

THE
LONDON
LIBRARY

A guide to the African collections

Scope of the Collections

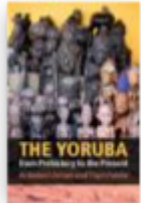
The London Library holds a vast collection of materials on and from the continent of Africa which includes works on its history, art, languages and philology, literature, religion and topography. The collection is especially strong in African history, literature and topography. It continues to grow and suggestions for acquisitions are always welcomed.


It is worth noting that volumes in large formats i.e. 4to and folio are shelved in separate sequences from 8vo. Please also bear in mind that the Library retains old forms of names and jurisdictions in some cases i.e. materials on Zaire are shelved under Congo, those on Ethiopia are shelved under Abyssinia, books on Djibouti are appear under Somaliland, and materials on Tonga Islands appear under T. Friendly Islands.

Understanding shelfmarks

The collection is divided into broad subject areas (History, Literature, Topography, for example) and then into smaller areas, arranged alphabetically. Within each section, books are generally arranged by author name but edited titles are filed under the book title instead. Check the Catalyst record for the 'shelved under' information.

In order to make the most effective use of space, the collection is also shelved by size. Check the end of shelf marks for the notations 4to (quarto), Folio and Folio Extra Large that may indicate a different place to look for the books.



BOOK
The Yoruba from prehistory to the present
Usman, Aribidesi Adisa, author.; Falola, Toyin, author.
2019
Shelved Under: Usman, Aribidesi Adisa,
 [Available at London Library History \(H. Nigeria\) >](#)

Above is an example of a book record from the catalogue. Here you can see that the book is shelved under the author's name and that it is available (i.e. on the shelf) in the history section (H.), in the sub-section for Nigeria and then shelved under Usman.

Books may be requested and put aside for ready for collection, but we would always encourage members to browse the shelves for themselves and discover the books they did not know they needed. Items from the Library's Special Collections that cannot be borrowed, can be consulted in the Library under supervised conditions with 72 hours' notice.

History and Religion

The Library holds a rich collection of materials on African history, located on Levels 2, 3 and 4 of the Back Stacks. There are a wide variety of shelfmarks covering relevant topics, countries and regions which are arranged in alphabetical order:

H. Abyssinia	H. Egypt (Modern)
H. Abyssinian Campaigns	H. Egyptian Campaigns
H. Africa (Gen.)	H. Eritrea
H. Africa, East	H. Libya
H. Africa, North	H. Mauritius
H. Africa, South	H. Moors
H. Africa (South) Campaigns	H. Morocco
H. Africa, West	H. Mozambique
H. Algeria	H. Nigeria
H. Army, Nigerian	H. Rhodesia &c.
H. Army, South African	H. Sinai
H. Ashantee Campaigns	H. Somaliland
H. Berbers	H. Transvaal
H. Cameroons	H. Tunis
H. Cape Colony	H. Uganda
H. Carthage	H. Zambia
H. Colonies &c., English	H. Zanzibar
H. Congo	H. Zimbabwe
H. Egypt (Ancient)	H. Zululand

In **H. Africa (Gen.)**, materials on the history of Africa in general can be found. **H. Africa, East** comprises materials on the history of Eastern Africa in general and volumes that discuss the history of two or more East African countries. The same applies to **H. Africa, South**; **H. Africa, West**; and **H. Africa, North**.

The Library holds materials on the ecclesiastical history of Africa, located in **R. Africa, Eccles. Hist.**

Literature and Philology

The Library's collection on African literature is located on the 2nd Floor and is divided into the following shelfmarks:

L. African &c. Lit. - covers all sets of complete works, essays, plays, poetry and non-fiction literary works in African languages including literary criticism on individual authors.

L. African &c. Lit., Hist. of - covers works of general literary criticism and works on the history of African literature.

L. African &c. Lit., Trans. - covers translations into all languages of literary works by authors writing in African languages (excluding works of fiction translated into English which are shelved under **Fiction**).

L. Arabic – covers works in Arabic or on Arabic literature including poetry and drama.

L. Coptic – covers works in Coptic and relating to Coptic literature.

L. Ethiopic & Amharic – covers works in Amharic and Ethiopic, and relating to Amharic and Ethiopic literature.

The Library's philology collection is located in the basement. There are a wide variety of shelfmarks covering African languages, containing books considering both form and meaning in linguistic expression:

Philology, African Languages

Philology, Amharic

Philology, Arabic

Philology, Coptic

Philology, Egyptian

Philology, Ethiopian

Philology, Hausa

Philology, Libyan

Philology, Phoenician

Philology, Semitic

Philology, Swahili

Philology, Yoruba

It is worth noting that materials on Demotic and Hieroglyphs are shelved under **Philology, Egyptian**.

Art

The Library's extensive collection of art books, shelved in the Art Room and on the Mezzanine of T.S. Eliot House, includes a wide range of materials on African art and artists e.g. *Art of the South African township*; *African rock art: paintings and engravings on stone*; *Eternal ancestors: the art of the Central African reliquary*. Books on individual artists will be found under the sub-section for the medium concerned and then under the artist's name e.g. **A. Painting, Ofili**.

There are also books on general African art history and criticism and relevant African art exhibitions held in Britain e.g. *Dynasty and divinity: Ife art in ancient Nigeria* by Henry John Drewal and Enid Schildkrout. Exhibition catalogues are shelved alphabetically under exhibition title, and museum catalogues can be found under the name of the museum. Books covering works in more than one medium are shelved at **A. Art**.

