SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTING THE ORAL EPIC OF

AL SIRAH
AL HILALIYYA

Phase I
Collecting and documenting
Egypt 2006
SAFEGUARDING, PROTECTING AND DOCUMENTING OF

AL SIRAH AL HILALIYYA
AN EGYPTIAN ORAL EPIC

Phase I
Collecting and documenting
Egypt 2006

Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Prize
for the “Masterpieces of The Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”

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www.esft.org
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Preface

The Egyptian traditional epic Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya was proclaimed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, on November the 7th 2003.

Following this proclamation and according to a UNESCO recommendation on the “Safeguarding and Protection of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya”, an ambitious project was conceived whose actions were oriented towards the main goals of safeguarding, revitalizing and protecting Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya through the collection, documentation, classification and archiving of its content, which goes back to almost a thousand years.

As a matter of fact, the epic genre of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya is one of the most loved of all folk forms, narrating the story of a whole tribe, the Al Hilali tribe in the early centuries of Islam. While many of the epics from the past have fallen into oblivion, Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya is the only one that has survived in its complete form with all its four episodes intact and its various forms of performance. Extremely rich technically and culturally, Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya constitutes a multipurpose document.

The language technique of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya employs a highly stylized kind of verse language and its performers enact it in a theatrical fashion, making different vocal sounds, changing their voices to suit the personalities of the various characters and employing hands, facial expressions and body motions to act out some difficult parts. Compared to other epics, Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya remains the only one performed as an oral folk tradition.

Furthermore, in referring to places and events, it represents a historical document while its references to traditional food, customs and practices give it a significant sociological value. It contains poetry and riddles, offers a reflection of art tradition, costumes, jewellery and cosmetics, shows norms, habits and rituals of community and social interaction through the centuries. Involving different geographic locations and ethnic groups in the community, Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya epic exerts a considerable influence in shaping community ethics and can be commended for its clear allowance of cultural diversity.

Unfortunately, under the influence of rapid cultural changes and processes of acculturation, Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya was in peril of perishing. Indeed, the number of Master poets of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya is decreasing very rapidly. Use of this traditional epic to entertain tourists led the poets to select the most exciting parts of the epic for the performance, thus threatening the other parts of the epic with disappearance.

In order to document this historical event and protect this remarkable part of the intangible Human Heritage, initiative was taken in this regard by UNESCO Culture Division at its headquarters in Paris, its Regional Bureau for Science in the Arabe States, Cairo and the Egyptian Society for Folk Traditions (ESFT).

Most of all, the people and societies involved in the implementation of this valuable project would like to express their acknowledgement to the generous contributors that made it possible.
To achieve the documentation of this historical epic, UNESCO succeeded in the promotion and implementation of an extra-budgetary activity where generous financial supports was contributed by His Excellency Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan International Prize ($70,000) and His Excellency Sheikh Ghassan I. Shaker, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador ($50,000). The project was carried out by the Egyptian Society for Folk Traditions (ESFT) and managed by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States, and UNESCO Culture Sector in Paris.

We acknowledge with great appreciation His Excellency Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan International Prize and His Excellency Sheikh Ghassan I. Shaker, for their financial contribution to this important project. We thank the Egyptian Ministry of Culture (Culture Development Fund) for the financial support to ESFT and also the Centre for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage (CULTNAT) for its technical assistance in preparing the candidature file. We thank all experts and colleagues especially Dr. Gérard de Puymège, Ms. Janet Chilinguirian, Ms. Melanie Clouser, Ms. Fanny Durville and Ms. Gehanne Abdel-Malek and others who have provided substantive and logistic support. The following brochure aims at providing brief on the implementation phases of the project and presents its primary results.

Dr. Mohamed Abdurrazak
Director
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States
UNESCO Cluster Office Egypt, Sudan and Yemen

Dr. Ahmed Morsi
Chairman
Egyptian Society for Folk Traditions (ESFT)
CHAPTER I

1. Introduction

1.1 The Egyptian Society for Folks Traditions (ESFT)

The society was founded in 2000 under the supervision of the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs, as an NGO.

The ESFT is composed mainly of Professors specialized in folk traditions, experts in different aspects of Tangible and Intangible Heritage, as well as graduate students preparing their Master of Arts or PhD in this field.

