Peter Ladefoged and Phonetics in the Field

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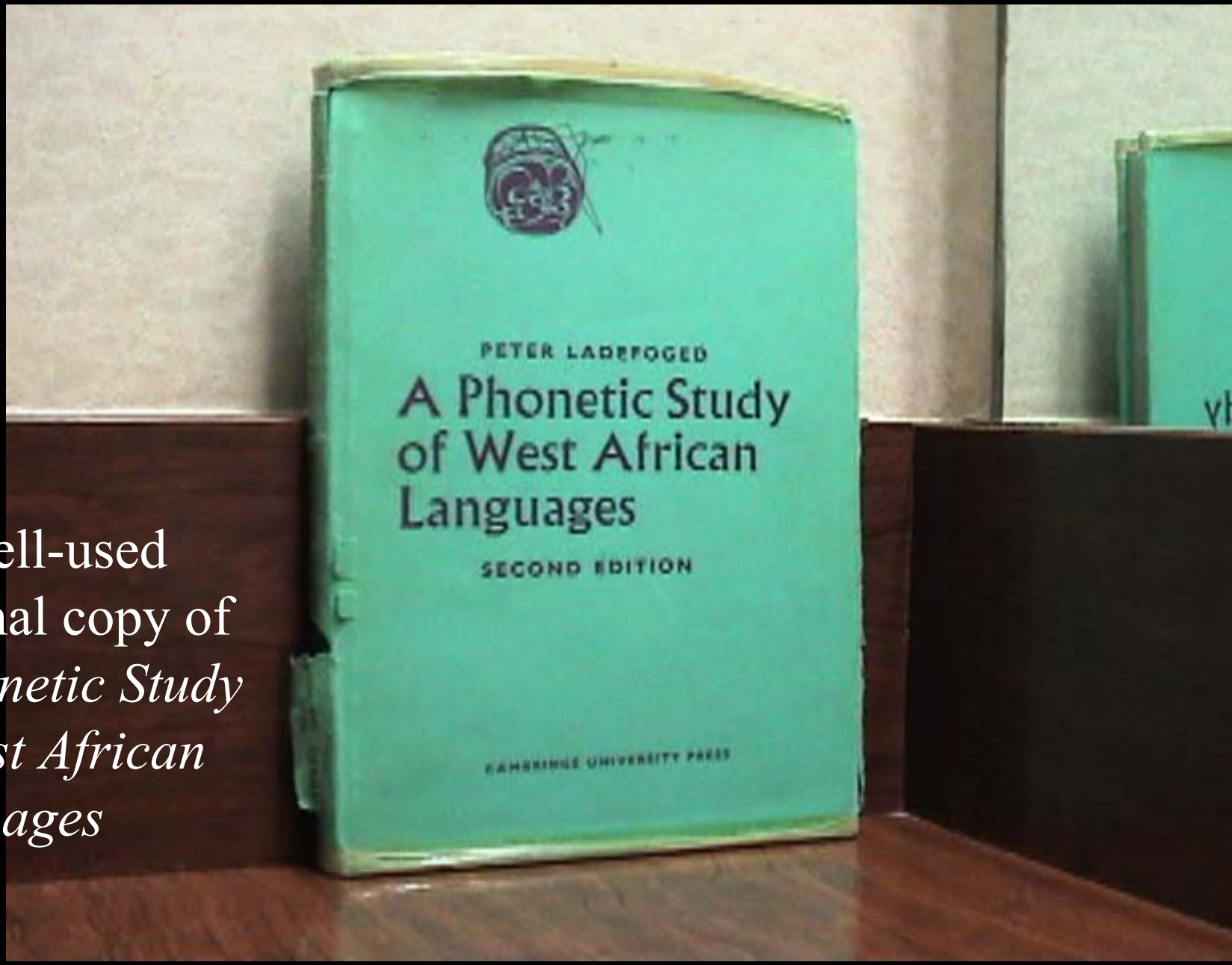
- Among many distinctive contributions to phonetics by Peter Ladefoged is an insistence on the immense diversity of phonetic phenomena in the languages of the world, particularly at the segmental level
- Because of this, Peter has maintained a flexible approach to any scheme of classification or description, adapting to both new approaches and new data
- Perhaps more than any other phonetician he has always ***expected*** to find surprises, and has gone to far corners of the world in search of them

- His ground-breaking *Phonetic Study of West African Languages* from 1964 laid out a template for synthesizing a large mass of data which is echoed in later works such as *Preliminaries to Linguistic Phonetics* and *Sounds of the World's Languages*
- His widely-used *Course in Phonetics* and other textbooks have drawn on this extensive experience and shown generations of students the richness of spoken sound
- But the beginning of this thread in Peter's work is clearly the *Phonetic Study of West African Languages*

