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Review

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*

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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 Käfa 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

unaware of these topics, which makes this book attractive for interested members of Sāho diaspora communities. The book is divided into three main parts.

In part one, a general overview given by Banti and Vergari, the book clarifies that the Irob, a Sāho-speaking group that lives in the Təgray region of Ethiopia as settled agriculturists, have been influenced by their Təgrəññа neighbors but still maintain a distinct identity. Accordingly, they use a different orthography, and their pronunciation varies from Sāho speakers in Eritrea (pp. 25–27).

I consider this part of the volume to be an excellent contribution to the existing body of literature about the material culture of the Sāho, which can encourage younger researchers to engage further with the dwelling and settlement habits of the Sāho people. The references listed here are very comprehensive and helpful (pp. 31–50).

Another important aspect of the book is the discussion of the influence of regional and colonial powers on the agropastoral Sāho ethnic group. Their policies resulted in internal displacement and forced villagization, while some Sāho groups were forced to migrate further to Sudan as refugees due to the atrocities of the liberation war. These developments had an impact on the erection of their settlements because traditional temporary dwellings were replaced by permanent buildings constructed with different kinds of building material both in the highlands and in the lowlands. Regrettably, the authors do not discuss the causes of these forced displacements and the involuntary resettlement of many Sāho communities due to the confiscation of their traditional pasture lands.

Part two is dedicated to the 'Dwelling practices of the Sāho speaking communities (pp. 51–137)'. This chapter, written by Dore, describes the dwelling, housing, and settlement patterns of the scattered Sāho ethnics along the highland slopes and in the eastern lowlands and their century-long control of the main caravan trade routes from the coastal lowlands to the highlands. Most of the research sites in Eritrea are situated in the surroundings of ʿAddi Qäyyəḥ (ዓዲ ቀይሕ) and Sänʿafä (ሰንዓፈ) and especially on the Qooxayto (Təgrəññа: ቆሓይቶ, Qoḥayto), plateau, which are populated by various Sāho groups and are of great historical and archaeological importance. Some villages in the coastal areas were also included in the study, most of which have maintained their original historical names, for instance Qooxayto, Saafira, Nabagade, Cishka, Thiisha, Dhiicot, and Xaddas[1] (Təgrəññа: Ḥaddas).

While Dore elaborates that there were chronic conflicts between Sāho- and Təgrəññа-speaking groups in the highlands related to usufruct rights over pasturelands, he does this without deeply analyzing the root causes of these land conflicts. He also explains how the Sāho tribes established solidarity networks to maintain their autonomy against the threat of regional and external powers and

[1] Sāho names according to orthography given in the reviewed book.

developed sophisticated mediation procedures to avoid mutual raids or raids from outsiders. On the contrary, the Irob Sāho in Təgray lived as settled peasant communities in the ʿAgamä (ዓጋመ) region and supplemented their income with animal husbandry and maintained good relationships with their Sāho neighbors (pp. 51–58).

The Ḥazəmo fertile land attracted different Sāho lineages and sub-clans (from the type of *kišo*, *dik*, *ʿáre*), and their dwellings were gradually transformed from temporary to permanent settlements. The author paints an accurate picture of the seasonal migration of the Irob-Sāho and how they regulated their pasture routes that crossed the Ḥazo and ʿAfar lands through usufruct agreements and negotiations to avoid raids (pp. 62–65). He also describes how Sāho merchants were involved in the transport of salt to the highlands, where they exchanged it for other goods and materials.

Special attention is paid to the highland Sāho-settlement types of *daasa*, *naxsa*, *care*, and *agdo*, which are inhabited by the Asaorta (Təgrəññа: ዓሳውርታ, ʿAsawərta), Minifire, and Irob. An interesting aspect of this chapter is the author's detailed explanation of the origin of names given to provisional dwellings and construction materials, such as cow dung, stone, and tree branches. The author highlights the important contribution of women to the construction of mobile and fixed houses (*daasa* and *carwa*) and their responsibility for decorating the houses, particularly during the men's absence during their migration to distant pastures or their involvement in feuds or wars. They also prepared food and grinded flour to prepare local bread. Generally, women in the rural areas carried heavy responsibilities, but their activities were poorly recognized by the men who were influenced by the patriarchal culture of their Təgrəññа neighbors and whose dwelling system in the urban areas were influenced by Təgrəññа people (pp. 78–83).

Dore meticulously describes the structure and the shape of the *naxsa* ('house') by evaluating the work of different colonial scholars and by collecting empirical data from local informants (pp. 91–97). He also explains in detail several types of houses and their sub-divisions (pp. 100–103) and illustrates the typical shapes of Sāho dwellings in Saafira, Thiisha, and Kaaribossa based on interviews with local village leaders.

He also notes the importance of animal husbandry and describes negotiations and agreements between Sāho and Irob regarding seasonal pasture areas and highlights the importance given to animal shelters (*abur* or *dagge*) (pp. 117–122) before the involvement of regional and external colonial powers. At the end of his chapter, the author briefly mentions that the dwellings of the Ḥazo Sāho in the Dänkäl depression area are characterized by a relatively different ecological and cultural environment. The author's findings are complemented by an appendix with descriptions and photos of different items. In sum, I would like to stress that

this chapter presents an excellent description of the transhumant way of life of the Sāho communities and the adaption of their dwelling habits to their environment.

The book ends with part three: A Sāho encyclopedic dictionary of dwelling, daily activities, and building practices (pp. 139–297), complemented by an appendix (pp. 299–334). This section presents a comprehensive and colorful 'encyclopedic dictionary' and is authored by the linguists Moreno Vergari, Roberta Vergari, and Ahmadsaad Mohammed, who conducted empirical research about the Sāho language for decades in collaboration with Eritrea's Ministry of Education. It is well organized and presents vocabulary related to the different names used for the material and non-material cultures of the different Sāho-speaking groups. In addition, the authors list the different names and symbols attached to shelters such as *abur* and *dagge* and for animals as well as for human dwellings, which makes this chapter a comprehensive and colorful 'encyclopedic dictionary'. The dictionary can also be useful for younger Sāho generations who grew up in refugee camps in Sudan or live scattered across the globe in diaspora communities. It will help them gain knowledge about their ancestral roots and the challenging lives of their great-grand-grandfathers and about their never-ending struggles to sustain their cultural identity. I am also convinced that the attachment of 'Terminologies quoted in the lexicon from Reinisch's *Wörterbuch der Saho-Sprache* (1890)' is a very important addition to the volume.[2] The dictionary by Reinisch has been used by different linguists, geographers, and historians since the time it was first published. Unlike Reinisch, who used the term Sāho as a collective name for all groups, older Italian scholars like Conti Rossini selected the term Asaorta, which is now understood as the name of a sub-group, as the collective name.

I would like to add a few general remarks to my review. Dore states that the Sāho were considered outsiders by the local Təgrəññа settlers and were identified as newcomers (in Təgrəññа **ማእከላይ ዓሌት**, *maʾkälay ʿalet*) to the highlands (pp. 65–73). Consequently, they needed permission to gain access to pasture lands or to build settlements. However, the term *maʾkälay ʿalet* was originally used to identify those migrants from Təgray to Eritrea who arrived during the era of *Aṣe* Yohannes IV and his representative *Ras* Alula. The latter distributed *rəst* and pasture lands used by the local population among his soldiers according to his slogan 'man is free, but land is tributary'. Dore could have critically analyzed these narratives without clarifying their specific historical background.

Secondly, the author praises the achievements of Italian colonialism to coerce part of the Sāho agropastoral families to become settled farmers in the areas of Ḥazəmo and around Gindaʿ (p. 84). Regrettably, he does not explain the back-

[2] L. Reinisch, *Die Saho-Sprache*, II: *Wörterbuch der Saho-Sprache* (Wien: Alfred Hölder, 1890).

ground of the Italian colonial policy, although he is aware of their resistance: 'The Saho sections, on various levels, tried to pursue their interests, putting pressure on colonial officials to defend or obtain land, water, and pasture even if this was to the detriment of competing Saho collective groups' (p. 67). Yet, the reason for their appeals and the underlying conflicts remains rather vague. For example, the traditional pasture lands of the Tarūʿá and Idda Sāho groups that were confiscated and distributed among the highland peasants and pastoral areas around Gindaʿ were converted into cash-crop plantations by the Italians. During Ethiopian rule, the conflicts between Təgrəññña and Sāho communities worsened further since the authorities favored the Təgrəññña as a loyal group towards the empire. Only after Eritrea's independence did the government try to settle these persistent land disputes.

The author also downplays the Italian colonial strategy of dividing the Sāho ethnic groups into two competing collective groups by coopting and favoring one group against the other one (*divide et impera*). He claims that 'The fission processes were not a colonial invention, but the Italian colonial experience blocked or enabled new possibilities for division' (p. 68). On the same page he states that 'The Italian colonial regime, however, allowed these same groups to regain their own autonomy' (p. 68). This refers to the Asaorta as a counterpart to the Minifere. However, the Sāho had an egalitarian political structure and lacked a central authority; accordingly, each sub-group operated independently. Thus, the Italians did not find a central political representative with which to negotiate, and consequently they divided the Sāho into two competing groups and privileged the Asaorta group. British scholars of the British military administration highlighted these facts; for example, Longrigg described the Sāho's social structure as '[…] among them no trace of serf and master caste',[3] similarly as Trevaskis.[4] The author mainly relies on Italian colonial sources such as Ciruzzi and Conti Rossini.[5] Nevertheless, the Italian scholars tend to use the term Asaorta as a synonym for the term Sāho to justify the privileges given to the Asaorta tribe.

Despite some shortcomings, this book is informative and a worthwhile read for scholars and the interested public, while presenting large amounts of primary and secondary data. I am confident that it will encourage scholars to engage in addi-

[3] S. H. Longrigg, *A Short History of Eritrea*, repr. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1974; 1st edn Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1945), 61.

[4] G. K. N. Trevaskis, *Eritrea: A Colony in Transition, 1941–52* (London–New York, NY–Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1960).

[5] S. Ciruzzi, R. Riccio, M. Piccardi, and M. G. Roselli, eds, '«Missione Eritrea», 1905–1906—Diario di Aldobrandino Mochi', *Archivio per l'Antropologia e la Etnologia*, 132 (2002), 3–252; 74 and 85–88; C. Conti Rossini, *Al Rágali*, Estratti dal Bollettino della 'Società Italiana di Esplorazioni Geografiche e Commerciali' (Milano: Premiato Stabilimento Tipografico P. B. Bellini, 1903), 68.

tional research on various features of the Sāho culture. It is particularly valuable for scholars who are interested in the Sāho culture in general, and specifically in traditional dwelling systems of the agropastoral societies in the Horn of Africa as well.

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MARIE HUBER, *Developing Heritage—Developing Countries: Ethiopian Nation-Building and the Origins of UNESCO World Heritage, 1960–1980*, Africa in Global History, 1 (Berlin–Boston, MA: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021). xiii, 204 pp. Price: €68,95. ISBN: 978-3-11-068023-2.

In academic discourse, the concept of 'development' has come under increased scrutiny, with an increasing number of scholars calling for new epistemologies of 'post-development' in research and practice. Projects conducted under 'development' frameworks are therefore now interrogated more critically regarding the power relations underlying agenda conceptualization and execution and are questioned regarding their outcome. In light of this background, Marie Huber researches the recent historical case of heritage development in Ethiopia. This book gives a detailed introduction into the origins of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage concept. In five chapters it describes the role of cultural tourism in economic development planning, which contributed to the formation of cultural and natural heritage conservation in Ethiopia; the Amhara-dominant symbolism of the heritage sites underpinning Ethiopian nationalism, validated by international and Western narratives; the renewed Western-led academic discourse and formation of the institutional and organizational backing at the United Nations (UN) as prerequisites for the Ethiopian World Heritage nominations; the conflicts between universalist standardization in heritage conservation and protection zoning vs local conservation practice and traditional land administration; as well as the particular bureaucratic background of institutional heritage-making, centering Ethiopia as a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) model country for large-scale projects.

In covering these topics, the book speaks to a scholarly audience from development studies, heritage studies, organizational studies, global history, and Ethiopian studies. It holds specialist interest for development officers within the UN institutions subject to the research.

The book makes for a very informative read by laying out the extensive material gathered on the Ethiopian heritage making and convincingly relates it to the larger discourse on UN World Heritage genesis. It makes evident the strong push towards a universal narrative on 'world heritage' that is anchored in western touristic practice and economic developmentalism. The author aptly distinguishes