Its main objectives is to safeguard and revitalize Egyptian intangible heritage such as folk tales, epics, songs, proverbs and other related forms of folk expressions and to promote fieldwork methods and classification specific to these forms of art. The ESFT is also concerned with Egyptian material culture and is cooperating with other associations for the preparation of the National Museum for Egyptian Civilization (NMEC).

The ESFT’s objective is to organize workshops and training programmes for folklorists and practitioners. It gives frequent lectures in universities and cultural institutes to disseminate knowledge of folk traditions and enhance awareness of the Intangible Heritage. It holds bi-weekly seminars for academic discussions on these issues and has strong association and interaction with the community of folk and intangible heritage experts and organizations. Members also participate in community festivities and periodic events.

1.2 Board

(i) The members the Scientific Board consist of:

a. Dr. Ahmed Ali Morsi, Professor of Folk Literature, Cairo University and chairperson of ESFT.

b. Dr. Asaad Nadim, Professor of Material Culture, High Institute of Folklore, Cairo.

c. Mr. Safwat Kamal, Professor of Folklore, High Institute of Folklore, Cairo.

d. Dr. Shawki Habeeb, Specialist in Oral History, previous Director of the Center of Folklore, Cairo.

e. Dr. Sameeh Sha’alan, associate Professor of Folk Beliefs and Customs, High Institute of Folklore, Cairo.

f. Dr. Ibrahim Abd ElHafez, associate Professor of Folk Literature, High Institute of Folklore, Cairo.
(ii) Financial Officer:
Mr. El Mohamady Attiya

(iii) Archivists & IT Experts:
   a. Engineer Atef Nawar, Specialist in Information Technology and Folklore.
   b. Engineer Haitham Younis, Specialist in Information Technology and Folklore.

(iv) Field Team:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Local Teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaled Abuelail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamal Mohammed Ata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed Abuelail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2004, the ESFT was appointed as the main organization to implement the project activities in safeguarding, preservation and revitalization of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya. Following the allocation of the funding from different sources, the project started in 2005, under the supervision of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States.

The ESFT began collecting Sirah/Epic texts in mid-January 2005, by inviting a number of specialists to discuss the methods and styles for preparing data collection. Specialists discussed the idea of training sessions for the research teams, keeping in mind that team members should be full-time employees in the project in exchange for appropriate monetary compensation.

1.3 Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya project activities:

Within the framework of the preservation of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya as a Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity, the ESFT, in coordination with UNESCO, agreed to implement the following activities:

(i) Establishing a detailed fieldwork plan of action.
(ii) Compiling a preliminary index of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya narrators throughout Egypt.
(iii) Forming fieldwork teams, identification of the Master Poets and training for collecting Sirah/Epic.
(iv) Forming a team for transcription of the epic recordings.
(v) Creating a system for classification and preservation of the recordings and texts.

(vi) Preparing musical transcription.

(vii) Planning for a project to assist master narrators in passing their art on to storytellers of younger generations (through apprenticeship with master narrators).

(viii) Collecting of the Sirah/Epic information from any sources for inclusion in the ESFT’s archive, including:

a. Descriptions and copies of recordings from the Centre for Folklore Studies of the Egyptian Academy of Arts.

b. Series of commercial audio recordings.
2.1 Background on the Presentation of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya:

(i) Al Hilaliyya or Sirat Bani Hilal:

It is a poetic tradition which is familiar throughout most of the Arab world. The Sirah or epic history, of the Bani Hilal tribe chronicles the tribe’s massive migration from its homeland “Najd” in the Arabian Peninsula, today known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, their sojourn in Egypt, their subsequent conquest of North Africa (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) and their final defeat one hundred years later. The migration, the conquest, and the defeat are historical events which took place between the tenth and twelfth centuries A.D.

From this chain of actual events, Arabic oral tradition has woven a rich and complex narrative centered on a cluster of heroic characters. Time and again, bedouin warriors and heroines are pitted against the kings and princes of towns and cities.

The individual destinies of the main actors were constantly placed in a fragile balance with the fate of the tribe itself. Finally, with the conquest of North Africa, the Bani Hilal nomads themselves became rulers of cities, a situation which led to the internal fragmentation of the tribe, internecine wars, and their eventual demise. To this day there are populations in Upper Egypt that claim descent from the Bani Hilal.

