Ethnography, History, and the Politics of Knowledge in Africa

Essays in Honour of Jon Abbink

Editors:
André van Dokkum
Alexander Meckelburg
Shauna LaTosky

africanstudies centre leiden

Universiteit Leiden
The Netherlands

Ethnography, History, and the Politics of Knowledge in Africa

Ethnography, History, and the Politics of Knowledge in Africa

Essays in Honour of Jon Abbink

Editors:
André van Dokkum
Alexander Meckelburg
Shauna LaTosky

Occasional Publication 51

African Studies Centre Leiden
P.O. Box 9515
2300 RA Leiden
The Netherlands
asc@asc.leidenuniv.nl
www.ascleiden.nl

Cover design: Akimoto
Interior design: Sjoukje Rienks
Cover photo's: Kibish Valley, 2006 © Mike Bryant. Churchill Road, Addis Ababa, 2024 © Alexander Meckelburg

ISBN: 978-90-5448-207-9

Table of contents

List of Figures

Contributing editors

André van Dokkum

André van Dokkum has been at the African Studies Centre Leiden (2007-2008, 2018) and the University of Macau (2015-), at the latter teaching at the Departments of Sociology and Economics. His doctorandus research on labour migration in eastern Gambia was completed at Leiden University in 1992 under the supervision of Gerti Hesseling. His PhD research on politics in Barue, Mozambique, was completed at VU University Amsterdam in 2015 under the supervision of Jan Abbink and Maria Paula Meneses. The latter research resulted in *Nationalism and Territoriality in Barue and Mozambique* (Brill, 2020). Current research interests include comparative anthropology in general and comparative political anthropology in Africa in particular.

Alexander Meckelburg

Alexander Meckelburg is a historical anthropologist and a post-doctoral fellow with the Department of History at University College London. He is actively involved in the ERC-funded project 'African Abolitionism: The Rise and Transformations of Anti-Slavery in Africa (AFRAB)'. Previously, he served as an editorial assistant with the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* and was a research fellow at the Hiob Ludolf Centre for Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies at the University of Hamburg. Alexander has also been a visiting researcher at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies at Addis Ababa University, where he was affiliated with the ERC-funded project 'SLAFNET: Slavery in Africa, a Dialogue between Europe and Africa'. His research interests include labour, slavery, migration, and the trajectories of citizenship in the political history of Northeast Africa. His recent works have been published in the *Law and History Review* and the *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African History*. Currently, he is co-editing a special issue on 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in Ethiopian Studies' in the *Supplement to Aethiopica* Series (Harrassowitz).

Shauna LaTosky

Shauna LaTosky is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Northern British Columbia, with an interest in material culture, women and pastoralism, ethnobotany, and social justice issues related to food security. She completed her doctoral studies at Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, under the supervision of Ivo Strecker, Jon Abbink, and Thomas Bierschenk on *Predicaments of Mursi Women in Ethiopia's Changing World*. She has worked with indigenous

agro-pastoralists in Southern Ethiopia for the last two decades, especially with the Mursi (Mun). Some of her publications include a co-edited volume *Rhetoric and Social Relations: Dialectics of Bonding and Contestation* (Abbink & LaTosky, 2021), and 'Customary Land Use and Local Consent Practices in Mun (Mursi): A New Call for Meaningful FPIC Standards in Southern Ethiopia' (LaTosky, 2021). She is currently working on an ethnographic documentary (together with Olisarali Olibui) on wild edible plants in Mursi, as part of the Guardians of Productive Landscapes film series.

Chapter Contributors

Ahmed Hassen Omer

Ahmed Hassen Omer is an Ethiopian historian. Ahmed holds a BA from Addis Ababa University, History, 1987, an MA from Addis Ababa University in History, 1994, DEA, Université de Provence Aix-Marseille I, 2001, and received his PhD, Université Paris I-Panthéon Sorbonne in 2007. He is a researcher and instructor at Addis Ababa University, Institute of Ethiopian Studies. He is associate researcher at the French Centre for Ethiopian Studies. He has been Director of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies from 1 January 2012 to 30 June 2019. He has variously translated books and published widely on Ethiopian history, society, and culture. His recent book is *Aleyyu Amba: L'Ifat et ses réseaux politiques, religieux et commerciaux au XIXe siècle* (Annales d'Éthiopie, Hors-série 6. Addis Abeba: Centre Français des Études Éthiopiennes – Éditions de Boccard, 2020). Currently he serves as the Director of External Relations Partnership and Communications at Addis Ababa University. His research interest focuses on social and environmental history and population mobility. He collaborates with different universities and research centres in Europe, America, and Asia.

Ameyu Godesso Roro

Ameyu Godesso Roro is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, Jimma University, Oromiya, Ethiopia. He has training both in sociology and social anthropology. Ameyu is a Cooperation Partner at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Saale), Germany. His research interests focus on peace, conflict, health, displacement, and migration. He has co-authored several publications, including book chapters published by Palgrave Macmillan and Routledge. Additionally, Ameyu serves as the Managing Editor of the *Ethiopian Journal of Social Sciences and Language Studies* – one of the nationally accredited journals in Ethiopia.

Asnake Kefale

Dr Asnake Kefale is Associate Professor of Political Science at Addis Ababa University. He earned his PhD in political science from Leiden University in the Netherlands. His research interests encompass federalism, conflict management, political economy, and migration. Notably, he authored the book *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia: A Comparative Regional Study* (Routledge, 2013/2018). Recently, he co-published the book *Eurasian Empires as Blueprints for Ethiopia: From Ethnolinguistic Nation-State to Multiethnic Federation* (with

Kamusella & Van der Beken, Routledge, 2021). His latest work, 'Constitutional Identity and Disruption in Contemporary Ethiopia', appears in the edited volume *Constitutional Identity and Constitutionalism in Africa* (Fombad & Steytler (Eds.), (2024), Oxford University Press), addressing the challenges of crafting a lasting constitution for the country.

Walter (Wouter) van Beek

Walter (Wouter) van Beek is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology of Religion at Tilburg University and Senior Researcher at the ASCL. As a cultural anthropologist he has performed extensive fieldwork among the Dogon (Mali) and the Kapsiki (Cameroon) over a timespan of more than 40 years; on both groups he has published extensively. He recently obtained and implemented a European JPICH project called DigiDogon, aiming at the registration, preservation, and digitalization of Dogon cultural heritage. Three major books and a series of articles have seen the light of day from this project, plus a PhD thesis, and a website is in preparation in the form of a Special Collection of the Leiden University Library. His most recent publication is a synthetic account of African masquerades, co-authored with Harry Leyten. This volume analyses where masquerades happen in Africa and why, and how they interact with the local arenas of gender and power in these societies.

Lidewyde Berckmoes

Trained as a social and cultural anthropologist, Lidewyde Berckmoes works as Associate Professor at the African Studies Centre Leiden at Leiden University. By bringing together insights from anthropology, psychology, and psychiatry, she seeks to improve understanding of the long-term and intergenerational effects of conflict and disaster, particularly in Burundi and Rwanda. She is also chair of the ASCL Collaborative Research Group on Conflict Continuities. In her previous work at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands Institute for Crime and Law Enforcement, Maastricht University, VU University, and with UNICEF Burundi, she conducted research on a variety of themes related to conflict and migration, including on young people coming of age in the aftermath of conflict, legacies of conflict on parenting, intergenerational transmission of violence and resilience, transnational parenting, SRHR among young refugees, and identity and belonging among diaspora youth.

Lucie Buffavand

Lucie Buffavand (PhD) is a social anthropologist, currently affiliated with the Institut des Mondes Africains. She has conducted most of her field research among the Mela, an agropastoral people of the Lower Omo Valley (Ethiopia). She has focused on identity formation, place-making practices, villagization, state build-

ing, religious representations, and material culture. She now investigates ethnonationalist movements in the former South Omo zone. Her latest publications include: 'State Building in the Ethiopian Southwestern Lowlands: Experiencing the Brunt of State Power in Mela' in Echi C. Gabbert, Fana Gebresenbet, John G. Galaty, & Günther Schlee (Eds.) (2021), *Lands of the Future: Anthropological Perspectives on Pastoralism, Land Deals, and Tropes of Modernity in Eastern Africa* (pp. 249-267). Berghahn.

Rijk van Dijk

Rijk van Dijk is Professor of Religion in Contemporary Africa and its Diaspora at the African Studies Centre, Leiden University, the Netherlands. He is an expert on Pentecostalism, migration, marriage, and youth. He has done extensive research on these topics in urban areas of Malawi, Ghana, and Botswana. Recently, he published the co-edited volume *Domestic Demons and the Intimate Uncanny* (Routledge, 2023) with Thomas Kirsch and Kirsten Mahlke. In his collaboration with Prof. Abbink, he published 'Secret Worlds, Democratization and Election Observation in Malawi' in Jon Abbink & Gerti Hesseling (Eds.) (2000), *Election Observation and Democratization in Africa* (pp. 180-210); Hampshire: MacMillan Press. In addition, he collaborated in publishing Jan Abbink, Rijk van Dijk, & André van Dokkum, 'Verdeeld Afrika: Etniciteit, conflict en de grenzen van de staat' in Jan Abbink & André van Dokkum (Eds.) (2008), *Verdeeld Afrika. Etniciteit, conflict en de grenzen van de staat* (pp. 3-15); AMB Uitgeverij.

Éloi Ficquet

Éloi Ficquet endeavours to apply critical methods of analysis to the confused ethnographic and historical material he gathers from the societies of the Horn of Africa, and writing about his career in a self-satisfied way is the last thing he enjoys.

Jan-Bart Gewald

Jan-Bart Gewald is a sociocultural historian of southern Africa. He grew up and was educated in southern Africa. He began studying geology but graduated with a BA in African History and African Political Studies at Rhodes University in Makhanda (Grahamstown), South Africa. He completed an MA in History at Leiden University, was an exchange student at Cologne University and the University of Ghana, Legon, and completed a PhD in History at Leiden University in 1996. Following postdoc positions in Germany (SFB 389) and Amsterdam (IISG), and residences in Niger, Eritrea, and Botswana, he was appointed at the African Studies Centre in Leiden. He was appointed Professor of Southern African History at Leiden University in 2013, became Professor of African History in 2017, and was Director of the African Studies Centre from 2017-2021. He is currently

working on a multispecies history of diamond mining in Kimberley, South Africa, 1870-1920.

Inge Ruigrok

Dr. Inge M. Ruigrok is a political scientist specializing in post-conflict governance and transitional justice. Her PhD research, funded by an NWO-WOTRO Science for Global Development Fellowship and a fieldwork grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, focused on Angola's state-building process following the 2002 peace agreement. Supervised by Prof. Jon Abbink and Prof. Martin Doornbos, her work emphasized the importance of local agency in governance reforms. Through fieldwork in former UNITA-controlled areas, Dr. Ruigrok examined how communities reconstructed governance structures in the absence of state authority. Her findings challenge conventional top-down peace-building narratives by highlighting the critical role of grassroots initiatives and community leaders in fostering social cohesion. She also explored the risks of blanket amnesties in perpetuating unresolved grievances. From 2012 to 2015, she served as an Associate Researcher at NOVA Law School in Lisbon, conducting postdoctoral research on public law and diversity in Lusophone Africa. This work further expanded her expertise in governance issues across Portuguese-speaking nations. Beyond academia, Dr. Ruigrok has held roles in journalism, public diplomacy, and policy advisory, particularly for the European Commission. She now serves as an adviser at the European Research Council in Brussels.

Günther Schlee

Since his retirement in Germany, Günther Schlee has been Professor of Social Anthropology at Arba Minch University, Ethiopia (2020-2024). Earlier stages of his career comprise the directorship of the department 'Integration and Conflict' at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle (1999-2019), a professorship at the Faculty of Sociology at the University of Bielefeld (1986-1999), a guest professorship at the École des Hautes Études et Sciences Sociales, Paris (1996), an assistant professorship at Bayreuth (1980-1985), his studies at Hamburg (1970-1977), and a happy childhood and youth in Schleswig-Holstein (1951-1970). A substantial part of this life has been spent doing field-research in Kenya and the Sudan. He has also been involved in development intervention and conflict resolution.

Ivo Strecker

Ivo Strecker, born in Germany in 1940, is Professor Emeritus of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany. Together with Jean Lydall he has done – and still does – ethnographic research in Ethiopia where he also taught off and on at the universities of Addis Ababa, Me-

kelle, and Arba Minch. He founded and for eight years directed the South Omo Research Center. Until 2019 he directed the project, 'Guardians of productive landscapes' under the auspices of the Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale, Germany. Together with Stephen Tyler and others he initiated the International Rhetoric Culture Project, which has so far published ten volumes in the Berghahn Books series 'Studies in Rhetoric and Culture'. Currently he is directing the DFG funded project 'Hamar Ethnography', which focuses on 'The Leap across the Cattle: A Rite of Passage among the Hamar', and 'Reading the Entrails: Sacrifice and Divination'.

Jan Záhořík

Jan Záhořík is an Africanist/social scientist working at the Department of the Middle Eastern Studies, University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic. His research interests include ethnicity and nationalism, modern and contemporary history, and the politics of the Horn of Africa, migration-development-security nexus, as well as Czechoslovak-African relations during the Cold War. He also closely collaborates with Jimma University, University of Gondar in Ethiopia, as well as several other universities in Nigeria, Rwanda, and Kenya. His recent publications include *Routledge Handbook of the Horn of Afric*a (co-editor, with Bach et al., 2022, Routledge), *Histories of Nationalism Beyond Europe. Myths, Elitism and Transnational Connections* (co-editor with Morone, 2022, Palgrave Macmillan), and *Inequalities and Conflicts in Modern and Contemporary African History: A Comparative Perspective* (author, 2019, Lexington Books).

Abstracts

1 Youth as Central Actors in Conflict but Not (Yet) in Peace

Lidewyde Berckmoes

Abbink and Van Kessel's edited volume 'Vanguards or Vandals: Youth, Politics, and Conflict in Africa' (2005) came at a time when the role of young people in conflict dynamics in Africa became increasingly visible and received ample academic attention (see also, Honwana & De Boeck, 2005; Utas, 2005; Vigh, 2006). It was one of the foundational books for my own research, particularly in my study on the role of young people for war/peace dynamics in Burundi after the 1993-2005 civil war, which I conducted as a PhD candidate under supervision of Ellen Bal, Ria Reis, and Jan Abbink (Berckmoes, 2014). Almost 20 years later, what has research brought us besides a nuanced understanding of young people's role in various African contexts and conflicts? In this contribution, I explore through my own work in the Great Lakes region in Africa how I have come to understand why and how young people have become central actors in conflict but not (yet) in peace.

2 The Mask and the Chief: An Arena of Symbolic Power

Wouter E.A. van Beek

Wherever masquerades occur in Africa, their influence on local politics is profound. Using Bourdieu's approach of different capitals, this contribution explores the varieties of the interaction between local institutional politics – say chiefs – and mask-based voluntary associations – say masks. 'Chief' and 'mask' both depend on symbolic capital but of different kinds, and these do not mix well. So, the text explores the see-saw between the power of the masking society and the power of the chief, and the ways this tension informs diverging political configurations. Starting from an exploration of the dynamics of secrecy as a crucial underpinning of symbolic power, four cases are examined: Ékpè, Oku, Bamum, and Mundang. The resulting power constellations range from a society with hegemonic secret societies, to one with a balanced interaction between masks and king, and then in one direction to a political ruler who dominates the masquerades and in another to a ruler whose power and even life expectancy are severely hedged in by masking. The analysis shows these two symbolic capitals to be fundamentally antithetical, and the arena between them contingent upon outside variables such as societal size, history, and wealth.

3 Reflections on Ethnicity, Conflict, and Peace in Ethiopia: From Ethnic Federalism to Domestic War(s)

Jan Záhořík and Ameyu Godesso Roro

In post-*Derg* Ethiopia, ethnicity has emerged as one of the key terms when discussing federalism, conflict, politically driven violence, and the state's overall future. Ethiopia's politics is heavily affected by ethnic tensions as a result of a complex set of historical, sociopolitical, and economic factors that have contributed to conflicts. Nation-building and state-building processes in Ethiopia differ from most of the African countries in the sense that they have not been initiated or influenced by European colonialism, with the exception of a short-lived Italian occupation (1935/36-41). This chapter aims to (1) evaluate the existing literature on ethnicity, federalism, and conflict in Ethiopia; (2) situate contemporary debates (including the primordialist/essentialist approach) in the context of current affairs in Ethiopia heavily affected by the war in Tigray and the turmoil that followed in the Amhara and Oromia regions; and (3) to provide a broad overview of the intricate relationship between ethnicity, conflict, and peace in Ethiopia, and shed light on the obstacles the country faces in its transition to a more peaceful and democratic future. We argue that the current problems and lack of peace in Ethiopia are mostly (but not completely) the result of the way ethnic federalism has been handled, which placed a high importance on ethnicity on paper rather than in practice. The war in Tigray and the Amhara-Oromo rivalry can be seen as the direct outcome of this legacy.

4 Public Authority in War-torn Rural Angola

Inge Ruigrok

This contribution explores the intricate process of re-establishing Angolan state authority in the aftermath of a decade-long conflict, with a focus on the Northern Huíla province, notably impacted by the war. Examining the case study of Caluquembe, a town situated on the Central High Plateau, the research sheds light on the challenges faced by the state in reclaiming areas where its sovereignty was contested during the conflict. Beyond mere territorial control, the chapter argues that the Angolan state's aspiration to become a 'developmental' entity necessitates the accumulation of what Michael Mann terms 'infrastructural power' – the ability to permeate the social and economic fabric of people's lives and execute political decisions logistically.

In emphasizing the political nature of institution building in post-war rural societies, the study contends that the African state is deeply interwoven with these communities, challenging prevailing notions of state failure. Despite not attaining complete dominance in Caluquembe's political arena, the state draws on the

authority and legitimacy of various local actors who operate in tandem with state functions. These actors, rooted in historical and indigenous networks of authority, represent a form of social institution sedimentation, wherein new structures gradually merge with historically established claims of domination. The chapter concludes by assessing the implications of this state-building process for ongoing political reforms on the national agenda.

5 **Federal Constitutional Design and Ethno-Nationalist Conflicts in Ethiopia**
Asnake Kefale

In multiethnic countries where there are contests between self-rule and shared rule, federalism is sought to balance these competing demands. Ethiopia, with a history of unequal ethnic relations, adopted a federal system in 1995. The federal system goes further than many multiethnic federations in recognizing the rights of ethnolinguistic groups. Accordingly, the country's ethnic groups – mentioned in the Constitution as Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples (NNP) were given the right of self-determination including secession. The main organizing principle of the federal system is ethnicity. This, however, accentuates ethnonationalism and violent conflicts over a range of issues including territory, identity, and political power. This article outlines some of the major constitutional issues that are related to ethnic conflicts and instability including ethnic territoriality, secession right, formation of regions, and constitutional adjudication. The article emphases the necessity of constitutional reform to overcome ethnonationalist conflicts and instability related to constitutional design.

6 **Overcoming Marginality: Predicaments of the Pastoralist Elite in South Omo (Ethiopia)**
Lucie Buffavand

The ethno-federal system of Ethiopia tends to create competition between elites of different ethnic groups over state resources. Concerning the southern region, which is the most ethnically heterogeneous, Jon Abbink foresaw a multiplication of levels of oppression. This chapter examines this issue of competition and domination among local elites at a moment of administrative reshuffling in the southern region, following the creation of the Sidama Regional State in 2020. The focus is on the South Omo zone, where the divide runs between agrarian elites from the highlands and pastoralist elites from the lowlands. This is partly the product of a differentiated history of integration into the Ethiopian state, meaning that only a minority of agro-pastoralists have had access to formal education. Members of the pastoralist elite holding positions in the administration face numerous challenges, such as a lack of recognition as Ethiopian citizens, an economic policy un-

suited to the pastoral economy, the impunity of their superiors, and a glass ceiling preventing them from accessing the upper echelons of the administration. This chapter relates how they seized the opportunity of a relative political opening to demand a special administrative entity for agro-pastoralist people.

7 How Islam Was Left Out of Maps of Africa Printed in Europe at the End of the Sixteenth Century

Éloi Ficquet

The standardization and mass distribution of maps of the African continent began at the end of the sixteenth century with the production of the first world atlases. If the sources of what is depicted in these images have been called into question, what is not depicted should also be under scrutiny. The participation of African societies in the community of Islam is barely represented in the first maps of Africa, to the point of complete erasure of this religion, while Christian settlements, especially the legendary kingdom of Priest John in Ethiopia, are over-represented. Even if the geopolitical competition between Christian and Muslim powers explains this erasure of Islam in the conception of Africa, a close examination of the documents leads us to question the limits of cartography in inscribing religious identities on the physical materiality of the graphic space of maps.

8 Political Parties and Elections in Mozambique: A Phenomenological Approach Toward the Ethnography of Collective Decision-Making

André van Dokkum

Postcolonial politics in Africa is often analysed from the perspective of the state, where the state is seen as an imposition of European ideas of the nation-state together with the later addition of multipartyism in collective-choice frameworks. Taking Mozambique as an example, it can be shown that neither the nation-state nor collective choice are ideas exogenous to Africa. The political functioning different from expectations in postcolonial Mozambique is better explained by taking the idea of political party (rather than nation-state) as a starting point for analysis. Current politics in Mozambique is analysed as a resultant of the combination of Mozambique's peculiar history of party politics and the equally peculiar application of reaching decisions with the implementation of a certain theoretical approach towards collective choice. This is theoretically contrasted with mechanisms for collective choice on the local level. At the same time the analysis reveals how subjective configurations of meaning systems can produce historical external effects that are difficult to change and have a reality of their own.

11 The Biocultural Importance of Lomay (Ximenia Americana) in Mursi

Shauna LaTosky

The ancient practice of wearing a labret is still common among many agro-pastoralist groups in southern Ethiopia. Among the Mursi, Tirmaga, and Chai (the latter two collectively known as Suri), for example, large ear spools and lip plates are worn among girls and women, respectively, despite social pressures to abandon them. The resilience of such permanent body modifications is evident in the number of girls and women who continue to pierce, stretch, and adorn their earlobes and, subsequently, their lower lips with pottery labrets in Mursi and wooden or pottery labrets in Suri. However, my intention here is not to focus on the various symbolic and expressive possibilities of piercing practices, which has been taken up elsewhere (see Abbink, 2009, on Suri; and Turton, 2004; LaTosky, 2013 and 2021, on Mursi). Instead, I am interested in situating this communication in the physical world by cultivating a sense of the plants that have been so vital to the success of body modification practices in Mursi, especially *lomay* (*Ximenia americana*). Here I propose that cultural keystone species theory could provide a useful framework for understanding relationships between the Mursi (and other labret-wearing groups in southern Ethiopia, such as, the Me'en, Suri, Kara, Nyangatom, and Daasanech) and the plants that are integral to maintaining their cultural practices, including embodied practices that mark identity and belonging.

12 Studying Evil: Ethnographic Methods and Problems of Identification

Günther Schlee

This chapter aims to be a contribution to the discussion on methods and research ethics of anthropological field research in violent settings. Its starting point is the identification of the researcher with the field, resulting from the deep immersion in another 'culture' which is regarded as a prerequisite for successful anthropological field research in the Malinowskian tradition. The chapter discusses cases in which this identification is difficult or impossible, like violent conflict among the people studied, or research on terrorism.

Introduction

What is more beautiful than doing research at
the intersection of philosophy and empirical science?
(cf. introduction in Abbink, 1995a, p. 2)

Figure 0.1
Jan Abbink at a promotion, VU, 2015

Gerrit Jan Abbink, also known as Jon, is an anthropologist and historian, who graduated in these disciplines at the University of Nijmegen (now Radboud University) in 1979 and 1980, respectively. He would become known as a specialist on Ethiopia, but the fieldwork for his PhD thesis (Nijmegen, 1984) on the Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) was actually carried out in Israel. The earliest fieldwork in Ethiopia proper was conducted in 1986 and 1988 amongst the Me'en (southwestern Ethiopia), with great devotion to the anthropological enterprise, as initially the research area could only be reached by a two-day journey on foot.

From 1995 onwards, Jan held a position at the African Studies Centre in Leiden (ASCL) besides his position in Nijmegen. It was the ASCL that would be the focal point of his career, although positions continued to be held elsewhere (from 2000 as a Professor at VU University Amsterdam and from 2016 at Leiden University when the ASCL became part of that university).

Jan had a specific interest in applying theory for its own sake. This has led to unusual, creative combinations of analytical approaches and subject matters. For example, Abbink (1985b) discussed missionary activity from a rationalist perspective. Sperber and Wilson's theory of relevance was applied to reading entrails in divination (Abbink, 1993). Abbink (1991) applied Derrida's idea of 'deconstruction' to discourses on 'tribe' and 'ethnic groups' in Ethiopia – while emphasizing that '[t]his does *not* mean that in social scientific explanation our work is complete when we have deconstructed' (p. 3, emphasis original; cf. note 4; see also Abbink 1994, p. 736). The importance of theory was so salient that he insisted that authors dealing with anthropology in a general sense expressly take a theoretical position in their work (Abbink, 1986, pp. 146-147). He lauded Nadel for having an 'independent position as theoretician and as fieldworker' (1985a, p. 222).

Jan's inaugural lecture at VU University Amsterdam (2001) revealed his own expressly stated preference for critical realism – a clear statement in favour of the acceptance of factuality, though (different from positivism) with taking into account recognition of how people view that factuality (p. 13). This would represent:

> an interaction perspective that is sensitive to the dialectics of causality between external reality shared by people and subjectively and culturally determined engagement with that (2001, p. 12).

The same inaugural lecture also highlighted the contribution of (especially Africanist) anthropology in building a record of information about humanity. At one point he recommended to one of us (AvD) the book by Hunt (2007), which greatly stresses the possibility for comparability in anthropology, which was not a widely propagated view around the turn of the century when certain interpretations of 'interpretation' implied that not much if anything could be said analytically beyond internal and subjective aspects of people's cultural expressions.

The attention for philosophy was also materially visible. In his office at the ASCL, Jan had a picture of the Dutch philosopher Spinoza hanging on the wall near his working desk, and the visitor might be specifically queried to name the identity of the person in the picture. The geographical proximity with Spinoza may be coin-

cidental – Spinoza lived in Rijnsburg close to Leiden – but the theoretical proximity certainly is not. Spinoza was thoroughly rationalist with an emphasis on studying things in wider connections, overlapping with what has been remarked above:

> 'Reason' […] is the apprehension of the essence of a thing through a discursive, inferential procedure. […] The adequate idea of a thing clearly and distinctly situates its object in all of its causal nexuses and conceptual relations, and shows not just *that* it is, but *what* it is and *how* and *why* it is. (Nadler 2023[2001], § 2.3)

(For more reflections on Spinoza, see the chapter by Gewald and van Dijk.)

As a person, Jan was always in for good humour and sharing a meal and a fine glass of wine in Leiden's historical inner city. For a personal recollection of events, we refer to the chapter of Ivo Strecker, who has known Jan for decades. We do, however, include some photos here (Figures 0.1, 0.2 and 0.3).

Figure 0.2
Jan Abbink 2012 with 'respondent' Ms Wuddnesh, during field trip in Southwest Ethiopia

Figure 0.3
Jan Abbink, during fieldwork in the 1990s, with Me'en local chief B'asagala (SW Ethiopia)

As Barari Siralugu Tulul recollects (Mizan Teferi, 2 June 2024):

> His nickname in Suri is Roriyabo and as a Suri we describe him as 'A man who opened the eyes of the Suri', or 'A person that brought light to Suri'. Roriyabo means a senior father or great father.
>
> Saro Roriyabo ani chali hung, inye ani hira bere kuneyi holidini basuri.
>
> *Barari Siralugu Tulul*
> *Economist, Ethiopia*

That is a beautiful description.

This *Festschrift* will continue, first, with a number of congratulatory notes by friends and colleagues. This will then be followed by fourteen chapters. The book will close with Jan Abbink's (impressive!) bibliography. The first six chapters deal predominantly with political analysis. Lidewyde Berckmoes analyses the involvement of youth in, and the intergenerational transmission of, conflict in Burundi and Rwanda. Wouter van Beek presents an analysis of the role of masquerades in

politics in Nigeria and Cameroon. Jan Záhořík and Ameyu Godesso Roro reflect on the problematic character of the Ethiopian constitution of 1995 that formally aims at promoting ethnic harmony but has failed to realize this. Inge Ruigrok investigates how in Caluquembe, Angola, the state interacts with local actors in processes of state building. Asnake Kefale discusses power relations between regions and the federal central government in Ethiopia and gives proposals for reforms. Lucie Buffavand studies relations between local elites of different ethnic groups in South Omo, Ethiopia. Then follow seven chapters on historical, methodological, and philosophical issues. Éloi Ficquet studies how sixteenth-century European maps have obscured the presence of the Islamic religion on the African continent. André van Dokkum applies Schutz's phenomenology to the analysis of political parties and electoral versus consensus decision-making in Mozambique. Ahmed Hassen Omer points out the value of interdisciplinary research, especially concerning anthropology, history, politics, and culture. Alexander Meckelburg discusses the importance of studying the hitherto rather neglected role of slavery in Ethiopian history. Shauna LaTosky discusses the topic of wearing lip plates in relation to the use of plants in this practice of body modification, a factor often overlooked in 'harm' debates. Günther Schlee investigates ethical dilemmas in studying violence, where applicable ethical rules for research may not so easily be obtained as a collection of straightforward imperatives might suggest. Jan-Bart Gewald and Rijk van Dijk take us on an ethnographic tour to Rijnsburg, once the place of residence of Baruch Spinoza, an important source of inspiration for Jan Abbink. The final chapter, by Ivo Strecker, contains more personal observations and ends with twelve points of attention derived from Jan Abbink's writing that may inspire us in future research.

The editors wish to thank Jos Damen and Klaas van Walraven for their guidance in producing this *Festschrift*. They are also grateful to Azeb Amha for providing the bibliography and the photos in this Introduction, and extend special thanks to David Ratner for his reflections. The editors and the authors heartily congratulate Jan Abbink on his emeritus status.

References cited and other sources used

Abbink, J. pers. comm.

Abbink, J. (1983). Seged celebration in Ethiopia and Israel: continuity and change of a Falasha religious holiday. *Anthropos*, *78*(5-6), 789-810.

Abbink, J. (1985a). Book review of J. Salat, *Reasoning as Enterprise: The Anthropology of S.F. Nadel*. *Africa*, *55*(2), 221-223.

Abbink, J. (1985b). Anthropology and the Missions. A Critical Epistemological Perspective. *Methodology and Science*, *18*(4), 253-269.

Abbink, J. (1986). Book review of Serena Nanda, *Cultural Anthropology*. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, *142*(1), 145-147.

Abbink, J. 1990 Tribal Formation on the Ethiopian Fringe: Toward a History of the 'Tishana'. *Northeast African Studies*, *12*(1): 21-42.

Abbink, J. (1991).The deconstruction of 'tribe': ethnicity and politics in southwestern Ethiopia. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, *24*, 1-21.

Abbink, J. (1993). Reading the Entrails. Analysis of an African Divination Discourse. *Man* (NS), *28*(4), 705-726.

Abbink, J. (1994). Refractions of Revolution in Ethiopian 'Surmic' Societies: An Analysis of Cultural Response. In H.G. Marcus (Ed.), *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies*. Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (Vol. 2, pp. 734-755). Red Sea Press.

Abbink, J. (1995a). Tussen cognitie en cultuur. *Facta*, *3*(7), 2-5.

Abbink, J. (2001). *Identiteit, strijd en continuïteit in trans-modern Afrika: een kritisch-realistische benadering* (Inaugural lecture). Vrije Universiteitspers.

ASCL (African Studies Centre Leiden). Diverse annual reports.

Google Scholar (≤ 2024). Page J. Abbink. <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=BceITioAAAAJ&hl=nl&oi=sra>.

Hunt, R.C. (2007). *Beyond Relativism: Comparability in Cultural Anthropology*. Rowman Altamira.

Nadler (2023[2001]) Baruch Spinoza. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spinoza/>, accessed 30 August 2024.

Translations from Dutch: AvD

Shauna LaTosky, Alexander Meckelburg & André van Dokkum

Celebratory Notes

Bahru Zewde:

Academics never really retire. They do so only officially. The same applies to Jan Abbink, whose prodigious academic career is celebrated in this *Festschrift*. Official as it is, however, retirement is particularly worth celebrating when it is capped by a life of remarkable and variegated achievements. That is what Jan Abbink can rightfully claim. His decades-long scholarly publications have covered a whole gamut of disciplines and issues, in a manner reminiscent of the late Richard Pankhurst. Following the trail blazed by the milestone publication, *The Southern Marches of Ethiopia* (co-edited by Donald Donham and the late Wendy James), he has admirably combined anthropology and history. But he has also ventured into disciplines as far apart as politics and photography. His incisive book reviews have appeared in so many different journals. His loyalty to former students and colleagues is almost proverbial, as evidenced by the obituaries that he wrote on their death. He is a typical example of the engaged scholar, observing and analysing, for instance, Ethiopia's chequered path of electoral democracy after the change of regime in 1991. Likewise, he has studied the impact of the Ethio-Eritrean war of 1998-2000 on the local population and exposed the biased reportage of the recent war in northern Ethiopia by the Western media. Underpinning all his writings has been an abiding love for Ethiopia.

Bahru Zewde
Emeritus Professor, Addis Ababa University

Alessandro Bausi:

I first met Jon G. Abbink in Addis Ababa in 1990 and 1991, if I remember correctly, during my first PhD research stays in Ethiopia. It was one of the many difficult moments that the country, and the capital in particular, experienced just before the change of regime in 1991. For the small community of young foreign scholars there at the time (*färänği*, as we were still called by the children in the streets), and especially for those like me who were experiencing not only Ethiopia but Africa for the first time, Jon already enjoyed the status and respect of a brilliant scholar, deeply familiar with the local cultures and all the intricacies of social, ethnic, and political relations. In the years that followed, although the very different interests we cultivated did not often favour encounters and direct collaboration, I always found Jon to be a deeply and sincerely engaged scholar, both in scholarly discussion and in cultural and political debate more generally. He was always ready to support but also to voice and express his authoritative, sometimes sharp,

point of view. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to congratulate him warmly on his long, exceptionally productive, and successful career dedicated to Ethiopian studies, and on his emeritus position at the African Studies Centre at Leiden University.
Alessandro Bausi
Professor of Ethiopian Studies
Sapienza Università di Roma
Dipartimento SARAS (Storia Antropologia Religioni Arte Spettacolo)

Rosabelle Boswell:
At the end of a year of PhD fieldwork in Mauritius in 2001, I realized that I was going to need additional funding. In South Africa, where I was situated, the Affirmative Action project of the national government did not include people like me, as I was not born in the country. I was therefore grateful to come across PhD funding from NWO/Wotro and Professor Jan Abbink, who agreed to further co-supervise my PhD studies and to offer wisdom and guidance on what would be a long journey. Prof. Abbink's incisive supervision of my PhD contributed to the work becoming a standard reference for Indian Ocean multi-sited ethnography. He also provided input and support into the postdoctoral work that I went on to do in Zanzibar, Madagascar, and Seychelles (2005-7). Beyond scholarly reflection, Prof. Abbink became the kind of person I could turn to for sober career advice and for moral support, for – in addition to anthropology – I have served as an academic dean. In brief and I believe because of his own extensive and highly detailed, empathetic ethnographic work in Africa, Prof. Abbink is the kind of person who is eminently able to recognise both need and scholarly potential, something I will be forever grateful to him for. Today, because of his early support and guidance, I am an NRF Research Chair in Ocean Cultures and Heritage, and my work spans five African countries. I apply the same empathy and approach of recognising potential that he taught me twenty years ago.
Rosabelle Laville-Boswell
PhD Anthropology, Vrije Universiteit;
Research Chair in Ocean Cultures and Heritage, Nelson Mandela University

Mienke van der Brug:
Although I studied in Leiden, I only got to know Jan well during my PhD trajectory at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. As an extraordinary professor at this university, Jan was my supervisor, together with Sandra Evers and later Freek Colombijn. I experienced Jan as hard-working; he divided his time between Leiden and Amsterdam, conducted research, attended conferences, wrote articles, and when he wasn't doing that, he was on the radio explaining what was happening in the Horn of Africa. Despite his full agenda, you always received a quick response to

your email. Jan was a committed and great supervisor. His knowledge of anthropological and Africa-related themes was impressive, and he gave valuable comments to my work, whether it involved anthropological research into emotions, witchcraft, or historical issues in Namibia. Even after finishing the PhD trajectory, Jan remains involved with his PhD students. You can always contact him with a question, request for support with a fund application, etc.

Jan, congratulations in having reached this milestone, and I wish you all the best!
Warm regards, Mienke
Assistant Professor, University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht

Michael Bryant:
Jon,
You have contributed so much to the understanding of the Suri people and many other peoples throughout Ethiopia over the years. It always amazes me how prolific you are at publishing articles, which provide a wealth of information that will be of great benefit far into the future. I have fond memories of the time you spent with us in Tulge. You respectfully learned from the Suri people and have continued your relationship with many of them over the years. Thank you for giving Daniel Bambu and myself the opportunity to publish together with you. May God bless you and your family as you enter this new phase of life.

Congratulations,
Michael Bryant
Training Coordinator for the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL Global), Ethiopia

Susanne Epple:
My heartfelt congrats to a great scholar! Though we have never worked together on any project, I have always read his publications with interest and followed his research with admiration, both of which inspired me for my own work. Besides that, I always wondered how a single person can be so productive! This *Festschrift* is therefore indeed a wonderful opportunity to celebrate Jon as an exceptional scholar and inspiring scholar. Thank you, Jon!
Susanne Epple
Independent Scholar, Germany

Fana Gebresenbet:

Few individuals have had a distinguished career spanning decades, remaining productive and influential in an interrelated range of disciplines as Jon Abbink has, especially in Ethiopian and Horn of African studies. He seems to have made a full circle in his academic focus on Israel-Africa relations, which he started with in the 1980s and now is re-engaging with. Since his ethnographic PhD work among the Suri in the mid-1980s, he has remained a constant and towering voice to be heard on issues of ethnicity, cultural anthropology, religion, ethnic conflict, and federalism, as well as political culture and democratization in Ethiopia and Africa in general. In addition to the prolific and penetrating critical works he has authored over the span of his career, he has left an indelible mark through supervision of a large number of scholars from the continent at large. An additional unique mark and contribution was the series of bibliographies he prepared on 'Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies', illustrating his painstaking and meticulous following of new publications. These are crucial resources for anyone to take a stock of the available literature when embarking on a serious investigation. Abbink was also a public intellectual, critically engaging in public fora, be it in the form of old or new media landscapes. He is now leaving a long shadow on the field. His influence will persist.

A well-deserved congratulations, and best wishes!

Fana Gebresenbet

Associate Professor, Director, Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University

Felix Girke:

I think I only ever met Jon in the context of workshops and conferences – not in the classroom, not in the proverbial (and somewhat shared) field of Southern Ethiopia but in academic settings, admittedly with their more broadly social accoutrements of shared dinners, coffee breaks, excursions, and hallway chats.

Those occasions were across the board far richer for having Jon in them. His calm, his perspicacity, and his dedication to the precise stood out as a particular mode of conduct, that of somebody who enjoyed stimulating debate but sought to maintain both intellectual standards and civility. I know my academic journey benefited enormously both from reading his papers and from the privilege of engaging with him between Oxford and Dire Dawa. So that others might benefit as my peers and I did, I wish Jon an unruly and busy retirement.

Felix Girke

Lake Constance Arts and Sciences Association, Germany

Mayke Kaag:

Dear Jan,

While we are both anthropologists interested in African politics, as our research focus has been on different regions (yours on the Horn of Africa, mine mainly on Francophone West-Africa), over the years I did not always follow closely what you published. But each year when the ASCL Annual Report came out, there it was: your long list of publications heading the list of publications by ASCL staff. The A of Abbink could not be missed! Impressive in quantity, the wide range of topic covered, and the diversity of outlets and audiences reached. At this celebration of your retirement, I would like to congratulate you with all of your achievements. At the same time, we are happily looking forward to more of your publications in the future!

Mayke

Professor Anthropology of Politics and Governance in Africa, University of Leiden

Margot Leegwater:

Dear Jan, I would like to congratulate you on your emeritus status and on your rich and impressive academic career so far. Knowing you, I believe that you will continue writing and commenting on the situation in the Horn of Africa. On a more personal note, I would like to thank you for your support during my PhD research. You believed in my work and in me as a researcher and that helped me through the sometimes-difficult struggle of doing research in traumatized and dictatorial Rwanda. I am very proud of my PhD title, which I earned with your supervision and help. Many thanks and best wishes,

Margot Leegwater

Project Leader/Researcher Platform31-IVO, the Netherlands

Maria Paula Meneses:

Jan Abbink is Emeritus Professor of Politics and Governance in Africa, after having served as a lecturer and researcher at Leiden University, in the Netherlands. Jan Abbink is truly a scholar of African history, as at home with anthropological research. His oeuvre compellingly demonstrates the importance of broadening the empirical range of research about politics in the African context, with a focus of Ethiopia.

His great command of historical analysis is matched by his knowledge of political anthropology, culture, and religion in the Horn of Africa. From the *The Falashas in Ethiopia and Israel: the problem of ethnic assimilation*, of 1984, until the most recent book I have read, *A Decade of Ethiopia: Politics, Economy and Society, 2004-2016*, his work established itself as reference studies on the subject. The impressive breadth and depth of Jan Abbink's work are evident in several of his academic works, spread over more than 40 years.

Jan Abbink's books are hardly his only scholarship: in articles, book chapters, and encyclopaedia entries, he covered a range of topics related to African regional history and livelihoods, including a critical stance towards the rhetoric and practice of development. Professor Abbink was also a helpful resource for faculty colleagues and a valuable and generous mentor to graduate students, who have also benefited from his wisdom and deep knowledge of the Horn of Africa. Enthusiastic but critical, it was a pleasure to have co-oriented André van Dokkum's thesis project, entitled *Deliberating 'democracy' in Mozambique* with Prof. Abbink. I wish you many years of happiness and success in your scholarly endeavours.
Maria Paula Meneses
Principal Researcher, Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra

Wiebe Nauta:
Jan Abbink: a Man of Great Erudition, Humour, and Modesty.
In academia, Jan Abbink represents a rare species. Frequently, the international hot shots and high flyers in their fields are quite arrogant and without much interest in their (junior) colleagues. Not Jan. Yet, what a prolific author! Incredibly respected in the field of Anthropology, African studies, History, et cetera. Whether the changing identity of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel (1984), the role of Islam in Ethiopia (1998), being young in Africa (2005), menstrual synchrony claims among Suri girls in Ethiopia (2015), or the way in which agro-pastoralists in Ethiopia cope with climate change (2021), Jan has written about it. There are not many who are so knowledgeable when it comes to the Horn of Africa and especially Ethiopia. Nevertheless, and this is rare, Jan is such an incredibly nice, modest, and humorous person. In fact, I have never attended a conference where one did not hear Jan making jokes, frequently at his own expense. Moreover, Jan always shows a genuine interest in his colleagues. There is one mystery, however, which surrounds the man. An enigma. Is it Jan Abbink? Is it Jon Abbink? Or are these actually two people, fooling all of us by pretending to be one and the same person? That would explain a lot…
Wiebe Nauta
Sociologist of Development, Maastricht University

Alula Pankhurst:
I am delighted to hear that the well-deserved *Festschrift* for Jon Abbink is about to be published. I had the privilege of an enjoyable friendship with Jon over many years including being best man at his wedding. I have always admired Jon for his meticulous work, intellectual rigour, and thought-provoking articles. Being Dutch and mastering the major European languages was an asset for Jon studying the complex ethnographic and political history of Ethiopia, written about by travellers and missionaries from different countries.

Jon excelled not just in his in-depth ethnographic research on several groups, notably the Bete Israel, Me'en, and Surma, but on countless other subjects. Unlike some anthropologists he never shied away from a political-economy approach and in his prolific career he addressed a wide range of topics including history, politics, religion, and conflict. The breadth and depth of his knowledge became even more apparent through the three wonderful comprehensive volumes of bibliographies he produced on *Ethiopian Society and History* (1957-1990), *Eritreo-Ethiopian Studies in Society and History* (1960-1995), and *A Bibliography of Ethiopian-Eritrean Studies in Society and History* (1995-2010), which have been an invaluable resource for students of Ethiopia, especially in the era before internet transformed searches.

Jon's services to Ethiopian studies with the bibliographies were also part of his dedication to encouraging other researchers, advising students, working in collaboration with colleagues, and as an active participant in conferences notably the International Conferences of Ethiopian studies, including in the International Organising Committee over so many years. I am convinced that in his retirement he will go on to produce many valuable works which will transform our understanding of Ethiopian studies, and I wish him, Azeb, and their children all the best.

Alula Pankhurst

Ethiopia Country Director, Young Lives

Takele Merid:

Jon Abbink is undoubtedly one of the most respected scholars in Ethiopian Studies I have encountered. I first met him at the 17th International Conference on Ethiopian Studies (ICES) held at Akaki Campus in Addis Ababa in 2009. At the time, we were both presenting on the same panel chaired by Herbert Lewis. As a junior staff member at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), I was eager to learn from his presentation.

Since that initial meeting, I have closely followed his work and noticed several overlapping thematic areas between our research, including livelihoods, cultural ecology, rituals, vernacular perceptions, and southwest Ethiopia. These overlaps have significantly influenced my own scholarly focus.

Jon Abbink has been a constant presence at all previous ICES conferences, and I have made it a point to attend his presentations. During the 21st International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in October 2022, our paths crossed numerous times. Abbink served as a member of the ICES International Organizing Committee, while I was the Committee's Chair and Director of the IES. His contributions were instrumental in the successful realization of the conference.

Abbink's views, research, achievements, and dedication to Ethiopian Studies have not only advanced the field but have also solidified his status as a sincere friend

of Ethiopia. His unwavering commitment and scholarly excellence deserve our deepest thanks and heartfelt congratulations.
Takele Merid
Assistant Professor, Director, Institute for Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University

Siegbert Uhlig:
Mit Jon Abbink über äthiopische Ethnien zu diskutieren, ist immer ein besonderes Erlebnis, wobei er nicht nur die historischen Fragestellungen beherrscht, sondern stets auch die aktuellen gesellschaftlich-politischen Entwicklungen ins Zentrum des Interesses rückt.
Mit der Erforschung und Dokumentation wenig erforschter Ethnien Äthiopiens hat er sich bleibende Verdienste erworben, so z.B. der Suri, der Me'en u.a. pastoraler Völker im Süden des Landes. Mehrfach hat er sich auch der Bearbeitung und Herausgabe wissenschaftlicher Bibliographien gewidmet, ein Feld, das von Wissenschaftlern als eher wenig ertragreich gemieden wird, obgleich es zu den Basisinstrumenten soliden Fachwissens gehört. Weitere Besonderheiten sind seine Offenheit für die Diskussion mit Sozialwissenschaftlern einerseits und seine Bereitschaft zur regionalen Öffnung andererseits.
Die Hamburger Äthiopistik verdankt generell der Zusammenarbeit mit dem African Studies Centre Leiden seit Emeri van Donzel außerordentlich fruchtbare Impulse und eine intensive Kooperation, eine Tradition, die Abbink fortgesetzt hat. Unvergessen ist seine grundlegende Mitarbeit an der Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, an der Abbink vom ersten bis zum letzten Band als field specialist mitgewirkt und nicht nur 69 eigene Artikel beisteuerte, sondern auch den weiten thematisch-strukturellen Horizont mitbestimmte.
Möge uns Jon Abbink mit seinem an der wissenschaftlichen Praxis orientierten Blick der afrikanischen Ethnologie, Sozialwissenschaft und Äthiopistik auch im sogenannten Ruhestand noch lange erhalten bleiben.
Siegbert Uhlig
Emeritus Professor, Universität Hamburg

1

Youth as Central Actors in Conflict but Not (Yet) in Peace

Lidewyde Berckmoes

Theorizing youth in Africa

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, conflict-affected young people started receiving increasing attention in policy circles and academia. Particularly famous is the extensive research commissioned by the UN General Assembly and Committee on the Rights of the Child, entitled 'Impact of armed conflict on children' (Machel, 1996). The report addresses the predicaments of children affected by armed conflict worldwide, and pays specific attention to the experiences of child soldiers.[1] It received widespread attention in policy circles and academia, and served as a source for inspiration for much research that followed.

Jan Abbink and Ineke van Kessel's edited volume *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa* was published in the same period, in 2005. It investigates the role of young people in political struggles and conflict in Africa specifically.[2] Concerned with 'youth' rather than 'children', a central interest of this volume and others of that time, is youth agency (see also Honwana & De Boeck, 2005; Utas, 2005; Vigh, 2006; Sommers, 2012). Indeed, the various studies explore the connection between young people's limited opportunities for economic and social becoming in various African contexts and their choice for violent careers in paramilitary or rebel movements. They also point to the paradox of young people's participation in violence while, as a new generation, young people represent hope for change, for peace as well. These studies furthermore point to the urgent need to theorize youth in Africa. In the introduction to the just cited edited volume, Abbink (2005) argues that such theory should engage with a number of themes specifically important for the African region, including the

1 Speaking of 'children' rather than young people, or youth, not only has implications for the age boundaries of the category, but also conveys important meanings concerning innocence and agency.

2 'Vanguard or Vandals' was developed from a conference organized by the 'Culture, Power and Inequality in Africa' theme group of the African Studies Centre, held in Leiden in April 2003.

historical impact of ruptures and changes in political systems due to colonialism; the post-colonial elites clinging to power and resources, thus excluding youth; the pressure and changes tremendous demographic growth has generated; the decline of 'neo-patrimonial' state governance; the potential of youth to construct a symbolic counter-discourse; the logic of violence and armed struggle; and the experiences of young women, who, while causing less nuisance, merit attention as well (2005, p. 25).

The abovementioned studies were foundational for my own research too, particularly my study on the role of young people in war and peace dynamics after the 1993-2005 civil war in Burundi. Interested in youth and peacebuilding, I found myself to be part of the academic trend to research young people and 'the dialectic of despair and crisis with that of survival and renewal' (Abbink, 2005, p. 25).

My interest developed from my fieldwork research experiences as a master's student in a refugee camp in Kibondo, western Tanzania. My research there was concerned with constructions of identity among young people who came of age as refugees in the camp (Berckmoes, 2006). The camp hosted mainly Burundian refugees who arrived with the outbreak of the civil war there (1993-2005). I started my research in the refugee camp in September 2005, one month after a transition government had been installed in Burundi, with the late Pierre Nkurunziza as president. After more than a decade of civil war, this was a breakthrough for peacebuilding in Burundi. For the camp population, the appointment of the new government led to speculations about prospects of sustained peace in their war-torn home country. Indeed, also prior to the civil war, violence had plagued the country with major attacks and massacres taking place in 1962, 1965, 1969, 1972, 1988, and 1991. In the refugee camp, many refugees gathered information via radio or letters from relatives, or they crossed the border to check out 'what [was] going on' in Burundi (Immaculée, young girl – in Berckmoes, 2006). Most of the young people I spoke with were furthermore informed by their parents' assessments of the situation. The parents seemed to be more certain that the worst was likely to happen again, as the following fragment of a group discussion reveals:

> Eric: Yeah, the parents are saying the Hutus and the Tutsis are … some parents blame the war on the ethnic divisions, because they are saying that even though they [i.e. Tanzanian and Burundian government and the UNHCR] are saying that the war is over, there are so many years like this, that [parents] are saying it can't change.
> LB: It can?
> Eric: It can't.

> Antoinette: Parents are telling their children they cannot forget what happened in their country. Maybe when [we] go back to the country, [we] can see that ethnic divisions are no longer important, or still important?
> *Group discussion, 2005 (in Berckmoes, 2006)*

Young people's open attitude regarding the potential formation of peace in Burundi became a key interest in my subsequent research. After a 'pilot study' in Bujumbura for my Research Master's African Studies at Leiden University (Berckmoes, 2008), I conducted research on the role of youth in peacebuilding in Burundi as a PhD candidate under supervision of Ellen Bal, Ria Reis, and Jan Abbink at VU University Amsterdam (Berckmoes, 2014). In the thesis, I describe how young people in Bujumbura try to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of the civil war, a context that I found to be marked by profound 'indeterminacy'. I tried to gauge what the young people's agentive, 'elusive tactics' could mean for the country's war-peace dynamics in general. I found that young people's everyday practices in response to pervasive indeterminacy helped them to invest in more hopeful futures but also contributed to a stranglehold on society, particularly in terms of mistrust and social divisions.

My entry into research thus developed hand-in-hand with academic and policy research and interest in young people's agency in conflict and politics in Africa. This leads to the following question: Since the late 1990s, how has our understanding of the predicament of young people in politics and conflict in Africa developed? In this contribution, instead of sharing an overview of extant studies, I ask this question through my own research. In the following, I describe how I have come to understand how young people have become central actors in violent political struggles and conflict but are not (as yet) central in peace formation. Here lies an assignment, I feel, for research, policy making and intervention in the years to come.

The problem of youth

As mentioned above, studies on young people in Africa have been mainly concerned with questions about youth agency in choices for violent or non-violent 'careers' and how to tailor interventions for young people so as to avoid enrolment in violent groups, and they have provided analytical descriptive understandings of young people in particular African contexts (Abbink, 2005). Furthermore, a central theme in many of the studies concerns the challenge for young people to reach respectable 'adulthood' (Christiansen et al., 2006; Sommers, 2012; 2015). Here, youth and adulthood are not defined only by age and biological maturation but also by societal roles.

While the boundaries of 'youth' are contested in most societies and often depend on specific situations, studies generally agree on youth being a liminal period of transition between the life stage of childhood and adulthood (Reis & Berckmoes, 2018). Yet studies of youth in Africa show that this transitionary, liminal period risks becoming long-term. Alcinda Honwana (2012) argues that these days inadequate education, massive unemployment, poverty, and HIV/AIDS lead to a prolonged if not unending 'time of youth' for many people. She suggests the concept of 'waithood' to capture this detrimental condition of waiting and wanting that befalls most African youth. Similarly, Henrik Vigh (2006) speaks of a 'social moratorium' for youth, while Marc Sommers (2012; 2015), who researched youth in war-affected contexts specifically, finds that many young people feel 'stuck'. For instance, in post-genocide Rwanda, young people are unable to transition to social adulthood, because becoming an adult in Rwandan society means that young men need to build a house, marry, and start a family. The daunting task of building one's own house would be challenging enough for most young people in most African countries, Sommers argues, but it is particularly difficult in Rwanda because of high levels of poverty after the mayhem and stifling legislation on housing implemented by the post-genocide government (2012; 2015).

The problems of getting stuck in the liminal period of youth are not unique to African youth but appear to be especially serious in Africa (Honwana, 2012, p. 3). Moreover, destructive effects of war and genocide can exacerbate the challenges of reaching respectable adulthood (Sommers, 2015). In many conflict-affected African societies, many young people consequently experience exclusion and alienation. While representing a demographic majority, their social positioning means that they are an 'outcast majority' (ibid.).

My research findings in Burundi in the period 2007-2015 resonate with these studies. Young people in Burundi shared with me their aspirations for higher education, employment, and a family they could support. Yet the 1993-2005 civil war left Burundi as one of the poorest countries worldwide, leaving few opportunities for success. Take for instance Anatol, a young man who came of age during the civil war in Bujumbura, the former capital of Burundi. He told me that he deeply cherished the dream of becoming 'a man worthy of being called a man'. For him, these are men who 'want what is best, do not run behind others but make choices based on their own knowledge'. Later in the conversation, he added that – like in Rwanda – getting married is one of the most important steps in becoming a respectable man in Burundi (fieldwork notes, 19 April 2011). Yet Anatol, like other youth in Bujumbura, felt crippled by the lack of opportunities available. He and other young people explained to me repeatedly that one needed a connection with someone in a powerful position to get a chance at employment at all,

while concurrently such connections were generally out of reach (in Berckmoes, 2014; 2015). Opportunities to forge connections, particularly with political leaders, however, sometimes opened up during electoral or other periods of youth mobilization. In exchange for votes or loyalty, sometimes implying violence, young people hoped that political leaders would help them obtain a scholarship for study abroad or an employment opportunity at some later stage (Berckmoes, 2015; 2017; see also Vigh, 2006).

The notion of young people experiencing limited life changes (Vigh, 2006) and waithood (Honwana 2012; 2014) gained much traction in research and policy circles, and stimulated a great number of interventions that focused on education and youth employment. Yet the recognition also enforced an understanding of 'youth' as an inherently problematic life stage. Take, for instance, the following definition as employed by Sommers in *The Outcast Majority*, concerned with war-affected youth: '…for the purpose of this book, "youth" will be defined simply as a young person with a tenuous social status and a hoped-for social transformation into adulthood' (2015, p. 14). Notably, such negative understanding of youth is in stark contrast with ideas of youth in Western societies, where the liminal period is also attributed with positive associations like adventure, exploration, experimentation, and freedom.

Contextualizing youth

Similarities in experiences among young people across Africa notwithstanding – particularly regarding difficulties procuring future prospects and so transitioning to respectable adulthood – most studies mentioned above also show that the meaning of youth is conditioned by specific local dynamics. A generalized notion of youth, it is argued, risks overlooking sociocultural, economic, and political variations, and may in fact lead to wrongful, if not harmful generalizations about the identity of youth across societies (e.g. Ismail & Olonisakin, 2021). To give an example, early research on 'youth bulges' claimed to find a correlation between large youth cohorts and an increased risk of criminal and/or political violence (in Simpson, 2018). In later research, attempts were made to establish more refined correlations. For instance, Henrik Urdal (2006) found that states with youth bulges were more likely to experience outbreaks of violence only when economic and educational opportunities for youth were limited or non-existent. Yet these studies are contradicted by numerous counterexamples of states with large youth populations that continue to experience relative peace, such as Malawi and Zambia (Simpson, 2018). Furthermore, extant critique maintains that correlation should not be confused with causation, and that we should question the definition of youth employed to compare country outcomes:

> Many of the studies use the wrong definition of youth; the 15-24 years-old benchmark is at variance with how youth is defined in Africa. This is in addition to the failure to disaggregate the notion of youth, especially to show variation between older and younger categories of youth, and between male and female youth.
> *(Ismail & Olonisakin, 2021, p. 376)*

In other words, context-specific understandings of 'youth' appear necessary to grasp what factors actually condition how young people engage in violence and peace.

These context-specific understandings of youth, I propose, should then be historically informed. In particular, attention should be paid to earlier experiences of violent conflict as informative and transformative of the meanings of youth in particular societies. Indeed, as Carolyn Nordstrom argues based on long-term research in conflict-affected Mozambique and Angola:

> Violence reconfigures its victims and the social milieu that hosts them. It isn't a passing phenomenon that momentarily challenges a stable system, leaving a scar but no lasting effects. Violence becomes a determining fact in shaping reality as people will know it, in the future.
> *Nordstrom in Sommers (2015, p. 31)*

For me, the recognition that past conflict 'continues' to shape present and future has led to an increased interest in the relationships between conflict legacies and youth agency.

Conflict legacies and youth

In this section, I describe three categories of legacies of conflict that appear to be especially significant in shaping the experiences and choices of youth in politics and conflict in Africa and elsewhere: namely, increased intergenerational distance; conflict-affected repertoires of action; and intergenerational transmission of conflict legacies.

Intergenerational distance

A first category of conflict legacies is related to the potential increase in intergenerational distance, potentially leading to intergenerational conflict. This category speaks to how, in various African countries, post-colonial elites tend to cling to power and resources, thus excluding younger generations from economic and political opportunities and power (Abbink, 2005; Sommers, 2015). Moreover, in many countries young people tend to be imagined as a potential danger to ex-

isting interests, if only because of youth's historical association with opposition groups (Abbink, 2005). For instance, in Ghana, the political mobilization of youth finds its roots in the struggle for independence from colonial rule. At the time, the political mobilization of youth and organization of youth conferences enabled young people to be brought together, who had not attained formal schooling and those who had been schooled, thus making for a strong voice against colonial authorities (Austin in Owusu Kyei & Berckmoes, 2020). The association of youth with opposition and violent resistance present in countries like Ghana, appears especially strong in countries affected by recent conflict (Sommers, 2015). Consequently, in these countries especially, young people's demands for inclusion tend to be met with powerful repression.

In addition, the potentially transformative impact of conflict on societies (Nordstrom in Sommers, 2015) may add complexity to the relationship between generations. In view of this, Carola Tize and I convened a panel to examine how societal transitions forced through conflict and other crises impact intergenerational proximity and distance (American and Canadian Annual Anthropology Meeting, 2023). The panel built on Karl Mannheim's theory, which argues that as young people have 'fresh contact' with existing, shared cultural material (1993[1927]), they are well positioned to affect gradual and complex change over time. In a study on young people and ideas about sex and sexuality in Madagascar, Jennifer Cole (2010) described the process of gradual change affected by young people as 'regeneration'. In the context of crisis, however, regeneration may take shape in more radical or conflictual ways due to the unsettling effects of war or other crises. In the aftermath of crises, the ways of being and becoming usually taken for granted may be questioned anew, leading, potentially, to profoundly different ways of thinking and being in the world between the older and younger generations.

In Burundi, these two processes that may affect an increase in intergenerational distance in the aftermath of conflict (i.e. repression of young people's demands for inclusion and very different viewpoints among older and younger generations), appear to have played a role in the unfolding of the new political crisis that started in April 2015 with the occurrence of mass demonstrations, mainly by young people in several urban neighbourhoods of Bujumbura. The mass demonstrations were announced as a 'peaceful movement' to give expression to resistance to the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the ruling party, epitomized by the announcement of President Pierre Nkurunziza as the presidential candidate in the upcoming elections. Young people participating in or supporting the mass demonstrations told us about their hopes for change, particularly in terms of opportunities for personal and national development: 'We thought things were

going to change, like in Rwanda. They went through hardship, but it ended, and now they are focused on development' (Jean Marie, youth protester, 2017). Yet as Jean Marie explained, the expectation of change was soon crushed in violent repression by the government: 'But as you can see, it's not what was expected that took place. … All started by this issue related to the third term' (Jean Marie, youth protester, 2017, in Berckmoes & Anonymous, 2023).

Tomas van Acker argues that the mass demonstrations also appear to 'mark a generational shift and constitute "a new way of doing politics", an alternative to armed struggle as the only means of resistance' (2015, p. 8). Our research findings support this argument too. Yet the novel 'logics' of political action that was prevalent among the youth, at least initially, was met with another 'logic', namely the wartime logic of violence, which the ruling party of the government, a former rebel movement, was versed in all too well.

Repertoires of action

The second category of conflict legacies concerns the ways in which conflict experiences shape possible future pathways for youth. Violent and non-violent pathways emerge through historical and contemporary experiences, including conflict experiences. For example, Marielle Debos (2016 (2013)) argues that experiences of conflict in Chad have shaped the repertoires of action currently available to youth there. She argues that for youth coming of age in Chad, 'arms and war have become one repertoire of action pretty much like any other, a relatively ordinary way of solving a problem' (2008, p.14). Similarly, Marius Crépin argues in his recent thesis that in Central African Republic (CAR) children, particularly boys, are raised with the expectation that they may take up arms once reaching adolescence and youth (2023). This understanding of youth has been historically shaped through repeated experiences of violent conflict, he argues, but also in light of the region functioning as a backyard for slave hunting for centuries. It provoked communities to organize self-defence groups, constituted by young, able-bodied men. Over time, youth in CAR have come to represent a resource that facilitates ongoing or new conflict, Crépin suggests – an argument that brings together ideas on 'youth bulges' (Urdal, 2006) and 'resource curse theory' (Auty in Badeed et al., 2017). In brief, both Debos and Crépin suggest that past experiences of violence, in combination with extremely limited alternative pathways, have somehow perversely translated into many young people, in subsequent times, taking up arms too. In the words of Sara Ahmed, their findings suggest that it becomes easier for young people to take a path that has been well-trodden, rather than seek out a trail less frequently used: 'a path is made by the repetition of the event . . . a path "clears" the way' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 16).

In my own research, I encountered a comparable dynamics whereby historical experiences of youth mobilization and violence seem to have facilitated subsequent youth mobilization for armed groups and the formation of political youth militias that do not shun violence. Specifically, in Burundi, like in Ghana, youth have been important actors in political struggles since the struggle for independence. In the 1960s, the phenomenon of politically active youth (*abajeunes*)[3] took shape in the first place through the youth wing of the UPRONA political party: the *Jeunesse Nationaliste Rwagasore* (JNR). The first time the JNR showed itself as a radical political organization was in the Kamenge riots of 1962. The riots helped establish the reputation of the JNR as anti-Western, anti-Hutu, and violence-prone. The JNR militants, in collaboration with politicians, emerged as a kind of surrogate government and took part in the elimination of coup suspects. Several years later, the youth wing (then *Jeunesse Révolutionaire Rwagasore* – JRR) showed its radical and violent side again. In 1972, when a 'selective genocide' was organized by the Micombero government (Lemarchand, 1994), the militias were called upon to identify and round up Hutu citizens to be killed. Later, when democratic space opened up in the 1990s, emerging political parties organized youth wings similar to the example of the JRR. For instance, FRODEBU, the political party that was to win the 1993 elections, created JEDEBU (*Jeunesse Démocratique du Burundi*). After the murder of elected President Melchior Ndadaye, this youth militia was involved in systematically hunting down Tutsi. In the period of civil war that followed, various other extremist groups were also formed, including *Sans échec* and *Sans défaite* which targeted Hutu, and the pro-Hutu youth league JPH (*Jeunesse Patriotique Hutu*), which was linked to the *Palipehutu*-FNL rebel group. (Berckmoes, 2015)

Through the various youth groups formed over the course of time in Burundi, 'youth' has arguably taken on the meaning of 'every individual aged between 18 and 45 years who has internalized the political ideology of youth'[4] (Muntunutwiwe, 2013, p. 3, translation LB). Moreover, the use of violence among many of these groups shapes the political roles available to next generations of young people. For instance, in Burundi in 2015, the relapse into political crisis entailed a new wave of political mobilization of youth, particularly by the ruling party CNDD-FDD and the *Imbonerakure* – the ruling party's youth wing. Several of my male youth interlocutors shared with me that they too had been approached by neighbours and friends to join the *Imbonerakure*. Matata, a young man in his late twenties, for instance, told me that he subsequently joined the militia group. He

3 Combines the Kirundi prefix used for people (*aba-*) with the French word for youth (*jeunes*).
4 Translation from original text in French: *Le jeune est alors tout individu âgé de plus de 18 ans et n'ayant pas plus de 45 ans qui a intériorisé les idéologies politiques des jeunes.*

aspired to a career in music and had been in and out of odd jobs since he finished school, over a decade earlier. He explained his choice as choiceless, saying that he felt pressured by his neighbour, the local *Imbonerakure* leader: 'I could not refuse. As a neighbour he saw me always hanging around doing nothing.' When I retorted that he might be asked to participate in violence, he shrugged his shoulders, adding that he knew that was a possibility. In contrast, Martin, around the same age, explained to me that he successfully managed to refuse a similar request from a former school mate. During the previous electoral period, Martin had been affiliated with the youth group. However, this time he had responded that he was now married and therefore too occupied trying to fulfil his obligations as a man (field notes, April and May 2015). While he too was without stable employment at the time, his marital status allowed him to identify with a different societal role and related expectations.

