# Interdisciplinary aspirations and disciplinary archives: Losing and finding John M. Weatherby's Soo data

Samuel J. Beer
*University of Virginia*

## Abstract

As theorized in language documentation, archives serve to make research reproducible and to make primary data accessible for multiple audiences (Himmelmann 2006; Berez-Kroeker et al. 2018). Scholars in the emerging mid-20th century field of African history emphasized these same priorities. Mid-century Africanist historians assembled large text collections but failed in a clearly stated disciplinary project to preserve them in accessible archives.

This paper explores the relationship between institutional and social factors in data preservation through the story of audio recordings and field notes documenting Soo (Uganda: Kuliak/Nilo-Saharan) collected in the mid-20th century by Makerere University history PhD student John M. Weatherby. For decades, Weatherby struggled and failed to find an institutional home for his materials, which were nearly lost amid changing disciplinary trends. I encountered them only through informal social interactions in 2018 and have subsequently been depositing them in a language archive.

The slide of Weatherby's data into obscurity shows how archiving is inherently a disciplinary practice. Institutions intending to preserve data rose and fell with changing disciplinary paradigms, but Weatherby's data were preserved through personal relationships. Despite a common emphasis on technical and institutional initiatives for archiving, the relational contexts of legacy materials are central to their preservation.

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## 1. Introduction: Archive construction is a social as well as technical phenomenon

In June 2018, I watched Joanna Weatherby reach onto the top shelf of a closet and retrieve boxes of recordings of linguistic elicitations, interviews, narratives, and conversations in which her father, John M. Weatherby, had documented speech in the endangered Soo[1] and Nyangi[2] languages of northeastern Uganda while he was a PhD student in history in the 1960s and 1970s. The scene felt too good to be true. We were at her home on the coast of Spain, and a year and a half had passed since I had completed my doctoral research on Nyangi, which was based on data collected with the only remaining speaker of the language that I was able to identify. One limit of my doctoral research had been the impossibility of knowing how the language had changed in recent decades. Now, as I looked on, Joanna Weatherby was setting boxes full of possible answers to such questions onto a bed in her home.

A foundational insight driving the field of language documentation is that the records of speech that scholars produce for their own research purposes can be useful to other people with different purposes as well. Attesting to this fact were my feelings of hope and anticipation when I first saw John M. Weatherby's research materials being retrieved from a closet. But as I will detail in this paper, Weatherby's materials and I had each taken convoluted paths to the moment in which we intersected. A great promise of the field of language documentation is that preserving research materials and connecting them to users need not be so haphazard; technological developments and archiving best practices provide better ways for data to be connected with users in order to fulfill the two-fold objective of rendering linguistic research reproducible and of making linguistic data accessible as multi-purpose records of languages.

With this end in mind, language documentation scholars have been identifying obstacles to the successful preservation, discovery, and mobilisation of language data and have been proposing ways to mitigate them. In order to make archived data more accessible to linguists and to scholars from other disciplines, these scholars have advocated for standards pertaining to, for example, the formats and settings used to record linguistic data, data workflows, metadata schema, annotation practices, and citation conventions (e.g., Bird & Simons 2003; Evans & Sasse 2004; Boynton et al. 2006; Himmelmann 2006; Thieberger and Berez 2011; Gawne et al. 2017; Berez-Kroeker et al. 2018; Andreassen et al. 2019; Sullivant 2020). These proposals

[1] ISO 639-3 teu, Glottocode sooo1256.

[2] ISO 639-3 nyp, Glottocode nyan1313.

posit ways for linguists to make the data that linguists collect more accessible to others, and the data that they address is data that already has an institutional home (or at least a planned institutional home). By and large, these proposals have identified technical obstacles to mobilising language data and proposed technical strategies to overcome them. These technical obstacles are undoubtedly real and important to overcome.

However, my experience locating, accessing, and archiving Weatherby's materials calls attention to the fact that many obstacles to the accessibility of data are not technical, but rather social.[3] While social factors have been a major point of emphasis in literature addressing how the products of language documentation (or the means of production in language documentation) can be made more accessible to the communities whose languages are documented (e.g., Yamada 2007; Czaykowska-Higgins 2009; Gardiner & Thorpe 2014; Garrett 2014; Linn 2014; Link et al. 2021; Ungsitipoonporn et al. 2021), the role of social factors in shaping the accessibility of language data to other scholars or in determining what gets archived in the first place remains little explored in language documentation scholarship.

In this paper, I focus particularly on the roles played by disciplinary pressures and interpersonal relationships in making language data accessible (or inaccessible) to other scholars. I illustrate these factors through my own interactions with Weatherby's audio recordings and field notes, originally produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s while Weatherby was serving as a civil servant in Uganda and pursuing a PhD in history at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda.

These materials were assembled to provide data for a study of the history of the Soo, who live on three mountains in the Karamoja Sub-region of northeastern Uganda. The Soo language belongs to the Kuliak language family, which has been treated as either an independent (or at least unclassifiable) language family (e.g., Sands 2009; Güldemann 2018) or a divergent branch of Nilo-Saharan (e.g., Bender 1991; Ehret 2001; Dimmendaal 2018).

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[3] I am depositing Weatherby's materials at the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) as the collection "Legacy Documentation of Soo and Nyangi from John M. Weatherby's Field Notes and Audio Recordings." The deposit ID is 0646, and it can be found at http://hdl.handle.net/2196/032185e4-d02f-47ef-9c41-dbfd8c12f0b6. The following abbreviations have been used to cite material in the text and the notes: JMW: John M. Weatherby; JMWLD: the deposit "Legacy Documentation of Soo and Nyangi from John M. Weatherby's Field Notes and Audio Recordings" at the Endangered Languages Archive. Specific items from the deposit are cited with unique identifiers. These will look, for example, like "teunotes0155", and the items can currently be found most easily by entering the unique identifier into the search tool at ELAR.

*Figure 1. John M. Weatherby and his wife Renée on a field trip to visit Nyangi speakers in Lobalangit, Uganda in 1970. Photo by John M. Weatherby. [teuphotos0004].*

In 1996, when he was 85 years old, John M. Weatherby wrote to an anthropology professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). He had "an enormous quantity of residue from all the notes and maps" that he had made in the course of 17 years of research on cultures of northeastern Uganda.[4] While a draft of his doctoral thesis had been deposited in a library at UCLA, Weatherby felt that "all the remaining notes and diagrams…besides the thesis itself are worth preserving for the future," because they documented "the only thorough study" of the Soo before Idi Amin's regime made such work impossible, and therefore represented a record of "the last chance of working on the oldest age group at that time".[5] Fearing that these materials would be lost forever, he sought advice regarding how to make them available for researchers in the future. Presciently, he understood that his field notes were a tool that could be used by future scholars to answer questions that he had never thought to ask of them. I was one such scholar.

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[4] JMWLD: JMW/Paul Spencer 1996-03-16, teunotes0155.

[5] JMWLD: JMW/Paul Spencer 1996-03-16, teunotes0155.

I first encountered Weatherby's materials two decades after Weatherby had contacted the professor at SOAS. They were not in an archive at SOAS—nothing had come of Weatherby's 1996 letter. Instead, they were uncatalogued in plastic tubs in the home in Spain that Weatherby lived in for the last several decades of his life. Interspersed with journals, field notes, photographs, and audiotapes that hold unique documentation of multiple Ugandan languages were fragments of evidence indicating that Weatherby had unsuccessfully sought for decades to preserve the fruits of his research. How could so much documentation have languished in obscurity for so long, given how motivated Weatherby was to make it accessible? This question nagged at me in early 2017 as I first began exchanging emails with Weatherby's daughter Joanna, who currently stewards her father's materials. As I have grown more familiar with the context of Weatherby's research, I have come to see him as laboring in the interstices of the disciplines of history, anthropology, and linguistics, his work never quite aligning with the research aims of any of them, which deprived his materials of a disciplinary home.

In Section 2, I detail the history of my encounter with Weatherby's materials, which I located while looking for possible sources of evidence regarding how languages of northeastern Uganda have changed over the past several decades. I began cataloging, digitising, and analysing the materials in 2018 as part of a project to clarify linguists' understanding of structural change in language shift by showing how the structures of two Kuliak languages, Soo and Nyangi, were affected by contact with the Nilotic languages which have almost completely replaced them in the language use of the Soo and Nyangi communities.

Section 3 explores the disciplinary context Weatherby worked within when he compiled his collection. In the leadup to the mid-20th century, the prospect of colonised African states gaining independence from their European colonisers grew ever more likely. Responding both to its own interests and to popular pressure from its African subjects, Britain created universities such as Makerere, the University of Nairobi, and the University of Dar es Salaam.[6] The new universities were to train the future political leaders of the soon-to-be independent African states, and the designers of the new university systems viewed history departments as integral to this project. A central objective of these new history departments was to expand the study of African history, which had previously been limited to the colonial era when (at least in many parts of the continent) written documents were introduced. Particularly following the publication of Africanist historian Jan Vansina's (1965) *Oral*

[6] While Francophone contexts held a different tradition with different practices in which text collection was more common, I have limited myself to addressing the Anglophone traditions that Weatherby's work was situated in.

*tradition: A study in historical methodology,*[7] a generation of historians set off to record oral texts from cultures across Africa in order to create databases for historical analysis. In taking on the task, historians found themselves faced with the problem of how oral data could be converted to an archival object that could be scrutinised by future scholars in accordance with the disciplinary standards of history. This yielded a theorisation of the archive that is closely echoed in the language documentation movement today. However, the mid-century Africanist historians lacked much of the disciplinary infrastructure that reinforces the project of archive-building in linguistics, and they largely failed in their mission to preserve and to make accessible the data underlying their research.