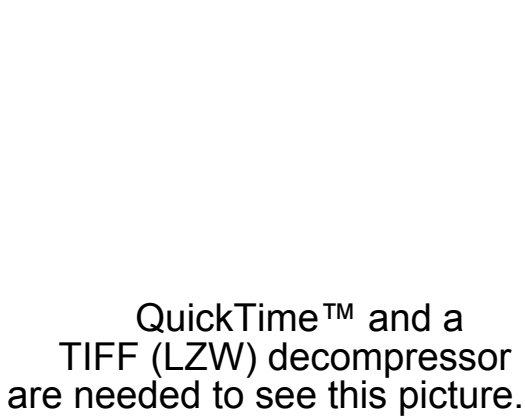


My well-used personal copy of *A Phonetic Study of West African Languages*

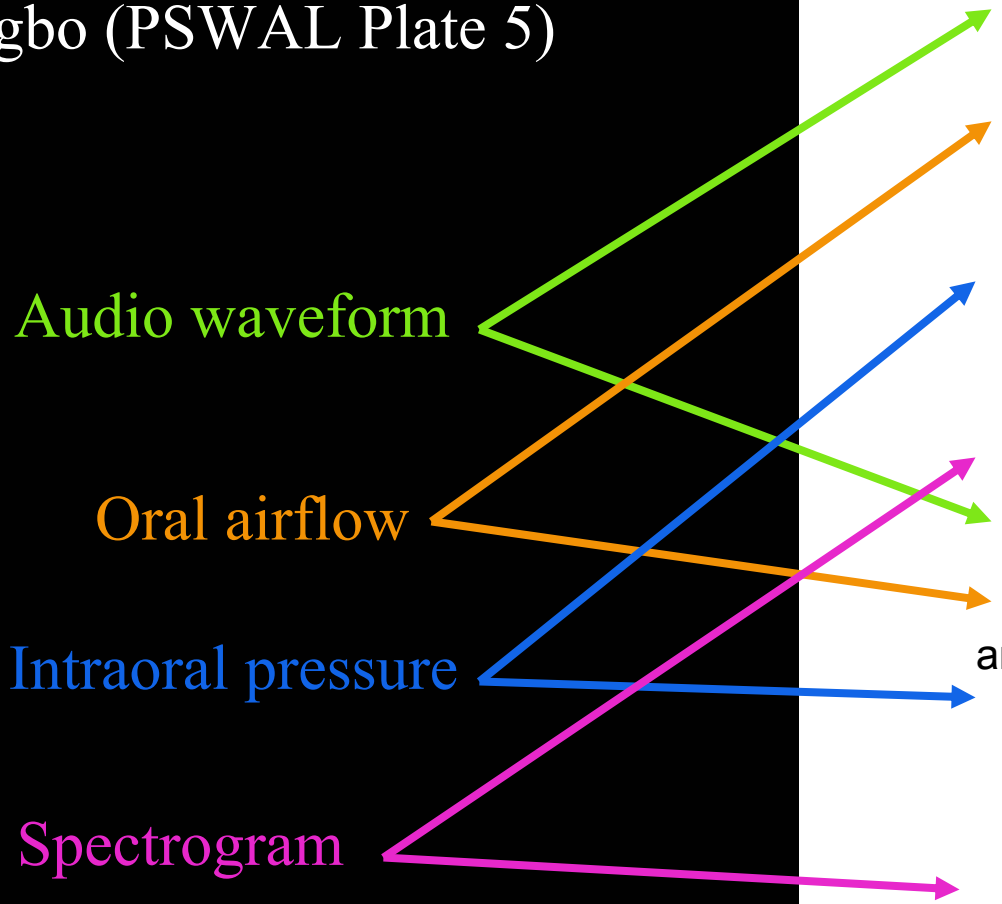
- Peter spent the year 1959/60 in Nigeria, ‘seconded’ from lectureship in phonetics at Edinburgh University
- Met Joseph Greenberg and William Welmers scouting for projects for the Ford Foundation’s *Survey of West African Languages*
- Proposed a phonetic study
- After a year back in Edinburgh, returned to base in Ibadan for 1961/62 academic year
- Collected material in Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Senegal on 61 languages from 9 countries
- By the time of publication, Peter was already at UCLA, his primary academic home ever since

- PSWAL was unlike any previous work in the breadth of descriptive techniques brought to bear
- *"I do not know of any previous attempt to use data provided by palatograms, linguagrams, casts of the mouth, photographs of the lips and spectrograms all of the same utterance, supplemented by tracings of cine-radiology films and pressure and flow recordings of similar utterances of the same word"* (PSWAL, Introduction, p. xvi)
- To this day we do not have any comparable study of the languages of any other area of the world

