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## Review

FRIEDRICH JULIUS BIEBER, *Reisen nach Äthiopien, Tagebücher 1904, 1905, 1909*  
ed. SAYURI YOSHIDA

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Finally, testimonies from victims of discriminatory and racist imagery appear only in the later chapters, standing in contrast to the abundant European narrative. As highlighted by the author, however, current post-colonial research will undoubtedly bridge these gaps.

In conclusion, *Sbiancare un etiope* provides a stimulating foundation for exploring the European perspective on conceived and perceived ‘otherness’, tracing its historical evolution and societal implications. The interdisciplinary approach, extensive use of sources, and commitment to addressing complex issues in an accessible manner establish this text as a valuable contribution to understanding the role of language and its enduring social impacts. Yet, enhancing precision and integrating a broader array of perspectives could further strengthen efforts aimed at dismantling entrenched prejudices.

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FRIEDRICH JULIUS BIEBER, *Reisen nach Äthiopien, Tagebücher 1904, 1905, 1909*, ed. SAYURI YOSHIDA, *Northeast African History, Orality and Heritage*, 5 (Berlin–Münster: LIT Verlag, 2021). viii, 627 pp. Price: €64,90. ISBN: 978-3-643-91062-2.

The volume currently under review, which is the fifth in the series *Northeast African History, Orality and Heritage*, contains the diary entries of the Austrian Julius Friedrich Bieber concerning his Ethiopian travels from the years 1904, 1905 and 1909. The handwritten diaries of Bieber, which are available in the Austrian National Library, were reviewed and edited by the Japanese cultural anthropologist Sayuri Yoshida and transcribed by Benedikt Roland. In light of the drastically changing societal conditions in Ethiopia at the beginning of the 20th century, the publication of Friedrich Julius Bieber’s diary offers contemporaneous insights into the changing lives of people in the countryside, while also recounting Bieber’s deeply personal experiences as a European traveler in East Africa and the everyday occurrences in urban and rural settings. The publication is organized according to Bieber’s three research trips, each of which, however, differs in its duration, intention, and experiences.

In the diary entries from 1904, the reader accompanies Friedrich Julius Bieber on his journey from Vienna via Trieste, Cairo, and Djibouti to Addis Abāba, the then still young capital of the Ethiopian Empire. In addition to descriptions of everyday life in Addis Abāba, the steady development of the city through the construction of new roads and buildings (p. 81), and the lives of European travelers, merchants, and missionaries (pp. 69, 158), the often finely detailed and thick descriptions of various festivities, audiences at court, and encounters with Ethiopian officials (including *Ras Wäldä Giyorgis* and *Ras Mäk’ännən*, father of the later

successor to the throne), as well as with Emperor Mənilək II himself (pp. 70, 100), paint a fascinating picture of life at court.

The second part of the publication depicts the extensive travels of Friedrich Julius Bieber in Ethiopia from 1905, including his expedition to the Kāfa region, which at that time had been part of the Ethiopian Empire for only eight years. With Bieber's arrival in Addis Abāba once again, the diary entries refer to events at the imperial court. Alongside descriptions of the relationship between Emperor Mənilək II and the Austrian Alfred Ilg, his advisor and minister of state, and the ceremonial signing of the trade treaty between the Ethiopian and Austro-Hungarian monarchies, the provision of an official travel permit that enabled Bieber's journey to the Kāfa Region is of particular importance—'Now begins the preparation for the journey to the wonderland of Kaffa!' (p. 295). Further, the reader accompanies Bieber's caravan on its journey via Ānnarya to the court of Abbaa Ġifaar in Ġimma and the subsequent onward journey to Kāfa. Once in Kāfa, the diary entries are particularly captivating because of their detailed descriptions of unique natural phenomena (p. 359), of the relationship of the Amhara and Kāfiččo (p. 363), of ancient religious sites and political centers of power of the Kāfa empire, and also of the construction of new churches and cities, all of which testify to the influence of Kāfa's new rulers from the north (p. 375).

The third and concluding part of the volume reflects Bieber's journey in 1909 via Dərre Dawa, Addis Abāba, and especially Gambella, from western Ethiopia to Sudan, his final destination. It is worth noting that the diary entries of this expedition differ in their narrative form and style from the previous ones; among other things, Bieber only rarely refers to his family in Austria, and he processes everyday experiences with extensive text passages instead of brief sentences. The diary entries of this research trip, a few years before Emperor Mənilək's death, deal with the emperor's illness and rumors about his succession at the imperial court in Addis Abāba, the influence of the railroad and increased trade on Ethiopia's society and economy (p. 501), and the extent of European influence through the establishment of hospitals and the first state schools (pp. 537–540). As Bieber's caravan advances toward Gambella, his entries bear witness to everyday descriptions of the slave trade, especially the relations between slaves and government officials (p. 590), and are marked by Bieber's many recollections of Kāfa and the experiences that he underwent on his previous expedition five years earlier (p. 574).

The ambivalent role of Friedrich Julius Bieber on his research trip becomes apparent in between the lines. The diary entries reveal a person who, being enthusiastic about the country and its people, pursues research and collecting activities, but who also acts as a member of a trade delegation in the context of diplomatic and economic endeavors for the Austro-Hungarian monarchy (pp. 70, 81). This ambiguity is exemplified by his personal thoughts regarding the Kāfa region.