At that time, neither linguists nor anthropologists working in East Africa were paying much attention to the collection and dissemination of texts in their original languages. Section 4 surveys the main research priorities in these disciplines when Weatherby was conducting his research, showing how and why scholars from each field valued data, and in particular text collection, differently from one another and from historians. Neither creating nor using archives was an important research practice in linguistics and anthropology during Weatherby's time. This had the effect of making the texts collected by historians both more remarkable and less visible.

I illustrate the perils of working in inauspicious disciplinary moments in Section 5, where I discuss John M. Weatherby's efforts to preserve his collection of field notes and audio recordings. Weatherby's attempts to produce and preserve data that would be useful to scholars from across disciplines involved collaboration with scholars from three disciplines that were treated as distinct in the context of Africanist scholarship in his time: social anthropology, history, and linguistics. Despite his cross-disciplinary collaborations and professional networks, Weatherby's materials nevertheless spent nearly 50 years in obscurity. Drawing on Weatherby's written correspondence with social anthropologists, historians, and linguists, I explore Weatherby's wide-ranging attempts to preserve a record of his field notes and recordings. In a disciplinary world that lacked a serious commitment to the preservation of oral data, Weatherby's attempts to preserve his work often left him at cross-purposes with other scholars.

A dominant theme in the story of Weatherby's materials is that at any given time, disciplinary communities have ideas about what data is, about what archives are, and about what the purpose of each is. These ideas are often rooted in projections of our future selves as the imagined users. For this reason, among others I will discuss, the implementation of a discipline's stated objectives for preserving data for future users may not be effective. For example, while

[7] Originally published in 1961 as *De la tradition orale*.

Weatherby's contemporaries sought to make archives that were universally accessible multipurpose records benefitting not only Africanist historians but also (among others) future linguists, disciplinary pressures were as often a hindrance as a help in the production and preservation of the materials that were supposed to fill such archives. To a much greater extent, Weatherby's materials were preserved through the care of people acting as his friends and kin, regardless of whether they were his colleagues or not.

My aim in this paper is not to assign blame. Undoubtedly the various actors that will be discussed throughout acted in good faith and made reasonable choices about, for example, whether or not to arrange for the accession of Weatherby's materials to their archive. As observed by a reviewer, Weatherby never demonstrated the sort of professional excellence within an academic discipline that might be associated with having one's research materials archived. Archives are finite institutions with limited financial and human resources; making choices about which materials to accept is an essential aspect of their successful operation. It might not be surprising, then, that the decades-old manuscripts and audio tapes of a former graduate student whose doctoral thesis had never been accepted were not seen as warranting exceptional effort by the SOAS archive in the incident mentioned above, which will be discussed at greater length in Section 5. There is no reason for me to doubt that it was a good choice. And that means that not everything that could be useful or important for future researchers can ultimately be archived. This paper interprets archiving as a social process that is shaped by individuals, institutions, and relationships (whether social or professional); the social phenomenon of Weatherby's failure to gain institutional recognition is at its very heart.

In the same way that Weatherby's work has proven to be very valuable to me, many of the other mid-century Africanist historians' research products could be of interest for linguists today, but they are not easily discoverable by linguists. This paper provides an account of why this is so and asks what, if anything, distinguishes recent theorisations and practices of language archiving from the practices of the Africanist historians. Certainly, technological developments offer some hope that today's language archives will be more accessible than the mid-century Africanist history archives. But the history of Weatherby's materials is not merely a cautionary tale calling for technical or institutional progress. Ultimately, Weatherby's materials have indeed reached me, and they reached me as a result of generosity and care emerging from relationships. Where institutions have proven transient, social connections have been surprisingly durable. Mid-century Africanist historians were silent on the role that relationships might play in the preservation and transmission of archival materials; this paper seeks to avoid repeating that silence in documentary linguistics today.

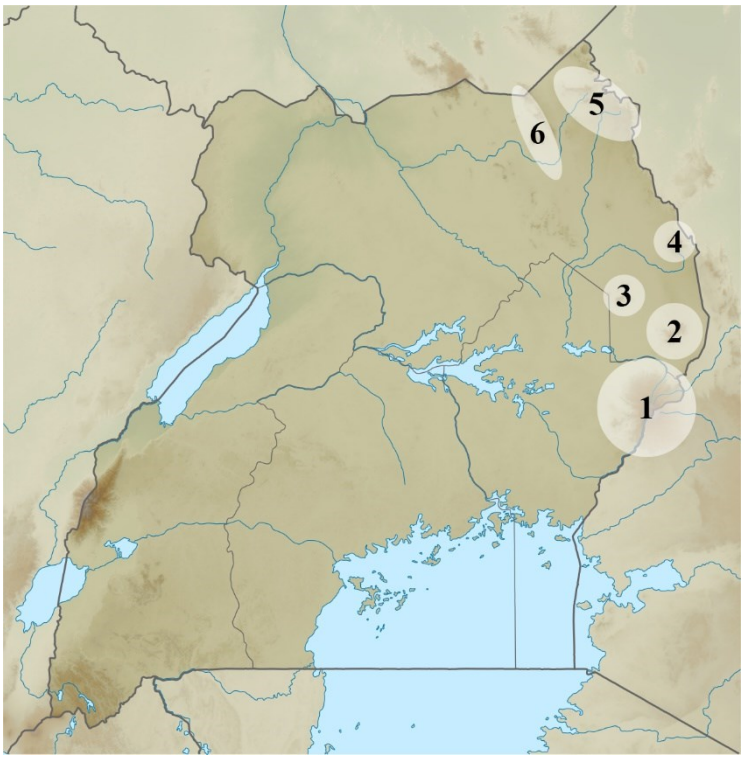
## 2. Finding a historian's corpus for linguistic analysis

My initial interest in working with the remaining records of Weatherby's fieldwork grew out of my doctoral research in linguistics at the University of Colorado, during which I focused on structural change in the late stages of language shift in Nyangi, a language closely related to Soo. Together with Ik,[8] Nyangi and Soo comprise the Kuliak language family, a group of languages spoken in Karamoja Sub-Region in northeastern Uganda (see Figure 2). The external relations of Kuliak remain contested. Prior to my work with Nyangi, existing documentation of the language was limited to a 106-item word list (Driberg 1932) and an eight-page sketch of selected phonological and morphosyntactic phenomena accompanied by another list of 416 words (Heine 1974).

Based on fieldwork with Komol Isaach, the only person I was able to locate who would produce more than a few lexical items in Nyangi, my dissertation consisted of a description of Komol's idiolect of Nyangi. In it I aspired to provide an account of structural changes that had occurred in this idiolect since the time when Nyangi was used in everyday communication. I had some successes. For example, I found that Komol's idiolect does not have the type of number marking system typical in the area, in which some noun roots are lexically singular, some noun roots are lexically plural, and a range of singulative and plurative affixes are used to reverse the number value of each type. In Komol's idiolect, all noun roots are singular and all number-marking affixes are plural, though extensive lexically conditioned allomorphy of the plural-marking affixes has been preserved (Beer 2017, 2018). The singulative/plurative system, which is present in the other Kuliak languages and unrelated Nilotic contact languages, was also attested in an earlier variety of Nyangi (Heine 1974).

But I was often frustrated in my efforts to reconstruct how Nyangi had changed. Because no systematic grammatical description of an earlier form of Nyangi existed, I usually had only indirect evidence as to what the language had been like. Where a particular structural feature of Nyangi was not addressed by Heine (1974), I hypothesised that if it was found both in languages related to Nyangi and in languages in contact with Nyangi, but not in Komol's idiolect, that feature was likely to have been a recent loss. For example, tone is lexically and/or grammatically contrastive in related and contact languages, but not contrastive in Komol's idiolect of Nyangi. By this I mean that there are no morphemes in the language which are differentiated from each other solely by the lexical representation of pitch. However, pitch

[8] ISO 639-3 ikx, Glotocode ikkk1242.




| Number | Geographical Feature | Home to speakers of: |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Mount Elgon | Sebei (Kupsabiny)[9] |
| 2 | Mount Kadam | Soo |
| 3 | Mount Napak | Soo |
| 4 | Mount Moroto | Soo |
| 5 | Assorted escarpment mountains | Ik |
| 6 | Nyangea Mountains | Nyangi |

*Figure 2. General locations of languages discussed in this paper. Marked on the basis of the geographical features with which they are associated.*[10]

[9] ISO 639-3 kpz, Glottocode kups1238.

[10] Mountains labeled by author CC (BY-SA). 2)-6) are at the northern and southern periphery of Karamoja Sub-Region, and 1) is adjacent. Based on a map in https://bit.ly/36DoOGP (accessed 2021-07-15).

values are lexically assigned to Nyangi morphemes (i.e., pitch assignment is not predictable on the basis of other segmental or prosodic features), and tonal processes including replacive tone accompany affixation. I speculated that this represented a recent reduction in the functional load of tone, but as with many other phenomena, I wished for direct evidence of what Nyangi had been like in the past and felt uncomfortable with how speculative my analyses were.

So while finishing my dissertation, I began to look for documentation of earlier forms of Nyangi. I started by trying to find the fieldnotes that the two existing articles dealing with Nyangi, those by Driberg and Heine, were based on, but I was unable to locate Nyangi fieldnotes from either scholar. Six sets of unpublished fieldnotes that could include Nyangi material, including Weatherby's collection, are mentioned in bibliographies of the Kuliak languages (Tucker & Bryan 1956; Heine 1974). Since I had not had any luck finding Driberg's or Heine's notes, I tried to find some of these collections, among which I found myself particularly interested in Weatherby's notes.[11] One reason for this inclination was that some of the other collections were described as wordlists, and it seemed likely that they would be particularly limited in their ability to offer insights into language structure, whereas Weatherby's materials appeared to include texts. There was also a more personal reason. During my undergraduate studies, I had spent time in Uganda studying Soo. My main Soo consultant had been a man named Lokiru Cosma, who 40 years previously had been one of Weatherby's most trusted consultants (see Figure 3). The day I met Lokiru, I was taken aback when he asked me if I knew John Weatherby. Years later, this interaction gave me a motivating sense of personal connection to Weatherby's work.