Spectrogram of Hausa phrase containing the word /ts’unts’a~aje~e/ “birds” (PSWAL Plate 1A)

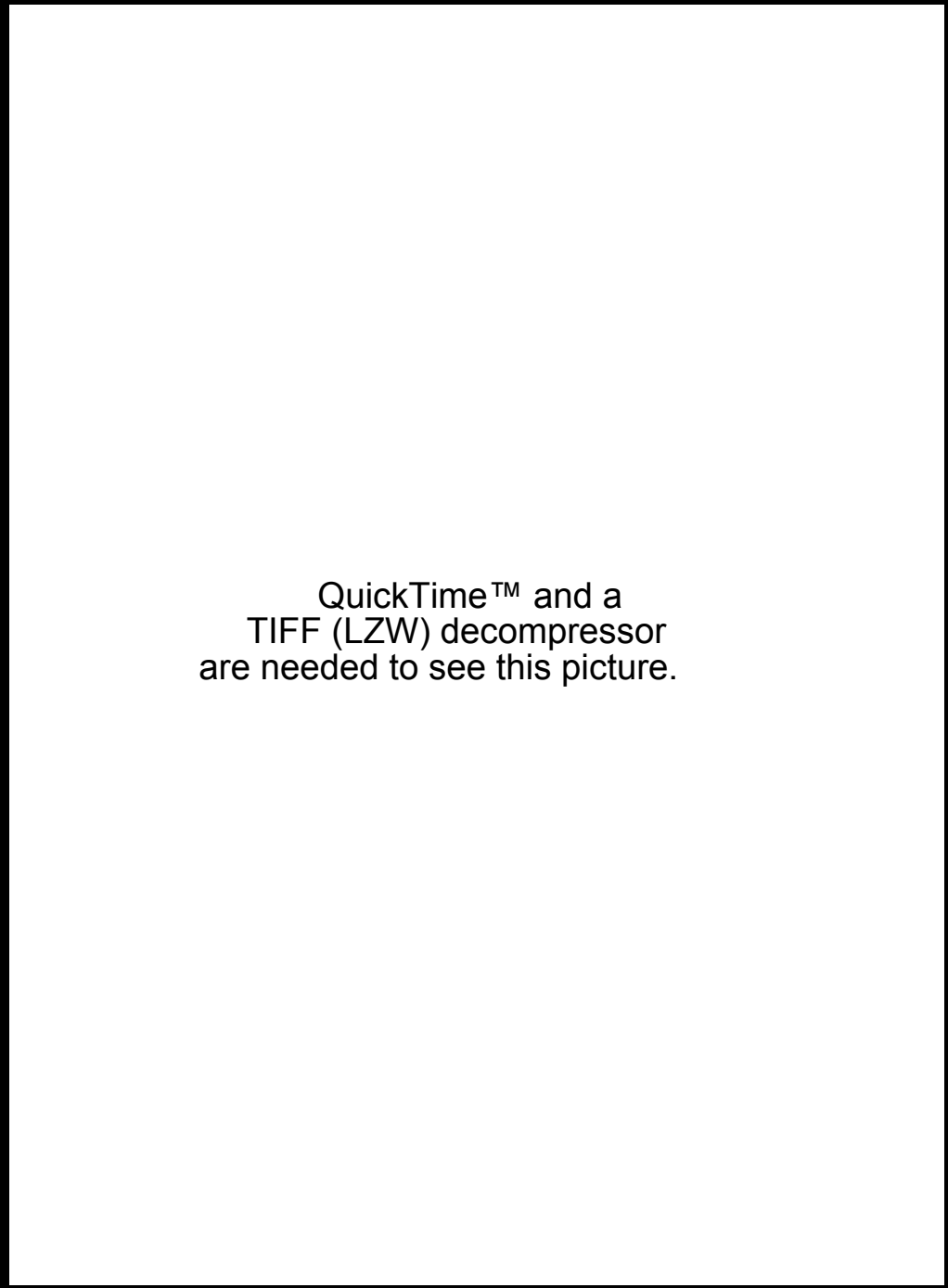


Four types of stops in Owerri Igbo (PSWAL Plate 5)

