



Aethiopia 23 (2020)

International Journal of Ethiopian and
Eritrean Studies

ALKE DOHRMANN, Hamburg

Review

FELIX GIRKE, SOPHIA THUBAUVILLE, and WOLBERT SMIDT, eds,
Anthropology as Homage: Festschrift for Ivo Strecker

Aethiopia 23 (2020), 269–271

ISSN: 1430 1938

Edited in the Asien Afrika Institut
Hiob Ludolf Zentrum für Äthiopistik
der Universität Hamburg
Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

by Alessandro Bausi

in cooperation with

Bairu Tafla, Ludwig Gerhardt, Susanne Hummel,
Alexander Meckelburg, and Siegbert Uhlig

Editorial Team

Susanne Hummel, Francesca Panini

REVIEWS

FELIX GIRKE, SOPHIA THUBAUVILLE, and WOLBERT SMIDT, eds, *Anthropology as Homage: Festschrift for Ivo Strecker*, Mainzer Beiträge zur Afrikaforschung, 41 (Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2018). 447 pp. Price: €69.80. ISBN: 978-3-89645-842-1.

On occasion of the seventy-eighth birthday of Ivo Strecker, Felix Girke, Sophia Thubauville, and Wolbert Smidt edited a long overdue *Festschrift* to honour his scientific merits in the fields of Ethiopian ethnography (especially of the Hamär ethnic group), rhetoric, and visual anthropology (e.g. MacDougall, pp. 107–114; LaTosky, pp. 199–223; Streck, pp. 317–332), as well as teaching. The *Festschrift* is seen as a homage to the fascinating personality of Ivo Strecker as a researcher, anthropologist, and teacher, but also as homage to the people he lives with. The *Festschrift* is an opportunity to give attention to Ivo Strecker and his life and work. Doing research and finding out new aspects of Hamär cultural life—and letting others know—is where he is entirely at home. This is demonstrated by the picture on the book cover showing Strecker demonstrably happy in the company of his main Hamär informant and friend, Baldambe, at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz.

The editors found a meaningful way to structure the *Festschrift* by forming chapters according to the Hamär social categories of *anamo*, *misso*, *bel*, *kanna*, *tamari nanna*, and *yeskenna*, meaning ‘age mates’, ‘hunting friends’, ‘bond-friends’, ‘junior siblings’, ‘students’, and ‘sister sons’. The twenty-five articles of these chapters are preceded by a Preface by Thomas Bierschenk, giving biographical information on Ivo Strecker, and an introductory chapter with the headline *barjo äla*, which means ‘call for good fortune’, and comprises three articles introducing different aspects of Strecker’s research approach identifying it as an ‘anthropology of homage’ (Felix Girke, pp. 19–27). It also renders impressions of his teachings in Ethiopia (Yohannes Yitbarek Ejigu, pp. 29–36), and allows one to hear the voice of his Hamär friend Baldambe. The Appendix lists Ivo Strecker’s publications. Most of the contributions are written in English with two exceptions in French by Philippe-Joseph Salazar (pp. 79–89) and Serge Tornay (pp. 91–105), and one in German by Karl-Heinz Kohl (pp. 137–148). The book is illustrated by many photographs, mainly showing Ivo Strecker either in the field or teaching.

Many articles relate personal encounters between the respective author and Ivo Strecker, such as Stephan Feuchtwang who tries to find out if Ivo is Hamär (pp. 73–78). Another aspect is his relation to people noted by Mitiku Gabrehiwot (pp. 409–413). Everybody wishes to tell of a personal story of their own connection to Ivo Strecker. Thus, for me personally, as one of Ivo Strecker's students, writing a book review of this particular *Festschrift* is not easy. While reading the articles, memories come to mind of the travels to South Omo and the shared experiences and adventures, such as the journey we made for the exhibition project on Hamär material culture at the University of Mainz in 1995, illustrated by the picture on page 334. This followed Ivo Strecker's 'idea of combining classroom discussions with field excursions and visits', as stated by Yohannes Yitbarek Ejigu (p. 29). Our last meeting was in 2017 at the South Omo Research Centre in Ğinka, a place Ivo Strecker created to focus on the cultural diversity of southern Ethiopia.

