

The International Library of African Music in South Africa and its role in digitising recordings in Tanzania and Zanzibar: Subterfuge or madness?

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**International  
Library of African  
Music  
Est. 1954**





# Sounding Africa on the Indian Ocean littoral and in the Southwestern Indian Ocean

## ▶ Duration

- ▶ 2 years: Mid-June 2020 to mid-June 2023.

## ▶ Members of the research team

- ▶ Lee Watkins, International Library of African Music (ILAM), Rhodes University.
- ▶ Rakesh Kumar, ILAM, Rhodes University.
- ▶ John Kitime, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

# Sub-project 1: The Siddis in India

- ▶ The project commenced with research of two years on a particular community of African descendants in India; a community referred to as the Sidis.
- ▶ The importance of African expressive culture is vital for this Indian African community who arrived in India 700 to 800 years ago.
- ▶ The Goma-Dhamal is the most important performance tradition of the Siddi community. This project provides a breakthrough in initiating the collection of Goma-Dhamal musical instruments and recording its performances. At the moment, there is a preliminary website being developed and built around participatory archival practices. See <https://www.siddidhamal.com/gomadhamal-photos>







## **SUB-PROJECTS 2**

# Réunion

- ▶ Réunion in June 2022.
- ▶ There is an excellent online music archive called the [La Phonothèque Historique de l'Océan Indien \(PHOI\)](#). The PHOI has a considerable amount of digitised materials mainly from the former French speaking colonies in the Indian Ocean World and the Mascarenes.
- ▶ They have also produced outputs such as music text-books, CDs and online exhibitions. But the facilities there are not ideal.

# Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar

- ▶ Another intervention was initiated in January 2023, when I visited Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam.
- ▶ Zanzibar is host to the Dhow Countries Music Academy (DCMA) where music is taught, performed and studied. I had meetings with two staff members there, Halda Alkanaana and Mahsin Basalama.
- ▶ I met with Hashim Rubanza and John Kitime. Kitime owns a radio station and had at the time started collecting music recorded on old formats such as cassettes.





# Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar

- ▶ Since January 2023, he has been travelling far and wide in Tanzania collecting video cassettes of musical performances, cassettes, vinyl records and other media.
- ▶ The Dhow Countries Music Academy in Zanzibar embarked on a similar mission of searching for taarab recordings.
- ▶ In 2024 they brought these recordings to John to digitise.

JOHN KITIME MUSIC ARCHIVE								
	QTY	UNIT	QTY	UNIT	AMOUNT @ TSH	TOTAL TSH	ACTUAL SPEND TSH	VERIFICATION
<b>TANGA</b>								
Bus Tickets	1	Journey	2	trips	20 000,00	40 000,00	-	Bus Tickets
Food	6	days	1	lunch and dinner	20 000,00	120 000,00	80 000,00	Cash acknowledgement forms signed
Lodgings	6	days	1		40 000,00	240 000,00	-	Receipts
Local transport	6	days	1	Taxi	20 000,00	120 000,00	80 000,00	Receipts
Facilitation Fees	5	people			50 000,00	250 000,00	245 000,00	
	<b>Sub Total</b>					<b>770 000,00</b>	<b>405 000,00</b>	
<b>ARUSHA</b>								
Bus Tickets	1	Journey	2	trips	37 000,00	74 000,00	-	Bus Tickets
Food	6	days	1	lunch and dinner	20 000,00	120 000,00	120 000,00	Cash acknowledgement forms signed
Lodgings	6	days	1		40 000,00	240 000,00	-	Receipts
Local transport	6	days	1	Taxi	20 000,00	120 000,00	120 000,00	Receipts
Facilitation Fees	5	people			50 000,00	250 000,00	-	
Purchase of VHS Cassettes					-	-	420 000,00	Part of Facilitation Fees?
	<b>Sub Total</b>					<b>804 000,00</b>	<b>660 000,00</b>	
Honorarium					345 000,00	345 000,00	345 000,00	
	<b>Sub Total</b>					<b>345 000,00</b>	<b>345 000,00</b>	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>						<b>1 919 000,00</b>	<b>1 410 000,00</b>	
<b>Underspent / (Overspent)</b>							<b>509 000,00</b>	













- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHdfFT19Qdc>







# Adam Rotbard

- ▶ Concentrated on the music of the Wahehe, to whom John belongs, and those of the Nyamuezi in Tabora town.
- ▶ John's father Francis wrote a book about the history of the Wahehe that goes back to the 16th century in Ethiopia.
- ▶ Livangala - a traditional type of cowbell dance. Danced in special occasions [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=li0MNkgpwx0&ab\\_channel=SimulizizaMwanaupwa](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=li0MNkgpwx0&ab_channel=SimulizizaMwanaupwa)  
Kiduo - another traditional type of music and dance, with no musical instruments but clapping [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHdfFT19Qdc&ab\\_channel=kingMarxi](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHdfFT19Qdc&ab_channel=kingMarxi)

# Adam Rotbard

- ▶ Do some kind of group listening to the songs to start a “living archive”.
- ▶ Two main obstacles: the language barrier and total dependence on the “cultural brokers”.
- ▶ Researcher – interlocutor – research assistant misadventures.
- ▶ The second challenge is economic.



# Adam Rotbard

- ▶ **Importance of context:** My research involves Livangala and Kiduo songs. I found out they differ according to the occasion. They can be sung in funerals and weddings, with the same melody, tone, and lyrics, but they differ in their meaning - they hold different interpretations of the context. Hehe music is full of metaphors that are lost in translation in Digital Archives, and require ongoing discussion with communities.

- ▶ Good example is the Kiduo song, “Helele Nene Nzovela”.



# Adam Rotbard

- ▶ **Generational gap:** Elders were able to interpret the lyrics, its hidden meanings. The younger generation, however, is not able to do that.
- ▶ **Sustainability of the old tracks:** Several villagers noted that the old recorded songs felt “incomplete” or “cut short.”
- ▶ **Fear of a culture that is about to be extinct:** Many thought that Hehe’s culture is in danger of being extinct due to a lack of appreciation and language among the youth.

# Others

- ▶ It was not possible to visit Ethiopia due to internal strife.
- ▶ It has not been possible to visit Madagascar either due to issues with time and logistics.
- ▶ I have had a request to help organise an online archive of Nubian music in Egypt. Much of this music, which was recorded on vinyls, scattered with the relocation of the Nubian community before the Aswan dam was built in the 1960s.
- ▶ More funding needs to be secured to digitise the collections from Tanzania and to explore relations with archivists in [Antananarivo](#), and Ethiopia, once a ceasefire is established.



# Challenges

- ▶ Politics - economics
- ▶ Distances
- ▶ Resources: Equipment, human
- ▶ Research experience: relations
- ▶ Archival experience: digitization equipment
- ▶ Funding



# INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY OF AFRICAN MUSIC

THANK YOU