In brief, past conflict can imbue meaning into particular societal categories and roles, paving the way for future violence. Notably, it is not simply the historically stapled choices of multiple generations of young people that pave these ways for violence. Rather, '[A]dults in need to defend their interests construct this group to position themselves on the dynamic, imbalanced political field'[5] (Muntununtwiwe, 2013, p. 3, translation LB). In other words, an elaborate 'support system' of adults and political elite appears with a continued, vested interest in 'youth' as signifying a violent political constituency.

Intergenerational transmission

The third category of conflict legacies concerns the ways in which experiences of conflict are transmitted intergenerationally. The intergenerational transmission of conflict legacies has received a lot of attention in various fields of research, particularly in the psychological field of intergenerational trauma. Research on intergenerational trauma finds its roots in the aftermath of the Second World War (Rakoff, 1966) and has particularly focussed on the experiences of Holocaust survivors and their descendants. Since the late 1990s, researchers started to expand these studies to other conflict-affected populations (Danieli, 1998), including survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda (e.g. Rieder & Elbert, 2013; Berckmoes et al., 2017; Eichelsheim et al., 2019; Rudahinwa et al., 2020). The topic has also attracted a growing number of interdisciplinary approaches – beyond psychology and psychiatry. As such, studies in medical anthropology have pointed to the intergenerational transmission of traumatized world views in families and communities (e.g. Dickson-Gomez, 2002), while the

5 Translation from original text in French: *Ainsi les adultes ayant besoin de défendre leurs intérêts construisent ce groupe afin de se positionner sur le champ politique en déséquilibre dynamique.*

field of epigenetics showed enduring embodied consequences, such as adapted stress responses transmitted intergenerationally (Lehrner & Yehuda, 2018). The diversification of disciplinary approaches has also led to new research questions, including the intergenerational transmission of resilience (e.g. Braga et al., 2012; Shevell & Denov, 2021) and the intergenerational transmission of violence, which may manifest in intimate partner violence or child abuse (Rees et al., 2015) but possibly also in renewed outbreaks of mass violence.

In this regard, notably in the Bujumbura neighbourhoods where the 2015 mass demonstrations took place, elders, former military and ex-child and youth combatants, prompted by the violent repression of government forces and *Imbonerakure*, started sharing stories and lessons about war, vengeful violence, military tactics, and how to handle guns with the younger generations. See, for instance, this excerpt based on interview notes with a former *kadogo* (child-combatant) who participated in the protests in Bujumbura in 2015:

> Alfred: 'I spent that [first] day [of protests] in bed. On one side my heart was telling me: "Stand up and fight against your enemies!" On the other side, my mind was saying: "Don't get involved in it!" I couldn't sleep because of a lot of thoughts. I said to myself: "These are not the same Hutus I fought in my childhood". The next day, without anyone telling me, I was the first to attend the demonstrations. I fought against policemen and *Imbonerakure*. The following days, we started getting guns. None knew to use them. I said, give me those guns and a group of ten young people …
> *(in Berckmoes & Anonymous, 2023, p. 10).*

The sharing of experiences and lessons we observed in Burundi in 2015 sparked my interest in understanding better how people actively teach others conflict, or what I have termed 'pedagogies of conflict'. Pedagogies of conflict concern the communicative demonstrations that convey knowledge about past conflict to novices. The concept builds on the work of Murray (2011) who proposed looking at violence not as a 'contagious' disease but rather investigate 'the ways that we teach each other to be violent' (p. 537). Looking at transmission of violence in pedagogical instead of epidemiological terms, he argues, prevents de-humanizing offenders as 'vectors of pestilence' and see how specific practices and emotions underlie teachings and why these 'stick' (p. 539).

In a study I recently conducted with colleagues from the University of Rwanda, we investigated 'domestic pedagogies of conflict and peace' among Congolese Banyamulenge and Burundian refugees and Rwandans living in Rwanda. We asked how experiences of past conflict and displacement fed into teaching and

learning particularly in family environments. Our findings suggest that parents, rather than violence or hatred, primarily seek to teach their children 'protective strategies', which may include survival tactics such as learning to hide well, lock doors at all times, maintain strong bonds with community members, mistrust 'outsiders', and, generally, keep silent (Berckmoes et al., forthcoming).

Moreover, especially among Rwandan parents we found a strong desire to break with ethnic divisions to prevent future violence, in conformity with Rwandan state policy, including by not disclosing family history and former ethnic identities. In view of the pervasive effects the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi still has on most aspects of society in Rwanda, however, Rwandan children are exposed to a lot of information about the past. They learn about the ethnic violence in the past in the 100 days commemoration that takes place every year from April until July, in school curricula, and in other contexts, but sometimes struggle with the gaps in information and, in particular, with how to relate themselves to their country's devastating past given the many silences surrounding the family experiences. For a number of children we met, this fuelled confusion and curiosity, along with a sense that they were excluded from significant but hidden knowledge.

The findings in Rwanda are reminiscent in some ways of findings from my earlier PhD study with young Burundians about the outbreak of the civil war in 1993. Many young people I spoke with in 2007-2011 recalled the moment of the murder of Burundi's democratically elected president in October 1993 as the beginning of the war and their troubles. The murder and subsequent spread of violence throughout the country led their neighbours and parents to talking about Hutu and Tutsi identities to their children. Several young people remembered this as the moment in which a powerful truth was revealed to them:

> Because before the war we knew nothing. At school they tell you nothing about the history, Hutu and Tutsi. It was only when the war broke out that our parents told us. When you came home, your father would say, okay, you are a bit big now, big enough to know the truth.
> *Jonathan, fieldwork notes, 2010 (in Berckmoes, 2014)*

Suppressed or hidden experiences or memories, these findings remind us, are not necessarily forgotten. With regard to Rwanda, David Mwambari (2021) argues that such 'vernacular memories' may be passed on within families, social networks, and communities. Similarly, based on research in Côte d'Ivoire, Line Kuppens and Arnim Langer (2023) warn that conflict narratives that are excluded from the public sphere may at some point serve as a source for mobilization for political contestation. Indeed, Ngozika Obi-Ani argued in a recent presentation

of her work at the African Studies Centre Leiden (14 March 2024) that memory entrepreneurs may recall earlier political movements in their own quests for political power. In her study about Nigeria, disadvantaged, impoverished workers in southeastern Nigeria are mobilized around the idea of, again, a separate state like Biafra. Notably, her study also suggests that the strong and ever-growing presence of social media in Nigeria, as in most African contexts, makes it possible to build a political community around the idea of Biafra, even by political actors elsewhere – Europe in this case.

These findings all resonate with the argument of Vakim Volkan (2001), who coined the concept of 'chosen trauma' to show that a traumatic, historical event of losses of people, land, or prestige, if not resolved, may become part of a large-group identity and serve a sense of entitlement to revenge. His argument is inspired by observations in the Balkans, where the traumatic event of a battle lost almost six centuries earlier, was reactivated in the political, genocidal violence against the Muslims of Kosovo in the early 1990s.

To sum up, legacies of conflict significantly shape the opportunities and constraints for young people in conflict-affected contexts through (1) the changes in intergenerational relations, (2) the available repertoires of action, and (3) the ways in which memories and lessons learned may be transmitted intergenerationally.

Regenerating peace

When I recently presented some of the arguments outlined above, a senior policy advisor in the audience asked me how long the legacies of conflict may be expected to last, noting that the answer is relevant for intervention. The quick answer is that we do not know but that they last long: multiple generations, or with regard to 'chosen trauma' (Volkan, 2001), perhaps even centuries. I hope that this unknown in itself will signal the importance of extreme reluctance in opting for violence and warfare as a solution to political tensions and problems, whether at a local, national, or international level.

At the same time, it should be noted that research about enduring effects of conflict reveals that the significance of conflict legacies for the present and future cannot be understood in isolation. *That* may provide entry points for further research, policy, and intervention when violence has taken place. Existing relationships between state and society, proximity of (former) armed actors and civilians, availability of small arms, and the success of 'memory' entrepreneurs in mobilizing 'youth', to name a few, all affect the potential significance of conflict legacies for new violence. Similarly, in looking at policy and intervention context

matters. Namely, while many policies and interventions directed at youth in Africa currently focus on increasing opportunities for education and employment, intervening actors need to begin addressing the differences between aspirations and imperatives as well (Sommers, 2015). Namely, interventions tend to focus on institutional structures to promote education and employment opportunities, yet often fail to address the hurdles young people encounter in their life to pursue their aspirations, such as those derived from societal expectations, family responsibilities, and unmet primary needs.

It is also important to recognize that even in contexts marked by conflict, most young people do not become involved in violence (Sommers, 2015; Iwilade & Marclint Ebiede, 2022; Ismail & Olonisakin, 2023). Akin Iwilade and others argue that we should therefore start investigating '… how within fragile and conflict-affected contexts across Africa, the same structures and relations that enable violence also enable non-violent choices' (Iwilade, 2022, p. 10). With them, a new wave of research is pushing for a focus on young people's resilience (Seymour, 2012). This redirection in focus would not only to do justice to the majority of young African lives but may also help to curb the negative effects of conceptualizing youth only or primarily as a problem (Simpson, 2018).

This brings me to an important agenda for future research, one that builds on Abbink's call to theorize youth, but that hopefully allows us to move beyond the focus on politics and conflict. That is, I propose to pay more attention to what can be thought of as alternative visions of peace, with peace as a plural. To arrive here, perhaps we need more research that investigates 'young people' rather than 'youth'. The concept of youth in many African countries has taken on the meaning of a politically active – and often violent – category of people '… with a tenuous social status and a hoped-for social transformation into [the category of] adulthood' (Sommers, 2015, p.14), leaving little space for the more positive dimensions of adolescence and youth. Focusing on young people instead, then, might inspire more research on the caring roles of young people (see Reis & Berckmoes, 2018).

For policy and intervention, a focus on caring roles of young people may stimulate initiatives that help to re-embed young people in positive, supportive generational structures in society. Indeed, building bridges of support between older and younger generations might be especially important in the aftermath of conflict. Violence often creates tears in the social fabric, leaving young people to shoulder heavy burdens or reinvent life with little support, while many elders also may be left with few people and lifelines to rely on. Finally, a focus on young people instead of youth might inspire increased understanding of their agentive practices for societal change outside of political arenas, open up alternative ways to address

traumatic legacies of conflict in communities and families, such as through art, and support what in psychological terms has been referred to as 'post-traumatic growth'. In this way, theorizing young people in Africa could help understand and enhance opportunities for young people to 'regenerate' peace.

References

Abbink, J. (2005). Being Young in Africa: The Politics of Despair and Renewal. In J. Abbink & I. van Kessel (Eds.), *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa* (pp. 1-34). Brill.

Abbink, J. & Van Kessel, I. (Eds.) (2005). *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa*. Brill.

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke University Press.

Badeeb, R. A., Lean, H. H., & Clark, J. (2017). The Evolution of the Natural Resource Curse Thesis: A Critical Literature Survey. *Resources Policy*, *51*, 123-134.

Berckmoes, L.H. (2006). *Growing up in a Refugee Camp: Constructions of Identity among Burundian Youth in Tanzania* [MA thesis, University of Amsterdam].

Berckmoes, L.H. (2008). *Being and Becoming in Bujumbura: War and Peace Through the Eyes of Burundian Youth* [MA thesis, African Studies Centre/Leiden University].

Berckmoes, L.H. (2014). *Elusive Tactics: Urban Youth Navigating the Aftermath of War in Burundi*.

Berckmoes, L.H. (2015). Youth, Politics and Violence in Burundi: Gullible Followers or Tactics Actors. *L'Afrique des Grand-Lacs: Annuaire 2014-2015*, 21-38.

Berckmoes, L.H. (2017). (Re)producing Ambiguity and Contradictions in Enduring and Looming Crisis in Burundi. *Ethnos*, *82*(5), 925-945.

Berckmoes, L.H., & Anonymous (2023). Young Protesters' Ambivalence about Violence in the 2015 Crisis in Burundi: Local Legacies of Conflict and Generational Change. *Peacebuilding*, *11*(3), 302-316.

Berckmoes, L.H., Kwaks, J., Mukeshimana, V., Tuyishimire, B., Jansen, S., Rutembesa, E. Rutayisire, T., Interayamahanga, R., & Kanazayire, C. (*forthcoming*). *Domestic Pedagogies of Peace and Conflict: Lessons of Conflict in Congolese Banyamulenge and Rwandan Families in Rwanda*.

Berckmoes, L.H., & Tize, C. (2023). A Bridge Too Far? Intergenerational Distance and Proximity in Times of Interlocking Societal and Life Stage Transitions. Panel at *American Anthropological Association and Canadian Anthropological Association Annual Meeting*, 15-19 November, Toronto, Canada.

Braga, L.L., Mello, M.F., & Fiks, J.P. (2012). Transgenerational Transmission of Trauma and Resilience: A Qualitative Study with Brazilian Offspring of Holocaust Survivors. *BMC Psychiatry*, *12*, 1-11.

Christiansen, C., Utas, M., & Vigh, H.E. (Eds.) (2006). *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood: Social Becoming in an African Context*. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Cole, J. (2010). *Sex and Salvation: Imagining the Future in Madagascar*. University of Chicago Press.

Crépin, M. (2023) *Jeunesse comme ressource des conflits violents: une lecture historique et anthropologique de l'arène politique en République centrafricaine* [PhD thesis, Leiden University].

Danieli, Y. (Ed.) (1998). *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*. New York Plenum Press.

Debos, M. (2016 (2013)). *Living by the Gun in Chad: Combatants, Impunity and State Formation* (Andrew Brown, Trans.). ZED Books.

Dickson-Gómez, J. (2002). The Sound of Barking Dogs: Violence and Terror among Salvadoran Families in the Postwar. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, *16*(4), 415-438.

Eichelsheim, V., Berckmoes, L., Hola, B., Rutayisire, T., & Richters, A. (2019). Before My Time? Addressing the Intergenerational Legacies of the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda. *Intervention Journal of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Conflict Affected Areas*, *17*(1), 31-39.

Honwana, A.M. (2012). *The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Honwana, A.M. (2014). 'Waithood': Youth transitions and social change. In D. Foeken, T. Dietz, L. de Haan, & L. Johnson (Eds.), *Development and Equity: An Interdisciplinary Exploration by Ten Scholars from Africa, Asia and Latin America* (pp. 28-40). Brill.

Honwana, A., & De Boeck, F. (Eds.) (2005). *Makers & Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*. James Currey.

Ismail, O., & Olonisakin, F. (2021). Why do Youth Participate in Violence in Africa? A Review of Evidence. *Conflict, Security & Development*, *21*(3), 371-399.

Iwilade, A. (2022). Introduction: A Theory of Youth and (Non)violence. In A. Iwilade & T.M. Ebiede (Eds.). (*Youth and Non-Violence in Africa's Fragile Contexts* (pp. 1-14). Springer International Publishing.

Iwilade, A., & Ebiede, T.M. (Eds.). (2022). *Youth and Non-Violence in Africa's Fragile Contexts*. Springer International Publishing.

Kuppens, L., & Langer, A. (2023). Memory Mobilization and Postconflict Stability in Côte d'Ivoire: Analysing the Transmission of Conflict Narratives among Ivoirian Youth. *African Affairs*, *122*(488), 403-427.

Lehrner, A., & Yehuda, R. (2018). Cultural Trauma and Epigenetic Inheritance. *Development and Psychopathology*, *30*(5), 1763-1777.

Lemarchand, R. (1994). *Burundi, Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press.

Machel, G. (1996). *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. UN.

Muntunutwiwe, J.S. (2013). La mobilisation politique des jeunes au Burundi à travers les élections démocratiques de 2010. *Les Cahiers d'Afrique de l'Est/The East African Review*, (46-2), 115-133.

Murray, Y. (2011). The Pedagogy of Violence. *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal*, *20*(3), 537-584.

Mwambari, D. (2021). *Agaciro*, Vernacular Memory, and the Politics of Memory in Post-Genocide Rwanda. *African Affairs*, *120*(481), 611-628.

Obi-Ani, N. (2024). A Question of Memory? The Biafran Struggle in Perspective. Paper presented at *CRG Conflict Continuities seminar*, African Studies Centre Leiden, Leiden: 14 March.

Owusu Kyei, J.R.K., & Berckmoes, L.H. (2020). Political Vigilante Groups in Ghana: Violence or Democracy?. *Africa Spectrum*, *55*(3), 321-338.

Rakoff V. (1966). A Long Term Effect of the Concentration Camp Experience. *Viewpoints*, *1*:17-22.

Rees, S., Thorpe, R., Tol, W., Fonseca, M., & Silove, D. (2015). Testing a Cycle of Family Violence Model in Conflict-Affected, Low-Income Countries: A Qualitative Study from Timor-Leste. *Social Science & Medicine*, *130*, 284–291.

Reis, R., & Berckmoes, L.H. (2018). Health, Youth, and Adolescence. In Hilary Callan & Simon Coleman (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, 1-2.

Rieder, H., & Elbert, T. (2013). Rwanda – Lasting Imprints of a Genocide: Trauma, Mental Health and Psychosocial Conditions in Survivors, Former Prisoners and Their Children. *Conflict and Health*, *7*(6). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1752-1505-7-6>, accessed 13 September 2019.

Rudahindwa, S., Mutesa, L., Rutembesa, E., Mutabaruka, J., Qu, A., Wildman, D.E., Jansen, S., & Uddin, M. (2020). Transgenerational Effects of the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda: A Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Domain Analysis. *Open Research Africa*, *1*(10), 10, <https://doi.org/10.12688/aasopenres.12848.2>.

Seymour, C. (2012). Ambiguous Agencies: Coping and Survival in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. *Children's Geographies*, *10*(4), 373-384.

Shevell, M.C., & Denov, M.S. (2021). A Multidimensional Model of Resilience: Family, Community, National, Global and Intergenerational Resilience. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *119*, 105035.

Simpson, G. (2018) *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth and Peace and Security*. United Nations Security Council.

Sommers, M. (2012). *Stuck: Rwandan Youth and the Struggle for Adulthood*. University of Georgia Press.

Sommers, M. (2015). *The Outcast Majority: War, Development, and Youth in Africa*. University of Georgia Press.

Urdal, H. (2006). A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence. *International Studies Quarterly*, *50*(3), 607-629.

Utas, M. (2005). West-African Warscapes: Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman's Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone. *Anthropological Quarterly*, *78*(2), 403-430.

Van Acker, T. (2015). Understanding Burundi's Predicament. *Africa Policy Briefs*, 1-10.

Vigh, H. (2006). *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*. Berghahn.

Volkan, V.D. (2001). Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity. *Group Analysis*, *34*(1), 79-97.

2

The Mask and the Chief: An Arena of Symbolic Power

Wouter E.A. van Beek

Introduction

The link between politics and religion is at the heart of Jan Abbink's work, and in this homage to him I pursue a line of thinking about power and religion from a region far from Abbink's habitual stomping ground, in the hope that it may appeal in the Ethiopian highlands. In the remembrance volume for Gerti Hesseling which Jan co-edited, I developed a model for the various discourses on African power holders (Van Beek, 2011) that I here want to hold up against a recent fascination of mine, African masquerades. The latter phenomenon does not exist in the Horn of Africa,[1] but the dynamics of power that shine through in the power arena of politics and masquerades do highlight the intricacies of and contradictions in power constellations based upon symbolic capital. Using concepts from Bourdieu's sociology of difference (Bourdieu, 1984), in particular the types of capital that undergird power differences – economic, social and symbolic –, I focus on two forms of the latter, the mask and the chief, and then sketch the struggle between these two.

The emic African definition of a mask is germane, which means that a mask is not just the head cover, but consists of the entire costumed appearance: the headpiece, the clothing or body cover, the adornment on arms, legs, and feet, and the paraphernalia it holds in its hands. A mask performance is called a masquerade, usually before an audience as part of a ritual which belongs to an indigenous religion. Thus, the power of masquerades is basically a religious one, based on an assumed link with a specific part of the 'otherworld'. Masks bear a strong associa-

1 Masquerades are found in a restricted part of Africa only, mainly situated in the forested zones of the continent, and actually occur in just three closely circumscribed non-contiguous zones, West Africa, West-Central Africa, and Central Africa. For the reasons for this curious distribution, see Van Beek & Leyten (2023, chapter 1). Space does not allow even a short synopsis of these dynamics, but one main guidepost resides in the presence or absence of zebu cattle (Van Beek, 2024).

tion with the bush, be it bush spirits, wild animals, or ancestors. They are neither direct representations of these beings nor gods but are best considered as apparitions *sui generis*, beings of their own kind, that are imbued with the power of the bush. In itself, the bush is definitely part of the 'otherworld', and never far away from African life (Ellis & Ter Haar, 2004). Thus, the power of masks rest squarely on symbolic capital.

With 'chief' I indicate a whole array of types of apical figures in African power constellations, of varying importance depending on the degree of local power centralization. If highly centralized I use the term 'king', especially when the position heavily rests on symbolic capital. But anyway, there is always a religious side to power in Africa, and most African political power to some degree depends on symbolic capital; pivotal figures like chiefs and kings are often considered gifted with special powers.

The point in this chapter is that the two kinds of symbolic capitals do not mix well; the chiefly one seems to stand perpendicular to the one represented by the masks, and this is the arena I want to explore. And it is an arena indeed, for wherever masks appear in an African society, they do have a serious effect on the total power constellation. How do mask performances interact with local politics? I present four cases with widely diverging political constellations, in order to show the complicated seesaw between masquerades and centralized power systems, but first explore a peculiar type of symbolic capital that is fundamental for understanding this power arena.

Secrecy

The symbolic capital of masks resides not just in their association with the otherworld but rests also on secrecy, i.e. information withheld on purpose; secrecy generates its own symbolic capital and serves as a multiplication factor for other forms of capital. Masquerades especially stand solidly on secret feet. The main and pervading secret in masquerades is that the uninitiated – all women and girls, plus young boys – are not allowed to know that inside those weird apparitions are just men. The core function of masquerades is the initiation of boys, and the main revelation inside the initiation ritual occurs when at the start of their bush period the boys witness the mask take off its headpiece: inside the apparition is a human being, probably someone the boys know, even a kinsman. For most of the initiands that is not a new kind of information since this is very much a public secret. It is knowledge that all share, but do not speak of. This is not unusual, for a dominant characteristic of initiation secrets is that they are empty, without specific cognitive content: initiands learn what they know already, only better. What

is new for the boys, though, is that they now have the right to know it – as well as the right to perform as a mask – and what is drummed into the boys is never to speak about it, never to disclose it to outsiders: they have to learn to be silent, their 'tongue is their own worst enemy' (Colleyn, 2002, p. 188). The border of secrecy has to be kept intact, even if it is a completely symbolic one. The critical issue is who has the keys to disclosure, so who has both access to information and the right to speak about it. Sharing a secret involves selection, for the essence is that some categories of people are denied access, while the ones in the know are aware of their prerogative (cf. Figure 2.1). In the words of Michael Taussig, 'secrecy is orchestrated disclosure' (Taussig, 1999, p. 103). It is this orchestration that lies at the basis of secrecy's power, and thus secrets become capital, both symbolic and other, as Simmel's classic work on secrets stresses:

> The strongly emphasised exclusion of all outsiders makes for a correspondingly strong feeling of possession. For many individuals, property does not fully gain its significance with mere ownership, but only with the consciousness that others must do without it. (Simmel, 1950, p. 332)

Figure 2.1
The power of secrecy: when the *epa ekpo* mask comes into view, the non-initiated flee, but the initiated man in the middle does not react; there are no women present.
Anang Ibibio, Cross Rover region, Nigeria, 1976. Photo: Jill Salmon[2]

The secret is an 'adorning possession' made more powerful because its exact nature remains vague (Newell, 2013, p. 141). Or in the words of Mary Nooter:

2 For all pictures in this article permission has been obtained from the photographers.

'The substance of secrets is less important than the social delineation resulting from their acquisition, ownership and controlled revelation' (Nooter, 1993, p. 60). 'Controlled' is the operative word, for the excluded others should know that they have no access to that 'property'.

These power dynamics come to the fore in secret societies, organizations based upon the symbolic capital of secrecy; these are also called power associations or initiation societies, for good reason, since they have initiation as their main raison d'être and power as their main product. A man can be a member of more than one, and each of the associations comprises several cult centres or lodges, strewn out over the various villages. Usually, village membership and familial tradition steer membership, but participation in more than one association is often possible. So, these are associations of choice that initiate upon entrance after a trial period, and the great majority of them feature masks.

One curious consequence of their basis in the secret is that the performances by secret societies are much more public than the discourse on secrecy would suggest. Or, as Gagliardi puts it for the Senufo: 'Power associations always have an audience in mind' (Gagliardi, 2010, p. 168). About the *sigma* mask in northwestern Ghana, Césare Poppi wrote: 'The existence of the "secret" must be proclaimed widely and loudly on as many occasions as possible' (Gagliardi, 2010, p. 168). As billboards of the secret, masks are the public face of the initiation society: secrets must be kept, but the fact of their existence must be advertised (cf. Figure 2.2).[3] So, essentially, in this chapter I look at the way secret societies that are based upon masking, relate to institutional forms of power.

3 In Europe there are 'open days' to visit the buildings of secret societies, such as the Freemasons, when there are no rituals performed.

Figure 2.2
Secrecy has to be advertised: the *kurosi* secret society on show with the *tso* dance.
Bamenda, Cameroon, ca 1960. Photo: Michel Huet

Ékpè

In the first case secret societies form the backbone of politics. The Cross River region in Nigeria harbours an ethnically and linguistically fragmented population with as their central sociopolitical institution the *ékpè* power association; they have hardly any other kind of political power.[4] This male power association can be found over a wide circle of ethnic groups, providing both the administration of justice inside the villages and the major link between villages and linguistic

4 See A.E. Afigbo (1987) on the dominant role of these societies in the 19th century.

groups. Miller and Ojong claim that this system of village-based lodges developed right inside this Cross River Region and then spread out wide over the larger forest area, up to southern Cameroon (Miller & Ojong, 2012, p. 267).

The *ékpè* society conferred citizenship inside the village, had the power of meting out disciplinary punishment for antisocial behaviour, provided entertainment through feasts, and served as an initiation platform. The system sported a series of initiation grades with titles, nine grades in all and each with three tiers, thus making for 27 different titles one could attain; in a culture without inheritable wealth, titles are the things to strive for, earned by organizing feasts with handouts. Masks, the dearest child of the secret society, abounded: each grade and tier had its own masquerade. The various *ékpè* masks were first and foremost considered to be emissaries of the *ékpè* lodges themselves.

If secrets are an asset to be cherished and an 'adorning possession', they can be sold or bought, as part of an economic transaction, a kind of property that in the hands of secret societies can become economic capital – I have shown the different types of capital to be close in Africa and easy to convert. Secrets can be monetized, and in fact they are continuously converted into cash: advancement through the ranks of the society is expensive, both in fees and feasts, and people have to pay their way up the ladder. But this can also be the case between communities too. Historically, in the Cross River area these associations flourished, since the *ékpè* societies considered their customs as potential objects for monetary transactions. So, when the *ékpè* spread out over various ethnic groups, the central branches made a profit from selling the rights to the secret lore needed to establish daughter societies (Miller & Ojong, 2012). This seems contradictory since secrets are essentially empty, but what is commoditized are the authority and the right to disclosure that are essential in the whole secrecy complex. Ute Röschenthaler, who traced the network of *ékpè* purchases throughout the Cross River Region, noted how the relay of the secrecy complex gave rise not only to a meshwork of monetary transactions but also to guardianship over the correct implementation of these *ékpè* branches (Röschenthaler, 2004). The model of a chain of franchise holders easily comes to mind. One corollary of this structure is a certain conservatism in these associations and performances: they are bought-and-licensed in this way and would lose the authority of the source if too many changes were made. Franchises do not lead to innovation.

Oku

What happens when secret societies co-exist with chieftainship? The second case comes from West-Cameroon, the small kingdom of Oku. Here the king is the cen-

tral icon of the society, all-important, powerful, and 'dangerous' because of the many medicines he has been endowed with, a person no commoners may address or touch, often not even look at. Extreme deference is shown to him, and he is the only one who may adorn himself with the insignia of animals, either teeth, pelts, or images. His palace is the pivot of society; he is the main officiant for the main sacrifices, and any mask dance will pay elaborate homage to him as king. One of his privileges is that he does not have to pay bride wealth for his spouses, and the important families of the realm will be proud to hand one of their daughters over to him.[5] So, his position is based on symbolic capital as well, but of a different kind, closely linked with social plus economic capital.

Despite his centrality and close link with the otherworld, the king is hemmed in by all the prerogatives and offices that surround him. As the source of ultimate power, he is inaccessible and out of bounds for all commoners – for instance, he may never show up at the weekly market. The real power is in the hands of the most important secret society, called Kwifon, which consists of the heads of the various lineages, the king himself plus numerous other dignitaries and titleholders, up to 230 persons. Princes of the royal clan are banned from this august body; it is just the king who is a member, and the Kwifon shows little subservience to him. Its decisions are binding, also for the king. And it is the Kwifon that commands the masks, the very same masks that honour the king profusely in their dancing (cf. Figure 2.3). The kingdom knows many types of masks and performances that are officially in honour of the king, but behind the scenes they are all commanded by the Kwifon. For its functions the latter do need the cooperation of the king, since he forms the major link to the otherworld, but the king alone has little mandate. In short, king-without-masks and Kwifon-with-masks hold each other in a tight power embrace. In Koloss' account of Oku this balancing between king and Kwifon seems to result in a stable state, but more historical analyses point at ever shifting power equations, in which masquerades may reinforce whatever side of the political coinage, and in so doing flourish, and even thrive in the contemporary rebellions in the Grassfields.[6]

There is a flipside to this picture of political balancing of the two types of symbolic capital, since below the surface the relationship of this combined ruling elite with the populace is shown to be much less harmonious. One major tension is that between generations. Masking tends to be in the hands of the elders: age structuring favours the settled generations, and initiation creates a distance between the newly initiated young and the advanced initiates higher up the ladder. Plus, in

5 Based upon Koloss (2000 & 1992).

6 Ian Fowler, personal communication.

the Grassfields full adulthood often depends on positional succession, meaning a man has to own specific titles in order to be eligible for death celebrations that promote him to ancestral status; such a pathway generates losers in life – men who never attain full masculine adulthood, 'perpetual youth'.[7] So, whatever power balance may be achieved, it is always under siege.

Figure 2.3
Another mask of the Oku secret society strutting around the dancing place.
Oku, Cameroon. Photo: Hans Knöpfli

In his restudy of Oku masking, Nicholas Argenti traces these contradictions be-

7 Ian Fowler, personal communication.

tween the palace and the subjects. Many palace masquerades were very aggressive against the audience, and make commoners flee like 'so many chickens before a diving hawk' (Argenti, 2007, p. 60). Why this aggression toward a mandatory audience? Argenti contrasts this palatial performance with the village based masquerades that showed a completely different character, which could be read as a critical commentary on the elite. Many regimes in this area were complicit in the Atlantic slave trade, and the contrast between these masquerades highlights the deep insecurity and distrust that two centuries of slaving have generated. The palace habitually portrays itself as the protector of its people, and the Kwifon masks portray the elite's hold over the populace. In contrast, the village masquerades show that the same palace that postures itself as the source of all wellbeing, in the past repeatedly betrayed its own people by selling youngsters on the slave markets. Masquerades have long memories, a weapon of the weak.

Bamum

A very strong central figure can overcome the power of the secret society, and an example is a masquerade in the Bamum sultanate in 1907.[8] The highlight of the feast was a long line of masks parading in front of the sultan. Over a hundred masks filed by the palace that day, where sultan Njoya, the queen mother, and a crowd of spectators, watched the proceedings. The masks were worn by the retainers at the royal court, for a large part the sultan's sisters' sons, wearing cloth costumes and with headpieces representing buffaloes, crocodiles, rams, and elephants, plus a host of human faces, worn mainly as crests and some as helmet tops. The buffalo opened the procession; all other mask types could be worn by any other court retainer. When the whole mask troupe had passed, the sultan himself followed, dancing slowly and with dignity but without a mask, while a crocodile mask kept up with his paces; behind them came the councillors of the land and the princes descended from kings of old, maskless as well. Finally came the princes of the royal household and the crowd of onlookers. All entered the central ground for a festive dance to the tune of flutes and to the rhythm of drums and rattles played by the royal family itself. The next morning Njoya poured libations on the graves of his ancestors at the royal graveyard (Geary & Njoya, 1985, pp. 110-111).

8 There is good early information on the Bamum festival of *nya* in Cameroon through photographs from 1907 and 1908 and descriptions from 1912, when missionaries reported on this huge and spectacular feast.

Figure 2.4
The bird masks dance at the *nya* in front of the Basel Mission.
Foumban, Cameroon, 1912. Photo: Maria Thorbecke

There were many festivals with masks at the court, but this *nya* feast was a huge one, calling for the most extravagant outfits (Geary & Njoya, 1985, p. 99-100). Claude Tardits, the principal ethnographer of the Bamum, calls the *nya* a harvest festival (Tardits, 1980, p. 790-798) while the Bamum themselves fondly remember it as 'the day of beauty' (Geary & Njoya, 1985, p. 105). It was a fabulous display of royal riches, showing off a wealth beyond imagination (cf. Figure 2.4). For instance, the crown of the sultan was so large and heavy that it had to be held by a courtier standing behind the king. During the festival Njoya's throne was placed in front of the palace, a work of art that has become world famous, made of life-sized carvings completely covered in beads. As a gesture for Kaiser Wilhelm II's birthday in 1908, Njoya had presented a similar splendid specimen – the throne of his father – to his German 'colleague'; the throne is now one of the highlights of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin.

Bamum was a military society, a kingdom that thrived on continuous expansion by warfare, and in 1907 represented an African polity at its apogee. This was one kingdom the German colonizer did not subjugate but rather co-opted, and respected. Also, this was not just any African ruler, for this was nobody less than sultan Njoya, and no Cameroonian ruler can stand even in the shadow of his fame. Njoya was the seventeenth in a long succession of kings, acceding to the throne in 1886. He witnessed the coming of the Germans and maintained good

relations with them throughout. Notably, Njoya recognised the importance of European script and thus had his sages develop a proper Bamum script, a syllabic one; he even had them write books of Bamum history in that same script. On top of that, Njoya constructed his own written religion, producing a holy text in that script, freely incorporating extracts from the Quran and the Bible, into a Bamum syncretic religion.[9] Though not all of his spectacular enterprises proved a success, this was an exceptional monarch and present-day Bamum is still a thriving sultanate led by a grandson of Njoya, enjoying huge status in modern Cameroon.

Yet, despite his solid position and huge reputation, the masks that paraded by the palace were not under the command of the sultan. Masks belonged to the secret societies. Njoya and his retinue joined in as sultan, wealthy and powerful but human. His was a power over men, not over the bush. However, his position was so strong that he dominated the secret societies, who paid homage to his exalted status with the masquerade. Beyond the palace masks, Bamum also had masquerades in the villages of roughly the same genre, but these performances in no way detracted from the centrality of the dynasty (Wittmer, 1979).

Figure 2.5
The delegation of the kingdom of Pet with their masks.
Foumban, Cameroon, 1912. Photo: Maria Thorbecke

In effect, masquerades served as an indication of dominance. In the seventeenth century the king of Bamum had conquered the neighbouring Pet, but he granted

9 This description is based upon the monumental work of Claude Tardits (1980).

them the right to maintain their own masquerades; and as a homage to his superior, the king of Pet would visit Foumban with a group of masks and perform for the sultan of Foumban (cf. Figure 2.5). The masks themselves are a variant of the huge human figures that performed in Foumban. In any case, having one's own masquerades defines identity, and performing in honour of a superior is a strong visual signal of fiefdom (Geary & Njoya, 1985, p. 117).

Mundang

The intricate balancing of the ritual power of the king with that of the masks can topple in the direction of masks as well, and the most pertinent example are the Mundang. Straddling the border between northern Cameroon and Chad, the Mundang exhibit a clear case of sacred kingship. The chief of Léré, the central Mundang city, was responsible for agriculture and rain but not for the masks. In Mundang culture, masks and royalty are diametrically opposed, two forces that do not mix and may even annihilate each other. Quite a number of rituals show this opposition, but the clearest one was initiation (Adler, 1998). Formerly, initiation was a grand, collective affair which had to be started by the king. Some three or four years after his enthronement, he had to initiate these proceedings – in fact when his reign had shown that he could procure rain. Yet, the initiation itself was performed almost completely without him or his royal clansmen, for all men of his huge clan were banned from this rite of passage. The format of the initiation was quite classic, with the boys ushered into a bush camp, where they were circumcised. After healing they returned for a moment to the village, to be snatched up again for the initiation proper, again in the camp. There they met the masks and learned the 'secret' of the mask, being ultimately reborn between the legs of the mask after a lot of beating. The masks themselves were covered with fibres (cf. Figure 2.6), also with fibre tops, in a number of different forms, each with its own name. In the bush the initiands learned a secret language, engaged in plaiting the fibres into mask skirts, and were taught about proper manners and, above all, instructed in keeping the secret of the masks from non-initiates.

The princes of the royal clans, who were quite numerous, participated in the first part, the circumcision, but not in the second part, the rebirth through the legs of the masks. They were not 'eaten by the mask'; that final rite was just for the boys of commoner clans. The king at some point entered the camp but then was treated as a nobody; he was even beaten like a neophyte. Although nominally all proceedings were under the tutelage of the monarch, the king and his large family were not welcome. While the huge royal clans pervaded the whole Mundang country[10]

10 See for an analysis Adler (1982) and Taïno Kari (2015).

and were represented in almost any village, in crucial instances such as the initiation – and funerals! – the royals were conspicuous by their absence.

Figure 2.6
Two Mundang masks address spectators at the market.
Lara, Mundang, Cameroon, 2018. Photo: Michel Dama

The ethnographer Alfred Adler analyses this quite unusual situation from a fundamental opposition between kingship and the clan system; the patrilineal clan system forms a countervailing power against the king, and both in initiations and funerals this comes to the fore – because these rituals are the stronghold of the clan elders, not of the king. At the basis of this divide is their link with the earth. It is the commoner clans that have the shrines for the earth, since they belong to the spot; they are the firstcomers, a crucial notion in West Africa. In Mundang culture the founder of the royal clans came later from the neighbouring Guiziga, so they are considered strangers. This theme that the king is an immigrant in the country is a dominant motif in Central African kingdoms (De Heusch, 1994), and is important here also. In Mundang, the masks reinforce the link of the clans with the soil and thus with the locality, through their sacred forest. Although the king dominates the annual festivals in the agricultural cycle, initiations and funerals are out of bounds for him. He has to procure rain, not the earth.
Initiations needed to be held once a decade. Since the king was never 'eaten by the mask' as a young prince, he had a vestigial femininity in his body, and following Mundang cultural logic, could supervise only one initiation during his reign.

Thus, the king had to die before the next one, in about ten years; a longer period without initiation would let the country fall into ruin (Taïno Kari, 2015. p. 80). So, not only was the power of the king curtailed by the mask rituals but also his life span; while the three huge royal clans permeated the whole residential and political structure of Mundang society, the mask rituals defined the essentials of life as being out of reach for the king.

The king's supreme importance in rain and agriculture bore its own evident risks and might also provoke his demise. The king needed to procure rain, an inherently hazardous business: 'The deeds of the king do not demand interpretation nor any deciphering of a sign: people know that the rains are those of the king of Léré.'[11] The king had no excuse; if things went wrong and drought hit the area, his life had to end; so, without rain he had to go. And with drought and famine there is no debate possible.

The two reasons for the king's demise converged and reinforced each other. The king's ritual realm had an inbuilt drought risk; and when new human life had to be generated, his position was also weak, for then the other clans held sway – with masks. Clans-*cum*-masks and the royal clans-*cum*-king made up a power arena between two forms of symbolic capital, in effect the surrounding bush and the heavenly rain. The masks were counter-hegemonic to the throne, and it was the commoner who 'owned' the bush, who spoke the language of the masks – a language the king never mastered.

Becoming king, therefore, involved a clear and reduced life expectancy. Older sources indicate that a Mundang king who overstayed this period of ten years had to be strangled (Lembezat, 1961), and that is indeed the dominant tale. In modern Mundang the initiation has been fragmented, allowing the king to live much longer; but the theme of regicide does illustrate the dialectics of masks versus political power and is not confined to the Mundang. Stories of regicide occur from the Jos Plateau in Nigeria to the north of Cameroon where the Mundang are situated.[12] Meek, one of the oldest major sources on northern Nigeria, mentions it for the Jukun (Meek, 1931) and Jean-Claude Mueller has reported regicide for the Rukuba of the Jos Plateau (Muller, 1987), while in Cameroon the Mbum have practiced it (Lembezat, 1961). Living in the same general area of Cameroon, all

11 *'L'action du roi n'exige nulle interprétation, nul décryptage de signe: on sait que la pluie est celle du roi de Léré'* (Adler, 1982: 213). Translation by the author.

12 Of course, regicide is by no means limited to West-Central Africa, as the monumental work of Simon Simonse shows for Southeast Sudan (Simonse, 2018). There the contrasting dynamics of centralization and dualism show in different form – without any mask present – but the arena is quite recognizable.

these groups had kings with fixed termination dates based upon the cycle of initiation, though less stringently defined. The Mundang form the best-documented case and highlight the competing principles in the balance of power.

Final reflection: Masks, secret societies, and chiefs

In the power exchange between the king and the populace, masks form a spectacular presence in the political arena, and the question is what the parameters are in this arena. Three crucial factors inform their role in the political balance: the scale of the political system, the role of secret societies, and primacy of occupation. In principle, mask rituals are part of the grassroots organization, of local communities and associations, and as such tend to distribute political power over a larger part of the community; masks are non-hegemonic and may provide a check on the centralization of power, because their otherworldly grounding and performative appeal make them hard to control from the political centre.

The focus has been on symbolic capital for power, and for masks the religious, so symbolic, side is evident. The ideology behind masks has them stem from the bush, which is seen as the generalized force surrounding the village, the source of all wisdom, power, and fertility. As emanations of this bush, or for that matter as 'things of the ancestors', masks partake in an otherworldly power that is beneficial for human life. Their efficacity is enhanced by the secrecy surrounding them, which excludes over half of the society, a dynamic which informs both the gender arena and the political arena. Secrecy – meaning the right to disclosure – becomes a force on its own when combined with a voluntary organization, and then becomes an independent player in the political arena. A secret society commands the masks, and with them controls the bush forces that enter the village, meaning that the men can direct otherworldly powers that are completely out of reach for non-initiates. So, the exclusion of initiation and the mastery of the initiatory process provide a powerful and lasting symbolic capital that hardly dissipates when shared or sold, and even increases when franchised.

The institutional form of power, such as chieftainship, is person-bound, with not just the individual chief or king, but also his very body forming the capital itself: the king has to be installed, doused with medicine, and instructed in rain making rituals; he is out of bounds for commoners, subject to a plethora of rules that protect him and charge him with sacredness-*cum*-power, while shielding him from other humans. Often the king is considered of foreign origin, not partaking in any definition of autochthony, which not only serves as his exclusion from initiation but also underwrites his presumed mastery over rain and rainmaking; in many parts of Africa rainmakers are foreigners coming from afar, combining the re-

nown of faraway places with the notion of inherited otherworldly powers and secret magical recipes. The combination of rain, fertility, and the land is an obvious one in Africa and can be found way beyond the area where mask rituals occur. So, the close link between the health of the king and the well-being of the populace lies at the forefront of the mind, enhancing the personalized nature of the king's symbolic power. The flipside, however, is that it makes his efficacy contingent upon his performance, as man, as king, and as rainmaker.[13]

It seems that the secret society with its impersonalized power base and inherent permanence easily trumps the king in many instances. It takes a towering figure like Njoya to come out on top of the equation, but in the Bamum case the power of the associations was already curtailed by the expansive nature of the realm and the strong military organization of sultanate. To paraphrase Adler (1982) 'war is the mask of the king', and a continuous state of war exceeds the mandate and grip of the secret societies, which operate best at the local level.

So, in conclusion, masks and their societies are a countervailing power against institutionalized power, their symbolic capital secure and lasting and in principle out of reach of individual rulers. Also, these societies are faceless, with anonymous leaders, which fits in well with masquerades as such, the most anonymous of all theatrical productions. As a consequence, power associations and initiation societies have considerable staying power, and they do persist in modernizing Africa for much longer than expected. In Tanzania, Malawi, and Mozambique, for instance, the conditions for masking have largely disappeared, but thanks to the persistence of the *Nyau* lodges, masks still operate at the local level (Birch, 1996; Blackmun & Schoffeleers, 1972). Senegal witnessed some clashes between the modern state and the initiation societies in the Manding area in the Basse Casamance (De Jong, 2007), confrontations in which the secret society emerged with shining colours. The symbolic capital of the bush and the ancestors – the mainstay of masks and their societies – stands perpendicular to any individual link with the otherworld through dynasty or personal kingly endowment, and shows great staying power. These two different symbolic capitals do not rule each other out, but they do wrestle and the outcome of their wrestling match for a large part decides the habitus of the power arena in that particular society.

13 One logical option would be for the king to pre-empt the masks himself, and only one case shows that option in action, the Kuba/Bushoong. Here it is the king himself who dances the mask. In view of its rareness, this option of the masked king seems out of reach for most chiefs and kings, since it demands great riches, a stable realm out of reach for marauders, plus the absence of secret societies (Vansina, 1973; Binckley, 2012).

References

Abbink, Jon (2022). Has Religion Been Fuelling the Politics of Conflict in Ethiopia? A Cautionary Tale. *Canopy Forum*, October 26. <https://canopyforum.org/2022/10/26/has-religion-been-fueling-the-politics-of-conflict-in-ethiopia-a-cautionary-tale/>.

Adler, Alfred (1982). *La mort est le masque du roi: La royauté sacrée des Moundang du Tchad*. Payot.

Adler, Alfred (1998). Des rois et des masques: Essai d'analyse comparative (Moundang du Tchad, Bushong de l'ex-Zaïre). *L'Homme*, *145*, 169-203.

Afigbo, A.E. (1987). Southeastern Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century. In J.F.A. Ajayi & Michael Crowder (Eds.), *History of West Africa* (pp. 429-484). Volume 2. Longman.

Argenti, Nicholas (2007). *The Intestines of the State. Youth, Violence, and Belated Histories in the Cameroon Grassfields*. University of Chicago Press.

Binckley, David A. (2012). *A View from the Forest. The Power of Southern Kuba Initiation Rites and Masks.* Lucia/Marquand.

Birch, Laurel (1996). *Inscribing the Mask: Nyau Ritual and Performance among the Chewa of Central Malawi.* Anthropos Institute and University of Freiburg Press.

Blackmun, Barbara, & Schoffeleers, Matthew. 1972. Masks of Malawi. *African Arts, 5*(4), 36-41+69+88.

Bourdieu 1984. *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste.* Harvard UP.

Colleyn, Jean-Paul (2002). Le *Kònò.* In Jean-Paul Colleyn (Ed.), *Bamana. Un art et un savoir-vivre au Mali* (pp. 185-200). Snoeck-Ducaju.

Ellis, Stephen, & Ter Haar, Gerrie (2004). *World of power. Religious thought and political practice in Africa.* Hurst.

Gagliardi, Susan E. (2010). *Crossing Borders, Pushing Boundaries: Arts of Power Associations on the Senufo-Mande Cultural 'Frontier'.* Dissertation UCLA.

Geary, Christraud, & Njoya, Adam N. (1985). *Mandou Yénou. Photographies du pays Bamoum, royaume ouest-africain 1902-1915.* Trickster Verlag.

Heusch, Luc, de (1994). Myth and Epic in Central Africa. In Thomas D. Blakely, Walter E.A. van Beek, & Dennis L. Thomson (Eds.), *Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression* (pp. 229-238). Currey & Heinemann.

Jong, Ferdinand de (2007). *Masquerades of Modernity. Power and Secrecy in Casamance, Senegal*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Koloss, Hans-Joachim (1992). Kwifon and Fon in Oku. On Kingship in the Cameroon Grasslands. In Erna Beumers & Hans-Joachim Koloss (Eds.), *Kings of Africa. Art and Authority in Central Africa* (pp. 33-42). Museum für Völkerkunde.

Koloss, Hans-Joachim (2000). *World-view and Society in Oku (Cameroon)*. Reimer.

Lembezat, Bertrand (1961). *Populations païennes du Nord Cameroun*. International African Institute.

Meek, C.K. (1931). *A Sudanese Kingdom: An Ethnographic Study of Jukunoid-Speaking Peoples of Nigeria*. Kegan Paul, Trech, Trubner & Co.

Miller, Ivor, & Mathew Ojong (2012). Ékpè 'Leopard' Society in Africa and the Americas: Influence and Values of an Ancient Tradition. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *36*(2), 266-281 (year 2013). Special issue on 'Secret or private organisations, race and ethnicity'.

Muller, Jean-Claude (1987). Transgression, rites de rajeunissement et mort culturelle du roi chez les Jukun et les Rukuba (Nigéria central). In Luc de Heusch (Ed.), *Chefs et rois sacrés* (pp. 49-68). Systèmes de Pensée en Afrique Noire 10. CNRS.

Newell, Sasha (2013). Brands as Masks: Public Secrecy and the Counterfeit in Côte d'Ivoire. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.), *19*, 138-54.

Nooter, Mary H. (1993). Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals. *African Arts*, *26*(1), 54-69 &102.

Nortey, Samuel, Bodjawah, Edwin K., & Kissiedu, Kwaku B. (2021). African Masking Systems: An Archive of Social Commentary. *African Arts, 54*(4), 52-63.

Poppi, Césare (2013). The Trail of Sigma. Masks and Technologies of Power in North-Western Ghana. In Anne-Marie Bouttiaux (Ed.), *La dynamique des masques en Afrique occidentale* (pp. 181-196). Musée Royale de l'Afrique Centrale.

Röschenthaler, Ute (2004). Transacting Obasinjom: The Dissemination of a Cult Agency in the Cross River Area. *Africa. Journal of the International African Society*, *74*(2), 241-276.

Simmel, Georg (1950). *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Free Press.

Simonse, Simon (2018). *Kings of Disaster. Dualism, Centralism and the Scapegoat King in Southeastern Sudan*. Fountainhead Publishers.

Taïno Kari (2015). *Les Moundang du Cameroun et du Tchad: Onomastique et histoire (XVIIIe-XXe siècle).* Le Harmattan.

Tardits, Claude (1980). *Le royaume bamoum*. A. Colin.

Taussig, Michael (1999). *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative.* University Press.

Van Beek, Walter E.A. (2011). Cultural Models of Power in Africa. In Jan Abbink & Mirjam de Bruijn (Eds.), *Land, Law and Politics in Africa: Mediating Conflict and Reshaping the State* (pp. 25-48). Brill.

Van Beek, Walter E.A., & Harry Leyten (2023). *Masquerades in African Society: Gender, Power, and Identity*. Currey, Boydell and Brewer.

Van Beek, Walter E.A. (2024). Masks versus Cattle: The Ecology of an African Art Form. *Human Ecology*, 52, 4: 851-865. https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3748515.

Vansina, Jan (1973). *The Children of Woot. A History of the Kuba Peoples*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Wittmer, Marcilene K. (1979). Bamum Village Masks. *African Arts*, *12*(4), 58-63, 92.

3

Reflections on Ethnicity, Conflict, and Peace in Ethiopia: From Ethnic Federalism to Domestic War(s)

Jan Záhořík & Ameyu Godesso Roro

Introduction

When one googles the term Ethiopia, he or she may find almost an endless number of articles related to conflict, crisis, ethnicity, nationalism, war, and so on. This may give the impression that Ethiopia is a collapsing country full of internal hatred, violence, and turbulence. The reality is, of course, way more complex and multilayered. Literature on ethnicity and nationalism in Africa has been vast, and we may see two major trends in the history of research in this field. The first deals with ethnicity as part of European colonial legacy in Africa (Fjeldstad, Jiang, & Shifa, 2019; Mamdani, 2019; Robinson, 2014). This can hardly be applied to Ethiopia which has never been systematically colonised by an external power. However, colonial discourse became relevant and prominent also in Ethiopia due to the reasons we will discuss later (Záhořík, 2017, pp. 9-18). The second large body of literature takes a deeper look into the theoretical roots of current discourses on ethnicity. Massive work has been done, for instance, by Thomas Hylland Eriksen in this regard (Eriksen, 2002).

There exist a number of approaches towards ethnicity, nations, nationalisms, which we have no space to comprehensively analyse in this chapter. Works of Weber, Barth, Anderson, Fukuyama, and Hobsbawm are, however, all well known to students of courses in anthropology and history (Hutchinson & Smith, 1996).

Last but not least, given the multiple conflicts and crises in Africa in the last twenty years, there has been a growing literature on the impact of ethnicity on conflict and the prominence of ethnicity in African public discourse (Azarya, 2003; Diamond, 1987; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1999). The latter is also the case of Ethiopia which has been characterized by a long-term fight of various ethnic minorities against the Marxist military junta called the *Derg* and later on (primarily but

not only) the Oromo struggle against the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) and its main driving force, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

The diversity of theoretical approaches in regard to ethnicity in Ethiopia (primordialist, essentialist, and constructivist) have led to (in many cases) confusing pictures of what the nature of current turmoil in Ethiopia is. We also have to bear in mind that, particularly in Ethiopia, the ethnic discourse has been very often driven and led by the Ethiopian diaspora perpetrating purely essentialist and primordialist views on ethnicity, and having very little understanding for the fluidity of ethnic identities or for overlapping nationalist projects (Schlee, 2003; Fekadu Adugna, 2011). This is very typical for representatives of 'long-distance nationalism', a term coined by Benedict Anderson (Anderson, 1983). As we will see later, discourse on ethnicity and nationalism in the Ethiopian context has been shaped both inside and outside the country, primarily by the Ethiopian diaspora.

In this chapter, our aim is to first evaluate the existing literature on the role of ethnicity in Ethiopia's conflicts, the failure of federalism in post-1991 Ethiopia, and the current context and prospects of the country which is undergoing significant changes, challenges, and turbulence. We will also take a deeper look into the nature of the 'ethnic federalism' which we see as one of the major root causes of the current difficulties in Ethiopia. The last part of the chapter will be dedicated to reflections on ethnicity and nationalism in the context of the war in Tigray.

Ethnicity and nationalism in the Ethiopian context

In Ethiopia, ethnicity and nationalism have been closely linked. And so, Ethiopia's history, politics, and society have been shaped by the intertwined dynamics of ethnicity and nationalism, or, to put it better, by competing ethno-nationalist projects (Merera Gudina, 2004). Ethiopia has also been praised for its strong national identity rooted in Ethiopianism, which emphasizes unity, sovereignty, and pride in the country's rich history and traditions. (Ethiopia's status as one of the few African states that has never been colonized further underscores this narrative.) Underneath the broader narrative, the reality is that there are multiple identities in Ethiopia, more than 80 different ethnic groups with their own languages, unique histories, and cultural heritage. These groups, which contributed to the country's rich heritage and preserved their own identity, have coexisted and/or competed for power and domination for generations.

Although the Ethiopian state should aim to balance promoting unity and diversity, it has historically been characterized by centralized power, often dominated by one ethnic group at the expense of others. Historically, the Amhara and Tigray

ethnic groups dominated Ethiopia's state; their elites alternated as a dominant political force (Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003). But even between these two major groups there was a clash for power and supremacy within the emerging state since Tewodros' times (1855-1868). The subsequent expansion of the state causes, up to this day, mixed interpretations of Ethiopia's history, and even serves as a ground for various separatist proclamations (orchestrated mainly by parts of radicalized diaspora).

The political dominance of the *northern elites* has left little room for political representation of past Ethiopian regimes to promote a shared national identity beyond their ethnic boundaries. This has contributed to the occurrence of tension between a centralized Ethiopian identity and the diverse range of ethnic identities in the country. The tension often manifests in resistance, protest, and conflict, highlighting that ethnicity in Ethiopia is not just about cultural differences but is closely connected to power dynamics and political competition. Therefore, Ethiopian nationalism has not only served to unify the country but has also been a dominating and divisive force in Ethiopian politics. This is because while Ethiopian nationalism promotes unity and national pride, it has often been implemented in ways that marginalize, disenfranchise, or suppress the identities of non-dominant ethnic groups. Such unity and national pride is usually manifested through key historical symbols such as the battle of Adowa, Queen of Sheba, the creation of the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa, and many other things. Ethiopia is in a certain sense – through this discourse – taken and perceived as a true African country serving as a role model for others under the umbrella of Pan-Africanism which the current government of Abiy Ahmed frequently refers to.[1]

Some of these nondominant groups had organized resistance ranging from large-scale demonstrations to armed struggle against the ruling regimes: The Imperial and the *Derg*. In 1991, a coalition of armed forces, primarily ethno-nationalist forces overthrew the *Derg* regime. The ideology of the resistance was shaped by ethnic nationalism, which had mobilized them to do battle with the state. The introduction of ethno-federalism, which will be discussed later, marked a major shift from the previous centralized model of governance. It aimed to decentralize power to regional states demarcated on settlement patterns, identity, languages, and the consent of the people concerned.[2] This system was designed to address

1 Addis Ababa is currently full of billboards full of slogans referring to Pan-Africanism and the need to find African solutions to African problems. See also e.g. Abiy Calls on Africans to Consolidate Pan-Africanism that Enables Development, Safeguards Continent, in: <https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/en_39775>.

2 Constitution of the Federal Republic Democratic of Ethiopia 1995, Article 46 (2).

the concerns of different ethnic groups by granting more power and autonomy to regional states based on ethnic lines.

While the federal system has improved representation and self-governance for many ethnic groups, it has also had negative consequences, such as exacerbating ethnic tensions and conflicts. The fall of the *Derg* regime led to political domination of the Tigray, causing discontent among other ethnic groups including the Amhara, who lost their dominant position, and the Oromo, the Somali and many others (Ismagilova, 2004). This shows that the issue of power is deeply intertwined with ethnicity and nationalism in Ethiopia, which reinforce inequalities along ethnic lines. Differences in access to political power, economic opportunities, and social privileges contribute to these inequalities. These have contributed to the creation of a feeling of injustice and discrimination among some ethnic groups, which has led to political instability in the country.

In particular, feelings of marginalization, subjugation, and oppression led to mass protests in Oromia, which contributed to the removal of the Tigrayan elites from their dominant position in Ethiopia's politics, after years of the so-called Oromo protests. The regime change in 2018 brought Abiy Ahmed (an EPRDF cadre) to the post of Ethiopia's prime minister putting someone affiliated to Oromo political elite at the helm of Ethiopian politics (Forsén & Tronvoll, 2021, p. 19). The Tigrayan elites were, obviously, not satisfied with the regime change and the loss of their dominant political position centred around the narrative of the developmental state which focused on the construction of various infrastructure mega-projects while rather neglecting or even deteriorating the situation of the people on the 'periphery' as well as the perspectives 'from below' (Abbink, 2012). This discontent could, among other things, be the cause of the war in Tigray. The war was very deadly, and ethnicity as well as different interpretation of history played a significant part in it. The conflict in Tigray had wider implications beyond just involving the federal government. It also took on an interregional dimension and an ethnic-based rivalry between the Amhara and Tigrayan groups. Not only did this conflict help to further solidify social boundaries between the two groups, but it was also used as justification for the Amhara to claim territories that were previously under the administrative jurisdiction of the Tigray regional government.

The war played a significant role in shaping the identity of the Amhara community. It mobilized them against those whom they perceived as 'other' ethnic groups and rivals and the federal government. As a result, Amhara nationalism emerged, as a tool for protecting the interests of the Amhara people as well as their integrity, while the war in Tigray led to violent conflicts in the Amhara region and Oro-

mia regions in particular. The tensions between the Amhara and Oromo groups have increased at both ethnic and regional levels. Meanwhile, the Amhara elites are striving to engage in a discourse of 'reclaiming their historical forefathers' palace', which has become increasingly spoken about in public and publicized in the media.

It is exactly this 'looking back into history' which has become a constant part of all kinds of debates between academics, political activists, and politicians. Application of current views and knowledge on historical periods long gone has not really contributed to peaceful reconciliation of the country's multiple ethnic groups. Quite the contrary, what prevails is the historical revanchism mixed with populism led by intentions to mobilize voters, supporters, street mobs, and the like. Let us go back to the beginning of this process.

The path to ethnic federalism

The path to ethnic federalism was an uneasy one, and we may perceive the creation of this system as a necessary and almost unavoidable outcome of years of struggle against the oppressive *Derg* regime. Oppression only helped to create ethno-nationalist liberation fronts among which the TPLF and OLF (Oromo Liberation Front) were by far the most important ones – leaving the Eritrean Liberation Front aside for the purpose of this chapter. However, already at the time of the collapse of the *Derg* regime, the first signals of future problems appeared. These were basically twofold. First, while the Tigrayans and the Oromos had their big political-military parties, the Amharas had no such comparable representative body, and therefore from the beginning of the post-*Derg* transformation process, the main rivalry took place between the TPLF and OLF. The second aspect was the constant clash between ethno-nationalist projects and national identity. The concept of *Ethiopiawinet* (Ethiopianness) was seen by many Oromo and Tigrayan intellectuals as an Amhara project and therefore working against the interests of the Oromo and Tigrayans (Ishiyama, 2023, pp. 12-18).

In 1991, when the *Derg* regime collapsed, in order to fulfil the desires of many ethnic liberation fronts, the transitional government had to adopt a new strategy by preparing the ground for the establishment of so-called ethnic federalism. The Ethiopian constitution of 1995 then proclaimed nine federal regional states plus two cities with special status (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa).

Ethnicity in Ethiopia has been taken, from a primordialist-essentialist point of view (mainly by political activists, politicians, and diaspora sponsors of various movements), as something given, unchangeable, and something which is not ne-

gotiated, let alone fluid. On the other hand, in daily life ethnicity refers to cultural and historical identity which can be strengthened and boosted by conflict, oppression, marginalization, or conquest (Abbink, 1997, p. 159). Given the fact that all the liberation fronts fought for the 'liberation' of their people and all of them declared that they had been oppressed by previous regimes, there was hardly any other choice then a system centred on ethnicity as a key defining element (Abbink, 1995, p. 152).

The Ethiopian constitution, which considered the territorial principle as determinant in terms of ethnicity, created nine federal states, six of which were intended to be ethnically homogeneous (Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somalia, and Harari), while two (Benishangul/Gumuz and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region) significantly heterogeneous (Article 47). The very notion of an ethnically homogeneous state, however, is not only based on primordialist ideas but also does not correspond at all to the character and internal organization of Ethiopia, in which no region is ethnically homogeneous, principally due to centuries-long internal migrations, intermarriages, etc. The problem with the federal constitution is that it treats ethnic identity as the basic identity of the individual and the group, without taking into account other variables. Ethnicity has thus become, especially in many conflict situations at the local level, a highly politicized and 'appropriated' identity, which has a considerable mobilizing potential. At the same time, the character of the post-*Derg* transitional period and the dominance of TPLF led not only to the exclusion of the Oromos from political life but also exclusion of the Amharas (Yilkal Ayalew Workneh, 2024). It was no surprise that both groups joined forces in 2015-2018 during the so-called Oromo protests and Amhara protests as a reaction to the arrogance of the ruling party (EPRDF), especially after the proclamation of the Addis Ababa Masterplan.

Ethnic federalism: Opening Pandora's Box?

Together with Merera Gudina, we may indicate three basic ethno-nationalist perspectives on Ethiopian history, and these are (1) the nation-building perspective, (2) national-oppression perspective, (3) and colonization perspective (Merera Gudina, 2006, p. 120). It is obvious that the incompatibility of these perspectives lies at the core of the 'Pandora's Box' which ethnic federalism helped to open. We know from other countries suffering from all kinds of injustices how important the reconciliation process is in order to build a peaceful future. The (imperfect) example of post-Apartheid South Africa is an obvious one (Gibson, 2004).

In the Ethiopian case, it was clear that after the destruction of the nation-building process constructed by both the imperial and socialist regimes, there was a need

to build a completely new Ethiopia, defined by something other than a top-down oppressive regime largely ignoring complex realities on the ground (Clapham, 2017, p. 68). However, the newly established ethnic federalism did not overcome the centre-periphery gaps, as representatives of many groups felt excluded, and rightly so, by the TPLF/EPRDF regime and formed either legal or illegal opposition voices, to use Markakis' terms. By legal he means those parties which accepted the federal system but did not agree with EPRDF's rule, while the illegal ones turned into guerilla warfare or all kinds of rebellious activities with the aim of secession. This was primarily the OLF (Markakis, 2010, p. 282).

Ethnic federalism helped not only to strengthen the position of ethnicity in Ethiopia's politics, but it also institutionalized a system in which political parties were created on the ethnic bases. As Abbink rightly states, from the African comparative perspective, this is an unusual, or even unique aspect of politics, which means that each political party finds political followers and voters primarily among 'its' own ethnic group (Abbink, 2011). Moreover, Asnake Kefale adds that ethnic federalism in the Ethiopian way created both horizontal and vertical asymmetries. Not only did it codify the supremacy of the big ethnic groups which were allowed to have their own federal regional state, but it gave the centre great power over the regions (Asnake Kefale, 2013, pp. 41-43).

First of all, we should briefly indicate what federalism usually means. Princeton Encyclopedia defines federalism as an ideology 'that favors a distinct territorial pattern of government, one that combines the centralization of some political powers and the decentralization of others' (O'Leary, Brendan, n.d.). In other words, the federal arrangement is a type of governance that is composed of 'shared rule' and 'self-rule' in which some elements of governance, politics, and economy are shared by all the units of federation, while others are autonomously decided by the federal units themselves. The famous Article 39 of the Federal Constitution proclaims that every 'Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and to equitable representation in state and Federal governments.'[3] this article in particular, acknowledging the right to self-determination, has been often referred to as the most explosive.

Why? There has never been true federalism implemented in Ethiopia throughout the years of TPLF/EPRDF rule. Not only did the TPLF/EPRDF make sure that all elections would be won with a constitutional majority (the exception was the 2005 elections in which the opposition parties gained an unknown number of votes until

3 The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1995.

the Ethiopian government under Meles Zenawi intervened and modified the results for the benefit of the ruling party). As Abbink stated, the 2005 elections were the most contested up to that moment in Ethiopia's history, and the result was rather disastrous, showing deficiencies of the federal system in which all institutions were firmly in the hands of one political party (Abbink, 2011).

At all levels of the federal structure, the TPLF/EPRDF was overwhelmingly present via the system of loyal cadres dependent on the centre. In this sense, the ethnic federalism existed as federalism only on paper and in many ways served as a continuation of previous centralized regimes (Záhořík, 2014, p. 25) In this case, under the supremacy of the Tigrayan elites.

Given the lack of decentralization which would meet the aspirations of the various ethnic groups in Ethiopia, the country sunk into a collective lethargy which was interrupted by the attempt to implement the so-called Addis Ababa Integrated Masterplan in 2014-2015 (Záhořík, 2017). This led to several years of 'Oromo protest' followed by 'Amhara protests' which in turn led to the regime change in 2018 when Abiy Ahmed (an EPRDF cadre) became the first Oromo politician in the post of Ethiopia's prime minister.

