Disability & Deafness in North East Africa

Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia

Introduction and Bibliography, mainly non–medical, with historical material and some annotation

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For a list of abbreviations used in this document, consult the glossary.

Introduction

The following bibliography, currently with c. 520 items, focuses on social, educational and psychological responses to disability and deafness in North East Africa, with some material from the medical and scientific fields where it overlaps with social and individual living. Purely biomedical or pharmaceutical material, and newspaper or magazine articles, are omitted unless there is very little other relevant material available for a given period and place. Very little internet material is shown. (There is certainly much interesting information on the net; so people with web access can make searches using keywords of their own choice and interest, using their judgement about the quality or problems in whatever they may find.)

- North East Africa

The region designated "North East Africa" is of course geographically within the African continent, while also having some deep historical and cultural links with the Eastern Mediterranean, the Arab lands, and the Middle East. The present bibliography in fact creates a link between two earlier web bibliographies, covering Disability in the Middle East, and Disability in some Southern African nations, also hosted at CIRRIE:

- Disability and Social Responses in Some Southern African Nations
- Disability in the Middle East

(The latter bibliography also contains Egyptian material, dispersed among the Middle Eastern material. That has been updated and listed here, to give an adequate representation of Egypt within North East Africa.)

- Country names
Political divisions and borders of the large area covered by these six countries have changed since the 1960s, so that the country names used before and after that period are not necessarily those normally used at present or preferred by different political groups. This bibliography does not intend to engage, support, or deny any political stance when it records names as found in published papers. No offence is intended toward any ethnic, religious or political group. It is also regretted that relevant material in regional languages, e.g. Arabic, Amharic and others, is very weakly represented.

- Some sources


- Historical material

Material with historical reference appears in the two sections ("1601 to 1955"; and "Antiquity to 1600," with partial annotation. The dividing lines of 1600 and 1955 are arbitrary and intuitive. (A few items are actually listed in the ‘wrong’ period by date, when their contents seem to fit better inside that period). The historical–cultural heritage of the region was being shaped over three or four millennia, and historical outcomes continue to have powerful effects on many aspects of modern life; yet the experience of health and disability in the daily lives of the vast majority of people living before 1960 is already becoming a distant memory for those from that era who are still alive. It may be little known or understood by the younger generations, and is not easy to reconstruct in a meaningful way. Yet without some knowledge about the past, it is very hard to understand how things are working now, or to perceive the possible directions into the future.

Knowledge of the still more distant material from antiquity is normally confined to historians, theologians and archaeologists; yet it does indicate that disabled people have managed their lives in this region over very long periods; and there have been varying social responses to disability. For example, evidence from the
history of Egypt exhibits a remarkable continuum, with blind musicians in deep antiquity (see Manniche; Lichtheim); the blind theologian and teacher Didymus at Alexandria in the Fourth century (Bardy; Lascaratos; Weerakkody); blind cantors in the early Coptic church, and a recent revival of this tradition (Ragheb Moftah); blind muezzins and Qur'an reciters being trained at Al–Azhar from the Twelfth to the Twentieth century (Crecelius; Dodge; Lane, Heyworth–Dunn); the appraisal of socially valued roles for some blind people in Egypt under the Mamluks (Malti–Douglas); medical hazards for muezzins giving the call to prayer (Larrey); use of Lucas's method of teaching blind people to read in the 1850s (London Society) and of formal schooling for blind children in the 1870s (Abbate Pacha); and finally the life of the Twentieth century educator and statesman Taha Husayn (Goldschmidt; Husayn; Kashif; Malti–Douglas; Selim). Many other countries have illuminating short ‘spots’ of blind persons' historical activity; but few, if any, have evidence of multiple strands of such activities through four millennia.

Some revered texts of Islam could have been listed, which are in common use among Muslims in North East Africa and which mention various provisions for disabled people in the history of Islam. However, they are already listed and annotated in the Middle East bibliography indicated above. A small number of Christian texts are shown in the present bibliography, associated with Ethiopian and early Egyptian Coptic history, which were not shown in the earlier Middle East bibliography. A few items of mostly earlier work on female circumcision are included, as there are disability implications in current practices, and it may be useful to see if there has been some evolution of practice.

- **Djibouti**

Regrettably little has been listed for Djibouti, as compared with the nearby countries. No doubt more material exists in Arabic and French, which remains to be found. It was considered better at least to name Djibouti as part of the region, and to list a few items, mostly of a medical nature, rather than to omit all mention of this small but significant North East African country.

- **Annotations**

The annotations are intended to highlight disability alone, regardless of the merits of other topics that may occur in the book or article. They are given mainly on older work which is likely to be harder to obtain. Some annotations may address only one paragraph or footnote in a long book, which might be tedious to search for if no page number were shown.

By and large, the contents of listed items are taken at face value, though obviously in some cases, e.g. reported healing of people having severe disabilities, there are several points of view about the interpretation of such reports; and in other cases the annotator's own opinion may be more apparent than was intended. The reader should make up her own mind on the extent to which trends such as ‘Orientalism’
may have biased some authors, while an exaggerated ‘post–colonial’ stance might have influenced a later generation. The significance of ‘what is not mentioned’ may strike some users. In all cases, the annotations cannot properly be employed as a substitute for reading the original texts.

- **Apologies**

Data in square brackets [ ] has some uncertainty. The publication status of some papers remains unclear. A few authors' names may regrettably have become inverted through the compiler's lack of familiarity with African names. Listing and annotation were done over several years, with some changes of style, which is therefore not always uniform. Some accents have gone astray in languages other than English, or have been omitted because there is no uniform way in which they can be represented by screen readers. The bibliography is issued as a working tool, with apologies for any flaws. The compiler will read with interest any suggestions for corrections and for relevant additions.

- **Appreciation**

Useful comments and suggestions were received from Katharina Sprick, on late drafts of this bibliography.

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