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Review

DIRK BUSTORF, *Lebendige Überlieferung: Geschichte und Erinnerung der muslimischen Silt'e Äthiopiens. With an English Summary*

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Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume

- AE* *Annales d'Éthiopie*, Paris 1955ff.
- ÄthFor* Äthiopistische Forschungen, 1–35, ed. by E. HAMMERSCHMIDT, 36–40, ed. by S. UHLIG, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner (1–34), 1977–1992; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (35–40), 1994–1995.
- AethFor* Aethiopistische Forschungen, 41–73, ed. by S. UHLIG, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998–2011; 74–75, ed. by A. BAUSI and S. UHLIG, *ibid.*, 2011f.; 76ff. ed. by A. BAUSI, *ibid.*, 2012ff.
- AION* *Annali dell'Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"*, Napoli: Università di Napoli "L'Orientale" (former Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli), 1929ff.
- BSOAS* *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London 1917ff.
- CSCO* *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, 1903ff.
- EAE* S. UHLIG (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, I: A–C, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003; II: D–Ha, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005; III: He–N, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007; (in cooperation with A. BAUSI), IV: O–X, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010; A. BAUSI (ed. in cooperation with S. UHLIG), V: Y–Z, *Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014.
- EFAH* Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Orient-Abteilung, Epigraphische Forschungen auf der Arabischen Halbinsel, herausgegeben im Auftrag des Instituts von NORBERT NEBES.
- EMML* Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.
- IJAHS* *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Boston, MA – New York 1968ff.
- JAH* *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge 1960ff.
- JES* *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa 1963ff.
- JSS* *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Manchester 1956ff.
- NEASt* *Northeast African Studies*, East Lansing, MI 1979ff.
- OrChr* *Oriens Christianus*, Leipzig – Roma – Wiesbaden 1901ff.
- OrChrP* *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, Roma 1935ff.
- PICES 15* S. UHLIG – M. BULAKH – D. NOSNITSIN – T. RAVE (eds.) 2005, *Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Hamburg July 20–25, 2003* = *AethFor* 65, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- PICES 16* H. ASPEN – BIRHANU TEFERRA – SHIFERAW BEKELE – S. EGE (eds.) 2010, *Research in Ethiopian Studies: Selected papers of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim July 2007* = *AethFor* 72, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- PO* *Patrologia Orientalis*, 1903ff.
- RIÉ* É. BERNAND – A. J. DREWES – R. SCHNEIDER 1991, *Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite*, I: *Les documents*, II: *Les planches*, Paris: [Académie des inscriptions et belle-lettres] Diffusion de Boccard.
- RSE* *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Roma 1941–1981, Roma – Napoli 1983ff.
- SAe* *Scriptores Aethiopici*.
- ZDMG* *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Leipzig – Wiesbaden – Stuttgart 1847ff.

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DIRK BUSTORF, *Lebendige Überlieferung: Geschichte und Erinnerung der muslimischen Silt'e Äthiopiens. With an English Summary* = Aethiopistische Forschungen 74. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011. xviii, 476 pp., 6 ill., 12 maps. Price: € 78,-. ISBN: 978-3-447-06543-6.

Until recently, the ethnic formation recognized as Səlṭe (Silt'e) today was known as *Səlṭe, Səlṭi, Hadiyya, Adäre, Islam, East Gurage*, both locally and also in the existing literature. Their language was classified as *Eastern Gurage*. Their common name Səlṭe was only officially determined in the 1990s. On the basis of cultural and linguistic similarity, the Səlṭe were long considered as a branch of the Gurage people and their population (about 700,000 in 2007) was separately administered in different zones, e.g. those of Gurage, Hadiyya and Allaaba. When their quest for independence was finally granted in 2001, they were recognized as an independent political entity and granted their own administrative zone.

Bustorf's research enlightens how the Səlṭe perceive themselves today, and how their self-image firmly stands on their contemporary memories of their origin and history: today's "Səlṭe identity" is based on the shared idea of a common historical unity and a uniqueness of the people that is claimed to have existed for a long period of time.

During past regimes, governance in Ethiopia was highly centralised and ethnic, religious and other differences between the various groups were rather downplayed. After the downfall of the socialist *Därg* regime in 1991, Ethiopia had not only been decentralized and reorganized along ethnic, linguistic and historical lines; all ethnic groups regardless of their size were granted equality by the new Ethiopian constitution of 1995. One consequence of the mainly ethnic based federalism has been the re-emergence and creation of ethnic identities: as being acknowledged as a distinctive ethnic group brings advantages in political participation, formerly suppressed or ignored groups have been claiming independent existence. As a result, the official number of ethnic groups in Ethiopia has increased. In the ethnically very diverse Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), for example, the number increased from 45 to 56. The Səlṭe are one of these newly acknowledged ethnic groups. Their case is prominently known in Ethiopia and the story of their successful struggle for administrative independence has been described by different scholars.¹ However, no

¹ See NISHI MAKOTO, "Making and Unmaking of the National-State and Ethnicity in Modern Ethiopia: A Study on the History of the Silte People", in: MASAYOSHI SHIGETA – GEBRE YNTISO (eds.), *African Study Monographs: Supplementary Issue 29*, Kyoto University: Center for African Area Studies, pp. 157–168.

one has studied the contribution of their history and memory to the formation of the Sälte as an independent ethnic group in such detail as Dirk Bustorf.