At first, there were hopes when Abiy came to power, but some of those hopes soon turned to concerns. The people who organized, took part in, and encouraged the Oromo protests thought that the ethnic federalism – which did not exist in reality – would be implemented. This included full autonomy for regional governments, equal participation in the political framework of the federal government, and the end of socioeconomic marginalization based on ethnicity. However, the tone in the mainstream media, and from a few prominent politicians, began to cast doubt on these hopes. Furthermore, there was a shift in political discourse from ethnonationalism towards Ethiopian nationalism, which was perceived by some as an attempt to quell the foundation of federalism. Here we get to the overlapping and competing nationalist projects.

The criticism of the latter, which was something that was off-limits for discussion outside of election campaigns for the EPRDF, becomes a commonplace practice. Ethnicity and ethnic federalism were presumed to be the target of some measures taken by the government, in particular through the Prime Minister's decision to dissolve the EPRDF. This is the primary, if not the only, factor that brought about war in Tigray and which has led to a sudden revival of rivalry among the Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans. The ethno-federal arrangement decentralized the state primarily on paper while creating space for rivalries and tensions at the local level so that, already in 2006, Abbink could write the following: 'The federal state is

all-powerful, retaining political control and financial-economic resources at the centre, but declines responsibility for the emergence, or even production, of local conflicts between ethnic communities on the regional or local levels, of which there have been dozens since the early 1990s' (Abbink, 2006, p. 390).

War in Tigray and the power rivalry among Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayans

The TPLF's 27-year hegemony over Ethiopia has come to an end as a result of the protest. Abiy Ahmed, became prime minister in 2018. On top of the lack of a smooth transfer of power from Tigray to Oromo, however, there was a political crisis. Given the decades of centralization of power in the hands of one political entity (TPLF/EPRDF), it was clear that any transformation would require a broad consensus among the key actors within the political arena and, when at the beginning of 2019 exiled political parties were invited to Ethiopia to take part in the transitional process and debates with Abiy Ahmed government on the future of Ethiopia, it an unprecedented era of overcoming ethnic rivalries and historical injustices was about to emerge.

However, very quickly, it became clear that finding a consensus between TPLF and the new government would not be easy. Amid the crisis, the TPLF withdrew from Addis Ababa and its political epicentre, Arat Kilo,[4] towards Mekelle. At Arat Kilo, Abiy began to consolidate power. He dissolved the EPRDF as a party at the end of 2019 and set up a new Prosperity Party (PP). The Prosperity Party formation was considered by the TPLF as treacherous, because the dissolution of EPRDF implied impeding Tigrayan control over the upper political and economic echelon and Tigray – a core nation within the Ethiopian polity.

If Oromos and Amharas felt excluded from the decision-making processes in past decades, now after the dissolution of the EPRDF and establishment of PP party, Tigrayans took on the role of the ones excluded. After a series of incidents, war became inevitable. The war was said to have been triggered by an alleged surprise night-time assault by the forces of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) on the main Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) base in Tigray.[5] That reportedly resulted in the killing of non-Tigrayan soldiers and the attempted looting of heavy artillery and weapons. On 4 November 2020, the prime minister ordered a military offensive against the TPLF and the Tigray Defence Force (TDF). A num-

4 Arat Kilo is a part of Addis Ababa with a concentration of ministries and the seat of the prime minister.

5 From the very beginning, the internet was literally flooded by all kinds of propaganda material from both sides, which made it very difficult for 'outsiders' to properly decipher what exactly was going on.

ber of regional and federal forces joined the ENDF in the fight against the TDF. The Amhara region's Special Forces, and Amhara ethnic militias, referred to as Fano, quickly joined the federal government and became a key ally of the ENDF. At that point, the conflict took on a new dimension.

For the Amhara, the Tigray war was not just a power struggle, it was also another battle for contested historic territories long claimed by the Amhara. This is because the Amhara elites thought they had lost territory to Tigray after 1991. The war thus enabled Amhara forces to seize or reinstate, in their view, territories such as Wolkayt, Humera, Tselemti, and Raya, which were under Tigray's jurisdiction. Wolkayt, Humera, and Tselemti are in the Western Tigray, a fertile area bordering Sudan, while Raya is in the southern part of Tigray. Competition, distrust, and power rivalry between the Amhara and Tigrayans are historical. It has been described by Donald N. Levine as a rivalry between twins, arising from a close historical and social link. The current war shows how the struggle for power between Ethiopia's ethnic elites in a federal system based on ethnicity has intensified and complicated this conflict. The war was one of the deadliest in the recent history of Ethiopia and formally ended in November 2022.

To complicate matters even more, the emerging Amhara nationalist movement that we can observe roughly from 2018, has drawn widespread attention among scholars to the 'Amhara question'. Due to the fact that Amharic language and culture were some of the key pillars of Imperial Ethiopia and 'national unity', no particular movement, based on a narrow identity discourse, formed prior to the formation of the Amhara Regional State. This has changed in the last decade. Now, when Amhara interests and lives are in danger, the nationalist movement rises to protect them (Shiferaw Chanie & Ishiyama, 2021; Tezera Tazebew, 2021). In the aftermath of the war between the Ethiopian federal government and Tigray, Ethiopia is once again engaged in violent internal conflicts. Firstly, the government has resumed its military operations in relation to the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) that it had started in January 2019. Second, the federal government announced that in 2023 it would crack down on Amhara regional armed forces' activities, not to mention the Amhara militias.

There is conflict in the Oromia region due to a long-standing insurgency by the OLA against the Ethiopian government. In July 2018, OLA agreed to a ceasefire with Ethiopia in the Eritrean capital of Asmara, which lasted only a short time.[6] Relations between the two parties have become more volatile and subject to accu-

6 https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2024/01/04/why-did-peace-talks-fail-in-ethiopia-with-the-oromo-liberation-front/.

sations and counteraccusations due to the absence of a signed peace agreement, among other things. The federal government then announced its military operation against OLA in January 2019, OLA subsequently intensified its armed struggle in Oromia region. Conflicts between the federal forces and OLA have been ongoing ever since, with varying degrees of intensity, thought the conflict seemed to be abating during the war in Tigray.

While the opposing sides in the Tigray conflict have agreed to a ceasefire, peace negotiations with the OLA have failed for the third time in 2023. This is because the conflict in Oromia is rather complicated, causing peace talks to collapse prematurely. In relation to this, an Africa analyst at the risk intelligence firm Verisk Maplecroft said: 'The Oromia conflict is both an ethnic conflict between the Oromo and the Amhara, and a struggle within Oromia between supporters of (Prime Minister) Abiy Ahmed's government and its enemies'.[7] There is a long history of disunity within what we may call 'Oromo nationalism'.

Conflict broke out in Amhara during the spring of 2023, just as the armed conflict in Oromia was beginning to gain momentum. The trigger of the conflict was the Ethiopia-Tigray Peace Agreement, commonly called the Pretoria Agreement.[8] Other grievances also abound among the Amhara elites who alleged Oromo dominance in power politics on the front line since 2018. It has been noted that despite the significant involvement of the regional forces and militia of the Amhara Region in the Tigray War of 2020-2022, no one representing Amhara interests was in the peace talks. This illustrates how important ethnicity is in the political representation in Ethiopia. Additionally, the agreement reportedly suggests that territorial disputes will be addressed in accordance with the constitutions. This is the case of Tigray's western zone, where Amhara regional forces have been in control since the beginning of the conflict, an area that has become a flashpoint for bitter fighting among Amhara and Tigray.

In the Amhara region, another conflict also began to break out and has been creating new tensions. Two reasons were mentioned as causing the conflict. First is the intervention of the federal government to put a stop to the anarchy created by Amhara militias, which did not demobilize after the war in Tigray. The demobilization attempt ended, and the militia fled into the mountains. The second is the

7 https://www.barrons.com/articles/ethiopia-s-other-war-the-shadowy-oromia-conflict-01669119308.

8 The agreement, also called the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), is a peace treaty between the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) that was signed 2 November 2022, wherein both parties agreed to a 'permanent cessation of hostilities' to end the Tigray War.

dissolution of the regional Special Forces, which has further exacerbated tensions in the Amhara region. It is said that a number of Amhara Special Forces opposed the government plan and were intent on joining an Amhara militia in the bush. They regrouped in the countryside and launched new attacks against government forces in a number of cities. The central government stepped up its military operations in Amhara in late 2023 to repel the assaults, forcing the insurgents to retreat to the uplands. This ultimately led to the declaration of a state of emergency in the Amhara region. Since then, there have been hit-and-run ambushes between the federal forces and the Amhara militias. The unresolved issues of the Amhara-Oromo conflict, as a legacy of ethnic federalism, centralized policies, and a winner-takes-all approach to politics[9] along with the war in Tigray, have the potential to complicate matters for years to come.

There continues to be a power rivalry between the Oromo and Tigrayan elites: during the Tigray War, the OLF in particular sided with the Tigrayans, while the Amhara groups largely allied with the central government. The Amhara elites have not been happy with the alliances. Nor have they had a shared understanding with the Oromo and Tigrayan elites about the importance of ethnic federalism for Ethiopia.

Conclusion

As we have seen, in Ethiopia, perhaps more than in any other country in Africa, ethnicity has played a central role in shaping politics. Not only have there been many political parties with clear and undeniable ethnic affiliation but the interpretation of history, territorial claims, and internal political struggles are in one way or another linked to ethnicity.

The emergence of ethnic federalism was (perhaps) supposed to bring peace and a sense of emancipation for various ethnic groups. The inability to implement a true federal structure along with the enormous emphasis given to ethnicity has led to the exact opposite of the intended peaceful co-existence – whether intentionally or unintentionally that is not a matter for discussion in this chapter.

The current turbulent situation in Ethiopia since the war in Tigray shows that the clash between different visions (ethno-federalist, unitarist, supremacist) is as vivid as it has always been and that ethnicity remains a heavy-weight factor in Ethiopia's politics. There is, obviously, also an international dimension to the turmoil in Ethiopia, whether coming from the diaspora or elsewhere (Egypt, Middle East,

9 A term used by many Ethiopian colleagues in academic circles.

EU, USA, etc.) which would, however, require a separate chapter. As we claimed on the previous pages, a large part of the problem lies in the failed experiment of ethnic federalism which, combined with historically unresolved structural problems, will continue to shape Ethiopia's politics.

References

Abbink, J. (1995). Breaking and Making the State: The Dynamics of Ethnic Democracy in Ethiopia. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *13*(2), 152.

Abbink, J. (1997). Ethnicity and Constitutionalism in Contemporary Ethiopia. *Journal of African Law*, *41*, 159.

Abbink, J. (2006a). Discomfiture of Democracy? The 2005 Election Crisis in Ethiopia and Its Aftermath. *African Affairs*, *105*(419), 173-199.

Abbink, J. (2006b). Ethnicity and Conflict Generation in Ethiopia: Some Problems and Prospects of Ethno-regional Federalism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *24*(3), 390.

Abbink, J. (2011). Ethnic-based Federalism and Ethnicity in Ethiopia: Reassessing the Experiment after 20 Years. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *5*(4), 596-618.

Abbink, J. (2012). Dam Controversies: Contested Governance and Developmental Discourse on the Ethiopian Omo River Dam. *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale*, *20*(2), 125-144.

Ali, M., Fjeldstad, O.H., Jiang, B., & Shifa, A.B. (2019). Colonial Legacy, State-building and the Salience of Ethnicity in Sub-Saharan Africa. *The Economic Journal*, *129*(619), 1048-1081.

Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.

Asnake Kefale (2013). *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia: A Comparative Regional Study*. Routledge.

Azarya, V. (2003). Ethnicity and Conflict Management in Post-colonial Africa. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, *9*(3), 1-24.

Clapham, C. (2017). *The Horn of Africa: State Formation and Decay*. Hurst.

Diamond, L. (1987). Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *25*(1), 117-128.

Eriksen, T.H. (2002). *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. Pluto Press.

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1995). *Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*. Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b5a84.html>.

Fekadu Adugna (2011). Overlapping Nationalist Projects and Contested Spaces: The Oromo–Somali Borderlands in Southern Ethiopia. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *5*(4), 773-787.

Forsén, T. & Tronvoll, K. (2021). Protest and Political Change in Ethiopia: The Initial Success of the Oromo Qeerroo Youth Movement. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, *30*(4), 19.

Gibson, J.L. (2004). Overcoming Apartheid: Can Truth Reconcile a Divided Nation? *Politikon*, *31*(2), 129-155.

Hutchinson, J. & Smith, A.D. (1996). *Ethnicity*. Oxford Readers. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ishiyama, J. (2023). Ethnic Identity and Conflict: The Case of Ethiopia. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, *24*(1), 12-18.

Ismagilova, R. (2004). Ethnicity and Federalism: The Case of Ethiopia. *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano perl'Africa e l'Oriente*, *59*(2), 179-200.

Merera Gudina (2004). The State, Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and Democratisation in Ethiopia. *African Journal of Political Science*, *9*(1), 27-50.

Merera Gudina (2006). Contradictory Interpretations of Ethiopian History: The Need for a New Consensus. In D. Turton (Ed.), *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 119-130). James Currey.

Markakis, J. (2010). *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers*. Oxford: James Currey.

Nzongola-Ntalaja, G. (1999). Ethnicity and State Politics in Africa. *African Journal of International Affairs*, *2*(1), 31-60.

O'Leary, Brendan, Federalism and Federation. In *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination* (online publication: <https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/431>).

Robinson, A.L. (2014). National Versus Ethnic Identification in Africa: Modernization, Colonial Legacy, and the Origins of Territorial Nationalism. *World Politics*, *66*(4), 709-746.

Schlee, G. (2003). Redrawing the Map of the Horn: The Politics of Difference. *Africa*, *73*(3), 343-368.

Shiferaw Chanie, B. & Ishiyama, J. (2021). Political Transition and the Rise of Amhara Nationalism in Ethiopia. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, *56*(5), 1036-1050.

Tezera Tazebew (2021). Amhara Nationalism: The Empire Strikes Back. *African Affairs*, *120*(479), 297-313.

Vaughan, S. & Tronvoll, K. (2003). *The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life*. Retrieved from <https://www.sida.se/en/publications/the-culture-of-power-in-contemporary-ethiopian-political-life>.

Yilkal Ayalew Workneh (2024). Reactions to Nation-building: The Roots of Amhara Nationalism in Ethiopia and Its Implications. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *10*(1), 1-26.

Záhořík, J. (2014). Ethiopia's Hegemony in the Horn of Africa: Internal Tensions and External Challenges Before and after Meles Zenawi. *Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, *5*(1), 23-38.

Záhořík, J. (2017a). Ethiopia and the Colonial Discourse. In J. Záhořík & L. Piknerová (Eds.), *Colonialism on the Margins of Africa* (pp. 9-18). Routledge.

Záhořík, J. (2017b). Reconsidering Ethiopia's Ethnic Politics in the Light of the Addis Ababa Master Plan and Anti-governmental Protests. *Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, *8*(3), 257-272.

4

Public Authority in War-torn Rural Angola

Inge Ruigrok

Introduction

Northern Huila province was one of the regions most affected by the last decade of the Angolan conflict. It was a contested area where the state could not maintain a monopoly of force, and officials often abandoned their offices amid the fighting. The war led to the rise of new institutions like the civil defence force and brought in supra-local agencies such as humanitarian organizations, Catholic relief workers, and transnational NGOs. Traditional authorities sometimes reclaimed their power in the absence of a state or under a rebel movement lacking civil structures for governance.

This chapter explores how the Angolan state is re-establishing itself in rural areas where its sovereignty was often contested, focusing on Caluquembe. Situated on the southwestern edge of the Central High Plateau, Caluquembe was occupied by UNITA just before the September 1992 elections. It remained under their control until 1994, when government troops retook part of the town, turning Caluquembe into a frontline until the war ended in 2002.

In this post-conflict environment, the central state seeks to expand its power through local bureaus. This effort requires not only the reestablishment of territorial boundaries and an effective bureaucratic apparatus but also the accumulation of what Michael Mann calls 'infrastructural power' – the capacity to penetrate social and economic life and implement political decisions (Mann, 1984, p. 189).

Furthermore, the state must establish political and discursive authority to define and stabilize the state's role (Ashley & Walker, 1990; Hansen & Stepputat, 2001, p. 8; Bourdieu, 1994). 'While the practical elements of governance – the allocation of resources, administration of rights, appointments to office, authorization of certain practices – are crucial', Lund (2006, 690) writes, 'it is when they com-

bine with the symbolic language and chorography of governance and its props in terms of contracts, deeds, attestations and so forth that the compound makes up the state.'

This analysis is guided by two questions: what configurations of public authority have emerged in Caluquembe's post-war society, and how does the emergent local state carve out a position for itself? One argument is that institution building and reform in the countryside are not technical or administrative problems but rather highly political processes. This implies that the African state is more deeply grounded in rural societies than the failed state accounts suggest. As Boone (1998; 2003) demonstrates in her account of local state practices in West Africa, state authority and hegemony have often been constituted through fusion of state power with societal-based forms of power.

In Caluquembe, the state has not yet achieved predominance but draws on the authority and legitimacy of various actors operating there. These actors are part of historical and indigenous networks of authority reasserted in times of crisis. This situation is partly due to the state's poor penetration in rural areas and the lack of criteria for developing state administrative units below the municipal level. Local government in Caluquembe collaborates with these actors, consulting them on community affairs and recognizing them as local leaders, resulting in a process where new social institutions graft onto historical claims of domination (Bierschenk & Olivier de Sardan, 2003; Forrest, 1998).

The first section of this chapter describes the history of war in Caluquembe, based on interviews conducted in 2006-2007. The second section analyses the configurations of public authority in rural Angola, where historically grown structures now form the base for the state's consolidation strategy. The third section assesses the consequences of this process for current state reforms on the political agenda.

A short history of a troubled town

In the late 1970s, UNITA directed its mobilization efforts towards the Central High Plateau, finding fertile ground among Caluquembe's predominantly Ovimbundu inhabitants. These communities, steeped in religious fervour from missionary activity, found solace in UNITA amidst the MPLA government's repression of religious expression and confiscation of missionary assets for military purposes. Concurrently, discontent brewed over socialist economic policies that disregarded individual property rights. Historically, the Ovimbundu thrived in capitalism through endeavours like the rubber trade and later transitioned to small-scale cash crop farming (Pössinger, 1975, p. 37; see also Heywood, 2000, p. 31).

By 1981, bolstered by support from the United States and South Africa, UNITA had seized control of rural central Angola. Although an initial attempt to capture Caluquembe in 1987 faltered, escalating tensions spiralled into full-scale warfare by the early 1990s. This tumult obstructed post-independence economic recovery endeavours, precipitated by the Portuguese exodus and the ensuing collapse of local economies.

UNITA's effective occupation of Caluquembe in March 1991 forced the government to retreat, relinquishing administrative structures and ceding control of seven neighbouring municipalities. Ironically, this transpired amidst peace talks in Bicesse, Portugal, and the lead-up to the 1992 elections, etching traumatic memories into Caluquembe's collective consciousness. The strategic significance of a well-appointed hospital, and agricultural productivity rendered Caluquembe a fiercely contested territory.

Government forces reestablished authority in 1994, intensifying military operations ahead of renewed peace negotiations. Continuing instability prompted the government to supplement its military presence with civil administration, commencing only in 1996. Even then, governmental control extended merely to the town's core, up to the Calépi commune in the north. UNITA retained its grip on the periphery, turning Caluquembe into a mosaic of government-controlled and rebel-held territories until war's end in 2002. UNITA maintained military outposts in Vionga, 10 km west of the town, and Calongo in the southeast, with political footholds in Vatuka, Ngola, Kahana, and beyond.

Amidst the chaos, ordinary villagers sought refuge in relatively secure locales like Lubango, often for the second time, having fled once before during UNITA's initial incursion in 1987. Others, particularly those residing on Caluquembe's outskirts, gravitated towards the town centre, where government troops provided semblances of security. Yet, being labelled a *deslocado* (displaced person) not only elicited humanitarian aid but also embodied a poignant loss of land and home:

> Leaving was the hardest ordeal of my life. It's heart-wrenching. To live on another's land is a struggle. A *deslocado* is scorned, stripped of everything. It stings, especially when you still have the vigour to toil. I'd rather not dwell on that period when I bore that name.
> *(Interview with 40-year-old woman who had to flee Caluquembe multiple times during last phase of war [1992-2002])*

UNITA's hold on the outskirts, including main roads, constrained the government's ability to supply its troops, relying on aerial drops or heavily guarded con-

voys. Meanwhile, roads and bridges linking Caluquembe to neighbouring municipalities lay ravaged or mined, exacerbating the populace's plight.

Crossing the borders of war – from government to UNITA held areas and vice versa – would mean risking one's life. As an MPLA-sympathizer recalls:

> Many people fled the area during the war. Like in my case, I had to go to Lubango. It was full of mines here; everything was mined. People suffered a lot. They waited. You could not have salt or soap or sugar. UNITA would not allow it. They would attack. The one who was found with soap or salt would be dead. This salt meant that you had someone familiar on the government's side. It meant that you eat from two plates. You are a traitor, so that means death. Thank goodness for the party in power [the MPLA]. We could return and be still alive.[1]

Despite sporadic violence, some semblance of normalcy persisted, facilitated by exchanges at Evangelic mission posts under UNITA's watchful eye. These transactions, vital for sustenance, underscored UNITA's regulatory function, epitomized by its appointment of a pseudo-mayor to oversee socioeconomic affairs. Nonetheless, UNITA's authority remained precarious as Caluquembe endured as a front line until the war's end in early 2002.

UNITA's credibility waned over time due to indiscriminate violence, reflected in the 2008 elections. Deep-seated animosity between factions persisted, with memories of atrocities shaping post-war reconciliation efforts.

The mayor and his administration

By early 2003, a semblance of normalcy began to return to Caluquembe's administrative landscape. Under United Nations supervision, UNITA troops evacuated their occupied zones, paving the way for the reinstatement of state officials tasked with restoring central administration. Official directives dictated this moment as the opportune time for displaced individuals to reclaim their homes in Caluquembe, often with assistance from NGOs and the Ministry for Assistance and Social Reinsertion (MINARS). Some returned spontaneously at the first whispers of peace. In the major's office (the *palácio*) there was a power-sharing arrangement in accordance with the Lusaka Protocol between the mayor (UNI-

1 This narrative, in which UNITA would kill people who possessed salt, soap, or any other product from the 'city' matches the accounts collected by Brinkman (2003) among Angolan refugees in the Kavango region of northern Namibia.

TA) and the vice-mayor (MPLA) until the 2008 elections ended the transitional government period.

Mayors in Angola occupy an ambiguous position. From the state's vantage point, they are pivotal figures within the local hierarchy, serving as conduits for central policies and enforcers of laws. They shoulder the responsibility of maintaining order, delivering public goods, and stimulating economic growth. Simultaneously, they are perceived as political leaders, liaising between the community, NGOs, and organized groups, serving as advocates and spokespersons before provincial authorities.

However, despite their pivotal role, mayors often find themselves handcuffed by a lack of essential resources. Assisted by a modest secretariat and communal administrators, they grapple with bureaucratic hurdles and systemic deficiencies. The integration of former ministerial delegations into municipal government has bolstered administrative capacity, culminating in the establishment of the *Conselho de Administração Municipal* – a consultative body instrumental in local governance.

Yet, mayors wield limited autonomy, tethered to provincial authorities for budget allocations and bureaucratic approvals. The absence of essential ministerial departments, notably Interior and Finance, further complicates matters, leaving mayors at the mercy of centralized oversight. In practice, mayoral efficacy hinges on personal relationships with provincial governors or party bureaus in Luanda. Despite the semblance of a hegemonic state apparatus, the local administrative bureau remains contingent on intricate social networks for its sustenance and effectiveness. In essence, navigating the labyrinthine corridors of state administration in Caluquembe requires an understanding of the intricate web of power dynamics that shape post-war governance.

Powers below the state

Below the mayor in the state's administrative hierarchy lies a revealing tableau of the state's limited reach into rural territories. Echoes of a bygone era, remnants of the socialist system implemented between 1977 and 1991 persist at the grassroots level of governance. These vestiges, nearly assimilated into the fabric of historical institutions, grapple with a modified system of authority, particularly considering the traditional authorities' enduring influence.

Understanding this requires a brief peek into the region's past. Prior to the waning days of colonial rule, Portuguese presence in the area was concentrated in Cacon-

da, a venerable colonial outpost nestled to the north of Caluquembe. Founded in the late 1760s as a presidio – a military-administrative enclave centred around a fortress – Caconda aimed to facilitate trade routes traversing 'foreign' Ovimbundu territory (Candido, 2003; Childs, 1964). This strategic outpost witnessed the passage of countless slaves from the interior to the coast, alongside a plethora of trade goods ranging from ivory to wax, honey, and rubber.

The Ovimbundu people, renowned for their organizational prowess, orchestrated caravans and emerged as eminent merchants along these trade routes. Unlike the centralized bureaucracy of the Kongo kingdom to the north, Ovimbundu kingdoms lacked elaborate administrative structures. Their capitals, fortified and strategically situated, struggled to exert total control over their expansive domains, allowing local identities to flourish amidst shifting political landscapes (Thornton, 2001, pp. 114-115; Heywood, 2000, pp. 4-5).

In this milieu of flux and mobility, expressions of political dissent often manifested as 'exit' from existing polities, leading to the establishment of new entities elsewhere (Herbst, 1990). It was against this backdrop of dynamism that two brothers, Wisi and Cikongo, descended from Viyé (Bié) across the Cunene River and laid the foundations of Caluquembe on the southwestern fringes of the Planalto Central. This *ombala* (ruler's seat), likely established more recently than its contemporaries, predated the Portuguese presidio in Caconda by approximately thirty years (Childs, 1964; Hauenstein, 1963).

The Portuguese completed their military occupation of the Central High Plateau after the defeat of the last king of Wambu, Livonge, in 1902. Subsequently, under Salazar's regime, the colonial administrative apparatus underwent refinement, with traditional Ovimbundu administrative divisions forming the bedrock of the lowest administrative tiers (Bailey, 1968). Each *ombala* evolved into the seat (*sede*) of a district (*concelho*), further subdivided into *regedorias* and settlements (*povoações*). While Portuguese administrators assumed leadership roles, traditional authorities like *olesekulo* (plural of *sekulo*) and *sobas* (village chiefs) were co-opted into the colonial bureaucracy, instrumental in maintaining control over the population (Heywood, 2000).

Caluquembe's *ombala* became in this way a *concelho* in 1965. New villages sprouted on *fazendas* (large farmsteads) to accommodate labourers, while original settlements underwent renaming. For instance, Vatuca, presently inhabited by approximately 5780 individuals and encompassed within Caluquembe, originally bore the name Calomupanda in Umbundu, signifying 'the place where Mupanda

trees have amassed'. The appellation 'Vatuca' likely owes its origin to a Portuguese figure, perhaps a trader, who bestowed the name upon the village in 1949.

This historical tapestry illustrates the intricate interplay between colonial impositions and indigenous sociopolitical structures, underscoring the enduring resilience of local identities amidst shifting administrative paradigms.

Chefs and chiefs

The legacy of Portuguese colonialism persists in the streamlined functions of chiefs, evident even today. One such intriguing figure is the *regedor*. Originating from Portugal, where the *regedor* oversaw the *freguesia*, the lowest administrative level, this term found its way to Angola. Here, the colonial regime appointed the *regedor* to act as the intermediary between the state and the *sobas*, effectively serving as the head of these various *sobas*. While the term *regedor* remains in common usage, official documents also refer to the *regedor* as *soba grande* (MAT, 2004).

This dual nomenclature underscores the disparity between formal designations and practical realities, highlighting the enduring colonial functions attributed to traditional leaders in modern Angola. In rural areas, the *soba grande* is often regarded as the paramount chief, or even akin to a king, underscoring the complexities of post-colonial governance and the entanglement of traditional and modern administrative structures.

As articulated by the *regedor* of Vissapa Yela:

> The *regedor* functions as a vital link within the diplomatic framework, directly interfacing with the government to oversee a spectrum of crucial domains. From economic matters to issues of birth, health, water, and forestry, the *regedor* maintains comprehensive oversight. Acting as a conduit between the populace and governmental authorities, the *regedor* channels the concerns and aspirations of the community to the appropriate channels of governance.
> In contrast, the *soba grande* embodies the essence of traditional leadership, holding sway over the natural world. In times of ecological imbalance, such as erratic rainfall leading to crop spoilage, the *soba grande* is consulted to restore harmony with nature. However, accessing the wisdom of the *soba grande* is not a matter of haste; it entails adherence to a meticulous protocol. Upon arrival at the *ombala*, the *soba grande*'s residence, strict decorum is observed. No one dares to sit until granted permission by the esteemed leader.

> The institution of *soba grande* is deeply entrenched in familial lineage, passed down through generations. Only those born into families with a lineage of *sobas* can ascend to this esteemed position. It is a sacred duty that transcends individual lifetimes, existing since the dawn of creation. To be born into the lineage of *sobas* is to embrace a legacy that persists from birth to beyond the mortal realm.

Within traditional authority structures, another notable figure is the *sekulo*, also known as *soba pequeno* (little *soba*), acting as an assistant to the *soba* and typically held in high esteem within the community. However, the role of the *sekulo* remains somewhat ambiguous. This figure is alternatively referred to as *chefe da povoação*, a designation reminiscent of the socialist state era. Operating at the lower echelons of the hierarchy, the *sekulo* ranks below the *chefe de sector*, who, too, historically performed official duties during the party-state era.

At the local level in Angola, changes in regime at the national level – whether colonial, socialist, or democratic – have introduced new layers to the local political landscape without entirely displacing existing ones. A similar truth holds for Angola as for Benin as observed by Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan (2003): various local power configurations comprise distinct political institutions that have 'sedimented' over time.

While independence itself did not drastically alter local power dynamics in rural areas, the imposition of the party-state wielded a significant influence by organizing grassroots units for social and political mobilization. The territorial reform of 1980 introduced novel positions of local power, such as 'coordinators of villages' and 'administrators of sectors'. However, with the transition to a democratic state system in the early 1990s, these party-state positions were once again abolished.

Since then, the state's administrative tiers below the commune have scarcely received attention in legal frameworks. While the constitutions of 1992 and 2010 acknowledge the existence of state structures at the grassroots level – referred to as *bairro* (neighbourhood) in urban settings and *povoação* (settlement) in rural areas – no subsequent legislation has delineated their precise organization. Remarkably, state administration at the commune level was abolished in 1988 due to the precarious political-military climate, only to be reinstated in 1999.

The gaps within the Angolan state apparatus have inadvertently preserved socialist state positions and structures in rural locales. The imperative for control at this level is evident; in rural areas like Caluquembe, a *povoação* still encompasses vast territories that prove challenging for the state to govern from the more distant municipal or commune levels. Intriguingly, traditional state administrative

designations such as sector persist informally in everyday practice. A sector denotes a cluster of villages (*aldeias* or *povoações*) constituting a *comuna*, yet its territorial delineations are ad hoc, drawn on the ground without formal involvement of local authorities, although they acknowledge its existence. As elucidated by a *chefe de sector*:

> Even in the absence of explicit demarcations, it is possible to demarcate a focal point. Simply designate a village serving as the hub for all surrounding settlements, one teeming with inhabitants. This becomes a sector, strategically positioned amidst the villages. From there, one can discern the happenings in the surrounding communities.

Chiefs in times of war

The amalgamation, to some extent, of former socialist state structures with traditional chieftaincy epitomizes the transformations undergone by the latter in Angola. Ovimbundu chiefs traditionally ascend to their positions through lineage, with successive generations from the matrilineal line being recruited from the same families. The selection process, overseen by elders, involves identifying the legitimate successor, who may be a son, cousin, or even a daughter. The elders approach the chosen individual, although sometimes the offer is declined. If accepted, the candidate is presented to the community, whose respect for ancestral authority ensures the legitimacy of the leadership. Thus, leadership is inherently sanctioned by ancestry, imbuing the office with dignity and security.

Despite deriving their authority and legitimacy from different sources than the state, traditional chiefs coexist within the same territory, sharing sovereignty. Those who resisted integration into the colonial state often faced harsh reprisals, including imprisonment and violence. During periods of conflict, when the rebel movement challenged state sovereignty, chiefs found themselves caught in the crossfire. In areas under UNITA control, *sobas* were coerced into compliance with the movement's military directives, facing punishment or even execution for refusal. Communities in conflict zones concealed their structures and relationships to safeguard against external aggression, believing that humiliating traditional authority could provoke ancestral retribution.

To shield *sobas* from humiliation, communities appointed substitutes to interface with opposing forces, typically family members of the 'real' *soba* who remained hidden. These substitutes, consulted only under cover of darkness, maintained the semblance of traditional leadership despite the upheaval caused by war.

However, these mechanisms of cultural survival, aimed at resisting state or quasi-state domination, inadvertently eroded traditional governance institutions. Some substitute *sobas*, reluctant to relinquish their positions, perpetuated confusion and conflicts. To address these issues, some communities introduced 'elections' for chiefs, transitioning towards quasi-democratic principles within the local political sphere.

As a *soba* of Lombo Alto, a village of Caluquembe, explained:

> Before, the *soba* would be chosen from within one family. But this situation is abandoned because it caused confusion. Now there is a democratic system; the community elects the *soba*. The community comes together and must choose between two or more candidates who compete. This is already a manifestation of democracy from within the community.

Yet, the introduction of elected *sobas* is met with resistance, with some traditionalists viewing them as mere administrative figures. For lineage-based *sobas* like those in Vissapa Yela, altering the traditional system is seen as a perilous endeavour, believed to invite supernatural repercussions and weaken the community:

> It will bring witchcraft. He wants to govern but he is not from a family [of *sobas*]. Now he is steaming up things. He cannot be *soba*. He can stay in this position, but the people will become weaker.
> *(Interview with* soba *of Vissapa Yela)*

This phenomenon underscores the notion that contact with the state inevitably influences those whose power stems from sources outside the formal political apparatus (Geschiere, 1993). Moreover, it reflects the impact of transnational organizations disseminating ideas about democracy and rights in rural African areas, often through NGOs engaged in peace-building and civic education initiatives since the early 1990s.

Expanding state power

The role of traditional chiefs has garnered renewed attention from the central state since the cessation of hostilities. While a government regulation in 1986 relegated them to the status of village commissionaires (*comissários de povoação*), state-sponsored conferences since 2002 have explored avenues for integrating traditional leaders more deeply into the state's governance framework. A crucial initial step towards granting chiefs a greater voice in local politics and establishing a firmer legal foundation in political-administrative affairs occurred with

their constitutional recognition in 2010. The next stride would be taken through further state reforms aimed at decentralization, but almost fifteen years later this process was still mostly stalled.

The lived experience in Caluquembe sheds light on the considerations of state officials in Luanda. Firstly, the protracted conflict has left Angola with a severely deficient knowledge base essential for effective state regulation. A census, vital for gathering information on population demographics and distribution, was only conducted in 2014. In Caluquembe, state documents are scarce due to theft or destruction. In March 2007, a substantial portion of the population still lacked proof of Angolan citizenship, having lost their identity cards during the war. In 2021, approximately 2.4 million Angolans still did not have a national identity card, underscoring the state's limited regulatory capacity, although there has been an ongoing program for universal birth registration and identity card issuance since November 2019.

Compounding the issue of information scarcity are inadequate and unequal information channels. This applies to both disseminating newly enacted laws from the central to local levels and addressing practical administrative issues within Caluquembe, such as the status of facilities at the local state-run hospital. This information gap reflects the limited state presence beyond the town centre. Caluquembe sprawls across 3,075 km², with its communes situated at considerable distances. Road infrastructure in Angola remained stagnant between 1974 and 1997, impeding access to remote areas. By 2007, existing roads and bridges had deteriorated further. Moreover, Caluquembe lacked telephone or cellular network coverage until recently. While the mayor ventures out regularly in his jeep to visit communes, there are remote areas where inhabitants have never encountered or communicated with a state representative.

State reforms in Angola are intricately linked to the process of national reconciliation and involve a two-step approach. Firstly, administrative decentralization, which focuses on the spatial deconcentration of the state's administrative apparatus, is being implemented. Secondly, political (or democratic) decentralization is on the reform agenda, involving the transfer of state-sanctioned political authority to municipal-level groups that are legally recognized as local power (*poder local*), including elected local bodies (*autarquias locais*), traditional authorities, and civic groups (Feijó, 2001; 2002; Silva, 2020).

While administrative decentralization or deconcentration concerns central state management in the local arena (Boone, 1998), political decentralization deals with the rights that local governments can exercise on behalf of their constituents

– it is about enfranchisement and democratization (Ribot, 2002; Kassimir, 2001). These reform measures aim to strengthen and build local government structures, without diminishing central powers or dismantling central government in favour of local institutions. Instead, they refine the power relations between the central state and local societies (Olowu, 1999; 2003).

Democratic decentralization potentially implies radical changes in the distribution of power in society, enabling many rather than a few to make decisions. Such reforms might threaten previously powerful individuals. For instance, decentralization could alter the political base of national state leaders and the patronage resources they can allocate to political constituencies. Additionally, democratic institutions accountable to local populations might not support local elites. Local elite capture is a frequently cited problem affecting decentralization reforms in Africa (Crook, 2003; Ribot, 2002). This means that local elites, such as traditional authorities and other notables who bring necessary resources or networks for local government systems to function, might prioritize their interests over the common good. This elite capture of resources can be attributed to central actors' need to maintain local agents using central resources to sustain their patronage networks (Smoke, 2003; Olowu, 1999, 2003).

In Angola, despite changes to their institutions, chiefs are still described as the 'key' to a community in rural areas: they hold the power to prevent or facilitate access to the population. Within his jurisdiction, the *soba* personally knows his 'people'; where they are, who they are, and what they do. In Caluquembe, many chiefs helped displaced people reunite with their families. Consequently, chiefs are regularly invited to the local state bureau to meet with the mayor and relay the *orientações* (instructions) of local state authorities to their communities. Official documents mention chiefs as one of the three instances of *poder local*, alongside elected bodies (*autarquias*) and civic groups (Feijó, 2001; 2002). Chiefs, often as impoverished as the people they serve, are eager for such recognition as it grants them access to state resources.

Essentially, enlarging the chief's intermediary role serves to expand MPLA state power to rural areas like Caluquembe. As noted, informal political structures at the grassroots still contain vestiges of the socialist state connected to the chieftaincy. By tying *sobas* closer to the state, the MPLA can fill these gaps in the state administrative system, enhancing its penetration into rural areas. For example, UNITA fiercely protested the use of chiefs in the identification and registration campaigns for the 2008 elections. In the absence of birth registration documents, the word of the *soba* was accepted as legal proof of identity. UNITA feared that

chiefs would be manipulated by the MPLA to refuse identification of suspected UNITA supporters, thereby disenfranchising them.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to analyse the configuration of politics in the everyday reality of a former war zone in Angola, focusing on two interrelated questions: what particular configurations of public authority exist in Caluquembe, and how does the emergent state draw on the legitimacy of these alternative authorities to establish its own sovereignty in areas where this was formally contested?

At the local level, the state in Caluquembe presents a starkly different image from its national projection: it is less confident, less composed, and less in charge. Like other parts of Africa, Angola is replete with institutions attempting to exercise public authority, many of which were shaped by previous state systems. Each significant political shift at the national level – such as the transition to socialism in 1975-1977, the democratic shift in 1991-1992, and the end of the war in 2002 – introduced or reasserted new forms of power in the local political scene. Existing institutions of authority were neither rejected nor ostracized; instead, external interventions originating outside the municipality were integrated without causing radical transformations.

The longevity of present-day local authorities is significant. Older structures often lie beneath newer arrangements, with traditional authority structures merging with or adapting to remnants of party-state structures. This has led to the introduction of new mechanisms to govern these institutions. Traditional positions of authority can now sometimes be accessed through elections, adding quasi-democratic principles and extending the repertoire of rules in the local political landscape.

Given its feeble sovereignty and the lack of fixed institutional structures, the local state cannot be autonomous from the alternative public authorities beneath it. The central state provides insufficient means for carrying out basic functions, leading the local state to borrow networks from existing structures, akin to a roaming system. More often, it seeks to strengthen its own authority and gain local legitimacy by reclaiming the spaces occupied by these alternative authorities. A primary strategy for the state to assert itself in local arenas is to tie chiefs closer to it by assigning key state functions to them. The ongoing state reform process towards decentralization and local democracy is likely to reinforce this tendency.

References

Ashley, Richard, & Walker, R.B.J. (1990). Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline. Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies. *International Studies Quarterly*, *34*, 367-416.

Bailey, Norman (1968). Local and Community Power in Angola. *The Western Political Quarterly*, *21*(3), 400-408.

Bierschenk, Thomas, & Olivier de Sardan, Jean-Pierre (2003). Powers in the Village: Rural Benin Between Democratization and Decentralization. *Africa*, *73*(2), 145-173.

Boone, Catherine (1998). State Building in the African Countryside: Structure and Politics at the Grassroots. *Journal of Development Studies*, *34*, 1-31.

Boone, Catherine (2003). *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice*. Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1994). 'Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field'. *Sociological Theory*, *12*(1), 1-18.

Brinkman, Inge (2003). War and Identity in Angola. *Lusotopie*, Violences et contrôle de la violence au Brésil, en Afrique et à Goa (Camille Goirand, Ed.), *10*, 195-222.

Candido, Mariana (2003). Demography, Epidemics, and Trade: the case of Caconda, 1830-1869. Paper presented at international symposium *Angola on the Move: Transport Routes, Communications, and History*, 24-26 September. Berlin: Centre for Modern Oriental Studies.

Childs, Gladwyn Murray (1964). Kingdom of Wambu (Huambo): a Tentative Chronology. *Journal of African History*, *5*(3). 367-379;

Childs, Gladwyn Murray (1970). 'The Chronology of the Ovimbundu Kingdoms. *Journal of African History*, *11*(2), 241-248.

Crook, Richard (2003). Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction: The Politics of Local-Central Relations. *Public Administration and Development*, *23*, 77-88.

Feijó, Carlos (2002). 'O poder local em Angola'. In Adérito Correia (Ed.) *A constituição angolana: Temas e debates* (pp. 221-243). Luanda: Universidade Agostinho Neto.

Feijó, Carlos (2001). *Problemas actuais do direito público angolano: Contributos para a sua compreensão*. Principia.

Forrest, Josua Bernard (1998). State Inversion and Nonstate Politics. In Leonardo A. Villalón & Philip A. Huxtable (Eds.), *The African State at a Critical Junction: Between Disintegration and Reconfiguration* (pp. 45-56). Lynne Rienner.

Geschiere, Peter (1993). Chiefs and Colonial Rule in Cameroon: Inventing Chieftaincy, French and British Style. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, *63*(2), 151-175.

Hansen, Thomas Blom, & Stepputat, Finn (2001). *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*. Duke University Press.

Hauenstein, Alfred (1963). L'Ombala de Caluquembe. Histoire, traditions, coutumes et rites des familles royales de Caluquembe, de la tribu des Ovimbundu (Angola). *Anthropos*, (58), 47-120.

Herbst, Jeffrey (2000). *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Heywood, Linda (2000). *Contested Power in Angola: 1840s to the Present*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

Kassimir, Ronald (2001). Producing Local Politics: Governance, Representation, and Non-state Organizations in Africa. In Thomas Callaghy, Ronald Kassimir, & Robert Latham (Eds.), *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power* (pp. 93-112). Cambridge University Press.

Lund, Christian (2006). Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa. *Development and Change*, *37*(4), 685-705.

Mann, Michael (1984). The Autonomous Power of the State, Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results. *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, *25*, 185-213.

MAT (2004). *1.º Encontro sobre a Autoridade Tradicional em Angola*. Luanda: Ministério da Administração do Território (MAT).

Olowu, Dele (1999). Local governance, Democracy, and Development. In R. Joseph (Ed.), *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa* (pp. 285-298).: Lynne Rienner Publications.

Olowu, Dele (2003). Local Institutional and Political Structures and Processes: Recent Experience in Africa. *Public Administration and Development*, *23*, 41-52.

Pössinger, Hermann (1973). Interrelations Between Economic and Social Change in Rural Africa: The Case of the Ovimbundu in Angola. In Franz-Wilhelm Heimer (Ed.), *Social Change in Angola* (pp. 32-52). Weltforum Verlag.

Ribot, Jesse (2002). African Decentralization: Local Actors, Powers and Accountability. *UNRISD Programme on Democracy, Governance and Human Rights*, Paper number 8. Geneva: UNRISD.

Smoke, Paul (2003). Decentralisation in Africa: Goals, Dimensions and Challenges. *Public Administration and Development*, *23*, 7-16.

Thornton, John (2001). The Origins and Early History of the Kingdom of Kongo, c 1350-1550. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, *34*(1), 89-120.

5

Federal Constitutional Design and Ethno-Nationalist Conflicts in Ethiopia

Asnake Kefale

Introduction

Ethiopia presently is at a crossroads. The optimism for peaceful and democratic transition that was generated by the 2018 change of leadership is now fading away. In the last few years, the country has been gripped by several kinds of conflict. The most devastating conflict has developed in Tigray which at later stages expanded into the neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions. The signing of the Pretoria peace agreement in early November 2022 between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian federal government offered a glimmer of hope for the war-torn region. However, the peace remains fragile. The agreement itself lacked comprehensiveness and failed to address the underlying causes that triggered the conflict in November 2020. Unresolved territorial and identity disputes, particularly between the Amhara and Tigray regions, continue to cast a shadow over the fragile peace process.

In addition to the conflict in the north, there are conflicts in other regions. In the Oromia region, due to the insurgency of a faction of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), which the government brands *Shene*,[1] several parts of the region are severely affected. Another civil war has been going on in the Amhara region since April 2023. In August 2023, the federal government declared a six-month state of emergency (SoE) in the Amhara region, later extended for another four months in February 2024. The conflict in Amhara escalated due to longstanding tensions and the accumulation of grievances among the Amhara over issues such as violence against their community members in different parts of the country, territorial disputes with adjacent regions, and divergent views on national politics. The

1 *Shene* – derived from the Afaan Oromo word '*Shen*', meaning five (5). In May 2021, the Ethiopian government branded the armed wing of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) – that is the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) – as a terrorist group and called it *Shene*. Since the adoption of this designation by the government, OLA has been referred to by the government media as *Shene*.

immediate catalyst, however, was the federal government's decision to disband the Amhara Special Force, a paramilitary unit under regional control. The federal army, along with regional militia and riot police, are engaged in combat with the Amhara *Fano*, a volunteer militia.

On the top of the above conflicts, there are intermittent conflicts over boundary/territory involving several regions within the ethnic federation, including Amhara-Tigray, Oromia-Somali, Somali-Afar, and Amhara-Oromia, among others.

Amid the political tensions and conflicts, there is a polarized debate about the future of federalism in the country. On the one hand, critics of the ethnic federal structure contend that the federal system is the main reason for the conflicts that engulfed the country and needs to be either reformed or scrapped altogether (Kassahun, 2021). The supporters of the ethnic federal system, on the other hand, contend that federalism is not the cause for the conflicts, rather the conflicts are associated with problems of implementation and lack of democracy (Negash & Shewaye, 2017). Hence, they contend they do not see any point behind negotiating on the federal system (Oromo Democratic Party, 2019).

In this chapter, I maintain that a primary cause of instability in Ethiopia is the establishment of ethnicity as the central organizing principle of the federal system by the 1995 federal constitution. This view supports Jon Abbink's arguments in various works regarding the risks of constitutionalizing ethnicity. Abbink, in an earlier insightful work, underscored the potential adverse effects of embedding ethnicity in the Ethiopian federal system as outlined in the 1995 constitution (Abbink, 1997). Furthermore, he examined the conflict-inducing tendency of ethnic federalism in another study (Abbink, 2006).

In what follows, I will outline the major federal constitutional design issues that directly and indirectly contribute to political instability.

Federal design, ethno-nationalist conflicts, and instability

Framers of any federal constitution make key choices about the institutional design and structure of the federal system. Broadly speaking, institutional design of federations includes key decisions on the principles that are used for the formation of the members of the federation, symmetry and asymmetry in the powers of the members of the federation, division of power between the federal and sub-national governments and also the institutional set up for adjudicating constitutional disputes (Ordeshook & Shvetsova, 2004).

As the experiences of many federations show institutional design has crucial impacts on political stability and the development of federalism (Andrew, 2002; Horowitz, 2000; Rotimi, 2001). In what follows, I will briefly identify and examine key federal design issues that are related with political instability and ethno-nationalist conflicts.

Ethnic territoriality, regional asymmetry, and conflicts

The Ethiopian federal system provides for the creation of administrative structures for ethnic groups in their territories (articles 39, 46, and 47). In doing so, the constitution implicitly promotes the convergence of ethnic territory and self-administrative structures. Unlike other multi-ethnic federations, the regions are named after the names of the ethnic groups for whom they are created. In addition, the larger ethnicities are not divided into several regions. As a result, the numerically and politically dominant ethnic Oromo, Amhara, and Tigray are put into their respective regions. This created a large asymmetry which has political and economic implications. According to the 2007 census, the Oromo, Amhara, and Tigray constitute respectively 36.7%, 23.3%, and 5.8% of the country's population (FDRE, Census Commission, 2007). In contrast, regions like Harari (0.2%), Benishangul Gumuz (0.9%), and Gambella (0.4 %) have a small population size (ibid.).

The imbalance between the regions and the federal design that promoted ethnic territoriality has a number of implications for political stability. In the first place, there is unbalanced power among the regions (see also Záhořík & Ameyu, this volume). The larger regions – Oromia and Amhara have more economic resources and political influence. The Oromia and Amhara regions comprise about 60% of the population hence political harmony between the regions will help to greatly stabilize the federation. Conversely, discord in the relationships between the regions will be destabilizing. More ominously, the federal design in Ethiopia encourages ethno-nationalism. In the first place, because of the ethnic structure, the majority of the political parties are ethnic and openly promote ethno-nationalist ideas. In their mobilization, they almost always focus on issues that would rally their constituencies against the other competing region.

The other result of such an arrangement is a dangerous power play by the larger and dominant groups to control the political centre. Between 1991 and 2018, the TPLF was the most important organization in the former ruling coalition, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) was at the driving seat of the federal government. In the post-2018 period, there is an intense power struggle among the political forces of the three larger ethnicities – Oromo,

Amhara, and Tigray. The multidimensional conflicts that are happening in the country since 2018 are partly related to the ongoing power struggle among the three groups.

In addition, the principle of converging ethnicity with self-administrative structures has generated conflicts over the boundaries of the ethnic regions. Such conflicts in some cases have led to the death of thousands of people and the displacement of millions. Major examples in this regard include the territorial conflict between the Somali and Oromia regions which from 2015-2018 resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people (*Addis Standard*, 2018). There are also territorial and identity conflicts involving the other regions including Tigray and Amhara who contest over what the Amhara call Welqayt and Tigray call western Tigray.

The main method used by the government for the resolution of territorial conflicts is referendum which by its very nature produces winners and losers and has shortcomings in creating sustainable peace.

The Secession Clause

The right of secession which is incorporated in the constitution is one of the design issues that has adverse implication for the stability of the federation. The Ethiopian situation is unique in comparison with other federations. Many federations commit themselves to the preservation of unity – or advocate what the Americans call indestructible union and indestructible states (Radan, 2006). Put in other words, the dominant attitude in the federalist discourse is the use of federalism as a principle and mechanism that creates a balance between self-rule and shared rule and thereby reduces political instability (Fleiner-Gerster & Basta Fleiner, 2009).

In Ethiopia, the right to secession was first incorporated in the 1991 transitional charter (TGE, 1991). It was, however, remedial. The charter said, every *nation, nationality, and people* could exercise 'its right to self-determination of independence when [it] is convinced that [its rights] are denied, abridged or abrogated' (art. 2/C).

In the 1995 Constitution, the right of secession is not conditional. It could be demanded by the representative assemblies of the country's ethnic groups at any time and without any justification (see article 39). The role of the federal government (House of Federation) is limited to the management of the demand – the holding of a referendum and sharing of state assets (FDRE, 1995).

The recognition of the right of secession is destabilizing as disgruntled politicians may demand this right and engender political instability. The conflict in northern Ethiopia after the 2018 change of government showed how resentful politicians could manipulate the issue of secession. Right after the removal of the TPLF from power, politicians from the Tigray region, began to float ideas of *de facto* statehood, others proposed secession (Tronvoll, 2020). This shows how the secession clause can cause instability.

The formation of new regions – Internal secession

The federal Constitution provides ethnic self-determination rights – administrative structure and the right of internal and external secession for all of the ethnic groups of the country which are estimated as over 85. In practice, however, regional status has been given to six ethnic groups (Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromo, Somali, and Sidama). The rest of the ethnic groups are put in multi-ethnic regions and are allowed to establish a self-administrative structure at sub-regional levels.

Article 47 of the constitution, however, allows ethnic groups which are found in multi-ethnic regions to demand the establishment of their own regional states (FDRE, 1995). Accordingly, the assembly of the concerned ethnic group needs to approve the demand for a separate statehood by two thirds majority. The demand is then presented to the regional state assembly which is obliged to organize a referendum within a year. If the demand is approved by a majority of the voters, a new region will be established.

This is again unique in comparison to other federations. The provision for the establishment of new regions in Ethiopia is easier and does not require the participation of either the regional government from which the ethnic group wishes to secede or from the federal government. The practice of establishing a new region is, however, more complicated. Due to the economic and political resources that a regional status provides, many ethnic groups seek the establishment of their own regions. The federal government resists demands for the establishment of new regions. The reluctance of the federal government to allow the formation of new regions has in many cases led to violent struggles. A case in point is the Sidama of the former Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR). They were able to establish their region in 2021 after several rounds of violent conflicts including the violent suppression of Sidama protestors in May 2002 and large-scale violence in Hawassa and other towns of the former Sidama zone in July 2019 (Legide, 2019).

After the separation of the Sidama, almost all of the remaining 16 zones and special *woredas* of the former SNNPR demanded the establishment of their own regions. But the federal government, which was worried about the proliferation of regions, resisted the formation of new regions. The ruling party (the Prosperity Party which replaced the EPRDF in December 2019) has thus suppressed the demands for the creation of new regions and established three new multi-ethnic regions. The three newly established regions include: Southwest Ethiopia; South Ethiopia, and Central Ethiopia. As these regions were largely formed in a top-down manner and by suppressing dissent, it is likely that new demands for additional ethnic regions will arise in the future.

Constitutional adjudication and dispute settlement

Unlike other federations which give constitutional adjudication to either a constitutional or supreme court, the 1995 constitution gives the power of constitutional interpretation to the House of Federation (HoF – the upper house of the federal parliament representing all ethnic groups. The HoF is a political organ, and its decisions could be affected by the political considerations of its members or the parties they represent. The limitation of the HoF to arbitrate constitutional interpretation issues was made clear during the dispute over the postponement of the fifth general elections originally scheduled to be held in 2020 due to the covid pandemic. The federal government enacted a state of emergency to control the spread of the disease and requested constitutional interpretation on the postponement of the elections. The HoF decided in favour of the possibility of postponing the elections up until the time the disease came under control. This decision was rejected by major political parties including the TPLF and the opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The TPLF-led Tigray regional government went beyond opposing the decision of the HoF and conducted a regional election in Tigray, even though elections are a federal mandate in accordance with the constitution. The federal government refused to recognize the elections. Similarly, the TPLF, which rejected the postponing of the elections, decided to de-recognize the federal government after the end of its term in October 2020. The dispute over the postponement of the elections was one of the factors that triggered the conflict.

Conclusion

Jon Abbink, who has extensively contributed to the study of Ethiopian society, state, and politics, has made insightful arguments about the ethnic basis of federalism in Ethiopia. In his 1997 article, Abbink succinctly argued that the constitutionalisation of ethnicity by the 1995 Ethiopian constitution would lead to the

essentialization of ethnicity, creating rigid ethnic boundaries (Abbink, 1997). He also forewarned that this could result in the fragmentation of society, making it difficult to build national consensus on broader issues. Additionally, he underscored that the proliferation of ethnic political parties exacerbates these challenges. In his 2006 article, he revisited federalism and examined the challenges faced by the federal system in managing and resolving conflicts, as well as how the system itself is linked to the generation of localized conflicts (Abbink, 2006).

Building upon the insights of Abbink, this chapter showed the key constitutional design challenges that contribute to political instability and ethno-nationalist conflicts in Ethiopia. While Ethiopia's diversity, population, and geographic vastness necessitate a federal system, it requires a structure that effectively balances the cherished goals of both unity and diversity. This includes achieving self-rule for constituent groups while fostering shared governance. Hence, it is high time for the country to address the design flaws of the federal system that contributed to political instability through a negotiated process. The initial constitutional reforms should include reducing the emphasis on ethnicity and revisiting the principle of ethnic territoriality. Such a reform among other things could allow the creation of additional regions by dividing larger ethnic regions (similar to Nigeria). Such a move could help reduce dangerous power competition by larger groups seeking to control the political centre.

The second set of reforms that could help bring stability is the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities – both territorial and non-territorial across the federation. As has been seen from the experience of the Ethiopian federal system, ethnic-territoriality not only engendered ethnic nationalism but also xenophobic feelings – threatening the security and welfare of communities and individuals who live outside of their 'ethnic homelands/regions'. It is worth mentioning here that due to ongoing inter-communal and armed conflicts, Ethiopia in recent years has become one of the top countries in terms of internally displaced people (IDPs). According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), by June 2023, Ethiopia had over 4.3 million IDPs (IOM, 2023).

The third set of reforms that could help bring stability is the reforming of the provisions on external secession and the creation of new regions. As has been seen in the last six years (since 2018), these provisions are destabilizing.

The fourth and final set of reforms refers to the problem of constitutional interpretation. As discussed in this chapter, in the present constitutional arrangement it is the House of Federation (HoF) which is responsible for constitutional interpretation and finding solutions to territorial disputes between ethnic regions. In

terms of constitutional interpretation, the HoF, which is a partisan and political body, is inadequate for resolving politically controversial constitutional issues. When addressing identity and territorial matters, the HoF relies on referendums as the final instrument. However, historical practice from 1995 to 2018 shows that referendums did not consistently provide sustainable solutions to conflicts arising between neighbouring communities over territory and identity. Therefore, it is crucial to develop a broader range of instruments for managing such disputes.

References

Abbink, J. (1997). Ethnicity and Constitutionalism in Contemporary Ethiopia. *Journal of African Law*, *41*(2), 159-174.

Abbink, J. (2006). Ethnicity and Conflict Generation in Ethiopia: Some Problems and Prospects of Ethno-regional Federalism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *24*(3), 389-413.

Addis Standard (2018). Clashes in Somali, Oromia States Bordering Areas Displace Thousands from Bale Zone as Hunger Claims Scores of Lives. 18 July 2022. <https://addisstandard.com/news-clashes-in-somali-oromia-states-bordering-areas-displace-thousands-from-bale-zone-as-hunger-claims-scores-of-lives/>.

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) (1995). *The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.* FDRE.

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission (2008). *Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population size by age and sex.* Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Population Census Commission.

Filippov, M., Ordeshook, P.C., & Shvetsova, O. (2004). *Designing Federalism: A Theory of Self-sustainable Federal Institutions*. Cambridge University Press.

Fleiner-Gerster, T., & Basta Fleiner, L.R. (2009). *Constitutional Democracy in a Multicultural and Globalised World*. Springer.

Horowitz, D.L. (2000). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. University of California Press.

Kassahun Melesse (2021). Ethnic Federalism: A Theory Threatening to Kill Ethiopia. *Ethiopia Insight.* <https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2021/06/30/ethnic-federalism-a-theory-threatening-to-kill-ethiopia/>.

Legide, K.K. (2019). The Quest for Regional Statehood and Its Practicability under the Post-1991 Ethiopian Federation: The Discontents and Experience of Sidama Nation. *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research*, *7*(7), 1-52.

IOM, International Organization for Migration (2023). *Ethiopia – National Displacement Report 16 (November 2022-June 2023)*, available: https://dtm.iom.int/reports/ethiopia-national-displacement-report-16-november-2022-june-2023.

Negash Mohammed, & Shewaye Legesse (2017). Federalism and Conflict in Ethiopia. DW Amharic Service – in Amharic. <https://www.dw.com/am/ኢትዮጵያ-ፌደራሊዝም-እና-ግጭት a-4056894>.

Oromo Democratic Party (2019). We Do Not Negotiate on Federalism and We Will Work for Additional Victory, Press Statement. 19 February 2019. <https://www.gudayachn.com/2019/02/blog-post_19.html>.

Radan, P. (2006). 'An Indestructible Union ... of Indestructible States': The Supreme Court of the United States and Secession. *Legal History*, *10*(1-2), 187-205.

Reynolds, A. (2002). *The Architecture of Democracy: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy*. Oxford University Press.

Suberu, R.T. (2001). *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*. United States Institute of Peace Press.

Thorpe, F.N. (1917). *The Essentials of American Constitutional Law*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1991). *The Transitional Period Charter*. Transitional Government of Ethiopia.

Tronvoll, K. (2020). *Tigray: Towards a De-facto State?* <https://eritreahub.org/tigray-towards-a-de-facto-state>.

6

Overcoming Marginality: Predicaments of the Pastoralist Elite in South Omo (Ethiopia)

Lucie Buffavand

There has been a notable interest in local elites in Africa in recent decades, as being essential contributors to state-making. Catherine Boone, for instance, shows how the presence or absence of a local elite with control over persons and resources has shaped the nature of state institution building across Africa (Boone, 2003). John Markakis, in his book on centre-periphery relations in Ethiopia, outlines the way the 'power elite' at the centre had created a 'subordinate elite' that would collaborate and administer the periphery (Markakis, 2011) (see also Czuba, 2019, for the Karamojan elite in Uganda). Fana and colleagues rightly criticize such depictions of the relation between the state and the local elite as tending to portray a local elite overly dominated by the central elite and devoid of any real agency (Fana et al., 2023). They also overlook the relations between different subordinate elites, and the competition that set them against each other in their access to the political centre, which they may actively seek. An elite is necessarily a relational category, and 'the other [social groups] is part and parcel of elite positioning' (Abbink & Salverda, 2013, p. 16). In this contribution, I propose to explore, not the relations of the local elite to the state or to the larger local group from which it originates, as is usually done, but among local elites themselves.

The political field in Ethiopia is rife with competition between elites of different ethnic groups, especially since ethnic federalism was enshrined in the constitution in 1994. Jon Abbink, as an observer of Ethiopian politics and ethnic relations, has repeatedly assessed the 'experiment' of the ethno-federal regime (e.g. Abbink, 2006, 2011). He has noted the 'political economy of claim making for local power, jobs as well as federal budgets' which is motivating the assertion of ethnic identities (2011, p. 604). Hence, the competition between aspiring elites over these resources: 'they have a political interest to take position against each other' (ibid., p. 607). Earlier, Abbink had outlined the potential problems that the ethno-federalist structure would create in Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities and

Peoples' Region (SNNPR) (Abbink, 1998). While the federalist system was supposed to put an end to the dominance of one ethnic group (namely, the Amhara) associated with the former power holders at the country level, this was notwithstanding 'the fact that on a regional or local level there might be other patterns of dominance' (ibid., p. 70). Abbink saw in the ethnically diverse South a fertile ground for a 'multiplication of levels of oppression': small groups would likely feel excluded from power by locally dominant groups, and the system would 'force groups to act toward each other in antagonistic terms' (ibid., p. 70-71).

This chapter takes up this research agenda and explores the situation of southern elites twenty years later, at a time when the competition between them is fuelled by the reshuffling of the administrative structure. In 2020, the creation of a Sidama Regional State within the SNNPR initiated its breakdown. The remaining of this administrative entity was further broken down into three other regions from 2021 to 2023. Back in 1992, the reason invoked for the existence of such a heterogenous region was budgetary efficiency (Vaughan, 2003, p. 249) and the lack of a sizeable indigenous educated elite who could administer its different parts. Thirty years later, with the growth of a population of youth educated at university level and mounting ethno-nationalist movements, it appears that the federal government can no longer resist the application in the south of its constitutional principle of self-administration. The focus here will be on the South Omo zone.[1] With its sixteen ethnic groups (until 2023), it is the most heterogenous zone. It is also the only zone of the region which has populations of agro-pastoralists along with populations of farmers. The most numerous are the Aari farmers, who account for almost 45% of the zone's total population, followed by the agrarian Maale (14%); most of the other fourteen groups are agro-pastoralists.[2] I will use the word 'pastoralist' to refer to a cultural identity rather than merely a livelihood activity.[3] Members of the 'pastoralist elite' identify themselves as such, even though they live in towns and do not practice animal husbandry like their kins. The main divide between the political elite is the one between the agrarian elite and the pastoralist elite – or between the 'highlanders' and the 'lowlanders'.

1 The Ethiopian administrative structure is the following, from the largest to the smallest administrative unit: region (or regional state), zone, *wereda*, and *kebele*.

2 Namely, the Dime (agrarians), the Kwegu, the Koegu, and the Ongota (former hunter-gatherers), and the Bodi, Mursi, Banna, Tsemay, Arbore, Hamar, Kara, Murle, Nyangatom, and Dassanech (agro-pastoralists).

3 The word pastoralist is oversimplistic when characterizing people's livelihoods, since in the Lower Omo Valley, pastoralists are also cultivators, a fact that Ethiopian authorities fail to recognize. I will therefore employ 'agro-pastoralist' when referring to their activities and 'pastoralist' for their identity.

Fieldwork was carried out in the towns of Hana and Jinka (former South Omo zone) in May-June 2021, and in Jinka in November 2023. Before these two periods of fieldwork, I did extensive ethnography among the Bodi,[4] an ethnic group of the Sala-Mago *wereda* where the town of Hana is located, and have thus gained familiarity with the overall area. In 2021 and 2023, I interviewed government workers or former government workers originating from different agro-pastoralist communities of the former South Omo zone. Given the political sensitivity of the topic, I have tried to preserve their anonymity as much as possible, and have withdrawn their names, and in most cases their home community as well.

A differentiated history of school-education

In the process of Ethiopian state-building, the strategy of the centre to administer its peripheries was to rely on a local elite, which it set itself to educate. But schooling, as a tool for incorporation, expanded unevenly in the diverse South. It reached the southern lowlands long after it did the southern highlands. Today's school enrolment rates among the lowlanders, and thus the number of lowlanders who can occupy an administrative or political position, are still a far cry from the part of school educated people among the southern highlanders. This discrepancy reflects a contrasting history of incorporation into the Ethiopian state. Following the military conquest of the South in the late 19th century, settlers from the northern and central highlands submitted the southern farmers to a form of serfdom, while semi-nomadic herders of the lowlands were, for the most part, left to their own devices. Under the reign of Haile Selassie, part of the education effort was carried out by foreign missionaries, notably the members of the Sudan Interior Mission, who expanded southward gradually (Donham, 1999, p. 105). Their expansion reached Aariland, the southern tip of the highlands, where a mission was established in 1954 (ibid.).[5] Missionary efforts in the 1960s among the agro-pastoralists Hamar, Banna (Maurus, 2020, p. 4) and Suri (Abbink, 2009, p. 48) were short-lived. After the fall of the emperor in 1974, foreign missionary activities were drastically reduced under the *Derg* regime, which started with a countrywide campaign (*zämächa*) to teach the revolution and bring literacy to the rural masses. The campaign had little impact on the lowlanders, if it reached them at all (Markakis, 2011, p. 218-219), while it did lay the foundations for mass education in better integrated southern highlands, like Wolaita (Guidi, 2020, p.