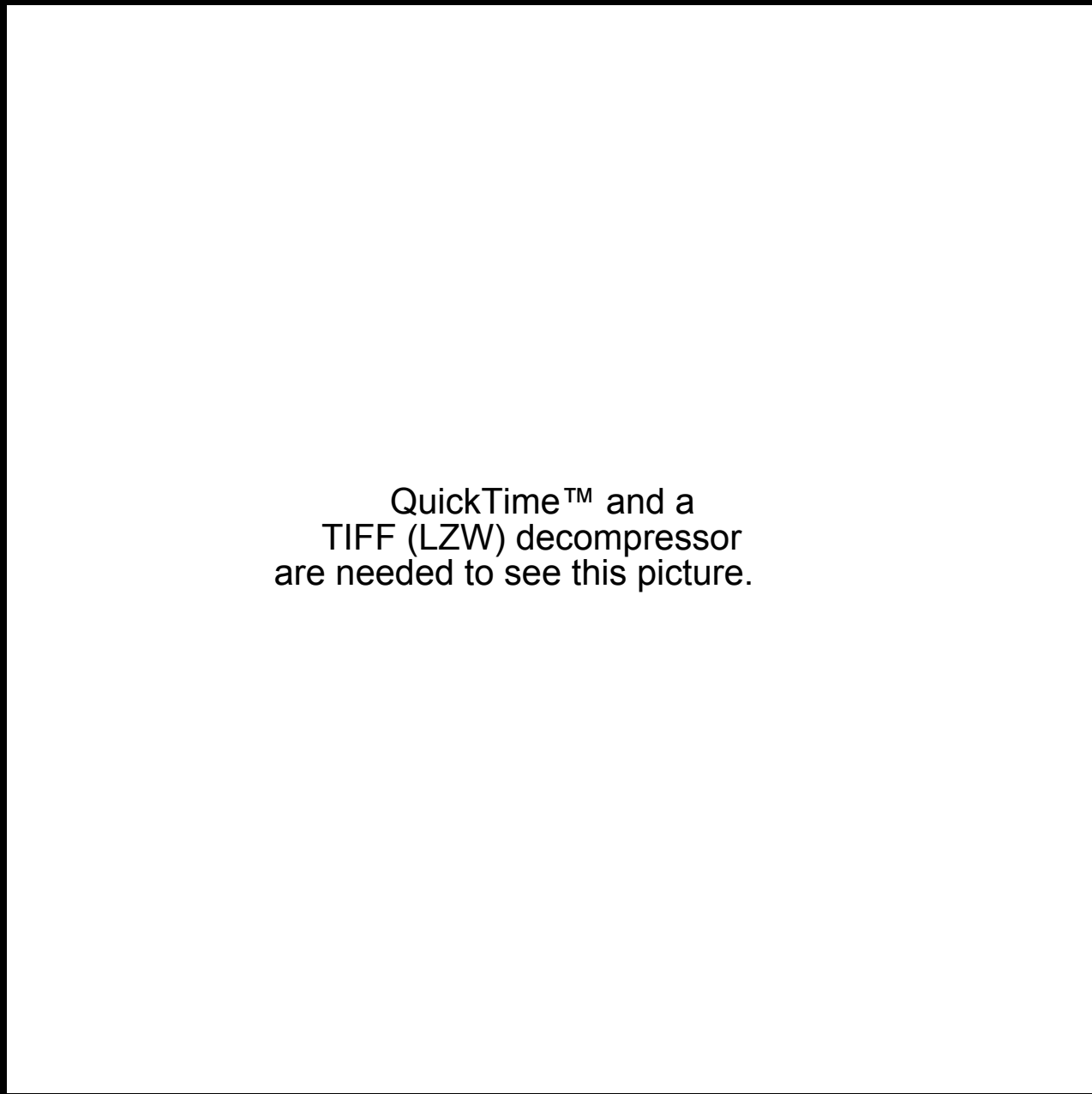


QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

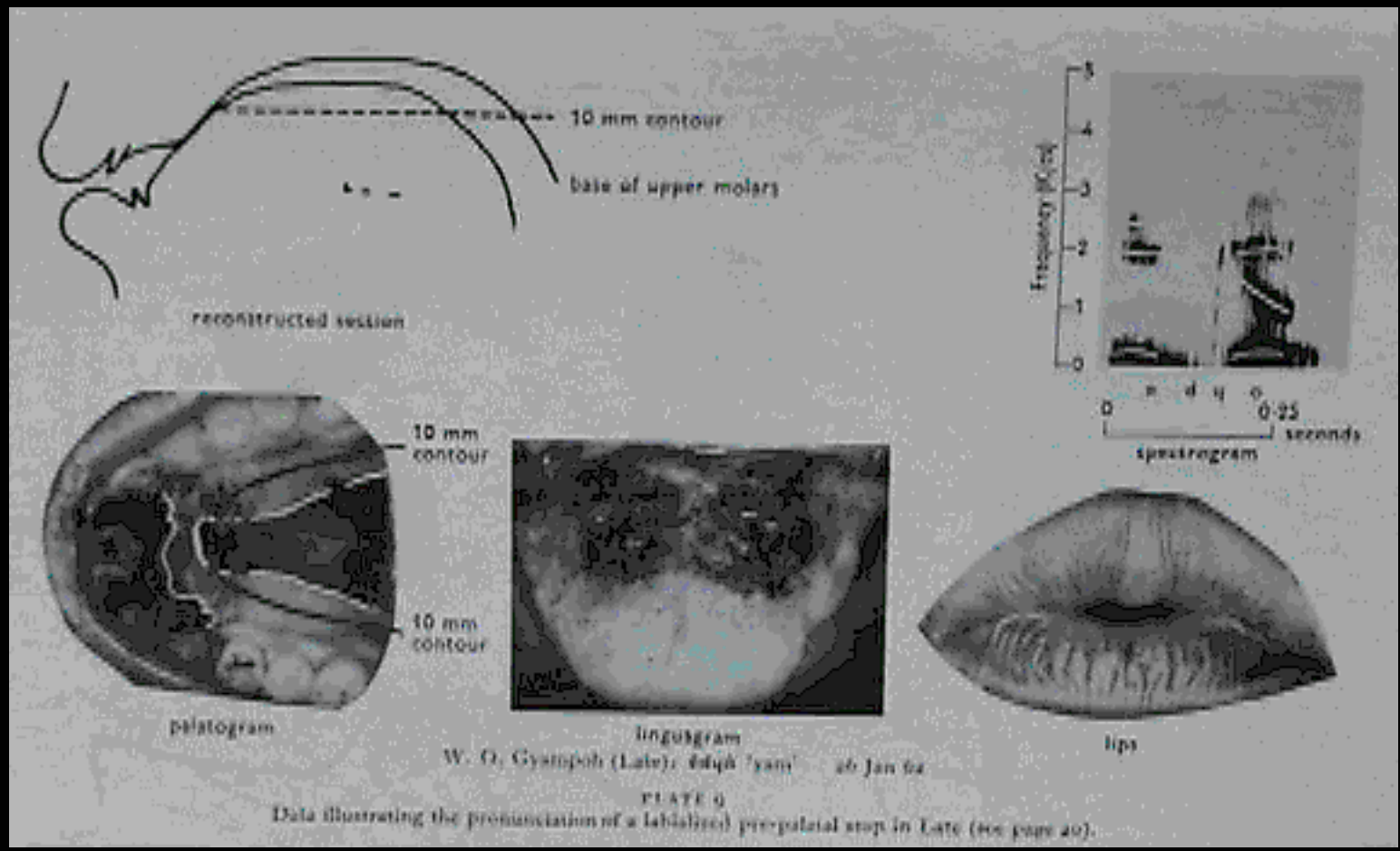
Simultaneous frontal and lateral photographs of selected labial consonants of Isoko (PSWAL Plate 12)



Pharyngeal and oral pressure records and waveform and spectrogram of Itsekiri phrase containing bilabial and labial-velar stops /i~pE~rE~ kpo~ro~ bu!gba!/ “a big nail and a calabash” (PSWAL Plate 2A)



Data on Larteh voiced labial-palatalized alveolar stop in the word /e!dᴬo!/ “yam”. Spectrogram, palatogram, linguagram, lip position photo and reconstruction of the articulatory posture (PSWAL Plate 9)



The recordings made for PSWAL are even now available for further research on UCLA Archive site

The UCLA Phonetics Lab Archive

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Language (Click to view materials)	Ethnologue Code (Click for SIL Description)
Ladino	
Larteh	LAR
Latvian	
Lendu and Mangbetu	
Limba	LIA
Lisu	
Lithuanian	
Logba	LGQ
Luganda	
Luya	

This site is made possible through funds provided by the National Science Foundation.

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Larteh

Back to Language Index

Consult the Word Lists in order to locate individual words of interest. You can search within your web-browser for specific sounds. (See word lists for more details.)

Left-click to access files online; right-click (Macintosh Control + click) to download. Not all information is available for all recordings, and so some cells might be blank.

Click "Details" for more information about a specific recording.