Narratives about the Bani Hilal tribe have been passed down from generation to generation by oral tradition in regions located across the breadth of the Arab world, from Morocco on the shores of the Atlantic, to the Sultanate of Oman on the shores of the Indian ocean, from the Mediterranean in the north, to as far south in Africa as Sudan, Chad and Nigeria. So it is the single most widespread narrative tradition of Arabic Oral Literature.

(ii) Sirat Bani Hilal:

It is now seldom heard in the urban centers of Egypt, but in rural areas, it continues to be performed in prose, in poetry, and in song. The most famous versions are those sung in Upper Egypt by epic-singers who perform their versified narrative for nights at a time while accompanying themselves on the rababa, the tar or kamanja. These epic-singers perform at wedding ceremonies, and during some other occasions. The epic is divided - as it is known by the singers and also the scholars - into three parts: Mawaleed, Ra’eddah, and Taghriba. Some times they add a fourth part called El Aytam.
**The first section, Mawaleed** (Birth), recounts the history of the tribe, the birth of the main heroes (sultan Hassan, Abu Zaid, Diyab, Bedeir), their adventures as youth, and their marriages. Then a severe drought strikes their homeland in Najd in the Center of today’s Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the tribal council decides new pasturage must be sought if the tribe is to survive. A scouting party is formed consisting of Abu Zaid and his three nephews.

**The second section of the Sirah is the Ra’eddah** (Pioneering /Reconnaissance), relates the adventures of these four heroes, as they travel to Tunisia, seeking a new homeland for their tribe.

**The third section of The Sirah, the Taghriba,** (Westward journey), is an elaborate series of battles and romances, which takes the tribe on a not very direct route through Iraq, Syria, Cyprus, Jerusalem, Gaza, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Libya before they arrive in Tunisia. There the final battles are fought against the forces of Al Zanati Khalifa, and the unavoidable destiny of the tribe is played out. The death of Al Zanati by Diyab marks the end of many versions of Sirat Bani Hilal.

At the close of the final battle, most of the great heroes lie dead and the tribe has completed its conquest and realized its search for a homeland.

**A fourth section is found in some regions, especially in Egypt, El Aytam,** (Tome of the orphans), the Bani Hilal who in unity were victorious are divided in the ensuing peace. The final fratricidal battle is fought between Diyab and his forces and the army of orphans led by Al Jazya and the blind Abu Zaid, who lost his sight because of his weeping and mourning over Sultan Hassan’s death. At the battle’s end, all the heroes are dead; the clans are decimated and dispersed, as stragglers and refugees, over the face of the earth.

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**Sources :**

1. Yunis, Abdel hamid, Al Hilaliyya in History and Folk Literature, Cairo University Press, 1950. (in arabic)
3.1 Project Description

(i) Objectives:
The ESFT conducted a number of seminars and workshops having the following objectives:

a. Defining the general and specific project objectives (where opportunities were given for participants to make suggestions and discuss possible plans).

b. Determining the needs of the fieldwork teams (both in training and equipment).

c. Critical review of previous experiences in collecting Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya information.

d. Specifying the geographical framework coverage of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya and its narrators.

e. Specifying the stages of the fieldwork activities implementation.

f. Specifying the roles and priorities of the fieldworkers.

g. Training fieldworkers in developing the skills necessary for this project through ESFT by involving experienced professors specializing in fieldwork and its methods, including: foundations of fieldwork; fieldwork challenges; technical and artistic skills for field work.

(ii) Lectures and Workshops:
More than 40 fieldwork specialists, researchers, and ESFT members participated in the following substantive general and training lectures.

a. The general lectures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29/1/2005</td>
<td>Dr. Ahmed Morsi</td>
<td>Introduction to the Project and its Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/2/2005</td>
<td>Dr. Ahmed Morsi</td>
<td>The Importance of Fieldwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/2/2005</td>
<td>Mr. Safwat Kamal</td>
<td>Geographic Distribution of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/2/2005</td>
<td>Dr. Asaad Nadim</td>
<td>New Technologies in Fieldwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/2/2005</td>
<td>Dr. Sameeh Sha’alan</td>
<td>Fieldwork Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/2/2005</td>
<td>Dr. Ibrahim Abd ElHafez</td>
<td>Sirah/Epic Studies in Egypt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. The workshops:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31/1/2005</td>
<td>Dr. Ibrahim Abd El Hafez</td>
<td>Styles and Rules of Fieldwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mohammed Hassan</td>
<td>Collecting Narrations of the Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya Field Experiment from Asyut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2/2005</td>
<td>Khalid Abu Elail</td>
<td>Transcription the Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mohammed Hassan</td>
<td>Ways of Transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2/2005</td>
<td>Essam Staty</td>
<td>Musical Transcription of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/2/2005</td>
<td>Abd ElRahman El Shafi'y</td>
<td>Passing the Traditions to Younger Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Mustafa Gad</td>
<td>Methods of Classification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. The series of general lectures and workshops focused on the following points:

1- The importance of collecting narrations of the epic and the goals of collection.
2- The professionalism of fieldwork.
3- Skills of the fieldworker.
4- The multiple functions of collecting performed texts: storage; reviewing previous studies; a service to folk life centres, a national documentary project.
5- The necessity of ongoing evaluations of the fieldworkers' progress and performance.
6- Methods of recording in 'authentic' contexts (weddings, festivals and other events).
7- Methods of recording in 'staged' contexts.
8- Provision background information needed for the fieldworker to implement activities (the subjects of the Sirah/Epic and the conditions of its production; the distinctiveness of the Sirah/Epic in comparison to other narrative forms).
9- Discussions of fieldwork guidebooks.
10- Documenting the current state of Al Sirah/Epic narrations.
11- Examination of certain social and cultural contexts related to the transmission of oral narrations of the Sirah/Epic.
12- Observation of performance styles of the narrators.
13- Learning the prevailing attitudes, opinions of the narrators toward the epic and its narration, and the importance of collecting epic narrations from some amateur narrators.

14- Assessing the current skills and abilities of the fieldworkers:

- Knowledge of local dialect.
- Technical familiarity with the recording equipment.
- Ability to develop a contact, cultivate respect and good relations with narrators.
- Duality of observations and interviews.
- Ability to transcribe the collected material.
- Understanding the necessity for making copies of all data and sending it immediately to the ESFT.
- Adhering to proper documentation of the narrators’ and musicians’ personal information and including it with the epic text.
- Familiarity with current communications technology.

(iii) Technical Equipment:
The ESFT, under the direction of Dr. Asaad Nadim, identified a member with expertise in computers to determine the particular needs of the fieldwork operations. Information Technology engineer Atef Nawar (ESFT member and graduate student in folklore) was chosen for this task. A committee was then formed under the supervision of Dr. Ahmed Morsi and Dr. Asaad Nadim, including Dr. Shawki Habeeb, El Mohammady Attiya and engineer Atef Nawar, to buy the equipment.

Implementation of the initiative to document and preserve Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya activities in Egypt requires the utilization of the most modern and advanced technologies available for fieldwork documentation. The equipment that was chosen included, digital video/still/audio devices, and computers for transferring the recorded materials from the place of recording to the Information Center of the ESFT in Cairo.

Processing of data required sending audio files along with their associated still photographs, by means of the internet, to the ESFT website, where each field team was able to deposit copies of the recorded materials. Specialists in the Information Center then downloaded the files and transformed sound files into text files and registered them in the appropriate areas of the archive, after correcting flaws and errors.
(iv) Training of the Fieldworkers

a. Objective

Several fieldwork training sessions have been offered under the direction of Dr. Sameeh Sha’alan as part of the preparations for conducting fieldwork on Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya in Egypt. The training course was offered to researchers working in sound recording and photography with the latest digital technologies. Training sessions were attended by members of the ESFT and other researchers who are responsible for maintaining the archives (Information Center) of the ESFT, including instructors of documentary technology and techniques.

There were also a number of lectures in the theoretical and practical use of the audio and photographic equipment and laptop computers that had been purchased. Thirty members participated in this training session, given by two specialists in Computer Science and Information Technology recording. The ESFTs’ intention was that the training sessions would bring together a group of veteran fieldworkers (University professors, graduates of High Institute of Folklore) along with less experienced fieldworkers, in order to promote educational exchanges.