While, on the one hand, Bieber seeks to preserve Käfa's history and culture in salvage-ethnological endeavors (p. 374), his colonial aspirations, on the other hand, become visible in his thoughts about the future of this region and its people (p. 364). Thus, for scholars concerned with the ambiguous relationship of European travelers in Africa at the beginning of the 20th century between their research and salvage-ethnological collection activities and their representation of political interests of European powers in Ethiopia, these diaries represent interesting primary sources. On this note, the diary entries, which contain precise geographic and chronological information, complemented by isolated photographs that Bieber produced in the course of his travels, convey a varied picture of his research trips in the context of his collecting and documentation activities, his personal fascination and curiosity for Ethiopia, and even his economic and diplomatic efforts as an envoy for the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

The diary entries make clear that Bieber comes to understand the country, society, and language increasingly better over the course of his expeditions in Ethiopia; he even offers direct translations in some passages of his diaries in his second and last travels to Ethiopia. Nevertheless, it would have been desirable for the editor of the volume under review to include a comprehensive glossary, especially to make Amharic and Kafi noonoo terms understandable for readers who have limited or no knowledge of these languages.

Friedrich Julius Bieber shared the results of his research trips to Ethiopia and in particular to the Käfa region in numerous publications, such as the *Deutsche Rundschau für Geographie und Statistik*, the *Mittheilungen der kaiserlich-königlichen Geographischen Gesellschaft* in Vienna and the *Mittheilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* (Berlin). His most important work, however, was the publication of the two-volume monograph *Kaffa: Ein altkuschitisches Volkstum in Innerafrika. Nachrichten über Land und Volk, Brauch und Sitte der Kaffitscho oder Gonga und das Kaiserreich Kaffa* in 1920 and 1923.<sup>1</sup> I would like to discuss briefly the relationship between this publication and the diary entries reviewed here. Unfortunately, the diary entries only provide isolated glimpses into Friedrich Julius Bieber's actual research activities in Käfa, including reports of conversations, observations of dances, and descriptions of the travel routes and everyday occurrences. However, as most of the entries and notes are of a private and personal nature, the value of the diaries lies in the insights that they provide about the personality of Friedrich Julius Bieber. Bieber's moving emotions upon reaching the Käfa region for the first time or his reminiscences of his experiences there,

<sup>1</sup> F. J. Bieber, *Kaffa: Ein altkuschitisches Volkstum in Innerafrika. Nachrichten über Land und Volk, Brauch und Sitte der Kaffitscho oder Gonga und das Kaiserreich Kaffa*, I: *Eingleitung: Das Eigenleben der Kaffitscho oder Gonga*, II: *Das Gemeinleben der Kaffitscho oder Gonga* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1920; Wien: Verlag der Anthropos-Administration, 1923).

which extend over broad sections of his 1909 expedition, exemplify this. Thus, these diary entries complement Friedrich Julius Bieber's most important publication in the sense that while they do not represent a scientific basis for his monograph in terms of providing field notes, they do offer the deeply personal thoughts and reflections of Bieber through which his enthusiasm for Kāfa and its people becomes apparent.

The chronological reproduction of the diaries and the deliberate omission of comments by the editor of this volume, as well as the verbatim transcription of the handwritten diaries, are a strength of the publication, because they allow insights into the person of Friedrich Julius Bieber himself. It would, however, have been helpful for the editor to include more detailed information about the methodology and approach used for analyzing, editing, and collating the diaries, which is mentioned only briefly in the preface to the volume. Nevertheless, the often detailed and thick descriptions of everyday life in rural and urban Ethiopia at the beginning of the 20th century—a time of considerable social transformation and the expansion of the Ethiopian Empire into the south and southwest—provide the diaries with their special value as important documents of contemporaneous history. In view of the current political processes in Ethiopia, the restructuring of political administrative zones, and the (re)emergence of discourse on the role of internal Ethiopian and European imperialism, the diary entries have a special contemporary relevance. Therefore, not only is the volume under review here of particular interest for scholars of history, anthropology, and linguistics, but also for political scientists and researchers of (southwestern) Ethiopia in general.

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MORENO VERGARI, ed., with the contributions of AHMEDSAAD MOHAMMED OMER, GIORGIO BANTI, GIANNI DORE, MORENO VERGARI, and ROBERTA VERGARI, *Housing and Dwelling Among the Saho-speaking Communities of Eritrea and Ethiopia: History, Anthropology and Lexicography*, Aree di transizione linguistiche e culturali in Africa, 9 (Trieste: EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2022). 399 pp. Price: €35.00. ISBN: 978-88-5511-374-8, 978-88-5511-375-5 (online).

This book is the outcome of many years of library and field work by the authors to gather empirical data about the Sāho communities. The focus of the book is the development of housing and dwelling arrangements among the Sāho communities in Eritrea and Ethiopia, presented in the form of an 'Atlas of the Traditional Material Culture of the Saho' (ATMCS). In addition, the authors describe the linguistic variations of different dialects of the Sāho language. Many Sāho speakers are