Sjoerd Hofstra Research Fieldwork in Sierra Leone (1934 - 1936)

Archival Inventory

Archival Inventory by:
Michele Portatadino, 2014

Digital version:
Michele Portatadino, 2014

Brief description

**Title:** Research Fieldwork of Sjoerd Hofstra in Sierra Leone (1934-1936);

**Origin:** African Studies Centre Library, Leiden University;

**Dated (mostly):** 1934 - 1936;

**Dimensions:** Approximately five moving boxes, one book of informal letters, 400 photographs;

**Languages (mostly):** English, Mende, Dutch; also present: German;

**Summary:** Collection of letters book "Among the Mende in Sierra Leone" edited by Marijke Gijswijt - Hofstra, fieldwork notes, reports, postcards and photographs;

**Abstract:** Collection of letters, postcards fieldwork notes, reports and photographs by Sjoerd Hofstra during his fieldwork in Sierra Leone among the Mende people, in January 1934 - March 1935 and May - September 1936;

**Institution:** African Studies Centre, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands.

**Repository:** African Studies Centre Library, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands.

Origin and Acquisition

**Acquisition**

By gentle concession of Marijke Gijswijt - Hofstra, cultural and social historian and Sjoerd Hofstra's daughter, in 2014, the ASC was honoured to welcome amongst its publications, the book of letters by Sjoerd Hofstra, written between 1934 and 1936, in the course of his
anthropological fieldwork among the Mende people in Sierra Leone. Along with the book, the archive is enriched by five archive boxes of research material and approximately 400 digital photographs which Marijke Gijswijt - Hofstra agreed for uploading on the website Wikimedia Commons.

Content and composition

Specification content

As during both his permanences in Sierra Leone (Jan. 1934 - Mar. 1935 and May - Sep. 1936) Professor Hofstra contracted blackwater fever, he was convinced to return to Europe and never he had the possibility to complete his fieldwork research and, therefore, publish his research results. Nonetheless, four articles anent the Mende (referred to in his work as "Mendi") were published in English and are present in the book "Among the Mende in Sierra Leone" edited and translated by Marijke Gijswijt - Hofstra. Along with the mentioned articles, the book contains the letters to Maria Frederica Overdiep - Ham, Sjoerd Hofstra's adoptive mother, as a precious source of first-hand information regarding his fieldwork experience.

Five moving boxes are present at the ASC since 2004 as well, consisting of personal diaries, fieldwork notes, translations from the Mende language, personal letters between Sjoerd Hofstra (henceforth S.H.) and academic institutions, his fellow scholars, friends and relatives. The content of the moving boxes is specified below:

Box 1:

- Blue Abbot Duplicate Book (1/2 A4), (English), S.H. notes anent Hunting in Mendiland;
- Sierra Leone Survey Contoured Folder South East Panguma Region, 1st edition, and North West Pendembu Region, 1st edition, (English), no dates;
- Several booklets in Mende language, including exercise books and a translation of the Biblical Book of Ruth (Mende), no dates;
- D. Westermann, "African Dialects", original title: "Afrikanische Dialekte", Berlin, pp. 3-23, (German), 1931;
- S.H. "The Attitude towards the Dead by the Mendi (West Africa)", original title: "De houding tegenover den Dood bij de Mendi (West Afrika)", paper presented in lecture in Amsterdam 24/11/1939 for the Dutch National Anthropology Office, Man and Society, 15, pp.79-80 (Dutch); 1939;
- S.H. "Personality and differentiation in the political life of the Mendi", Africa, 10, 4, pp. 436-457, (English), 1937;
- Urbanisation in Africa Social Change, Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, proceedings of the inaugural seminar held in the Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, (English) 5-7 January 1963;
- Large notebook of S.H. notes anent miscellaneous topics, i.e.: the Mende language, family relationships and examples of names, (Mende/ English), no dates;
- 9 x Oxford Reporter's Book of notes anent the Mende language, 6 by S.H. and 3 by Woutje Hofstra - van de Bergh van Eysinga. Presumably used for fieldwork, (Mende/ English), 1936;
- 14 x The Instanter Reporter's Note Book (small, hard cover, 400 pp.), by S.H. and informants, part of a text anent Rice Farming and one text anent local Proverbs, (English), 1934;

**Box 2:**
- Archive box of S.H. fieldwork notes anent miscellaneous topics, i.e.: “witchcraft”, “dreams”, “Ngafanga”, “On spirits again” (13/06/1936), “Boa Constrictor” (29/08/1936), “suicide”, “family relations”, “a story anent hnanyafei” (21/07/1936), language exercises notes (Mende/ English), notes by Mende informant;
- Folder of S.H. fieldwork notes anent miscellaneous topics (English), no dates;
- Folder of Sierra Leone Governor publications of ordinances (English, 1924-1934), included: copy of Sierra Leone Royal Gazette (English), 1934-1935;
Frage der primitiven Individualität”. Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema, (German), 1933;