4 'Bodi' is a name used by state authorities and outsiders to refer to the Me'en populations of the eastern banks of the Omo, namely the Mela and the Chirim. Since I am concerned here with people working in the administration, and to avoid confusion, I will use the ethnonym 'Bodi'.

5 Donham explains how Maale people who came into contact with the missionaries in Bako and converted to Christianity would form a modern vanguard which eased state penetration in Maale in the 1980s (Donham, 1999, p. 120).

194). As early as 1981, a school-educated Wolaita elite could fill virtually all key positions within their administration (Bureau, 1980-2, p. 225). By contrast, Mursi agro-pastoralists (Sala-Mago *wereda*, South Omo zone) had to wait until 2006 to see the first public school built in their land, with funding from foreign development agencies (LaTosky & Zehle, 2016, p. 247). Although the EPRDF[6] government has tried to remedy the neglect of schooling for agro-pastoralist people by previous regimes, it has failed to address the perennial problem of an education adapted to the constraints of agro-pastoralist livelihoods. Boarding schools in urban centres have been favoured, free of charge for agro-pastoralist students (ibid., p. 248). A number of centres for basic education, such as the one mentioned above in Mursi, have appeared across the lowlands in the 2000s, but as for the ones built in the Sala-Mago *wereda*, they operated only for a few years (ibid., p. 250). An attempt at compulsory schooling in Hamar triggered a violent conflict between Hamar agro-pastoralists and government workers in 2014 (Maurus, 2020). Foreign missionary activities over the past few decades account for some differences among agro-pastoralist groups, such as in Nyangatom, where a generation of graduates did their primary education at the Swedish Philadelphia Church Mission (Tornay, 2009).

Discriminations on ethnic criteria

The state's relative neglect for formal education in agro-pastoral lowlands has far-reaching consequences for the balance of power between groups of highlanders and lowlanders. Here I consider the case of the Sala-Mago *wereda* in the South Omo zone. Its three main ethnic groups – the Dime, the Bodi, and the Mursi – have relatively equivalent population sizes: at least 10,000 for each group.[7] The Dime, who are sedentary farmers, have however far more educated people than the semi-nomadic Bodi and Mursi agro-pastoralists. The administrative headquarters of the *wereda* is in Hana, in the plain inhabited by the Bodi, but it was not until the 1990s that some Bodi families could send their children to the new boarding school in Hana, and until 2003 there were no Bodi or Mursi working in the administration of their *wereda*.[8] Since then, the positions that they have

6 Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, the political coalition which ruled Ethiopia from 1991 to 2019.

7 The results of the 2017 national census have not yet been published. According to leaked numbers from this census, enumerators counted 13,558 Bodi people, 10,803 Mursi and 11,856 Dime. To these three groups, one has to add the Kwegu, a minority in Bodi and Mursi, and the Konso, resettled in the early 2000s as part of a government scheme and who were about 8,000 in 2017.

8 Mursi made their entrance within the *wereda* administration even later and are still extremely few; I therefore focus here on Bodi civil servants in their relations with those from farming communities.

been given have often been security-related: head of the justice and security department, or head of the militia, for example. Even though they have obtained a degree in health, they inevitably find themselves in these positions. A Bodi man who was for a long time in charge of justice and security explains it this way:

> 'The Bodi are troublemakers!' they would say. 'You speak their language, just go and talk to the Bodi, your brothers!' So, the difficult things, when there's a war, they send me first. [...] People give us [this job] out of spite. 'Those who shoot people are the Bodi! It's your problem!'[9]

Dime civil servants or 'Habesha' (those of northern descent) are afraid of coming face to face with armed herders in times of conflict. They consider these situations to be the responsibility of their Bodi or Mursi colleagues, who are supposed to bear responsibility for acts of violence carried out by members of their home community.

Moreover, Bodi and Dime are in competition for administrative positions. In the *wereda*, a civil servant rarely stays in a position for more than a few years: the five members of the coordinating committee, which heads the administration and coordinates with the zonal level, can reshuffle teams at will. The Bodi, who are a minority because only a few of them have managed to complete their education, let alone obtain a degree in higher education, are often demoted. One of them, who was the first Bodi to obtain a bachelor's degree, lost his position as head of the court of justice for a lower position in the militia.

> I studied for three years and when I finished, I came back, I got a good job, in justice, very good. But people got along with each other. They only reproached me! They were all Dime. They argued with me. 'He doesn't work properly! When one of his relatives comes, he works well; when others come, he works badly! Blah, blah, blah...' [...] They were lying! It made me angry. I gave up.[10]

According to another Bodi government worker, their colleagues do not recognize their skills:

> They [Dime or Habesha] are supposed to be the strongest people, the experts, only they are the experts.[11]

9 Interview, Hana, 30 May 2021.
10 Interview, Hana, 22 May 2021.
11 Interview, Hana, 22 June 2021.

The perceived disdain of highlanders towards lowlanders was echoed by a Nyangatom who experienced it while working at the zonal administration: despite all their academic degrees, they are not deemed worthy of occupying important positions, not so much for a lack of skills, but for a lack of legitimacy, as though they were not Ethiopians, or merely second-class citizens.

Nonetheless, the small Bodi elite places all hopes on education to conquer positions at all levels of the administration:

> One of us who now writes on paper in Jinka, there is none. One of us, a Bodi, 'he's a child of the Bodi', at the region, in Hawassa, there is none. We are in the bush. Why? It is forced upon us! We are just pastoralists. Children of the Bodi who went to study recently, there are. Now when we meet, when we talk, what are we talking about? We talk about how to develop our [Bodi]land, how to study. […] Positions in the administration, we want them too. […] If you go to the south, in Nyangatom, people are developed. […] If we study and we team up, the land will develop. Now we want only this.[12]

Although ethnicity may have sometimes trumped ability in the allocation of positions under the EPRDF government, the level of education is an important criterion in the recruitment of administrators, and in this regard the Bodi have not closed the gap with their Dime neighbours or even with other agro-pastoralist groups such as the Nyangatom. For a former Bodi civil servant at the security department, a few young Bodi with a bachelor's degree would be all that is needed to take over the administration of their *wereda*:

> Later, if we send ten young Bodi only, and they obtain their degree, the Dime will flee. They will flee in their mountains, they will ask for their own *wereda* and they will leave, later you will see.[13]

Owing to contrasting histories of state incorporation, neighbouring groups of sedentary cultivators and of semi-nomadic herders have had unequal access to formal education, and the most marginalized groups now find themselves ill-equipped to obtain administrative positions dominated by their better integrated neighbours. At the local level, the dominance of the age-old 'Amhara' has indeed shifted to the dominance of a local ethnic group, not because of sheer population numbers – in the Sala-Mago *wereda*, agro-pastoralists are a majority – but because of education access. School is a powerful tool of the centre to incorporate

12 Interview, Hana, 22 May 2021.
13 Interview, Jinka, 16 June 2021.

its peripheries, and its imposition is still met with some resistances, such as in Hamar, where Hamar government workers were put under unbearable pressure to forcefully implement a policy of compulsory schooling (Maurus, 2020). However, for the Bodi elite, and arguably for Bodi agro-pastoralists too, (non-compulsory) formal education is invested as a strategy to circumvent their domination, not so much from the centre but from the neighbouring highlands' elite.

Working in agro-pastoralist communities under a farmer's mindset

One could suspect that the pastoralist elite's appetite for higher positions is motivated by personal gains, and that they mostly intend to 'develop' their careers. But such a narrow view of self-interested actors would fail to capture what many expressed in interviews: the wish to see their home communities benefit from economic development. In their perspective, the dominance of the elites from agrarian communities impedes them from bringing these benefits to agro-pastoralist people.

When working at the *wereda* or zonal administrations, civil servants from a pastoralist background have to comply with the dominant ideology in Ethiopia that sees pastoralism as a backward, if not obsolete, economic pursuit. There is first the sheer ignorance, by administrators who were raised in agrarian communities, of the realities of pastoralism. A former pastoralist *wereda* head administrator explains the disagreement with a regional official that cost him his position:

> Before, I was for five years at the [x] *wereda*, I fought to the regional level or the pastoralist office head, he'd say, 'thirteen days to train pastoralists on these issues'. I said: 'For our community, this is drought time. Pastoral people live [far away in the bush], not in their villages. So how can we train or get the information to the pastoralists?' Farmers, during the dry season, they live at home, they don't have any activities. During the rainy season, the farmer is busy. For our community, the pattern is that during the dry season, they are busy, finding water for their livestock. So, I say that it's not possible to train the pastoralists at this time. He says, 'No, this is my command. You do this!' After that I went to study, because he took my position.[14]

In a region where pastoralists are a minority, government programs are not adapted to the seasonal variations of herding activities, which happen to be the reverse of that of farmers. The irony here is that the order came from the regional pastoralist affairs office, which was headed at the time by a person from an agrarian community. The office had actually never been directed by a pastoralist. In

14 Interview, Jinka, 17 June 2021.

2020 and 2021 however, its vice-director was a Nyangatom; his pride was the size of the budget allocated to funding the studies of young people from agro-pastoralist communities.[15] But the office's other projects were aligned with the idea of transforming (agro-)pastoralists into farmers. A former chief administrator of a pastoralist *wereda*, already quoted above, deplores the irrationality of this project:

> My opinion is that a pastoral economy is based on livestock, but the government of the region says that pastoralists must be transformed into farmers...] In my opinion, we need to improve livestock, which is what their economy is based on, to close the gap. [...] The regional government says you have to turn the pastoralists into semi-farmers. But pastoral areas, or most pastoral areas, already don't get enough rain. So how can we turn them into farmers? All the big investments the government is making here, perhaps on the Omo River or other rivers, are for irrigation systems. The Omo River is difficult for irrigation [because of its very steep banks in its lower course]. So now, the government buys pumps or generators, which adds to the expensive consumption of fuel.[16]

The policy focus on irrigation rather than on livestock for the lowlands was further entrenched by the creation, in late 2021, of a Ministry of Lowlands and Irrigation (Yitbarek & Kamski, 2023, p. 40). The regional pastoralist affairs office evoked above has thus been replaced by the Regional State Irrigation Development and Lowland office, located in Jinka, and whose walls are adorned with pictures of Bodi people weeding irrigated fields on the sugar cane estate.[17] For a member of the pastoralist elite, the loss of the word 'pastoralist' in the name of the new office is not only indicative of the dismissal of the economic potential of pastoralism; it opens the possibility, for the regionally dominant farmers' elite, to capture the part of the federal budget previously allocated specifically to pastoralist communities, for their own people – lowlands being also found in *wereda* of agrarian people.[18] The management of resources is central in the grievances of pastoralist civil-servants, for the budget is controlled at an administrative level where they are hardly represented. In their view, the dominance of their highland neighbours in the administration prevents services from being delivered to pastoralist communities. They deplore for instance the construction of a hospital in Turmi, a town in the Hamar *wereda*, which has been taking years, while other hospitals have rapidly sprung up in agrarian *wereda* of the same zone (former South Omo). In this case, the problem of resources allocation is compounded by a health policy inadequate for pastoral lowlands:

15 Interview, Jinka, 17 June 2021.
16 Interview, Jinka, 17 June 2021.
17 A request for an interview in 2023 was declined.
18 Interview, Jinka, 12 November 2023.

> The government of Ethiopia says: health post for 5,000 people, health centre for 25,000 people. But our community is scattered. There is no access for people. They are 10 or maybe 20 km away from a health post. We fight every day to the government: our people is not getting health institutions. We fight a lot.[19]

As revealed in a previous example, when a remark about the absurdity of wanting to train pastoralists during the dry season was considered as an act of defiance, the authoritarianism that characterizes Ethiopian politics prevents policies from being adapted to local contexts.

The pastoralist elites' glass ceiling

The literature is replete with references to the rigidly top-down approach of policies in Ethiopia (e.g. Harrison, 2002, Lefort, 2013, Abbink, 2020). This brand of authoritarianism rests notably on the ruling party's tentacular control over the administration and on the precarious position of civil-servants, who can rarely find other job opportunities and who have no guarantee of remaining state employees (Labzaé, 2015). Those occupying a political position in the *wereda* cannot manage their administration independently:

> According to the law,…] *weredas* are formally declared to be independent local government authorities but in reality, there is a great deal of supervision and control by regional and federal governments over *wereda* affairs. (Taye & Tegegne, 2007, p. 91)

In the former SNNP region, zones were granted political status, owing to their supposed ethnic homogeneity: they are not just simple intermediaries within the administrative structure as is the case in other regions of Ethiopia, and they have an elected council. The zones as well therefore exercise tight control over the *wereda*. *Wereda* chief administrators frequently owe their position to their zonal counterparts. Outside election periods, if a *wereda* chief administrator is promoted, dismissed, or leaves to pursue his or her studies, his or her successor is appointed by members of the zonal coordinating committee. None of the former *wereda* chief administrators I interviewed had obtained their position following an election; all had been appointed by the zonal executive. They are thus strongly dependent on their zonal superiors (see also Abbink, 1998, p. 71) and can be demoted or promoted at the latter's discretion.[20] Given their dominated status, the

19 Interview, Jinka, 17 June 2021.

20 Removals used to be decided at the end of evaluation sessions (*gemgema*) attended by all civil servants (see Labzaé, 2015). The practice of *gemgema* has ended with the coming to power of Abiy

pastoralist elite understand their careers to be in the hands of the better integrated agrarian elite.

A former zonal vice-administrator (from an agro-pastoralist group) exposed their powerlessness in the face of the zone's former chief administrator (from an agrarian group), over a conflict surrounding a locality at the border between two *wereda* of agro-pastoralists. This locality was farmed by a minority from *wereda* A, but herders from *wereda* B began to graze their cattle there. The zonal chief administrator authorized a private investor to farm the land, stating that it belonged to *wereda* B, and that he had to pay taxes to this *wereda*. No officials from *wereda* A were informed of the investor's arrival, and not even the then zonal vice-administrator, who is from this *wereda*. Administrators from *wereda* A opposed administrators from *wereda* B, and the conflict spread to pastoralists from both *wereda*. The former zonal vice-administrator recounts the official demotions that followed:

> It was [the former zonal chief administrator] who made a mistake. But due to the conflict between [agro-pastoralists from the two *wereda*], the chief administrator of *wereda* A was fired from his position.
> LB – But [the zonal chief administrator] wasn't fired?
> – He was not fired, who can fire him? He's the chief administrator of the zone. He's [the one who's] firing us! And he also changed me from vice admin position [of the zone].
> LB – Where is he now?
> – At regional level. He's been promoted!The chief administrator of *wereda* A] was removed and was promoted to zonal level, as a demotion. At a lower position. Cooperative department head. Not at cabinet level. [...]
> LB – So if he [the zonal chief administrator] does something wrong, and the regional level doesn't know, nothing happens to him?
> – Nothing happens. Even we don't have any communication with the higher officials of the regional level. So, we cannot [do anything] because we are just talking here, like pastoralists.[21]

Demotions concealed as promotions are common: government workers are moved from a position in the executive in the *wereda* to a position at the upper administrative division, but as 'expert' in the administration, not in a political po-

Ahmed, and the fate of civil servants has since then been decided by members of the executive behind closed doors.

21 Interview, 14 June 2021, Jinka.

sition. This is also sometimes a strategy to distance them from their community when they are deemed too influential.

Owing to the virtual absence of a pastoralist elite at the regional, let alone federal level, the pastoralist elite at the zonal and *wereda* level perceive themselves to be up against a glass ceiling that prevents the most capable among them to climb the political ladder, like their agrarian neighbours have long achieved. When challenged with the case of an old member of the pastoralist elite who had been zonal chief administrator for many years, then member of parliament, and had obtained a master's degree, a former zonal employee from a pastoralist background retorted:

> If they are thinking that they have to develop pastoralists, they might have put him at the federal level in one position. But no one did. They put him back here [at the zone], and then without giving [him] a good position, they put him inside as expert, administration office.[22]

All these grievances of the pastoralist elite – an economic policy ill-suited to the pastoral economy, a lack of control over their own resources, the impunity of their superiors, their poor representation in the upper echelons of the administration – were to find expression during the brief period of openness represented by the arrival of Abyi Ahmed as Prime Minister in 2018 and the upheaval of the southern regional administrative structure brought about by the regionalization of the Sidama zone in 2019. They saw in the request for the creation of a pastoralist region the only option to obtain the higher positions that were refused to them.

Administrative reshuffling

Specific problems of agro-pastoralist areas are not considered by administrative levels largely dominated by personnel from agrarian populations, who exert their power over lower-level administrators. For pastoralist elites, the solution is therefore to bypass these intermediate administrative levels by crafting a direct link with the federal government, as explained by a former Nyangatom *wereda* and South Omo zone official:

22 Interview, 2 November 2023, Jinka.

> If you're a region, you have a direct link with the federal government. That's what everyone wants. You'll have your own voice heard. You'll have a connection, a direct contact with the prime minister and senior civil servants.[23]

Ever since the creation of the large SNNP region, some of its officially recognized ethnic groups have relentlessly asked for a superior administrative status: from *wereda* to zone, or to special *wereda*,[24] and from zone to region. The Sidama were the first to obtain an upgrading of their zone to regional status, after a referendum in 2019 through which a strong majority pronounced itself for autonomy. The administrative redrawing of the remaining SNNP region, amputated from the former Sidama zone and its capital Hawassa, was not a simple task. The federal government first formed a committee of scholars and officials from the region to investigate various options for new administrative divisions. A new South-West Ethiopia Regional State was created in 2021, but there was no easy solution for the rest. The restructuration process was delayed, not least because the federal government wanted to contain autonomy claims that stormed the region in the preceding years, notably in view of the 2021 general elections. The experts' committee was finally dissolved, and the federal government went back to a more top-down approach on this issue. All autonomy movements, especially when they were accompanied with violence, were then suspected to be supported by the '*junta*', the Tigrean People's Liberation Front, at war with the federal state between November 2020 and November 2022. Nonetheless, the elites of most ethnic groups tried to seize this opportunity of administrative reshuffling to obtain a higher administrative status for their own district, and thus put themselves in competition with each other.

The race for self-governance

In 2020, the elite of the South Omo zone favoured a request for regionalization for their zone alone, without grouping it with other zones. The very diversity of the zone (with sixteen officially recognized ethnic groups) would make it unique and justify preserving it as an autonomous administrative unit. The variety of economic activities, with the presence of a national park and nature reserves, the flow of tourists, and the many commercial farming projects in the lowlands, would make this option viable.[25] But the Aari and the Maale, the two largest agrarian groups in the area, had anticipated this outcome by proceeding with an administrative redrawing of their own *wereda* – creating new *kebele* that would

23 Interview, 18 June 2021, Jinka.

24 A special *wereda* is not overseen by the zone but has a direct link with the region.

25 See for instance the claim for South Omo statehood by a scholar from Aari: Asress (2020).

likely be upgraded to *wereda* at the end of the process. Two members of the pastoralist elite (Y. and Z.) recount the reaction of the administrators of the pastoralist *wereda* that followed:

> Y.: 'The rumour was saying that the Aari and Maale *wereda* were forming other [new] *kebele*, they're making themselves ready, before other people. Let me make it clear: the first target is to be a region, South Omo region. So, the other idea [...], sharing the power, dividing the region, [with] some *kebele* whatever, will come after we get the region. That was the agreement. [...] Now, the pastoralist *wereda* were angry: we all have one idea, and you guys are sneaking behind us and want to divide the *kebele*. So, if that is the case, we will ask the Prime Minister to give us our special zone. [...] The idea was just to make them know...
> Z.: – To counter-attack.
> Y.: – ... to make them aware that we are also ready.'[26]

Both men downplay the significance of the pastoralist elite's secession, but other members of this elite were more serious in their intentions and wanted to launch a movement. A *wereda* chief administrator took the initiative of inviting all the other chief administrators of pastoralist *wereda* to a meeting. Another former chief administrator drew up the first documents for a pastoralist movement, centred around the issue of land dispossession and human rights violations. The administrators of the zone and the region heard of these initiatives and put a stop to them – the chief administrator who organized the meeting was for instance 'promoted' to a lesser position in the zone. According to a pastoralist former official, the zonal and regional administrators feared that this movement would threaten the zone's relative stability:

> If the pastoralists say that, then maybe, in the South Omo zone, the issue will come back, because they are armed people. If this idea is communicated to the communities, it will become dangerous.[27]

But the pastoralist elite did not keep quiet about their grievances when confronted with the regional administrators, as reported by the same pastoralist former official:

> The region sent leaders from there, and they held a meeting with the zonal and *wereda* core cabinets on these issues. All the *wereda*. [...] [The initiators of the pastoralist movement] said: 'We did this because they started before. These people

26 Interview, 16 June 2021, Jinka.
27 Interview, 14 June 2021, Jinka.

(Aari and Maale) are still making pastoralists underdeveloped. Because they are a majority, in the higher positions, the pastoralist elite is not given the opportunity to lead.'[28]

Numerically, the two groups of Aari and Maale farmers were the majority.[29] But the pastoralist elite were particularly aware of the growing contradiction between the zone's 'pastoral' identity, by then claimed by the Aari and Maale administrators themselves, and the latter's dominance within the administration. The two members of the pastoralist elite continued their account of the exchanges that took place:

Y.: So, everyone was, 'calm down', they were shocked, because most of the investment, most of the development...
Z.: – In terms of livestock, in terms of fisheries, come from the pastoralist communities.
Y.: – So if we detach [ourselves from them] ... then zero. No development. The Prime Minister comes, he talks about the pastoralists. NGOs come; they talk about the pastoralists. Everyone talks about the pastoralists. So, everything is about pastoralists in this zone.[30]

Since supposedly virgin land was made available to investors or large-scale government projects at the turn of the 2010s, development has focused on the lowlands. Jinka, the zonal capital, would probably not have paved roads and a new airport with flights from Addis Ababa on an almost daily basis if the sugar industry had not taken root on pastoralists' land. Claiming to be a pastoralist zone, even though they are in fact numerically a minority, also attracts government funds and international aid specifically earmarked for them. Although the elites of peripheral territories, like the elites of the South Omo zone in general, complain that the contributions of their constituents go towards the development of infrastructures (roads, hospitals, universities, etc.) in distant capitals to which they have little access,[31] the pastoralist elite point to a similar problem specific to them: the absence of rewards, in terms of positions of power, for the capture of resources in the lowlands.

From 2021 on, it became clear that the Aari elite was going it alone: they had abandoned the claim for a South Omo region and were requesting an Aari zone

28 Ibid.
29 Part of Maale is situated in the lowlands and thus some of their elite mobilize a pastoralist identity.
30 Interview, 16 June 2021, Jinka.
31 See for instance: Asress (2020).

only. The pastoralist elite, for their part, continued to hold onto the idea of an administrative entity clustering all pastoralist groups of the South Omo zone, without any intermediary between them and the federation. A former pastoralist *wereda* chief administrator sums up their strategy:

> We were directly communicating with core leaders in six *wereda* of pastoralists, especially the chief admin and the party heads, and all *wereda*, we were communicating and have meetings. […] We agreed upon many points, we started to face the political leaders of the region, of zonal levels, by talking frankly about the importance of the region of pastoralists, and why we were asking the issue to be a region.[32]

In early 2023, a dozen of them went to the Prosperity Party and the prime minister's offices in Addis Ababa to present their request. They were not the first southern group who attempted to bypass potential blockers at the zonal or regional levels by sending delegates to the federal level.[33] They were received courteously and told to present their request at the regional level. There, at the Nations council, where they had been preceded by Aari delegates, they were told that:

> The probability of getting the region is very low, because now Aari people from South Omo are claiming the zone, instead of claiming for the region, so it will be difficult for the federal government, even us the region, to make the pastoralists only us, the region, because of the criteria, the requirements. Even when we see the educated people of pastoralists, very few in numbers. If you see the construction of the offices, no area which can handle the regional institutes. So, it will be very difficult. The question is the right question, but it takes time. It needs more development.[34]

Not totally deterred by this setback, they followed the legal procedure and submitted letters from their *wereda* to the zonal council. Aari officials had done the same a year before; the refusal of the zonal council to put their request for an Aari zone on the agenda had triggered riots in Jinka and in several towns of southern Aari. The zonal council maintained its stance concerning the pastoralist *wereda*'s request and refused to treat these issues so long as the federal government had not delineated the new regions. People in the pastoralist *wereda* were not mobilized around the issue of self-governance as the Aari people had been, and the refusal of their request went unnoticed. In June 2023, all chief administrators

32 Interview, 12 November 2023, Jinka.

33 See for instance the Wolaita delegates bypassing the blockade of Sidama regional officials by going directly to the federal level in Planel (2022).

34 Interview, 2 November 2023, Jinka.

of pastoralist *wereda* were removed from their position, in an attempt to bury their movement. The creation of the new South Ethiopia Regional State was announced in August; the Aari obtained their own zone, and the rest of the South Omo zone (that is the pastoralist *wereda* and the Maale) retained the same name. As a pastoralist former official commented:

> They forced pastoralists to be the zone under the administration of the new Southern region, but it was not our concept. Still, we have a question.[35]

Conclusion

I have outlined the emergence of an elite with a common agenda in the periphery of the Ethiopian state. Its members do not share a common ethnic identity but identify with a larger sociocultural category as pastoralists: they share a similar background from agro-pastoral communities of the lowlands in and around the Omo Valley and have often lived their students' years together in the boarding schools specifically designed for them by regional programs. Those programs have enabled a number of pastoralist students to achieve a sufficient level to be employed in the administration, but the gap with farming populations is still wide, particularly for women. The recent rebranding of the regional office tasked with pastoralist affairs into one dedicated to irrigation in the lowlands begs the question whether support for pastoralist students will continue or decline.

The pastoralist elite sees itself in opposition to the elite of the neighbouring agrarian highlanders – who may however strategically mobilize a pastoralist identity for themselves when they see fit. Better integrated into the state thanks to the extension of schooling in the southern highlands under the previous regime, they are better equipped in the competition for jobs and other state resources than their pastoralist counterparts, who report experiences of discrimination and domination by this agrarian elite.

The administrative restructuring that followed the creation of the Sidama Regional State in 2020 put state resources up for grabs for the diverse southern elites and was the catalyst for an unprecedented alliance of the pastoralist elite for a common goal: the demand for a pastoralist region. The initial climate was that of a political opening, and as one member of the pastoralist elite expressed it, under the previous government, 'we would not have been able to even think of it.'[36] A connection with the central elite is sought after to bypass local domination, based

35 Interview, 2 November 2023, Jinka.

36 Interview, 16 June 2021, Jinka.

on the – probably illusory – idea that problems specific to agro-pastoralists will be finally given proper consideration and that funds dedicated to them will not be diverted. Here the ethno-federal system diverges from the usual pattern of a dual relation between a central elite and a local elite, into a triangular configuration of elites, in which the central elite is regarded by the marginalized ones as a third, neutral party. The attempts of the pastoralist elite were so far unsuccessful, and their movement was snuffed out by the locally dominant elite. Hence the ambivalence of the current Ethiopian political system: while formally recognizing the right of historically marginalized minority groups such as the pastoralists of South Omo, it creates adverse conditions for their political emancipation.

References

Abbink, Jon (1998). New Configurations of Ethiopian Ethnicity: The Challenge of the South. *Northeast African Studies*, *5*(1), 59-81.

Abbink, Jon (2006). Ethnicity and Conflict Generation in Ethiopia: Some Problems and Prospects of Ethno-Regional Federalism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *24*(3), 389-413.

Abbink, Jon (2009). The Fate of the Suri: Conflict and Group Tension on the South-West Ethiopian Frontier. In Günther Schlee & Elizabeth E. Watson (Eds.), *Changing Identifications and Alliances in North-East Africa* (Vol. 1, pp. 35-51). Berghahn.

Abbink, Jon (2011). Ethnic-Based Federalism and Ethnicity in Ethiopia: Reassessing the Experiment after 20 Years. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *5*(4), 596-618.

Abbink, Jon (2020). On 'Good Governance'. *Africa: Rivista semestrale di studi e ricerche*, *2*(1), 5-24.

Asress Adimi Gikay (2020). The Reasons for South Omo People's Demand for Statehood. *Ethiopia Observer*, 18 June. <https://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2020/06/18/the-reasons-for-south-omo-peoples-for-statehood/>, accessed 6 January 2021.

Boone, Catherine (2003). *Political Topographies of the African State*. Cambridge University Press.

Bureau, Jacques (1980-82). Comment s'écrit l'histoire d'une province d'Éthiopie: le Wolaita. *Abbay. Études éthiopiennes*, *11*, 225-243.

Czuba, Karol (2019). Karamojan Politics: Extension of State Power and Formation of a Subordinate Political Elite in Northeastern Uganda. *Third World Quarterly*, *40*(3), 558-577.

Donham, Donald (1999). *Marxist Modern. An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution*. University of California Press.

Fana Gebresenbet, Mercy Fekadu & Yonas Tariku (2022). Negotiating State Intervention in Pastoral Areas: Local Elite as Brokers for Peace. In Thomas K. Tieku, Amanda Coffie, Mary B. Settana, & Akin Taiwo (Eds.), *The Politics of Peacebuilding in Africa* (pp. 134–153). Routledge.

Guidi, Pierre (2020). *Eduquer la nation en Ethiopie. Ecole, Etat et identités dans le Wolaita (1941-1991)*. Presses universitaires de Rennes.

Harrison, Elizabeth (2002). 'The Problem with the Locals': Partnership and Participation in Ethiopia. *Development and Change, 33*(4), 587-610.

Labzaé, Mehdi (2015). Les travailleurs du gouvernement. Encadrement partisan et formes du travail administratif dans l'administration éthiopienne. *Genèses*, *98*, 89-109.

LaTosky, Shauna, & Zehle, Jana (2016). Schooling for Agro-Pastoralist Communities in the Sala-Mago District, South Omo Zone: Vignettes from the First Generation of Mursi Schoolgirls. In Eloi Ficquet, Ahmed Hassen, & Thomas Osmond (Eds.), *Movements in Ethiopia, Ethiopia in Movement. Volume 2: Proceedings of the 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (pp. 247-260). Centre Français des Etudes Ethiopiennes.

Lefort, René (2013). The Theory and Practice of Meles Zenawi: A Response to Alex De Waal. *African Affairs*, *112*(448), 460-470.

Markakis, John (2011). *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers*. James Currey.

Maurus, Sabrina (2020). *Battles over State Making on a Frontier: Dilemmas of Schooling, Young People and Agro-Pastoralism in Hamar, Southwest Ethiopia* [PhD thesis, University of Bayreuth].

Planel, Sabine (2022). Ethiopie. Dans le Wolayta, même loin du front, le pouvoir serre la vis. *Afrique* XXI, 5 janvier. <https://afriquexxi.info/Ethiopie-Dans-le-Wolayta-meme-loin-du-front-le-pouvoir-serre-la-vis>, accessed 12 February 2022.

Salverda, Tijo, & Abbink, Jon (2013). Introduction: An Anthropological Perspective on Elite Power and the Cultural Politics of Elites. In Jon Abbink & Tijo Salverda (Eds.), *The Anthropology of Elites: Power, Culture, and the Complexities of Distinction* (pp. 1-28). Palgrave Macmillan US.

Taye Assefa & Tegegne Gebre-Egziabher (Eds.) (2007). *Decentralization in Ethiopia*. Forum for Social Studies.

Tornay, Serge (2009). Modernization in the Lower Omo Valley and Adjacent Marches of Eastern Equatoria, Sudan: 1991-2000. In Günther Schlee & Elizabeth E. Watson (Eds.), *Changing Identifications and Alliances in North-East Africa* (Vol. 2, pp. 77-86). Berghahn.

Vaughan, Sarah (2003). *Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia* [PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh].

Yohannes Yitbarek & Kamski, Benedik (2023). *Sugarcoating 'Homegrown' Development in the Periphery: The Politics of Privatizing Kuraz Sugar Development Project in South Omo*. Rift Valley Institute. <https://riftvalley.net/publication/sugarcoating-homegrown-development-periphery>, accessed 6 February 2024.

7

How Islam Was Left Out of Maps of Africa Printed in Europe at the End of the Sixteenth Century

Éloi Ficquet

The visual unity of Africa[1]

Usually, that is, in technology-driven modernity, the shape of Africa is viewed through its cartographic representation as graspable evidence, endowed with a tangible character, as a distinct and manipulable entity that could fit in the palm of one's hand.

The reduction to a single object of a multitude of territories and societies within a single continental unit, to the point of becoming an ordinary thing, can be seen in the many ornamental uses of the contours of the African continent, as tattoos, clothing motifs, pendants, or earrings. In short, African realities are signified by the shape of Africa as a pictogram (Ficquet, 2010). The same cannot be said of other continental spaces, which stretch into peninsulas, expand into sub-continental protuberances or fragment into constellations of islands.

Since the end of the 20th century, studies in the field of metageography have examined the historical and ideological constructs used to divide the world into distinct areas. Piece by piece, the concept of continent has been dismantled (Lewis & Wigen, 1997; Grataloup, 2009). The division of the world into vast groups of land masses, more or less solid, crumbling or contiguous, whose configurations would be the visible expression of the powerful subterranean forces of nature, is now understood as a figment of the imagination, an abstract construction produced from century to century. The invention of Africa as a continent, and the continent as an

1 With the exception of the first sub-section, which has been added, this article is my translation into English of the article published under the title: 'L'impensé cartographique de l'Islam dans les cartes de l'Afrique produites en Europe à la fin du seizième siècle' in *L'Islam dans les mondialisations*, Collection Les Conférences de l'IISMM sous la direction Sophie Bilardello, Anne Troadec & Elise Voguet, Paris: Diacritiques Éditions/Institut d'études de l'Islam et des sociétés du monde musulman, 2024.

idea (Mudimbe, 1988), is the result of such mechanisms for reducing the world to simple units of representation considered to be tangible.

While the establishment of border zones and the negotiation of crossing points are subject to confrontations between militarized statal powers, the linguistic and imaginary uses that describe the distinctive qualities of the great territorial entities are generated by and transmitted through an infinite variety of experiences of circulations, exchanges, and mixtures of products, goods, and information, and the voluntary or forced movement of individuals, each of whom can come to produce, receive, and transmit fragments of representation that will be assembled and fixed in the stereotypes of the common mind.

Shaping the cartographic image of Africa in Renaissance Europe

The representation of the African continent and its peoples took on its modern cartographic form in the European scholarly imaginary through the combination of several sources: ancient geography, travel accounts, surveys, and calculations (Betz, 2007; Bodenstein, 2017; Vagnon & Vallet, 2017, Surun, 2018). In the 15th century, the rediscovery in Europe of Claudius Ptolemy's *Geography* rekindled the understanding of African spaces. Already known to Arab geographers since the 9th century, this collection of mathematical geography dating from the 2nd century CE provided a series of positions from which maps could be redrawn, providing a framework for placing newly acquired information. At the same time, the maritime explorations and conquests undertaken by the Portuguese Empire from 1415 onwards traced the contours of the African continent from island to island, coast to coast, eventually revealing its entire perimeter after passing the Cape of Good Hope in 1488. As the American continent began to be revealed, the coastal lines of Africa gave way to new visualizations and visions of the world (Randles, 2000). They formed a hollow shape that could be filled in as knowledge evolved. The new data were not pushing out others that were deemed obsolete but were being added, by juxtaposition, to repertoires of information from a variety of sources and timeframes.

The standardization and widespread dissemination throughout Europe of the cartographic image of the African continent began at the end of the 16th century with the production of atlases, which brought together maps of countries or continental areas in the same print format but at different scales. This was the era of dominance of Dutch cartography, in a context of economic boom and political-religious tensions. Under the rule of the Habsburg Empire, part of which Charles V bequeathed to his son Philip II, the King of Spain, in 1555, the Netherlands consolidated its economic power and benefited from the prosperity gener-

ated by the conquest of America. On a scientific level, cartographers had access to the considerable resources of new knowledge generated by the imperial wars and conquests. Intellectually and religiously, the Dutch scene was also affected by the policy of the Reconquista, which aimed to eradicate Jews and Muslims from the Iberian peninsula, resulting in a massive wave of exiles, many of whom found refuge in Northern Europe. In addition, the Inquisition's uncompromising policy of defending a radical Catholic faith strengthened the dissent of the reformed movements, especially the Calvinists, who gained ground until 1566, when a war of secession broke out that was to last eighty years.

The maps examined here reflect the ambitions and contradictions of their time. Beginning with the first atlas, designed by Abraham Ortelius in 1570, the analysis will focus on the ways in which religious information was processed in the maps that delineated the contours of Africa. The aim will be both to identify meaningful connections in the abundance of detail, and to consider the potentially structuring scope of what is left unsaid.

The emergence of Africa's coastal contours on the surface of European maps was largely the result of technological advances: ships capable of crossing the oceans, navigational instruments and methods, institutions capable of producing and exchanging geographical data. The invention of engraving and printing techniques accelerated and extended these processes. To what extent was this quest for accuracy in the mathematical and technical description of the world matched by an equivalent effort to capture ephemeral human realities? How was the supposedly unchanging framework of physical geography compatible with mapping the changing and conflicting dimensions of inhabited territories?

The missing cartography of Islam

Given the importance of Islamic faith and norms, and the actors who embodied them, in the social, economic and cultural development of African societies in the medieval period, one might expect that this widely shared identity would be reflected, at least in part, in Renaissance European cartography. The societies that populated, organized, and connected the African coasts of the Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean had long been an active part of Islam, conceived as a common 'home',[2] a territory, and identified as such in the accounts of the explorers who provided cartography with its main sources.

2 This is one of the possible translations of the Arabic locution Dār-al-Islām. The concept of a confessional territory is found neither in the Koran nor in the corpus of the Sunna, but it was used early in Islamic law to designate regions of the world governed by the same doctrinal principles 'in the community of faith and the unity of law' (Abel, 1993).

Without comparing with the ways other regions of the world were mapped during the same period, we can observe that the integration of African societies into the community of Islam was poorly represented, or left out. This lack of reflection, to the point of complete erasure, had a negative dimension in terms of knowledge, in the sense of an unestablished fact, a cartographic blind spot. It would be presumptuous, however, to claim that this omission was systematic and deliberate, and that it may have been motivated by ideological considerations. Even if elements of geopolitical competition between Christian and Muslim powers can be discerned and followed from one map to the next, a closer look reveals oscillations in the choice of representation that do not relate solely to the Muslim faith in particular, calling into question the limited capacity of cartography to inscribe mobile and competing religious identities on the graphic space of the map, representing the fixed materiality of terrestrial space.

The 'New Map of Africa' by Ortelius (1570)

To frame the problem and gather some elements of interpretation, let us begin with the *New Map of Africa*,[3] which was engraved and printed in Antwerp from 1570 onwards under the instructions and supervision of the cartographer Abraham Ortelius (Figure 7.1). This map was part of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, known as the first atlas of the modern age, which was a great success. Translated from Latin into several languages and reprinted several times until 1641, it was a major reference for 17th-century cartography. For the map of Africa, the fourth in order of appearance in the volume, Richard Betz has identified six different versions printed from the same copper plate, which was retouched several times and used by several printing workshops.

For the design of his map, Ortelius relied heavily on the large eight-sheet wall map drawn up by the Venetian Giacomo Gastaldi in 1564, which he reduced while adding his own interpretations based on the same constellation of sources from ancient authors (Ptolemy, of course, but also Herodotus, Pliny, etc.) and more recent publications such as the routes of the navigator João de Castro (published between 1538 and 1541). Another essential source is the volume of *Navigations and Travels* [*Navigationi et Viaggi*] compiled by Giovanni Battista Ramusio, published in Venice in 1550. This work contained the first edition of the *Description of Africa* [*Della Descrittione dell'Africa et delle cose notabilie che ivi sono*] by Hassan al-Wazzan, known as Leo Africanus, which provides first-hand information on the societies of North-West Africa. Ramusio's compilation also included the

3 In Latin: *Africæ Tabula Nova*.

Authentic Information [*Verdadera informaçam*] brought back from Ethiopia by Francisco Alvares, a text to which we will return later.

Figure 7.1

The New Map of Africa/Africæ Tabula Nova by Abraham Ortelius published in the first edition of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Antwerp, 1570)

University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) Libraries Special Collections, gift of Dr Jack Franke; in the public domain in the United States, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ortelius_Africae_Tabula_Nova_1570_UTA.jpg

Among the many layers of information that make up Ortelius' map of Africa, we shall limit our reading to information relating to religion, in order to highlight some structuring elements before extending the comparison with earlier and later maps. Overall, there are very few references to religious features. Among the symbols of localities, represented by buildings with pointed roofs,[4] only Jerusalem stands out on the edges of the map with a five-storey building, topped by a cross placed on the highest roof, representing the Holy Sepulchre. A cross also appears at the top of the mountain representing Mount Sinai. These are the only two graphic indications referring to a sacred geography.

4 See Delano-Smith (2007) for a study of signs and symbols used in 16th-century maps.

In the Arabian peninsula, there are no graphic signs to distinguish the holy cities of Islam, Mecca or Medina. In the case of Mecca, a short caption reads: 'Here we visit the tomb of Muhammad'.[5] Muhammad's grave is actually in Medina. The sanctity of Islam's holiest city is recognized, albeit inappropriately by attributing to it a sepulchral sacredness equivalent to that of Jerusalem from the Christian point of view. Medina is known as 'Medina Talnabi', which in Arabic means Madina(t) al-Nabi, 'the city of the Prophet'. As with several other places on this map, the toponymy has been passed on, albeit with some distortion and with a loss of the associated meanings.

Within the geographical outline of the African continent, which is the central theme of the map, there is no reference to Islam, although this religion was long established in Egypt and North-West Africa. Apart from Morocco, where Turkish attempts at conquest were episodic and disputed, there is no mention of the recent expansion of Ottoman rule.[6] Ortelius' *Theatrum* does not ignore the Ottoman sphere, however. One of the last maps in the volume gives a *Description of the Empire of the Turks*,[7] centred on the Anatolian peninsula, including the territories of the Mediterranean coast of North Africa under Ottoman rule as far as Tripoli, with the following commentary:

> In the knowledge of our ancestors, Cape Rasausen, once called the Borean promontory, formed the border between the Tunisian and Egyptian empires. Today, the empire of the Solimans extends to this point and even beyond.[8]

This text acknowledges a shift in the timeframe in which the map was conceived, no longer reflecting a toponymy inherited from the ancients, but a newly emerging toponymy reconfigured by Turkish hegemony. However, this representation of a recent political situation, still in flux, is not reflected in the map of Africa, which limits its references to recent developments in Portuguese conquests.

As with the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts, the description of the Indian Ocean coasts gives no indication of the participation of these societies in the community of Islam. On the other hand, the establishment of fortified anchorages by the Portuguese along the East African coast from the territory of Mozam-

5 In Latin: *Hic Mahometis sepulchrum visitur*.

6 Ottoman rule was extended to North Africa after the capture of Algiers by Khayr ad-dīn, known as 'Barbarossa', and his allegiance the Sultan of Istanbul in 1519. More generally, on representations of the Ottoman Empire in European cartography, see Brummett (2015).

7 In Latin: *Turcici Imperii Descriptio*.

8 In Latin : *Ad C. Rasausen, olim Boreum Promerant patrum nostrorum memoria, Regis Tunetani et Soldani Aegyptu confinia hodie vero Solimannorum imperium hucusqye & ultra extenditur*.

bique to Somalia ('Magadazo' for Mogadishu), is indicated by a series of places referring to Christian saintly figures whose only distinctive mark is the abbreviation S.: S. Michel, S. Lazaro, S. Rafel. An even greater density of Christian place names can be found on the island of Madagascar.

In the lower right-hand corner of the map, the depiction of a naval battle between three galleons firing cannons at each other, two against one, is an indication of imperial competition for control of the sea routes. During the first half of the 16th century, there were several clashes between the Ottoman and Portuguese fleets in the Red Sea and the Northern Indian Ocean, but no figurative elements (flag, ship shape) or legends explicitly refer to the protagonists.

Islam is mentioned, but only in passing and as an allusion. While the island of 'Zenzibar' is located off the coast of East Africa, fairly accurately but without any further precision, the vast territory known as 'Zanzibar' is located symmetrically opposite in South-West Africa, on the Atlantic coast, covering a vast region described as *deserta* (corresponding to the Namib Desert). The explanatory caption attributes a form of knowledge and frequentation of this area to the geographers of the Muslim world: 'This part of southern Africa, unknown to the ancients, is so denominated by Persian and Arab authors'.[9] This can be seen as a form of relegation of Islamic spatiality to unknown desert territories, disconnected from other regions of the Muslim world. In the layering of temporalities that structure this map, Islam is placed in a kind of hostile, empty space between ancient geographical knowledge and modern European geography.

In contrast to this erasure of Islam, the politico-religious fact in the centre of Africa is more clearly articulated in textual form. Nubia, south of Egypt, is described as 'a kingdom once steeped in the Christian religion, but with the passage of time they hardly recognize any religion'.[10] This assertion completely ignores the long history of the region's conversion, not without resistance, to Islam in the 15th century. Ortelius' sources, which have yet to be identified in this specific case, must have highlighted a situation of confusion and anomie that followed the dismantling of the Christian kingdoms of Nubia. This additional element underlines the systematic nature of Ortelius' attempt to erase Islam from the map of Africa.

9 In Latin: *Hec pars Africe meridionalis que veteribus incognita fuit, a Persis Arabibusq scriptoribus vocatur*.

10 In Latin: *Regnum olim Christiana religione imbutum; tac tempestate vixullam religionem agnoscunt*.

The empire of Priest John

Still on the Tabula Nova, further south, the map reads: 'Here reigns over vast lands the great prince [named] Priest John, the most powerful king in all Africa.' The Priest John is a legendary figure whose origins can be traced back to stories from the 12th century, when the Christian kingdoms of Western Europe were on a crusade to establish their authority over a Holy Land that was claimed to be for the exclusive use of Christians. The structures of power and knowledge associated with the crusaders wanted to believe false information, based on supposedly original letters, suggesting the possibility of an alliance with a distant and powerful Eastern Christian kingdom of fabulous wealth. The mobilizing power of this legend led many travellers, including Marco Polo, to search for the Prester John in Central Asia, as far as China and India. At the end of the 15th century, the search turned to Africa, based on an intensified exchange of emissaries, pilgrims, and merchants between the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia and the flourishing cities of Italy, especially Florence and Venice (Krebs, 2021).

After a long wait, the 16th-century scholars were ready to accept that the quest for Prester John had come to an end with the revelations of Francisco Álvares. In 1515, King Manoel I of Portugal sent an ambassador to meet the ruler of Ethiopia, in response to earlier exchanges of envoys and against the backdrop of growing tensions with the Muslim powers in the region. Álvares was the chaplain on this mission. He returned to Europe in 1527. A probably abridged version of his account, entitled 'True Information on the Lands of the Priest John of the Indies' [*Verdadera informaçam das terras do Preste Joam das Indias*], was published in Lisbon in 1540, followed by a widely read Italian translation in 1550 in the first of three volumes of the *Navigationi e Viaggi* compiled by the Venetian diplomat and geographer Giovanni Battista Ramusio. For cartographers, the factual confirmation, supported by a wealth of information, of a Christian kingdom in the heart of Africa was quite an event.

Álvares' text provides many previously unpublished details about the stages of his journey, including the churches he visited, the distinctive practices of Ethiopian Christians, and the organization of the kingdom and its provinces. The relative positions of the territories in relation to each other and to the course of the Nile are fairly accurate considering what we know today. The cartographers of the time had no other frame of reference than Ptolemy's map, updated with the coastal contours drawn by the Portuguese navigators. To fill in and update this framework, they accepted much of the new information provided by Álvares – while leaving out a great deal. As a result, the distribution of information in the map of Africa may appear rather disorganized and disproportionate, since the Ethiopian

kingdom covers the whole of East and Central Africa, up to the equator, for lack of other reference points.

It should also be noted that Álvares also gave a precise description of the interdependent relationship between the Ethiopian kingdom and the Muslim territories (called 'Mori') that surrounded it. For example, the city of Manadeli, in the Ethiopian interior at the foot of the mountain ranges, which is no longer known, is described as follows:

> ... It is a great trading city. There are an infinite number of merchants, and all the languages of the Moors [i.e. Muslims] are spoken there, i.e. from Jadra [Lebanon], Morocco, Fes, Béjaïa, Tunisia, Turkey, Rumes, i.e. the white men of Greece, the Moors of India, who live there, Ormus and Cairo. All sorts of merchants come from these lands. Since we have been here, the local Moors have been complaining about the priest John, who is demanding a thousand ounces of gold which he lent them and which they are obliged to pay every year as tribute. (in Ramusio, 1550, p. 228: my translation)

The king of Ethiopia, identified as Priest John, is thus recognized as exercising a form of superior authority over the tributary Muslim populations, in line with the expectations placed on him in the European imagination. Álvares does not, however, seek to exaggerate his power in order to conform to the legendary figure. Throughout his narrative, he describes power relationships based on rivalry and interdependence within a transactional framework, the intertwining of which is shown in the rest of the story (particularly through the intermarriages between the Christian royal court and the surrounding Islamic principalities). This text also gives an account of the juxtaposition of territorialities, between the Christian highlands, administered by a dense network of ecclesiastical institutions, and the lowlands, structured as marketplaces, where a circulating and dispersed territoriality was part of the vast exchange networks of the 'House of Islam'. We can see here that the spread of Islam was well known and documented in the sources of geographers. This observation highlights the lack of representation of this religious and geopolitical community in the maps of the period.

Returning to Ortelius' map, apart from the status of priest-king, which suggests a powerful Christianity, there is almost no indication of the actual spread of the Christian religion. A closer look at the place names reveals some toponyms with a Christian connotation, transcribed in Italian, which are a trace of the borrowings made by Ortelius from the map of Gastaldi, who had borrowed them from Ramusio's account of Álvares. These place names are: S. Michel, S. Croce [Holy

Cross], La Trinita, Betmaria [*bet* in Guèze means 'house', which orientalists of the time could easily relate to *bayt* in Arabic or *bayith* in Hebrew].

Figure 7.2
'Description of the Empire of the Prester John or of the Abyssinians', by Abraham Ortelius, added to the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* from the 1573 edition.
Courtesy of Geographicus Rare Antique Maps (http://www.geographicus.com)

The representation of Prester John and his vast empire in Inner Africa received its cartographic consecration in the 1573 edition of the *Theatrum*, in which Ortelius added a second map of Africa entitled 'Description of the Empire of the Prester John or of the Abyssinians' (Figure 7.2).[11] The toponymic information is more or less identical to that of the *Tabula Nova*. In the eastern region, which corresponds to central Ethiopia, there is a greater density of sanctuaries marked with the initial 'S.' and several names of provinces appear. All this information corresponds to that given by Álvares and repeated by Gastaldi, with selections and interpretative distortions that cannot be discussed here. The most important contribution of

11 In Latin: *Presbiteri Iohannis, sive, Abissinorum Imperii Descriptio*.

this map is a cartouche covering North-West Africa, which gives the titles of the Ethiopian ruler, transcribed as a statement in the first person:

> King David is the greatest of my Kings, specially chosen by God, pillar of the faith, from the tribe of Judah, son of David, son of Solomon, son of the Pillar of Zion [i.e. King Amde Tsïyon, r. 1314-1344], son of the Seed of Jacob [King Zer'e Ya'ïqob, r. 1434-1468], son of the Hand of Mary [King Be'ïde Maryam, r. 1434-1468], by the flesh son of Nahu [Na'od, 1494-1508]. Son by the grace of Saints Peter and Paul, emperor of high and great Ethiopia, and of the legal lands and countries of the highest kingdoms; king of Goa [Shewa], Caffates [Gafat], Fatigar, Angot, Baru, Baliguanza, Adea [Hadiya], Vangua, Goiama [Gojjam] where the Nile rises, Amara, Baguamedrum [Begémïdïr], Ambea, Vangucum, Tigremahon, home of the Queen of Sheba, Barnagasso and lord of all Nubia, extending as far as Egypt.

Although this text requires further deciphering, and some of the names of regions cannot be related to known territories, these genealogical and territorial lists are accurate. This information is taken verbatim from a letter from King Lïbne-Dïngïl (reigned 1508-1540), which was delivered by Álvares himself to the King of Portugal and Pope Clement VII. His reigning name was indeed David. The names of his ancestors are Latin translations of royal names in the Geez language, such as 'Seed of Jacob' and 'Hand of Mary'. The list of territories that made up his kingdom follows the practice of listing tributary states, often with the title of their leader. This transcription in capital letters of a kind of official oral cartography marks a transition in European cartography of Africa between the toponymy of antiquity, which remains active to a certain extent through a dynastic transmission linked to the biblical kings, and the emergence of a new information structure based on the territorial claims of the ruling powers.

A cartographic disappearance of religion?

Ortelius's map of Africa reveals a Christian religious toponymy, albeit in small, even infinitesimal hints, which take on a more striking significance in the map dedicated to Prester John. Islam, as well as the local religions of the populations described as 'gentiles', i.e. 'pagans', are obscured in the European cartographic gaze by a double obfuscation between, on the one hand, the African coasts in the process of being 'cartographically converted' by the Portuguese, who dotted the coasts with the names of Christian saints, and, on the other hand, the Christianity of the African interior, rooted in biblical antiquity, to which cartography is ready to grant an immense extension in the empty space of unknown lands.

These elements are not specific to Ortelius' map. The same structure of information can be found in Giacomo Gastaldi's map, printed in Venice six years earlier in 1564.[12] Gastaldi had worked on several maps of Africa since 1548, including the one published for the second edition of Ramusio's *Navigationi e Viaggi* in 1554. For more than a century, before the rise of Dutch cartography at the end of the 16th century, Venetian geographers had compiled all the knowledge available from the various channels of information, whether commercial, religious, or political. This large map (108 x 142 cm) can be seen as one of the high points of this cartographic tradition. Ortelius reduced and simplified it so that it could be widely distributed in his atlas. It was subsequently adopted by many other cartographers.

Compared to Ortelius, Gastaldi's map is even more devoid of religious symbols: Jerusalem, Sinai and Mecca are depicted in the same way as all the other places, without any distinctive markings. In the case of Nubia, a short legend gives only an indication of the products: civet musk and sandalwood, as well as other information of the same kind found in various places on the map, characteristic of information collected by merchants. The kingdom of Prester John is not highlighted, but it is mentioned in the legend of the Amara Mountains 'where Prester John keeps his sons under close guard', which corresponds to the information reported by Álvares. The location and names of the main Christian religious sites in Ethiopia are more precise and faithful to Álvares' account, although this Christian topography is not emphasized and is not always understandable. There is nothing to distinguish the great monastery of Debre-Libanos (transcribed as 'Bilibranos'), the royal church of Mekane Sïllasé (transcribed as 'Machan Celacen') or Lalibela (transcribed as 'Lulibella').

Whereas Ortelius's maps of Africa seem to systematically and deliberately evacuate Islam in order to suggest the triumph of the Christian faith, Gastaldi's map invites us to shift our focus from a particular religion to all religions. This could be seen as a form of distancing from the religious, as if it were outside the world, in a context of suspicion in scholarly circles since the Inquisition's trials of supporters of Copernican heliocentric theories (Giordano Bruno burned alive in 1600; Galileo's trial in 1615).

However, it would be misleading to generalize from this map alone that Gastaldi and other cartographers in his wake had removed the religious from maps. A new edition of the map of Africa was engraved after Ortelius by a certain Bertelli

12 Cf. the copy of the Library of Congress, which can be consulted and downloaded at: <hdl.loc.gov/loc.wdl/wdl.6764>.

in 1573. Perhaps in response to the success of the *Theatrum*, this version added numerous graphic details and legends. A non-religious description of the Arab populations of the North African desert is given, in very negative terms:

> The Arabs, with their wives and children, drive their livestock into the desert; they are notorious thieves, taking anyone's goods and not hesitating to attack their own fellow citizens. They live in unsafe tents.[13]

Where the other maps are silent or show a drawing of a herd, this expression of value judgements tends to reveal the hostile representations of Muslim populations implied in the non-depiction of their common faith. However, copies of this map are extremely rare, and none can be consulted in a sufficiently legible digital version to allow further analysis.

In the fold of the maps

When we (carefully) fold up the maps and come to our conclusions, we might want to come to the conclusion that the cartographers of the European Renaissance concealed Islam in their representation of the territorial units of the African continent. All the evidence we have gathered could be corroborated by other maps and texts from the same period, revealing the deep structures of representation shaped by the imperial structures of modernity that continue to affect the distribution of resources and the movement of populations across the world and the ways in which we represent it.

What may have emerged from the analysis of the first printed European maps of Africa as a 'missing cartography' of Islam is one of the shortcomings that have shaped the persistent lack of understanding of African societies in European intellectual thought. However, this question needs to be considered from a number of angles. A map cannot show everything. It is a form of visual repertory, which, as we have seen, refers to imaginary, narrative, and textual knowledge that cannot be represented visually in all its nuances, uncertainties, and entanglements. While all scholarly work is imbued, to varying degrees, with the dominant ideologies of its time, it is important to remember that the makers and users of these maps, who were great scholars and avid readers of travelogues, shared a deep knowledge of the sources from which the information they sought to locate was drawn. They were well aware of the imperfections and limitations of the cartographic image they were trying to improve.

13 This information is given on the website of Daniel Crouch Rare Books, which put the map up for sale. <https://crouchrarebooks.com/>.

Hostile representations of Islam may have led to the long-term concealment of the importance of this religion in the organization and development of many African territories and their relations with the rest of the world. We must also take into account other motivations that have led to the minimization or even invisibilization of the religious (Watts, 2007), either to avoid the difficulty of representing spiritual communities with their too variable and entangled contours over the whole of a map, or because of a more or less assertive refusal to represent facts of a spiritual nature in a spatial representation of material realities that fall within the scope of scientific modelling.

References

Abel, Armand (1965). Dār al Islām. In P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, & W.P. Heinrichs (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Islam* (2d edition, 2, 126-127). Brill.

Betz, Richard L. (2007). *The Mapping of Africa: A Cartobibliography of Printed Maps of the African Continent to 1700*. Brill.

Bodenstein, Wulf (2017). *Exploring Africa with Ancient Maps*. Royal Museum for Central Africa.

Brummett, Palmira (2015). *Mapping the Ottomans. Sovereignty, Territory, and Identity in the Early Modern Mediterranean*. Cambridge University Press.

Delano-Smith, Catherine (2007). Signs on Printed Topographical Maps ca. 1470-ca. 1640. In D. Woodward (Ed.), *The History of Cartography, Volume Three: Cartography in the European Renaissance*, part 1 (pp. 528-590). University of Chicago Press.

Ficquet, Éloi (2010). L'Afrique comme pictogramme: un continent souvent réduit à ses contours. *Cahiers d'études africaines*, *50*(198/200), 405-418.

Grataloup, Christian (2009). *L'inventions des continents. Comment l'Europe a découpé le monde*. Larousse.

Krebs, Verena (2021). *Medieval Ethiopian Kingship, Craft, and Diplomacy with Latin Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Lewis, Martin W., & Wigen, Kären (1997). *The Myth of Continents. A Critique of Metageography*. University of California Press.

Mudimbe, Valentin (1988). *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge.* Indiana University Press.

Randles, William G.L. (2000). *Geography, Cartography and Nautical Science in the Renaissance. The Impact of the Great Discoveries*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Surun, Isabelle (2018). *Dévoiler l'Afrique? Lieux et pratiques de l'exploration (Afrique occidentale, 1780-1880).* Éditions de la Sorbonne.

Vagnon, Emmanuelle, & Vallet, Éric (Eds.) (2017). *La fabrique de l'océan Indien. Cartes d'Orient et d'Occident (Antiquité-XVI^e siècle)*. Publications de la Sorbonne.

Watts, Pauline Moffitt (2007). The European Religious Worldview and Its Influence on Mapping. In D. Woodward (Ed.), *The History of Cartography, Volume Three: Cartography in the European Renaissance* (pp. 382-400). University of Chicago Press.

8

Political Parties and Elections in Mozambique: A Phenomenological Approach Toward the Ethnography of Collective Decision-making

André van Dokkum

Mozambique obtained independence in 1975 after armed conflict with colonizer Portugal, in which conflict the organization Frelimo played a dominant role. At independence, Frelimo set up a one-party political system which was challenged by Renamo in an armed conflict from 1977 to 1992, in which Renamo cooperated with the then Rhodesian and South African minority regimes. In 1994, the first multi-party elections were held, including Renamo and other parties. These and subsequent elections have largely reinforced Frelimo's political hegemony, except in a relatively small number of municipalities (Van Dokkum, 2015; 2020).

My thesis, partly dealing with these issues, was written under supervision of Jan Abbink – thanks to Victor Igreja for the fortunate referral – with Maria Paula Meneses as co-supervisor. My cooperation with Jan Abbink (see also Abbink and Van Dokkum (Eds.) 2008a; 2008b) was initially based on our common interest in political anthropology, but eventually an overlap in interest concerning broader theoretical issues became apparent as well. One of the theoretical issues that popped up during my thesis research was the question of the phenomenological character of the concept of *political party* as a cultural phenomenon. As there was no opportunity to answer this question in the thesis, this chapter will set out to propose an answer. It is appropriate to add the study of collective decision-making, in connection to the issue of 'political parties'. I will apply certain ideas of Alfred Schutz (1967[1932]), whose book is largely an elaboration on ideas of Husserl and Weber.

Comments on phenomenology

Phenomenology deals with the interaction between objects and human cognition concerning objects. In the famous expression of Husserl (1989(1952), § 11,

p. 27) phenomenology entails that in order to understand an object theoretically one needs to 'put in brackets' any considerations that we might have that are not necessary for that theoretical understanding. But phenomenology is not solely interested in observed objects on themselves. In connection with that interest, it also focuses on how observers perceive those objects (Husserl, 1989(1952), p. 26; Schutz, 1967[1932], p. 11, 13, cf. 106, 206, 241). Eventually, settlements of meaning take place in some interpretation within the cognition of a human (Schutz, 1989[1952], pp. 118-124). Since humans will have different interpretations concerning objects, we are dealing here with *relativism* (ibid., p. 34). In certain cases, it will be possible to insert relativist interpretations back into a social object, a phenomenon that I have labelled, borrowing from set-theory, anti-foundation (Van Dokkum, 2023). Below we will see an example of this with the case of the Mozambican independence movement, and later political party, Frelimo.

Political parties

Let us now study some definitions of 'political parties' ('parties' for short). Wilton (2009, p. 145) has:

> Organizations, usually consisting of volunteers and paid staff that nominate candidates and compete in elections.

Lawson (1976, pp. 3-4) states that:

> a political party is an organization of individuals that seeks continuing electoral and non-electoral authorization from the public (or a portion thereof) for specified representatives of that organization to exercise the political power of particular government offices, claiming that such power will be exercised on behalf of that public.

These two definitions do not satisfy the phenomenological approach; e.g. the aspect of elections, or even generally the seeking of authorization, is only what some people might *normatively expect* from parties. Is it not something that parties *necessarily do*, as at least some one-party systems testify ('neutralize dissent' by a variety of means (cf. Abbink, 2017, p. 305) is a better description there). Weber's definition fits phenomenology better: a party is an association to realize power, goals and advantages for its leaders and members (1922, p. 167, 1-III § 18). (With 'power' I mean 'differential capability of persons or organizations to bring about certain state(s) of affairs in social environments'.)

Weber's (1922, p. 29, 1-I § 17) definition of 'state' including a 'successfully claimed legitimate monopoly of physical force' is less easily taken as phenomenologically satisfactory. During the period 1977-1992 Mozambique suffered from the Frelimo-Renamo war, in which (a) the Frelimo administration had no effective monopoly of physical force in the country; and (b) Frelimo and Renamo did not consider each other's use of physical force legitimate. Hence, by Weber's definition Mozambique was not a state during 1977-1992. But somehow our intuition seems to be right that Mozambique, despite the war, was a state in that period. A phenomenological solution to this would be to consider that the 'successfully claimed monopoly' clause needs to be discarded as being more what we might normatively expect from a state than a factor in its existence. If we accept the existence of Mozambique as a state, we can then analyse the different views that Frelimo and Renamo had (and have) on that state, and how that was a factor in the war. A similar argument can be made for the situation in the province of Cabo Delgado in the north-east of Mozambique, where an insurrection loosely related to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, a.k.a. ISIS) erupted in 2017 (Mourier-Genoud, 2020). Here again Weber's definition would require concluding that the Mozambique state does not exist in the areas affected; but still, a reasonable intuition would be that the state does exist as it is a party in the conflict there.

On the other hand, in phenomenology we can also study objects as to what aspects are intrinsic to them. For parties, this would, first, include that the membership aspect will be *sectional*, because aspirations for power and ideational goals will usually be differential across the population (on this point Lawson's definition is more acute). Here the difference between one-party and multi-party-political systems is not absolute; in a one-party system the single party has only successfully made irrelevant, or even eliminated, other parties (cf. Abbink, 2017, p. 312). Second, a party will have an internal structure to organize the membership and the way goals should be realized, as these organizational aspects will not be realized in a perfectly random amassment of events.[1] Third, parties (as far as their phenomenological definition is concerned) as collections of individuals have no other anthropological characteristics predicated upon them than the pursuance of the political goals itself. Here parties differ from kin groups, such as the Habsburg family or religious organizations, such as the Roman Catholic Church, which have been politically powerful but can, apart from politics, be viewed as just that: a family and a church. This is not possible with parties: take away the political power objective and they may turn into something else, such as an NGO

1 This argument holds for most of social life; *some* form of social-scientific argumentation from structure will aways have a degree of validity.

or an informal debating club, but they are no longer a party. Such an entity (party) has been very unusual in human political history.

Democracy and collective decision-making

In the literature as well as in daily life, 'democracy' is defined in many different ways, where at least in some cases definitions may include ideas how 'democracy' *should* work (in a normative sense). The most salient distinction is that between consensus and majority-rule approaches (Van Dokkum, 2015, ch. 4; Wiredu, 2001). The latter stipulates that the wishes of minorities can, or even should, be ignored, while the first stipulates that the wishes of minorities should be reckoned with. Since the word 'democracy' is in practice applied to both these contradictory descriptions, it follows that in a phenomenological approach a mere general idea of 'democracy' cannot be properly defined; only specific operational understandings of it can. Processes of collective decision-making are here reduced to operations, which facilitates comparisons between different ways of decision-making, including non-democratic ones. Phenomenologically, we can say that a collective decision-making process is a process with a collection of individuals and a collection of options (to choose from) as inputs and a collection of (chosen) options as output, endowed with a functional set-up for producing the output from the inputs.

A common approach for determining outputs nowadays (but with historical antecedents) is to use elections, where people submit (in one way or another) preference orderings concerning options (often human candidates) and some body of computational rules determines some set of superior options (preferably just one option). This would be done on a one-off basis, the counting of votes with a decision made – technically – in one shot.[2] The resulting output is called the *choice set*. The theoretical basis for this approach is given by Arrow (1963(1951), p. 26-27) and Sen (1970, p. 10, responsible for the term 'choice set'). The choice set of a collective choice procedure is the set, delivered by the procedure, of top collective preferences out of a set of given options. The procedure is some mathematical procedure operating on a collection of individual preference orderings concerning the options. Ideally, but not necessarily, the choice set consists of one

2 This form, being a mechanical determination, can be written down in a logical formula, like I have done for the Mozambican presidential election (Van Dokkum, 2015, Appendix C). In practice, the determination does not always occur in one shot, like in situations where the electorate votes in a second round between two top options resulting from a first round (French presidential elections are well-known for this). But technically this amounts only to a delayed revelation of many voters' second preference, which presumably would not change much during the same electoral event.

option only. It has some affinity with Rousseau's idea of the 'general will' (Rousseau, 1988(1762), book IV, ch. 2; cf. Arrow, 1963(1951), pp. 81, 82, 85; cf. Van Dokkum, 2015, p. 52).

