their heritage may have been “sold to the whites”, see Joy, “Enchanting Town of Mud”, pp. 156-57.

31 EAP690: Project to digitise and preserve the manuscripts of Djenné and surrounding

mutual agreement, there will be a three-year delay on Internet publication after the end of the project, which means that the entire Djenné collection will be available online in 2018.

The results of the first digitisation project, a hard drive containing 150,000 images, was delivered to the British Library in August 2013. A copy was also delivered to the *Archives Nationales* in Bamako in December, in a ceremony attended by the British Ambassador and televised by Malian TV. The same event was used to launch the present project (EAP690). Such high profile events are invaluable for the promoting of good will for the project, and are used as a strategy to combat the undercurrents of ill will which still threaten to damage the project and the library.

Alongside the digitisation supported by the EAP, we have organised several events that aim to raise awareness of the importance of the manuscripts of Djenné, and to promote positive attitudes towards the library. In April 2014, we organised a week-long teaching seminar on the conservation and storage of manuscripts. The seminar culminated in a televised conference in Djenné, attended by over a hundred people. Among the participants were the manuscript owners who deposited their collections at the Djenné Manuscript Library, as well as scholars and conservators from Brazil, Sweden and Germany. The conference was supported by the EAP, the Helen Hamlyn Trust (UK), The Rizoma Institute (Brazil) and The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg, the latter represented by conservator Eva Brozowski, who conducted research into traditional inks used in the Djenné manuscripts. In association with MaliMali<sup>32</sup> we have also organised calligraphy workshops and competitions at the Djenné Manuscript Library.

These events and efforts would never have been possible had the library not received the support from the EAP. The growth of the library's collection, as the local population gradually deposit their manuscripts, is the most potent sign of the success of the projects in Djenné. The collection grew from 2,172 manuscripts representing 33 families in 2011, to close to 6,000 manuscripts, from 100 families in 2014. We are proud to see this sign of trust from the local people, who increasingly see the library and its archivists as reliable custodians of their collections.

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