- S.H. notes anent “magic”, from a duplicated book, with final notes by Woutje Hofstra, (English), 1934;
- S.H. notes from a duplicate book anent miscellaneous topics, i.e. “thoughts”, informant Yengbeke notes with partial translation to English, (Mende/ English), no dates;
- Alice A. Bailey “The next three years”, Lucis Publishers Co. New York, (English), 1934;
- S.H. notes anent the Mende people, various questions and topics, i.e.: ownership of land, chiefs elections, Poro secret society (by Max Gorvies (?)), (English), 1934-1936;
- Thicker folder of S.H. notes anent oil palm, (English), presum. 1934-1936;

Box 3:

- “Acme” Manilla folder, S.H. notes anent comparisons between European and Mende law system, (English), no dates;
- “The Orderly File” folder: 5 certificates, filled and signed by S.H. (English), (resp. 4 births: 05/08/1934; 15/08/1934; 09/09/1934, 23/10/1934 and 1 death: 19/08/1934);
- Folder “Mende aantekeningen”, S.H. notes anent the Mende people, (English), 1934-1936;
- “The Orderly File” folder: S.H. notes anent the fieldwork among the Mende people, (English), 1935;
- Folder “Education”: R. Crosby letter to Mr. Dymond, Union College Bunumbu, Segbwema (20-12-1934); S.H. handw. notes anent a conversation with R. Crosby (1935); S.H. typew. notes anent College Education in Sierra Leone;
- Folder “Law”: S.H. notes anent law issues among the Mende, with Index; (English); Nov. 1934 - Mar. 1935;
- Folder “Panguma”: notes by Hanns Vischer (13-12-1933), Vierkandt, Alleney. Conversation on boat (Jan. 1934); An account of Davids staying at Freetown (Jan. 1935), notes anent Economic life and the crisis, notes anent Fieldwork progresses, report by I. Schapera, T.J.A. Yates, M. Hunter, G. Gordon Brown, (English);
- Folder “Mende aantekeningen”: S.H. notes anent labour among the Mende, (English), 1935;
- Folder “Mende aantekeningen”: S.H. notes anent the Mende people, (English), 1936;
- “Acme” Manilla folder: S.H. notes anent dowry cases and court cases, (English), Nov. 1934;
- Folder “Courts”: S.H. notes anent the political life of the Mende, (English), 1934;
- Folder “Law”: two handw. letters to S.H. by Nadel (30/01/1934, German), and M. Biou (06/04/1934), miscellaneous S.H. notes (English), no dates;
● Folder of S.H. notes anent miscellaneous topics: psychological problems, economic affairs, daily routine description, ethology (German/English), 1934;
● Folder “Charms”: S.H. notes anent children and charms among the Mende, (English), June-July 1936;
● Folder with handwritten letter, (English), 24/03/1934;
● Folder “Taboo”: S.H. notes regarding taboos among the Mende, (English), 24/06/1936 - 01/08/1936;
● Folder “Medicines”: S.H. notes anent pets, farm animals and animal sacrifices among the Mende, (English), 06/07/1936 - 16/07/1936;
● Folder “Mohammedanism”: S.H. notes anent Muslim influences on Mende burial ceremonies, (English), 26/07/1936;
● “Acme” Manilla folder: S.H. notes anent “Swearing”, “Kinds of debts”, “Rice cultivation”, “Court cases”, (English), 1935;
● “Acme” Manilla folder: S.H. notes anent family situations, (English), Dec. 1934;
● “Acme” Manilla folder: S.H. notes anent marriage, bride price and dowries among the Mende, (English), 1934-1935;
● “Acme” Manilla folder: S.H. notes anent food, medicines, dresses, (English), 1934;
● University of Amsterdam (UvA) envelop: notes by S.H. informants in Bundu, Sierra Leone, (English), 1934;
● S.H. paperclipped notes anent “Individual and group in Mendi life”, (English), no dates;
● Unnamed folder: list of reminders, S.H. notes, (English), 1936;
● “The Orderly File” folder: S.H. notes, (English), 1936;
● “The Orderly File” folder: S.H. notebooks, personal notes, newspaper cuts (Dutch), fliers, (English); 1935;
● “Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden” envelop: S.H. handw. notes anent Mende language, (Mende/English), 1934-1936;
● Folder “Food”: S.H. notes anent food, (English), 04/06/1936 - 03/09/1936;
● Folder “Swearing”: S.H. notes anent swearing among the Mende, (English), 12/06/1936 - 04/09/1936;
● Folder “Politics”: S.H. notes anent politics among the Mende, (English), 21/05/1936 - 24/07/1936;
● Folder “Conteh’s notes on Court Cases”: notes by Conteh anent court cases in Sierra Leone, (English), no dates;
● Folder “Economics”: S.H. notes anent Mende economics, (English), 06/06/1936 - 14/08/1936;
● Folder of S.H. notes anent Mende burial ceremonies, (English), 26/06/1936 - 01/09/1936;
● Folder “Confession”: S.H. notes anent confession in Mende society, (English), 15/07/1936 - 20/08/1936;
● Folder “Psychology”, with Index: S.H. notes anent psychological issues among the Mende, (English), 15/09/1934 - 04/06/1936;
● Envelop by Clarke to S.H.: notebooks and paper sheets in Mende language (Mende), included letter by Clarke to S.H. (English), 21-02-1935;
● “db Nederlandse Verening Tot Bescherming van Dieren” envelop: notes anent farming among the Mende, (English), no dates;
● Unnamed folder: handw. notes on miscellaneous topics: meetings and ceremonies, (Mende/English), 1934;
● “Londen 1933” bag: notes anent a talk at Malinowski seminar, reports of conversation with Alleney, (English/ German), 1933.