The choice set idea is not an absolute necessity in general elections; the Netherlands, for instance, does not formally know it. However, in that country the idea is often applied after all in the form of selecting for prime minister the leader of the largest party. Also, cabinets are formed with the idea of 'majority in power versus minority in opposition' in mind. A rare example where this idea of 'power versus opposition' has not been applied is the interim constitution of South Africa after apartheid. Here parties above a certain threshold could have proportional (reflecting vote share) access to the executive, and not just the legislature (section 88-2 as per South Africa, 1994). As the South African example shows, we do not *have* to organize our politics in a 'power versus opposition' manner (cf. Abbink, 2011, p. 225). Yet this seems to be the dominant approach in the world today when considering multi-party systems.

What is more, collective decision-making may occur without any voting at all. However, the choice set idea as 'amalgamating' the tastes of many individuals seems to have set the standard in collective choice theorizing. That there might exist other ways to reach non-dictatorial collective decisions does not even occur in the introductory comments of Arrow's influential book (see 1963(1951), pp. 1-2). As Little (1952, p. 427) described it, with the choice set idea we are basically dealing with a *machine* that carries out the election for the electors on the basis of inputs and mathematical prescriptions of a certain form. A consensus determination through debate works very differently. Here there is no machine doing the determination in one instance of evaluation but (unless the agreement is immediately obvious) an agreement formation over a stretch of time with possibly several moments of evaluation.

To see that this is satisfying the phenomenological approach, we can give the two procedures described in the form of functional operations. These descriptions then represent how the procedures operate and not what we expect from them. Below orderings of options to choose from are summarized as 'preference ordering' (such as 'option A preferred to option B preferred to option C' etc.) between '< >'. A subscript then indicates which individual out of a group of n individuals (which we could call the 'demos') is considered, or whether the collective is dealt with. All the n preference orderings grouped together is a set indicated by '{ }'. The Arrow/Sen framework then is basically nothing else than the function f depicted here:

f: {<preference ordering>$_i$} (i = 1 … n) → <preference ordering>$_{collective}$,

where the collective preference ordering follows from the set of individual preference orderings according to the prescriptions that make up the mathematical machine (the '→') and nowadays often defined in electoral laws. The choice set is then implied by the collective preference ordering as the top preferred option(s) of that ordering. In a selection-by-debate procedure, on the other hand, if no candidate is self-evidently overwhelming the others, we will have a situation more like the following after the very first submission of preference orderings:

Step 1 – for each i:

g_i: {<preference ordering>$_i$} → <(revised) preference ordering>$_i$,

where there are as many functions g_i as there are individuals in the demos, and each individual can, in principle, accommodate arguments put forward by others in a debate to reconsider one's own preference ordering, which reconsidered (or revised) ordering can then be inputted into the debate. With a new set of individual preference orderings defined as {<(revised) preference ordering>$_i$} (i = 1 … n), there now is

Step 2:

> If one option overwhelms the others in the new set, select that one, else repeat Step 1.

A more technical exposition is given in Van Dokkum (2021). Selection-by-debate differs from choice set approaches in the aspect that numerical definitions in the latter, such as '50%+1' or 'first-past-the-post' are not decisive in the first. Although unanimity will rarely be achieved, selection-by-debate will reach resolution by obtaining a maximizing result (which we can call 'consensus') that cannot be improved by debating any further. It would be possible to count the number of those people who would be satisfied with the result and then compare that number with that of those who would not, but this exact numerical exercise would not be an input in the decision-making. It is only required that the satisfactory result cannot be improved any more. Empirical examples of selection without voting in my Barue research are chief Sanhantamba and headman Nhamugodzo (Van Dokkum, 2015, pp. 207-209, 234-235, 244). An example where, apparently, a selection procedure did not reach an effective conclusion is that of the Sahatsiro chiefdom (Van Dokkum, 2020, pp. 167-169, 170-173). The latter example confirms the temporally extended character of the procedure but also shows that a

possible weakness goes with that character, namely that no definitive conclusion may be reached.

The aspect of repetitive cycles of evaluation resembles the approach on consensus by Lehrer and Wagner (1981). However, these authors model consensus through decision-makers' assignment of numerical weights to their fellow decision-makers, where decision-makers assign equally numerical subjective probabilities to options. There may be (e.g. televised) debates, but such debates are not part of the collective decision-making process. The model here above follows the Arrow/Sen approach more in using ordinal preferences, but it differs from it in that there is no mathematical machine which decides an outcome in one shot. In the model above, arguments that others may have can be taken into account during the concerned debate. Moreover, even *the totality of the distribution* of the (initial) individual preference orderings within the demos might also be evaluated by the decision-makers and be inputted back into the debate – an impossibility in the Arrow/Sen approach. An example of this in my Barue fieldwork is given by Samuel M who preferred a certain candidate for chief in the Sahatsiro area but would be happy with a (for him) second preference if it would end interminable dispute (*vachikana*) – Van Dokkum (2015, p. 241). With Arrow and Sen, a set of preference orderings is an input into a machine which then turns out an immediate verdict. With the consensus model as described here, such a set is an input into human evaluators. That does not make the approach 'unmathematical'.

This is not to say that people in Barue never apply choice-set procedures in their selection of chiefs or headmen. Examples are headmen Mulinganiza of Vulamite and Sadziwa of Nhachigo (Van Dokkum 2015, p. 236). The ethnographic data just show that choice-set methods are not the only possibility for collective choice.

Frelimo, (proto-)party politics and choice-set elections

Frelimo did not come into being as a party in the sense defined above. In 1962, Frelimo was an organization with the goal of obtaining independence for Mozambique, claiming to represent all Mozambicans (for historical details, see Van Dokkum, 2020). It only became sectional over time, and the choice-set idea played a crucial role in this during Frelimo's Second Congress in July 1968, still during the anti-colonial struggle.

At the Second Congress, Frelimo delegates elected a president out of two candidates, Mondlane and Simango. Curiously, no exact result is publicly known (Van Dokkum, 2020, pp. 84-89). Mondlane is generally seen as the winner, but this is only to be taken as the result of the mathematical machine which produced a re-

sult from a reconstructed 143 votes at the Congress with a margin narrow enough that contingent factors like biased recruitment of delegates may have had a decisive impact.[3] Simango furthermore claimed threats to certain of his supporters (USA, 1974). As I argue in (2020, p. 84), the electoral result boosted the influence of Frelimo's guerilla army commander Machel, with whom Mondlane was allied. This lay the basis for Frelimo's sectional character, not immediately but later when Machel himself had become president and could deny Frelimo membership to those who had no 'revolutionary' ideas (2020, p. 97).

One can see the force of the phenomenologically objective, abstracted from individuals (Schutz, 1967(1932), p. 33), but simultaneously relativistic character at work in the 1968 election. On its phenomenological self, the result was a Mondlane victory due to the working of the mathematical machine. There was subsequently no way to challenge it and so the election event, after completion, reduced to an objective historical thing (*pastness* – Schutz, ibid., pp. 207, 227). But there are at least three possible perspectives relative to it:

1. The election result was an unproblematic product of the mathematical machine (accepting the working of the machine at face value).
2. The election result was due to threats to certain voters, which directly affected some of the inputs (asserting manipulation of the machine).
3. The election result was due to biased recruitment of the voters, which indirectly affected the inputs (asserting framing of the machine).

These perspectives are not mere angles of viewing but can, as propositions, also be true or false. My point here is that (so far as the information goes) Simango apparently considered the second perspective but not the third (cf. Van Dokkum, 2020, pp. 87-88). Thus, while we can posit the objective existence of the machine, an actor may not be aware of all its relevant aspects (Schutz, p. 152). That circumstance may in itself become a new *fait accompli*, showing a criss-crossing process of objective and subjective manifestations of social life.

Multi-party elections in Mozambique from 1994 (excerpts)

At independence in 1975 Mozambique was controlled by Frelimo in a one-party framework with the physical removal and probable elimination of representatives of other parties (Van Dokkum, 2020, p. 115-122). From 1976 onwards, opponents of Frelimo were mostly organized in or associated with Renamo (Portuguese ac-

3 Reported numbers of provincial delegates made no systemic sense since they were neither uniform nor reflecting population numbers (Van Dokkum, 2020, pp. 85-86 – taking expected Niassa = 5 [*less* extreme], goodness-of-fit gives a very low *p*-value: 2.27E-8 [stats.libretext.org]).

ronym for Mozambican National Resistance), at the time a military organization representing a mixture of Rhodesian/South African racist minority and Mozambique-internal anti-Frelimo interests. With both Frelimo and Renamo having a past as military entities their emergence as parties in some supposed 'process of democratization' cannot be equalled to the emergence of parties in Britain or the United States in a historical sense. Phenomenologically, however, they can indeed be seen as sociopolitical tools for the exercise of power. Together with the introduction of the choice-set idea this has led to an almost complete failure to address Mozambique's predicament of one-party rule.

In 1994, Frelimo got less than half of the parliamentary vote, but the choice-set machine in the form of the electoral law at the time resulted in a majority in parliament for Frelimo, and 100% of the executive power (Van Dokkum, 2020, pp. 131, 137). As for the presidential election in 1999, it is certainly possible that Dhlakama was the preferred choice of the majority of the voters; in fact, former US President Carter has stated as much (CIP & Hanlon, 2023a), although the observation team bearing his name did not state so at the time (Van Dokkum, 2020, pp. 139-140; cf. the Carter Center's masquerading verbosity concerning the 2005 elections in Ethiopia – Abbink, 2011, p. 225n22). However, the numerical mode of operation made it possible for a collection of lost votes to tip the balance toward the incumbent (van Dokkum, 2020, App. 4). This has enabled Frelimo to perpetuate its own grip on subsequent elections in a self-reinforcing cycle over the decades, affecting credibility of the elections (2020, pp. 140-141).

The latest electoral event, the local elections of 11 October 2023, held in 65 municipalities, still did not cover the totality of Mozambique's territory, and moreover saw massive irregularities, where apparently even the pretence of clean elections is no longer attempted. The irregularities, too many to mention here, affect the registration, balloting, and counting processes (CIP & Hanlon, 2023b). It appears that Renamo did far better than the official results would show, even winning in the capital Maputo (CIP & Hanlon, 2023b, #160), but confirming this was not on the mind of the election authorities.

Excursus: United States

As stated above, in general the term 'democracy' in itself has no phenomenologically definite significance. Consequently, the expression 'The United States is a democratic country' has no phenomenologically definite significance either. Limiting ourselves to the procedure of electing the president, this is a combination of a complex of several choice-set determinations as formalized in the constitution (USA, 2007(1787)), and the practical circumstance of the presidential candi-

dates predominantly operating within frameworks of political parties. Above we saw already with Frelimo history that a political party may ensure political power through getting hold over the choice-set machine. There is no reason why this would not possibly apply to the United States. Within a phenomenological approach, the events of 6 January 2021, where Trump supporters invaded the Capitol during the vote count of the presidential election (Lonsdorf et al., 2024), are not at all surprising. Interestingly, as president of the Senate the Vice-President, in this case Pence, is supposed to lead the vote count (USA 2007(1787), II, 1-3). In this episode, Pence did not collude with the intruders, but surely the possibility of such an event must be considered real. This way of leaving the supervision of the choice-set machine to someone who might have himself a stake in it is indeed an embarrassing 'failure of the Founding Fathers' (Ackerman, 2005, p. 74).

Political parties are entities seeking political power, and choice-set mechanisms are ways to obtain paramount power. 'Non-violent conflict resolution' is what someone perhaps *expects* from these anthropological objects, but it is not part of their phenomenology, and evidently some people have different attitudes towards them from their perspectives.

Excursus: Ethiopia

Abbink (2011; 2017), already alluded to, discusses technical issues concerning the Ethiopian political situation that much resembles the situation in Mozambique. From 1991 the TPLF (Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front) was dominant in national politics within the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) until late 2019 (Abbink, 2017; Gardner, 2020). Like Frelimo, EPRDF-TPLF started as an insurgent movement against an unwanted regime (in the Ethiopian case the Mengistu regime). Like Frelimo, EPRDF-TPLF was 'not inclined to sharing or giving up power' (Abbink, 2017, p. 304). There have been elections, but as in Mozambique (at least at the national level) they were organized in such a way that the opposition could not win. Abbink also mentions the choice-set idea as contributing to the continuing 'electoral authoritarianism' in which the incumbent can easily frame the electoral process to its own advantage (Abbink, 2017, p. 305-312). Significant political change eventually did not occur through elections but because of protests, leading to the resignation of Hailemariam Desalegn in February 2018, after which Abiy Ahmed was elected by the parliament, so even this change was an internal affair of the incumbent power holders (Al Jazeera, 2020).

Discussion

The formal introduction of a multi-party system in Mozambican politics in the 1990s has not brought consensus in the country. I have argued in (2020; esp. p. 2) that the internal struggle within Frelimo during the anti-colonial war and the post-colonial war between Frelimo and Renamo are connected events. Elections like the Frelimo presidential election in 1968 and all national elections since 1994 have only reinforced the power position of a rather limited group of people first within Frelimo and then by extension within the independent country. Dislodging them through elections has so far appeared impossible. Perhaps not all the blame for this situation should be laid with the choice-set idea, but that idea does contribute to it.

Moreover, even in cases where the choice-set machine is not manipulated or framed, the machine can imply outcomes that contradict certain possible normative intuitions concerning 'democracy'. Suppose – as a thought experiment – that in some country there are two political parties and the polls in a certain year result in 3,846,941 votes for one party and 3,846,939 for the other. The choice-set framework then requires the leadership of the country to be given to the first party on the basis of the two votes difference. If in subsequent elections similar results occur, the choice-set idea demands that the leadership must again go to the same party, and so on in perpetuity, *only* because of an insignificant *numerical* difference irrespective of matters of content. A normative expectation to prevent concentration of power would be for political parties to *alternate* over time (Abbink, 2017, pp. 303, 307, 312, 318). But the choice-set framework is by definition incapable of accommodating such an argument, let alone enforcing such a situation.

Another way to soften the power of the (presumably) numerically superior party would be to hold many local elections, creating opportunities for the opposition to gain visibility. But in Mozambique local elections are limited to only a part of the territory (Van Dokkum, 2020, pp. 130, 132-134). The choice-set idea applies only to unanalysed 'alternatives' (options) without considering the internal content of the alternatives. Evidently, Frelimo's top preference the last few decades has been to limit local elections against an alternative in which local elections cover all of Mozambique's territory, optimizing its own interest. Frelimo can enforce that situation through its numerical overweight in parliament. Any morphological intuition that power should be distributed spatially across the country, is overruled by the choice-set intuition operating on the national level. Again, the choice-set idea is by definition not capable of accommodating these consider-

ations, except for the machine blindly ejecting a verdict when territorial coverage is itself treated as an input.

There are serious deficiencies in the ways 'democracy' is approached in the literature. As Abbink formulates it in the aforementioned article, there is a tendency to look at political change not meeting its 'promises' (2017, p. 310). Introduction of 'competitive' and 'inclusive' multi-party elections, as in Mozambique in 1994, is seen as equivalent to 'transition to democracy', like in Doorenspleet (2005), without considering how the multi-party systems actually function (cf. Abbink, 2017, p. 316), which may not cover all possible intuitions about 'democracy'. Phenomenologically speaking, this is a matter of unduly mingling normative expectations (about treating multi-party elections *as* 'democracy') with objective descriptions (about certain types of collective choice methods with certain effects).

Conclusion

Phenomenologically, the present political situation in Mozambique is not at all surprising. Political parties are sociopolitical entities to obtain power, and choice-set elections are machines to extract leadership positions from sets of preference orderings among the population. That a party would try to secure a desirable outcome of the choice-set machine through manipulation and/or framing the machine is, seen from the perspective of obtaining power, very natural.

We see here an example of an objective circumstance in the social world, and hence of the possibility of objectivity in social science. The objective existence of Frelimo's entrenchment becomes apparent if one tries to imagine how it might be changed. One might, for instance, try to convince Frelimo not to influence the choice-set machine through manipulation or framing, or, being Renamo, taking up arms again (as happened in 2013: Van Dokkum, 2020, pp. 141-142). Here aspects of relative positioning in viewing a sociopolitical situation may crop up. Perhaps we have to agree here with Schutz (1967(1932), pp. 97-98) that at this point we leave the *strictly* phenomenological method. But the phenomenological study of social objects can be fruitful not only as a tool to scrape off distorting cognitive interferences in studying these objects but also as an enabler in the making of comparisons. Phenomenology does not tell the whole analytical story, but it can tell a great deal of it.

References

Abbink, J. (2011). Democracy Deferred: Understanding Elections and the Role of Donors in Ethiopia. In J. Abbink & M. de Bruijn (Eds.), *Land, Law and Politics in Africa. Mediating Conflict and Reshaping the State* (pp. 213-239). Brill/Africa Studiecentrum.

Abbink, J. (2017). Paradoxes of Electoral Authoritarianism: The 2015 Ethiopian Elections as Hegemonic Performance. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *35*(3), 303-323.

Abbink, J., & Van Dokkum, A. (Eds.) (2008a). *Verdeeld Afrika: etniciteit, conflict en de grenzen van de staat*. AMB.

Abbink, J., & Van Dokkum, A. (Eds.) (2008b). *Dilemmas of Development: Conflicts of Interest and Their Resolutions in Modernizing Africa*. African Studies Centre.

Ackerman, B. (2005). *The Failure of the Founding Fathers. Jefferson, Marshall, and the Rise of Presidential Democracy*. Belknap Press.

Al Jazeera (2018). Abiy Ahmed Sworn in as Ethiopia's Prime Minister. *Al Jazeera*, 2 April. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/4/2/abiy-ahmed-sworn-in-as-ethiopias-prime-minister>, accessed 15 January 2024.

Arrow, K.J. (1963(1951)). *Social Choice and Individual Values*. Yale University Press.

CIP & Hanlon, J. (2023a). Reading the Numbers of the CNE Election Results – Part 1. Emailed *Mozambique Elections* bulletin, #170, 31 October. Centro de Integridade Pública.

CIP & Hanlon, J. (2023b). (Array of emailed *Mozambique Elections* bulletin issues on local elections of 11 October 2023). Centro de Integridade Pública. See also <https://www5.open.ac.uk/technology/mozambique/>.

Doorenspleet, R. (2005). *Democratic Transitions. Exploring the Structural Sources of the Fourth Wave*. Lynne Rienner.

Gardner, T. (2020). Will Abiy Ahmed's Bet on Ethiopia's Political Future Pay Off?. *Foreign Policy*, January 21. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/21/will-abiy-ahmed-eprdf-bet-ethiopia-political-future-pay-off/>, accessed 15 January 2024.

Husserl, E. (1989(1952)). *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution* (R. Rojcewicz & A. Schuwer, Trans.). Kluwer.

Lawson, K. (1976). *The Comparative Study of Political Parties*. St. Martin's Press.

Lehrer, K., & Wagner, C. (1981). *Rational Consensus in Science and Society. A Philosophical and Mathematical Study*. Reidel.

Little, I.M.D. (1952). Social Choice and Individual Values. *Journal of Political Economy*, *60*(5), 422-432.

Lonsdorf, K., Dorning, C., Isackson, A., Kelly, M.L., & Chang, A. (2024). *A Timeline of the Jan. 6 Capitol Attack – Including When and How Trump Responded*. NPR: <https://www.npr.org/2022/01/05/1069977469/a-timeline-of-how-the-jan-6-attack-unfolded-including-who-said-what-and-when>, accessed 9 January 2024.

Mourier-Genoud, E. (2020). The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique: Origins, Nature and Beginning. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *14*(3), 396-412.

Schutz, A. (1967(1932)). *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (G. Walsh & F. Lehnert, Trans.). Heinemann Educational Books.

Sen, A.K. (1970). *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*. Holden-Day.

South Africa (1994). Act to Amend the Constitution of the Republic of South. Africa, 1993, so as to Provide for the Appointment of a Person Who is Not a Member of Parliament as a Minister in the Cabinet; and to Provide for Matters in Connection Therewith. Fourth Amendment Act, Act No. 14 [concerning substitution of subsection (2) of section 88]. *Government Gazette*, *351*(15986), p. 5. <https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/act14of1994.pdf>, accessed 11 January 2024.

USA (1974). Amconsul Lourenço Marques, 8 July. *Coremo's Secretary of Foreign Affairs Arrives in Mozambique*. <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=154600&dt=-2474&dl=1345>, accessed 5 February 2018.

USA (2007[1787]). *The Constitution of the United States*. Government Printing Office. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CDOC-110hdoc50/pdf/CDOC-110hdoc50.pdf>, accessed 27 December 2023.

Van Dokkum, A. (2015). *Politics, History and Conceptions of Democracy in Barue District, Mozambique* [PhD thesis, VU University Amsterdam].

Van Dokkum, A. (2020). *Nationalism and Territoriality in Barue and Mozambique. Independence, Belonging, Contradiction*. Brill/Afrika Studiecentrum.

Van Dokkum, A. (2021). *Selecting Chiefs and Other Leaders in Western Barue District, Mozambique: Choice Set vs. Moderate Communitarianism in Collective Choice*. Ukama Academic.

Van Dokkum, A. (2023). *Mathematical Anti-Foundation in Cultural Indeterminacy*. Presentation University of Macau, Department of Sociology, 15 March.

Weber, M. (1922). *Grundriß der Sozialökonomik. III. Abteilung Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. J.C.B Mohr (Paul Siebeck).

Wilton, S. (2009). Political Parties and Elections. In J. Brodie & S. Rein (Eds.), *Critical Concepts. An Introduction to Politics*, fourth edition (pp. 144-156). Pearson.

Wiredu, K. (2001). Tradition, Democracy and Political Legitimacy in Contemporary Africa. In E. Kurimoto (Ed.), *Rewriting Africa: Toward Renaissance or Collapse?* JCAS Symposium Series No. 14 (pp. 161-172). The Japan Center for Area Studies.

9

The Meritorious Rectangle of Anthropology, History, Politics, and Culture in Ethiopian Studies: A Research Compass

Ahmed Hassen Omer

Ethiopian studies is a multidisciplinary academic field focused on the cultural and societal aspects of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Researchers in this field are collectively referred to as 'Etiopisants'. It brings together contributions from both European and non-European researchers and has developed through disciplines such as philology, linguistics, history, sociology, anthropology, and ethnography. The field encompasses the study of Ethiopian history, politics, diverse cultures, and religions.

The classical core of Ethiopian studies centred on the philology of Christian Ethiopia and Ethio-Semitic linguistic communities. While this approach remains relevant, the field has expanded to include a broader scope. This encompasses the Afro-Asiatic and non-Afro-Asiatic languages and cultures of Ethiopia, peripheral regions, and the southern diverse cultures. Additionally, it includes non-Christian beliefs, such as Islam and indigenous faiths, as well as contemporary issues like gender, environmental studies, and development.

Jon Abbink's work has significantly contributed to the expansion of Ethiopian studies, particularly regarding the peoples of Southwest Ethiopia. His publications in the *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* and his involvement with the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and Addis Ababa University's College of Social Sciences have been instrumental. He has played a key role in training academic staff for doctoral studies, supporting field research, and aiding students with research methodologies.

Abbink's contributions to the International Conference of Ethiopian Studies are noteworthy. He has been a regular participant and an active member of the International Organizing Committee, demonstrating genuine and collegial commit-

ment. The author of the present chapter organized three consecutive International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies in Dire Dawa (2012), Warsaw (2015), and Mekelle (2020), in collaboration with French, Polish, and Ethiopian colleagues, respectively. This chapter recognizes Professor Abbink's outstanding role and his enduring dedication to the field of Ethiopian studies and the community of *Etiopisants*.

The contributions of Jon Abbink to Ethiopian studies represent a unique and comprehensive approach that one can aptly describe as the 'Meritorious Rectangle'. This framework integrates four critical disciplines: anthropology, history, politics, and culture, creating a robust and holistic research compass that guides the exploration and understanding of Ethiopian societies.

In the field of social sciences, anthropology is the systematic study of humanity, aimed at understanding human evolutionary origins, our distinctiveness as a species, and the vast diversity in our social existence across the world and throughout time (Eriksen, 2001; Kottak, 2017). The discipline focuses on understanding both our shared humanity and diversity, engaging with various ways of being in the world. Similarly, history encompasses past events, human memory, discoveries, collections, social organizations, and the interpretation of social events within specific contexts (Tosh, 2015; Munslow, 2012). Historians seek knowledge of the past using historical sources such as written documents, oral accounts, art, material artifacts, and ecological markers.

Additionally, political science is a branch of knowledge that deals with the state and systems of government, analysing political activity and behaviour scientifically (Heywood, 2019; Easton, 1965). It is essential to recognize that culture encompasses all aspects of life, including arts, beliefs, and institutions, passed down through generations. Culture represents the way of life for an entire society, including codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, and art (Geertz, 1973; Hofstede, 2001).

When these disciplines – anthropology, history, political science, and culture – are combined, they provide a comprehensive and methodological approach to research. This interdisciplinary collaboration enhances the depth and breadth of understanding within the social sciences. Such methodological approaches that cross boundaries and integrate these fields significantly advance our knowledge and research capabilities.

Deborah James (2007) emphasized the importance of integrating anthropology and history to produce meaningful research. She highlighted the 1980 History

and Anthropology Conference, hosted by the *Journal of South African Studies*, where it was argued that 'only the insights of history could rescue anthropology from accusations of static functionalist model making' (*Journal of South African Studies*, 1981). The intersection of anthropology and history has been a focal point for both disciplines since the 1950s. E.E. Evans-Pritchard's work in 1962 underscored the inevitability of these disciplines converging, forming a substantial partnership in the latter half of the 20th century.

Saurabh Dube (2007) argued that anthropological understandings have varied in their approach to temporality and history, necessitating further examination of the reciprocal principles underpinning both disciplines. Similarly, Don Kalb and colleagues (1996) explored the intellectual connections between anthropology and history, contributing to the development of historical anthropology and anthropological history. These disciplines, while distinct, share several parameters and traits, forming the two pillars of the social science research framework.

In the realm of politics, the focus is on understanding societal issues through the study of government structures, institutional processes, and public debates involving political, economic, and cultural syntheses. Kamaramava (2000) successfully illustrated this in his work on politics and society in the developing world. Political stability is crucial for preventing conflict, which often arises from economic resource disparities. According to Luiz (2000), a capable state machinery is essential for creating a political environment conducive to growth.

Culture, as defined by Griswold (2013), is a complex set of knowledge, beliefs, art, customs, and other practices developed by human societies. The pressures of globalization have significantly influenced cultural policies worldwide, prompting debates among scholars. Robins (2016) noted that recent discussions in arts and cultural policy have focused on the changing nature of culture due to globalization, often framed within market-based solutions. Politics and culture thus form the remaining pillars of the social science research framework, completing the comprehensive 'Meritorious Rectangle'. Ethiopia, located in the Horn of Africa, has been a cradle of human societies for millennia, attracting researchers from various social science fields. These researchers employ interdisciplinary approaches to understand the diverse peoples and cultures of Ethiopia. While some scholars assert that anthropological research in Ethiopia has developed through workshops and international conferences, it is also evident that high-quality researchers have deeply invested in this task.

Professor Jon Abbink, a Dutch anthropologist and historian, has made significant contributions to the study of the history and cultures of the Horn of Africa,

particularly Ethiopia. Abbink's extensive research covers a wide range of topics, including politics and governance, making his career as a prolific anthropologist and historian particularly notable over the last four decades. His unique approach integrates anthropology, history, politics, and culture, forming what one may describe as a 'rectangular research framework'.

Abbink has been instrumental in compiling comprehensive bibliographies on Eritrean-Ethiopian studies across different periods (1960-1995, 1995-2010, 2010-2016, and 2016-2022). His work serves as a crucial resource for scholars and highlights his commitment to advancing Ethiopian studies. One of Abbink's notable contributions is his methodological approach in studying the Me'en community (1992). This work reconstructs the history of the Me'en's territorial clusters in the Kafa area of southwest Ethiopia. Similarly, his research on the Surma/Suri ethnic group (1997) addresses their lack of political representation and highlights the need for inclusive Ethiopian studies.

Abbink's interdisciplinary research extends to exploring the shrinking cultural and political space of East African pastoral societies (1997), and the intimate relationship between anthropology and history in studying Ethiopian Islam (1998). His works in the early 21st century further underscore his expertise in documenting the dynamics of Ethiopian-Eritrean relations, the challenges of Ethiopian elections, and the role of ethnicity in conflict generation (2003, 2006). His analysis of these topics contributes to a deeper understanding of the sociopolitical landscape in Ethiopia.

In addition to his work on anthropology and history, Abbink has extensively studied religious dynamics in Ethiopia. His research on Christian-Muslim relations (2011) examines the emerging polemics between these communities and their implications for public life. Abbink argues that religious identities are becoming more central in civic identity, influenced by both state dynamics and global interactions. This theme is further explored in his analysis of the intersection of religion and politics in Africa (2014), where he discusses the significant role of religion in societal development and democratization processes.

Abbink's research on the Suri people in southwest Ethiopia (2009) provides valuable insights into the community's struggles with conflicts and small arms proliferation. His work delves into why the Suri, an agropastoral community, face challenges in conflict resolution and alliance formation with neighbouring groups. This study exemplifies his broader interest in the sociopolitical dynamics of marginalized groups in Ethiopia.

Abbink's interdisciplinary methodology showcases his ability to merge these fields seamlessly, offering a multifaceted perspective on Ethiopia's complex social fabric. His work on the Me'en and Surma/Suri communities highlights the importance of historical and anthropological insights in understanding territorial and political dynamics. By addressing the shrinking cultural and political space of East African pastoral societies, Abbink underscores the interplay between anthropology and politics, advocating for inclusive policies that recognize the diverse needs of marginalized groups.

In the realm of religion, Abbink's research on Christian-Muslim relations and the broader implications of religious dynamics in Ethiopian public life illustrates the critical intersection of anthropology, history, and politics. His analysis of the Tigray conflict further exemplifies his capacity to apply a comprehensive lens to contemporary issues, integrating historical context, political analysis, and cultural understanding.

Abbink's extensive bibliographic compilations on Eritrean-Ethiopian studies serve as invaluable resources, reflecting his dedication to documenting and advancing knowledge in these interconnected fields (cf., 1990, 2010). His work on the sociopolitical challenges and conflicts within Ethiopia provides essential insights into the causes and consequences of ethnic tensions and governance issues, emphasizing the need for balanced and informed policy-making.

In conclusion, Professor Jon Abbink's contributions epitomize the *Meritorious Rectangle* of anthropology, history, politics, and culture, forming a research compass that enhances our understanding of Ethiopian societies. His interdisciplinary approach not only enriches Ethiopian studies but also sets a standard for holistic and integrated research in the social sciences. By drawing connections between these four pillars, Abbink's work offers a comprehensive framework that continues to guide and inspire scholars in their exploration of Ethiopia's rich and diverse heritage.

References

Abbink, J. (1990). *Ethiopian Society and History: A Bibliography of Ethiopian Studies 1957-1990 (No. 45)*. African Studies Centre.

Abbink, J. (1992). An Ethno-historical Perspective on Me'en Territorial Organization (Southwest Ethiopia). *Anthropos*, *87*, 351-364.

Abbink, J. (1997a). The Shrinking Cultural and Political Space of East African Pastoral Societies. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, *6*(1), 1-15.

Abbink, J. (1997b). Authority and Leadership in Surma Society (Ethiopia). *Africa*, *67*(3), 317-332.

Abbink, J. (1998). An Historical-anthropological Approach to Islam in Ethiopia: Issues of Identity and Politics. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *11*(2), 109-124.

Abbink, J. (2000). *Meanings of Violence: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Berg.

Abbink, J. (2003). Ethiopia-Eritrea: Proxy Wars and Prospects of Peace in the Horn of Africa. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *21*(3), 407-426.

Abbink, J. (2006a). Discomfiture of Democracy? The 2005 Election Crisis in Ethiopia and Its Aftermath. *African Affairs*, *105*(419), 173-199.

Abbink, J. (2006b). Ethnicity and Conflict Generation in Ethiopia: Some Problems and Prospects of Ethno-regional Federalism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *24*(3), 389-413.

Abbink, J. (2009). Conflict and Social Change on the South-west Ethiopian Frontier: An Analysis of Suri Society. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *3*(1), 22-41.

Abbink, J. (2010). *A Bibliography of Ethiopian-Eritrean Studies in Society and History, 1995-2010*. African Studies Centre.

Abbink, J. (2011). Religion in Public Spaces: Emerging Muslim-Christian Polemics in Ethiopia. *African Affairs*, *110*(439), 253-274.

Abbink, J. (2014). Religion and Politics in Africa: The Future of Secular States. *Africa Spectrum*, *49*(3), 83-106.

Abbink, J. (2016). Rethinking the Anthropology of Ethiopia: From Ethnography to Explanation. In A. Hassen, E. Ficquet, & T. Osmond (Eds.), *Movements in Ethiopia, Ethiopia in Movement: Proceedings of the 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (pp. 37-52). Tsehai Publishers.

Abbink, J. (2020). Religion and Violence in the Horn of Africa: Trajectories of Mimetic Rivalry and Escalation Between Political Islam and the State. *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, *21*(2), 194-215.

Abbink, J. (2021). *The Politics of Conflict in Northern Ethiopia, 2020-2021: A Study of War Making, Media Bias and Policy Struggle*. ASCL Working Paper, 152.

Dube, S. (2007). *Historical Anthropology*. Oxford University Press.

Eriksen, T. H. (2001). *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*. Pluto Press.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (1962). *Essays in Social Anthropology*. Faber and Faber.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.

Griswold, W. (2013). *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. SAGE Publications.

Heywood, A. (2019). *Politics*. London, England: Macmillan International Higher Education.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*. SAGE Publications.

James, D. (2007). *Gaining Ground? 'Rights' and 'Property' in South African Land Reform*. Routledge. *Journal of South African Studies*, 1981, *Vol. I* (2).

Kalb, D., Marks, H., & Tak, H. (1996). Historical anthropology and anthropological history: Two distinct programs. *Focaal*, 26/27, 5-13.

Kamaramava, M. (2000). *Politics and Society in the Developing World* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
Kottak, C.P. (2017). *Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity*. McGraw-Hill Education.
Luiz, J. (2000). The Politics of State, Society and Economy. *International Journal of Social Economics*, *27*(3), 227-243. DOI:10.1108/0306829001028655
Munslow, A. (2012). *A History of History*. Routledge.
Robins, K. (2026). *The Globalization of Culture*. Sage Publications.
Tosh, J. (2015). *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*. Routledge.

10

‘Unjust Histories’: Anthropological and Ethno-Historical Inquiries on Slavery and Dependency in Ethiopia[1]

Alexander Meckelburg

Introduction

Jon Abbink suggested that integrating the study of rituals into broader comparative approaches to the study of Ethiopian societies could allow researchers to develop a more comprehensive understanding of cultural, social, and political dynamics (Abbink, 2016). By comparing how different communities within a region are impacted by policies and economic changes, researchers can highlight inequalities that need to be addressed. Understanding these impacts can lead to more equitable policies that consider the historical and cultural circumstances of each group (Abbink, 2000). Would such a comparative approach enhance our understanding of slavery in Ethiopia? Could we delineate boundaries between different systems of bondage more effectively by comparing historical practices and vernacular variants of institutionalized enslavement and manumission across Ethiopian societies?

Slavery, often a non-topic in much of mainstream Ethiopianist discourse, might seem like a curious starting point for this discussion. However, this perspective evolves when we consider how little we understand about the nuances of slavery and abolition in Ethiopia. The prevalence of the *gabbar* system and the rich debates surrounding its eradication (e.g. within the student movement since the 1960s), in contrast to the relative neglect of slavery in Ethiopian historiography, raise intriguing questions.

---

1 Research for this article summarizes findings and academic collaborations from two consecutive ERC-funded grants, SLAFNET (2017-2022) and AFRAB (2020-to date). These projects have catalysed a re-evaluation of slavery in Ethiopian history within a broader African context and have generated impactful research led by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and UCL in recent years (cp. Becker et al., 2023; Bonacci & Meckelburg, 2017, 2023; Takele Merid & Meckelburg, 2024). Research and writing of this paper were supported by the ERC-funded AFRAB project, led by Prof. Benedetta Rossi at UCL (grant agreement No. 885418).

It can be hypothesized that the *gabbar* system, with its tangible manifestations and direct impact mainly on non-Christian communities, has garnered more attention and provoked more debate. This system, particularly noted in the southward expansion of the Kingdom of Shewa since the late 19th century, involved land alienation, tributary subordination through serfdom, and surplus extraction. Consequently, discussions about the *gabbar* system have been more prevalent in academic and public spheres, and the rare spaces where both meet, than those about slavery.[2]

It seems crucial to revisit a fundamental question: what constituted slavery in Ethiopia? Is it the historical formation defined by human ownership, where the owner holds absolute rights over the life, death, body, and labour of other people? At present no such form of ownership exists legally, though there are forms of modern slavery, yet outside of the scope of my present reflections. How did different political formations and structures influence slavery across Ethiopia? Researchers are tasked with assessing the complex meanings of slavery not only within the context of the Ethiopian state but also from the perspective of the diverse 'vernacular terminologies' within Ethiopian societies. Studying slavery in Ethiopia necessitates examining it within the micro-historical context of the country's plurality of societies. What are the moral questions raised by the imperative to confront and understand the legacy of slavery in Ethiopian society? Both descendants of enslaved individuals and those with ties to a lineage of slave holders grapple with the shame and discomfort associated with this history. Yet, descendants of slave holders also show certain levels of nostalgia for the familiar relationship with former slaves or vassals.

A promising path forward lies in considering the periphery and its intricate internal dynamics and relations with the 'centre' within the broader context of Ethiopian history. Jon Abbink, discussing the Ethiopian centre-periphery paradigm, suggests that the periphery is not merely a geographic area but rather is defined by the distribution and accessibility of power (Abbink, 2002). I would add that peripheries are fluid and can themselves contain further peripheries. Even within the central regions, certain groups, such as occupational and caste-like communities, often experience marginalization, a situation reinforced by cultural taboos and regulations. Essentially, each periphery has its own centre, and this centre, in turn, spawns its own peripheries. From the perspective of this paper, these

2 One such meeting point was the 2019 SLAFNET Spring school organized at the Institute for Ethiopian Studies with its attempt to a first of its kind public exhibition on slavery in Ethiopia: <https://slafnet.hypotheses.org/files/2019/04/SLAFNET-Spring-School-Program.pdf>. SLAFNET is an ERC funded project, 'Slavery in Africa: A dialogue between Europa and Africa' (grant agreement No. 734596).

peripheries not only served as *slaving zones* for the (imperial) centre, but also encompassed smaller, internal zones of enslavement. Understanding these layered dynamics is critical for grasping the role of slavery in shaping the complex interactions between the state and its citizens across Ethiopia's varied ethnic landscape.

Slavery, though a deeply entrenched institution in Ethiopian history, has often been overshadowed in discourse due to its social and political sensitivity and perhaps, its association with *national shame*, e.g. due to its politicization in the League of Nations and the Italian propaganda leading to war. While discussions about the *gabbar* system have enriched the study of the periphery, peasant perspectives, and agrarian transformation, it likewise blurs the lines between the *gabbar* system and slavery, with both concepts frequently lacking clear distinctions and moving interchangeably to discuss what was often branded an Ethiopian 'feudal order' (for the southern conquest traditions, cf. Mohammed Hassen, 2002; Abbas H. Gnamo, 2014). The discursive fuzzy boundary between slave and peasant, and other appellative dimensions of slavery, first became apparent to me during my fieldwork; it was commonly expressed that during the imperial era, peasants were 'like slaves to the landlord', a phrase that vividly characterizes social hierarchies. In the borderlands between Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia, Mao informants represented *corvée* labour as akin to slavery, highlighting the coercive conditions endured by marginalized communities (Meckelburg, 2015, 2019). In his study on *corvée* labour and its abolition, Bahru Zewde introduces the terms of 'unfree labour outside of slavery', a choice which illuminates the theoretical and practical challenges of discussing complex relations of dependency, labour dynamics, and freedom in the region (Bahru Zewde, 2023). Moreover, slavery is often viewed through the lens of Euro-American industrial exploitation, which overlooks its complex cultural dimensions and its multiple trajectories for descendants of formerly enslaved persons in Ethiopia. Recent studies have started to explore these complexities, recognizing slavery's deep cultural roots and its intersections with exclusion, racialization, and marginality (Bombe, Bosha, 2018; Boylston, 2018; Kiya Gezahegne, 2018; Meckelburg, 2015). Emerging scholarship invites further theoretical exploration into how labour, race, and power dynamics interact in Ethiopian history, challenging established perceptions of marginalization, stratification, and dependency. [3]

3 A forthcoming edited volume offers revaluation of slavery through multiple Ethiopian case studies and important new perspectives on the post slavery-society (see also further below): *Slavery and the Slave Trade in Ethiopian Studies* (Supplement to *AETHIOPICA International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies*), edited by Alexander Meckelburg, Giulia Bonacci, Serena Tolino, & Ahmed Hassen.

During the 2019 SLAFNET Spring school in Addis Ababa, a participant raised thought-provoking questions about the presentation on slave descendants, class, and social stratification in Wollega among the Oromo and their neighbours. This individual expressed concerns about what he perceived as a Eurocentric bias in the project. Specifically, he was uncomfortable with terms like *slavery* and the racialization of 'blackness', suggesting that such terminology, rooted in Euro-American historical contexts, may not fully capture the complexities of Ethiopian social dynamics. In essence, he criticized presentations that sought to reassess social stratification based on perceived or real slave descent. Some presenters, and by proxy the organizers, faced accusations from Ethiopian colleagues of fostering a Eurocentric viewpoint. While there may be some truth to this assertion, it also raises broader questions about agency and representation within the narrative of Ethiopian state and ethnic history: it prompts inquiries into the nature of slavery compared to other prominent features of Ethiopian dependencies and questions of victimhood. Who owned slaves and who were the enslaved? The present author, examining group stigma of the Mao vis-à-vis the majority Oromo population, explained that the term 'slave' appears to persist not just as a carryover of historical stigma but also as a framework to understand present-day social hierarchies.[4] Such research raises the question whether *slave descent* might eventually be supplanted by alternative explanations for such hierarchies.

Moving forward, there is a need to enhance the synthesis with broader Africanist literature and research, which has significantly advanced the understanding of domestic and internal dynamics of slavery. This enriched perspective would provide a valuable and fruitful repository for Ethiopian empirical materials (cf. Bonacci, 2011; Crummey, 1990). In the following I will try to address these through three hypotheses:

1 Slavery does not depend on political structure.
2 Slavery is part of a wide range of dependencies in Ethiopia.
3 A post-slavery perspective is particularly promising for future research.

Slavery does not depend on political structure

In the Christian highlands of Ethiopia, the relationship between slave-owner and enslaved was governed by the *Fetha Negast*, the Christian law code (Pankhurst, 2011; Takele Merid, & Meckelburg, 2024; Yonas Ashine Demisse, 2022). A central issue in the study of slavery is the disproportionate emphasis of academic

4 Küspert-Rakotondrainy, Sophie, The Power of the Past: Slavery, Stigma and Social Stratification in Western Wälläga, forthcoming in Alexander Meckelburg, Giulia Bonacci, Serena Tolino, & Ahmed Hassen (Eds.), *Slavery and the Slave Trade in Ethiopian Studies* (Supplement to *AETHIOPICA International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies*).

knowledge on Christian polities. This imbalance stems largely from the historical context of knowledge production, with 19th and early 20th centuries European philologists, linguists, historians, and archaeologists working foremostly on Christian spaces. Although anti-slavery treaties with Afar sultans and Somali chiefs along the Red Sea coast were also signed, colonial powers were drawn primarily to the Christian highlands to build alliances for controlling the Red Sea and hinterland trade.[5] Consequently, the highland kingdoms became the primary regulators of the trade, shaping how slavery was perceived more broadly in the Ethiopian space and in international relations with Ethiopia.

The depiction of rampant African slavery grew with European exploration: European reports framed what was recognized as slavery through European eyes. This influenced the narrative of slavery in the Ethiopian context. The discourse on slavery primarily relies on foundational texts, including historical documents and academic works, which necessitate examination within their historical context. Margery Perham succinctly noted that certain 18th-century explorers failed to see any moral qualms with a practice deeply rooted in their own societies. Perham's influential chapter on slavery, co-authored with Frank De Halpert, previously legal advisor for the Anti-Slavery Department appointed by Haile Selassie, has significantly influenced subsequent scholarship, including the works of Suzanne Miers and others exploring the state's role in combating slavery (Miers, 1997; Perham, 1948).

However, this emphasis on state intervention has led to a somewhat oversimplified binary framework of slavery and freedom in an abolitionist context. This approach has largely framed it as a problem of state intervention, or the lack of it (Coleman, 2008; Miers, 1997; Whyte, 2014). While this perspective acknowledges the state's significant role in perpetuating and suppressing slavery, an exclusive emphasis on state intervention tends to obscure the nuanced geographical and spatial dynamics of slavery within Ethiopian societies.

Attempting to characterize Ethiopia as a 'society with slaves/slave society', a gradual difference defined by the magnitude, involvement, and importance of slavery in any given society, invites exploration across Ethiopian societies (Finley, 1998; Lenski & Cameron, 2018). Finley's criteria for identifying slave societies emphasize the significant presence of slaves and their role. Precise quantifications of slavery in Ethiopia remain elusive and politically charged, which renders an ap-

5 For the Issa treaty, see Annex, VII. No. LXXXXVIII, Treaty with the Esa tibe-1884, Committee of Imperial Defence, Overseas Defence Committee, Somaliland Protectorate-Proposed Cession of Zeila to Ethiopia, 1934-FO 141_497_2, National Archive, London.

plication of Finley's criteria difficult. In the mid-19th century, increased scrutiny of slavery in Ethiopia arose due to British interests and the growth of global abolitionism. Reports by travellers highlight the thriving slave trade, providing scholars like R. Pankhurst with numbers suggesting significant exports of over 25,000 slaves exported annually from Ethiopia between 1800 and 1850 (Austen, 1988; Pankhurst, 1964, 1968). At the forefront of this trade were the state-like, hierarchically organized kingdoms of northern Ethiopia. In contrast, the decentralized societies of the south often appeared as victims of the trade.

Based on West African examples, Paul Lovejoy suggests rethinking these dichotomies in ways that can also fit in the Ethiopian context. Lovejoy challenges the oversimplified distinctions between state and stateless societies, as well as between *Slave Societies* and *Societies with Slaves* as rather obstructive for the actual complexities of political organization and slavery. According to Lovejoy, the mere presence or absence of a state does not sufficiently explain the variations in slave systems (Lovejoy, 2018). Benedetta Rossi echoes Lovejoy's stance, stressing the necessity to engage with local meanings and embodied experiences to establish a foundation for comparative analysis. She warns against making assumptions about the relevance of macro-historical structures without first conducting thorough micro-historical analyses. Rossi proposes that a comparative semantic examination could reveal similarities and differences in the conceptualizations of slavery among various regional actors. However, she acknowledges the challenges posed by the scarcity of direct sources for many historical actors, particularly in societies that did not extensively document their laws and norms (Rossi, 2021). This serves as a valuable reminder for a broader comparative study of slavery across Ethiopia that is mindful of vernacular conceptualizations and the careful revisiting of sources. In turn, this calls for comparative research on Ethiopian slaveries both before and after the influence of national campaigns for the abolition of domestic slavery. Questions arise regarding the political structure, slave identities, the legal justifications of slavery and manumission, the cultural logic and practice of manumission and its aftermaths.

While nearly all Ethiopian societies had slaves, most slaveries remain unstudied. Despite occasional inquiries in specific regions like Bela Shangul and Jimma, comparisons across societies in the sub-region are lacking, and sources are scarce (Abdussamad H. Ahmad, 1999; Tekalign W. Mariam, 1989). Travel accounts mention local forms of slavery, but prolonged residence in distant kingdoms was rare, leading to potentially skewed understanding based on perceptions from neighbours or guides (James, 2007). Advancing research requires revisiting historical sources and employing anthropological inquiries to reassess the memory, practices, and implications of slavery in each cultural-linguistic context. Seminal

works like Haberland's *Sklaverei im alten Wolayta* stand out for their in-depth treatment of slavery, hierarchy, and work prior to conquest (Haberland, 1992). The Omotic kingdoms of the pre-conquest area were slave-holding societies in their own right (see also Lange, 1982). Critical re-evaluation highlights the limitation in understanding slavery through the perspectives of masters and owner societies, emphasizing the need for more inclusive approaches (Data Dea Barata, 2017). Wendy James underscored the importance of considering the viewpoints of enslaved individuals and marginalized groups in understanding the complexities of slavery in Ethiopia (James, 1988). Slaveries existed across various political formations, yet the trajectories of slavery have been moulded into hierarchies created by conquest, expressed in post-imperial social identities at various scales.

Slavery is part of a wide range of dependencies in Ethiopia

If slavery has been practiced across the Ethiopian region and enslavement was a shared experience for many communities, what are the methodological implications of a comparative perspective? One approach to understanding slavery is to demystify it by placing it within a continuum of possible marginalities across time and space. While various types of dependency are often discussed separately, there is a growing need for broader comparative approaches to understand the levels of coercion and marginalization of different groups in Ethiopia. This approach is crucial for delineating the social boundaries of slave descendants. The issue of marginalized groups in Ethiopian social history is pervasive, with occupational groups receiving significant attention in anthropological studies, while serfs and slaves are frequently politicized in discussions on social history.

However, there is an imminent danger of oversimplification in this approach. A potential solution lies in the concept of *asymmetrical dependency* introduced by the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies. This framework moves beyond the dichotomy of *slavery versus freedom*. By integrating slavery with more thoroughly studied forms of dependency, this approach could help clarify the boundaries between different systems (Winnebeck et al., 2023). At its heart, asymmetrical dependency describes unequal relationships marked by one-sided dependence and control over resources. Power dynamics are sustained between actors and solidified by institutional contexts that limit capacity to resist or express grievances, deepening entrenched power imbalances. Consequently, a continuum of unfreedom and various shades of bondage emerge. A deeper understanding would necessitate full appreciation of the complex layers of dependency across Ethiopian societies.

Legal and institutional relationships, shaped by economic status, racial classification, and cultural norms, establish power dynamics that consign certain individuals to dependence. In the anthropological literature in Ethiopia, slave descendants are often identified as part of marginalized communities (Epple, 2017; Freeman & Pankhurst, 2003). These communities typically include craftworkers such as tanners, blacksmiths, and weavers, as well as hunters, musicians, and slave descendants. In cross-country comparisons, these groups are usually seen as distinct yet integral to the mainstream community. They often face rejection based on cultural taboos related to impurity and are usually confined to their prescribed roles, unable to intermarry or achieve higher social or political office. These societal norms reinforce their status based on perceived impurities or racial and social differences. Knowledge regarding continuity between the impurity of slave descendent akin to craft workers is expanding. The work of Bosha Bombe on the purification rituals of slave descendants in Gamo is particularly noteworthy (Bosha Bombe, 2018). Susanne Epple has done remarkable work in bringing together comparative studies on various marginalities in southern Ethiopia (Epple, 2014, 2018).

Another example of asymmetrical dependency is seen in the *gabbar-neftegnya* system, where the conflation of slavery with serfdom has muddied understanding of various dependencies in Ethiopian history. Studies often lack clarity, complicating efforts to develop a coherent analytical framework. A *gabbar*, for instance, would surrender over two-thirds of his produce to the landlord, provide labour, pay taxes to the state, and contribute to the construction of government infrastructure, sometimes even far from his home, in the provincial capital. The expansion of the 'slave-like' condition of the *gabbar* system in the violent incorporation of the Oromo is a foundational moment of Oromo studies (Ezekiel Gebissa, 2002). However, this emphasis inadvertently overlooked patterns of inner-Oromo stratification and attributed slavery solely to Abyssinian conquerors. 'In Oromia,' argued Mohammed Hassen, 'Ethiopian colonialism was built on twin pillars: the *gabbar* system (serfdom) and slavery' (Mohammed Hassen, 2002). Slavery's existence before the 19th-century conquest in Oromia is often acknowledged only in passing. But in Oromo societies, slaving – as imposed on Oromo captives and as practised by Oromo in relation to less powerful groups – warrants further scrutiny; slavery, vassalage, and conquest happened at multiple levels and created various under-studied minorities, some of whom continue to bear the marks of slave descent. Lambert Bartels' seminal ethnography of Oromo religion and philosophy addresses how different classes of slaves were integrated into the Macca lineage, exploring both slavery and manumission in depth (Bartels, 1983). Mohammed Hassen has studied extensively the use of slave labour and the involvement of the Gibe kings in the slave trade in southern Ethiopia (Mohammed Hassen,

1990). The works of Tesema Ta'a or Negaso Gidada have highlighted the unequal integration and continued marginalization of pre-Oromo populations after the westward expansion of the Oromo between the 16th and 19th century ((Negaso Gidada, 1984; Tesema Ta'a, 2006). These vassal statuses are not uncommon and can include various types of reciprocal relations embedded in highly stratified social settings (Turton, 1986). Furthermore, there are marginal groups settled at the borders of former major polities that have not been studied. These slave descendants, occupational groups and former vassal groups, that have nestled at the peripheries of multiple 'centres', are often excluded or marginalized, and stigmatized on the basis of physiognomy, occupation, or descent (Küspert-Rakotondrainy, 2023). Like Ethiopian studies, Oromo studies often replicate a majority-centric narrative in which the neighbours and vassals of Oromo *mootis* (kings) become footnotes in the story of a distant past.

The student movement of the 1960s quickly identified disparities among the various regional and ethnic groups within the Ethiopian Empire. However, their focus shifted towards revolutionary transformation and regional self-governance, which they saw as essential components of the reformed state they envisioned. While the state implemented socialist policies aimed at addressing what was perceived as feudal political orders across the country – including the headman-ship of the Anywaa and the divine kingships of the Omotic kingdoms – the intellectual discourse largely centred on the national question of self-determination.

The *Derg*'s 1975 land reform was perceived as a liberation for both peasants and slaves from the constraints of feudalism. Consequently, the discourse in politics and academia began to focus on peasant liberation and anti-feudal struggles, with the *gabbar* system occupying a central role in discussions on the feudal agrarian economy. Scholars like Ulrich Bräukamper believed that slavery ceased with the proclamation of the land nationalization based on his studies among the Kambatta (Braukämper, 2014). The equation between peasant rebellion and national liberation seemingly freed Ethiopia from feudalism, and to many also solved the slavery question once and for all: feudalism was dead, and so was the practice of slavery – but things are hardly that clear-cut.

A post-slavery perspective is particularly promising for future research

Some communities in Ethiopia are still stigmatized because of the historical experience of enslavement which is used to justify discrimination and marginaliza-

tion.[6] So, when did slavery end? The abolition of slavery has often been attributed to the transition from feudal/indigenous society to a modern one, with the expansion of capitalism and a slave price inflation playing a significant role (Edwards, 1982). While acknowledging the contributions of modernization, ongoing research by Yonas Ashine indicates that abolition occurred albeit without emancipation – with manumission being the most important strategy at the household level leading to an expansion of the surrogate household and the expansion of precarious labour in urban centres (Yonas Ashine Demisse, 2022). Retainers were free but remained dependent on former masters. Yonas's analysis resonates with Asmaron Legesse's framework for comprehending post-feudal society (albeit in the urban environment of Addis Ababa). Asmarom posits that historically, the master-servant relationship was imbued with an illusion of sentimentality. Servants were expected to develop emotional bonds with the families they served, often blurring the lines between kinship roles and surrogate roles. While I argue against the overemphasis on Addis Ababa as a monolithic entity, one should explore further the local repercussions and dependencies that were recreated in the wake of urbanization across the empire. Beyond the focus on ethnicity, we might find clarity regarding social interactions when we consider slavery outside of the centres and how it lived on. Elaborating the notion of *post-slavery society* may help expand our understanding of the memory, aftermath and trajectories of slaving systems across Ethiopia.

Post-slavery dynamics entail inherited social status and inequality, in contrast to contemporary forms of slavery characterized by anonymous, coercive relationships of bondage. A post-slavery approach examines the lasting effects and continuities of historical slavery and the slave trade in societies after formal abolition and emancipation. It highlights the ongoing inequalities and social stratification between descendants of slaves and slaveholders, as well as mechanisms of societal exclusion (Lecocq & Pelckmans, 2023). Yet again, there is an urgent need to revive social research on the periphery (or *peripheries*) and examine social differentiation from a post-slavery perspective, connecting what may be termed the *greater* and *lesser Traditions*. In Ethiopia, the distinction between the north and south reflects how *Habesha*, i.e. northern *Ethiopian, semitic, Christian*, etc. – identity is perceived vis-à-vis other African identities. The term '*barya*' (slave), although legally obsolete, still carries cultural significance, referring to individuals with very dark skin and kinky hair historically associated with slavery (Dagmawi Woubshet, 2010). Ethiopian exceptionalism, while celebrating the nation's

6 Slave descendants, or people framed accordingly, across Ethiopia, may have little or less access to resources, there is negative public attitude towards them, such as for instance excluding them from marriage arrangements, absence of opportunities to make social and economic and even political contributions.

achievements, excludes and marginalizes those with slave ancestry, perpetuating narrow definitions of Ethiopian identity. Despite terms like '*barya*' becoming obsolete, derogatory language persists, contributing to the marginalization of certain groups within Ethiopian society. In the Christian dominions, the biblically based distinction stemming from the idea of the curse of Ham lingers on in notions of blackness or *Africanness*, as well as slave descent, that serve as stark reminders of enduring exclusion. This distinction affects access to resources and political office, and is reinforced by taboos against intermarriage, perpetuating segregation between groups with and without access to social and economic privileges (Aalen, 2011; Meckelburg, 2015). The struggle for political marginalization is intensified among groups that have experienced power dynamics shaped by slave raids. The history of slave trading is often politicized in these groups' fight for political recognition. Recent work by Desalegn Amsalu has highlighted this aspect. For example, the Dube of the Wabi Shebelle River are stigmatized as slave descendants, although they could also be considered remnants of Bantu minority groups that settled in the region before the migration of the Oromo and Somali. Dube political leaders reject these claims of slave descent in their pursuit of political recognition (Asnake Kefale, 2009).[7]

Conclusion

Nearly 30 years ago, in the aftermath of significant transformations, Alessandro Triulzi noted the difficulties in creating a multi-centred inclusive narrative of the nation's past until old and new stereotypes of self-assertion and exclusion are dismantled (Triulzi, 2002). Instead of dissolving, these political identities have in fact solidified over the past three decades. Ethno-histories have multiplied but remain driven by the political and sometimes hegemonic ambitions of core ethnic groups. In these groups, social categories such as subordinate slave descendants, former vassals, and occupational castes remain marginalized. Addressing these identities would help deconstruct the often rigid and antiquated approaches to ethnicity that are still common in everyday discussions.

A comparative approach to slavery could illuminate diverse patterns of dependency and simultaneously offer a clearer perspective on what slavery was and what are its enduring consequences. Methodologically, this involves challenging

7 Two chapters by Desalgen Amsalu, 'Slave Raid Memory in the Interethnic Relations between Gumuz and Agäw (1991-2019)' and by the later historian Kefyalew Tesema, 'Competing Narratives of Status Relating to Slave Descent among the Dube People of the Wabi-Šäbälle Valley and their Neighbors, Southeastern Ethiopia' are in preparation for Alexander Meckelburg, Giulia Bonacci, Serena Tolino, & Ahmed Hassen (Eds.), *Slavery and the Slave Trade in Ethiopian Studies* (Supplement to *AETHIOPICA International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies*).

tasks: distinguishing between alleged and real slave descent, and understanding which interactions inform us about actual slavery, and which ones refer to classificatory or metaphorical slavery and expand patterns of exclusion related to real or alleged slave descent (Rossi, 2009). It involves, too, rereading the histories of multiple peripheries and studying multiple systems of social stratification that point to hierarchies beyond those based on unequal ethnic relations. This can be done as is illustrated by new research that allows the integration of historical research, oral history, and cultural analysis, highlighting the persistent legacy of slavery and its impacts on Ethiopian society. Exploring these complexities requires acknowledging the voices of those historically marginalized or silenced, as their stories provide essential insights into the lasting effects of slavery in Ethiopia.

References

Aalen, L. (2011). *The Politics of Ethnicity in Ethiopia: Actors, Power and Mobilisation Under Ethnic Federalism*. Brill.

Abbas H. Gnamo (2014). *Conquest and Resistance in the Ethiopian Empire, 1880 -1974: The Case of the Arsi Oromo*. Brill.

Abbink, J. (2000). Comparing Cultures in Southern Ethiopia: From Ethnography to Generative Explanation. *Northeast African Studies*, *7*(3), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nas.2005.0002>.

Abbink, J. (2002). Paradoxes of Power and Culture in an Old Periphery: Surma 1974-98.' In W. James, D. L. Donham, E. Kurimoto, & A. Triulzi (Eds.), *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After* (pp. 155-172). James Currey.

Abbink, J. (2016). Rethinking the Anthropology of Ethiopia through Culture and Ritual: From Ethnography to Explanation. In *Addis Ababa University*. Tsehai Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.cfee.1139>.

Abdussamad H. Ahmad (1999). Trading in Slaves in Bela-Shangul and Gumuz, Ethiopia: Border Enclaves in History, 1897-1938. *The Journal of African History*, *40*(3), 433-446.

Asnake Kefale (2009). *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia: A Comparative Study of the Somali and Benishangul-Gumuz Regions* [PhD thesis, University of Leiden].

Austen, R.A. (1988). The 19th Century Islamic Slave Trade from East Africa (Swahili and Red Sea Coasts): A Tentative Census. *Slavery & Abolition*, *9*(3), 21-44.

Bahru Zewde (2023). Agricultural Corvée Labor in Ethiopia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, *56*(1), 21-41.

Bartels, L. (1983). *Oromo religion: Myths and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia – An Attempt to Understand*. Berlin: Reimer.

Becker, F., Nyanto, S.S., Giblin, J., McDougall, A., Meckelburg, A., & Pelckmans, L. (2023). Researching the Aftermath of Slavery in Mainland East Africa: Methodological, Ethical, and Practical Challenges. *Slavery & Abolition*, *44*(1), 131-156.

Bonacci, G. (2011). 'Ethiopia and Africa': Another Perspective in Modern Ethiopian Studies. *Ityopis. Northeast African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, *1*, 197-200.

Bonacci, G., & Meckelburg, A. (2017). Introduction: Revisiting Slavery and the Slave Trade in Ethiopia. *Northeast African Studies*, *17*(2), 5-30.

Bonacci, G., & Meckelburg, A. (2023). Slavery and the Slave Trade in Ethiopia and Eritrea. In G. Bonacci & A. Meckelburg, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.836>.

Bosha Bombe (2018). Heritages of Slavery and Status Transformation. Evidence from Ganta, Gamo Highlands of Southern Ethiopia. In S. Epple (Ed.), *The State of Status Groups in Ethiopia. Minorities Between Marginalization and Integration* (Cultural Studies/ Studien zur Kulturkunde (Vol. *132*, pp. 65-78). Reimer.

Boylston, T. (2018). *The Stranger at the Feast: Prohibition and Mediation in an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Community*. University of California Press.

Braukämper, U. (2014). *Fandaanano: The Traditional Socio-Religious System of the Hadiyya in Southern Ethiopia* (Aethiopistische Forschungen, *Vol. 80*). Harrassowitz.

Coleman, S.J. (2008). Gradual Abolition or Immediate Abolition of Slavery? The Political, Social and Economic Quandary of Emperor Haile Selassie I. *Slavery & Abolition*, *29*(1), 65-82.

Crummey, D. (1990). Society, State and Nationality in the Recent Historiography of Ethiopia. *The Journal of African History*, *31*(1), 103-119.

Dagmawi Woubshet (2010). Gleaning Ethiopia. *Callaloo*, *33*(1), 199-202.

Data Dea Barata (2017). Goldmine and Minefield: A Native Anthropologist's Review of Eike Haberland's Culture-History Research on Wolaita, Ethiopia. In S. Dinslage & S. Thubauville (Eds.), *Seeking out Wise Old Men. Six Decades of Ethiopian Studies at the Frobenius Institute* (pp. 237-249). Reimer.

Edwards, J.R. (1982). Slavery, the Slave Trade and the Economic Reorganization of Ethiopia 1916-1935. *African Economic History*, *11*, 3-14.

Epple, S. (Ed.) (2014). *Creating and Crossing Boundaries in Ethiopia: Dynamics of Social Categorization and Differentiation*. LIT Verlag.

Epple, S. (2017). Definite Segregation or Permeable Boundaries: Revisiting the Frobenius Research on Artisans, Hunters and Slave Descendants. In S. Dinslage & S. Thubauville (Eds.), *Seeking out Wise Old Men. Six Decades of Ethiopian Studies at the Frobenius Institute* (pp. 89-108). Reimer.

Epple, S. (Ed.). (2018). *The State of Status Groups in Ethiopia: Minorities Between Marginalization and Integration* (Cultural Studies/Studien zur Kulturkunde, *Vol. 132*). Reimer.

Ezekiel Gebissa (2002). Introduction: Rendering Audible the Voices of the Powerless. *Northeast African Studies*, *9*(3), 1-14.

Finley, M.I. (1998). *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (B. Shaw, Ed.). Markus Wiener Publishers.

Freeman, D., & Pankhurst, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Peripheral People: The Excluded Minorities of Ethiopia*. Hurst and Company.

Haberland, E. (1992). Sklaverei im alten Wolayta (Süd-Äthiopien). *Jahrbuch des Museums für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig*, *39*, 157-173.

James, W. (1988). Perceptions from an African Slaving Frontier. In L. Archer (Ed.), *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour in Africa* (pp. 113-140). Routledge.

James, W. (2007). A 'Frontier Mosaic': Ethiopia's Western Edge. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies. Festschrift Dedicated in Honour of Prof. Richard Pankhurst & Mrs. Rita Pankhurst*, *40*(1-2), 277-291.

Kiya Gezahegne (2018). Living on the Magins of the Rayya Qobbo Highlands: Slave descendants in contemporary north Wollo, Amhara region. In S. Epple (Ed.), *The State of Status Groups in Ethiopia: Minorities Between Marginalization and Integration* (Cultural Studies/Studien zur Kulturkunde) (Vol. 132, pp. 157-171). Reimer.

Küspert-Rakotondrainy, S. (2023). *Transformations of Hierarchies in Western Ethiopia: The Case of the Mao* [PhD thesis, University of Birmingham].

Lange, W.J. (1982). *History of the Southern Gonga (Southwestern Ethiopia).* Franz Steiner Verlag.

Lecocq, B., & Pelckmans, L. (2023, March 22). *Post-Slavery*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.956>.