b. Training themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th-21st February 2005</td>
<td>Dr. Ibrahim Abd El Gayyed, Professor of audio recording, High Institute of Cinema, Academy of Arts.</td>
<td>Lectures on Sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th-21st February 2005</td>
<td>Dr. Wael Sabir, Professor of photography, High Institute of Cinema, Academy of Arts</td>
<td>Lectures on Visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th April - 7th May 2005</td>
<td>Atef Nawar &amp; Haitham Younis, Information Technology Engineers &amp; members of the ESFT</td>
<td>Technical Training Session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Audio visual training :

The audio training sessions focused on sound: its amplification, variety, transmission, and recording. The photography sessions emphasized the use of digital still and video cameras. Technical training sessions focused on practices with the laptop, the digital video still cameras and the digital voice recorder whose details are presented below.

d. Information & Communication Technology (ICT) training:

Computer terminology, use of the laptop computer, navigating the operating system, working with files, using word processing software, using the internet, transferring data from recording equipment to the laptop computer, creating backup files, power issues.
e. The Digital Video - Digital Camera:

1- Features and functions of the camera:
   Installing / removing compact flash card, installing / removing an SD card, selecting recording medium, charging the battery pack - power using AC power, date & time adjust, angle adjustment, operation mode, power switch position, recording / playback mode, auto / manual mode, connecting to ATV or VCR, changing the menu settings, memory card settings, display, menus for manual recording, cleaning the camera.

2- Use and focus the digital camera
   Still image recording, still image playback, zooming, single & continuous shooting, video recording, video playback, zooming, deleting video files, various playback operations.

3- Types of Images
   Quality, still image recording menus, still image playback menus.

4- Digital voice recorder
   Voice recording, voice playback, deleting voice files, voice recording, menus, voice playback menus.

N.B. Refer to Annex I for details.

3.2 Composition of the Fieldwork Teams

After the training sessions were completed, members were divided into five fieldwork teams each consisting of three fieldworkers. Each team was equipped with a laptop and a JVC video camera in order to canvass most Egyptian governorates, particularly those known for having a strong epic tradition, to ensure a coverage of both professional and amateur narrators. In each group an experienced fieldworker was appointed to act as head of the team, with the members as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governorate</th>
<th>Team Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qena</td>
<td>Khalid Abuelail, Gamal Mohamed Ata and Ahmed Abuelail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asyut</td>
<td>Mohamed Hassan, Ahmed Tawfik and Medhat Mahfouz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Cairo</td>
<td>Masoud Shoman , Mahmoud Ghidan and Hesham Abd El Aziz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafr El Sheikh</td>
<td>Ahmed Bahey, Mohammed Abu El Ila and Mohammed Abd El Azeem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suhag</td>
<td>Ahmed Abd El Rehim, (El Mohamady Atyya, Haitham Younis and Atef Nawar) part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>El Mohamady Atyya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer &amp; IT Support</td>
<td>Atef Nawar and Haitham Younis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Field Surveys

(i) Objectives

Two preliminary fieldtrips were undertaken by six members of the fieldwork teams to achieve the following aims:

a. Testing the new equipment for research purposes.

b. Practicing sending recorded material via the Internet to the ESFT’s headquarters for analysis. Locating epic narrators.

c. Preparations to train the fieldwork teams.

d. Overcoming challenges in fieldwork.

(ii) Implementation of field activities

a. Organization of fieldtrip to Kafr El Sheikh Province (4 days).

The fieldwork team travelled to several villages, beginning in Al Waraq, Markaz Sid Salem, where they worked with two narrators, Fathy Awad Salam, and Abd El-Galeel Iraqi. The team collected approximately 15 hours of epic narration as well as sending the data via the internet to the Information Center of ESFT in Cairo.

b. Organization of fieldtrip to Suhag Province (3 days)

The fieldwork team made a number of recordings transmitted from locations near Al Maragha and Al Sowamia and Sohag to the Information Center of ESFT. They recorded 15 hours with the narrators Sayed Dayf, Ahmed Ibrahim, and Al Munshawy. The team noted the prevalence of internet cafés using high speed connections.