When I started my PhD research on Nyangi, I did not even know where to begin looking for Weatherby's work. I was surprised and encouraged, then, when Weatherby's doctoral thesis, edited by Joanna Weatherby and her husband Javier Sánchez Díez, was published posthumously at around this time. The new book included transcripts of a few interviews in Soo, so maybe more of Weatherby's primary documentation (even notes or recordings from Nyangi?) was still accessible. But my attempts to contact Joanna Weatherby to find out if this was the case were unsuccessful.

[11] To this day, I have not succeeded in locating any of the other five sets of notes.

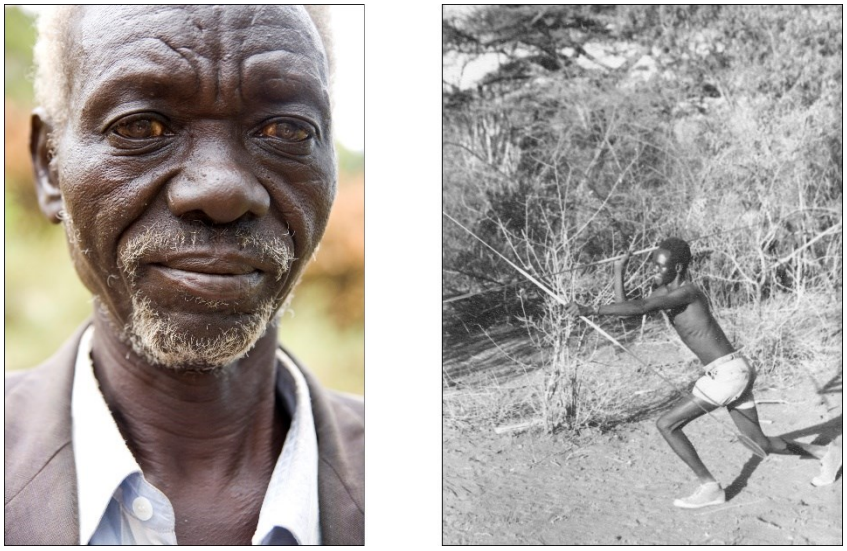


*Figure 3. Left: Lokiru Cosma in 2009. Photo by author. Right: Lokiru Cosma in 1970. Photo by John M. Weatherby. [teuphotos0004].*

Discouraged by my fruitless search for archival sources and preoccupied with the data that I collected during my own fieldwork, I had all but given up on finding Weatherby's Nyangi notes by the time that I completed my dissertation, which I defended a week after the 2017 annual Linguistics Society of America meeting in Austin, Texas. In a chance conversation with Africanist linguist Bonny Sands at that meeting, I mentioned my suspicion that John Weatherby's field notes might still exist somewhere, but that I had not been able to locate them. Days later, I was startled and delighted to receive an email from Sands putting me in touch with Joanna Weatherby, whose contact information Sands had secured through a chain of academic connections. Joanna Weatherby promptly invited me to her home in Spain to survey the recordings and fieldnotes left by her father. She expressed the joy that she imagined her father would feel at my interest: "My father would indeed be happy to know that, even after so long, someone is interested in his work! He loved Africa, and particularly Karamoja, so much and would certainly have most enthusiastically wanted to contribute anything he could towards your research."[12]

[12] Email Joanna Weatherby/Samuel Beer, 2017-01-29.

I was able to accept Joanna Weatherby's gracious hospitality in June 2018, when I visited her to assess the materials. The audio recordings, photographs, and field notes that comprise the collection fill several large plastic tubs (see Figure 4). The field notes include original shorthand notes produced during meetings with consultants, longhand copies of the same notes written more neatly later, and individual sentences cut out of longhand copies that Weatherby had glued together in new arrangements as he assembled his analyses. In addition to songs and translational equivalents of lexical items and short sentences in Soo, Nyangi, and Ik, the audio recordings include conversations, interviews, and narratives entirely or mainly in Soo. The collection has yielded a total of 21 hours of digitised audio files and 3500 pages of scanned field notes. Field note and photograph scanning were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic; an estimated 1000 pages of field notes remain to be scanned, as well as an estimated 500 photographs. Until a documentation project began in 2019 (Oriikiriza 2021), Weatherby's collection was the only existing collection of audio recorded naturalistic speech in Soo, to my knowledge. Finally, the collection includes Weatherby's correspondence with other scholars working in Uganda at the time.

*Figure 4. Boxes containing John M. Weatherby's Soo and Nyangi materials. (Photo by author).*

The collection exceeded my wildest expectations. It includes recordings of a wide variety of interaction types, and these recordings are embedded in a sea of field notes, diaries, photographs, and other clues contextualising the

moments in which the recordings were made. It seemed very much like the sort of multipurpose collection that would afford use as "the database for exploring issues [it] was not intended for" championed by Himmelmann (2006: 3). It was startling to me that such a useful set of data had been lost for so many decades from the view of scholars such as me who might have benefited from studying it.

I was particularly surprised by the collection's obscurity because Weatherby, and then his daughter, had been eager to share the materials with whoever was interested, and had even sought out institutional archives in which the materials could be deposited. I assumed that was because African historians of the time must not have prioritised the preservation of primary data, so I was relieved that I, with my background in contemporary documentary linguistics, had come across the materials in time to preserve them. But my research into Weatherby's disciplinary context challenged this assumption. The preservation of oral data was a leading concern among the Africanist historians, and the role of the archive was theorised in terms that would be familiar to documentary linguists today. Nevertheless, I only managed to locate Weatherby's collection as the result of several fortuitous circumstances. This raised several questions for me. Were mid-century Africanist historians actually serious about making their data accessible, or did they just claim to be? If they were serious, what efforts did they take to make it happen? Which of these efforts were successful, and which failed, and why? Why could I only find Weatherby's materials after a far-flung search that led me to an attic in a private home in Spain? And finally, why does this matter for the field of language documentation today? The rest of this paper is an attempt to answer these questions.

## 3. Archiving for accountability and multipurpose mobilisation in history and linguistics

A first step toward addressing these questions is to place John M. Weatherby's data collection within the context of broader disciplinary trends. Weatherby originally assembled his collection to serve as the database for his doctoral thesis in history, which was intended to be an account of the history of the Soo (see Figure 5). He was approaching 60 years of age when he began his program, and he had never sought out an academic career. His time as an undergraduate was distinguished by his selection to lead and organise Oxford University Exploration Club's 1930 ecological research expedition to Lapland rather than by his relatively indifferent studies. However, the same hunger for new experiences that had led him to Lapland prompted him in the mid-1950s to seize an opportunity to take a civil service post in Uganda. While there, he would take every chance he could to go hunting with his Ugandan neighbors to get to know them and the country better; as these trips led him farther afield, they became a means by which he developed increasingly close relationships with

Sebei people on Mount Elgon and Soo people on nearby Mount Kadam. At the same time, he fell increasingly into the orbit of a dynamic set of scholars at Makerere University in Kampala. By 1968, having completed a Master's degree in social anthropology studying the Sebei, Weatherby enrolled as a doctoral student in history, in which capacity he planned to study the precolonial history of the Soo.

As it happened, this was at the peak of what has been labeled a golden age of history in Uganda (Sicherman 2005; Reid 2017). Until the mid-20th century, Anglophone historians had treated the notion of African history as oxymoronic, ideologically echoing Hegel's declaration that Africa is "no historical part of the World, [with] no movement or development to exhibit" (Hegel 1991[1831]: 117). However, as it became increasingly apparent to the British colonial administrations that the independence of Britain's colonial holdings in Africa was inevitable, a series of commissions began planning to open the first universities in British colonies (Asquith 1945; Elliot 1945). At these universities, the commissions hoped, the leaders and bureaucrats of the soon-to-be independent African states could receive a British-style liberal arts education, which included the study of history. History departments at the new universities were mainly staffed with young and ambitious researchers who spent much of the 1950s and 1960s developing a framework for the study of African history that made use of unwritten source material.[13] Proof of concept for this project was demonstrated by a groundbreaking doctoral thesis based on oral sources (Ogot 1967 [thesis completed in 1965]), and around the same time, the foundational methodological text for using oral tradition in historical research appeared in English translation (Vansina 1965). In the following years, Weatherby and many other historians, aided by the new portability of audio recording technology, would set off into the field to document whatever evidence about African history they could find.

[13] This framework was newly developed in the sense that it had not previously had a place in the practice of history in Anglophone universities. Peterson & Macola (2009) call attention to how participants in intellectual movements indigenous to Africa, but outside of the university, had long been interpreting oral traditions historically.