Lenski, N., & Cameron, C.M. (Eds.). (2018). *What Is a Slave Society? The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective*. Cambridge University Press.

Lovejoy, P. (2018). Slavery in Societies on the Frontiers of Centralized States in West Africa. In N. Lenski & C.M. Cameron (Eds.), *What Is a Slave Society? The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective* (pp. 220-248). Cambridge University Press.

Meckelburg, A. (2015). Slavery, Emancipation, and Memory: Exploratory Notes on Western Ethiopia. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, *48*(2), 345-362.

Meckelburg, A. (2019). *From 'Subject to Citizen'? History, Identity and Minority Citizenship: The Case of the Mao and Komo of Western Ethiopia* [PhD thesis, Universität Hamburg].

Miers, S. (1997). Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Ethiopia. *Slavery & Abolition*, *18*(3), 257-288.

Mohammed Hassen (1990). *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860*. Cambridge University Press.

Mohammed Hassen (2002). Conquest, Tyranny, and Ethnocide against the Oromo: A Historical Assessment of Human Rights Conditions in Ethiopia, ca. 1880s-2002. *Northeast African Studies*, *9*(3), 15-49.

Negaso Gidada (1984). *History of the Sayyoo Oromoo of Southwestern Wallaga, Ethiopia from about 1770-1886* [PhD thesis, Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität].

Pankhurst, R. (1964). The Ethiopian Slave Trade in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: A Statistical Inquiry. In C.F. Beckingham & E. Ullendorff (Eds.), *Ethiopian Studies: Papers Read at the 2nd International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (Manchester University, July 1963)* (*Vol. 1*, pp. 220-228). Manchester University Press.

Pankhurst, R. (1968). *Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800-1935*. Haile Sellassie I University Press.

Pankhurst, R. (2011). Slavery and Emancipation in Traditional Ethiopia: The Role of the Fetha Nagast, or Laws of the Kings. *African and Asian Studies*, *10*(1), 32-40.

Perham, M. (1948). *The Government of Ethiopia*. Faber and Faber.

Rossi, B. (Ed.). (2009). *Reconfiguring Slavery: West African Trajectories* (1st ed., *Vol. 2*). Liverpool University Press.

Rossi, B. (2021). Promises and Pitfalls of Global Comparisons: Slavery in West African Political Cultures. *African Economic History*, *49*(1), 15-46.

Takele Merid & Meckelburg, A. (2024). Abolitionist Decrees in Ethiopia: The Evolution of Anti-Slavery Legal Strategies from Menilek to Haile Selassie, 1889-1942. *Law and History Review*, *42*(1), 97-117.

Tekalign W. Mariam (1989). The Slave Trade in the Economy of Jimma. In Taddese Beyene (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Vol. 1, pp. 308-318). Institute of Ethiopian Studies.

Tesema Ta'a (2006). *The Political Economy of an African Society in Transformation: The Case of Macca Oromo (Ethiopia)* (C. Griefenow-Mewis, Ed.). Harrassowitz.

Triulzi, A. (2002). Battling with the Past. New Frameworks for Ethiopian Historiography. In Wendy James, Donald Donham, Eisei Kurimoto, & Alessandro Triulzi (Eds.), *Remapping Ethiopia. Socialism and After* (pp. 276-288). James Currey et al.

Turton, D. (1986). A Problem of Domination at the Periphery: The Kwegu and the Mursi. In D. Donham & W. James (Eds.), *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology* (pp. 148-171). Cambridge University Press.

Whyte, C. (2014). 'Everyone Knows that Laws Bring the Greatest Benefits to Mankind': The Global and Local Origins of Anti-Slavery in Abyssinia, 1880-1942. *Slavery & Abolition*, *35*(4), 652-669.

Winnebeck, J., Sutter, O., Hermann, A., Antweiler, C., & Conermann, S. (2023). The Analytical Concept of Asymmetrical Dependency. *Journal of Global Slavery*, *8*(1), 1-59.

Yonas Ashine Demisse (2022). *Slaves of State, Intellectuals of Development: A Genealogy of Development in Ethiopia*. Makerere Institute of Social Research.

11

The Biocultural Importance of *Lomay (Ximenia Americana)* in Mursi

Shauna LaTosky

> Since I started research in 1992 on the Suri and their cultural knowledge on plants and the environment, I have seen little evidence that more respect or even curiosity about local knowledge is emerging among government-linked clinic workers and administrators.
> *Abbink (2002, p. 205)*

Introduction

The ancient practice of wearing a labret is still common among many agro-pastoralist groups in southern Ethiopia. Among the Mursi, Tirmaga, and Chai (the latter two collectively known as Suri), for example, large ear spools and lip plates are worn among girls and women, respectively, despite social pressures to abandon them. The resilience of such permanent body modifications is evident in the number of girls and women who continue to pierce, stretch and adorn their earlobes with wooden and pottery ear spools and, subsequently, their lower lips with pottery labrets in Mursi and wooden or pottery labrets in Suri. However, my intention here is not to focus on the various symbolic and expressive possibilities of piercing practices, which has been taken up elsewhere (see Abbink, 2009 on Suri; and Turton, 2004, LaTosky, 2013, and Eczet, 2014; 2021 on Mursi). Instead, I am interested in situating this communication in the physical world by cultivating a sense of the plants that have been so vital to the success of body modification practices in Mursi, in particular *lomay* (*Ximenia americana*). Here I propose that cultural keystone species theory could provide a useful framework for understanding relationships between the Mursi (and other labret wearing groups in southern Ethiopia, such as, the Me'en, Suri, Kara, Nyangatom, and Daasanech) and the plants that are integral to maintaining their cultural practices, including embodied practices that mark identity and belonging.

Whereas the literature on body modification practices in Mursi and Suri tends to focus on their sociocultural significance, little attention has been given to the biocultural importance of the plants that make such practices possible at all.[1] Cultural keystone species theory predicts that plant species that are culturally important, also have an associated naming and terminology in the native language, are of high use-value and fulfil a sociocultural function (Coe & Gaoue, 2020). I draw on the concept of cultural keystone species to help frame my hypothesis that the resilience of Mursi body modification practices is rooted in more than social norms and values but in the indigenous knowledge required for acquiring the resources that make them possible. One keystone designation that is applied here is to the indigenous fruit tree *lomay* (*Ximenia americana*) in recognition of its role in the success of sustaining permanent body modifications such as the piercing and stretching of girls' ears and women's lower lips, but also in the overall promotion of health and social well-being.

Understanding the important role of such knowledge is especially relevant given the ongoing debates about the so-called harmful nature of Mursi (and Suri) corporeal practices, especially lip plates which I will briefly touch on after first introducing the Mursi, and then moving on to discuss the biocultural importance of *lomay* and some of the dramatic changes that are impacting the transmission of indigenous knowledge and access to ecological resources today, not to mention the social pressures to abandon such bodily practices (see also Abbink, 2009, on Suri).

The Mun people are better known as Mursi (also Murzu), a name given to them by their pastoralist neighbours. Their self-designation is Mun. They speak Munen, a southeast Surmic language, which is from the Eastern Sudanic family of the Nilo-Saharan languages. Today, the Mursi live sandwiched between the Omo and Mago National Parks in hundreds of semi-permanent villages across five territorial sections (not recognized by the government), covering an area of approximately 2000 square kms (200,000 hectares). Their remoteness has meant that until quite recently, they have been able to maintain their customary governance

1 This chapter draws on two related presentations that I gave at the CARTA symposium on 'Body Modification: Anatomy, Alteration, and Art in Anthropogeny'. LaTosky, S. (2024, February 9-10). *Lip Plates in Ethiopia: The Plants and Places Vital to Their Success in Mursi.* Center for Academic Research and Training in Anthropogeny (CARTA), UC San Diego, United States, <https://carta.anthropogeny.org/events/sessions/lip-plates-ethiopia-plants-and-places-vital-their-success-mursi> and the Canadian Anthropological Society (CASCA) conference on *The Biocultural Importance of the Indigenous Fruit Tree 'Lomay' (Ximenia Americana) for Maintaining Women's Health and Social Well-being in Mursi (Mun), Southern Ethiopia.* LaTosky, S. (2024, May 15-18), University of British Columbia (Okanagan), Kelowna.

structure and agro-pastoralist way of life and their many distinct cultural practices, from *donga* (stick fighting) to unique body modifications like the stretching of earlobes and lips.

Since 2012 much of their traditional grazing and hunting areas as well as riverine cultivation sites, have been partly cleared, crisscrossed with roads and encroached on by large-scale sugar cane plantations. This situation has so far proven to be devastating for the Mursi, ever since the policies advocated by the former TPLF government have also led to the construction of hydroelectric dams upstream along the Omo, disrupting the natural flooding of the river as well as the riverine flood-retreat cultivation that the Mursi and many of their agro-pastoralist and hunter-gatherer neighbours have relied on for centuries (Turton, 2021). In recent years, this disruption to natural flood levels has led to severe food insecurity and development-induced diseases, like visceral leishmaniasis from which there were a record number of deaths in 2023 (LaTosky, 2023). The Mursi population is less than 10,000 and they are surrounded by other indigenous groups, mainly agro-pastoralists, but also hunter-gatherers like the Kwegu and Ari highland farmers. Some of the surrounding agro-pastoralists also wear a diverse range of labrets, but it is only the Suri (Chai and Tirmaga) girls and women on the western side of the Omo River who wear large ear spools and labrets similar to those found in Mursi. The Chai and Tirmaga are also the only groups to intermarry with the Mursi. In what follows, I focus mainly on Mursi piercing practices, although Suri corporeal practices are almost identical.

Whereas large wooden lip plates were once common in Mursi, wooden ones have gradually been replaced by pottery lip plates. Today, only Suri women still adorn themselves with circular and trapezoidal-shaped wooden labrets. Overall, we also see a decline in pottery lip plates, as many Mursi (and Suri) women choose to no longer wear them. However, despite this decline over the last two decades, lip plates are still considered today as important and distinctive identity markers that mark womanhood and differentiate the Mursi (and Suri) from other neighbouring groups, in particular Mursi girls and women, from other women, like the Me'en (Bodi) women, who only wear a small wooden plug. Wearing a lip plate and being a Mursi (or Suri) are not co-extensive, since not every young woman will or *can* subscribe to such ideals; however, Mursi rhetoric is nonetheless full of persuasive statements and metaphors and metonyms about the strength, beauty, maturity and long-term well-being of girls who endure this painful procedure and manage to succeed in fully extending their lower lips. Ultimately, however, the choice is left up to the girl, as not every girl's lip will fit a lip plate and not every girl today wants to – or can – commit to this arduous process.

The cultural practice of wearing pottery lip plates in Mursi is more than merely 'cosmetic' or aesthetic; as I discuss elsewhere, it is constitutive of an adolescent girl's and woman's identity and reputation, as it embodies Mursi values of strength, courage, and the commitment to care for one's body, health, and social well-being (LaTosky, 2013, 2015; LaTosky & de Robert, 2024). Such values also extend to the health and well-being of one's children, husband, and cattle in the future. This is why Mursi will make frequent rhetorical references to a girl with a large labret as attracting a 'wealthy' husband (LaTosky, 2013). Bridewealth is in fact fixed in Mursi, so the idea that a girl with a labret will get more cattle is not entirely accurate, but nor is it inaccurate, since there is a higher probability that she will attract a man who is able to give more bridewealth cattle up front, or preferably all at once (ibid.).

That the lip plate is linked to health, well-being, and reproductive success of humans and cattle alike is explained by Bikalumi Sabakorro in 2004 when documenting her life history. 'A girl without a labret will walk hastily into the cattle compound and milk the calves, unlike a girl with a labret who will walk slowly and intentionally, taking her time before inserting her lip plate. It is during this time that the calves are able to get a good drink from their mother. As a result, her calves will be healthier' (ibid.). Their decline, over the last two decades, along with many of the normative practices associated with them, like milking one's husband's special milking cow (called a *hamwe*) or serving one's husband and his guests while wearing a lip plate – have to do mainly with both internal factors, but also social pressures to abandon what is often perceived by outsiders as a 'harmful' cultural practice, a topic that I delve into in a co-edited volume (Longman & Bradley 2005) 'Interrogating Harmful Cultural Practices' and only briefly touch on here.

In 2011 and 2012, when the Mursi and other groups in South Omo came face-to-face with what Ethiopian scholar Fana Gebresenbet (2014) calls 'the securitisation of development' in South Omo, and played out under the former TPLF government, many Mursi soon came to equate development with intimidation, harassment, imprisonment, and discrimination, especially of those opposing the TPLF government's development plans. Also targeted were so-called 'harmful cultural practices', such as ceremonial stick fighting and scarification, dress and bodily adornment including lip plates, as together, such practices were blamed as being a deterrent for the modern development of agro-pastoralist communities (see Abbink, 2009, on Suri; LaTosky, 2013; 2015, p. 289, on Mursi).

These discussions of harm still seem to be firmly rooted in persistent origin myths about lip plates, the least persuasive of which, at least from the perspective of

Mursi oral history, being the claim that Mursi (and Suri) lip plates originated as a way to disfigure women in order to deter traders from taking them as slaves, although the late David Turton showed, already half a century ago, that this is not compatible with Mursi narratives and oral history. Yet such origin myths persist. If you type 'The origins of lip plates' into Google today, the following is most likely to appear:

> There are lots of speculations [sic] on how lip plates originated, but one common belief is that it started because the men of some tribes in Ethiopia wanted their women to look uninteresting to foreign men during the time of slavery. Hence, it could be perceived as a response to colonialism. (E.g. medium.com website, accessed 2 September 2024)

This conventional myth about 'disfigurement' that portrays Mursi (and Suri) women in this negative light as powerless victims of a coercive practice, deprived of the ability to have control over or even the capacity or means to heal their own bodies, has led to biased conclusions that lip plates are 'harmful'. Such myths also continue to overshadow any recognition of the cultural significance of the lip plate as a metonym for strength, including the reproductive strength in both cattle and humans, but also the important indigenous ecological knowledge that can disprove the equally persistent myth of bringing 'harm' to the health of girls and women.

My previous work on this topic was largely inspired by Jon Abbink's critique of how Suri women's bodies are marginalized in the media (Abbink, 2009) and Suri local knowledge misunderstood and disrespected, as he expresses in the opening quote (Abbink, 2002). In a similar vein, I have frequently challenged stereotypical representations of Mursi women in the public media (LaTosky 2014) as having no rights over their own bodies and of inflicting 'harmful' practices on adolescent girls. As I argue elsewhere, the privileging of unmodified bodies over modified ones has been perpetuated in Mursi predominantly through the work of GOs and international medical NGOs (LaTosky 2015). Over a decade ago, for example, I interviewed Mursi women who were part of the first and most ambitious campaign designed to eradicate women's 'backward' lip plates. This government-sponsored campaign, with funding from the Canadian government and the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF), paid women in Marege (northern Mursi) to have their lips sewn back, after medical authorities decided that labrets were harmful to girls' and women's health, contradicting how most Mursi women view them and the indigenous knowledge that helps to minimize any risk. As one intern working for AMREF reported at that time:

> I am so proud of the work that is done here, and believe that AMREF has really made a difference, for example in educating the community about harmful traditional practice such as lip plates. After AMREF workshops, the women understood and were keen to have reconstructive surgery. Now they say they will not cause their daughters to be harmed in this way (Scanion quoted in LaTosky, 2015, p. 174).

What I have come to observe over the years is that the real harm associated with lip plates in Mursi today is the continued neglect of indigenous knowledge that makes, for instance, the piercing and stretching process possible. A closer examination of cultural keystone species could provide a better understanding of the resilience of certain cultural practices.

The term cultural keystone species originates from the ecological and biological sciences based on Paine's (1969) concept of an ecological keystone species, which identifies a key species in an environment or ecosystem which, if it were diminished or eliminated, would significantly change the overall characteristics of that ecosystem (Prats, LaTosky, & Turner, in progress). Introduced by Garibaldi and Turner (2004), the concept of 'Cultural Keystone Species', and which Cristancho and Vining's (2004) expand on in their work on 'Culturally Defined Keystone Species' (2004, p. 155), refers to 'those plant and animal species whose existence and symbolic value are essential to the stability of a cultural group over time'. This fits well with the different ways in which Mursi men and women talked about certain plant species as being vital to their health *and* cultural well-being (LaTosky, 2022). One plant that came up again and again was that of *lomay*, a wild fruit that grows in the open savannah but also in the understorey of dry forests, in dry woodlands, or on riverbanks that women would commonly refer to. I was already familiar with the medicinal use of *lomay* in relation to lip plates, but I had not fully situated it in its physical environment as also an importance food source during cyclical periods of scarcity. Numerous other culturally important plants were also discussed, like those used to pierce girls' ears, those used to carve wooden dowels, lip plugs and ear plates, or the leaves to sand them, the sap to repair them, and seed oils used to decorate and polish pottery labrets such as marula seeds, pumpkin seeds, and many others, but *lomay* was repeatedly referred to as one of the most culturally salient plant species (ibid.).

In order for a girl to successfully pierce and stretch her lip, she needs a mother, her mother's co-wife, or other female experts to guide her through the process and ensure that she has a good supply of carved lip plugs, which must be changed daily in the initial stretching stages and that she has plenty of *lomay* for wound care, which requires specialized knowledge. Bijaloi Biyobisenno is one of these experts, who knows how to prepare everything from the first dowels that are in-

serted into a freshly pierced lip to all aspects related to the harvesting and preparing of *lomay*, in order to care for the lip. The importance of *lomay* was something that I had underestimated until I began to work with Bijaloi in 2019.

In short, one of many culturally important species defined by Mursi women is that of *lomay* (*Ximenia americana*, also known as hog plum or sea lemon). Women liked to emphasize, for instance, that *lomay* is one of the most necessary plants for the Mursi, in particular for Mursi girls and women to thrive. As Bijaloi Biobisenno explains: 'it is because of *lomay* that we are able to survive until our crops ripened, and it is because of the curative powers of *lomay* that mature girls can "become wealthy"'. This also aligns with what Cristancho and Vining (2004, p. 155) propose in their concept of a culturally defined keystone species, which applies to 'those plant and animal species whose existence and symbolic value are essential to the stability of a cultural group over time'. Not only is *lomay* a vital food source that is rich in vitamin C and found in abundance during the dry season, but it is also an important antibacterial medicine used to heal wounds, especially those incurred when girls begin to pierce and stretch their earlobes and lower lips (LaTosky, 2013).

The nutritional, social, and medicinal importance of *lomay* is best described by Bijaloi Biyobisseno, a Mursi junior elder and plant expert, who is quoted at length in the first preliminary study on Mursi cultural keystone species (LaTosky, 2022).

'While roasting *lomay* fruits in the fire to prepare a medicinal ointment, she explains that "without *lomay*, piercing (and stretching) girls' lips and ears would not exist, just as the Mun would not exist as wealthy cattle-keepers. Without *lomay* we would be *nyidini*" (lit. Kwegu; here: "poor, without cattle")' (ibid.). *Lomay* is widely distributed in northern Mursi often near the cultivation sites of women. Not only is it a major source of food energy, without it, a girl would not be able to pierce and stretch her lip (*tugoa ramay*) as she would face infections and not be able to follow through with the stretching, which is considered at least according to Mursi rhetoric as essential for attracting a wealthy husband (LaTosky 2013). Women will often go in groups in the dry season, in December and January, to collect berries from the *lomay* tree which women also described as significantly drought tolerant and a tree species that will even grow in fallow and degraded lands and in low rainfall areas. This biocultural and livelihood resource is accessed predominantly by women for the collection of the berries for consumption – mainly as a sweet and nutritious drink while working in their fields – and as an important antibacterial ointment (LaTosky, 2022).

In fact, recent surgical literature only confirms what indigenous plant experts like Bijaloi already know about the potential of *X. americana* to accelerate wound healing (Souza Neto Júnior, J., de Moura Estevão, Ferraz, et al., 2019). *Lomay* is used to treat cutaneous wounds also across several neighbouring groups in southern Ethiopia. For example, the Suri (see Abbink, 1995, 2002, p. 201), Kwegu, and Kara (see Teklehaymanot & Giday, 2010, p. 7) also use the trees' fruits to prepare an antibacterial ointment.

When it comes to the argument that oral piercing make girls more susceptible to infection, Mursi girls and women are acutely aware of this fact, which is why a girl does not always engage in rigorous activities while her lip is healing, always careful to cover her freshly pierced lip with a leaf or cloth, and to frequently change her labret, applying *lomay* (*Ximenia americana*) which is prepared by burning the fruit and applying the oily black paste to heal the wound, and freshly pierced earlobes (LaTosky, 2013).

This knowledge is also part of women's expert knowledge on how to make pottery lip plates: one must know about the distribution of trees for seed oils, bark, thorns, leaves, and dried grasses, all of which are used for various purposes, from polishing and decorating, to enhancing different colours and colour patterns during the firing and post-firing process (LaTosky & de Robert, 2024). They must but also know about the different types of clay and their locations (ibid.).

However, as large-scale irrigation projects and hydroelectric dams on the Omo River are restricting their access to land used for traditional cattle grazing and cultivation along the Omo River, development projects have also led to the loss of tree cover cleared to build the infrastructure for the big sugarcane development projects, limiting access to wild foods, both wild plants and wild animals, but also salt licks and clay pits, places that are important for the health of cattle and people, respectively, as clays are not only essential for making labrets but for healing communities, for example, when disease strikes.

Conclusion

While changing social norms within Mursi but also outside pressures to conform to new ideals of beauty and what it means to be a modern citizen of the Ethiopian state are transforming gendered bodily practices and perceptions of them, there has been little discussion about the expert indigenous knowledge and materials required to safely pierce and stretch a young Mursi girl's ears and a young woman's lower lip. I predict that without continued access to and protection of cultural keystone species like *lomay* but also 'cultural keystone places' (i.e. those asso-

ciated with special clay quarries), the health and social well-being of the Mursi will be severely compromised (LaTosky, 2024a; 2024b). This prediction is inspired by Mursi women, in particular, Biaklumi Biyobisenno and Bhekey Biyobisesnno, who stated in 2019 that 'without *lomay* (hog plum or sea lemon), girls' lip plates will cease to exist' (LaTosky, 2022, p. 245). This is not to conclude then that lip plates in southern Ethiopia are destined to disappear. If anything, they have become more ubiquitous than ever (whether one has a pierced lip or not); most girls and women know how to make them, even if they are not expertly made or worn in the hope that tourists will come. Today, they are more intricately decorated, more colourful, and often heavier than the more black and red lip plates of the past, making them often cumbersome to wear.

Recognition that lip plates are in no way intended to harm or risk the health and well-being of girls (as is often assumed in the popular media and by human rights activists), but rather to allow a girl to 'stand tall', in the sense that she can hold her head high and feel strong and self-assured. All of this is made possible by the often taken-for-granted knowledge of cultural keystone species such as *lomay*. The continued access to cultural keystone species might hold the key to the future of lip plates but also a deeper understanding of food security in Mursi. I predict that without the protection and maintenance of Mursi indigenous knowledge and the right to develop and cultivate their biocultural heritage, women's health and the resilience of their corporeal practices, including dietary ones, will continue to be radically undermined, a trend that has become increasingly apparent over the last two decades.

To date, however, no studies that mentioned cultural keystone species have tested the predictions of the theory in Ethiopia.

> Only 4.4% provided a measure for cultural keystone status and 47.4% have cited or applied keystone designation to a given species without providing a reproducible measure for cultural keystone species. Studies that provided a measure for cultural keystone species primarily occurred in North America while few of these studies occurred in Australia and Europe with none occurring in Africa (Coe & Gaoue, 2020).

Since most cultural keystone species have been designated qualitatively and based on researcher subjectivity, and while other studies have designated keystone species with quantitative indices of cultural importance, often incorporating researcher biases or measuring a few of the cultural keystone status predictors rather than all of them, there is still a lack of consensus in identifying cultural keystone species (ibid.). Following Coe and Gaoue's line of argumentation, I agree that there is also a 'need for a paradigm shift toward the development of serious

and systematic approaches for keystone designation' (ibid.). Future studies of cultural keystone species in southern Ethiopia should be aimed at directing and testing predictions of the theory and emphasizing their potential roles in ecosystem and sociocultural understanding, which are foundational for facilitating biocultural conservation in agro-pastoralist areas.

References

Abbink, G.J. (2009). Suri Images: The Return of Exoticism and the Commodification of an Ethiopian 'Tribe'. *Cahiers d'études africaines*, *49*(196), 893-924.

Abbink, G.J. (2002). Plant Use among the Suri People of Southern Ethiopia: A System of Knowledge in Danger? *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere*, *70*, 199-206. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/9476>.

Abbink, G.J. (1995). Medicinal and Ritual Plants of the Ethiopian Southwest: An Account of Recent Research. *Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor*, *3*(2), 6-8.

Coe, M.A., & Gaoue, O.G. (2020). Cultural Keystone Species Revisited: Are We Asking the Right Questions? *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*, *16*, 70. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13002-020-00422-z>.

Eczet, Jean-Baptiste (2014). Révéler et éloigner. Usages du corps et de ses ornements en pays mursi. *Annales d'Éthiopie*, *29*, 223-246.

Eczet, Jean-Baptiste (2021). *Cattle Poetics. How Aesthetics Shapes Politics in Mursiland, Ethiopia*. Berghahn.

Garibaldi, A., & Turner, N. (2004). Cultural Keystone Species: Implications for Ecological Conservation and Restoration. *Ecology and Society*, *9*(3), 1. Retrieved from <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol9/iss3/art1/>.

Gebresenbet, F. (2014). Securitisation of Development in Ethiopia: The Discourse and Politics of Developmentalism. *Review of African Political Economy*, *41*(sup.1), S64-S74. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2014.976191>.

LaTosky, S. (2013). Predicaments of Mun (Mursi) Women in Ethiopia's Changing World. (Mainzer Beiträge zur Afrikaforschung, *Volume 33*). Rüdiger Köppe Verlag.

LaTosky, Shauna. (2014). Images of Mursi 'Women and the Realities they Conceal'. In F. Girke (Ed.), *Ethiopian Images of Self and Other* (pp. 121-145). Schriften des Zentrums für Interdisziplinäre Regionalstudien II. Universitätsverlag Halle-Wittenberg.

LaTosky, S. (2015). Lip plates, 'Harm' Debates, and the Cultural Rights of Mun (Mursi) Women. In C. Longman & T. Bradley (Eds.), *Interrogating Harmful Cultural Practices: Gender, Culture and Coercion* (pp. 169-191). Routledge.

LaTosky, S. (2022). 'When the Milk Containers Are Empty, the Children "Milk" the Marula!' The Role of Wild Food Plants for Food Security in Mun (Mursi), Southern Ethiopia. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies/Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, *6*(3a), 233-256.

LaTosky, S. (2023, March 9). *Paying Lip Service to the Health and Well-Being of Mursi Women*. Anthropology in Our Backyards Public Speaker Series, University of Northern British Columbia, Department of Anthropology.

LaTosky, S. (2024, February 9-10). *Lip-Plates in Ethiopia: The Plants and Places Vital to Their Success in Mursi.* Center for Academic Research and Training in Anthropogeny (CARTA), UC San Diego, United States. <https://carta.anthropogeny.org/events/sessions/lip-plates-ethiopia-plants-and-places-vital-their-success-mursi>.

LaTosky, S. (2024, May 15-18). *The Biocultural Importance of the Indigenous Fruit Tree 'Lomay' (Ximenia Americana) for Maintaining Women's Health and Social Well-Being in Mursi (Mun), Southern Ethiopia.* Kelowna: Canadian Anthropological Association (CASCA), University of British Columbia (Okanagan).

LaTosky, S., & de Robert, P. (2024). To Wear, or Not to Wear: The Symbolism and Technology of Labrets in Mun/Mursi (Ethiopia) and Mebêngôkre/Kayapo (Brazil). In F. d'Errico & F. Manni (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology and Anthropology of Body Modifications*.

Paine, R.T. (1966). Food Web Complexity and Species Diversity. *American Naturalist*, *100*, 65-75.

Teklehaymanot, T., & M. Giday (2010). Ethnobotanical Study of Wild Edible Plants of Kara and Kwego Semi-Pastoralist People in Lower Omo River Valley, Debub Omo Zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia. *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*, *6*(23), 1-8.

Turton, D. (2004). Lip Plates and the People Who Take Photographs: Uneasy Encounters Between Mursi and Tourists in Southern Ethiopia. *Anthropology Today*, *20*, 3-8.

Turton, D. (2021). 'Breaking Every Rule in the Book': The Story of River Basin Development in Ethiopia's Omo Valley. In E.C. Gabbert, F. Gebresenbet, J.G. Galaty, & G. Schlee (Eds.), *Lands of the Future Anthropological Perspectives on Pastoralism, Land Deals and Tropes of Modernity in Eastern Africa* (pp. 251-248). Berghahn.

12

Studying Evil: Ethnographic Methods and Problems of Identification

Günther Schlee

Much of Jon Abbink's work is devoted to the study of violence and its regulation (Aijmer & Abbink (Eds.), 2000), and more specifically, to ethnic and religion-based radicalization and terrorism (Abbink, 2000). Explaining violence is a demanding task, 'a thing of utter complexity, evasiveness and ambiguity. This opaqueness must not refrain us from trying to come to grips with the social production of violation' (Aijmer & Abbink, 2000, p. 7). As if that was not enough, the study of violence is further burdened with the imperative to search for remedies to contain it or stop it, preferably by changing the circumstances which lead to it. It is one of the topics on which it is difficult to maintain a 'basic research rather than applied' or 'purely analytical and value-free' position for long, because it is inextricably interwoven with political and moral questions. Jon Abbink has dealt with these challenges, and the present paper is meant to be a modest contribution to this effort. Its focus is on dilemmas anthropologists face when studying violence or terrorism.

Social anthropologists have a different and more personal relationship to the people they study than social scientists who work with statistical methods. This has to do with their privileged form of empirical work, participant observation. This chapter examines what this implies for the study of violent conflict and terrorism in particular.

At least since Malinowski, ethnographic field research has come to imply deep immersion in another 'culture', a second socialization of the researcher, aspiring at learning the ways of the host community as if one was one of them, i.e. the acquisition of cultural competence, and a great deal of identification.

If this did not occur, if there were no such positive resonances between the researcher and the field, the professional competence of the researcher could be put into question. Maybe he or she did not understand the culture properly. Maybe

she rejects certain practices because she did not find out their hidden meanings or functions. Did she after all learn the language properly? Was she really open and receptive? In other words: in anthropology there is a premium on approving what one studies.

In colonial times there was the worry that anthropologists might 'go native' and no longer fit into their society and social class of origin, but sympathy and empathy with the objects of their research was assumed and regarded as legitimate and the least of what was expected from them was that they had the interests of the people they studied in their minds – something which was later made explicit in the agenda called 'advocacy anthropology'. This positive relationship between the researcher and her or his 'field' has also found its way into law. In a document of the European Union about *Research Ethics in Ethnography/Anthropology* (Iphofen, n.d.) we read:

> The basic ethical principles to be maintained include doing good, not doing harm and protecting the autonomy, wellbeing, safety and dignity of all research participants (p. 1).
>
> Concern for the rights and well-being of research participants lies at the root of ethical research (p. 2).

The classical anthropological village study deals with friendly peasants who produce healthy food and live close to nature. There is no reason to assume that the anthropologist runs into moral problems when he defends this way of life and the dignity and wellbeing of those who live it.

But here we shall discuss some cases where these rules are not easy to apply. The main topic will be the study of terrorism. But it is generally true that in conflict situations and violent settings it is not easy to protect the 'wellbeing' and 'safety' 'of all research participants' at the same time. One just needs to move into areas in which violence is not the monopoly of the state and into conflict situations in which the 'research participants', the people one studies, are engaged in robbing and killing each other. What are the choices a researcher has and what are the ethical standards he or she can meet, if she has to rely on one conflict party for her own safety?

I will take my own experience from the northern Kenyan borderlands with Ethiopia and Somalia as an example.

Identification of the researcher with the field in violent settings

When I started my doctoral research among the Rendille, camel nomads of northern Kenya, I had no problems with identification. I was 23 years of age, liked where I was, and absorbed everything that was new. It never occurred to me that there could be a contradiction between their interests and my description of their way of life. Their major concern, as far as politics was concerned, was rights to pasture and water. For my whole professional life, I have been writing against limitations to pastoral mobility,[1] against taking district boundaries as borders of tribal grazing lands, against building fences and land grabbing. In all this I was and still am confident that my writings support their interests. So that part of my research meets the expectation that the researcher has a positive identification with the field and even engages in advocacy. It also meets the criteria of success in our academic discipline of which successful integration into the host society is a part.

To this extent my research would have met the criteria set up by the EU much later, that the researcher should be 'doing good, not doing harm, and protecting the autonomy, wellbeing, safety, and dignity of all research participants'. Soon after joining a Rendille settlement and a clan which gave me the status of a son and brother, I was reminded, however, of the circumstance that I was living far outside effective government control in a setting of inter-group fighting. For my own protection I relied on my hosts, and they, of course, assumed that I would side with them.

One morning there was an alarm cry and within a moment my Landrover was full of men armed with spears and I found myself driving towards where an enemy attack was said to have occurred. As a Max Planck director, employer, and supervisor of doctoral students, in a later phase of my life, I would have been expected to tell my students to drive precisely in the opposite direction in such a situation. Fortunately, the alarm turned out to be false.

As the clan histories of the Rendille point to neighbouring groups who speak Somali or Oromo, I soon extended my interest to these groups and collected oral histories there. These groups have changing alliances with each other and often hostile relationships. As the only person around with a car, I inevitably got involved in the raiding between these groups, of course only on the side of the defenders (Schlee, 1979, 52f). But the groups defending themselves on one occasion might be the attackers on the next.

1 E.g. Schlee & Shongolo (2012).

In another period I was staying again with the Rendille mobile hamlet which I had originally joined. People had left and others had joined, but the core of my earlier contacts was there, so in a way it was my place among the Rendille. Footprints had been seen which were thought to belong to enemy scouts. One night I took my Landrover and went to the four corners of the immediate area, with full lights on, staying some time in different spots and turning around as if depositing patrols, pretending to be a police squad. The feared attack never occurred, and whether that was due to my deterrent measures or to other circumstances we shall never know.

In that period, I also made it my habit to keep my shoes on while asleep and to wear a dark shirt at night to make me less conspicuous in case I had to abscond into the bush.

In the mid-eighties hostilities escalated into a full-scale war between two Somali clans among whom I had done research. On both sides I had key informants, former hosts, friends, and protectors. The two clans, who had been living in mixed settlement clusters, started to kill one another.

One of my hosts was a man in his sixties, a very rich man who owned hundreds of camels. All of these were driven away by his former neighbours and new enemies, who – short of naming individuals – did not even conceal that it was them. I met my old friend years later and he asked me for money to hire a lawyer to get his camels back.

But for the Kenyan government this part of the country was in a state of war, and therefore the normal jurisdiction was suspended, although the government would never have admitted officially that it did not control its entire territory. Warlike acts are not dealt with by jurisdiction but by peace negotiations.

I was aware of that, but gave him some money nevertheless. Here the situation becomes complicated. What does advocacy mean here? Should I have determined who is guilty? And how? Should I have taken sides to deal with injustice? Should I have told my friend who it was who took his camels, if he had not known that already and maybe even more precisely than me? Would I then not have betrayed the trust of my research partners? After all, the perpetrators were also my research partners or closely related to them. They had not asked me to treat the information they gave me as confidential. But that would not have made me feel entitled to give away information which might harm them.

The conflict between these two Somali clans was not free of government interference. The most notorious incident of such interference is the Wagalla massacre of 1984 (Anderson, 2014). So, it had connections which went beyond the region to the national level. Shortly, we shall address a conflict between different Somali coalitions at the other end of the Horn of Africa which did have global connections. One of these coalitions fought the other in the name of the Global War on Terror and with American help. I think my stories about how easy it is to get involved in violent conflicts also show how easily a researcher in the perception of some, at least, can end up on the wrong side in the Global War on Terror.

Identification and empathy in the study of terrorism

The classical image of the anthropologist appears to be a person studying an indigenous group threatened by powerful economic interests in their resource base which the anthropologist wants to help them to defend. Indeed, while this description only fits a minority among us, I think most of us focus on groups and categories of people who are marginal or disadvantaged in one way or another and whose interests we want to get recognized and whose voices we want to get heard. Some anthropologists also study groups whose world view and political agenda they do not share, like right wing and racist milieus or economic and political elites who become the object of what is called 'studying up'. But that is a complicated relationship between researcher and field and correspondingly rare.

It is obvious that the study of terrorism cannot fit the model of a caring researcher who identifies with his or her research partners (in earlier times called 'informants') at all. In the unlikely event that an active terrorist group would allow you to do participant observation among them, you would have to betray their trust immediately, at the latest as soon as you witness preparation of a terrorist attack. Otherwise, you would become a perpetrator yourself as a member of a terrorist group and complicit in a murderous attack. Quite irrespective of this legal situation it would be hard to justify the decision NOT to report such preparations in the interest of continued field research, because life and limb of innocent civilians are at risk.

This makes classical field research among terrorists practically impossible, and I am not aware of any such research going on. That is why the forms of study of terrorism which do exist all deviate from this anthropological model in one or the other way, and they do so necessarily.

The same is true for the study of other illegal activities. As a researcher doing field research in some urban youth subcultures, you may risk hearing about some shop

lifting and witness some roughing up between gang members without reporting this to the police, but even then you would be on shaky legal ground. But then then there is the category of things which (for good reasons) meet with the absolute rejection of society and with zero tolerance by the law. Apart from terrorism this category includes, for example, child abuse. This phenomenon is, of course, totally unrelated to terrorism in most aspects, but if you tried to do participant observation among people who engage in child pornography, you would run into problems which are precisely parallel to those you would end up in among terrorists.

Therefore, some of the problems related to the study of terrorism are not limited to terrorism. To describe this more general phenomenon, I have chosen the somewhat archaic term 'evil' for the title of this chapter ('Studying Evil'). It has religious connotations which I am not going to deal with. I have chosen it because of its absoluteness. With evil you cannot make compromises. You cannot even tolerate it for a while, just long enough to study it. No way.

'Evil' in this sense, is not an ahistorical, universal given. Terrorism is not an evil thing for everybody. One of the most widely quoted sayings about it is 'What are terrorists for some, are freedom fighters for others'. Also, our notion of child abuse, as deep as its roots may be, has evolved and been modified to some extent over the recent decades. The year 1968 stands for changes in values and attitudes which led to the legalization of homosexuality and made many other laws related to sexuality obsolete. In the course of this 'sexual liberation' it was also discussed what is so bad about an erotic relationship between a tender, loving grown-up and a consenting child. Teachers who fantasized about the 'pedagogical eros' in ancient Greece (and committed crimes against their pupils) added to the confusion. After this, it took some time for the notions that a child is incapable of consent, and that sexual activities with a child are always child abuse and a crime, to take root and to be universally accepted in the West. (Countries with a strong gender segregation but a high level of tolerance for sex between men and 'boys' and settings in which sexual actions are part of initiation rituals are not the subject of this paper but would present plenty of interesting problems of research ethics for anyone trying to do 'participant observation' there.)

After these relativistic notes, we can specify that in this paper 'evil' stands for those things which are not only illegal but in our present sociolegal environment are perceived as abhorrent, and which are rejected in absolute terms. These absolute terms imply that there are no trade-offs or compromises. We cannot tolerate just one or two acts of terrorism in order to see how it works.

Studying evil comes with some complications. In this chapter, I shall discuss two kinds of complications. The first are those which result from rules and regulations like those laid down in the ethical standards of the bodies which have to approve your research application or the allocation of liability if something goes wrong. The second are those complications which result from the dilemma of empathy without sympathy, as Scott Atran would phrase it. You need empathy to understand the people you study and to explain their behaviour. That is the job of an anthropologist. This empathy even implies a degree of identification. You have to imagine yourself in their position and to model their perceptions in your mind. But in the case of terrorists and other 'evil' people in the sense just defined, you cannot sympathize with them, take over their political positions or do 'advocacy' for them, as other anthropologists do, those other anthropologists – who study victims, not perpetrators. So, no matter how much sympathy creeps into your soul in the course of long conversations, and no matter how indebted you might feel to them for sharing their experiences and aspirations with you, there is always the imperative of ultimate betrayal lingering above you. Apart from the internal problems with sympathy the anthropologist might have, there are the suspicions of others that he or she might sympathize with evildoers. Empathy rarely comes with entirely negative emotions. It tends to come with a degree of sympathy. If this sympathy is morally indefensible, it is to be thought about, critically reflected, and contained. So, the suspicion of others that someone who shows empathy with evildoers might also feel some measure of sympathy with them is not totally unfounded. The problems arising from such constellations will be the subject of the second part of my chapter. So, I will first deal with rules and regulations, then with the morals and the politics of our issue.

Rules and regulations

If I send a doctoral student to study terrorists and he or she gets killed, I get into deep trouble. Risk assessment and aversion to liability has become a growing concern among universities, research institutes, and sponsoring bodies over the past decades, and to be accused of negligence of safety issues is a grave matter.

That is one of the reasons why field research among active terrorists does not happen. As a consequence, much of the interviewing with terrorists is done when they have been caught and are in prison. There we no longer face problems of life and death but run into problems of research ethics.

Research participants need to give their free and informed consent. Are prisoners capable of free consent or is everything they say or do shaped by external force? Scott Atran and his team have done a lot of interviewing in prison, in spite of

difficulties caused by the human subjects reviews of universities and the US defence department, which has funded some of their work. In one case he did not succeed. I quote: 'I got permission, before the [three] Bali bombers [who carried out a set of simultaneous attacks in 2002] were executed, to interview them. They were going to be shot because they blew up 200 people. I couldn't get human subjects approval because "you have to bring a lawyer, and besides we won't allow anyone to interview prisoners"' (Atran, 2015).

This episode offers a lot to think about. Atran here complains about bureaucracy which has spoiled what he perceived as a singular chance. The committee which had to give the approval for research which involved human subjects had refused permission to interview prisoners. The prisoners in question were sentenced to death and awaiting their execution. One might find the idea to use this interval for some interview sessions a bit macabre. Are people in that situation really capable of giving free and informed consent? Was their entire situation not marked by constraint and being exposed to lethal power? I think the committee had a point.

On the other hand, to kill 200 innocent people is much more macabre than interviewing the prisoners who had committed this act. If interviewing them helps in finding out how terrorists, or a certain type of terrorist, tick, and how to prevent such atrocities in the future, it would be a good deal in terms of trading macabre activities. You would do some interviews in a situation which looks a bit macabre to prevent something which is much more macabre. I think Scott Atran had a point.

Empathy and the suspicion of sympathy

Unlike the French saying '*Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*', to understand everything does *not* mean to forgive everything. There are many situations in which we need to understand people without condoning their activities or sharing their views. Let us think of an undercover police agent as an example. It is not enough for such an agent to rationally comprehend the calculating mind of a criminal; he also needs empathy. In other words, he must be able to put himself in the criminal's shoes. He has to 'understand' him in the fullest sense of the word, and yet he still hands him over to his colleagues, the police. Likewise, a battered child would do well to model the inner world of the violent father in its mind in order to gauge his moods and alcohol level. This is a question of survival that has nothing to do with forgiveness. The list of examples is endless. *Tout comprendre, ce n'est pas tout pardonner*.

In the cases of the police agent and the battered child it is clear that they need empathy in order to convict the criminal or to avoid being beaten, respectively, but that sympathy cannot be expected of them. In the case of research on terrorism, the situation is more complicated. There are social values which are obstacles to successful empathy, and those who overcome these obstacles – succeed in empathy and have good explanations of terrorist thoughts and acts – risk being suspected of sympathy.

Understanding violence is easier said than done. In our media-saturated environment, which shapes most of us more strongly than science, and also shapes the views of our political decision makers, effects come to the fore that hinder an understanding of violence. One of them stems from the emotions associated with moral outrage. These often lead to a refusal to deal with a matter intellectually. The statement 'I just can't understand it!' does not express a desire for better comprehension or understanding but rather implies that the speaker does not want to understand. Another effect is pathologization. We classify a phenomenon as pathological, deviant, or crazy. From a medical point of view, of course, this should pique our interest in understanding it, but few people share this medical perspective. In most cases, such statements are an expression of exclusion and a desire to distance oneself.

Take, for example, the so-called Islamic State, which a few years ago controlled large sections of Syria and Iraq and which in the present situation, with many of its fighters liberated by the Turkish intervention which forced the Kurdish guards to flee, continues to be a terrorist threat. Its stereotype of the enemy is that of the shameless, promiscuous, profane, and capitalistic West, which in turn brands the Islamic State as barbaric and a 'terrorist militia'. In conflict situations, such mutual insults often reflect the truth one hundred percent, but here we are not concerned with the inherent truth of these statements. The question, rather, is what effect these verbal exclusory statements have on our cognitive ability to explain violent conflicts in which the Islamic State is involved. My assertion is: certainly, no conducive effect.

'Terrorists' are people from whom the general public want to distance themselves as much as possible. Barbarism was vanquished in Germany 80 years ago, albeit with foreign help, and we want nothing more to do with it. This attitude does not help us find out what makes the perpetrators of violence tick – in other words, model their thoughts and actions in our minds. This strong desire to distance ourselves also ignores the 12 million people who, in the period of the maximal expansion of the Islamic State, lived under it and often supported it or at least accepted it as the lesser evil (no surprise, considering the available alternatives).

They must be quite normal people. Incidentally, ever since Auschwitz, we have known that the perpetrators of violence are also entirely normal people in other contexts. And it ought to be possible to explain the behaviour of entirely normal people. Obviously, in many cases there is no serious desire to do so.

That perpetrators of barbaric violence can be quite normal people, of course, does not imply that they are harmless. It rather implies that normal people are not harmless. And it does not exclude the possibility that some of them might be mentally ill. Like teachers, nurses, policemen, cleaners, and carpenters, perpetrators of barbaric violence can also be crazy. I do not argue against that. I'm just warning not to explain away all sorts of terrorism as pathological. And we do have a problem with attribution of causes. There is reason to suspect that right wing terrorism is underreported and under-investigated because it is assumed that these perpetrators are acting on their own and are mentally deranged, while a mentally deranged Muslim who is acting alone would be suspected to be a religiously motivated terrorist and part of a network.

Religious classifications are used in strange ways. Every wrong a Muslim does is attributed to Islam. Christianity is not subject to similar attributions. In 2004, Marc Dutroux and his accomplices were sentenced for murder and sex-related crimes. I think they were all Catholics. But still, they are part of public memory as 'the Belgian child abusers', not 'the Catholic child abusers'. Not that I would favour the latter. I just think that such collective classifications obscure reality in all cases where what a person has done has nothing to do with his or her religion or nationality.

To substantiate this point, we can look at another 'terrorist militia', al-Shabaab, in Somalia.[2] Al-Shabaab grew out of the militias of the Islamic Courts in Mogadishu.[3] In the absence of a functional state, the Islamic Courts had developed as a grass-roots initiative and enjoyed widespread acceptance within the population – not because Somalia was suddenly gripped by an atypical religious zeal and moral rigor but because business people wanted a little security for their property and their transactions and were happy to fund the courts – one of the very rare cases in the history of mankind where business people were happy to pay taxes. The Islamic Courts were a lifeline in the violence-riven economy that had generally prevailed and in which the key players were major warlords who plundered the country and sold off communally owned assets (fishing rights, for example, and permission to dump toxic waste) to foreigners at bargain prices.

2 This account is based on Hoehne (2014).

3 See Abbink (2000) for his take on the history of the Islamic Courts and al-Shabaab.

The court militias were perceived as threatening by their opponents – so much so that Ethiopia, with US support, launched a military campaign against them in 2007. The Islamic Court militias then simply disappeared. They were not set up to fight against regular military units equipped with heavy weapons, so they did not even engage the enemy. The Islamic Courts vanished with them. Only in this way could the internationally recognized government of Somalia be established in the capital of Mogadishu (internationally recognized because it was formed by a 'peace process' coordinated by the 'international community') (Schlee, 2006; 2008).

The 'peace process' was a compromise between the warlords. The internationally recognized government was therefore a government that emerged from organized crime. Now the warlords were in power again, and with the blessing of the international community. Since then, troops of the African Union (AU) have also been in the country. This development led to the radicalization of some of the former Court militias, giving rise to al-Shabaab. Soon they controlled such large swaths of the country so that the 'legitimate' government that had been formed through the 'peace process' and established in the capital with foreign help no longer dared to venture far from the capital. So, the 'international community' had to step in again. Kenyan troops marched into Somalia in 2011, thus strengthening the alliance between Ethiopia, the forces of the African Union, the US, and the government they supported. Al-Shabaab then lost control of the cities and was increasingly restricted to conducting hit-and-run operations from the cover of the rugged terrain.

Al-Shabaab soon regained strength in the north of the country in a craggy, mountainous area on the coast bordering the Gulf of Aden, far from the foreign forces stationed in the south. Zinc and coltan were discovered in this coastal area. There is a strong, rapidly growing and insatiable demand in Asian economies particularly for coltan. The mining rights were quickly sold to an Australian company. The seller was the government of Puntland, a semi-autonomous entity in the northeast of the country. However, the 'peace process' had just catapulted the president of Puntland to the presidency of the whole of Somalia. He then set out claims on behalf of the Somali federal government, whose rights had not yet been defined. Nor, for that matter, had the rights of the states, whose exact number and form were also unclear. Moreover, this government initially found itself unable to move into the capital, and when it did, it hardly dared to venture out again. Nevertheless, the parties soon settled on a fifty-fifty formula. Except that they had forgotten one thing: to consult the local population and allow them to share in the new-found wealth in some way. The clan that has settled these coastal mountains is smaller than the clan that prevails in the rest of Puntland, but it is part of the

same confederation of clans. The government of Puntland had wrongly believed it could rely on the cohesion of this wider unit when it neglected the claims of the local sub-clan. This local group launched a spirited armed uprising but soon ran into trouble. It is therefore not surprising that it welcomed help from outside. The local sheikh appealed to Islamic sentiments to mobilize his followers against the infidels. The lines of the alliance that stretched from Puntland to Mogadishu, and from there to Ethiopia, Kenya, and the US, made it expedient to portray the opponents as Islamic apostates in collusion with Christian or even godless powers. After being driven out of the south of the country, al-Shabaab fighters found rhetorical and ideological points of contact here. At some point, al-Shabaab then evidently gained the upper hand, and the local sheikh became subservient to it.

Shifting our focus from the local clans and their alliances to the larger, global picture, we see the following: The government, which had sold off the mining rights to natural resources (without being able to guarantee the buyers access to those resources) without consulting the local population, found itself in a global economic web. Other nodes in this web were an Australian mining company and customers in Asia. These relationships were supposed to be cemented by a political-military alliance under the motto 'the War on Terror', which included Ethiopia and Kenya in the immediate area and the USA further afield. Faced with this overwhelming configuration, the local population was forced to form alliances with fighters who likewise appealed to global causes: the struggle of 'all Muslims' against the 'decadent West'. The response to large alliances is large alliances or at least appeals to global similarities with like-minded individuals.

Another thing we can learn from this story is how terrorists are made. There were terrorists before, too, but what we observe here is an expansion of this category. The business people of Mogadishu, who expected a little security from the Islamic Courts and supported them as the only available peacekeeping power; the inhabitants of the coastal region, who actually only wanted a share of the revenues from mining in their homeland; the simple Somalis, who felt that warlords are perhaps not the ideal officeholders for a government – they were all bundled into this category and branded opponents of the 'West' in its 'Global War on Terror'.

This case history also illustrates how tightly resource-based conflicts and processes of collective identity are intertwined. Appeals were made to narrow and broad clan relationships, depending on which group of players wanted narrow or broad population segments to share in the profit from the mining of natural resources. The category 'terrorist' also evolved in this context, becoming significantly broader, as did other attributions of self and others.

Summary: Research ethics in violent settings

Let me now summarize some of our basic findings about research ethics in the context of studying evil, and terrorists in particular. These findings have to do with understanding, empathy, and shared humanity.

We have shown that it is possible to understand terrorists. In identifying the grievances and inequities of people targeted by the Global War On Terror – grievances and inequities which are more immediately related to neglected material interests and political marginalization than to ideologies – we also have found cases where the category 'terrorist' has been overextended and wrongly applied. But, no matter how many people just find arrangements of convenience with al-Shabaab and form tactical alliances with them, there can be no doubt that al-Shabaab also comprises terrorists who fit the ideal type of a terrorist, who have a monomaniac ideology which denies those who do not adhere to it human rights like the freedom of religion and the safety of life and limb, and does not refrain from killing unarmed civilians.

In 2015, there was an attack, claimed by al-Shabaab and carried out by Kenyan Somalis from the major area, on the University of Garissa, which is located in a majority Muslim and Somali area in eastern Kenya. Among those killed were 142 students[4] who had been identified as Christians, which implies that they mostly stemmed from other parts of Kenya. The Muslim students were released. If it is not clear from the name or the appearance who is a Christian, the test in such situations appears to be to tell the person to recite some verses from the Qurʿan.

This event shows that our analysis (following Hoehne, 2014) – that the causes of terrorism are to be sought in discrimination and economic marginalization and that many followers and allies of terrorist organizations may only be on that side in a conflict situation only for lack of an alternative – should not lead us to explain ideologically based terrorism away. Even in cases where religion or ideology only come into play as legitimation to do what the perpetrators would do anyhow, they result in a dynamic of their own. A Christian student from another part of the country cannot directly be held responsible for the grievances of the Somali against global capitalism, Western politics, or the discrimination of the Somali in Kenya. Only after the global dichotomies just described and an interpretation of religion which allows the killing of non-believers have taken root, can a student from up-country Kenya who is a Christian thereby be equated with the West and imperialism. And, therefore, be viewed as an agent of oppression and of capi-

4 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garissa_University_College_attack>, accessed 20191116.

talism and of the devil, and, therefore, be found to be a legitimate target. This is many 'therefores' and a long chain of derivation. We have identified economic and political grievances which have favoured the emergence of terrorism. But there is no guarantee that terrorism and the binary logic it has brought about will disappear as soon as we start to deal with the causes of terrorism.

And, no matter how successful we have been in analysing terrorists, and how well we understand them, that does not affect our right of self-defence. I, for my part, would defend myself against a murder attempt even if the attacker has a perfectly plausible reason to kill me.

No doubt, the fear of terrorism in the general public is out of proportion with the fear of numerically more important causes of death. Many more people die in traffic accidents than in terrorist attacks, and still people are afraid of terrorists, not of cars. This, of course, is just what terrorists want to achieve: it is the terror felt by the terrorized. With relatively cheap means terrorism can achieve a huge psychological effect, and that comes with costs which are measurable. People take the car because they are afraid of terror attacks on aviation and thereby cause yet more road accidents, flows of tourism and investment are redirected to the detriment of vast regions, border regimes are changed at the expense of the freedom and ease to travel of all of us, and security is beefed up with our tax money. To observe one potential perpetrator all around the clock absorbs the labour of 25 officers.[5] So, terrorism is very harmful and expensive to fight, and there can be no doubt in a democracy that terrorism is the enemy. Scott Atran (2010) leaves no doubt about this by calling his book about terrorism *Talking to the Enemy*.

There is no way to apply the research ethics postulated by the EU document cited above in the context of field work with terrorists.

> The basic ethical principles to be maintained include… protecting the… wellbeing… of all research participants.
>
> Concern for the rights and wellbeing of research participants lies at the root of ethical research.

What do these rules mean when the 'research participants' are terrorists or turn out to be terrorists in the course of the research? Then there are no simple rules to be followed, and the researcher is facing tough choices between legal goods. One of these legal goods is the trust of the interlocutor who shares sensitive infor-

5 I learned that on some TV programme, I do not remember which.

mation with the researcher, and this moral value attaches itself to some practical requirements. If the researcher does not want to give up his or her research project or even to face retaliation, he or she should better not betray the trust of those who confide in her. The other legal good, of course, is the life and health of third persons. If the researcher does not report plans of a terrorist attack, innocent third persons – and potentially great numbers of them – are in danger.

The problem looks like a classic dilemma, a choice between two evils. You cannot satisfy all moral imperatives at the same time. From a categorical perspective (or 'an either/or perspective') it looks like a choice between two bad options, from a gradualist perspective like a trade-off. The more you respect the trust of your interlocutor, the less you do to minimalize the risk for third persons and vice versa.

One may face these dilemmas not only in the unlikely situation of field research among active terrorists. One can also think about research in a supportive environment which might be instrumental to terrorists or where one might witness radicalization, terrorists in jail who have the prospects of being released but reveal information which speaks against that, or, if you study deradicalization you may come across cases where deradicalization does not work and new dangers come up.

At first glance the choice between the protection of life and the trust of a perpetrator looks easy. The protection of life is a higher good and the trust of a perpetrator a lesser legal good, so the decision needs to be taken in favour of life. But what if the researcher is not quite sure? There may be no concrete plans on the table. The interlocutors just play with ideas. Or they speak in allusions or metaphors. Or the suspicion is just based on the frame of mind of the interlocutor, which, by the way, might be just what the researcher wants to study. What if the probability of an actual attack is just 30%. Would that be worth blowing up the research project, betraying the trust of the potential perpetrators, and risking their revenge? What if it is 5%?

I am not going to give you easy answers to these questions, because there are no such answers. There are no hard and fast rules to deal with a 5% risk. There is not even a standard way to calculate the risk. So, it is better to end with these questions. Furthermore, the books of rules of the ethics committees are of no help here and heavy moralizing is misplaced. We are dealing with difficult questions and the only preparation for such questions is to think through hypothetical situations while there is time. When such tough decisions need to be taken, there might be little time left for thinking.

References

Abbink, Jon (2020). Religion and Violence in the Horn of Africa: Trajectories of Mimetic Rivalry and Escalation between 'Political Islam' and the State. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, *21*(2), 194-215, DOI: 10.1080/21567689.2020.1754206.

Aijmer, Göran & Abbink, Jon (Eds.) (2000). *Meanings of Violence: A Cross-Cultural Perspective.* New York University Press.

Anderson, David (2014). Remembering Wagalla: State Violence in Northern Kenya 1962-1991. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *8*(4)

Atran, Scott (2010). *Talking to the Enemy: Religion, Brotherhood, and the (Un)Making of Terrorists*. HarperCollins.

Atran, Scott (2015). (Interview) Anthropologist Seeks the Roots of Terrorism. *Scientific American*, ≤https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/anthropologist-seeks-the-roots-of-terrorism/>, last accessed 9 September 2019.

Hoehne, Markus V. (2014). Resource Conflict and Militant Islam in the Golis Mountains in Northern Somalia (2006-2013). *Review of African Political Economy*, *41*(141), 358-373.

Iphofen, Ron (n.d.) *Research Ethics in Ethnography/Anthropology*. European Commission. <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/ethics-guide-ethnog-anthrop_en.pdf>, accessed 8 January 2017.

Schlee, Günther (1979). *Das Glaubens- und Sozialsystem der Rendille: Kamelnomaden Nordkenias*. Dietrich Reimer Verlag. <http://www.eth.mpg.de/pubs/series_fieldnotes/vol0008.html>. English version: <http://www.eth.mpg.de/pubs/series_fieldnotes/vol0007.html>.

Schlee, Günther (2006). *Wie Feindbilder entstehen: Eine Theorie ethnischer und religiöser Konflikte*. C.H. Beck.

Schlee, Günther (2008). *How Enemies Are Made: Towards a Theory of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts*. Berghahn.

Schlee, Günther with Shongolo, Abdullahi A. (2012). *Islam and Ethnicity in Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia*. James Currey.

13

To the Source of an Intellectual Icon: Being an account of an ethnological tour to the mouth of the Rhine, the headwaters of De Vliet, and the banished residence of Baruch Spinoza

In Honour of Prof. J. Abbink

Jan-Bart Gewald & Rijk van Dijk

> What altar of refuge can a man find for himself, when he commits treason against the majesty of reason (III/188).
>
> For the common people suppose they have satisfactorily explained something as soon as it no longer astounds them (III/84).
> *Spinoza, 1670, Theological Political Treatise (in Israel & Silverthorne, 2007)*

It was an overcast, wet, and blustery afternoon, the remnants of Storm Henk lashing the North Sea coast and pummelling the towns and villages that lay in the lee of the dunes that protected them from the death aquatic. It was the era of the Anthropocene, Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West), the ever-continuing triumph of Huizinga's *puerilisme* (puerilism) at the end of the beginning of the endgame that heralded the collapse of *Homo Industriae* (Industrial Man), the end of the industrial age, and the beginning of a new era in human history.

We set off in a motor-coach from the railway station in Leiden. It is probable that sixty-four years previously, Albert Einstein set off on exactly the same trip to pay his respects to the memory of the man whom he venerated, and who adored the same god as he did. As Einstein put it, 'I believe in Spinoza's God, who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns himself with fates and actions of human beings' (cited in Calaprice, 2011, p. 325).

We drove along the Rijnsburgerweg skirting Oegstgeest, the leafy and prosperous village neighbouring Leiden, which for the second half of the twentieth century, when academics garnered respect and earned substantial salaries, was the home

for much of Leiden University's faculty. Past the A44 *Rijksstraatweg* highway that leads from The Hague to Amsterdam and into the *bollenstreek* (Bulb Area): the sandy reaches of west Holland that proved to be the ideal biotope for the country's tulip bulb production.

Tulips first arrived in the Netherlands from the Ottoman Empire in the late 1500s. Carolus Clusius, the botanist who established the *Hortus Botanicus* at Leiden University, planted them in his gardens where they thrived. By the 1630s tulips had become big business and at the very centre of the speculative bubble known as the Tulip Mania. Between 1634 and 1637 contract prices for tulip bulbs literally exploded, with single bulbs being sold at up to 4200 guilders, at a time when skilled craftsmen were earning 300 guilders a year. The tulip, along with windmills and clogs, still remains a symbol of the Netherlands. In essence the tulip is an apt illustration of the Dutch Golden Age (1588-1672), in which the Netherlands drew in people, goods, and ideas from elsewhere in the world, and then exported these at substantial profit. It was in the Golden Age that Spinoza's family settled in Amsterdam to escape the Portuguese Inquisition, and it was in Amsterdam that Baruch Spinoza was born in 1632.

In less than 20 minutes we had arrived in Rijnsburg, in the very heart of the *bollenstreek,* where Spinoza lived between 1661 and 1663. At an hour's walk away (5 Km), Rijnsburg was close to Leiden, but far away enough to escape the clamour of the town and the smell of rotting canals in the summer, and thus it became the site of country summer homes of faculty at Leiden University. In addition, Rijnsburg became the centre of the Remonstranten (Remonstrants), a faction of Dutch protestants who fell afoul of the synod of Dort (1618-1619).

Driving from Oegstgeest into Rijnsburg, we passed a large bronze monument to a *Landman*, a man in workman's clothing, leaning on a spade and staring across the fields.[1] Completed in 1973, the statue reflects the social-democratic sentiments of a substantial part of the Dutch population at the time. Arriving in Rijnsburg we alighted from the motor-coach at a traffic circle and set off on foot to our destination, the refuge of Spinoza in Rijnsburg. Our way was marked by bronze statues and large domineering protestant churches.

'De Grote Kerk' was built of sober brick after the reformation in 1577 upon the ruins of a Catholic abbey of Rijnsburg, which had been established by Petronilla of Saxony in 1134. At the foot of the church tower stands a statue cast in bronze of Count Floris V, known as *der keerlen god* (god of the guys, of the common chap).

1 <https://standbeelden.vanderkrogt.net/object.php?record=ZH48ad>.

Cast in bronze, wearing a crown and full armour, Count Floris brandishes a sword in his right hand whilst lifting his gauntleted left hand as a perch for an eagle. Floris V, epitomizes the Netherlands self-image and what it would like itself to be:

> He is credited with a mostly peaceful reign, modernizing administration, policies beneficial to trade, generally acting in the interests of his peasants at the expense of nobility, and reclaiming land from the sea.[2]

As befitting a recalcitrant Dutchman, he is said to have knighted forty peasants without permission of the church. These and other unverifiable stories subsequently inspired Dutch nationalist sentiments through the ages particularly during the *eighty years' war* (1568-1648) and thereafter.

Continuing down the Graaf Florislaan (Count Floris Lane), we passed an imposing building cast in red brick and fronted by yet another bronze statue mounted on a plinth of industrial concrete. The building was the public library of Rijnsburg. The statue was yet another statue of a working man, in this case that of a labourer wearing a flat cap and clogs, carting a wheelbarrow filled with horticultural detritus that may or may not represent tulips and the bulb industry of the area. The statue, in keeping once again with Dutch self-image, is entitled *De Pionier* and was completed in 1973 during the high days of social democratic sentiment in the Netherlands.

Crossing the Abdijlaan (Abbey Lane), we headed north till we reached the Vliet River. Turning west we followed the canalized river to its headwaters. So doing we passed yet another church, in this case the *Immanuëlkerk*. Which, in keeping with its religious sentiments was built of brick with an imposing bell-tower. In its formal proclamation to the general public, the church states:

> Our congregation situates itself in actuality of the Reformation and is a community that wants to be open, loving and serving to people inside and outside the church. We believe in God the Father and know that we are the church of Jesus Christ, whom we confess as Lord and Savior. We are guided by God's Spirit. We regard the Bible as the guiding word of God.[3]

Its members support youth churches in Malawi and is clearly thriving in what to all intents and purposes is a largely secular society.

---

2 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Floris_V,_Count_of_Holland>.

3 <https://www.protestantsrijnsburg.nl/>.

Heading west along the Vliet River along the Rapenburg, we reached the source of the Vliet River. There at the source of the river a small statue, once again in bronze, of about 1 meter in height had been erected of Baruch Spinoza. The statue had been sponsored by the Netherlands largest cooperative agricultural bank, the Rabobank. It had been erected in 1993, twenty years after the *De Pionier* and reflects the change in public sentiment that had come about in the Netherlands at the dawning of the neoliberal age that would transform the country forever. Where *De Pionier* reflected an era in which social-democratic sentiments found general acceptance in the Netherlands, the statue of Spinoza erected in 1993 reflected a harshening of the political climate in the Netherlands. A political climate in which social solidarity, if expressed by a politician, was seen as a weakness, and the glorification of individual endeavour unfettered by the tethers of the state was seen as the highest good. Whereas the statues of the 1970s reflected public sentiment and were paid for with public funding, the statue of Baruch Spinoza was a private venture paid for by private capital.

Continuing west along the Rapenburg, we passed the epitome of poverty in the Netherlands, an *Action* supermarket, and entered a high-density suburb of social housing before entering the Spinozalaan. There, in the middle of Dutch suburbia we found a small house, a small building which 363 years ago had given Baruch Spinoza shelter when he had fled from Amsterdam. In Rijnsburg, Spinoza survived, through the kindness of Herman Homan, who was a surgeon at Leiden University. In a small room in the building Spinoza attempted to make a living for himself by grinding lenses and by teaching Cartesian philosophy (Nadler, 2018). Nadler indicates that students from Leiden, as well as Leiden professors, would travel to Rijnsburg specifically to talk to Spinoza about Cartesian philosophy. The house was known to be a meeting place of the *collegianten* (collegiants), a section of protestants with whom Spinoza associated. It was in these conditions that Spinoza worked on the philosophical works that would make him the philosophical hero of countless people around the world that have faced institutions and structures that have ranged from the oppressive to the totalitarian. It is striking to notice that, although the Spinoza house is almost invisible within the context of contemporary Rijnsburg and the Netherlands (thus physically it is overshadowed by social housing estates and socially it has been relegated to a quaint and unimportant folkloristic stopping point on cycle routes), it remains a shrine, a holy site (although they would vehemently deny this) for numerous people from around the world. A glance at the visitors' book at the Spinoza house shows pilgrims from around the world, from Iran to Japan, from Germany to Argentina. It is clear that Spinoza argues for and guides people through the ages, wherever they face repressive structures and institutions on planet Earth. Amongst those countless

thousands guided by the arguments and spirit of Spinoza is Prof. Jon Abbink, in whose working office a portrait of Spinoza has overlooked his working days.