(iii) Collected information on poets of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya in Egypt

Khalid Abu Elail and Mohammed Hassan were in charge of collecting and revising the list of Sirah/Epic poets, presenting Poets’ names, place and kind (professional/non-professional) of performance, and their age when known.
### GREATER CAIRO

#### Theme & Poet’s Name

The fainting of Abu Zeid, by Al-Sayed Omaran

---

### GIZA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet’s Name</th>
<th>Specific Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abd El Megeed Farghali</td>
<td>Sedfa district</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hussein Mohammed Masud</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed Saad</td>
<td>Kerdassa</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Global Map**

![Global Map of Egypt](image_url)
### MENUFeya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet’s Name</th>
<th>Specific Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abd ElSatar Fathi</td>
<td>Zawit Grawan, El Bagur district</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahhat ElAfifi</td>
<td>El Bagur district</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### KAfr EL SHEIKH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet’s Name</th>
<th>Specific Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abdel Moneim Fahmi</td>
<td>El Baakatush village, Kelleen district</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Professional and plays Rabab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abd El Galil Hawwas</td>
<td>El Waraq village, Sidi Salem district</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Professional and plays Rabab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathi Awad Sallam</td>
<td>El Waraq village, Sidi Salem district</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Professional and plays Rabab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### GharbeYA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet’s Name</th>
<th>Specific Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmad Sayed Hawas</td>
<td>Sandbast village, Zefta district</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Professional, a group of musicians accompanies him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### ASYUT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet’s Name</th>
<th>Themes &amp; Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antar Ezz El Arab</td>
<td>Mansheyyet, Hammam Village, El Badari district</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaddad Ezz El Arab</td>
<td>Mansheyyet, Hammam Village, El Badari district</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed El Fooly</td>
<td>Gaw El Nawwra Village, El Badari district</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathi Abu Dheef Sharaf</td>
<td>Gaw El Nawwra Village, El Badari district</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramadan El Sayid</td>
<td>Gaw El Nawwra Village, El Badari district</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abd El Ati Nayel</td>
<td>Ra’eddah, El Nekheela, Abu Teeg</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sayed El Dawee the most famous Sirah Poet and his team, from Qena, performing during a wedding ceremony celebration. Their eminent theme: Ra’eddah*
## ASYUT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet’s Name</th>
<th>Themes &amp; Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fathi Ali</td>
<td>Gaw El Nawwra Village, El Badari district</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayyd Diab</td>
<td>Gaw El Nawwra Village, El Badari district</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abd El megeed Farghali</td>
<td>Sedfa district</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaddad Ezz El Arab</td>
<td>Ra’eddah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## SUHAG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet’s Name</th>
<th>Themes &amp; Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ezz El Din Nasr El Din</td>
<td>El Balyna district</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Professional and plays Rabab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayyed El Gelei</td>
<td>Abu El Gud, Suhag city</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Professional and plays Rabab, a group of musicians accompany him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragab ElSuhagi</td>
<td>Suhag city</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional and a group of musicians accompany him</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## SUHAG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet’s Name</th>
<th>Themes &amp; Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abd El Sattar</td>
<td>El Balyna district</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Professional and plays Rabab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antar Radwan</td>
<td>Ra’eddah Suhag City</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional, plays Rabab, a group of musicians accompany him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed Ibrahim</td>
<td>The stories of the fight of Handal Ibn Akil and the exile of Diab Ibn Ghanem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Antar Radwan and his team during performance at a wedding.*
## QENA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet's Name</th>
<th>Themes &amp; Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sayyed El Dhuwwi</td>
<td>Ra‘eddah Qus City</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Professional and plays Rabab, a group of musicians accompany him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diab  Abd El Azeem</td>
<td>Naga El Hagr, Naga Hammadi district</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refat El Qenuwi</td>
<td>El Sheon, Qena district</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Professional and plays Rabab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Mohammed El Qenawi (Ali El Sharer)</td>
<td>Qena</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Professional and plays Rabab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed Mahmud Ibrahim (Abu Fahim)</td>
<td>Kafr El Mimnin, Qeft district</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abd El Naser Hassan Musa</td>
<td>El Oвидat Village, Qeft district</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramadan Ali</td>
<td>Ezbet El Gbeel Dandara Village Qena district</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed El Labo</td>
<td>El Oвидat Village, Qeft district</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassan Mohammed Mageed</td>
<td>Ezbet El Gbeel, Dandara Village, Qena district</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed Abd El Naeem Saleh</td>
<td>El Kalaa village, Qeft district</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahmoud Ata El Haffar</td>
<td>El Kalaa village, Qeft district</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed El Yamani</td>
<td>Ezbet Hussein Naga Hammadi district</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Professional, a group of musicians accompany him</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ezz El Din Nasr El Din and his team
### QENA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet's Name</th>
<th>Themes &amp; Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abu Abd El Fattah Mustafa</td>
<td>El Kalaa village, Qeft district</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Badawi El Qutt</td>
<td>Naga El Shawwaf, Deshna district</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Part time professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashraf Farouk Qenawi</td>
<td>El Ababda, Qena district</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Diab Shbib</td>
<td>Ezbet Gabr (El Sleeba) Asmant village</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed El Qenawi</td>
<td>Ezbet El Sheon, El Abayda, Qena district</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramadan El Qenawi</td>
<td>El Sheon, Qena district</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Professional and plays Rabab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramadan Hassani</td>
<td>Qus city</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Professional, plays Rabab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiman Mahmoud Ata</td>
<td>El Owidat Village, Qeft district</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu El Wafa Basheer</td>
<td>El Owidat Village, Qeft district</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abd El Raheem Ahmed Hassan</td>
<td>Ezbet El Gbeel, Dandara Village, Qena district</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed Awad</td>
<td>El Shekhia Village, Qeft district</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nur Mliki Hassan</td>
<td>Ezbet El Gbeel, Dandara Village, Qena district</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Non Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathi Faw</td>
<td>Qena city</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramadan M. Ibrahim</td>
<td>Ra’eddah Qena City</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezz ElDin Nasr ElDin</td>
<td>The story of Diab and the Deer Qena City</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional and plays Rabab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adly Habbash</td>
<td>Part of the story of Abu Zeid and Alya Qena City</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hussein Gomaah Hassan</td>
<td>The story of the Princess Alya Qena City</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thabet Abu-El Wafa</td>
<td>The story of Zeidan and the Deer Qena City</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(iv) Field work evaluation

The actual recordings of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya Epic narrations began in mid-May 2005, and it was decided that the fieldwork teams would send their recorded materials to the Information Centre daily, via the Internet. Due to technical difficulties encountered by the teams, the recordings were saved on CDs and then sent to Cairo via express mail.

The archivists reviewed the field recorded materials in order to deposit them in the appropriate areas of the electronic storage file system:

a. Evaluating recorded materials quality through a scale: from high quality and perfection by majority, to weak audio strength and poor photo quality by minority.

b. Attaching a detailed report to the materials from each group, addressing the team’s progress in the field.

c. Including some interviews that were not recordings of the epic but that addressed the epic and related topics.

1. The evaluation was carried out as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First period 15/05/05 - 18/06/05</th>
<th>Second period 10/06/05 - 12/07/05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total hours 196:05</td>
<td>Total hours 160:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qena team 78:11 hours</td>
<td>Qena team 48:55 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asyut team 33:17 hours</td>
<td>Asyut team 37:10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Cairo 12:56 hours</td>
<td>Greater Cairo 36:00 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafr El Shiekh 60:29 hours</td>
<td>Kafr El Shiekh 38:00 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suhag team 11:10 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Outcome

After reviewing samples of the recorded audio and video materials, each of the fieldwork teams reviewed their guidelines for organizing their summary reports to include:

- Emphasis in Phase II (refer to page 25, point 4.3) on recording a few well-known professional master narrators.
- Obtaining complete personal information about each of the narrators.
- Preparing detailed daily fieldwork reports to be sent with the recorded data.
- Focusing on the clarity of voice recordings and photographs.
- Noting in detail the contents of every CD.
- Providing a general description of the dialects used in the recordings, to be used later as a guide for transcription.
Each group may transcribe a certain number of its own sound recordings once
the files have been sent to the Information Centre, emphasizing that the
recording has already been transcribed (to prevent repeated transcription of
the same recordings). Field workers were compensated for any hours of
transcription.

3.4 Documentation of the Epic: Narrations

(i) Transcription of recorded materials

After receiving samples of the transcribed material of Al Sirah, some phrases
or words were found to be erroneous. Consequently, a quick training for the
transcribers was conducted, including how to deal with local dialects and
property. Also, each fieldwork team was to revise the transcription of its work.

a. The morning office team:

   Ahmed Kamel, Ibrahim Al-Khawaga and Hesham Ramadan.

b. The evening office team:

    Mohamed Tawfik, Ibrahim Hamed Mohamed and Mohamed Moemn.