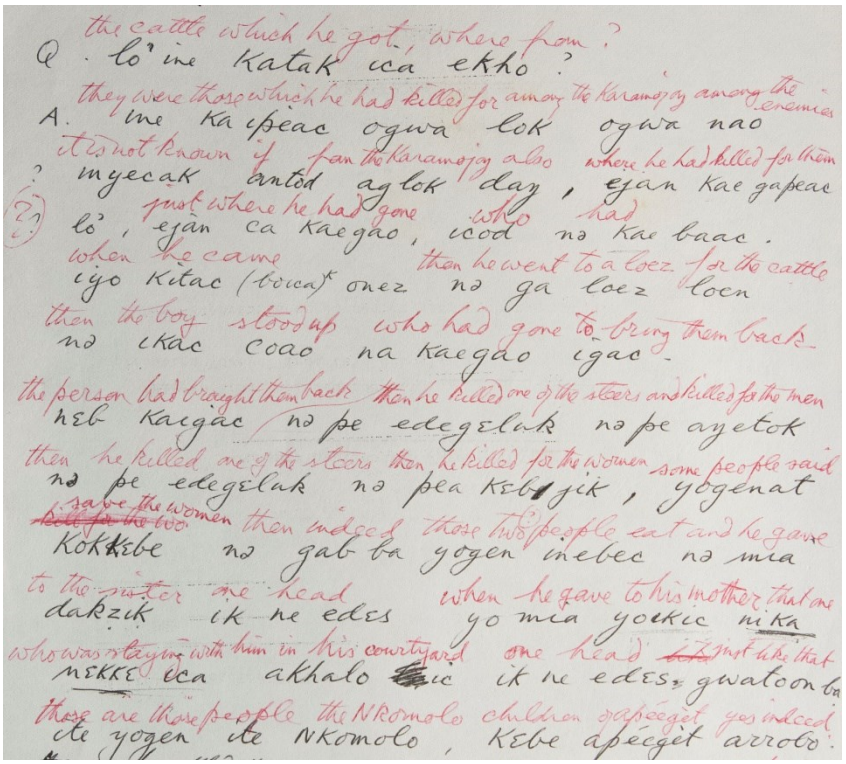


*Figure 5. Excerpt from a text transcribed and translated by Weatherby and Lokiru. The text is entitled "The founding of the Nkomolo clan." [teunotes0069a: 13].*

The pace of these projects was accelerated by the field's need for content to fill out its still-nascent curriculum and by anxiety about the impending loss of traditions preserved only in the memories of rapidly aging elders (e.g., Curtin 1968: 369; Webster 1969; Usoigwe 1973: 192). As the movement for basing history in oral tradition engendered a growing body of scholarly publications, though, it began to face a credibility crisis. While "the normal rules of historical verification require the historian to cite the most original version of his sources" (Curtin 1968: 370), records of the oral traditions collected through midcentury Africanist historians' fieldwork often existed only in privately held notebooks and audio tapes. To remedy this crisis, leading scholars established interdisciplinary committees for the management and preservation of oral data (e.g., the papers in Dorson 1969), instructed their colleagues to publish critical editions of the full corpora of oral traditions that they had collected (e.g., Vansina 1965: 203-204), and published articles formulating and justifying best

practices for archiving oral data (e.g., Curtin 1968). Members of the African Studies Association's Oral Data Committee, spearheaded by historians, secured Ford Foundation funding to enable the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University, which had existing infrastructure for dealing with multimedia collections, to serve as a centralised clearinghouse for the collection, preservation, and distribution of Africanist historians' audio recordings and field notes (Notes and news 1969).

These scholars conceptualised the functions of oral tradition archives in ways that will resonate with documentary linguists today. One key function of the archive recurrently identified by the historians is as a means of promoting *accountability* by providing other scholars access to the sources on which a researcher's claims are based; recent work on citation practices and reproducibility has positioned similar issues front and centre in language documentation (e.g., Gawne et al. 2017; Berez-Kroeker et al. 2018). A second key function of the archive identified by scholars from both disciplines is to serve as a *multipurpose* data source that could benefit scholars regardless of discipline (Curtin 1968: 383; Himmelmann 2006).

But the movement for accessible archiving practices in Africanist history largely failed to accomplish its goals. Notwithstanding the expectation of scholars such as Vansina (1965) that the full corpus of oral traditions collected by historians should ultimately be published, what was actually published or deposited in archives represents only a subset of the recorded material referred to in the historians' work. The archive could not, therefore, serve as a way to reconstruct the collectors' analyses from the original data. This problem was identified at the time. For example, one historian conducted a case-by-case study of what happened to the data underlying major works by oral tradition historians working in and around Uganda. The study found that no data at all had been deposited anywhere from nine out of the twelve surveyed projects; at least sample audio recordings and transcripts had been deposited from the remaining three, but only from one of these three was the deposited sample openly accessible (Henige 1980). What data was made accessible served almost exclusively as a symbol of the researcher's credibility, offering insufficient means to test the researcher's claims.

This failure to archive cannot merely be attributed to the absence of archives with the technical infrastructure necessary to handle multimedia collections. At the very least, the plan for the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University to serve as a centralised clearinghouse for Africanists' oral data not only provided a repository that researchers could use free of cost, but even "provided free tapes of commensurate quality for those researchers willing to obligate themselves to deposit materials at the archives" as late as 1976 (Heintze 1976: 52-53). Nevertheless, as observed decades later by leading Africanist historian Jan Vansina (2009: 466), the repository "did not fare very well" in large part because it was so infrequently used. Perhaps had Weatherby's dedication to depositing the entirety of his materials in an archive

coincided temporally with the height of the Archives of Traditional Music's collaboration with the Africanists he might have found a home for them there. However, the fact that few of his peers—even those from the United States, where the archive was located—made use of it points to a broader issue. The pairing of theoretical arguments for the necessity of archiving with the presence of institutions with the requisite technical infrastructure to facilitate multimedia archiving was not sufficient to motivate fieldworkers to actually do the work of archiving. The types of disciplinary infrastructure that were missing were, for example, professional incentives for archiving. The technical infrastructure was not undergirded by sufficient social infrastructure.

Further, few of the depositories established to house African oral traditions have stood the test of time. One prominent example is the *History of Africa* project, an initiative spearheaded by Weatherby's advisor, J. B. Webster, and to which Weatherby contributed. In this project, transcripts of over 1000 interviews were compiled for dozens of cultures across Uganda in 1969, with considerably more in the following two years before the project disbanded in the early 1970s. These transcripts were deposited in the Department of History at Makerere University. But Sicherman (2003: 275) reports that as of 2001 "all field notes for the History of Uganda project have been lost".

To summarise, Weatherby recorded the materials in his collection within the context of a broader disciplinary project that emphasised the documentation of oral traditions for historical analysis. Leading Africanist historians argued that the newly collected data should be openly accessible, for they saw it as offering opportunities to hold analyses accountable and to serve interests other than those of the original collectors. The ideals of mid-century Africanist historians, then, resemble those advocated for in documentary linguistics today. But the historians' project differed fundamentally from that of documentary linguists. The historians' archiving project lacked the institutional and disciplinary buy-in that documentary linguistics has won in recent decades (reflected in e.g., several well-funded internationally prominent archives, fieldwork funding that is contingent upon archiving commitments, professional society initiatives supporting the value of archive curation for hiring, tenure, and promotion), leaving researchers with little opportunity or incentive to deposit their materials. Few scholars actually deposited their materials in archives, and many archives with limited institutional support failed in their mission to preserve the materials entrusted to them. For reasons explored in the next section, though, even when Africanist historians did deposit oral data in stable archives, scholars in adjacent disciplines have generally not taken much interest.[14]

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[14] Instances of linguists of East Africa using historians' texts are vanishingly rare. The one such instance that I have found is Kießling's (2002) use of a Gorwaa (ISO 639-3

## 4. Collecting and neglecting texts in neighboring fields

In discussing which other scholars might be interested in oral tradition data, historians often mentioned anthropologists and linguists. At least in the American context, practitioners of Africanist history, anthropology, and linguistics in the mid-20th century were ideally positioned for interdisciplinary collaboration. The area studies paradigm, which used geographical regions rather than research methods to demarcate domains of study, was instantiated for Africanists by the establishment of African Studies programs at universities such as Northwestern and the University of Wisconsin and the formation of the African Studies Association.[15] Anthropologists and linguists seemed likely sources of interest in historians' texts, as the histories of both disciplines had been shaped by the Boasian era during which they each had a tradition of incorporating texts as sources of insight. However, the disciplines of anthropology and linguistics had both moved away from this textual legacy by the mid-20th century, and practitioners studying the languages and cultures of Africa largely participated in the movements characterising their respective fields as a whole. Though there were occasional exceptions, the anthropologists and linguists in Weatherby's milieu were not particularly interested in texts.

Two consequences follow from the anthropologists' and linguists' lack of interest in textual data. First, Weatherby's collection stands out as a unique (and therefore particularly valuable) data source from the era, because scholars from other disciplines who worked in the area eschewed recording texts. A second consequence, however, is that Weatherby's collection was not amplified by scholars from other disciplines—scholars from other disciplines who worked in the area did not seek out texts, cite them, or otherwise act so as to increase their visibility.

By the middle of the 20th century, the dominant research paradigm among Africanist sociocultural anthropologists was known as structural-functionalism. In structural-functionalism, anthropologists analysed societies as consisting of a set of institutions that worked together to maintain the society as a whole. Anthropology's task was to identify the structures within a society and to provide an account of their function. In general, anthropologists working in this tradition had little regard for texts. Leading theorist of structural-functionalism A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1952: 192) asserted that his scientific approach to the

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gow, Glottocode goro1270) text (Heepe 1930) to argue that a set of current Gorwaa geminate consonants was derived relatively recently from reduplicated forms attested in Heepe's text (as discussed in Harvey 2018a, 2018b).

[15]In his presidential address to the ASA, linguist Joseph Greenberg stated that if the African Studies Association was not facilitating or initiating interdisciplinary research, then it had "no real raison d'être" (1966a: 12).

study of social structure "is not concerned with the particular, the unique, but only with the general". To Radcliffe-Brown, the value of texts ended once generalisations had been gleaned from them, and attempts to preserve texts were mere sentimentality (Darnell 1990).

While Weatherby was working in the textualist mode of mid-century Africanist history, his contemporaries in the discipline of anthropology who worked near him were firmly entrenched in this structural-functionalist research tradition. Given that their disciplinary paradigm saw no promise of insight in texts, the anthropologists who worked in the area in the mid-20th century neither collected original language texts nor made use of such texts collected by others.

Similarly, in keeping with broader trends in linguistic practice noted by linguists working elsewhere in the world (e.g., Olmsted 1961), text collection did not play a prominent role in linguistic research in East Africa in the 1960s and 1970s.[16] Instead research efforts were focused on cataloguing and classifying languages, whether along historical or typological lines (often couched in terms of discovering linguistic universals), and they accomplished this task through less time-intensive data collection methods than text collection, mainly directly eliciting word lists and grammatical questionnaires (such a questionnaire-centric approach would reach an apex in Comrie and Smith 1977). This focus is reflected in language survey work of the area (e.g., Ladefoged et al. 1972: 51-68) and is also prominent in a foundational guide to field linguistics by William Samarin, an American linguist who conducted fieldwork in central Africa. Samarin (1967: 3) treats the basic cataloguing of the languages of the world and progress "toward the understanding of linguistic universals" as two of the four main purposes of linguistic fieldwork. These objectives are similarly at the centre of two groundbreaking 1963 publications by Joseph Greenberg. Greenberg (1963a) hypothesises that the genetic diversity of languages in Africa could be reduced to four phyla: Niger-Congo, Afroasiatic, Khoisan, and Nilo-Saharan; Greenberg (1963b) is the foundational typological text on the correlations associated with basic word order.

The two linguists who conducted fieldwork in Karamoja contemporaneously to Weatherby, A. N. Tucker (SOAS) and Bernd Heine (Köln), likewise oriented much of their work around these two issues. A fundamental problem facing scholars seeking to classify African languages genetically was the paucity of the data available for many languages; approaches to this problem

[16]Blommaert (2008: 293) rightly points out that "The Africanist tradition has always been text-focused: it was a philology that created its own written literature through fieldwork (the elicitation and notation of language-in-use) and then used that corpus inductively to identify and systematise the 'regularities' of the language[...]"; however, Blommaert's definition of "text" is wider than the one I am concerned with here, encompassing e.g. data obtained exclusively through "direct elicitation" (Blommaert 2008: 297).

ranged from the methodological (how can we make the most of the limited data that we have?) to the logistical (how can we get a baseline of data useful for genealogical classification as quickly as possible?). In his own research, Greenberg focused on methodological approaches to this problem. His classifications purported to rest solely on "resemblances involving both sound and meaning in specific forms" (Greenberg 1966b: 1) not because he dismissed the potential value of other methods, but because "[f]or Africa, we could not ignore the evidence of vocabulary, even if we wished. For the vast majority of languages this is the only material available, so we must, willy-nilly, learn to use and evaluate it" (Greenberg 1949: 80).

In addition to proposing methodological responses to the problem of language classification,[17] Tucker and Heine conducted fieldwork yielding preliminary descriptions of a number of languages, including in Karamoja, where they produced the earliest published grammatical sketches of Kuliak languages (Tucker & Bryan 1966; Tucker 1971, 1972, 1973; Heine 1974, 1975). The primary purpose of this fieldwork, particularly in the case of Heine, was to produce description adequate for use in historical-comparative or typological studies. But given its goals, the work was generally limited in scope and prioritised achieving broad coverage of languages rather than depth of analysis. In the case of both Tucker and Heine, data appears to have been collected by means of translational elicitation, and no mention is made in publications of the disposition of raw field notes or of whether or not any

[17] In Tucker's work on language classification, typological features provide a "linguistic criterion to which one can turn for interim guidance" when "the available vocabulary…is small or haphazardly recorded" (Tucker 1967a: 19-21). Heine makes a more straightforward use of the comparative method than either Greenberg or Tucker do, focusing on reconstructing phonological systems of protolanguages of lower level groupings, under the theory that "only if the relationships within smaller units have been established will it be possible to yield satisfactory results within larger groupings" (Heine 1971: 2; 1976: x).

audio recordings were produced.[18] So linguists' focus on preliminary language classification, which could be accomplished with more tractable forms of data, means that there are few texts to be found in the work of mid-century linguists working in East Africa.

In summary, anthropologists and linguists, who were actively conducting research in East Africa contemporaneously to Weatherby and whose disciplines shared close historical ties to Boas's textualist project, might have produced collections of texts in the languages that they studied and might have been interested in texts collected by others. However, they did not collect texts, and the ostensibly fertile soil for interdisciplinarity offered by the rise of area studies did not change the fact that Africanists were first and foremost affiliated with one or another of "the standard academic disciplines" such as "sociology, history, anthropology, or some other" (Greenberg 1966a: 8). The interdisciplinary ambition of the African Studies Association was not sufficient to overcome the inertia of scholars' commitments to their standard disciplines, the research programs of which did not motivate their practitioners to put texts collected by others to use.

Weatherby's interactions with anthropologists and linguists were shaped by these sorts of disciplinary commitments. While these scholars took interest in Weatherby's work and collaborated or imagined collaborating with him in the future, their engagement followed the well-worn paths of their own disciplinary expectations. As we will see in the next section, they were happy for him to collect specific data that could immediately be used in their own research. They could suggest that he write a linguistics paper. But they did not express interest in how the texts he collected organically for his own research purposes could be informative to their work.

## 5. How to lose a corpus in the gaps between disciplines

On one level, the overarching question of how Weatherby's records of Soo speech ended up hidden away in such obscurity can be answered with reference to the loss of the *History of Africa* project archive (to which Weatherby would presumably have submitted a version of his materials) and to the broader failure of the era's oral data movement in African history. However, Weatherby intentionally sought out ways to publicise and preserve the data that he had collected in institutions associated with other disciplines--efforts that usually

[18] Other German scholars working in the tradition of Afrikanistik, such as Hermann Jungraithmayr and Ludwig Gerhardt, more often produced texts; however, their work was overwhelmingly in German and primarily took place in west Africa, and so had little influence on Weatherby's intellectual context.

ended in frustration. He tried, for example, to publish his work in journals associated with linguistics and anthropology and to tap into relationships with scholars from a range of fields to get his data deposited in the institutions that they were affiliated with. However, he inevitably found that he was seeking in these arrangements something other than what was on offer. Weatherby's attempts to preserve his collection illustrate at an individual level the consequences of some of the failures of disciplinary projects and the diverging disciplinary priorities discussed previously.

In over a decade of fieldwork, most of which was conducted within the mid-century oral tradition paradigm of Africanist history, Weatherby produced a sizable corpus of notes documenting his encounters with Soo people and recordings documenting Soo speech. The Soo (and the other Kuliak-speaking peoples, the Nyangi and Ik) have attracted scholars' interest by way of their divergence linguistically and culturally from their Nilotic neighbors, ostensibly more recently arrived in the area. Scholars have often bemoaned the lack of linguistic data from especially Soo and Nyangi as an obstacle to a deeper understanding of the area's past. One might expect a collection such as Weatherby's to have been a valued data source for scholars studying such topics. However, Weatherby's audio recordings and hand-written notes, which would strike me decades later as precious long-sought resources, found no home in institutions associated with the disciplines of history, linguistics, and anthropology, notwithstanding persistent efforts by Weatherby to preserve his materials in them. Never fitting neatly into the ecology of any scholarly community, Weatherby's work languished in disciplinary interstices.

One misalignment between Weatherby's intentions and the academic structures that he interacted with took place in his efforts to contribute to linguistics. This culminated in an incident that bruised his relationship with linguist Bernd Heine and discouraged him from pursuing linguistic studies ever again. Had things gone differently, it is possible that Weatherby's work would later have been more easily recognisable as including linguistic data. Perhaps ironically, the types of data that Weatherby and his contemporaries viewed as linguistic data (and which he tried to base linguistic analyses for publication on) are of less interest to linguists today than Weatherby's textual data.

Early in his career, Weatherby's collaborations with linguists seemed promising. He accompanied SOAS linguist A. N. Tucker on field trips to study Ik, Soo, and Sebei, and he shared transcriptions and audio recordings of Soo data with Tucker (see Figure 6).[19] Weatherby's early engagement in linguistics

[19] Tucker's findings from these trips were written up in Tucker 1971, 1972, and 1973. In December of 1968 Tucker sent Weatherby a letter thanking him for a copy of an audio tape (the contents of this tape are unknown) and asking if Weatherby would collect translations for a set of sentences with complement clauses in English (e.g., 'I want you to drink water') (JMWLD: A. N. Tucker/JMW 1968-12-19, teunotes0156). These

was not limited to collecting linguistic data for others; some of his own research practices produced linguistic data that would be recognisable to contemporary linguists. He, like many other Africanist historians of the era, collected lexical and basic grammatical forms elicited directly by means of translation from a contact language.[20] This data was collected for historical linguistic purposes, including comparative reconstruction, analysis of loan word patterns, and glottochronology. To fulfill these functions, researchers needed target language word forms and glosses.

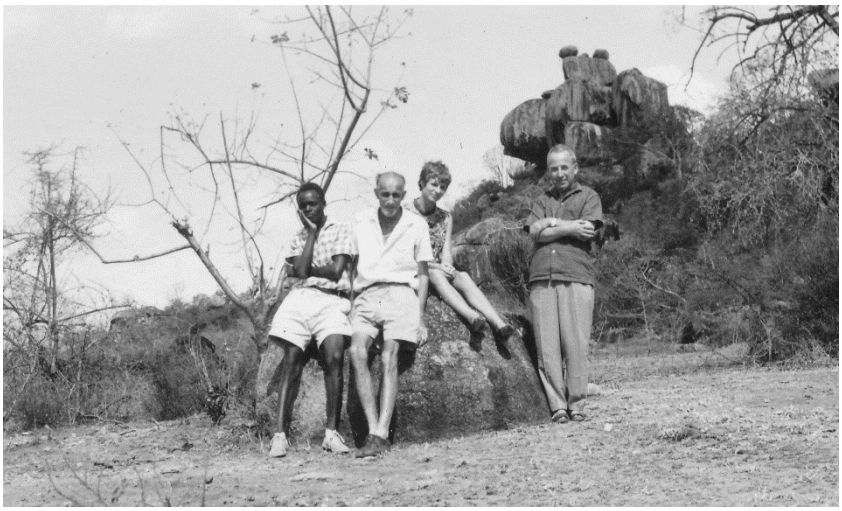

*Figure 6. Photo from a field trip with A. N. Tucker in 1966. (Left to right: Chemonges, John M. Weatherby, Ellie Warnaar, and A. N. Tucker). Photo by John M. Weatherby [teuphotos0003].*

The footprint this data leaves in the archival record is generally a list of English words and phrases in a questionnaire format accompanied by transcriptions or recordings of target language translational equivalents; the

sentences appear attributed to Weatherby in one of Tucker's subsequent articles on Ik (Tucker 1972).

[20] Christopher Ehret's earliest publications laying out and implementing a more robust linguistic approach to history (e.g., 1968, 1971) began appearing while Weatherby's work was ongoing. While Weatherby was in communication with Ehret during this time, he did not seek to implement Ehret's methods himself. I have not dealt with Ehret's approach further here because it did not gain widespread currency among Africanist historians until somewhat later than Weatherby was active.

analysed products (e.g., what appeared in publications) generally consist of statistical or schematic summaries such as cognacy rates or language family trees, with the forms used to derive them omitted. Weatherby notes, for example, that "Linguistic comparisons made among the Nkuliak [i.e., Kuliak] peoples show Sor [i.e., Soo] and Teuso [i.e., Ik] to be only distantly related, the differentiation having taken place at least three thousand or more years ago… Sor has a 30-40% similarity with Nyangea [i.e., Nyangi]" (Weatherby 2012: 31).

While Weatherby did not explicitly write out his elicitation and recording methodologies for the linguistic data that he collected, his archive does provide a window into how such materials were produced. Presumably in order to save expensive audio tape, the audio recordings of elicitation sessions were made only after an initial period of unrecorded elicitation in which Weatherby and his consultants negotiated the word-forms Weatherby ultimately transcribed in his field notes. The subsequent recordings of the words tend to proceed briskly; in their typical layout, Weatherby says first the English word or phrase corresponding to a target utterance and then the target utterance, after which his consultants (most of whom did not speak English) repeat the target utterance. This yields a record of the phonetic value of each utterance accompanied by a gloss (the original stimulus) but omits the discursive context in which Weatherby and his consultants negotiated which forms should be used.[21] Evidence of the prior negotiation only resurfaces when the utterances produced by his consultants either do not coincide with what Weatherby thought had been agreed upon or when he otherwise finds them surprising. Examples of such exchanges are found in two elicitation sessions with a man named Loguti (see Figure 7), a Soo man who did not speak English and who was, along with Lokiru Cosma, one of Weatherby's two main research assistants:

[21] A similar technique is recommended by Curtin (1968) for the collection of a restricted set of oral traditions; Curtin (1968: 375) suggests having interlocutors rehearse a tradition several times without recording so that "the informant will be able to cover his subject in perhaps a quarter of the original time," resulting in "a concentrated body of data of much greater archival value than that of the first rambling discussions". Curtin does not justify the claim that the later recording would be of greater archival value.

(1) Weatherby: I am not a Tepes *merea kadmat*
Loguti: *mere ao kadmat*
W: Note that he says *mere ay ou kadmat*, he puts in this *eou* just before the, uh, tribal name. But in some cases he doesn't do that. He doesn't do that if he says "I am or I am not a Turkana." Uh… *mereat turkana*
L: *mereat turukeat* [teu0002_01-03: 6:55]

(2) Weatherby: Now come the female singular of the animal. Lion. *ŋatuny.*
Loguti; *ŋatuny. ini mosin*
W: No, the singular this must be, he did it wrong then. It's *ŋatuny ni mosi.*
L: *ŋatuny ni mosi* [teu0002_01-01: 9:04]

When the exchange in (1) begins, Weatherby is proceeding with a scripted elicitation. He utters a short sentence in English, followed by a presumed translational equivalent in Soo, which he evidently learned on a different occasion. Loguti repeats the sentence in Soo with a minor difference. Weatherby responds by directing his subsequent speech to the recorder, referring to Loguti in the 3rd person. In the exchange in (2), Weatherby explicitly states that Loguti has said the words wrong and provides a correction, which Loguti then reproduces. Weatherby's metalinguistic analysis of the grammatical phenomena under discussion offers the only residue of their prior negotiations. Weatherby's evaluation of what parts of the prior negotiations hold value for the archival record depends on his personal knowledge of those negotiations and on his own beliefs about what holds value for the archive. In exchanges such as these, Weatherby's goal is to collect an objective record of a native speaker producing a predetermined target language form accompanied by an English language gloss. Weatherby's elicitation practices seem aimed at removing evidence of the speaker's individual contribution as anything other than the reproduction of a stable standardised form. This commitment to erasing the social context of data collection seems to echo the methodological literature from the oral tradition-oriented historians of the era; for example, Vansina recommended that historians pretend not to speak their consultants' language so that the consultant would not be tempted to alter what they were saying in consideration of their audience (Vansina 1965:200). As a consequence, the documentary record of Weatherby's self-consciously linguistic data is often bleached of the sorts of dialog that could offer more useful nuance about lexical semantics, for example, or that could bring misunderstandings in Weatherby's glosses to light.

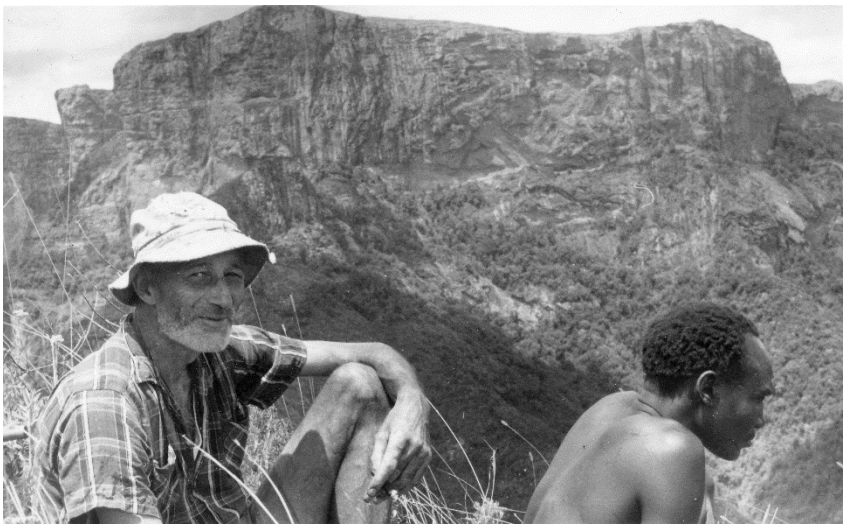

*Figure 7. John M. Weatherby with Loguti near Loguti's home on Mount Kadam in 1968. Photo by John M. Weatherby [teuphotos0001].*

Much of Weatherby's more overtly linguistic research was associated with correspondence with a young Bernd Heine. Not yet having conducted his own fieldwork with the Kuliak languages, Heine encouraged Weatherby to travel to the Ik and Nyangi, presumably both to facilitate Weatherby's use of linguistic methods in reconstructing the history of the Soo for his dissertation and to enrich the documentary record of the then little-understood language family. Also at Heine's encouragement, Weatherby submitted a historical-comparative analysis of Soo and Nyangi to the journal *Afrika und Übersee*.[22] In later letters sent to *Afrika und Übersee* and to Heine, Weatherby claims that he had been told by Heine that Heine himself intended to submit papers on the languages to *Afrika und Übersee*, but that Heine "asked me to publish as soon as possible so that he could refer to my material in his work, which he said would be published at a later date".[23] The paper was initially rejected; the reasons given were primarily related to deficiencies in the formal presentation of language data. He was invited to consult with a trained linguist to tidy up the presentation of the data and to resubmit the paper.

Weatherby did this, submitting a revised version of the paper in July 1971, but the paper was again rejected, this time without an invitation to resubmit.

[22] JMWLD: teunotes0178.

[23] JMWLD: JMW/Emmi Kähler-Meyer 1971-12-11, teunotes0174.

Instead, Emmi Kähler-Meyer, the editor of the journal, noted that "in the meantime I learnt that Dr. Heine gathered material on Tepes, Nyanya (sic.) and other small languages during University vacations. He intends to publish his material very soon. So there could be a possibility that his rather big material will appear before we can publish your article." Kähler-Meyer concluded by suggesting that Weatherby could submit a different article on "historical or cultural subjects about these populations," which "would be a valuable completion to Dr. Heine's linguistic work".[24]

Undoubtedly, Weatherby's paper (several versions of which can be accessed at the archive of Weatherby's materials)[25] was not up to *Afrika und Übersee*'s usual standards for articles on linguistics. Its core is a list of about 100 cognates; in general, the opportunity to set up systematic sound correspondences is not taken, although Weatherby does note the occurrence of [h] in word-initial position in Nyangi reflexes of several vowel-initial words in Soo and the occurrence of [g] in word-initial position in Soo reflexes of several vowel-initial words in Nyangi. A few example sentences are provided for some grammatical phenomena (e.g. a future construction using an auxiliary verb, a set of affixes for each language that recurs on verbs in sentences with causative semantics), but no morpheme-level glosses are provided. The paper presents a set of linguistic forms but uses it for little in the way of linguistic analysis or historical inference. As an attempt by somebody who almost entirely lacked linguistic training to write a linguistics paper that had as its primary objective the dissemination of primary data from two underdescribed languages, it had predictable shortcomings.

Weatherby, who was conscious of these shortcomings, drafted a chagrinned letter to Heine upon receiving the rejection letter. "You will remember that you asked me to submit this to them so that it would precede your work and you would be able to refer to it, and in good faith, I complied with your suggestion…if their reason for rejecting my paper was because they felt that it fell short of the academic standards of linguistics, they should have said so," he noted in a draft of a letter to Heine dated 1971-12-11. Weatherby complained about the editor's suggestion that he "supply historical material as a completion of your linguistic work," noting that "such an idea does not appeal to me and I told them so".[26] Weatherby did not see this as initiating an unbridgeable rift

[24] JMWLD: Emmi Kähler-Meyer/JMW 1971-11-02, teunotes0169.