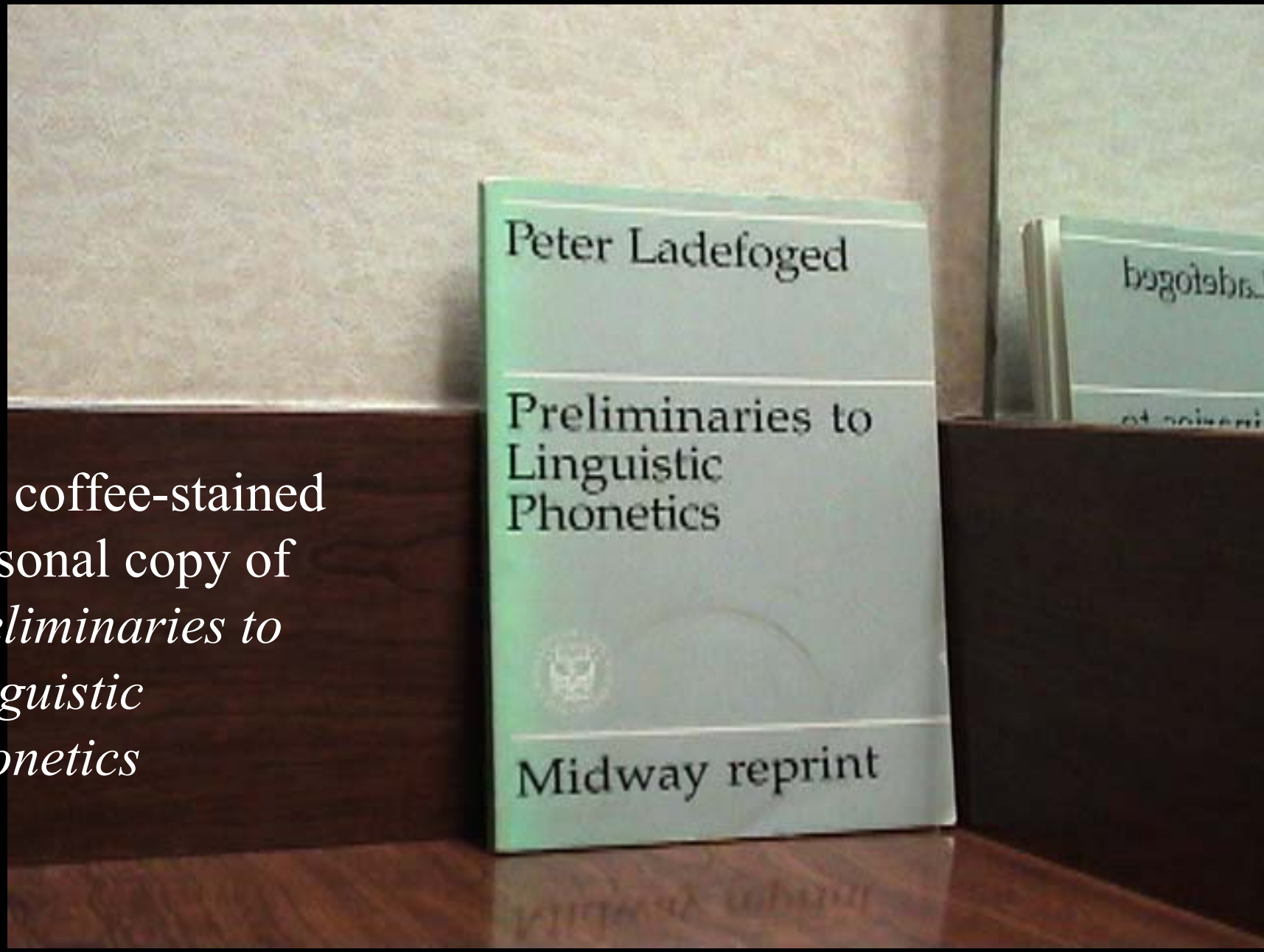
For more detailed instructions, click here.

	Word List	Word List Entries	Speaker(s)	Audio Filename	WAV	MP3	Scanned Word List (JPG)	JPG 2	Scanned Word List (TIF)	TIF 2	Recording Details
1	LARword-list.1962.01.html	1 - 30	W. O. Gyampoh	LARword-list.1962.01	WAV	MP3	JPG	JPG 2	TIF	TIF 2	Details

The field recording of Larteh — Peter Ladefoged with W. O. Gyampoh in 1962

Peter's voice has hardly changed at all since 1962

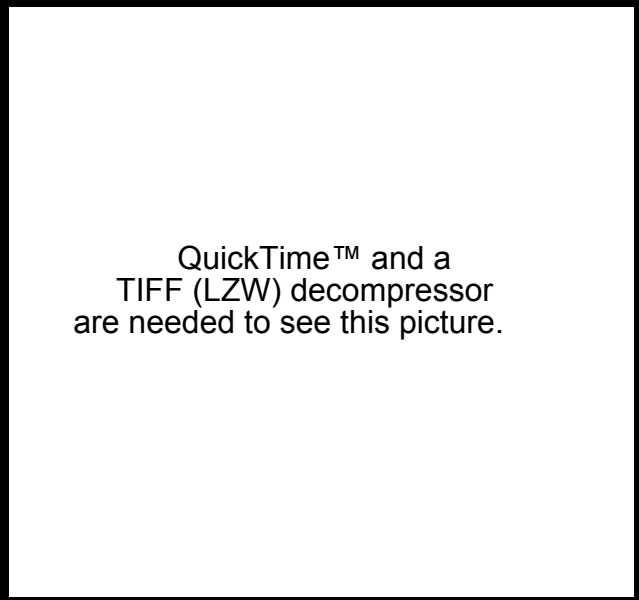
- Following his West African work, Peter soon started to visit other parts of the world — Mexico in 1963, India in 1965, Uganda in 1966/7
- This led to the incisive survey of information on the "contrasts observable at the systematic phonetic level in a wide variety of languages" — *Preliminaries to Linguistic Phonetics* (1971) — proposing a universal set of articulatory and auditory features