(ii) Format of the transcribed material

a. The original raw material is kept in ESFT archives and will be handled upon
   the release and completion of all records on all three phases.

b. The completion of the life history of each poet, his repertoire and the
   transmitting of the lore to younger generations will be released by feature
   in the final report of phase II.

c. On the database, material is sorted out as follows:

   File number, place of
   recording, narrator /
   poet name, date of
   recording name of
   researcher / fieldworker,
   duration of file, name of
   transcribers, date of
   transcription, narrative
   poetry / poetry, singing
   / tallying.

(iii) Conservation and
     retrieval of data

Currently, a database
management system is
being developed for
conservation, retrieval and
classification of data.
3.5 UNESCO Cairo Office input on the project

A team from UNESCO headquarters' Intangible Heritage Section' and Cairo Office were actively involved in providing administrative and substantive support to project activities. A special thank to Janet Tchilinguirian, Melanie Clouser, Fanny Durville and Gehanne Abdel-Malek, under the supervision of the Senior Programme Specialist for Culture, Dr. Gérard de Puymége. Each has done excellent coordination with the Egyptian Society for Folk Traditions (ESFT).

They have assisted and participated in the following:

a. Attending all meetings concerning Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya, either at UNESCO Cairo Office or ESFT premises.

b. Preparing draft reports, editing document reports in English and taking minutes of meetings including distribution.

c. Organizing bilateral meetings between project decision makers.
4.1 Concluding remarks

The experience of the first phase can be summed up as follows:

(i) Most of the researchers (field workers) did not maximize the utilization of the technical equipment.

(ii) Some researchers from outside the districts, specially in Upper Egypt (Asyut, Suhag and Qena), found difficulty in comprehending the local dialect.

(iii) It is important and necessary that the researchers (field workers) stay a longer time in the districts where they are collecting the materials, in order to recollect more than once from the same poets in different occasions.

4.2 Recommendations

(i) It is fundamental, and this has to be very clear, to reaffirm the importance of transcribing the collected materials by the concerned researchers immediately after recording.

(ii) Prepare workshops which bring together specialists and researchers, to evaluate, rectify and correct what has been done in the first phase and to avoid deficiency and imperfection which could happen in the Phase II.

(iii) To concentrate in Phase II on distinguished professional poets (narrators), who were acknowledged by the researchers during the first phase data collection.

(iv) The necessity for the researchers (fieldworkers) to stay at least one month in the field.

4.3 Planned activities Phase II

(i) Extending the identification of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya master poets still practicing in Egypt, by collecting initial information about each one of them and, assemble documentations of their repertoires.

(ii) Documenting versions of Al Sirah Al Hilaliyya, Oral and Intangible Heritage aspects related to the performances.

(iii) Securing the transmission of the Oral and Intangible Heritage to younger generations (Training of Trainees).
4.4 Future activities Phase III:

(i) Encouraging the masters of Sirah poets, story tellers and the accompanying musicians to transmit their know-how to younger generation by providing the adequate tools such as workshops and training local community members.

(ii) Contending to support local communities by providing experts in the domain of story-telling for training the new generations to guarantee the transmission of know-how. Also lectures in schools, youth centers, cultural palaces (Qusur Al-Thaqafa) all over the country to strengthen the interest in Intangible culture in general and Al Hilaliyya in particular. This is expected to promote awareness and the significance of Intangible Heritage at national, Arab and international levels.

(iii) In consultation with Masters of Al Hilaliyya and academic scholars, choosing expert performers for the performances of the Sirah through theater presentations, TV and Radio to reach wider audience.

(iv) The third phase of the project is involved with preparations for, and development of an electronic inventory, classification and archiving of the Sirah through comprehensive training and collection of materials. This action will provide quality training to artists, story-tellers, practitioners of Sirah, and also create research opportunities for national and international students and concerned individuals.

(v) Reviewing and collecting copies of manuscripts of Al Hilaliyya from archives and libraries all over the world such as the Berlin Library, and the British Museum, etc, as well as comparing what the association collected with other variants that other collectors produced in different periods of modern times.

(vi) Organizing an international conference about Al Hilaliyya and its legacy among the community to arouse inspiration to other cultural forms of expression.

(vii) Publishing a book on the narratives of Al Hilaliyya.

(vii) Translating some of the narratives of Al Hilaliyya into English, French and Spanish, if it is possible.