[25] JMWLD: teunotes0178.

[26] JMWLD: JMW/Bernd Heine 1971-12-11, teunotes0175.

between him and Heine, though, suggesting that "on the other hand, to publish a joint work involving the two disciplines might be worth considering."[27]

Heine's response was conciliatory. "The story with *Afrika und Übersee* has been very regrettable",[28] he wrote in response to Weatherby's complaint.[29] He admitted that the editor, Kähler-Meyer, had contacted him to express her confusion at receiving a manuscript from the very languages that she knew Heine to be working on. Further, Heine admitted that he had responded by suggesting that if she felt that she could not publish Weatherby's paper, she should suggest that he submit something from his own discipline, so the suggestion which Weatherby found so patronising had actually originated with Heine! He was, however, very interested in "a collaboration between a linguist and a historian,"[30] although no such collaboration between Heine and Weatherby ever took place. Heine additionally included a draft of a talk that he had recently given at the University of Nairobi with the letter, to which Weatherby would later reply warmly.

Publishing linguistic analyses had never been an objective in itself for Weatherby; he had pursued the task at Heine's urging. He was annoyed by having spent considerable time on what must have seemed to him a less important side project undertaken at the suggestion of others only to have the journal subsequently reject the paper in favor of a paper from the man at whose urging Weatherby had submitted to the journal in the first place. This annoyance was surely particularly sharp in that this event took place in the last months before Weatherby's final departure from Uganda. Weatherby never again looked for ways to disseminate his research to linguistic audiences, and a footnote in Heine's sketch of Soo and Nyangi, which appeared in *Afrika und Übersee* in 1974, is the only mention of Weatherby's work as a potential source of linguistic data in Heine's later publications (Heine 1974).[31] Nearly 50 years

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[27] JMWLD: JMW/Bernd Heine 1971-12-11, teunotes0175.

[28] Translated from German by the author. The original text reads *Die Geschichte mit Afrika und Übersee ist ja sehr bedauerlich verlaufen*.

[29] JMWLD: Bernd Heine/JMW 1972-03-02, teunotes0165.

[30] JMWLD: Bernd Heine/JMW 1972-03-02, teunotes0165. Translated from German by the author. The original text reads *An einer Zusammenarbeit zwischen einem Linguisten und einem Historiker wäre ich sehr interessiert.*

[31] "For additional unpublished data see Tucker/Bryan 1956: 193/194. P. H. Gulliver, A. N. Tucker, J. Weatherby, and O. Köhler have further records of these languages. Brief information on Tepes can be found in Tucker (1967[b]), Ehret (1971) and some other work." (Heine 1974: 265. Translated from German by the author. The original text reads: *Wegen verchiedener unveröffentlichter Daten s. Tucker/Bryan 1956: 193/194, Aufzeichnungen über diese Sprachen besitzen ferner P. H. Gulliver, A. N. Tucker, J.*

later, frustration with the lack of credit that Weatherby received for his early fieldwork in Kuliak languages was still evident in my earliest communication with Joanna Weatherby.

The *Afrika und Übersee* incident took place shortly before Weatherby retired to Spain in 1972. He would complete his doctoral thesis from Spain; meanwhile, increasingly oppressive policies from the Amin regime made future fieldwork in Karamoja impossible. As Weatherby recalled in correspondence over twenty years later, the final product, which he finished writing up from Spain and submitted in July 1974,[32] was rejected by Semekula Kiwanuka, the head of the history department at Makerere, "on the grounds that it was sociology and not history".[33] With a return to Karamoja to gather the data necessary to reshape his thesis now impossible, Weatherby did not attempt to revise the document for resubmission.

While Weatherby's forays into linguistics, which took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s, were often motivated by or associated with requests from others, his later attempts to place his work in other disciplines arose from his own desire to preserve a record of his notes. Weatherby viewed his audio recordings and field notes as a valuable and unreproducible resource that could be of interest to future researchers. In 1985, over a decade after the rejection of his doctoral thesis had effectively brought his career as a professional scholar to a close, Weatherby began preparing an article on a spirit cult among the Soo. When a reviewer requested that he address ethnographic literature from adjacent cultures in this paper, Weatherby chafed. His response made clear that at this stage in his career, he viewed publication as a means of preserving a record of his field notes rather than as a means of entering into ongoing academic conversations: "I have only one desire and that is that the material which I gathered carefully over a long period of years should be available to those likely to be interested, since it will never again be possible to have access to the very old men and women who were still alive when I worked there."[34]

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*Weatherby und O. Köhler. Kurze Angaben über das Tepes finden sich in Tucker (1967), Ehret (1971) und einigen anderen Arbeiten.*)

[32] JMWLD: Semakula Kiwanuka/JMW 1974-07-19, teunotes0138.

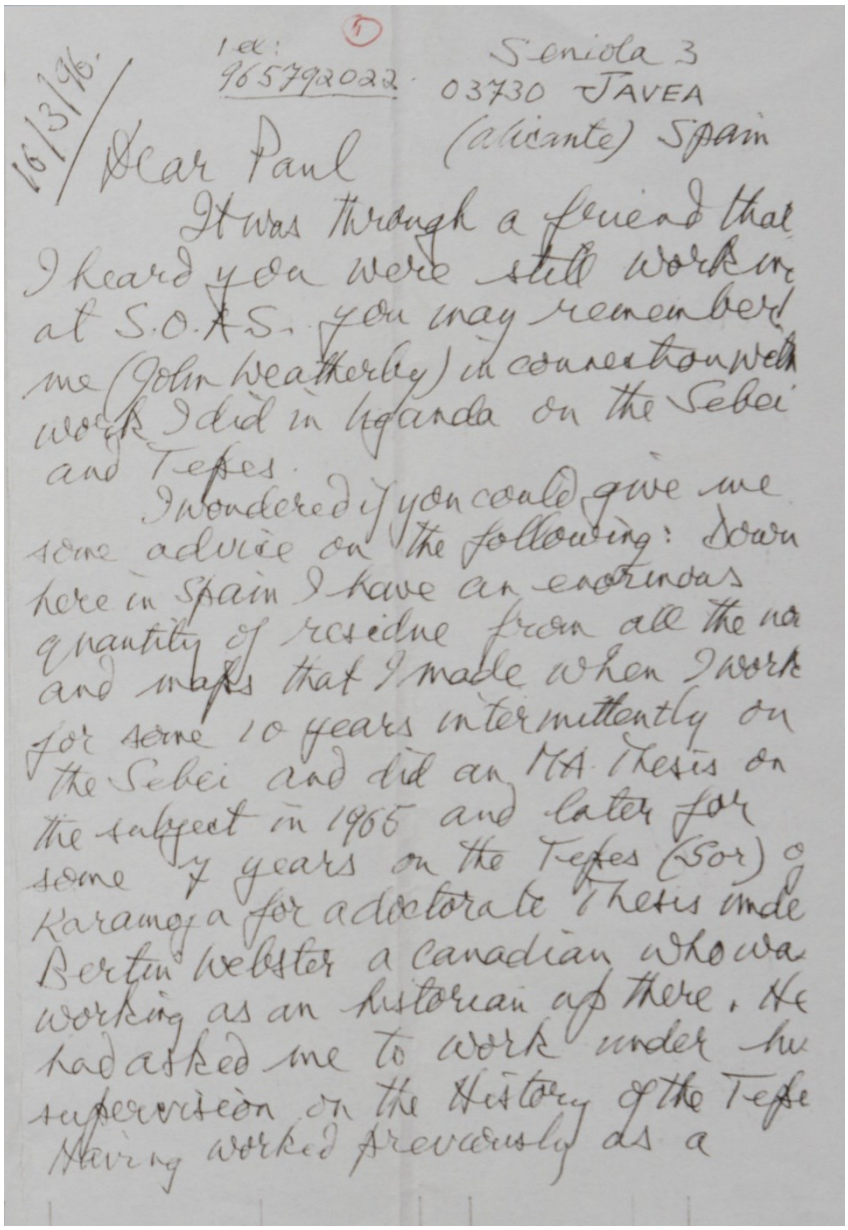
[33] JMWLD: JMW/Paul Spencer 1996-03-16, teunotes0155. This should not be taken to mean that Weatherby's methods were qualitatively atypical of Africanist historians of the era. The types of oral traditions that he collected (accounts of migrations and conflicts, tales of clan founders, etc.) were characteristic of the research paradigm, even if his analyses did not involve enough historical interpretation to satisfy Kiwanuka. It is not necessary for this paper that Weatherby's work was successful history research, only that it exemplifies the text-centric methodological focus of the research paradigm.

[34] JMWLD: JMW/John Peel 1985-10-10, teunotes0179.

He took up this refrain again in 1996, as he tried at 85 years of age to find a home for his now 25-year-old field data in the archives of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London (see Figure 8). Claiming that he had taken "the last chance of working on the oldest age groups at the time", he felt "that all the remaining notes and diagrams…besides the thesis itself are worth preserving for the future". However, given his advanced age he thought that "transporting it all to London from Spain would be too big a job", so he asked if there were any students who might be interested in "go[ing] through it all".[35] Just one year previously, in a guide to SOAS's archival holdings related to Africa published in *History in Africa*, SOAS archivists had announced that the library was accepting collections dealing with all regions of Africa (Anderson and Seton 1995: 45); however, the archivists decided that they could not take any action on Weatherby's materials without a better description of them.[36] Perhaps had this exchange taken place a decade earlier, Weatherby might have been able to undertake the rather extensive task of preparing a satisfactory description of the materials, but by 1996 that opportunity had passed.

[35] JMWLD: JMW/Paul Spencer 1996-03-16, teunotes0155.

[36] JMWLD: Rosemary Seton/Paul Spencer 1996-04-12, teunotes0154.