Box 4:

● “The Orderly File” blue folder: S.H. notes anent conclusion points of his research fieldwork, miscellaneous notes, (English), no dates;
● “The Orderly File” green folder: S.H. notes anent Questions on Religion, (English), no dates;
● “The Orderly File” green folder: S.H. notes anent diseases (Mende), notes anent Mende spirituality and religion, (English), 27/06/1934 - 12/10/1934;
● Folder with green string: “Medical and hygiene education”, (orig.: Medische en hygiënische voorlichting”), Sierra Leone Messenger booklet (1933), “Health Instruction” booklet (1928), S.H. notes anent health, sanitation and medical treatments, (English);
● “Acme” Manilla folder: S.H. notes anent “Court case of a few big men from Laoma” and other court cases, (English), Sept. 1934 - March 1935;
● Envelope “University van Amsterdam” (UvA): S.H. notes anent the Mende language (Mende), conversation with Dr. Richards (English), 1934 - 1936;
● “Acme” Manilla folder: S.H. notes anent ceremonies and religious matters among the Mende, (English), May 1934;
● “Acme” Manilla folder: S.H. notes anent spinning and weaving among the Mende, (English), 06/04/1934;
● Folder “Somi”: S.H. notes anent a man called Somi, (Mende/ English), 13/02/1935;
● Large green folder: S.H. notes anent Pegbei curse, ceremonies, court cases, burials, (Mende/ English), 1936;
● “The Orderly File” folder “Questions”: “Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant” newspaper (07/01/1936), S.H. notes anent fieldwork questions on miscellaneous topics, i.e. animals, secret societies, mining, education, (English/ Dutch), 1936;
● “Acme” Manilla folder: S.H. notes anent kpalepei ceremony, (English), 27/04/1934;
● “Acme” Manilla green folder: S.H. notes anent Mende attitude towards animals, (English), 1935-1936;
● “Samen stelling inwoners” folder: S.H. lists of inhabitants and family relationships, (English), no dates;
● “The Orderly File” green folder: S.H. notes anent “Paramount Chiefs” and “Natives attitude towards animals”, (English), 1936;
● “Union College Exams” pink folder: handwritten, corrected and evaluated Union College students essays, (Mende), Nov. 1934. Typewritten Bunumbu Union College syllabus, (Mende/ English), 1935;
● “The Orderly File” folder “LABOUR”: S.H. notes anent labour among the Mende, (Mende/ English), Aug. 1936;
● SISWO Envelope: Folder “Verslag”: S.H. notes anent a talk with Dr. Summer in Koyema school (23/01/1934), notes anent mission schools, (English), (28/01/1934 - 14/02/1934). Folder “Religion”: S.H. notes anent religion and supernatural possessions, (English/ Dutch), no dates;
• Folder of S.H. notes anent the Mende language (Mende/ English), presum. 1935;
• “The Orderly File” folder “Family Relations Terms”: S.H. notes anent family groups, (English), no dates;
• DIENTS brown envelop: empty;
• DIENTS white envelop: folder of S.H. notes on burials, (English), 1936; folder “Family”: S.H. notes anent bride prices and dowries, marriage and family issues among the Mende, (English), 06/07/1936 - 06/08/1936; folder “Soothsaying”: S.H. notes anent “the commercial side of soothsaying”, (English), 22/07/1936; folder: “Psychological observation, Personal”: S.H. notes anent miscellaneous topics, i.e. Mende language and vocabulary, shame by women, interpersonal relationships (Mende/ English), 01/07/1936 - 07/09/1936; folder “Change Problems”: S.H. notes anent “opinion about older and new times, changes brought about by Europeans”, notes anent a talk on sexual matters and family life, (English), 04/09/1936; folder of S.H. notes in Mende language (Mende), no dates;
• “On His Majesty Service” Envelop: two typewritten copies of Vergette’s booklet on “Certain marriage customs among the natives of Sierra Leone”, with letter to S.H. by H.B. Williams, (English), 17/09/1934;
• Folder “Family”: S.H. notes anent social relations in Mende life, (English), no dates;
• Envelope “db Nederlandse Verening tot Bescherming van Dieren”: pink folder “Marriage”: S.H. notes anent marriage and family among the Mende, (English), Nov. 1934 - Feb. 1935, June 1936;
• DIENTS brown envelop: green folder: S.H. notes (Mende), 04/09/1936; folder “Twins”: S.H. notes anent twins, (Mende/ English), 24/06/1936;
• Yellow Envelop “Mendi Onuitgewerkt Materiaal”: folder “Boakaai Kowai burial”: S.H. notes anent the burial of Boakaai Kowai, (Mende/ English), 1936; folder “Mafinda’s burial”: S.H. notes anent the burial of Mafinda, (Mende/ English), 08/09/1936; folder “Momokane death”, S.H. notes anent the death and burial of Momokane, (Mende/ English), 1936; folder “Poro”: S.H. notes anent Poro secret society (Mende/ English), no dates; folder “Samawai’s woman palaver”: S.H. notes anent “Samawai about his woman palaver” court case, (Mende/ English), 04/09/1936;
Box 5:

- “The Blue Abbott Duplicate Book”: notes on medical conditions, (English), 1934-1936;
- ESCO Indexed Diary: S.H. notes anent personal routine, (English), 1936;
- Pocket notebook: notes anent the Mende language, (Mende/English), no dates;
- Brown envelop: two deteriorated photographs, (one of Mende people, other of two white young men with English notes: “To be excluded” on the back, 09/09/1929);
- Plastic folder: S.H. correspondence with academic institution and representatives, such as the London University Institute of Education, (English), 23/05/1945 - 14/01/1948;
- Green folder: folder “Over Mendi”: six paperclipped blocks of S.H. notes anent the Mende people, (Dutch), 1936; S.H. notes anent a lecture in Rotterdam “The thinking of the primitive people”, original title: “Het denken der natuurvolken”, (Dutch), 09/01/1940;
- Paperclipped block of S.H. cultural anthropological notes, frequent use of red crayon, (Dutch), no dates;
- Scanned and printed version of S.H. correspondence, (English), 09/08/2010, 12/08/2010 (see also Dutch-to-English translated letters and postcards from S.H. to Frederica Maria Overdiep, by Marijke Gijswijt - Hofstra about labour assistance to Malinowski, Summer 1933);
- Folder of reports by Leiden African Studies Institute, (English/Dutch), 1951 - 1953 (Present in the Leiden African Studies Centre archives since 15 July 2014);
- Envelop of Congratulations for S.H. appointment as extraordinary Professor at Leiden African Culture Institute, (Dutch), 1947 (Present in the Leiden African Studies Centre archives since 15 July 2014);

Red Box I: folder of S.H. correspondence with the NY Rockefeller foundation (English), 23/02/1932; S.H. correspondence with the London International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (English), 3/10/1933 - 26/06/1936; Evans Pritchard letter to S.H. (English), 25/03/1936; letter to S.H. (English), 14/08/1938; folder “Sierra Leone - Madeira - Amsterdam”: miscellaneous documents, i.e. S.H. notes, letters, boat tickets, hotel receipts, drug stores bills, (English/Dutch), 1936-1937; folder of S.H. correspondence with the London International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (English); S.H. correspondence with the London School of Oriental Studies (English); S.H. correspondence with the Berlin International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (German), 1936-1940; folder of S.H. correspondence with the London International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (English); S.H. correspondence with the London School of Oriental Studies (English); S.H. correspondence with the British Colonial Office (English), 1946-1951; folder of S.H. correspondence to and from Sierra Leone: letters to S.H. by Freetown Education Department, (English), 22/12/1934 - 23/11/1938; S.H. correspondence with informants in Sierra Leone, (English), 1934-1939; S.H. typewritten report anent three University Colleges in Nigeria, Gold Coast (Ghana) and Sierra Leone, (English/Dutch), 14/01/1954 - 04/03/1954;


**Editing:** the book "Among the Mende in Sierra Leone", edited and translated by Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, is currently catalogued and available at the African Studies Centre Library, Leiden University, as ASC Occasional Publication n°19, 2014. All the rights are reserved to Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra.