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Dissertation Abstracts

*Battles over State Making on a Frontier: Dilemmas of Schooling, Young People
and Agro-Pastoralism in Hamar, Southwest Ethiopia*

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a single coherent narrative required for a history of philosophy. The second, a ‘method of parallels’ based on parallels in the material conditions of quite different contexts of philosophical production offers stronger (material) grounds for such a history. The third, and my favoured option that of a ‘connected’ history of philosophy, which traces the material and linguistic connections between philosophical texts, thinkers, and contexts of production.

The fifth chapter puts this methodology into action, providing a connected microhistorical study of philosophy in early seventeenth century Aksum. I do so by building up a picture of the discursive context of discussions of philosophy, cultural difference, societal critique, and neutral adjudication of religious disputes from contemporary Gə‘əz theological, historical, and ethnographic works, translations of foreign philosophy, and oral disputations. The aim here is to finally intervene in the authorship debate by providing a ‘proof of possibility’ of a seventeenth-century Ethiopian authorship of the text, thereby debunking Conti Rossini’s argument that the work was unthinkable in early modern Ethiopia. It is also intended to demonstrate the potential of the ‘connected’ history of philosophy for the study of seventeenth century philosophy in a global context, and more generally the philosophical richness of seventeenth century Ethiopian thought.

The final chapter ties up some of the most important themes of the dissertation, beginning with an account of the method of parallels and connected history as a framework for a globally interconnected history of seventeenth-century philosophy. Second, I provide some reflections on the significance of authorship and authenticity in the study of the *Ḥatäta*, and ask whether, and why we should care who wrote the *Ḥatäta*. Finally, in the coda I provide an interpretation of the significance of the *Ḥatäta* to a modern audience.

SABRINA MAURUS, *Battles over State Making on a Frontier: Dilemmas of Schooling, Young People and Agro-Pastoralism in Hamar, Southwest Ethiopia*, PhD Dissertation in Sociocultural Anthropology, Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), University of Bayreuth, on 16 June 2020.*

Compulsory schooling has been promoted worldwide through the United Nation’s Development Goals. Assuming that schooling minimizes poverty and supports development and social mobility, ‘western’-style schooling has become a ‘global good’ that is rarely examined critically. However, in Hamär *wäräda* (‘district’) in

* This work was awarded the dissertation prize of the German Anthropological Association (2021, first prize), the prize for excellence in applied development research of the KfW Development Bank (2021, second prize), the young scholars’ prize of the Association for African Studies in Germany (2020/21), and the prize of the city of Bayreuth for outstanding dissertations (2020).

southwest Ethiopia, the attempt to implement compulsory schooling turned into a violent conflict in 2014/2015. This dissertation analyzes this conflict over education, in particular girl's schooling, which is entangled with an ongoing process of state-making on Ethiopia's southwestern frontier.

The theoretical framework of the dissertation builds upon anthropological studies that conceptualize schools in Africa as an arena, in which states and citizens negotiate their relationship. The conflict between the Ethiopian government and the agro-pastoralist group of the Hamär shows that schools are not only a metaphorical arena but literally turned into a battlefield, in which people of different generational, gendered, educational, and ethnic backgrounds fight over claims to power. The government of Ethiopia, which at the time of the fieldwork was called a developmentalist state, tried to enlarge its power over the southwestern frontier of the country by implementing compulsory schooling, thereby trying to achieve (inter)national development goals, such as 'Education for All'. Agro-pastoralist societies, which mainly live by mobile animal husbandry and slash-and-burn cultivation, aimed at securing their existence in the periphery of the state by sending some children to school and by educating others at home for an agro-pastoralist livelihood.

During 19 months of ethnographic fieldwork between 2012 and 2015, the author witnessed the outbreak of the violent conflict in Hamär *wäräda*. The ethnographic study focuses on first-generation students from agro-pastoralist households, whose voices are hardly heard in educational and political discourses. In a multi-sited ethnography, the author followed students from rural agro-pastoralist homesteads to schools and student hostels in towns. In this ethnographic study of education in and outside schools, young people do not appear as passive objects over whom the state and parents decide, but they are maneuvering subjects whose lives are interwoven with larger processes that shape them and which they also co-create.

The perspectives of students overcome a distinction which is often drawn in Ethiopia between centre and periphery. Agro-pastoralists in the Omo valley do not exist independently from the Ethiopian state. The boundaries between the two groups are blurred since they are increasingly related through school-educated youths who become government workers and thus intermediaries between their kin and the state. Situated at the interface of power, young people face dilemmas in deciding for or against schooling and its corresponding life paths.

