

EDITORIAL NOTE

The first half of the present issue of *Africa* is a contribution to the journal's Local Intellectuals series. Inaugurated in 2008, this series seeks to retrieve, edit and present to a new public the writings or performed compositions of African thinkers past and present – thinkers who wrestled with issues in philosophy, politics, history and culture but who were not part of mainstream academic or cultural institutions. They were more likely to be clerks, traders or village headmasters than university graduates, and their writings, though sometimes famous in their communities, were published locally – or even remained unpublished – and reached a restricted audience. Examples include the Gold Coast clerk who wrote a memoir (part fact, part fantasy) of his experiences in the First World War, and published it as a serial in the *Gold Coast Leader* (Newell 2008); the self-educated Yoruba media poet Lanrewaju Adepaju, whose poems, though famous in Nigeria, had never been translated into English (Okunoye 2011); the son of a northern Ghanaian chief who wrote a history of his father (Lentz 2012); Malian farmers who kept idiosyncratic notebooks recording all kinds of information (Mbodj-Pouye 2013); a South African Zionist minister whose letters to the parent church in the USA reveal a desire to claim legitimacy through cosmopolitan connections (Cabrita 2014); and a school magazine, recalling affectionately but ruefully the rigours of colonial boarding school life (Ochiagha 2015).¹ The aim of the series is to give readers access to the texts produced by these 'local intellectuals' themselves. In the print version of the journal, a short excerpt is given, together with a scholarly essay contextualizing the work; in the online version of the journal, however, we publish the full text, edited and annotated, and in some cases translated into English. In this way we plan gradually to build up a permanent archive of African intellectual writing which would otherwise be forgotten or hard to access. The variety and quality of the contributions so far give an indication of the vitality of a huge field of local enquiry in Africa: a field of reflection and speculation that mostly falls below the radar of academic research.

The current contribution to this series is on a bigger scale and includes more contributions than anything we have attempted before. Akiga Sai was a 'contact intellectual', a Tiv convert who witnessed first-hand the incursions of the British colonial power into the Tiv-speaking area and who began to write down the history, customs, memories and experiences of Tiv communities, gathering data from elders and recording the stages of missionary expansion as well as colonial conquest. He produced an extraordinary document, 380 pages of typescript in the Tiv language. Parts of this were translated by Rupert East, in collaboration with Akiga Sai himself, and published by the International African Institute (then the International Institute for African Languages and Cultures) as *Akiga's Story* in 1939. It is fitting that it should once again be the IAI that now brings into the public domain the full Tiv text and a complete translation

¹The full texts of all the articles cited are freely available via the online version of the Local Intellectuals series at <<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayCustomArticles?jid=AFR&articleListId=1101>>.

of this remarkable document, both available with the supplementary materials included in this section.² When Professor Harold Bergsma approached the IAI in 2009 with a proposal to publish some Tiv research materials, we jumped at the chance of finally making available a complete translation of the text. Bergsma and his assistant editor Martin Luter Akiga, a grandson of Akiga Sai, assembled a team of translators and divided up the text amongst them. There followed years of work translating, compiling, coordinating and editing the translation. Bergsma kept his editorial interventions as light as possible so as not to interrupt the flow of reading, but many things needed to be explained, and more years passed in which Bergsma and Martin Akiga responded to my many questions asking them to throw light on allusions, disentangle contradictions, clarify obscurities, and introduce consistency between the different translators' styles. In this process, Richard Fardon, a leading anthropologist of West Africa, member of the journal's editorial board and contributor to this section, also played a vital part.

The new translation does not set out to supersede the East/Akiga version but rather to add to it. Some of the extensive sections that East omitted are among those that will be of greatest interest to historians: the local eye view of colonial conquest; the nicknames given to all of the colonial officers; the barbarous punishments some of them meted out to recalcitrant chiefs; the poised puzzlement with which Akiga and, reportedly, his fellow Tiv viewed the transformations the Europeans brought; the active speculation about their motives; and the alacrity with which some players turned the new situation to their own advantage. Presenting the complete text, without cuts or reorganization, gives new access to Akiga's world. We have done our best to adhere closely to Akiga's own structure and style, retaining his numerous subheadings, which in some chapters divide the text into a plethora of short sections, sometimes several to a page; and reflecting his use of parenthetical comments that reveal a critical consciousness and desire for lucidity. Akiga was an inventor – he created a new textual form, which, as far as one can tell, had no precedent. It was a massive compendium of local knowledge; at the same time, it was highly original. To illustrate how things were done in Tivland, he invents scenarios, populates them with *dramatis personae*, and stages whole scenes of incredible liveliness – tooth chipping, circumcision, litigation, conspiracy ... He combines his own vivid memories with hearsay and oral histories systematically researched among clan elders.

True to Bergsma's vision of the publication, we have kept footnotes to a minimum, in contrast to Rupert East's massive (and illuminating) editorial commentary in *Akiga's Story*. We are well aware that in some senses this is a work in progress to which future scholarship will be able to add further commentaries and glosses. Some of the vocabulary current in Akiga's day appears now to have been lost, and some of the references to local places and events could not be reconstructed. Every text can be translated in numerous different ways. This one, to my mind, captures a distinctive voice: direct, calling a spade a spade, but often sounding ironical or wryly humorous, full of curiosity about the astonishing period Akiga lived through.

²The supplementary materials are available at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0001972015000613>>.

One purpose of this publication, then, is to invite much further study of the Tiv text and its translation. To this end, we present in the online version of the journal not only a complete annotated translation but the whole original Tiv-language typescript of 380 pages. And there is more.

In the print version of the journal, in addition to Harold Bergsma's vivid 'Prologue', we have a major article by Richard Fardon setting out the historical and social context, tracing the history of the publication of Akiga's manuscript, and comparing it with the East/Akiga translation of 1939. We have an essay by James Tar Tsaaior that reflects on the iconic status of Akiga Sai's text within the Nigerian – and specifically Tiv – scholarly community and wider public. And finally we have samples of the translated text: chosen for their drama by Richard Fardon from among the previously unavailable sections of Akiga, annotated by him, and seasoned with a taste of the kinds of contextualizing information provided by Professor David Dorward that is more fully represented in the online version of the journal.

Online publication, indeed, has given us the opportunity to present extensive additional material. Akiga referred to colonial officers and missionaries by local nicknames, sometimes critical and humorous, sometimes just adaptations of the names to Tiv phonology. This gives a fascinating impression of how the world of Europeans might have appeared to Tiv eyes; but it can also be bewildering. Who are all these people – Chafa Don and Chafa Fishi, Ortese Uhe and Masa Ibi? We had the immense good fortune of securing David Dorward's help with this. In an extensive appendix to the translation, he has identified almost all of the nicknamed characters and has provided their biographical details. Reading this after having read the translation of Akiga's *History of the Tiv* produces a kind of culture shock. The world of British officials evoked in this appendix – with their parentage, education, spouses, military decorations and postings overseas – could not contrast more strongly with the appalled and wondering view of their antics from a Tiv perspective. Professor Dorward also made available to us a precious additional archival document: a later piece written by Akiga Sai in Hausa on the *Inyamibuan* movement that swept the Tiv region in 1939. This has been meticulously translated and annotated by William Burgess of the IAI and is here published for the first time.

Finally, the online material includes information about the two primary editors, Harold Bergsma and Martin Luter Akiga, and the team of Tiv translators. For their immense labour of love, the world of African scholarship owes them a permanent debt of gratitude.

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