Surely the position that Spinoza took in his day, in view of the dominant structures of power that he faced and critiqued, formed a basis of inspiration for Abbink's ethnographic studies and explorations. In a way Spinoza's critical and independent position vis-à-vis the powers that were (church, state, capitalist formations, emerging technocratic interventions, and taxonomic systems of governance) will undoubtedly have formed a lens through which Abbink recognized the same in the context of African (usually Ethiopian) nation-state developments. His inaugural lecture, delivered at the Free University, Amsterdam, in 2001 conveys this Spinoza-based interest. Specifically, Abbink explores the context within which, in the face of dominant structures, individuals can maintain their own independent, critical, non-submissive position, that might lead them to protest and rebel against such dominance, and to do so morally. He transposes this 'moral assignment' of individual's positioning to his analysis of the nation-state development on the African continent when he writes:

> Gezien het feit dat de Afrikaanse staat nog niet, zoals in de modern-industriële samenlevingen, de meeste waarden en normen via wetgeving heeft "'geannexeerd" en een systeem van *surveillance* (in Foucault's zin) heeft kunnen institutionaliseren, hanteren Afrikanen hun eigen normen en waarden als maatstaf voor de beoordeling van wat de staat doet. Op dit punt kan men leren van de Afrikaanse ervaring: als de staat [~~is~~] [deletion ours] een institutie wordt puur gericht op zelfhandhaving, machtsvorming zonder redelijke, publieke verantwoordelijkheid, en van burgers eist dat men de eigen positieve morele principes aan de kant zet, dan is er een legitiem argument voor weigering, subversie of rebellie. Deze Spinozistische positie is onlangs met gloed verdedigd door de filosofe Heidi Hurd, in haar inspirerende boek *Moral Combat* (1999]. Een menselijke subjectiviteit, gegrond in het recht om individuele, rationele keuzen te maken en in het respecteren van cultureel pluralisme dat zelf ook kan omgaan met verschillen, moet verdedigd worden tegen de combinatie een regime van mondiaal corporatief en media-kapitalisme en van uitdijende surveillance-achtige staatsmacht. (Abbink, 2001, p. 31) (citation represented without in-text footnotes)

English translation:

> Given that the African state has not yet, as in modern industrial societies, "'annexed" most values and norms through legislation and has not been able to institutionalize a system of *surveillance* (in Foucault's sense), Africans use their own norms and values as a yardstick for judging what the state does. Here one can learn

> from the African experience: when the state is or becomes an institution purely aimed at self-preservation, power-building without reasonable, public accountability, and demands that citizens set aside their own positive moral principles, then there is a legitimate argument for refusal, subversion or rebellion. This Spinozist position has recently been defended with ardor by the philosopher Heidi Hurd, in her inspiring book *Moral Combat* (1999). A human subjectivity, grounded in the right to make individual, rational choices and in respect for cultural pluralism that can itself deal with differences, must be defended against the combination of a regime of global corporate and media capitalism and of expanding surveillance-like state power. (Abbink, 2001, p. 31) (our translation, citation represented without in-text footnotes).

The ethnographic walking tour (see Urquijo, 2023) through Rijnsburg and into the house where Spinoza lived and worked is thus more than an academic pilgrimage to the shrine of an intellectual forebearer of independent thinking, of celebrating critical thinking, and of profoundly acknowledging the value of scientific exploration. The walking tour demonstrated how many of the dominant powers that Abbink addressed are and remain relevant; transferred and transformed from the times of Spinoza their visibility remains strong. The statues that we met transmitted the salience of persisting labour relations, the structures of exploration and exploitation that formed the basis of the economic structures that brought wealth to Rijnsburg, that produced mercantilism, a working class as well as middle and elite classes in its citizenry. In addition, the visibility of the religious power of the churches, although having lost much of their social basis due to the long years of rising secularism, are yet nevertheless centrally positioned in the lay-out of Rijnsburg's geography. Abbink (2001) entitled his inaugural lecture *Identiteit, strijd en continuïteit in trans-modern Afrika. Een kritisch-realistische benadering* ('Identity, Conflict and Continuity in Trans-modern Afrika. A Critical-Realist Approach', our translation) thus indicating firstly this 'time-lapse' experience that we also noted in our Rijnsburg ethnographic tour in view of how early-modernity's structures of dominance persist and transpose over time into different cultural contexts. But secondly it also draws attention to the critical realism of Spinoza's position on the significance of individual thought that Abbink recognizes and acknowledges in the African context of his ethnographic work. Critical realism does not deny the importance of structures and institutions of power, on the one hand, while it also does not reject the significance of ideology, the power of ideation, and the manner in which people may conceive of different realities, perceptually shape their lived-in worlds while metaphorically producing the lenses through which this world can be apprehended, on the other. Taking both of these as 'realities', critical realism aims to explore and understand how

individuals then deal with both worlds of structure and ideation in their own, conscious and critical ways. As Rees and Gatenby succinctly argue:

> As Davies notes, critical realism thus proposes a subtle and complex view of society in which human agents are neither passive products of social structures nor entirely their creators, but rather are 'placed in an iterative and naturally reflexive feedback relationship to them' (2008, p. 26). Ethnographic writing involves the adoption of intensive field-research observational practices, and a critical realist ethnography would seek to provide a grounded and contextualized account of 'how the social world works' (Watson, 2011), setting out from the premise that subjects' own accounts are the *starting point*, but not the end, of the research process. A critical realist ethnography would aim not only to describe events but also to *explain* them, by identifying the influence of structural factors on human agency. Specifically, its objective would be to elucidate the specific, contingent manner in which a certain mix of causal powers has been formed and activated. (Rees & Gatenby, 2014, p. 138)

To sum up, Spinoza remains relevant and will remain relevant. Jon Abbink admired Spinoza, and this is reflected in his work, and so it should. Spinoza stood for the power and moral responsibility of every individual to reflect on their position within the world and to take a stand.

References

Abbink, G.J. (2001). *Identiteit, strijd en continuïteit in trans-modern Afrika: een kritisch-realistische benadering.* VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij.

Calaprice, A. (Ed.) (2011). *The Ultimate Quotable Einstein*. Princeton University Press.

Davies, C.A. (2008). *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (2nd edition). London: Routledge. Hurd, H. (1999). *Moral Combat*. Cambridge University Press.

Israel, J., & Silverthorne, M. (2007). *Spinoza: Theological-Political Treatise. Annotated Edition.* Cambridge University Press.

Nadler S. (2018). A Philosopher in Rijnsburg. In *Spinoza: A Life* (pp. 215-238). Cambridge University Press.

Rees, C., & Gatenby, M. (2014). Critical Realism and Ethnography. In Paul K. Edwards, Joe O'Mahoney, & Steve Vincent (Eds.), *Studying Organizations Using Critical Realism: A Practical Guide*. (Oxford online edn., Oxford Academic, 1 Apr. 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199665525.003.0007>, accessed 22 Aug. 2024.

Urquijo, M. (2023). Walking Ethnography: The Polyphonies of Space in an Urban Landscape. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, *40*(2), 143-161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08873631.2023.2217395>.

Watson, T.J. (2011). Ethnography, Reality, and Truth: The Vital Need for Studies of 'How Things Work' in Organizations and Management. *Journal of Management Studies*, *48*, 202-17. <10.1111/j.1467-6486.2010.00979.x>.

14

The Pleasure of Writing for a *Festschrift*

Ivo Strecker

In this contribution to a *Festschrift* for Jon Abbink I first present excerpts from some selected articles that I wrote in the past to *honour* other anthropological colleagues and friends. This is to substantiate what I mean by 'the pleasure of writing for a *festschrift*', and to make readers wonder what kind of pleasure it will be for me to write – and for them to read – my *festschrift* text particularly dedicated to Jon Abbink. A recurrent theme will be 'rhetoric culture theory', which first surfaces indirectly in topics like 'chiasmus', 'mantic and magical confidence', and the 'imperial gerund' and then leads to a counter positioning of rational choice theory (RCT 1) and rhetoric culture theory (RCT 2). The pleasure of writing for this *festschrift* culminates in a presentation of what I like to call the 'Abbink alert', which points up epistemic lacunae of previous work and for the future envisions 'a social theory of *rhetoric as dialectic*.'

For Bernhard Streck

In a *festschrift* for Bernhard Streck entitled *Bewegliche Horizonte* (2005) I wrote about the rhetorical figure of chiasmus which had been in the forefront of my theoretical interests for a while, and which went well with what I knew about Bernhard's interest in tropes and any kind of figuration. So, I composed an introductory note which I offer here as a part that stands for the whole (translated from German):

A '*festschrift*' goes well with Bernhard who likes to celebrate, who enjoys arranging big feasts together with Martina and their children at his railway station, who enjoys practicing 'cheerful scholarship', who – following Huizinga – likes to view culture as a game, a fantastic staging, masquerade, performance, and seduction. A *festschrift* appeals also to us who write for Bernhard because here we are allowed to breathe freely and write down what enters our minds as we know that no anonymous reviewer will stalk our pages hunting for our vulnerable spots.

In addition, a *festschrift* is also a suitable place to take stock and reflect on one's personal 'deixis' as Karl Bühler has called it: the place, time, and action components that impinge on our behaviour, the great four W in which we are enmeshed, the Where, When, Whom, and (W)how. For me this is an old theme that I recently rediscovered and want to pursue further in the future, a theme which I know that it will also interest Bernhard who, as I have said above, enjoys the mysterious, the fascinating, the dramatic.

Sometimes I also think this is a fever, an old fever, which has risen up again, the tropical fever, a feverish enthusiasm for everything that has to do with tropes. Tropes are the essence of ethnography like Claude Lévi-Strauss has indicated already in *Tristes Tropiques*. It's not the simple, clear objects and meanings that lie on the surface that give anthropology its particular charm – but the complex, opaque and multi-vocal elements of culture.

The tropical fever of which I speak can surface of course on all latitudes of the globe, for it is not like malaria but something which Dan Sperber has called the 'contagion of ideas', an infection with expressions and figures like for example metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, irony, allegory, and last but not least chiasmus. Their semantic richness and plenitude incite us to search forever for new interpretations, and their ultimate obliqueness poses riddles that won't let go of us.

For Karl-Heinz Kohl

Karl-Heinz Kohl's *festschrift* entitled *Zwischen Aneignung und Verfremdung. Ethnologische Gratwanderungen* was published in 2009, but I composed my literary present for Karl-Heinz Kohl already in 2007 and gave it the title, 'Notes on Mantic and Magical_Confidence in Hamar, Southern Ethiopia'. By way of a miniature introduction, I then wrote: 'Karl-Heinz has always been interested in matters pertaining to religion. So, I offer him here some observations on *mantic and magical confidence* as a token of gratitude for our long-lasting friendship and fruitful academic relationship. Like in so many other publications I quote more or less directly from my notebooks'. Below I present just a few of the many cases that I offered to Karl-Heinz, choosing those, which are most pleasurable to present and entertaining to read. I also include some passages where I venture into tentative reflections.

Mouse and fly (4.10.1975)

'I have killed a mouse in my trap, and thinking I am following the logic of Hamar customs, I am going to throw it "away with the sun", that is towards the West,

when Aikenda exclaims: "No, no! This is forbidden (kais), throw it towards the direction from where the sun rises".

Immediately I understand and ask: "Is then the mouse like the fly?" "Yes, it is. Just like the fly arrives with the milk, the mouse arrives with the sorghum. We kill it, but then we throw it towards where the sun rises and from where the rains come, asking it to return with more sorghum." Later, Ginonda tells me that mice arrive even before the sorghum gets ripe and, in this way, forecast a good harvest: "This year many grey and white mice turned up. Usually, they are busy in the bush, and when they all come to our houses and to the fields, we know that there will be a good crop".

On the one side, one can see here how Aikenda and Ginonda predict from the coming of the mice abundance of sorghum, and from the arrival of flies an abundance of milk. On the other side, one can see how they think that one would cause the future absence of milk if one would senselessly kill the flies which swarm around the milk containers and sit on people's faces, or if one killed mice and threw them away towards the setting sun. To throw a mouse away towards the setting sun would, in Hamar terms, be a gesture, which would have the effect that one never would see the mouse again, and as the presence of mice is closely associated with the presence of sorghum, the gesture would also cause the sorghum to disappear forever.'

Thunder, theft and lightning (2.5.1972)

'It rains heavily, and thunder and lightning crash down on Dambaiti. We sit and drink coffee in Baldambe's house. An immensely frightening flash of lightning comes down near us and Jean asks jokingly whether men who have stolen girls are also in danger of getting killed by lightning. She is alluding to the fact that Baldambe has stolen his young wife into marriage, and to the following Hamar practice: when someone has been robbed, he or she may go to a specialist of the clan called Duma who can kill the thief by means of lightning. Everyone laughs and Baldambe says that he is in no danger. But his sister Maiza then tells the following story which is meant to prove that the threat of the Duma specialist works: Several years ago, her father, Berimba, was sitting together with two friends in his house while rain, thunder, and lightning swept down on them. One flash of lightning after the other came down close to them, and it seemed as if the flashes were aiming at the house in which the men were sitting. So Berimba said that there was something wrong, and he ordered the fire to be put out. Next morning, Berimba found his beautiful giraffe skin sandals, which had been missing for some time in front of his house. One of the two men who had been with him during the

night had previously stolen the sandals, but when the lightning came nearer and nearer, and when Berimba pointed out that the lightning meant that something was wrong, he felt threatened and returned the stolen sandals as soon as possible.'

This is an example where the powers of nature are clearly harnessed to the will of humans. The flashes of lightning, which threatened the thief that night SAID something because they were sent by Berimba who had asked (or could have asked!) the specialist of the clan Duma to punish the thief. In fact, it was quite ironic that on the occasion the thief and Berimba were sitting next to each other, and that even though he himself did not know it at that time, Berimba was mustering the support of the lightning when he said that something was wrong and extinguished the fire as a precaution. The thief 'knew' of course the precise meaning of the threatening flashes of lightning, and his precaution was to return the stolen sandals at once.

Cactus and sorghum (30.9.1985)

'In the early evening, Baldambe and I take a walk in the surroundings of Dambaiti. Baldambe points to the towering flower of the "wolkanti" cactus, touches the seeds of the flower and says: "This is sorghum". I first think he is saying that one can eat the "wolkanti" seeds like sorghum. But this is not the case. Rather, the "wolkanti" tells us how the next sorghum harvest will be. Baldambe speaks here of a specific observation. Hamar traditional knowledge says that when the "wolkanti" flowers well, and when its fruits are rich, then the next sorghum harvest will accordingly also be rich. The observation sounds reasonable and would in principle allow an empirical validation.

But then Baldambe goes on to extend his predictions into realms where causal connections seem less plausible and validation less possible. For example, he says that just as the first flowers of the "wolkanti" may be weak and the second strong, so the first growth of the sorghum will be expected to turn out weak while the second will be strong. And he says that the sickness which befalls the "wolkanti" will later befall the sorghum. I do not quite understand the other analogical extensions. Perhaps they are after all not so farfetched as they seem to me. The principle, I think, is clear: The Hamar allow all sorts of causation. Like modern science they deduce one event from another or infer one phenomenon from another. But as there is no scientific community and no institutionalized science, deductions and inferences may get more "wild" and quickly get an element of usurpation of knowledge, which makes use of uncontrolled analogy and metaphor.

In Hamar one finds both, a lot of reasonable "scientific" practice and a lot of "wild" reasoning. People seem to feel themselves integrated in a wider context in which they can influence things which we of the modern world would not dream of influencing, at least not with the magical means the Hamar use. Yet, the Hamar are also not hysterically given to beliefs in magic and sorcery. They speak occasionally of sorcery and have some remedies against it, and they believe in the spirits of the dead and sacrifice animals for them, but this does not overshadow their practical reasoning in everyday life.'

As my fieldwork continued, I began to ponder more and more about Hamar mantic confidence and the relationship between the symbolical, predictive, and magical mode of Hamar thinking. Where lie the differences between these three modes, and how do they interact? These are, of course, old anthropological questions, which go at least as far back as to Lévy-Bruhl (1911). But as the answers are very difficult and have continued to be confusing, I think that my notes from the field may be useful, or at least interesting. But with this I end my excursions into Hamar mantic and magical confidence as it manifests itself in everyday life. This – in our view more poetical than effective – confidence is part and parcel of the 'undomesticated' or 'savage' mind (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, Goody, 1977), which makes unbounded use of analogical thinking (metaphor) and analogical action (magic), and which anthropologists have the agonizingly good fortune to explore. We find also other, more institutionalized expressions of mantic confidence in Hamar (reading the entrails and throwing the sandals for example), but they are too grand and unwieldy to be included in this little birthday present for Karl-Heinz Kohl.

For Michael Oppitz

An opulent volume entitled *Genauigkeit: Schöne Wissenschaft* was published in 2008 when Michael Oppitz's term as director of the Völkerkundemuseum Zürich had reached its end. As so often is the case, the editors followed the strategy (expected by the publishers) not to call it a '*festschrift*' but rather speak of 'a book of the friends of Michael Oppitz for Michael Oppitz' (2008, p. 11). In my introductory paragraph I colluded with the editors by writing as follows:

'It is a good Idea to devote a book for Michael Oppitz to a theme, which he has always cherished – precision. Precision not for its own sake but because the complex cultural inventions ethnographers study are often inherently so finely structured that it would do them harm if we were to represent them in fuzzy, opaque, and imprecise ways.'

However, after saying this, I immediately voiced my reservations and argued: 'But we also need to be aware of the fact that many cultural phenomena are by their very nature fuzzy and opaque and would be harmed by inappropriate plain style and mistaken forms of precision. Jean-Luc Goddard once countered his critics by saying: "You accuse me of being fuzzy while it is fuzziness that I want to portray in my films".

Then I went on to say that in this paper – dedicated to Michael's joy of precision – I wanted to have a closer look at a piece of conversation with my friend Lomotor, brother-in-law of Baldambe (see Lydall & Strecker, 1979a; Strecker, 1998), which we had in July 1973. Our theme was the background of current feuds between the Hamar and some of their neighbours, and at some point Lomotor related to me what was said at a meeting, which had recently been held between the Hamar and Galeba (Dasanech). This passage, included in the ethnographic album 'Music of the Hamar' (Strecker, 1979), is especially moving and worth listening to for its own sake. It even has inspired artists – first Tilman Künzel and later Carmen Eder – to emphasize its prosody, its rhythms, modes, and tones of feeling by accompanying it with music. But here I examine this extraordinary powerful instance of Hamar oratory partly to demonstrate a culture-specific style of speaking, partly to highlight a particular aesthetic, but above all to make the more general point that *tension phenomena* are worth our attention, for tension is inherent in nature, inherent in life, inherent in human experience, and therefore also inherent in the use of language:

As the dictionary tells us, 'tension' involves a state of being stretched, strained, and filled with excitement, like the stress by which a bar or a string is pulled. This relates to the adjective and verb 'tense' meaning '(of cord, membrane, or figuratively of nerve, mind, emotion) stretched tight, strained to stiffness, causing tenseness (a tense moment)' (*The Oxford Concise Dictionary*).

One of the most effective ways to create tension in discourse is the use of gerundial clause structures, which carry the hidden message that just as the author masters the complex structure of the sentence, he or she is able to grasp difficult issues, and, above all, is able to master people. This is why one can rightly speak of the 'imperial' gerund.

Lomotor's speech begins with a gerund, which is supported by a short ejection and laughter of content, and then is repeated again:

'*Maxulo dabaise*
Maxulo having risen (Maxulo: a spokesman of the Galeba)
Ye, Maxulo! "Eh."

Oh yes, Maxulo (Lomotor imitates the inviting character of the meeting and laughs because of his satisfying memories.)

Maxulo dabaise:
Maxulo having risen (said).'

Then Lomotor imitates Maxulo as well as other speakers, and a series of directly quoted utterances follows until in the end Lomotor finishes saying:

'*Amaisse tau won dalkono*
Having done/spoken like this, we talked.'

Tellingly, the use of the gerund is here associated with the physical act of rising, and taking a spear. This amplifies what we know from the handbooks of both grammar and rhetoric already: gerunds have a projective, tension raising property. They 'raise matters', analogous to the way in which Maxulo raises himself physically and takes a spear into his right hand in order to address the audience and make it the target of his rhetorical will. Here is how I have described such a public speech held at the Hamar cattle camps:

'In the grazing areas of the Lower Omo where the territory of the Hamar borders those of the Galeba and Bume, the young Hamar men have slaughtered an ox. The meat has been roasted over a fire and served on freshly cut bunches of green leaves which are placed on the ground in a wide semicircle. About one hundred Hamar men sit down and begin to eat the meat.

At first, while they eat, everyone is silent. Then after a while, one of the oldest and most influential men present rises. He takes a special spear, which is a symbol for his privilege to speak in a public meeting. He removes the leather cover that protects the sharp blade of the spear and walks over to the centre of the semicircle. Here he takes some of the contents of the ox's stomach – the partly digested green contents of the stomach consist of grasses, herbs, and leaves, and symbolises health and fertility – and rubs it on his forehead, chest, and knees. Then, according to his personal temperament and the content of his speech, he passes repeatedly in front of the semicircle of sitting men with a fast or slow stride. First,

he does not say a word and one only hears his steps on the ground. The stillness and tension grows until eventually he breaks it with the loud cry: "Hai! Hamar, listen to me!" Then he begins his speech. At first, he scolds the men and intimidates them in the fashion, which has been described by Lomotor above. In particular, he addresses himself to the younger men and says that only they should speak from now on, as it is they who are only interested in evil and not in good. He accuses them of having brought bad luck, saying that war, sickness, drought, and all other suffering are ultimately the outcome of their bad social behaviour and their careless enactment of the rites for the dead.

After his vehement introduction the speaker turns to the special problems of the immediate situation. On the day of the recording (June 1, 1973) the war with the Bume was at issue.'

Part of the art of precision is to cultivate selectivity, to strengthen the will to focus only on particular topics, and to resist the temptation to pursue the many themes that suggest themselves when one begins to examine any phenomenon more closely. This is why I have concentrated in this small piece only on one single instance of Hamar speech competence – the use of the imperial gerund. Here I can confidently say that I have reached a certain measure of precision. But there remain a host of questions, which call for an answer if one wants to understand the many rhetorical strategies mastered by Lomotor so persuasively. The use of central figures of speech such as hyperbole, irony, sarcasm, chiasmus, metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, as well as strategies of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) or rather strategies of domination (Strecker, 1988) would be of prime interest here. But these as well as other ingredients are not – and should not – be part of the little meal, with which I hope to contribute to our joint effort to feast, celebrate and entertain our friend and esteemed colleague: Michael Oppitz.

For Günther Schlee

In the book *Dynamics of Identification and Conflict. Anthropological Encounters* (2023) I pursued in my contribution the glorifying themes of *Charisma* as well as *Ethnographers and their Host Societies*. I quote from it here at length firstly because it documents what I mean by the pleasure of casual, free-style writing for what one perceives to be a *festschrift*, and secondly of the pleasure to share one's own most cherished theoretical ventures with colleagues and friends. In my case the rhetoric culture project as part of my article for the imagined *festschrift* for Günther Schlee follows below.

'How do I best celebrate my younger age-mate, neighbour, and academic colleague', I ask myself as I glance from my farm in Redecke towards Borgholzhausen where Günther Schlee has his abode. This sunny afternoon of 24th March 2019 is so pleasant, and the birds chirp so cheerfully that I decide to begin on a playful note paraphrasing an old Irish joke: 'I don't like to think before I write. I like to be just as surprised as everyone else about what I write.'

The first thought that pops up in my mind is, 'we are celebrating here a truly *charismatic* personality'. Yes, no doubt, Günther has great *charisma*, but as soon as I write this, I wonder what I – or anyone else – might mean by it precisely. We know that the ancient Greeks meant by *charis* a superior person's attitude of benevolence and kindness towards subordinates. We know that the Christian apostles, prophets and leaders of the church who bent people's beliefs to their will, were said to possess *charisma*. We know that the heroes, hunters, shamans, etc. who tended to act as leaders of their groups had *charisma*. We know that Max Weber identified *charisma* as one of the three major types of political rule, i.e. traditional, legal, and *charismatic*; and that he saw *charismatic* leadership grounded in and deriving from magical or otherwise 'supernatural qualities of a personality', adding that it did not matter whether such qualities were objectively true. And finally, we know that in modern and postmodern discourse *charisma* is often used more loosely to praise the radiant and captivating character of a person. But in spite of all this knowledge (or perhaps because of it?) we still do not really know what we mean by *charisma.* Like metaphor and other tropes, it has echo chambers that may cause all sorts of evocations.

Innate qualities of persons undoubtedly play a role, but only when we also take other factors such as hearsay, storytelling, weaving of legends, etc. into account can we understand the dynamics of *charismatic* leadership and meaningfully ask how Günther's *charisma* may have come about. Night has fallen and I pause now, but I can see already how tomorrow morning I will continue and tell you the tale of how Günther's name became imbued with fame, received an aura, and bespoke a certain *charisma* long before I met him in person.

Now it is the morning of March 25th, 2019, with strong winds blowing from Northwest and rain splashing against my window. Just the right weather to leave and move – at least in one's mind-to the drier and warmer regions where Jean Lydall and I as well as Günther Schlee did ethnographic research during the ear-

ly and mid-nineteen seventies: Günther among the Rendille of northern Kenya and Jean and I among the Hamar of southern Ethiopia. Others also did fieldwork here during this 'blessed' period: David Turton among the Mursi, Uri Almagor and Claudia Carr among the Dassanech, Serge Tornay among the Nyangatom, Don Donham among the Maale, Christopher Hallpike among the Konso, Paul Baxter and Asmarom Legesse among the Boran (later followed by Marco Bassi), and others…

Today, March 26th, 2019, began with gentle rays of the sun filtering through the trees. Later mighty black clouds rose over the forest, and gradually rain began to fall that now, towards the evening, has given way to a lighter sky that promises the return of the sun, if not this evening, then surely tomorrow. In light of my present writing this augurs some brightening up, some kind of arrival followed by a new departure. And so it is! I have now found my central theme with even a title for it: 'Charisma. Ethnographers and their Host Societies'.

With this essay I want to pay homage to Günther's achievements as head of the department of 'Integration and Conflict' at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale, Germany, and contribute to his research agenda by asking, 'how do interethnic processes of conflict and integration affect the relationships between ethnographers?'

So, what does our 'echo chamber' (i.e. 'Baldambe Explains') tell us about the relationship between the Hamar and the people Günther came in 1974 to study (i.e. the Rendille, Samburu, Gabra, Somali, and others whom most Hamar don't distinguish and simply call 'Korre')? Here is what we find:

'In the time of the ancestors, … the Korre used to come here, jingle, jingle, their leg bells going: jingle, jingle. One Korre would have four spears, another would have three, another would have two, and they all had shields. The Hamar had no shields, and each Hamar had only one spear and one bow, which makes two. Thus, they would fight. Early in the morning the leg bells of the Korre would sound *bororororororokorrororololololololol* and the Hamar would call: "*Wah! wah! wah*! The Korre have come, have come. Get up, get up, get up."

'Then they would come together to fight, come together, come together… They fought all over the country. Then the Korre with their four spears, three spears, two spears and the Hamar with just one spear and a bow, would confront each other. The Hamar would shout: "Shoot cross-wise with your arrows, shoot cross-

wise, shoot cross-wise! …..". The Korre had raided our cattle, hadn't they? Then the owner of the cattle called out. Next the bowstring sounded *king, king, king* and the Korre were wiped out. Getting the cattle back from the Korre they came dancing. Thus, the ancestors of the Hamar' (Lydall & Strecker, 1979b, p. 26).

According to the thesis that I try to advance here, the well-remembered battles between the Korre and the Hamar will have influenced the relationship between 'their' ethnographers in one way or other. In particular, the prowess of the Korre must have added to Günther's *charisma.* In support of this view let us recall that ethnographic fieldwork has often been likened to a 'vision quest', a search for the 'meaning of life', a 'rite of passage'. A successful 'vision quest' enhances a person's social standing. And so it is with ethnographers who embark on fieldwork. The more difficult, demanding, and dangerous life in their host societies is the more fame they will eventually gain, and their name will attain a special aura.

There were in fact several aspects under which Günther's fieldwork can been seen as extreme and therefore prone to enhance his *charisma*: the war-like disposition of his hosts; their desert-like habitat; their magnificent camels; their nomadic life, and – perhaps surprisingly – his youth and physical appearance. Let me briefly mention some of these aspects:

Part of the desert-like environment where Günther did his research are the animals tended by his hosts: splendid herds of camels supplemented by cattle and small stock. From the perspective of the Hamar nothing is more demanding – and almost impossible to master – than the herding of camels. The Korre are therefore held in high esteem, as well as the ethnographer who lives with them in order to study the arduous and joyous sides of camel herding in the semi-desert of northern Kenya.

The fact that the Korre dismantle their homesteads, load them on the backs of their camels, and then move to other localities adds in the eyes of the Hamar (for whom most of this is anyway hearsay) to the Korre's and 'their' ethnographer's exotic character. For me a further element added to my perception of Günther, the never seen but often heard of ethnographer. He travelled the Kenyan deserts on the backs of camels like Roede Orm – immortalized by Frans Bengtsson – crossed the seas. This image was nourished further by bits of information that reached me about his youth; his tall and strong stature; his long blond hair, and generally – as I thought – Viking-like appearance.

2. April 2019: Jean and I were away, and upon our return we found the cherry trees blossoming and the leaves bursting out in the bushes and trees around us: time for me to write the final paragraph of this paper in which I want to once again strengthen my argument that the relationships pertaining between host societies influence the relationships between 'their' ethnographers.

Our 'echo chamber' tells us not of friendship or alliance between Korre and Hamar, only of fighting. Let's have a look again at the following lines: 'Early in the morning the leg bells of the Korre would sound *bororororororokorrororololololololol* and the Hamar would call: "*Wah! wah! wah*! The Korre have come, have come. Get up, get up, get up." And: 'Then the Korre with their four spears, three spears, two spears and the Hamar with just one spear and a bow, would confront each other. The Hamar would shout: "Shoot cross-wise with your arrows, shoot cross-wise, shoot cross-wise! …"

This vivid description of battles between our two host societies, their 'korrororololololololol', '*wah! wah! wah*!', and 'shoot cross-wise, shoot cross-wise!' serves as a perfect analogy of the battles fought between Günther and me on the field of anthropological theory. For seemingly inexplicable reasons (inexplicable as long as one does not take the theory of mutual influence between host societies and 'their' ethnographers into account) we never formed an alliance to strengthen the theoretical paradigms that each of us spent much effort to develop: *Rational Choice Theory* and *Rhetoric Culture Theory.* As time went by, I would simply speak of RCT 1 (*Rational Choice Theory*) and RCT 2 (*Rhetoric Culture Theory*) …

Now, to return to the finding with which I aim to surprise Günther as well as myself in this piece of '*Festschrift*' writing: I discovered that the relationships pertaining between host societies are prone to influence the relationships that pertain between 'their' ethnographers. So, to end this paper I like to repeat the question: 'Why did Günther and I never make an effort to join forces in the field of theory? Why did we never arrange a symposium on "Rational Choice Theory versus Rhetoric Culture Theory", "The Synergy of RCT 1 and RCT 2", or something similar?'

My answer is that here the stances of our respective host societies asserted themselves. Günther and I acted on our battlefield of theory just like the Korre and Hamar acted on their battlefield of raiding. We kept apart and conducted our argumentation from a distance. Günther was under the spell of the Korre who throw their spears straight and directly. So – as befits RCT 1 – he argued for the relevance of straight discourse: rational thought and action. I was under the spell

of the Hamar who shoot their arrows crosswise, and so – as befits RCT 2 – I argued for the relevance of crooked discourse: rhetorical thought and action.

In the afternoon of the 3rd of April 2019, the sun has begun to shine while rain is still falling, creating a curtain in front of the forest across the fields. There is something teasingly unreal in this picture, which goes well with the nature of my gift to Günther. For can any of the mutual influences between ethnographers and host societies of which I have spoken be more than a thought – an intimation, a gesture towards the power of analogy, the sensing of a vast resonance chamber that extends over space and time? Thus, the reality of mutual influence between observers and the observed vanishes like the forest behind a curtain of rain.

For Jon Abbink

It is a sunny day – 10th of November 2023 – as I look from our farm westward across fields and forests, once again contemplating what I will write for a *festschrift*, this time dedicated to Jon Abbink. Travelling in my mind past Günther Schlee's home along the 52nd parallel to the Netherlands, I reach Jon in Leiden where I find him at home with his wife Azeb. Their children Michael and Helen have left home already, and have entered the professional world. Having reached Jon this way, I feel inclined to reverse my mental route and recall how once – more than a dozen years ago – Jean and I came from the West. We sailed from Middelburg along the rivers Maas and Rhine until at Rotterdam we entered the canal that leads on to Leiden where we stopped, fastened our boat, and walked over to where Jon and Azeb live. What a warm welcome: food and conversation! We also visited Leiden University where Jon – the anthropologist – and Azeb – the linguist – work: How finely built this old university town is, how well-crafted all details are, like streets, squares, steps, doors, windows. All together they create a 'genius loci' that speaks of care and thoughtfulness, and reminds me of other old university towns that I have come to cherish, like for example Cambridge in England where Jean and I had the good fortune to live for a while, and where the theoretical ideas took shape that came to occupy me, and which I would later develop further together with other anthropologists who joined the 'rhetoric culture project' – among them Jon Abbink.

13th of November 2023, a colourful autumn day which goes well with the following: Jon and I recently exchanged letters to confirm that it was the 6th of June

1993, when he and Azeb married in Addis Ababa, and that among the 'best men', on Jon's side, were Alula Pankhurst and Getie Gelaye, while Richard Pankhurst and I were their 'honoured and much appreciated witnesses'. This fact in itself already gives me pleasure to report. But in addition, I'd like to say that Jon and Azeb's marriage evokes further special meanings for me.

Firstly, it is the character of their marriage that intrigues me, remindful as it is of those fairy tales (collected by the Grimm brothers in Germany, and Italo Calvino in Italy) where a young man accomplishes a great feat for the good of the country and therefore is given the king's daughter as his wife. Jon and Azeb still have to tell us all about it, because until now I have heard only rumours of Azeb's royal descent – of how her forebears ruled the kingdom of Wollaita and fought for it against the overwhelming strength of Emperor Menelik's troops who carried rifles acquired from Europeans. Whatever the case, this is the light in which I have come to see Azeb and Jon as a couple, and finding that Jon carries himself like a prince and Azeb like a princess I have never questioned this narrative or wanted to know further details because I like it and find it enchanting.

Secondly, we know that anthropological fieldwork has often been likened to a quest (a long or arduous search for something) from where one returns with some treasure. Prosaically this would just be 'data', but poetically it might well be – a woman. The stories of Jon and Azeb, as well as Jean and myself, may be telling in this respect. However, as I know only of the latter, I will relate it here in the hope that Jon and Azeb will enjoy it and will tell us theirs sometime later:

> Animated by Joseph Conrad's novels – for me the most intriguing among them 'Ahlmayer's Folly' – I began to study ethnology at Hamburg University in the early 1960s. This was the time of the Beatles to whose tunes we would dance until deep in the night in the clubs of St. Pauli. When they had left, several friends and I followed them to London where I enrolled at the London School of Economics and Political Science. My English was rudimentary then, and my zeal to study minimal – just enough to get a whiff of British Social Anthropology. But after I was back in Germany and the sociology of knowledge began to intrigue me, I chose as topic for my doctoral dissertation, 'Theory and practice of British functionalism'. Equipped with a lavish doctoral grant from the Volkswagen Foundation I enrolled eventually at the LSE again but this time as a postgraduate student with plenty of time to do independent research. What I had come for was to study British social anthropologists as a tribe that cultivated particular theories and practices to understand the 'cultural other'. Therefore, I not only attended lectures, and read carefully and widely, but also interviewed British scholars wherever I found them in London at the LSE, at SOAS, and at University College, as well as in Oxford and Cambridge.

They must have found it quite quaint how I asked them endless questions about the way they practiced their internationally acclaimed profession: Young lecturers like Robin Fox, Anthony Forge, Geoffrey and Peter Lienhardt, David Pocock for example, and gentle old sages like Raymond Firth, Isaac Shapera, Lucy Mair, Evans-Pritchard, Meyer-Fortes, Mary Douglas, and last but not least Reo Fortune whose *Sorcerers of Dobu* had become one of the foundation stones of Ruth Benedict's acclaimed, *Patterns of Culture*.

There were also students with whom I spoke. One of them soon became most important: Jean Lydall who remarked, 'You must be very learned' when we first met riding up in the elevator of the LSE to collect our respective letters from home. Today we still laugh about Jean's cheeky 'positive politeness strategy' that initiated our friendship and later led to our marriage. Here I recall only one early moment when I felt a bond growing between us: It was in Isaak Shapera's seminars where Jean used to sit across the room, and I began to wonder how she looked and how she spoke. Her accent was not at all English. So, because of her blond complexion I guessed she might be Scandinavian. But when we later began to go on walks along the river Thames, she told me that she was born in Barnet, North London, and later grew up in Oxford until her father took the whole family to Australia where he was offered a professorship in economics. Now, after six years abroad, Jean's English had acquired a tone that was very much her own, something precious, something for me to adore. In a biographical sketch entitled 'Merging Horizons' (Lydall & Strecker, 2011) Jean and I have described in some detail how through joint studies and travels we came to bond ever more closely and then, in 1969, embarked together on ethnographic studies in southern Ethiopia that continue until today. But I have never explained to anyone that my studies in England entailed real 'fieldwork' with all the mental and emotional elements that go with it, and that the most satisfying of it all was how I could bring home with me a woman from the British tribe of Social Anthropologists. In the summer when Jean first visited our family home in Germany my father drew a lovely portrait of her, and also advised me, 'don't let her go'. My mother eventually came to call her 'my daughter in love'.

15.11.2023. Rain is splashing against my window, and water covers the fields in front of our orchard. Grey and miserable as it looks, this is just the right weather for a November day like this. Also, I have a can of coffee beside me that provides a mental bridge to Addis Ababa where I often lived in the past enjoying daily coffee ceremonies with friends, and where I got to know Jon Abbink more than a quarter of a century ago. Our first casual encounter – sometime late in the nineteen eighties or early nineteen nineties in the park that extends from the Institute of

Ethiopian Studies towards Sidist Kilo – is still vividly in my mind because it was associated with some very pleasant events: My book, *The Social Practice of Symbolization* had been published by Athlone Press in 1988, and they had recently sent a letter telling me that it had been chosen in the USA as one of the 'outstanding academic books of the year'. Also, I lately had read a review in the Times Literary Supplement, which ended by saying that my book was, 'written in an excellent style, without a single footnote'. Needless to say, I felt elated. And now there was this young man here who, upon learning who I was, enthusiastically congratulated me for my scholarly achievement. But how on earth could he have read my symbolization study already? Well, my great surprise simply showed that I did not yet know Jon, who, as I have come to realize, is probably the most prolific reader and writer of contemporary Ethiopian studies. His bibliography as it stands at the moment has many hundred entries, each entailing numerous publications read and evaluated individually. How can anyone cope with such a magnitude of data? He must have a very acute mind, fast and clear!

Today – 20.10.23 – I like to recall how I perceived Jon in the early years when he – rather like Günther Schlee – impressed me by his absence. He would disappear for months on end to travel to one of the then most wayward, inaccessible regions of southern Ethiopia. He had chosen not the semi-deserts of the Southeast, as Günther Schlee, but the forests and savannah lands that extend along the valley of the Lower Omo west of the Gamo Highlands and east of the Maji Mountains. Jon had decided to study with the Suri, Dizi, as well as the Me'en, and as time went by, Jon's repeated disappearance travelling mostly alone and on foot, as well as his intriguing early ethnographic publications, gave him in my eyes a kind of 'aura', rather similar to what I have explained about Günther's 'charisma'. To honour Jon Abbink's early ethnographic achievements, I provide here just a few of his titles from that period. The details can be found in his full bibliography, which I expect to become part of the *festschrift* [see the end of this book; cf. <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/staffmembers/jan-abbink/publications#tab-3> – the editors]:

1986 Ethnic boundaries: delineating two Southwest Ethiopian groups. Analysis and research outline.
1988 The Me'en as historical transformation of the 'Surma'-preliminary notes on society and culture.
1990 The final rite: burial among the Me'en of Southwest Ethiopia.
1993 Reading the entrails: analysis of an African divination discourse.
1993 Ethnic conflict in the 'tribal' zone: the Dizi and Suri in Southern Ethiopia.

1995 Ritual and environment: The *mosit* ceremony of the Ethiopian Me'en people.
1999 Violence, ritual and reproduction: culture and context in Surma dueling.
2000 Restoring the balance: violence and culture among the Suri of Southern Ethiopia.
2003 Love and death of cattle: the paradox in Suri attitudes toward livestock.
2004 Ritual and political forms of violent practice among the Suri of Southern Ethiopia.
2005 Local leadership and state governance in southern Ethiopia: from charisma to bureaucracy.
2006 Of snakes and cattle: the dialectics of group esteem between Suri and Dizi in Southwest Ethiopia.

Readers interested in the many parallels between Jon and my ethnographic publications at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century may have a look at *Ethnographic Chiasmus. Essays on Culture, Conflict and Rhetoric* (Strecker, 2011) with its three parts: Rhetorical Creation of Culture and Self, Rhetorics of War and Peace, and Rhetorical Articulation of Knowledge and Belief.

Today is Saturday, 25th of November 2023, with further strong winds, almost gales. But the sky is clearing. This is a good analogue for the kind of mind I will now need as I aim to round off my poem for Jon. The topic will be rhetoric culture theory, but not a story of divergence as with Günther Schlee (remember RCT 1 and RCT 2 above) but a tale of convergence, of joint theoretical and empirical work on emergent rhetoric culture theory. So, what then is rhetoric culture theory? The *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Anthropology* has explained it as follows:

> Rhetoric culture theory is defined by working assumptions about human communication that can guide textual, ethnographic, and theoretical research. The most basic assumption is that the human species may be better understood, not as inherently rational, but in respect to its use of speech. This rhetorical humanism refuses a conventional distinction between speech and reason that was magnified in the modern era: speech now is given its due as a protean capability that includes but goes beyond rationality to permeate every aspect of experience. As Josef Kopperschmidt and his collaborators have argued, human beings use persuasive speech not only to influence others but also to shape their very selves (Kopperschmidt 2000). These processes draw on the whole human being and our many interactions with the environment. They include reason, emotion, imagination,

> and multiple dimensions of responsiveness. They remain continually provisional, requiring recurrent performances and the co-production of meaning to be sustainable and useful. They can be known, manipulated, and improved, but the result will not be comprehensive laws. Persuasion is an adaptive response to the existential condition that human beings cannot know the world, each other, or even themselves completely or infallibly (Hariman et al., 2022, p. 3).

Early punch lines that helped shape rhetoric culture theory were: (1) 'The rhetoric culture project arises from a fundamental chiasmus that leads us to explore the ways in which rhetoric structures culture and culture structures rhetoric' (Tyler & Strecker, 2009, p. 21). (2) 'Inward and outward persuasion is the mother of invention, and it is our rhetorical genius that creates the "customs" and "lifestyles" of culture' (Strecker & Tyler, 2009, p. 1). (3) 'By means of rhetoric we create phantasms, by means of rhetoric we act like demons, and by means of rhetoric we conjure up those ideas, values, moral rules, and laws that constitute the basis of culture' (Strecker & Tyler, 2009, p. 5). The beginning and expanding history of the rhetoric culture project has been told in various forms and to different degrees in the acknowledgements of the first ten volumes that by now have appeared in the Berghahn Books series *Studies in Rhetoric and Culture*. So, I may move now directly to the eighth volume in our series edited by Jon Abbink and Shauna LaTosky in 2021 entitled, *Rhetoric and Social Relations. Dialectics of Bonding and Contestation*.

The seeds for the book were planted at the Third International Rhetoric Culture Conference held in February 2005 at the Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz. Papers were read by Michael Herzfeld (Harvard), Robert Hariman (Northwestern); David Zeitlyn (Kent), Chris Gregory (Canberra), Nurit Bird-David (Haifa), Vincenzo Bartoli (Rome), Anke Reichenbach (Leipzig), Jean Lydall (Mainz), and others. But why were the contributions of these illustrious scholars published only sixteen years later?

The first explanation is simple: For practical reasons it took Berghahn Books after the conferences a considerable span of time to publish the first seven volumes of the 'Studies in Rhetoric and Culture' series.

The second explanation is more complex: Jon and Shauna LaTosky, who in the meantime had volunteered to be co-editor, wanted further contributions to cre-

ate a volume that was empirically rich, and would convince by way of examples. Needless to say, all this took time. As Jon and Shauna have put it in their preface: 'In line with admonitions from various authors within the Rhetoric Culture Project on the importance of ethnography and comparison, this volume contains chapters that are almost all based on serious fieldwork, which they see as crucial to test and extend the scope of the assumptions and hypotheses of the Rhetoric Culture Project' (2021, p. IX).

The empirical thrust of the volume that finally emerged led to important new findings that in the future will be relevant for the theory of social relations. Perhaps the most outstanding of them is *Kinship: Mother and Child of Rhetoric*, which was provided by the woman of the British tribe of Social Anthropologist who you have met already above. In a way, the ingeniously reflexive title tells already everything, but let us anyway listen to Jean Lydall for a moment as she explains her rhetorical theory of kinship 'by way of conclusion':

> In the mid-1970s, when puzzling over Hamar kinship, I first tried to understand it in terms of Lévi-Strauss' ideas of 'elementary structures of kinship' and the exchange of women through marriage. In Hamar, cousin marriage is prohibited and the husband's family is obliged to give bridewealth in exchange for his wife. In terms of Lévi-Strauss' model this constitutes "marriage by purchase" which "allows generalized exchange to break away from its elementary structure, and favours the creation of a growing number of increasingly supple and extended cycles" (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 471). The clans in Hamar, however, are not in any way corporate groups, and even though I could logically infer, and statistically corroborate, a generalized exchange of women between virtual groups of men, this simply amounted to "an accidental realization of an overall structure" (*op. cit*., p. 470).
>
> Reverting to a more functionalist approach to kinship such as I had been taught at the London School of Economics, and bending this to a nascent feminist approach, I recognized that the main function underlying Hamar marriage prescriptions and prohibitions was to provide women and their children with a wide network of support (i.e. kindred) which would give them optimal access to the scarce but unreliable resources which make up the mixed agro-pastoral economy of the Hamar (see Lydall 2005). Now, many years later, inspired by the rhetoric culture approach, which "explores the ways in which rhetoric structures culture and culture structures rhetoric" (Tyler and Strecker 2009: 21), I have tried to look behind and beyond function and structure, in search of rhetoric in the emergence of kinship, and kinship in the emergence of rhetoric. I start from the premise that a primary mother-infant bond and an elementary mother-child unit of kinship constitute the source of, and impetus for, both kinship and rhetoric. The primary purpose of marriage, which is a purely cultural invention, is the extension of kinship beyond the

mother-child unit in order to provide the latter with a network of support. Finally, because of the primary mother-infant bond, women are particularly interested and engaged in generating kinship relations, a process that involves a great deal of rhetoric. In the main body of the paper, I applied this approach to Hamar material in order to demonstrate how Hamar women use rhetoric to *cultivate* kinship (Jean Lydall 2021: 77-78).

The third explanation is rather conjectural. It has to do with Jon Abbink's deep-seated doubts about the epistemic status of rhetoric, which he indicates already in the 'Introduction' where usually such matters are raised, but on which he reflects most thoughtfully in his chapter, 'Power Relations in Suri: Rhetoric in Public Speech and Action'. In other words, I think that detecting a lacuna in rhetoric culture theory Jon was not eager to rush into publishing the precious essays assembled in 'Rhetoric and Social Relations'. Rather, in between a million other commitments, he took time to read widely, asking fundamental questions that in his view had never been fully discussed within the rhetoric culture project. As so often with fundamental issues, the questions sound deceptively simple. Jon asked, 'What does rhetoric, a key human discursive strategy in human interaction, achieve, and what is its scope?'. It was the 'critical rhetorical movement', which triggered these questions, of which he writes: 'Human activity and the world in which it is situated cannot be reduced, as the critical rhetoric movement would have it, to rhetoric' (2021, p. 286). Below I will take the liberty of '*festschrift* style writing' to assemble various passages of his text in new ways. I also provide numbers to help all of us when in future days we will want to discuss Jon's twelve points at length (perhaps even at a conference on 'Epistemic Queries of Rhetoric Culture Theory' – convened by Jon Abbink and held at Leiden University?).

1 Rhetoric is certainly a natural phenomenon, a universal faculty of humans and even – in non-verbal form-of non-human animals (e.g. apes), and it is partly constitutive of 'culture' and social relations.
2 Rhetoric may be said to be instrumental in the process of acquiring certain kinds of knowledge, of 'coming to know', so to speak.
3 But is rhetoric an autonomous dimension, and is it epistemic, i.e., knowledge-generating, or even creating the conditions or possibility of (truthfully) knowing? It is important to refer to this point in view of the claim that 'culture' is primarily a rhetorical construction.
4 Let me express scepticism on this thesis of rhetoric as being epistemic. When we want to analyse social relations and rhetoric, there is need to firmly ground our descriptions and analyses of how rhetoric works, via a realist

analysis of political and socio-economic settings that condition the appeal or effectiveness of rhetoric and shape the critical claims made by various groups.

5 Reference should of course be made to those realities that are the *issue* of dispute, competition and conflicts of interest and in which rhetoric performances are set. Such realities exist *beyond* their rhetorical construction, although they are contested during the latter.

6 I try to explore ways to go beyond the presentation of rhetorical ingenuities and strategies in various social contexts, and get to a more explanatory approach of how rhetoric and (other) social realities interact.

7 Rhetoric is recognized as a human universal because naturally given in speech-although it differs in its referential content. Rhetorical styles thus vary with specific *cultural traditions* or *repertoires* as to content but not as to form. Rhetorical efficiency is based on shared underlying speech metaphors and discourse techniques across cultures and that have some formal properties or recurring structures of expression like analogy, simile, metonymy and metaphor, rooted in the nature of human speech and psychology. Nevertheless, the cultural specificity and context-dependency make trans-cultural understanding of rhetoric difficult.

8 If we see 'cultures' (always in quote marks) as distinguishable repertoires of meaning and behaviour with which people have grown up, situating them in place and time, then we may see them as the results of rhetorical competition: ensembles of metaphors and representations that have congealed and inform people's thought and action. These cultural notions and traditions are re-produced in the actual rhetorical performances by its members – performances that are shaped by speakers' material and other interests.

9 Rhetoric, despite its inherent universal nature, functions mainly as *ideology* – not false consciousness, but interest-led, socio-culturally shaped, mental activity of humans, resulting in problem-solving but sectional views of reality aimed to 'persuade' or gain assent-and as having no direct or necessary relation to action.

10 While it has its own persuasive effects, rhetoric often needs to be backed up with threat, intimidation, sanctions or ultimately, the use of force to convert persuasion into corresponding action. An analysis of rhetoric as ideology allows us to connect to differing interests and inequalities that form the stuff of human social relations.

11 We always have to analyse rhetoric as used *in conjunction with* these inequalities of a political and socioeconomic nature, as seen and conceptualized by people as members of society. It is therefore not fully epistemic or 'knowledge-generating', but rather *validates* and re-shapes existing ideas, beliefs, and representations.

12 We need a social theory of *rhetoric as dialectic*, seeing it as part of wider societal dialogues and struggles, based on deliberative logic and arguments of different interested parties pursued in *other* spheres of discourse as well.

Jon's twelve points have something of Martin Luther's theses, which he nailed to the gate of Wittenberg Cathedral some five hundred years ago. They read to me so foundational, so apt, and inspiring that I feel they will help – together with our entry in the *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia in Anthropology* – set the rhetoric culture project on course for quite a few years to come. Congratulations, Jon, dear colleague and friend!!!!

References

Abbink, Jon (2021). Power Relations in Suri: Rhetoric in Public Speech and Action. In Jon Abbink & Shauna LaTosky (Eds.), *Rhetoric and Social Relations. Dialectics of Bonding and Contestation* (pp. 283-309). Berghahn Books.

Abbink, Jon, & LaTosky, Shauna (Eds.) (2021). *Rhetoric and Social Relations. Dialectics of Bonding and Contestation*. Berghahn Books.

Brown, Paula, & Levinson, Stephen (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use.* Cambridge University Press.

Goody, Jack (1977). *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*. Cambridge University Press.

Hariman, Robert, LaTosky, Shauna, Mokrzan, Michał, Pelkey, Jamin, & Strecker, Ivo (2022). Rhetoric Culture Theory. *Oxford Research Encyclopaedias, Anthropology*.

Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien (1910). *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures*, 1st ed. F. Alcan.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1966 (1962)). *The Savage Mind*. The University of Chicago Press/ Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1947 (1969)). *The Elementary Structures of Kinship (Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*), revised edition (James Harle Bell, John Richard von Stumer, & Rodney Needham (Ed.), (Trans.). Boston: Beacon Press.

Lydall, Jean (2005). The Power of Women in an Ostensibly Male-Dominated Agro-Pastoral Society. In Thomas Widlok & Wolde Gossa Tedesse (Eds.), *Property and Equality: Volume II: Encapsulation, Commercialization, Discrimination 152* (pp. 152-172). Berghahn Books.

Lydall, Jean, & Strecker, Ivo (1979a). *The Hamar of Southern Ethiopia. Vol. I: Work Journal.* Klaus Renner Verlag.

Lydall, Jean, & Strecker, Ivo (1979b). *The Hamar of Southern Ethiopia. Vol. II: Baldambe Explains.* Klaus Renner Verlag.

Lydall, Jean, & Strecker, Ivo (2011). Merging Horizons. *Paideuma*, *57*(7), 7-35.

Lydall, Jean (2021). Kinship: Mother and Child of Rhetoric. In Jon Abbink & Shauna LaTosky (Eds.), *Rhetoric and Social Relations. Dialectics of Bonding and Contestation* (pp. 57-79). Berghahn Books.

Strecker, Ivo (1979). *Hamar – Musik Der Hamar/Südäthiopien-Music of the Hamar/South Ethiopia* [sound recording]. Musikethnologische Abteilung, Museum für Völkerkunde/Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz.

Strecker, Ivo (1981). Über das Herstellen einer ethnographischen Schallplatte. In M.P. Baumann (Ed.), *Musikologische Feldforschung* (pp. 76-92). Verlag der Musikalienhandlungen Wagner.

Strecker, Ivo (1988). *The Social Practice of Symbolization. An Anthropological Analysis*. London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology No. 60. The Athlone Press.

Strecker, Ivo (1998). Our Good Fortune Brought Us Together: Obituary for Baldambe. *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde*, *Bd. 44*, Anthropology and the Question of the Other (1998), pp. 59-68.

Strecker, Ivo (2005). Der ethnographische Chiasmus. In Katja Geisenheimer & Katharina Lange (Eds.), *Bewegliche Horizonte. Festschrift für Bernhard Streck* (pp. 225-234). Leipziger Universitätsverlag GMBH.

Strecker, Ivo (2008). Lomotor's Talk or the Imperial Gerund. In Wolfgang Marschall, Paola von Wyss-Giacosa & Andreas Isler (Eds.), *Genauigkeit: Schöne Wissenschaft* (pp. 99-109). Benteli Verlags AG.

Strecker, Ivo (2009). Anmerkungen zu mantischem und magischem Vertrauen in Hamar, Südäthiopien. In Volker Gottowick, Holger Jebens, & Editha Platte (Eds.), *Zwischen Aneignung und Verfremdung. Ethnologische Gratwanderungen*, *Festschrift für Karl-Heinz Kohl* (pp. 423-432). Campus Verlag.

Strecker, Ivo (2011). *Ethnographic Chiasmus. Essays on Culture, Conflict and Rhetoric*. Lit Verlag/Michigan State University Press.

Strecker, Ivo (2023). Charisma: Ethnographers and Their Host Societies. In Markus Virgil Hoehne, Echi Christina Gabbert, & John R. Eidson (Eds.), *Dynamics of Identification and Conflict. Anthropological Encounters* (pp. 347-356). Berghahn Books.

Strecker, Ivo, & Tyler, Stephen (2009). *Culture and Rhetoric.* Berghahn Books.

Tyler, Stephen, & Strecker, Ivo (2009). The Rhetoric Culture Project. In Ivo Strecker and Stephen Tyler (Eds.), *Culture and Rhetoric* (pp. 2-30). Berghahn Books.

Bibliography of G.J. Abbink (ASCL)

Leiden, update July 2024

1 Monographs and edited books/collections

2024 Editor:
Politics and Governance of the 'Reform Agenda'in Ethiopia, 2018-2023. Leiden: ASCL.

2023 Editor:
StRA Paper Series. Leiden: ASCL (Published at: www.ascleiden.nl/research/projects/studying-reform-agenda-ethiopia-enhancing-inclusive-patterns-regional-governance)

2022 *Ethiopian-Eritrean Studies: a Bibliography on Society and History 2016-2022.* Leiden: African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCL Occasional publication 44), *xiii*, 488 pp. (https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3444002).

2022 Co-editor:
The Routledge Handbook of the Horn of Africa. Chief editor: J.-N. Bach. London – New York, Routledge, 746 pp. (www.routledge.com/Routledge-Handbook-of-the-Horn-of-Africa/Bach/p/book/9781138353992)

2021 Co-edited, with Shauna LaTosky:
Rhetoric and Social Relations. Dialectics of Bonding and Contestation. Oxford-New York: Berghahn Books (e-book & hardback). (www.berghahnbooks.com/title/AbbinkRhetoric/loc).

2018 Co-editor:
J. Abbink, A. Mehler, H. Melber, & V. Odetula (Eds.). *Africa Yearbook. Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara 2018*. Leiden – Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2018 Editor:
The Environmental Crunch in Africa. Growth Narratives vs. Local Realities. New York – Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, xvii, 324 pp. (doi 10.1007/978-3-319-77131-1). ISBN hardback: 978-3-319-77130-4; ISBN e-Book: 978-3-319-77131-1).

2017 Co-editor:
J. Abbink, S. Elischer, A. Mehler, & H. Melber (Eds.). *Africa Yearbook. Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara 2016*. Leiden – Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2017 *A Decade of Ethiopia-Politics, Economy and Society 2004-2016*. Leiden – Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 253 pp. (E-ISBN: 9789004346826).

2016 *Ethiopian-Eritrean Studies: a Bibliography on Society and History, 2010-2015.* Leiden: African Studies Centre (E-book), *vii*, 283 pp. ISBN 978-90-5448-151-5. [https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/37415].

2016 Co-editor:
J. Abbink, S. Elischer, A. Mehler, & H. Melber (Eds.). *Africa Yearbook. Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara 2015*. Leiden – Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2014 Co-author, with M. Bryant & D. Bambu:
Suri Orature: An Introduction to the Society, Language and Oral Culture of the Suri People (Southwest Ethiopia). Cologne: R. Köppe Publishers, 203 pp. (https://www.koeppe.de/titel_suri-orature)

2013 Co-edited, with Tobias Hagmann:
Reconfiguring Ethiopia: The Politics of Authoritarian Reform. London-New York: Routledge, 240 pp. (ISBN-10: 0415813875; ISBN-13: 978-0415813877). [Edited reprint of the special JEAS issue, 2011, see below]

2012a Editor:
Fractures and Reconnections: Civic Action and the Redefinition of African Political and Economic Spaces. Studies in Honor of Piet J.J. Konings.Berlin – Hamburg-Münster: Lit Verlag, 258 pp. (ISBN 978-3-643-90256-6).

2012b Co-edited, with Tijo S. Salverda:
The Anthropology of Elites: Power, Culture and the Complexities of Distinction. New York – Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 272 pp. (ISBN-10: 1137290544; ISBN-13: 978-1137290540).

2011a Co-edited, with M. de Bruijn:
Land, Law and Politics in Africa. Mediating Conflict and Reshaping the State. Leiden – Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 386 pp.

2011b Co-edited, with Tobias Hagmann:
'Twenty Years of Revolutionary – Democratic Ethiopia': a special issue of the *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *vol. 5*(4), 2011.

2010 *A Bibliography of Ethiopian-Eritrean Studies in Society and History, 1995-2010.* Addis Ababa: OSSREA-Leiden: African Studies Centre, 792 pp.

2008a Co-edited, with A. van Dokkum:
Dilemmas of Development. Conflicts of Interest and their Resolution in Modernizing Africa. Leiden: African Studies Centre (African Studies Collection 12), 256 pp.

2008b Co-edited, with A. van Dokkum:
Verdeeld Afrika. Etniciteit, Conflict en de Grenzen van de Staat. Diemen, NL: AMB Publishers, 232 pp.

2008c Spanish edition of 2003 book:
J. Abbink, M. de Bruijn, & K. van Walraven (Eds.) (2008). *A Propósito de Resistir. Repensar la Insurgencia in África.* Barcelona: Oozebap, 507 pp.

2005 Co-author, with Anne Alders:
Eritrean Beauty. The Wonderful People of Eritrea. Veenendaal, NL: PrimaMedia, 160 pp.

2005 Guest editor, Special Issue:
Cultural Variation and Social Change in Southern Ethiopia: Comparative Approaches. *Northeast African Studies*, *7*(3) (imprint 2000). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, 206 pp.

2004 Co-edited, with I. van Kessel:
Vanguard or Vandals. Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa. Leiden-Boston: E.J. Brill, 302 pp.

2003 Co-edited, with K. van Walraven & M. de Bruijn:
Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 366 pp.

2001 Co-author, with Habtamu Wondimu & B. Beit-Hallahmi:
Psychological modernity and attitudes to social change in Ethiopian young adults: the role of ethnic identity and change. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 58 pp.

2000 Co-edited, with G. Aijmer:
Meanings of Violence: A Cross-Cultural Perspective. Oxford-New York: Berg Publishers, 220 pp.

1999 Co-edited, with G. Hesseling:
Election Observation and Democratization in Africa. London-Basingstoke: Macmillan/New York: St. Martin's Press, 324 pp.

1996 *Eritreo-Ethiopian Studies in Society and History: a Supplementary Bibliography 1960-1995.* Leiden: African Studies Centre, 203 pp. (https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/377)

1992a Co-edited, with H. Vermeulen:
History and Culture. Essays on the Work of Eric R. Wolf. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis Publishers, 113 pp.

1992b *The Me'en of Southwestern Käfa: material culture of an Ethiopian shifting-cultivator people*. Addis Ababa: AAU Institute of Ethiopian Studies, iii, 86 pp.

1991 *Mytho-légendes et Histoire: l'énigme de l'ethnogenèse des Beta Esra'el*. Brussels: CEDAF/ASDOC, ii, 92 pp. (https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/9021).

1990 *Ethiopian Society and History. A Bibliography on Ethiopian Studies 1957-1990.* Leiden: African Studies Centre, 408 pp. (https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/4639).

1984 *The 'Falashas' in Ethiopia and Israel: the Problem of Ethnic Assimilation*. Nijmegen: ICSA (Sociaal-Antropologische Cahiers, vol. XV), vi, 441 pp. (ISBN 90-9000820-9) (http://hdl.handle.net/2066/113153).

2 Papers and book chapters (incl. encyclopaedia entries and digital papers)

2024 From periphery to centre: the development of the ASCL research agenda over seven decades. In F. Veldkamp & G. Seuren (Eds.), *A Window on Africa. African Studies Centre Leiden's 75th Anniversary Celebration* (pp. 33-42). ASCL.

2024 Politics above culture? The 2023 'Palestinian Festival of Literature' *redux*. Commentary on an NYRB discussion. (Online essay, 19 June 2024, at https://medium.com/@JonAbbink/politics-above-culture-12715c274479)

2024 Eternal periphery? Toward a socio-political history of Maji, an Ethiopian frontier town, 1898-2020–with illustrations (Pre-print). (See also the 2023 item). Online at: *SocArXiv*, 2 March 2024 (https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/4a35y).

2024 The Israel-Hamas drama and the dilemmas of scholarly response. *Research Africa Reviews*, *7*(3), 6-9. (https://sites.duke.edu/researchafrica/ra-reviews/volume-7-2023/volume7-issue-3-december-2023).

2024 Comment-Suffering and scholarly response: how to discuss the Israel-Hamas violence. *Research Africa Reviews*, *7*(3), 12-13. https://sites.duke.edu/researchafrica/ra-reviews/volume-7-2023/volume7-issue-3-december-2023).

2024 Growing political correctness in social science peer reviewing? Some personal reflections on experiences in African studies. *Enago Blog,* 2 January 2024. https://www.enago.com/academy/guestposts/firefly/political-correctness-in-social-science-peer-reviewing/ (15 pp.)

2023 Eternal periphery? Toward a socio-political history of Maji, an Ethiopian frontier settlement, 1898-2020. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, *56*(3), 277-295. (www.bu.edu/phpbin/ijahs/publications/?pid=793)

2023 Evaluating the 'Pretoria Agreement': the limitations of presentist analysis of conflicts in Ethiopia. *Review of African Political Economy*, *50*(176), 234-242. (https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2023.2270871)

2023 Contesting the 'secular' via the judiciary: exploring Muslim criticism of the national politico-legal order in Africa. *Anthropos*, *118*(2), 349-363 (www.anthropos.eu/anthropos/journal/current-issue/index.php; or: https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/10.5771/0257-9774-2023-2-349/contesting-the-secular-via-the-judiciary-jahrgang-118-2023-heft-2?page=1)

2023 Understanding secularism: new insights (Review article). *Secular Studies*, *5*(1): 1-7. (https://brill.com/view/journals/secu/5/1/article-p1_1.xml)

2022 Remembering Kassahun Berhanu Alemu (1955-2022) – the man and his work. *Ethiopian Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities* (EJOSSAH), *18*(1), 157-163.

2022 Ethiopia. In A. Awedoba, B. Kamski, A. Mehler, & D. Sewudubudu (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2021. Politics, Economics and Society South of the Sahara 2021* (pp. 323-337). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2022 Somalia. In A. Awedoba, B. Kamski, A. Mehler, & D. Sewudubudu (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2021. Politics, Economics and Society South of the Sahara 2021* (pp. 367-376). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2022 Has religion been fueling the politics of conflict in Ethiopia? A cautionary tale. *Canopy Forum*, 2022 (Emory University). Open access article, at: https://canopyforum.org/2022/10/26/has-religion-been-fueling-the-politics-of-conflict-in-ethiopia-a-cautionary-tale/

2022 History education in Ethiopia post-1991: rethinking the nation's history in the context of 'decolonization' debates. *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, *LXII*(3), no. 247, 487-515. (http://journals.openedition.org/etudesafricaines/38994)

2022 Introduction: authoritarianism, innovative regimes, and forms of resistance. In J.N. Bach et al. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Horn of Africa* (pp. 251-254). London-New York: Routledge.