The dissertation traces dilemmas of schooling, in a region in which schooling is not yet the norm but an exception, to reveal its manifold effects on children's lives and on wider society. It conceptualizes dilemmas, a term prominently used as a title of scientific work but hardly defined. Dilemmas are understood as moments in which it is difficult to make a decision because the path of life has reached a crossroads and each of the possible ways comes with challenges. The

concept of dilemma structures the book, which identifies dilemmas in five fields and reflects dilemmas of the research process in times of fieldwork ‘under fire’ in an authoritarian political field.

After an introduction to theory, methodology, and geography, Chapter 2 shows how the implementation of compulsory schooling creates economic dilemmas for the organization of agro-pastoralist households, which are subsistence-oriented. The diversified households depend on young people learning particular skills while living and working with relatives. This way of learning contributes directly to agro-pastoralist households in the present and for the future, while learning in school and hostels in town separates children from their rural living environment. The practice of schooling conflicts with the division of labor, the high labor demand, and the way children learn in agro-pastoralist households, so that the schooling of all children challenges an agro-pastoralist livelihood.

Looking at the practices of schooling, Chapter 3 analyzes the dilemmas of learning in rural schools in Hamär *wäräda*. It discusses the history of schooling in the Omo valley, school’s distinctive space and time compared to its surroundings, the struggles with diverse languages in the classroom, and the mismatch between the national and regional curricula for students growing up in the countryside. Some parents call school ‘empty’, hereby questioning its relevance, while students describe school as ‘try wood’ to express their difficulties of attending and following the classes until graduation and the challenges of competing with students from other zones and regions.

Chapter 4 describes how schools and agro-pastoralist households constitute spaces which set themselves apart from each other. Navigating these different social fields challenges students who are pressured from both sides to integrate well. In town schools, agro-pastoralist students experience discrimination, insecurity, and at times hunger due to a lack of public and familial support for their schooling. By going to school and moving to town, students adopt a costly urban lifestyle which makes them appear like town dwellers from other ethnic groups and distinguishes them from Hamär forms of clothing, hairstyles, jewelry, drinking, and eating habits. The changing lifestyle of students was addressed during the violent conflict by questioning if students are still Hamär or have become *gal*, a Hamär term for people from the ruling elites in the Ethiopian highlands.

The (dis)connections between students and Hamär are violently debated around the age of their expected initiation and marriage. Chapter 5 looks at controversial understandings of ‘harmful’ and ‘rightful’ cultural practices, such as initiation and marriage, and how they conflict with schooling. Some Hamär girls ran away from home and entered a student hostel to go to school in town, thereby evading an arranged marriage. While parents and older brothers want to get these girls out of school to solve disputes between in-laws about bride wealth payments and the continuity of lineages, teachers and government workers try to secure that

the girls remain in school. Students who evade initiation and a Hamär marriage feel pressure from their relatives to follow Hamär customs. These disputes over marriage reveal gendered notions of what constitutes a proper life course, as well as locally and (inter)nationally divergent ideas of a good life. Male and female students encounter different dilemmas, since they cannot satisfy all expectations.

In Chapter 6, disputes over the belonging of children are analyzed, which mirror conflicts and dilemmas of multiple claims to power. Hamär elders and the government demand the right to decide about children's education. These multiple claims to take decisions are locally discussed in kinship terms, in which the fathers of children and the 'father' state both demand the authority to rule over inferiors and make use of physical punishment of misbehaving children and citizens. These disputes demonstrate that the state does not hold a monopoly of power on the frontier and that the political actors do not agree on a hierarchy of power. Instead, a heterarchy of power of political actors exist. Students are caught between these competing claims to power and find themselves in a dilemma because they experience physical force from both sides. This conflict reveals an ongoing process of state making and resistance to it, in which students play an intermediary role.

In the conclusion, the multiple dilemmas of schooling on the frontier of the state and their wider implications for society are summarized. Against the background of high unemployment rates among school-educated youths in urban Ethiopia and in a context of decreasing land for agriculture and pastoralism due to population growth, climate change, and large-scale agriculture, the dissertation reveals the dilemmas behind making a living in rural areas in the context of specific development goals. Schooling appears to be one possible path into the future for some children, but not a sustainable way for every child. The conflict in Hamär *wäräda* raises the question of who has the right to decide about the education of children: is it the government, the parents, or the girls and boys themselves? The decision about children's education in agro-pastoralist households and in government schools shape personal and global processes of transformation.

Dilemmas of schooling apply not only to agro-pastoralists in Ethiopia but help to understand dilemmas of navigating antagonistic life worlds, such as in the situation of ethnic minorities, migrant children, and working class children in national school systems. The dissertation argues for integrating the study of schooling, education, and young people into the study of politics, kinship, and the economy and vice versa to understand how educational decisions are entangled with dilemmas of navigating multiple ways of living into the future. In an afterword, dilemmas of giving practical recommendations for shaping the future of schooling are discussed against the background of the dissertation's findings.