Ivo Strecker is a fieldworker *mit Haut und Haar* ('with skin and hair', Bierschenk, p. 11), who does not distinguish between the professional and private sphere ('he used his own money', Yohannes Yitbarek Ejigu, p. 32), and expects the same of his students. His methods are unconventional at times, not geared to given patterns of thinking, nor ignoring the, at times, clearly political dimensions of the information one receives as a researcher. His research is a manifestation of his appreciation of the research region—anthropology as homage. He carried out most of his fieldwork with his anthropologist wife, Jean Lydall, who merits a *Festschrift* of her own. Ivo Strecker likes a creative surrounding, that inspires the participants and creates new ideas. He does not keep his insights to himself but discusses them with others, sharing his passion, enthusiasm, and commitment. It is impossible not to become personal when writing about Ivo Strecker, which gives me the feeling I am writing another contribution to the *Festschrift* rather than a review.

The texts of friends, scholars, and companions gathered in this volume provide—aside from the very personal impression and dedication to Ivo—a lot of interesting and valuable information on the diverse cultural backgrounds of various regions of Ethiopia and beyond. To take just a few examples, I would like to mention the articles of Susanne Epple, Echi Gabbert, Felix Girke, and Sophia Thubauville, some of Ivo's *tamari nanna*. Susanne Epple (pp. 337–350) describes the finding of new details and contexts in her long-term research in the Bāšada region, an understanding for frequently observed phenomena. In Echi Christina Gabbert's article (pp. 351–355) about a fable from Arbore, the voice of a local person, Ginno Ballo, can be directly heard (just as Baldambe and others are heard in Ivo Streck-

er's publications). Felix Girke (pp. 357–371) reflects on the role of anthropologists, tourists, and the camera in southern Ethiopia. This is what all Ivo Strecker's students have learned to be sensitive and aware of: 'ethnographic fieldwork requires the negotiation of social roles between the fieldworker and his or her interlocutors, which in turn needs to be reflected upon for the positionality and perspective it creates' (Bierschenk, p. 11). We learned to unfold our methods, results, and failures, like Sophia Thubauville (pp. 373–383) describes in her research project on transgender in Maale.

Nagaya (Hamär greeting, 'a wish for well-being') to Ivo Strecker.

Alke Dohrmann, Hamburg

MICHELA GAUDIELLO and PAUL A. YULE, eds, *Mifsas Bahri: a Late Aksumite Frontier Community in the Mountains of Southern Tigray, Survey, Excavations and Analysis, 2013–16*, BAR International Series, 2839 (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2017). xix, 279 pp. Price: £55. ISBN: 978-1-4073-1579-9.

The book, edited by Michela Gaudiello and Paul Yule, reports on the results of a three-year (2013–2016) project of archaeological excavations and a survey conducted by Universität Heidelberg in collaboration with Mekelle University at the site of Mifsas Bahri, near Lake Ḥašəngä, in southern Təgray. The researches, co-directed by Paul Yule and Michela Gaudiello, brought to the light the remains of a late Aksumite basilica that had been disturbed, in the fifteenth century but presumably already from the eleventh/twelfth century, by a cemetery, and documented a series of potential ancient sites in its vicinities.

The book is organized into thirteen chapters provided by various authors. Chapters 1 to 3b provide the description of excavation and survey procedures and results; Chapter 4 presents a nineteenth-century cartography of the region under investigation; Chapter 5 reports of petrographic analysis; Chapters 6a to 8 describe small finds, lithics, ceramics, and human remains; Chapters 9 and 10 discuss architectural remains, stratigraphy, and chronology; Chapters 11 and 12 are accounts on local agricultural terminology and traditions; Chapter 13 provides a general overview. The text is paralleled by an exhausting corpus of 234 black-and-white and colour illustrations and 44 tables. The authors also provide access to an open digital archive in which all the photographs of the project have been catalogued.

Some weaknesses of the book can be clearly perceived when looking at its organization. The results of the archaeological activities have been pre-