Biography

Biographies and autobiographies of notable African figures can be found in the main biography stacks on the 3rd and 4th Floors. The Library holds extensive biographical material on literary authors, philosophers, artists and statesmen e.g. *You must set forth at dawn: a memoir* by Wole Soyinka; *Mandela: a critical life* by Tom Lodge; *The education of a British protected child: essays* by Chinua Achebe; *Dinner with Mugabe: the*

untold story of a freedom fighter who became a tyrant by Heidi Holland. Works containing collections of biographies of more than two persons can be found at the shelfmark **Biographical Colls.**

The Library's extensive collection of **biographical dictionaries** (shelved at **R.R. Biographical Dicts.**) includes a number of works on African authors, artists and important historical figures, such as *Dictionary of African historical biography*; *The dictionary of South African painters and sculptors, including Namibia*.

Topography and Guide Books

The Library's topography collection is located on Level 1 of the Back Stacks. There are a wide variety of shelfmarks covering relevant areas, countries and regions which are arranged in alphabetical order:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| T. Abyssinia | T. Mauritius |
| T. Africa (Gen.) | T. Morocco |
| T. Africa, Central | T. Niger |
| T. Africa, East | T. Nile |
| T. Africa, North | T. Rhodesia |
| T. Africa, South | T. Rodriguez Island |
| T. Africa, West | T. Sahara |
| T. Algeria | T. Senegal |
| T. Angola | T. Seychelles |
| T. Benin | T. Sierra Leone |
| T. Cameroons | T. Sinai |
| T. Cape Colony | T. Somaliland |
| T. Congo | T. Sudan |
| T. Dahomey | T. Timbuctoo |
| T. Egypt | T. Transvaal |
| T. Gambia | T. Tunis |
| T. Guinea | T. Uganda |
| T. Liberia | T. Zambia |
| T. Libya | T. Zanzibar |
| T. Madagascar | T. Zimbabwe |
| T. Mashonaland | T. Zululand |
| T. Matabeleland | |

In **T. Africa (Gen.)**, materials on the geography of the continent of Africa in general can be found. It also contains volumes that describe Africa in general and personal narratives covering African travels. In **T. Africa, Central** you will find materials on Central Africa in general and volumes that discuss two or more Central

African countries. The same applies in **T. Africa, East; T. Africa, South; T. Africa, West; and T. Africa, North.**

The Library's collection of Guide Books on Africa is located on the gallery in the Issue Hall under the following shelfmarks:

Guide Books, Africa

Guide Books, Algeria Guide Books, Egypt

Periodicals and Societies

The Library holds many periodical titles that complement the topography collection. Many of these titles are either no longer subscribed or are defunct but the Library retains back issues in its collection. Some titles may be online only or kept off-site. Please check the Library Catalogue for details of holdings. Titles include:-

Africa: journal of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures

Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies

Journal of African History

Journal of Egyptian Archaeology

Journal of Modern African Studies

Annual report - Society for Libyan Studies (Libyan Studies)

Wasafiri

The latest issues of periodicals are available for consultation in the Reading Room, with earlier issues bound as volumes and shelved in the Basement or off-site, available for loan.

Through the online Library Catalogue, members can use a range of electronic journals in the library or off site, as well as other electronic publications and databases. There is also access to JSTOR, an electronic periodicals archive that allows members to access back-runs of over 750 additional periodical titles.

The Library possesses a wealth of materials published by African institutions and learned societies. These society publications are shelved in the Societies section in the Basement under the original name of each issuing institute. e.g. *Van Riebeeck Society, Journal of the African Society.*

Reference Works

The Library's reference works are held for consultation in the Reading Rooms on the First floor. There are dictionaries and other reference works on various African languages. It is worth noting that although Amharic is Ethiopic, it has a shelfmark of its own. Other shelfmarks of African interest include:

R.R. Dicts., African
R.R. Lang. Dicts., Arabic
R.R. Lang. Dicts., Coptic
R.R. Lang. Dicts., Egyptian

R.R. Lang. Dicts., Hausa
R.R. Lang. Dicts., Nubian
R.R. Lang. Dicts., Swahili
R.R. Lang. Dicts., Zulu

The Library has standard reference works on humanities subjects shelved in their alphabetical positions at their relevant shelfmarks, e.g.

R.R. Dicts., **Art:** *Art and artists of South Africa: an illustrated biographical dictionary and historical survey of painters and graphic artists since 1875.*

R.R. Biographical Dicts.: *Biographical dictionary of modern Egypt.*

R.R. Dicts., **History:** *African political facts since 1945.*

R.R. Dicts., **Music:** *South African music encyclopaedia.*

R.R. Dicts., **Religion:** *The ancient gods speak: a guide to Egyptian religion.*

The Library also possesses some encyclopedias of African interest e.g. *Encyclopedia of Africa south of Sahara* and *Africana: the encyclopedia of the African and African American experience* which can be found in R. R. Encyclopedias.

External Websites

African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUUK) www.asauk.net/

Co-operative Africana Microform Project (CAMP)

www.crl.edu/area-studies/camp

International African Institute www.internationalafricaninstitute.org/

Royal African Society www.royalafricansociety.org/

School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) www.soas.ac.uk/africa/

Standing Conference on Library Materials on Africa (SCOLMA) <https://scolma.org/>