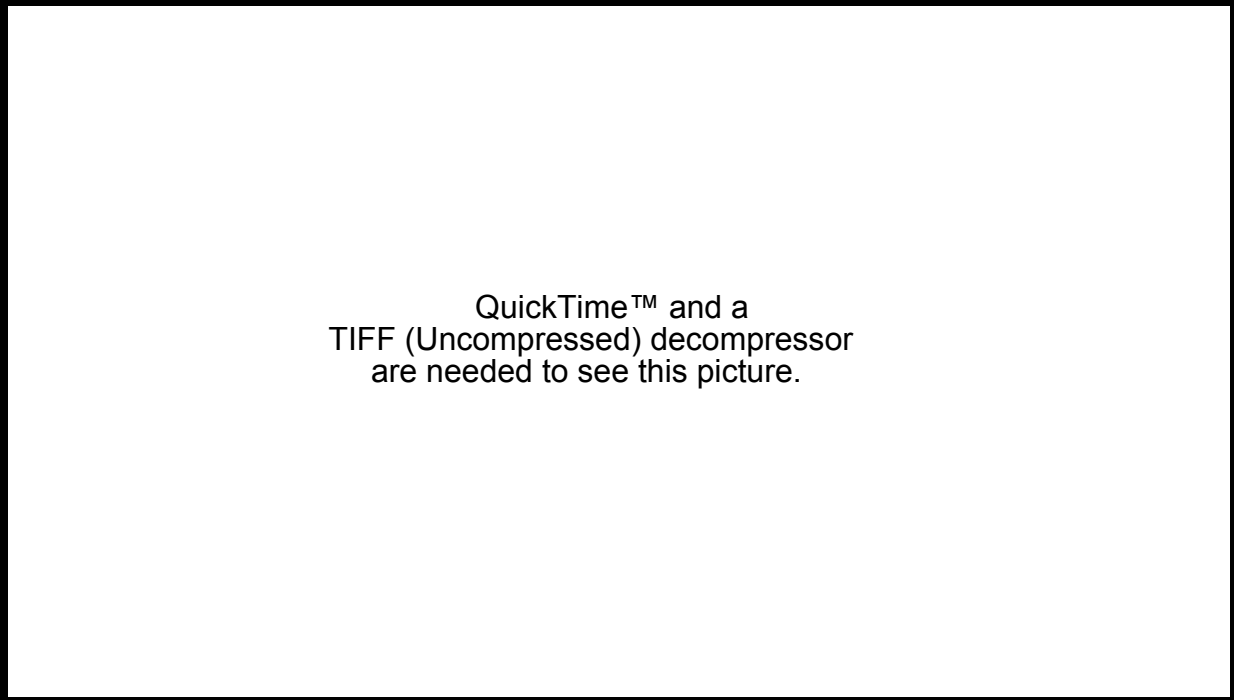
My coffee-stained personal copy of *Preliminaries to Linguistic Phonetics*

In this work the tables of real-language examples so familiar to generations of students who have used *A Course in Phonetics* make their first appearance