16/3/96

Ida: 965792022

Seniola 3
03730 JAVEA
(alicante) Spain

Dear Paul

It was through a friend that I heard you were still working at S.O.A.S. You may remember me (John Weatherby) in connection with work I did in Uganda on the Sebei and Teso.

I wondered if you could give me some advice on the following: Down here in Spain I have an enormous quantity of residue from all the notes and maps that I made when I worked for some 10 years intermittently on the Sebei and did an MA Thesis on the subject in 1966 and later for some 7 years on the Teso (Soroti) & Karamoja for a doctorate Thesis under Bertin Webster a Canadian who was working as an historian up there. He had asked me to work under his supervision on the History of the Teso having worked previously as a

*Figure 8. Excerpt from Weatherby's 1996 letter to Paul Spencer, in which Weatherby solicited Spencer's help regarding how to preserve his field notes*

*and recordings [teunotes0155: 1].*

Weatherby did have some limited success at preserving analysed products of his research. His article on the spirit cult was ultimately published (Weatherby 1988), and Christopher Ehret arranged for drafts of Weatherby's MA and PhD theses to be deposited in the UCLA library. But nobody was willing to take on the original notes and audio recordings. The materials remained in Spain until I began working with them in 2018. And that only came about because of Joanna Weatherby's persistence in working to get her father's thesis published posthumously and a chance meal with a generous and persistent colleague at a conference.

Weatherby's research was part of a doctoral thesis research project that did not work out. This project was conducted within a disciplinary project of archiving oral data for accessibility by scholars from a wide range of disciplines; that too did not work out. The *History of Africa* archive at Makerere University, which may or may not have held copies of Weatherby's notes at some point, was lost. His attempts to publish linguistic analyses came to naught while alienating him, barring off another avenue through which other scholars might have come to recognise the valuable linguistic data produced through his work. He did manage to publish some of his findings regarding the spirit cult in *Africa*, but the anthropologically-oriented venue and subject matter did not make his large textual database visible given the marginalisation of texts in anthropology discussed in Section 4. His work could far too seldom find a disciplinary home, and the home that it found in J. B. Webster's *History of Africa* project was to disappear nearly as soon as Weatherby became involved with it. Although the notes were produced in a disciplinary context for disciplinary purposes, and although the discipline in which he primarily worked was nominally committed to preserving oral data and making it accessible to future scholars, what ultimately preserved his materials and made them accessible to me was the care of somebody with relational rather than disciplinary commitments—his daughter (see Figure 9).

*Figure 9. Joanna Weatherby and John M. Weatherby visiting with Soo women in Katabok, Uganda. June 1968. Photo courtesy of Joanna Weatherby.*

## 6. Conclusion: From disciplinarily bounded archives to disciplinarily bounded archives

The context in which Weatherby worked differed greatly from that in which documentary linguists work today. He practiced a different discipline that was in a different life stage. Different technologies with different affordances are now available. Leveraging narratives about declining linguistic diversity and about the crucial importance that data from every language has to linguistic theory, linguists have built institutional infrastructure and disciplinary support for digital archives dedicated to preserving and making accessible language documentation data; such infrastructure did not exist for oral data when Weatherby was collecting his materials. In many ways, the disciplinary moment in which today's documentary linguists are working seems much more

conducive to the successful preservation and mobilisation of primary data than does the disciplinary moment in which Weatherby worked.

But as I move in a single work day from preparing Weatherby's materials for archiving to reading articles in which Weatherby's contemporaries theorised the archive in terms strikingly similar to those expressed by my own discipline, it has struck me as ironic that, having wrestled with the obstacles that disciplinary boundaries have raised in locating and working with the Weatherby Collection, my response has been to deposit newly digitised and annotated versions of the items from the collection into a new disciplinarily bounded archive. In such circumstances, it has been impossible to avoid asking if I can really expect my own version of archiving to have substantively different results from the archiving of mid-century Africanist historians. Will my project have been more successful in making Weatherby's field notes and audio recordings accessible to other scholars and stakeholders than the Africanist archiving activists of the 1960s were?

In asking this question, I suggest that, at least prior to my intervention, the preservation of Weatherby's field notes and recordings was a failed enterprise. In some ways, this is undeniably true—conservators were unable to capture audio from one of Weatherby's audio tapes, for instance, and one track was lost from another tape. On the other hand, half a century after Weatherby made the notes and recordings in question, I have accessed them, and they remain useful to me. In this sense, something about the way that the notes were preserved surely succeeded.

This success was facilitated by a web of relationships, and I am persistently impressed by the degree to which even physically accessing Weatherby's materials depended on a complex network of social relations. The materials themselves have long been cared for by Joanna Weatherby, and the possibility of locating the materials would never have occurred to me if she had not revised her father's doctoral thesis for publication four decades after it was originally written. Joanna Weatherby was encouraged in this work by a colleague and friend of her father's, John Lamphear, whom she contacted for advice about whether the thesis would conceivably be of interest for anything. My attempts to locate the materials were fueled by my own relationship with Weatherby's consultant Lokiru Cosma, which was framed in its earliest moments by his query as to whether I knew John Weatherby. My awareness of the materials and motivation to locate them might have come to nothing except for the generosity and persistence of Bonny Sands, who (although my connection to her was through professional contexts) had no structural obligations toward me. Decades after Weatherby conducted the fieldwork documented in the field notes and recordings, access to his work was mediated through personal and professional relationships that outlived him.

I linger on the central role that this wide array of relationships played in facilitating my access to Weatherby's materials because the mid-century Africanist historians' methodological and theoretical work on oral data

management is completely silent on what role social factors might play in the successful preservation and mobilisation of fieldworkers' data. This silence was part of a broader project of making objective, depersonalised data out of captured traces of intersubjective moments of personal relationships saturated with personal knowledge. Such an objective data-making project manifests also in many of the moments of capture that I find most startling, such as Weatherby's corrections of his consultants, or Vansina's pretense that he does not speak the language of his consultants so that their accounts will not be conditioned by relational considerations. The very conditions that make data mobilisation most likely, relationships, are often methodically omitted from the record. Recent developments in linguistics seem promising to me in reversing this tendency. Collaborative and participatory research models recognise and centre the social dimensions of ongoing research. A 2020 *Committee on Endangered Language Preservation* initiative headed by Kate Lindsey and Jorge Emilio Rosés Labrada paired senior linguists who had legacy collections of endangered language data that needed to be digitised with graduate students who were eager to study endangered languages and who were tasked with assisting in digitising, processing, and archiving the senior researchers' materials, building personal relationship into the archive-construction process (LSA 2010). It is likely that such an initiative would have appealed to Weatherby greatly.

But it is unlikely that Weatherby would have been a participant in the initiative. Nor is it reasonable to expect that he would have been; he was neither a senior scholar nor a professional linguist. The point of this paper is not to advocate for a disciplinary practice or structure that would inevitably have discovered Weatherby's research materials in his closet and preserved them, nor is it to demand that archives accept every item offered to them regardless of their institutional capacities. In attending to the social factors that shape the accessibility of language data, I seek to view language data as a social product. What sort of action that requires of us is likely to depend on the details of the specific social context.

I have addressed these factors with reference to my experiences with John M. Weatherby's research. Much of Weatherby's work could have interested scholars from a wide range of disciplines at a wide range of times. His commitment to collecting texts would have made sense in a Boasian textualist tradition, and the recordings that he made of naturalistic interactions in Soo were in the spirit of language documentation as recently imagined. In many attempts to engage with a discipline, though, he was nudged over to a different one. The one paper on linguistics that he wrote prompted the editor to solicit a paper about history. His doctoral thesis in history was rejected as too sociological. The texts that he recorded were left homeless amid the interdisciplinary shuffle. In each disciplinary context, the possible value of his materials was overlooked until they were pushed to the periphery and eventually lost from the sight of those who might have been interested in them.

Nevertheless, I was initially drawn to Weatherby's field notes and recordings in exactly the fashion envisioned by both the Africanist historians of the 1960s and by language documenters today. I had questions that Weatherby could not have thought to ask at the time that he was producing his documentation, and his materials provided a possible path to answering them. They provide hours of audio-recorded evidence about Soo grammatical structure 50 years ago. They preserve accounts of the personal experiences of the individuals whose voices are recorded, relatives of whom I can in some cases still identify. Several of the audio tapes were recorded while Weatherby was away by Lokiru Cosma, the consultant whom I would come to know four decades later; these provide a picture of what Lokiru himself was interested in.

As I undertake the deeply personal work of matching Weatherby's journal entries to audio recordings, of reconstructing the trajectories of his relationships in the field to better understand the interactions documented in text and audio, or of reading through his correspondence, I cannot help but wonder how my experience of these activities would be different if I did not know Lokiru Cosma myself or if I was unaware of the care with which Weatherby's daughter preserved this aspect of his legacy. Presumably, a centralised institutional archive functions to simplify the preconditions for the successful transmission of data, reducing the need for contributions from such a variety of people in such a variety of relationship configurations (e.g. between kin, between fieldworker and consultant, between scholars both within and across disciplines). I hope that in making Weatherby's collection accessible via a digital archive I am providing a new invitation to the ever-living relational world in which the materials were produced and preserved rather than, by obviating the need for relational mediation in "discovering" the materials, providing an end run around it.

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John M. Weatherby's commitment to seek connection with those around him and his persistence in seeking a home for his research materials are the only reason that this paper has any subject matter to discuss. Joanna Weatherby's care for those materials honors her father's legacy, and I am grateful for her generosity in welcoming me to her home, in helping me grow to understand her father better, and in offering feedback to this paper. A great many Soo and Nyangi people shared freely of themselves with Weatherby and with me. Some that I would specifically like to acknowledge are Lokeris, Napakhol, Sogolile, Loityang, Komol Isaach, and especially Loguti and Lokiru Cosma.

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