2022 The looming spectre: a history of the 'state of emergency' in Ethiopia, 1970s-2021. In J.N. Bach et al. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Horn of Africa* (pp. 302-316). London-New York: Routledge.

2022 Co-author, with Adane K. Gebeyehu: Land, sugar and pastoralism in Ethiopia: comparing the impact of the Omo-Kuraz sugar projects on local livelihoods and food (in)security in the lower Omo Valley. *Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice*, *12*(32) (https://doi.org/10.1186/s13570-022-00242-8), 20 pp.

2022 In Memoriam Professor Kassahun Berhanu (1955-2022). On the website of the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences: https://eas-et.org/eas-fellow-prof-kassahun-berhanu-passed-away/.

2021 The Ethiopia Conflict in International Relations and Global Media Discourse. *E-International Relations*, *5*(2021), 6 pp. (ISSN: 2053-8626, open access, https://www.e-ir.info/2021/11/21/the-ethiopia-conflict-in-international-relations-and-global-media-discourse/).

2021 The Politics of Conflict in Northern Ethiopia, 2020-2021: a study of war-making, media bias and policy struggle. Leiden: African Studies Centre Leiden (Working Paper 152), 23 pp. (www.ascleiden.nl/sites/default/files/j.abbink_working_paper_152_18-10-2021_final.pdf). (Or: https://aepact.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/j.abbink_working_paper_152_18-10-2021_final.pdf).

2021 Aïcha Haddad's work of dreams and memories. In N. Sanz, C. Levis, & A Beaumont (Eds), UNESCO, *Africa in the UNESCO Art Collection* (pp. 108-111). Paris: UNESCO.

2021 Co-author, with Adane Kebede Gebeyehu, Denyse Snelder, & Ben Sonneveld, How do agro-pastoralists cope with climate change? The case of the Nyangatom in the Lower Omo Valley of Ethiopia. *Journal of Arid Environments*, *189*(2021) (doi.org/10.1016/j.jaridenv.2021.104485)

2021 Law and politics in the Ethiopian-Eritrean border dispute, 2002-2019. In Andrea de Guttry, Harry H.G. Post, & Gabriella Venturini (Eds.), *The 1998-2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia War and Its Aftermath in International Legal Perspective. From the 2000 Algiers Agreements to the 2018 Peace Agreement* (2nd edition) (pp. 171-194, and p. 742). Cham: Springer-T.M.C. Asser Press (E-book: DOI 10.1007/978-94-6265-439-6).

2021 *The Atlantic Community mistake on Ethiopia: counter-productive statements and data-poor policies of the EU and the USA on the Tigray conflict.* 2nd edition.

Leiden: African Studies Centre Leiden (Working Paper 150), 29 pp. (Open access at: https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3158742).

2021 Introduction: rhetoric in social relations (with Shauna LaTosky). In Jon Abbink & Shauna LaTosky (Eds.) (2021), *Rhetoric and Social Relations. Dialectics of Bonding and Contestation* (pp. 3-29). Oxford-New York: Berghahn Books,

2021 Power relations in Suri: rhetoric in public speech and action. In Jon Abbink & Shauna LaTosky (Eds.) (2021), *Rhetoric and Social Relations. Dialectics of Bonding and Contestation* (pp. 283-309). Oxford-New York: Berghahn Books.

2020 Ethiopia and the Tigray conflict in 2021-Leader to watch 2021: Abiy Ahmed. In *The World in 2021* (pp. 53-56). Milan: Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI).

2020 Co-author, with Alexander Meckelburg: Subjects of history: administrative categories, ethnic labels, and the limits of cultural citizenship in Ethiopia. *Northeast African Studies*, *20*(1-2), 137-158. (https://msupress.org/9781684301324/northeast-african-studies-20-nos-1-2).

2020 Religion and violence in the Horn of Africa: trajectories of mimetic rivalry and escalation between 'political Islam' and the state. *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, *21*(2), 194-215. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21567689.2020.1754206?utm_medium=email&utm_source=EmailStudio&utm_campaign=-JOE09646_3728853&.

2020 Political renewal in Africa? Agency of protest and structure of governance in Sudan and Ethiopia, 2016-2020. Keynote speech, conference 'Africa 60 Years of Independence (Africa 2020)', ASCL Leiden, 30-1-2020 (Published on ASCL website: https://www.ascleiden.nl/sites/default/files/jan_abbink_30-1-2020_speech.pdf.

2020 On 'good governance': towards reconciling state and vernacular views in Southwest Ethiopia. *Africa* (Roma) NS, *2*(1), 97-115. https://www.viella.it/rivista/9788833133447.

2020 'Zeven factoren bepalen de politieke vooruitzichten in Afrika'. In *Internationale Spectator*, 28 mei 2020. https://spectator.clingendael.org/nl/publicatie/zeven-factoren-bepalen-de-politieke-vooruitzichten-afrika.

2020 Ethiopia. In A. Awedoba, B. Kamski, A. Mehler, & D. Sewudubudu (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2019. Politics, Economics and Society South of the Sahara 2019* (pp. 329-342). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers,

2020 Somalia. In A. Awedoba, B. Kamski, A. Mehler, & D. Sewudubudu (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2019. Politics, Economics and Society South of the Sahara 2019* (pp. 369-378). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers,

2019 Somalia. In Victor Adetula, Benedikt Kamski Andreas Mehler & Henning Melber (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook* 15 (pp. 359-368). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2019 Ethiopia. In Victor Adetula, Benedikt Kamski Andreas Mehler & Henning Melber (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook* 15 (pp. 317-329). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2019 In Memoriam Ulrich Braukämper. *Aethiopica 22* (2019), 246-252.

2019 Co-authorship, with *Concerned Scholars Ethiopia (CSE):* Memo on violence in South Omo areas, SNNPRS, Ethiopia (October 2019): a call for preventive action and rule of law (25 October 2019. Main author), 7 pp. (www.canr.msu.edu/news/concerned-scholars-for-ethiopia-issue-urgent-call-for-action-to-end-violence-in-south-omo-zone).

2018 Eastern Africa. *Africa Yearbook* 14, pp. 267-282 (See below).

2018 Somalia. *Africa Yearbook* 14, pp. 359-368.

2018 Ethiopia. *Africa Yearbook* 14, pp. 317-329.

2018 Co-author, with A. van Nieuwkerk: Seychelles. *Africa Yearbook* 14, pp. 353-358.

2018 Co-editor, with Andreas Mehler, Henning Melber & Victor Odetula: Sub-Saharan Africa, *Africa Yearbook* 14, pp. 3-19. Leiden-Boston: Brill.

2018 Introduction: promise and peril in Africa – growth narratives vs. local environmental problems. In J. Abbink (Ed.), *The Environmental Crunch in Africa. Growth Narratives vs. Local Realities* (pp. 1-28). New York-Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan,

2018 Losing the plot: environmental problems and livelihood strife in developing rural Ethiopia – Suri agropastoralism vs. state resource use. In J. Abbink (Ed.), *The Environmental Crunch in Africa. Growth Narratives vs. Local Realities* (pp. 137-178). New York-Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan,

2018 The religious soundscape of Ethiopia: 'noise' production between sacred and secular spaces. In F. Girke, S. Thubauville, & W. Smidt (Eds.), *Anthropology as Homage* (pp. 251-269). Cologne: R. Koeppe Verlag,

2018 The Suri. In Timothy Clack & Marcus Brittain (Eds.), *The River: Peoples and Histories of the Omo-Turkana Area* (pp. 133-139). Oxford: Archaeopress,

2017 'Seeking the political kingdom': researching governance and politics in Africa in a political culture perspective. Speech at the acceptance of the professorship in 'Politics and Governance in Africa', ASCL Graduate School of African Studies, Leiden University, 9 October 2017, 15 pp. www.ascleiden.nl/sites/default/files/lecture_jan_abbink_politics_and_governance_in_africa_9_october_2017_2.pdf.

2017 Stemming the tide? The promise of environmental rehabilitation scenarios in Ethiopia. In W. van Beek, J. Damen & D. Foeken (Eds.), *The Face of Africa. Essays in Honour of Ton Dietz* (pp. 185-198). Leiden: ASCL.

2017 Insecure food: diet, eating and identity among the Ethiopian Suri people in the age of development. *African Study Monographs*, *38*(3), 2017, 119-146 (also online: https://repository.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dspace/handle/2433/227070?locale=en).

2017 'Wie es eigentlich gewesen…': Eike Haberland's Rankean approach to southern Ethiopian cultures and its legacy today. In S. Dinslage & S. Thubauville (Eds.), *Seeking Out Wise Old Men: Six Decades of Ethiopian Studies at the Frobenius Institute Revisited* (pp. 154-175). Berlin: D. Reimer Verlag.

2017 Paradoxes of electoral authoritarianism: the 2015 Ethiopian elections as hegemonic performance. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *35*(3), 303-323. (http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/gPZ8GNKYFy4WmNCR3Iuk/full)

2017 Traditional Ethiopian legal culture: Amharic proverbs and maxims on law and justice. In Adam C. McCollum (Ed.), *Studies in Ethiopian Languages, Literature, and History. Festschrift for Getachew Haile* (pp. 3-20). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Publishers.

2017 Eastern Africa. *Africa Yearbook* 13, pp. 261-276. (See above).

2017 Somalia. *Africa Yearbook* 13, pp. 350-358.

2017 Ethiopia. *Africa Yearbook* 13, pp. 310-322.

2017 Co-author, with A. van Nieuwkerk: Seychelles. *Africa Yearbook* 13, pp. 344-349.

2017 Co-author, with Sebastian Elischer, Andreas Mehler, & Henning Melber: Sub-Saharan Africa. *Africa Yearbook* 13, pp. 3-20.

2017 3 items in S. Uhlig et al. (Eds.), 2017. *Ethiopia. History, Cultures, and Challenges*. Münster-Berlin: Lit Verlag: Wälaytta, pp. 75-77; Introduction: peoples in Ethiopia, pp. 39-44; with Alain Gascon: Climate, pp. 16-20.

2017 Etiyopya'da İslam ve sosyokültürel çeşitlilik (= 'Ethiopian Islam and socio-cultural diversity'). *Yeni Türkiye* 97: 459-462 (Translated version of a 1999 article).

2017 Obituary: Richard Keir Pethick Pankhurst (1927-2017). *Rassegna du Studi Etiopici* 3rd series, vol. 1, 226-229.

2016 Rethinking the anthropology of Ethiopia through culture and ritual. In E. Ficquet, A. Hassen, & Th. Osmond (Eds.), *Movements in Ethiopia: Ethiopia in Movement* (Vol. I, pp. 37-52). Los Angeles: Tsehai Publishers-Addis Ababa: Centre Français d'Études Éthiopiennes and AAU Institute of Ethiopian Studies.

2016 The Cross in Ethiopian Christianity: ecclesial symbolism and religious experience. In Elias K. Bongmba (Ed.), *Routledge Companion to Christianity in Africa* (pp. 122-140). London-New York: Routledge.

2016 Eastern Africa. In J. Abbink, S. Elischer, H. Melber, & A. Mehler (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2015* (pp. 259-273). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2016 Somalia. In J. Abbink, S. Elischer, H. Melber, & A. Mehler (Eds), *Africa Yearbook 2015* (pp. 348-356). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2016 Ethiopia. In J. Abbink, S. Elischer, H. Melber, & A. Mehler (Eds.),*Africa Yearbook 2015* (pp. 306-318). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2016 Co-author, with S. Elischer, A. Mehler, & H. Melber: Subsaharan Africa. In J. Abbink, S. Elischer, H. Melber, & A. Mehler (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2015* (pp. 3-17). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2015 'A river bursting its banks': livelihood pressure and identity in Wolaita, Ethiopia. In Aklilu Yilma & Ahmed Hassen (Eds.), *Ethiopian Studies at the Brink of its 50th Anniversary. Proceedings of the XVIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, November 2-5, 2009, Addis Ababa* (pp. 1-24). Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies.

2015 In Memoriam Donald N. Levine (1932-2015). *Aethiopica* (Hamburg), *18*, 213-222.

2015 Extensions of the self: artistry and identity in the headrests and stools of Southwest Ethiopian peoples. *African Arts*, *48*(4), 46-59.

2015 The Ethiopian Revolution after 40 years (1974-2014): Plan B in progress? *Journal of Developing Societies*, *31*(3), 333-357.

2015 Menstrual synchrony claims among Suri girls (Southwest Ethiopia): between culture and biology. *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, *LV*(2), no. 218, pp. 279-302.

2014 Religion and politics in Africa: the future of 'the secular'. *Africa Spectrum*, *42*(3), 83-106.

2014 Stabiele instabiliteit: Somalië, *Al Shabaab* en de wijdere regio. *Internationale Spectator*, *68*(8), 4-8.

2014 Religious freedom and the political order: the Ethiopian 'secular state' and the containment of Muslim identity politics. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *8*(3), 346-365.

2014 With 12 co-authors: *Lands of the Future. Transforming pastoral lands and livelihoods in Eastern Africa.* Halle (Saale): Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Working Paper 154).

2014 Five articles in S. Uhlig et al. (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (Vol. 5 – Final volume), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag:

- Languages and peoples in Ethiopia and Eritrea, pp. 381-388.
- Relations of Ethiopia with the Netherlands, pp. 459-461.
- Zala (people), p. 120.
- Siegfried Pausewang, pp. 476-477.
- Zayse-Zargulla, ethnography, pp. 171-173.

2014 Ethiopia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2013: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 319-330). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2014 Somalia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2013: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 365-376). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2014 Tegen het cornucopianisme. In J. Baijens (Ed.), *Het Beste Idee van 2014* (pp. 94-96). Tilburg: Uitgeverij de Wereld (zie ook online: http://www.uitgeverijdewereld.nl/het-beste-idee-van/2014/artikelen/tegen-het-cornucopianisme).

2013 The anthropology of Ethiopia 1999-2011: highlights and trends. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, *43*, 103-148.

2013 Ethiopia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2012: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 325-336). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2013 Somalia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2012: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 369-380). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2013 Eureka! Discovery during ethnographic fieldwork. In I. Strecker & S. LaTosky (Eds.), *Writing in the Field. Festschrift for Stephen Tyler* (pp. 73-79). Berlin-Hamburg: Lit Verlag.

2013 Mensen als natuurlijke cultuurwezens. In J. Baijens (Ed.), *Het Beste Idee van 2013* (pp. 34-35). Tilburg: Uitgeverij de Wereld.

2013 Ethnic-based federalism and ethnicity in Ethiopia: reassessing the experiment after 20 years. In T. Hagmann & J. Abbink (Eds.), *Reconfiguring Ethiopia: The Politics of Authoritarian Reform* (pp. 17-39). London-New York: Routledge [edited reprint].

2013 Ethnic-based federalism and ethnicity in Ethiopia: reassessing the experiment after 20 years. In T. Hagmann & J. Abbink (Eds.), *Reconfiguring Ethiopia: The Politics of Authoritarian Reform* (pp. 17-39). London-New York: Routledge [edited reprint].

2012 Co-author, with T.S. Salverda: Introduction: an anthropological perspective on elite power and the cultural politics of elites. In J. Abbink & T. Salverda (Eds.), *The Anthropology of Elites: Power, Culture and the Complexities of Distinction* (pp. 1-28). New York-Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.

2012 Introduction: Piet Konings's contributions to African Studies. In J. Abbink (Ed.), *Fractures and Reconnections: Civic Action and the Redefinition of African Political and Economic Spaces. Studies in Honor of Piet J.J. Konings* (pp. 1-13). Berlin-Hamburg-Münster: Lit Verlag.

2012 Dam controversies: contested governance and developmental discourse on the Ethiopian Omo River dam. *Social Anthropology*, *20*(2), 125-144.

2012 'Revolte en revolutie in de 'Arabische Lente': duurzame politieke klimaatverandering?' Amsterdam: VU University (Invited Talma-lecture, delivered on 13-1-2012, at the Faculty of Social Sciences (*Online publication*: www.fsw.vu.nl), 18 pp. (http://hdl.handle.net/1887/31872).

2012 Ethnic-based federalism and ethnicity in Ethiopia: reassessing the experiment after 20 years. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *5*(4), 596-618.

2012 Co-author, with T. Hagmann: Twenty years of revolutionary-democratic Ethiopia, 1991 to 2011 – introduction. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *5*(4), 579-595.

2012 De Hoorn van Afrika als regionale (on)veiligheidszone: conflicten en dilemma's. *International Spectator*, *66*(5), 235-240.

2012 Ethiopia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2011: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 329-342). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2012 Somalia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2011: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 377-386). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2012 Transformations of Islam and communal relations in Wällo, Ethiopia. In B.F. Soares & R. Otayek (Eds.), *Islam and Politics in Africa* (pp. 107-133). Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Akadimiyah (in Arabic; translation of a 2007 chapter).

2011a Religion in public spaces: emerging Muslim-Christian polemics in Ethiopia. *African* Affairs, *110*(439), 253-274.

2011b Slow awakening? The Ethiopian diaspora in the Netherlands, 1977-2007. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, *15*(2/3), 361-380. [ISSN: 1044-2057].

2011c Ethiopia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2010: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 331-344). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2011d Somalia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walrave (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2010: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 377-386). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2011e 'Land to the foreigners': economic, legal, and socio-cultural aspects of new land acquisition schemes in Ethiopia. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *29*(4), 513-535.

2011f Honger in de Hoorn-De politiek-maatschappelijke context van een terugkerend probleem. *Geografie* (Amsterdam), nov.-dec. 2011, pp. 10-12.

2011g Introduction: land, law and conflict mediation in Africa. In J. Abbink & M. de Bruijn (Eds.), *Land, Law and Politics in Africa. Mediating Conflict and Reshaping the State* (pp. 1-13). Leiden-Boston: Brill.

2011h Democracy deferred: understanding elections and the role of donors in Ethiopia. In J. Abbink & M. de Bruijn (Eds.), *Land, Law and Politics in Africa. Mediating Conflict and Reshaping the State* (pp. 213-239). Leiden-Boston: Brill.

2011i Wolaitta livelihoods (Ethiopia): agricultural 'involution', identity, and prospects of growth. *Afriche e Orienti* (Bologna) (pp.86-104), special issue, *13*(4): (Italian version on pp. 68-85).

2011j Gaki Sherocho, Käfa king. In E.K. Akyeampong & H.L. Gates Jr. (Eds.), *Dictionary of African Biography* (Vol. 2, pp. 410-411) . New York: Oxford University Press. [ISBN-0195382072]

2010a Political culture in Ethiopia: a balance sheet of post-1991 ethnic-based federalism. Leiden: African Studies Centre, Infosheet no. 8, 4 pp.

2010b Causes and trajectories of local conflict among pastoral peoples in Northeast Africa. *Ethiopian Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, *5*(1), 25-42.

2010c Elections in Africa 1991-2009: ways to democracy or breeding grounds for conflict? Leiden: African Studies Centre, Infosheet no. 9, 4 pp.

2010d Ethiopia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walrave (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2009: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 327-338). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2010e Somalia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2009: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 371-380). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2010f-y 24 articles in S. Uhlig (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, *vol. 4* (O-Z), (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz):

- Migrations in the southwest, pp. 175-77;
- Migrations from late 19th cent. until today, pp. 177-178;
- 'Possession cults', pp. 183-185;
- *Qallicha*, pp. 255;
- Sacrifice, pp. 442-444;
- Säpänhi, pp. 532-533;
- Shabo, pp. 437-438;
- Shangama, pp. 524-525;
- Sheko, pp. 599-601;
- Shekacho, pp. 481-483;
- Shinasha, pp. 664-665;
- Täsämma Nadäw, pp. 866-868;
- *Tato*, pp. 872;
- T'ona, king, pp. 972;
- T'íru Sina shrine, pp. 925;
- Tsamai, pp. 504-505;
- Ubamer, pp. 1013;
- Wälamo *awrajja*, pp. 1078-1079;
- Wälayta, kingdom, pp. 1092-1093;
- Wälayta, ethnography, pp. 1090-1092;
- Wälayta-Malla dynasty, pp. 1093-1094;
- Warfare, pp. 1137-1143;

Co-author, with Alain Gascon:

- National parks, pp. 114-117;

Co-author, with Sabine Planel:

- Soddo, pp. 685-686.

2009a Law against reality? Contextualizing the Ethiopian-Eritrean border problem. In Andrea de Guttry, Harry Post, & Gabriella Venturini (Eds.), *The 1998–2000 War Between Eritrea and Ethiopia: An International Legal Perspective* (pp. 141-158). The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press-Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2009b *The Total Somali Genealogy*, second edition. Leiden: African Studies Centre, 45 pp. (Working Paper 84).

2009c Conflict and social change on the south-west Ethiopian frontier: an analysis of Suri society. *Journal of Eastern African Studies, 3*(1), 22-41.

2009d Tourism and its discontents: Suri-Tourist encounters in southern Ethiopia. In S. Bohn Gmelch (Ed.), *Tourists and Tourism: a Reader. Second Edition* (pp. 115-136) (revised and updated chapter). Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, Inc.

2009e The Islamic Courts Union: the ebb and flow of a Somali Islamist movement. In S. Ellis & I. van Kessel (Eds.), *Movers and Shakers. Social Movements in Africa* (pp. 87-113). Leiden-Boston: Brill Publishers.

2009f The fate of the Suri: conflict and group tension the Southwest Ethiopian frontier. In G. Schlee & E.E. Watson (Eds.), *Changing Identifications and Alliances in Northeast Africa. Volume I: Ethiopia and Kenya* (pp. 35-51). Oxford-New York: Berghahn Books (Edited version of 2009c).

2009g Ethiopia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2008: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 309-320). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2009h Somalia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2008: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 351-360). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2009i Transformations de l'Islam et relations communautaires dans la province de Wallo, en Éthiopie. In R. Otayek & B.F. Soares (Eds.), *Islam, État et Société en Afrique* (pp. 105-132). Paris: Karthala.

2009j Suri images: the return of exoticism and the commodification of an Ethiopian 'tribe'. *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, *49*(4), 196, 893-924. (Online: http://www.cairn.info/revue-cahiers-d-etudes-africaines-2009-4-page-893.htm).

2009k The Ethiopian second republic and the fragile 'social contract'. *Africa Spectrum*, *44*(2), 3-28.

2009l Revolution as warfare in the Horn of Africa (review article). *Africa Review of Books*, *5*(2), 5-6.

2008a Muslim monasteries? Some aspects of religious culture in northern Ethiopia. *Aethiopica* (Hamburg), *11*, 117-133.

2008b 'Cannibalism' in Southern Ethiopia: an exploratory study of Me'en discourse. *Anthropos*, *103*(1), 3-13.

2008c Darfur: de weerslag van genocidaal geweld. *In de Marge – Tijdschrift voor Levensbeschouwing en Wetenschap*, *17*(1), 64-74.

2008d Co-author, with A. van Dokkum Introduction. The struggle for development in Africa: the culture of politics and the rooting of culture. In J. Abbink & A. van Dokkum (Eds.), *Dilemmas of Development. Conflicts of Interest and their Resolution in Modernizing Africa* (pp. 1-15). Leiden: African Studies Centre.

2008e Ethiopia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2007: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 323-334). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2008f Somalia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2007: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 365-374). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2008g Co-author, with R. van Dijk & A. van Dokkum: Inleiding. In *Verdeeld Afrika. Etniciteit, Conflict en de Grenzen van de Staat* (pp. 3-15). Diemen: AMB Publishers.

2008h Federaal Ethiopië: etniciteit, grenzen en de productie van conflict. In J. Abbink & A. van Dokkum (Eds.), *Verdeeld Afrika. Etniciteit, Conflict en de Grenzen van de Staat* (pp. 195-215). Diemen: AMB Publishers.

2008i *Violence and Culture: an anthropological study of the Suri, Southern Ethiopia* (African Studies Centre Infosheet no. 4), Leiden: ASC, 4 pp. Spanish translation of 2003 chapter:

2008j Derviches, moryaan y combatientes por la libertad: ciclos de rebelión y fragmentación en la sociedad somalí (1900-2000)'. In J. Abbink, M. de Bruijn, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *A Propósito de Resistir. Repensar la Insurgencia in África* (pp. 457-504). Barcelona: Oozebap.

2007a 'Comment', in Nigel Rapport, 2007, 'An outline for cosmopolitan study: reclaiming the human through introspection'. *Current Anthropology*, *48*(2), 269-270.

2007b Transformations of Islam and communal relations in Wällo, Ethiopia. In B.F. Soares & R. Otayek (Eds.), *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa* (pp. 65-84). Basingstoke, UK-New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

2007c Eureka! Constructing discovery in ethnographic fieldwork. In I. Strecker & S. LaTosky (Eds.), *Writing in the Field. Festschrift for Stephen Tyler's 75th Birthday, 8 May 2007. Volume 1*, 104-113. www.rhetoricculture.org/T_F/TF-1-all.pdf (accessed 30 May 2007, since removed).

2007d Warfare in Africa: overview. In J. Middleton (Ed.-in-chief), & J.C. Miller (Ed.), *New Encyclopedia of Africa* (Vol. *5*, 173-179). Farmington Hills, MI*:* Thomson Gale.

2007e Ethiopia.In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walrave (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2006: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 311-323). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2007f Culture slipping away: violence, social tension and personal drama in Suri society, southern Ethiopia. In A. Rao, M. Bollig, & M. Böck (Eds.), *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence* (pp. 53-72). Oxford: Berghahn Books. (Also, as e-book: www.berghahnbooksonline.com/books/raopractice/abs/52803_02.html)

2007g-w 16 entries in S. Uhlig (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopia*, *vol. 3* (He-N), (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007):

- Hodson, Arnold W., pp. 53-54;
- Hoti Sherocho (Käfa king), pp. 74-75;
- Initiation, pp. 150-152;
- Käfa ethnography, pp. 327-329;
- Käfa history, pp. 322-324;
- Kaye Sherocho (Käfa king), pp. 361-362;
- Kinship, pp. 403-408;
- *Komoru*, pp. 423-424;
- Koté (Wolaitta king), pp. 433-434;
- Limmu-Ennarya (kingdom), pp. 570-571;
- Mandjo (ethnic group), pp. 732-733;
- Me'en, pp. 909-910;
- Mikael Sihul, pp. 962-964;
- *Näft'ännya*, pp. 1099-1100;
- Nadäw Abba Bahr, pp.1093-1094;
- Nayi (ethnic group), pp. 1157-1158.

2006a Ethnicity and conflict generation in Ethiopia: some problems and prospects of ethno-regional federalism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *24*(3), 389-414.

2006b Van religieuze tolerantie naar politiek conflict? De Soefi Islam verliest terrein in Ethiopië. *ZemZem*, *2*(3), 92-97; 168-169.

2006c Reconstructing Haberland reconstructing the Wolaitta: writing the history and society of a former Ethiopian kingdom. *History in Africa*, *33*,1-15.

2006d Äthiopien: Prager Frühling in Addis. *Der Überblick*, *42*(3), 46-49.

2006e Ethiopia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2005: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 297-308). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2006f Interpreting Ethiopian elections in their context – reply to Tobias Hagmann. *African Affairs*, *105*(3), 613-620.

2006g Kinship and society among Surmic-speaking peoples in Southwest Ethiopia: a brief comparison. In S. Uhlig, M. Bulakh, D. Nosnitsin, & Th. Rave (Eds.), *Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Hamburg, July 20-25, 2003* (pp. 5-14). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

2006h Warfare in Africa: reframing state and 'culture' as factors of violent conflict. In T. Otto, H. Thrane, & H. Vandkilde (Eds.), *Warfare and Society: Archaeological and Social Anthropological Perspectives* (pp. 261-271). Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

2006i Discomfiture of democracy? The 2005 election crisis in Ethiopia and its aftermath. *African Affairs*, *105*(1), 1-27.

2006j Of snakes and cattle: the dialectics of group esteem between Suri and Dizi in Southwest Ethiopia. In I. Strecker & J. Lydall (Eds.), *Ethiopian Images of Self and*

Other. Essays on Cultural Contact, Respect and Self-Esteem in Southern Ethiopia (pp. 227-245). Münster-Hamburg-Berlin-Vienna-London: Lit Verlag.

2005 Transformaties van staat en geweld in Afrika: de teloorgang van de postkoloniale orde. In T. Zwaan (Ed.), *Politiek en Geweld. Etnisch Conflict, Oorlog en Genocide in de 20e Eeuw* (pp. 161-180). Zutphen-Amsterdam: De Walburg Pers and Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie).

2005 12 entries in S. Uhlig (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, *vol. 2* (D-Ha), (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz):

- Dime, pp. 163-164;
- Dizi, pp. 176-177;
- Ennarya, p. 310;
- Ethnicity, pp. 444-446;
- Galila, pp.658-659;
- Garamanjo, pp. 700-701;
- Gimira, pp. 799-800;
- Gofa, pp. 823-824;
- Goldiya, pp. 834;
- Gonga, 849-850;
- Gumuz, pp. 916-917;
- E. Haberland, p. 950.

2005 Ethiopia. In A. Mehler, H. Melber, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Africa Yearbook 2004: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara* (pp. 286-299). Leiden-Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

2005 Comparing cultures in Southern Ethiopia: from ethnography to generative explanation. In J. Abbink (Guest Ed.), *Cultural Variation and Social Change in Southern Ethiopia: Comparative Approaches*. Special Issue of *Northeast African Studies*, *7*(3), 1-14.

2005 Local leadership and state governance in southern Ethiopia: from charisma to bureaucracy. In O. Vaughan (Ed.), *Tradition and Politics: Indigenous Political Structures in Africa,* (pp. 159-184). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press [edited reprint].

2005 Afar. In C.O. Skutsch (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities* (Vol.1, pp. 11-13). New York-London: Routledge.

2005 Bilin. In C.O. Skutsch (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities* (Vol.1, pp. 222-223). New York-London: Routledge.

2005 Congo Republic. In C.O. Skutsch (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities* (Vol.1, pp. 328-330). New York-London: Routledge.

2005 Djibouti. In C.O. Skutsch (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities* (Vol.1, pp. 401-402). New York-London: Routledge.

2005 Eritrea. In C.O. Skutsch (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities* (Vol.1, pp. 434-436). New York-London: Routledge.

2005 Ethiopia. In C.O. Skutsch (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities* (Vol.1, pp. 438-440). New York-London: Routledge.

2005 Rasha'ida. In C.O. Skutsch (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities* (Vol. 3, pp. 1004-1005). New York-London: Routledge.

2005 Somali. In C.O. Skutsch (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities* (Vol. 3, pp. 1125-1127). New York-London: Routledge.

2005 Tigre. In C.O. Skutsch (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities* (Vol. 3, pp. 1200-1201). New York-London: Routledge.

2005 Co-author, with K. van Walraven: Landenstudies als velden van wetenschappelijke kennis. *Civis Mundi*, *44*(1-2), 20-23.

2004 Converting pastoralists: reflections on missionary work and development in southern Ethiopia. In A. Kumar Giri, A. van Harskamp, & O. Salemink (Eds.), *The Development of Religion, the Religion of Development* (pp. 133-142). Delft: Eburon.

2004 *Reconstructing Southern Sudan in the post-war era: challenges and prospects of 'Quick Impact Programmes'*. Report for the International Dialogues Foundation, The Hague, December 2003, 19 pp. Available online at: http//:asc.leidenuniv.nl/publications/working papers.

2004 An obituary of Aberra Jembere 1928-2004. *Aethiopica*, *7*, 189-193.

2004 Being young in Africa: the politics of despair and renewal. In J. Abbink & I. van Kessel (Eds.), *Vanguard or Vandals. Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa* (pp. 1-33). Leiden-Boston: E.J. Brill.

2004 Remembering Londósa: mediator and counterpoint in a "violent" society. In V. Böll et al. (Eds.), *Studia Aethiopica*, *In Honour of Siegbert Uhlig* (pp. 371-382). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

2004 Violence and state (re)formation in the African context: global and local aspects of crisis and change. In R.E. Westerfield (Ed.), *Current Issues in Globalization* (pp. 137-149). Happauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers (edited reprint).

2004 Ritual and political forms of violent practice among the Suri of Southern Ethiopia. In T. Young (Ed.), *Readings in African Politics* (pp. 80-89). Oxford: James Currey [reprinted paper, published first in 1998].

2004 An obituary of Alexander Naty. *Ethiopian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, *2*(1), p. 89. Also as, first author, with C. Ybarra, D.L. Donham, J.T. Gibbs, & Tekle Woldemikael: 'Obituary: Alexander Naty'. In *Anthropology Newsletter* (American Anthropological Association), February 2004, p. 24.

2003 Chaises éthiopiennes. In P. Benitez Johannot (Ed.), *Sièges de l'Afrique Noire du Musée Barbier-Mueller* (pp. 272-277). Genève: Musée Barbier-Mueller.

2003 Local leadership, imperial and 'revolutionary' governance in southern Ethiopia: from charisma to bureaucracy. In O. Vaughan (Ed.), *Indigenous Political Structures and Governance in Africa* (pp. 177-207). Ibadan: Sefer Press.

2003 Tourism and its discontents. Suri-tourist encounters in southern Ethiopia. In S. Bohn Gmelch (Ed.), *Tourists and Tourism. A Reader* (pp. 267-287). Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press [edited version of a paper first published in 2000].

2003 Ethiopia-Eritrea: proxy wars and prospects of peace in the Horn of Africa. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *21*(3), 407-426. [Abstract published in: *International Political Science Abstracts* 54, p. 551].

2003 Love and death of cattle: the paradox in Suri attitudes toward livestock. *Ethnos. Journal of Anthropology*, *68*(3), 341-64.

2003 Badme and the Ethio-Eritrean border: the challenges of demarcation in the post-war era. *Africa* (Roma), *58*(2), 219-231.

2003 10 entries in the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, vol. 1*, S. Uhlig (Ed.). (Wiesbaden: Verlag Otto Harrassowitz):

- Age group systems, pp. 145-46;
- Baale, pp. 424-25;
- Bench, pp. 526-27;
- Berta, pp. 547-48;
- Bibliography, pp. 578-580;
- F.J. Bieber, pp. 582-83;
- R.W. Burton, pp. 649-50;
- Chai, pp. 665-66;
- Ch'ara, pp. 684-85;
- Ch'elga, p. 705.

2003 Plant use among the Suri people of southern Ethiopia: a system of knowledge in danger? *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere*, *70*, 199-206.

2003 Badme and the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict: back to square one? *Perihelion* Online journal, 17-24 February 2003, at www.erpic.org/Badme.html, 10 p. (Also appeared in shortened version in: *Addis Tribune* (Addis Ababa), 23 May 2003).

2003 Dervishes, *moryaan* and freedom fighters: cycles of rebellion and the fragmentation of Somali society, 1900-2000. In J. Abbink, K. van Walraven, & M. de Bruijn (Eds.), *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History* (pp. 328-65). Leiden: E.J. Brill.

2003 Co-author, with Klaas van Walraven: Rethinking resistance in Africa: an introduction. In J. Abbink, M. de Bruijn, & K. van Walraven (Eds.), *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History* (pp. 1-40). Leiden: E.J. Brill.

2003 *A Bibliography on Christianity in Ethiopia.* Leiden: African Studies Centre (Working Paper no. 52), 102 pp.

2002 Afro-pessimisme op hoog niveau. *Facta. Tijdschrift voor Sociale Wetenschappen*, *10*(8), 2-5.

2002 Violence and state (re)formation in the African context: global and local aspects of crisis and change. In F. Columbus (Ed.), *Politics and Society in Africa* (pp. 1-14). Happauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers.

2002 Drinking, prestige and power: alcohol use and cultural hegemony in Maji, southern Ethiopia. In D.F. Bryceson (Ed.), *Alcohol in Africa: Mixing Business, Pleasure, and Politics* (pp. 161-77). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

2002 Ethiopia: the tourist game. In *African Studies Centre Annual Report 2001* (p. 8). Leiden: ASC.

2002 Body ornamentation in southern Ethiopia. (A text for the permanent exhibition (2002) of the Ethnological Museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa.)

2002 Doing justice to Clastres. In J. Benthall (Ed.), *The Best of 'Anthropology Today'* (pp. 72-3). London-New York: Routledge. [Reprint of 1999 article]

2002 Me'en. In C.R. Ember, M. Ember, & I. Skoggard (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of World Cultures, Supplement* (pp. 200-4). New York-Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan Reference USA-Gale Group.

2002 Paradoxes of power and culture in an old periphery: Surma, 1974-98. In W. James, D. Donham, E. Kurimoto, & A. Triulzi (Eds.), *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism and After* (pp. 155-72). Oxford: James Currey-Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press-Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.

2002 Creating borders: the impact of the Ethio-Eritrean war on the local population. *Africa* (Roma), *56*(4), 447-58.

2002 African Studies in the Netherlands: a brief survey. [Edited reprint of 2001 *H-Africa* web site article.] *African Research and Documentation*, *87*, 3-10.

2002 Ethnic trajectories in Israel: comparing the 'Bené Israel' and the 'Beta Israel' communities, 1950-2000. *Anthropos*, *97*(1-2), 3-19.

2001 Studying conflict and violence in Africa-some anthropological approaches. In F. Lindo & M. van Niekerk (Eds.), *Dedication and Detachment. Essays in Honor of Hans Vermeulen* (pp 15-32). Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.

2001 Chad. In M. Ember & C.R. Ember (Eds.), *Countries and Their Cultures* (Vol. 1, pp. 439-451). New York-Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan Reference USA-Gale Group. [For some positive comment on this item, see: https://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Chad.html]

2001 Djibouti. In M. Ember & C.R. Ember (Eds.), *Countries and Their Cultures* (Vol. 2, pp. 629-636). New York-Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan Reference USA-Gale Group. [For some positive comment on this item, see: https://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Djibouti.html]

2001 Macau. In M. Ember & C.R. Ember (Eds.), *Countries and Their Cultures* (Vol. 3, pp. 1325-1333). New York-Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan Reference USA-Gale Group. [For some positive comment on this item, see: https://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Macau.html]

2001 Schwer zu fassen (Mit Kultur gegen Krisen: Afrika). *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch*, *51*(2), 64-67.

2001 De Hoorn van Afrika: op weg naar vrede? *Internationale Spectator*, *55*(4), 199-205.

2001 Violence and the crisis of conciliation: Suri, Dizi and the state in Southwest Ethiopia. *Africa*, *70*(4), 527-550.

2001 The legacy of Macau. *Episteme. Revista Multidisciplinar* (Lisboa), *2*(5-6), 307-311. [Reprint of article originally published in *IIAS Newsletter* 21(2000)]

2001 Violence and culture: anthropological and evolutionary-psychological reflections on intergroup violence in Southwest Ethiopia. In I.W. Schröder & B.E. Schmidt (Eds.), *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict* (pp. 123-42). London-New York: Routledge.

2001 African Studies in the Netherlands: a brief survey. Website article on the H-Africa discussion list. *www2.h-net.msu.edu/~africa/africaforum/Abbink.html.*

2001 *Identiteit, strijd en continuïteit in trans-modern Afrika: een kritisch-realistische benadering* (Inaugural lecture). Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteitspers, 44 pp.

2000 Loof de Heer! Jeugd en religie in Afrika.
In H. ter Borg & I. van Kessel (Eds.), *Beelden van Afrika* (pp. 102-111). Utrecht: Het Spectrum.

2000 Représentations de la culture matérielle des Me'en: forme et fonction des artefacts. *Annales d'Ethiopie*, XVI, 93-107.

2000 La violence, l'État et l'ethnicité dans la corne de l'Afrique. *Autrepart (Cahiers des Sciences Humaines)*, *15*(NS), 149-166.

2000 Tourism and its discontents: Suri-tourist encounters in Southern Ethiopia. *Social Anthropology*, *8*(1), 1-17.

2000 Violence and state formation in Africa: the general and the particular. Website article, 'Warfare and Society' Project, University of Aarhus, Denmark (see: *http://prehistory.moes.hum.aau.dk/warfare/main.htm*).

2000 Preface: violation and violence as cultural phenomena. In G. Aijmer & J. Abbink (Eds.), *Meanings of Violence: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (pp. xi-xvii). Oxford-New York: Berg.

2000 Restoring the balance: violence and culture among the Suri of Southern Ethiopia. In G. Aijmer & J. Abbink (Eds.), *Meanings of Violence: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (pp. 77-100). Oxford-New York: Berg.

2000 De staat van Congo-Brazza. *Facta. Tijdschrift voor Sociale Wetenschappen*, *8*(3), 4-7.

2000 The legacy of Macau. *International Institute of Asian Studies Newsletter*, *21*, 31.

2000 New configurations of Ethiopian ethnicity: the challenge of the South. *Northeast African Studies*, *5*(1) (New Series), 59-81.

1999 Ethiopia. In G.E. DeLury & D. Kaple (Eds.), *World Encyclopedia of Political Systems and Parties*, 3rd edition (pp. 348-352). New York: Facts on File, Inc.

1999 Eritrea. In G.E. DeLury & D. Kaple (Eds.), *World Encyclopedia of Political Systems and Parties*, 3rd edition (pp. 340-343). New York: Facts on File, Inc.

1999 Ethiopian Islam and the challenge of diversity. *ISIM Newsletter* (Leiden), *4*, 24.

1999 Doing justice to Clastres (Letter). *Anthropology Today*, *15*(4), 21.

1999 Introduction: rethinking democratization and election observation in Africa. In J. Abbink & G. Hesseling (Eds.), *Election Observation and Democratization in Africa* (pp. 1-17). London-Basingstoke: Macmillan/New York: St. Martin's Press.

1999 Co-author, with W. van Binsbergen: International election observation: a discussion on policy and practice. In J. Abbink & G. Hesseling (Eds.), *Election Observation and Democratization in Afric,* (pp. 257-276). London-Basingstoke: Macmillan/New York: St. Martin's Press.

1999 The organization of elections in federal Ethiopia: retrospect and prospect. In J. Abbink & G. Hesseling (Eds.), *Election Observation and Democratization in Africa* (pp. 150-179). London-Basingstoke: Macmillan/New York: St. Martin's Press.

1999 'Ethiopia-the heritage of an empire': notes on an exhibition (Review article). *Aethiopica*, *2*, 291-296.

1999 Violence, ritual and reproduction: culture and context in Surma dueling. *Ethnology*, *38*(2),227-242.

1999 The production of 'primitiveness' and identity: Surma-tourist interactions. In R. Fardon et al. (Eds.), *Modernity on a Shoestring. Dimensions of Globalization, Consumption and Development in Africa and Beyond* (pp. 341-358). London-Leiden: EIDOS-ASC-CAS.

1999 The elusive chief: authority and leadership in Surma society (Ethiopia). In E.A.B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal & R. van Dijk (Eds.), *African Chieftaincy in a New Socio-Political Landscape* (pp. 49-74). Hamburg: Lit Verlag.

1999 Artifacts as 'daily art' in Me'en culture. The life and work of Bogine Shala and Gelta Foroshowa. In R.A. Silverman (Ed.), *Ethiopia: Traditions of Creativity* (pp. 26-45). Seattle-London: University of Washington Press.

1999 Ethiopian Studies in Japan: the 13th ICES in Kyoto (December 1997). *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, *41*, 141-145.

1998 Notes on an exhibition: *Aethiopia-Peoples of Ethiopia*. *Museum Anthropology*, *22*(2), 62-66.

1998 An historical-anthropological approach to Islam in Ethiopia: issues of identity and politics. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *11*(2), 109-124.

1998 Competing practices of drinking and power: alcoholic 'hegemonism' in Southern Ethiopia. *Northeast African Studies*, *4*(3) (N.S.), 7-22.

1998 Ritual and political forms of violent practice among the Suri of Southern Ethiopia. *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, *XXXVIII*(2-4), no. 150-152, 271-296.

1998 Violence and political discourse among the Chai Suri. In G.J. Dimmendaal & M. Last (Eds.), *Surmic Languages and Cultures* (pp. 321-344). Cologne: R. Köppe.

1998 Co-author, with P. Unseth: Surmic bibliography. In G.J. Dimmendaal & M. Last (Eds.), *Surmic Languages and Cultures* (pp. 127-141). Cologne: R. Köppe.

1998 Co-author, with P. Unseth: Cross-ethnic clan identities among Surmic groups and their neighbours: the case of the Mela. In G.J. Dimmendaal & M. Last (Eds.), *Surmic Languages and Cultures* (pp. 103-112). Cologne: R. Köppe.

1998 The Eritrean-Ethiopian border dispute. *African Affairs*, *97*(389), 551-565.

1998 Democratisering als schaduwtheater? Afrikaanse experimenten. *Facta*, *6*(3), 13-17.

1997 Ethnicity and constitutionalism in contemporary Ethiopia. *Journal of African Law, 41*(2), 159-174. [Abstract published in *International Political Science Abstracts*, *48*, p. 337].

1997 Authority and leadership in Surma society (Ethiopia). *Africa* (Roma), *52*(3). 317-342.

1997 Violence, ritual and reproduction: Surma ceremonial duelling as a construction of sociality and sexuality. In K. Fukui, E. Kurimoto, & M. Shigeta (Eds.), *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective vol. 2* (pp. 221-235). Kyoto: Shokado.

1997 Territory, space and state among the Suri: changes in an Ethiopian periphery, 1977-1997. In K. Fukui, E. Kurimoto & M. Shigeta (Eds.), *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective* (Vol. 2, 236-249). Kyoto: Shokado.

1997 [Islam in] Afrika bezuiden de Sahara. In H.D. Driessen (Ed.), *In het Huis van de Islam. Geografie, Geschiedenis, Geloofsleer, Cultuur, Economie, Politiek* (pp. 71-77). Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Sun.

1997 The myth of Tishana 'kingship': ideological reflections of socioeconomic change. *Anthropos*, *92*(4-6), 551-556.

1997 The shrinking cultural and political space of East African pastoral societies. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, *6*(1), 1-17.

1997 De ingebeelde EU-vorm als inhoud van de Europese Unie. *Facta*, *5*(4), 11-13.

1997 Staats*om*vorming in Afrika. *Internationale Spectator*, *51*(4), 204-208.

1997 Het Surma stok-duel: sport en ritueel geweld. In *De Baboab*, *12*(3),15-20.

1997 Co-author, with D. Nijland: Visuele etnografie-theorie, methoden en mogelijkheden. *Facta*, *5*(4), 16-19.

1996 The Falasha. In J. Middleton & A. Rassam (Volume Eds.), *Encyclopedia of World Cultures* (*Africa/Middle East*) (Vol. 9, pp. 89-93). Boston: G.K. Hall (imprint 1995).

1996 The Suri. In J. Middleton & A. Rassam, (Volume Eds.), *Encyclopedia of World Cultures* (*Africa/Middle East*) (Vol. 9, pp. 323-327). Boston: G.K. Hall (imprint 1995). [Also, online on: http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Suri.aspx]

1996 The challenges of education in an Ethiopian agro-pastoral society: Surma childhood in crisis. In Habtamu Wondimu (Ed.), *Research Papers on the Situation of Children and Adolescents in Ethiopia* (pp. 115-135). Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.

1996 De Nilo-Saharaanse en Omotisch sprekende bevolkingsgroepen. In X. van der Stappen (Ed.), *Aethiopia. Volkeren van Ethiopië. Geschiedenis, Bevolking, Geloof,*

Kunst en Ambacht (pp. 265-278). Tervuren: Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika/Berlin: Gordon & Breach Arts International.
1996 Bomen en planten bij de Ethiopische Surma: ritueel en praktisch gebruik. *De Baobab*, *12*(1), 27-31.
1996 Violence, state and ethnicity in the Horn of Africa. In J. Abbink et al., *Societies of Fear* (pp. 3-26). Utrecht: ISOR.
1996 The impact of violence: the Ethiopian 'Red Terror' as a social phenomenon. In P. Bräunlein & A. Lauser (Eds.), *Krieg und Frieden. Ethnologische Perspektiven* (*Kea*-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften, Sonderband 2) (pp. 129-146). Bremen: Kea-Edition.
1996 De afstand tussen antropologie en toerisme. *Facta*, *4*(3), 8-9.
1995 Disaster, relief and political change in southern Ethiopia: developments from within Suri society. In J. Sorenson (Ed.), *Disaster and Development in the Horn of Africa* (pp. 151-170). Basingstoke-London: MacMillan.
1995 Etniciteit en democratisering in Ethiopië. *Internationale Spectator*, *49*(11), 591-597.
1995 Tussen cognitie en cultuur. *Facta*, *3*(7), 2-5.
1995 Transformations of violence in twentieth-century Ethiopia: cultural roots, political conjunctures. *Focaal. Tijdschrift voor Antropologie*, *25*, 57-77.
1995 Medicinal and ritual plants of the Ethiopian southwest: an account of recent research. *Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor*, *3*(2), 6-8. www.nuffic.nl/ciran/ikdm/3-2/articles/abbink.html.
1995 Breaking and making the state: the dynamics of ethnic democracy in Ethiopia. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *13*(2), 149-163. [Abstract published in: *International Political Science Abstracts*, *46*, 419].
1995 Antropologen zijn geen toeristen. *Facta*, *3*(4), 2-5.
1995 Ritual and environment: The *mósit* ceremony of the Ethiopian Me'en people. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, *25*(2), 163-190.
1995 Rwanda één jaar later (review article). *Internationale Spectator*, *49*(5), 291-293.
1995 Éthiopie: le dilemme entre ethnicité et 'democratisation'. *Politique Africaine*, *57*, 134-142.
1994 The irrevocable past: history and image of the Beta Esra'el. *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, *XXXIV*(4) 136, 693-700.
1994 Refractions of revolution in Ethiopian 'Surmic' societies: an analysis of cultural response. In H.G. Marcus (Ed.), *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies*, *vol. 2*, (pp. 734-755). Lawrenceville, N.J.: Red Sea Press.
1994 The cannibalist discourse in southwestern Ethiopia. In C. Lepage et al. (Eds.), *Etudes Ethiopiennes* (Vol. 1, p. 431-440). Paris: Société Française des Études Éthiopiennes.

1994 Changing patterns of 'ethnic' violence: peasant-pastoralist confrontation in southern Ethiopia and its implications for a theory of violence. *Sociologus*, *44*(1), 66-78.

1994 'Tribal' violence, peace-making and ethnology. A comment. In Bahru Zewde et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the XIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa 1991* (pp. 1-9.).

1994 De boodschap der ingewanden-divinatie in een Afrikaanse samenleving. In H. Driessen & H. de Jonge (Eds.), *In de Ban van Betekenis.Proeven van Symbolische Antropologie* (pp. 141-169). Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN,.

1994 A note on Mänz traditional medicine in Southern Käfa. *Sociology-Ethnology Bulletin*, *1*(3), 70-76.

1993 Suri-English basic vocabulary. *Frankfurter Afrikanistische Blätter*, *5*, 39-64.

1993 Me'en medicinal, ritual and other plants: a contribution to Southwest Ethiopian ethnobotany. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, *26*(2), 1-21.

1993 Ethnic conflict in the 'tribal' zone: the Dizi and Suri in Southern Ethiopia. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *31*(4), 675-683. [Also appeared in: *Human Peace (IUAES) 10*(1) 1994, 3-7]

1993 Reading the entrails: analysis of an African divination discourse. *Man*, *28*(4), 705-726.

1993 Famine, gold and guns: the Suri of southern Ethiopia, 1985-91. *Disasters. Journal of Disaster Studies and Management*, *17*(3), 218-226.

1992 Anthropological and ethno-historical research on South-West Ethiopia: the need for integrative synthesis. *Bulletin de la Maison des* Études *Ethiopiennes*, *1*, 22-44.

1992 An ethno-historical perspective on Me'en territorial organisation (Southwest Ethiopia). *Anthropos*, *86*(4-6), 351-364.

1992 Settling the Surma: notes on an Ethiopian relief experiment. *Human Organization*, *51*(2),174-180.

1992 Gold and famine: the Suri effort at self-rehabilitation, 1985-1991. In J.T. Hinnant & B. Finne (Compilers), *Preproceedings of the Sixth MSU Conference on Northeast Africa, April 23-25, East Lansing* (pp. 12-28). East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.

1992 Funeral as ritual: an analysis of Me'en mortuary rites (Southwest Ethiopia). *Africa* (Roma), *47*(2), 221-236.

1992 Gender and power: male and female in a Me'en homicide compensation ceremony. *Sociology-Ethnology Bulletin*, *1*(2), 67-73.

1992 Ch'at in popular culture: a 'prayer' from Harär, Ethiopia. *Sociology-Ethnology Bulletin*, *1*(2), 89-94.

1992 Economy and society in Southwest Ethiopia: the emergence of the 'Tishana'. In J. Abbink & H. Vermeulen (Eds.), *History and Culture. Essays on the Work of Eric R. Wol* (pp. 71-94). Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis Publications (See above).

1992 Epilogue. In J. Abbink & H. Vermeulen (Eds.), *History and Culture. Essays on the Work of Eric R. Wolf* (pp. 95-106). Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis Publications.

1991 Islam in de Hoorn van Afrika. In T. Sunier & A.J. Termeulen (Eds.), *Macht, Mobilisatie en Moskee* (pp. 55-59). Baarn-Den Haag-Brussel: Ambo-Novib-NCOS.

1991 The deconstruction of 'tribe': ethnicity and politics in Southwest Ethiopia. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, *24*, 1-21.

1991 Gezondheidszorg in the Derde Wereld: de Somalische situatie [Review article]. *Internationale Spectator*, *45*(2), 155-157.

1991 The enigma of Beta Esra'el ethnogenesis. An anthro-historical study. *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, *120*(XXX-4), 397-449.

1990 The final rite: burial among the Me'en of Southwest Ethiopia. In R. Pankhurst et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the First National Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa 1990* (pp. 65-75). Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies.

1990 Tribal formation on the Ethiopian fringe: toward a history of the 'Tishana'. *Northeast African Studies*, *12*(1), 21-42.

1990 Missionaries, anthropologists and rationality. In R. Bonsen et al. (Eds.), *The Ambiguity of Rapprochement. Reflections of Anthropologists on their Controversial Relationship with Missionaries* (pp. 121-150). Nijmegen-Rotterdam: Focaal/ NSAV.

1990 The Geertzian charm. *Antropologische Verkenningen*, *9*(1), 50-55.

1989 Complementarity in literary and sociological views on unemployment and lifestyle: a comparison of 'Love on the Dole' and 'Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal'. *Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly*, *14*(3), 90-97.

1989 Historie, etnografie en 'dialoog': problemen van het antropologisch post-modernisme. In A. Borsboom, J. Kommers, & C. Remie (Eds.), *Liber Amicorum Albert Trouwborst. Antropologische Essays* (pp. 3-24). Nijmegen: ICSA.

1988 Het verschijnsel antropoloog: gêne en genre van veldwerk. *Etnofoor* (Amsterdam), *1*(2), 99-104.

1988 The Me'en as historical transformation of the 'Surma'-preliminary notes on society and culture. In An. A. Gromyko (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies, Moscow 1986* (Vol. 3, pp. 7-21). Moscow: Nauka Publishers,.

1988 Me'en means of subsistence: notes on crops, tools and ethnic change. *Anthropos*, *83*(1-3), 187-192.

1988 Einige Bemerkungen zum medizinalen Gebrauch von Pflanzen bei den Falaschas in Äthiopien. *Zeitschrift* für *Ethnologie*, *113*(2), 261-269.

1987 A socio-structural analysis of the Beta-Esra'el as an 'infamous' group in traditional Ethiopia. *Sociologus*, *37*(2), 140-154.

1987 'Koloniale etnografie': Thurnwald's veldwerk in Melanesië. In A. Borsboom & J. Kommers (Eds.), *Processen van Kolonisatie en Dekolonisatie in de Pacific.*

Onderzoek en Verkenning (pp. 89-107). Nijmegen: Centrum voor Studies van Australië en Oceanië, Universiteit van Nijmegen.
1987 An Ethiopian Jewish 'missionary' as cultural broker. In M. Ashkenazi & A. Weingrod (Eds.), *Ethiopian Jews and Israel* (pp. 21-32). New Brunswick-Oxford: Transaction Books, (Reprint of article first published in 1985).
1987 Australian views on ethnicity. (Review article) In *Critique of Anthropology*, *7*(1), 67-70.
1987 A bibliography on the Ethiopian Jews, 1958-1984. *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, *16*, 37-48.
1987 Structuralisme: de biogenetische optie. In P. van der Grijp, T. Lemaire, & A. Trouwborst (Eds.), *Sporen in de Antropologie. Liber Amicorum Jan Pouwer* (pp. 5-16). Nijmegen: ICSA.
1987 Ethiopië-Studies-Moskou 1986. Opmerkingen bij de negende 'International Conference on Ethiopian Studies'. *Focaal. Tijdschrift voor Antropologie*, *5*, 104-108
1986 Civiele religie: metafoor of analytisch concept. *Antropologische Verkenningen*, *5*(3), 35-40.
1986 Aspects of the ethnic identity of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel. *Plural Societies*, *16*, 102-125.
1986 Ethnic boundaries: delineating two Southwest Ethiopian groups. Analysis and research outline. *Research Contributions to Interdisciplinary Anthropology*, *3*, 71-92.
1986 A select ethnographic bibliography of Ethiopia, 1958-1982. *Behavior Science Research*, *19*, 58-111.
1985 Anthropology and the missions: a critical epistemological perspective. *Methodology and Science*, *18*(4), 253-270.
1985 An Ethiopian Jewish 'missionary' as culture broker. *Israel Social Science Research*, *3*(1-2), 21-32.
1985 'Militair socialisme': de politieke verhoudingen in Ethiopië. *Internationale Spectator*, *39*(2), 65-72.
1985 A preliminary ethnographic bibliography of Ethiopia. *Sociaal Antropologische Cahiers*, no. XVII (ICSA, University of Nijmegen), 40 pp.
1985 Ethno-cultural differences and assimilation: Falashas in an Israeli immigrant absorption center. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, *141*(1), 1-18.
1984 The changing identity of Ethiopian immigrants (Falashas) in Israel. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 57(4), 139-153.
1984 Civiele religie in Israel? *Antropologische Verkenningen*, *3*(1), 185-189.
1984 Crisis en crisisdenken: een reactie op Kloos. *Antropologische Verkenningen*, *3*(1), 36-40.
1983 *Seged* celebration in Ethiopia and Israel: continuity and change of a 'Falasha' religious holiday. *Anthropos*, *78*(5-6), 789-810.

1983 Ethnic differences and social change: Falashas in an Israeli Immigrant Absorption Center. *Sociaal-Antropologische Cahiers*, no. XIV (ICSA, University of Nijmegen), 27 pp.

1983 Antropologie in Tsjechoslowakije: een impressie. *Sociodrome*, 1983/3, pp. 7-9.

1983 Reassessing urgent research in Ethiopia. *Bulletin of the International Committee on Urgent Anthropological and Ethnological Research*, *25*, 29-39.

3 Blogs, website and press articles (national and international, selection)

2022 'Ethiopië wil van Rusland profiteren'. Interview met J. Abbink in *Historisch Nieuwsblad* (9-2022), 10-11.

2022 'Congress Risks Prolonging the Ethiopian Civil War'. *The American Conservative*, 30 March 2022. (www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/congress-risks-prolonging-the-ethiopian-civil-war/)

2022 'Exclusive: Professor J. Abbink discusses the Ethiopian war and the economic repercussions of the country's removal from AGOA', 5 January 2022. https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/markets/profer-jan-abbink-discusses-the-ethiopian-war-and-removal-from-agoa-by-the-us/3p05b8h

2022 'Why the Tigray People's Liberation Front and Putin's Russia are strikingly similar'. *Business Day* (Johannesburg), Op-ed., 23 March 2022. https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2022-03-23-jon-abbink-why-the-tigray-peoples-liberation-front-and-putins-russia-are-strikingly-similar/

2022 ' 'ኤች አር 6600 በኢትዮጵያ የሚደረገውን የሰላም ጥረት የሚያደናቅፍ ነው- Jon Abbink'. In: *Ghion Magazine* (Addis Ababa), 4 (no. 176), p. 2.

2022 'The Economist magazine and reporting on Ethiopia – a comment on the Gardner case'. *Medium.com*, 5 May 2022. https://medium.com/@JonAbbink/the-economist-magazine-and-reporting-on-ethiopia-a-comment-on-the-gardner-case-d4e4f39d8ad1, and at www.Ethioreference.com.

2021 'Getting things right on the Ethiopia conflict' (29 August 2021). https://medium.com/@JonAbbink?p=e128eaaf82d8 (Also on: https://ethioreference.com/archives/29171, and on: https://zehabesha.com/getting-things-right-on-the-ethiopia-conflict/).

2021 'The Ethiopian June 2021 elections: a step to political normality?' www.ascleiden.nl/news/new-blog-jon-abbink-ethiopian-june-2021-elections-step-political-normality, and on Medium.com (https://medium.com/@JonAbbink/the-ethiopian-june-2021-elections-a-step-to-political-normality-657b7c31c47).

2021 'Ethiopia's elections are needed. But they face credibility challenges'. *The Conversation-Africa,* 18 June 2021 https://theconversation.com/ethiopias-elections-are-needed-but-they-face-credibility-challenges-162865.

2021 The Tigray conflict in Ethiopia: post-war ramifications and international response. *The Global Observatory-Institute of Peace* (USA) blog, January 25, 2021. https://theglobalobservatory.org/2021/01/tigray-conflict-ethiopia-ramifications-international-response/

2021 'Tendency to demonise Ethiopia and give free pass to TPLF is false narrative'. In: *Business Day* (newspaper, Johannesburg, ZA), 12 Nov. 2021. https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2021-11-12-jon-abbink-tendency-to-demonise-ethiopia-and-give-free-pass-to-tplf-is-false-narrative/ (Also on: www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2021/11/13/tendency-to-demonise-ethiopia-and-give-free-pass-to-tplf-is-false-narrative/).

2020 'Gefaehrliche Erbschaften'. In *Jungle World* 51/2020 (Berlin). https://jungle.world/artikel/2020/51/gefaehrliche-erbschaften

2020 'Hopes dashed: sabotage and mayhem in Ethiopia', ASCL Blog, 6-11-2020. https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/ascl-blogs/jan-abbink/

2019 'An unknown chapter: Israel's re-emerging relations with Africa'. ASCL Blog, 5-7-2019. https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/ascl-blogs/jan-abbink/unknown-chapter-israels-re-emerging-relations-africa

2019 Co-author, with Yinebeb Nigatu: 'Political breakthrough in Ethiopia? Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's reformist agenda'. In *ASCL Annual Report 2018* (pp. 10-11), Leiden: ASCL.

2019 'Ethiopia's successes under Abiy Ahmed constrained by ethnic divisions' (Global Observatory – International Peace Institute, April 4, 2019). https://theglobalobservatory.org/2019/04/ethiopias-successes-abiy-constrained-by-ethnic-divisions/#more-18912

2018 'Governance in Africa: more than political and economic 'management'.' ASCL Blog piece, 26-3-2018. http://www.ascleiden.nl/content/ascl-blogs/jan-abbink/governance-africa-more-political-and-economic-management

2018 'Ethiopia plans for new Prime Minister, but crisis has deep challenges'. *Global Observatory-IPI* blog, 26-3-2018. https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/03/ethiopia-new-prime-minister-crisis-deep-challenges/

2018 'Development in rural Ethiopia, some puzzles'. In *African Studies Centre Leiden Annual Report* (pp. 18-19). Leiden: ASCL.

2018 'Conferencing in Ethiopia: no politically correct bla-bla'. ASCL blog piece. https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/ascl-blogs/jan-abbink/conferencing-ethiopia-no-politically-correct-bla-bla.

2016 'Stable instability: renewed turmoil Ethiopia'. Blog article, part 1 and part 2: https://standplaatswereld.nl/2016/09/09/stable-instability-renewed-turmoil-in-ethiopia/#more-9730 and https://standplaatswereld.nl/2016/09/16/renewed-turmoil-in-ethiopia-part-2/

2016 'Ethiopia's unrest sparked by unequal development record.' IPI Global Observatory blog: https://theglobalobservatory.org/2016/09/ethiopia-protests-amhara-oromiya.
2015 The enduring riddle of 'menstrual synchrony': an anthropological perspective. (Website – blog article (28-08-2015) on: http://openanthcoop.ning.com/profiles/blogs/the-enduring-riddle-of-menstrual-synchrony-an-anthropological).
2015 Is Turkey going rogue? (Website article, 26 August. http://www.atlantic-community.org/-/is-turkey-going-rogue-
2015 Disconnections? Dilemmas around the 'developmental state' in Africa. http://thebrokeronline.eu/Blogs/Sahel-Watch-a-living-analysis-of-the-conflict-in-Mali/Disconnections-Dilemmas-around-the-developmental-state-in-Africa. Republished at: http://includeplatform.net/disconnections-dilemmas-around-the-developmental-state-in-africa
2015 Contestation as claim to integration: the May 2015 public protest movement of Ethiopian Israelis (May 31, 2015). http://standplaatswereld.nl/2015/05/31/contestation-as-claim-to-integration-the-may-2015-public-protest-movement-of-ethiopian-israelis/#more-8303
2015 Ethiopia's stalemate 'election' hinders generational change (June 5, 2015). http://theglobalobservatory.org
2013 After 65 years: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Africa today. https://jonabbink.wordpress.com/ (Blog).
2010 De toeristische 'ontmoeting'. Article on *De Volkskrant*-website (4 November 2010): www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/3987/Toerisme-zegen-of-vloek/article/detail/1044941/2010/11/01/Opinie-De-toeristische-ontmoeting.dhtml.
2001 'Culture' as a resource for conciliation after conflict? Reflections on an elusive concept. http://www.ifa.de/ssg3/eabbinkf.htm

How We Published This Book Sustainably

The African Studies Centre Leiden strives to produce and disseminate a wide range of Africa related knowledge that will inform, inspire, and motivate readers of all generations. The production of knowledge, however, can have unintentional damaging and irreversible side effects on the environment. Unnecessary use of harmful materials, polluting transportation methods and the use of toxic substances in printing techniques are just a few examples of how hard copy books can have a negative impact on the environment.

We want future generations to enjoy our publications just as much as the current generation. That is why the African Studies Centre Leiden wants to publish its work in the most sustainable way, with an eye for the natural environment and all living organisms that it is home to.

This book was printed on Rebello (cover) and Everprint (interior) paper, made from 100% recycled paper. We used glue that is less burdensome to the environment than conventional book glue. Finally, our book cover is made from recycled plastic.

Do you want to contribute to sustainability yourself? Please pass this book on to others after you have finished with it.

If you have any further suggestions on how to make this book more sustainable, please let us know!

africanstudies centre leiden

Jon Abbink is Emeritus Professor of Governance and Politics in Africa at Leiden University. 'Ethnography, History, and the Politics of Knowledge in Africa' is a festschrift to celebrate his wide-ranging career covering culture and politics in Ethiopia and Africa in general, and methodological and philosophical topics in anthropology. Contributions from colleagues in Leiden, Ethiopia and beyond deal with political analysis concerning a variety of African countries, and historical, methodological and philosophical issues. Also, a chapter is included with personal observations and twelve points of attention derived from Jon Abbink's writing that may inspire us in future research. The book ends with a bibliography of Jon Abbink's publications.

Occasional Publications 51

africanstudies centre leiden

www.ascleiden.nl