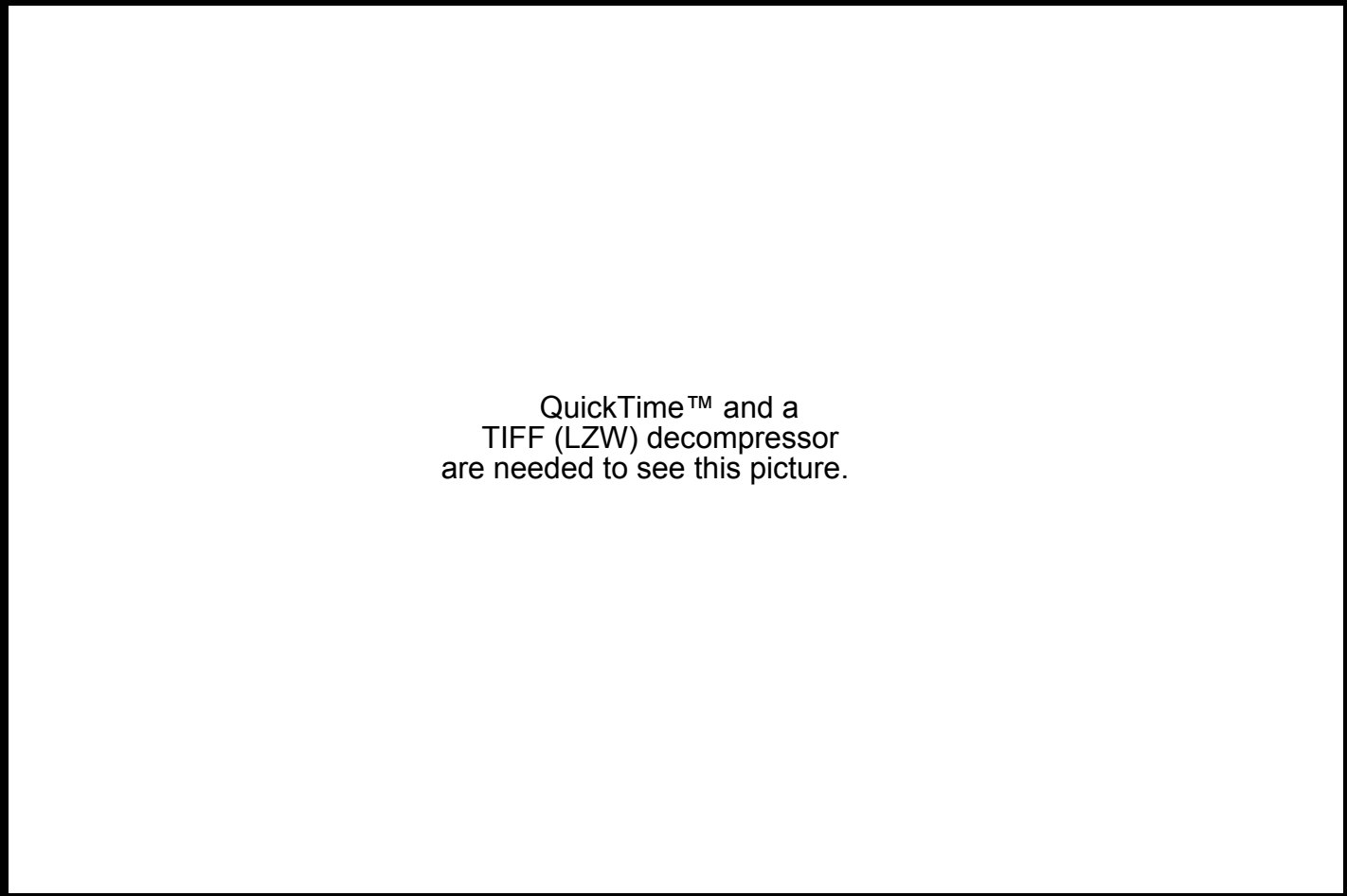
Table of stop contrasts in Sindhi from PLP



A later version of the table of Sindhi stops from the Hypercard stack *Sounds of the World's Languages* and UCLA Phonetics Lab website



One of the tables of features proposed in PLP



- Whereas most of the data for PSWAL had been gathered in university phonetics laboratories, Peter began to push for truly field-usable experimental phonetic equipment
- By the early 1980's Peter's field equipment — besides tape recorders, microphones, etc — included items such as a bulky Polaroid dental camera for photographing palatography, and a heavy aluminum trunk containing a modulator/demodulater system for recording DC signals for aerodynamic and physiological experiments
- Luckily, Peter was fit and strong

- By the 1990's 'luggable' computers were becoming available
- In 1991 a Macintosh weighing about 16 pounds and equipped with the first version of the Macquirer/PCQuirer analysis hardware and software made the trip with us to record the East African languages with clicks
- Unfortunately, the unreliable power supply in Tanzania blew the hardware to bits after only one subject had been recorded
- Now much lighter equipment does more

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- Unfortunately, the unreliable power supply in Tanzania blew the hardware to bits after only one subject had been recorded
- Now much lighter equipment does more, but a field-usable MRI is still in the future!

After many more trips, and with a few contributions from me, the most recent of Peter's surveys of the sounds of the world's languages appeared in 1996

But of course, he has written several books since then

- Peter's legacies include more than his writing — they include the development of a teaching style and the creation of the UCLA Phonetics Laboratory
- As Peter puts it in the career summary on his website "For me, the people mattered more than the equipment"
- Peter created a lab that remains a model of cameraderie, intellectual challenge and pragmatism

From managing the conflicts when there was ***one*** computer in the lab — a LINC-8 — to his status now as an inspirational guru, Peter has created a model for a research unit of its kind

He has also constantly striven to ensure the lab acted and was seen as an integrated part of the Linguistics Department

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

The last-ever LINC-8

Thankyou, Peter

and may the INS see fit to allow you to become a citizen!

Cameraderie

Linguistics 5k (take off sweater to show shirt)