Bustorf's analysis of Sälte history goes along two lines: on the one hand he was interested in the reconstruction of their history through comparing the content of their own historical knowledge with other historical sources. On the other hand, he looked at the structures of Sälte historical knowledge which were instrumental for creating an ethnic identity.

The book begins with a general introduction of Sälte ethnography and an outline of the author's theoretical orientation. The author draws on the concepts of *historical consciousness* and *social* or *cultural memory* in order to look at Sälte history as a "*construction of meaning by referring to the past* which serves the present and prepares for the future" (p. 460). Specifically, he looks at the variations of historical discourses of different sections or, as he calls it, sub-units of Sälte society and how they have led to a common identity.

Chapters 3 to 7 constitute the core of the book in which Bustorf describes Sälte history. He starts each chapter with a "historical overview" in which he outlines the basic facts of a specific period or on a specific topic, and then continues describing the events from Sälte perspective. He begins with the Sälte legends of origin which describe that in the 16th century the Muslim ancestors of the Sälte migrated from the eastern highlands, crossed the African Rift Valley and finally reached the Gurage Mountains. Bustorf explains that all Sälte claim to have common Arab ancestors even though there exist variations of historical narratives collected from the six different Sälte subgroups of which his informants were aware of. The author could also prove the inconsistencies through an analysis of individual genealogies.

Next, he describes the different migrations within the wider area that took place between the 16th and 18th centuries and became more intense in the 19th century, which was also characterized by many conflicts with neighbouring groups at the same time. In Chapter 5 he discusses the conquest of the South by Emperor Mənilək II which led, on the long run, to a revival and proliferation of Islam, as is demonstrated in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 describes how Sälte land became established within the Ethiopian state and ends with the Italian occupation in 1940. Bustorf leaves out the period between the end of the Italian occupation and the period under the socialist *Därg* regime, arguing that a satisfactory study of this close past would have needed a different methodological approach than he has chosen, e.g. a close look at and an analysis of the written documents of that time as well as a selection of different informants.

Thus the last chapter of the book jumps to the end of the socialist *Därg* regime in 1991. Along with the change in government, began the "Sälte movement", e.g. the time when the Sälte started claiming their independent

ethnic identity. Here, the author analyzes the basic structures of Səlṭe memories and explains, that their memories revolve around specifically remembered personalities identity and historical consciousness.

The book is an impressive work of more than 350 pages text written in German language. Besides the very details descriptions, the book also contains several appendices. These include a glossary (explaining Arabic, Amharic, Oromo, Gurage, Səlṭe and few Hadiyya terms), several graphic charts (demonstrating the social structure of Səlṭe society, their migratory movements and several genealogical clusters of key figures of Səlṭe history), an example of how Bustorf developed local genealogies, as well as nine maps (showing the migratory routes of expanding Səlṭe, locations of settlements and conflict). There is an elaborate index and at the end of the book one finds a well written English summary which makes the results of Bustorf's at least to some extent accessible to non-German readers.

In the introduction it is explained that the data on which the book is based stem from eight months fieldwork among the Səlṭe, and also from results and inspirations of previous visits of the author to the Hadiyya. Bustorf never stayed long in one area, he rather travelled from place to place and collected and compared historical accounts of different knowledgeable Səlṭe elders from different places and villages in Səlṭe land. It was necessary, he explains, to cover all parts of Səlṭe as the knowledge of many informants was limited to their own region or village. This meant that Bustorf had to put together the different fragments of Səlṭe remembered history himself.

The book also has a list of informants which has been included in a section "oral sources and bibliography" (pp. 363–369). Here, the author gives some basic information about the 200 informants that he interviewed. The representation of the informants and the list in the appendix are maybe the only parts of the book where the reader is more confused than enlightened. In the main text, informants are indicated only through an abbreviated code which one can look up in the section called "Interviewpartner". Here one finds information about name, age, and social status of each informant. Besides, the social status of the informants (here called "title" referring to religious or political functions of the informant) is indicated in Səlṭe or other languages, so that the reader has to go to the glossary to find out whether an informant was a religious expert, military leader or local administrator. This makes it very difficult and tedious for the reader to understand the social background of an informant, and thus the context of a given information or narrative. Also, while the author explained his methods and experiences in the field very well, he did not introduce the background of his assistants and translators, though they accompanied him throughout his research and possibly influenced the course of the research.

Reviews

Overall the book is very well readable and an excellent example of how Ethnography and History can be combined. I hope that it will be translated into English in the future to make it accessible to non-German speaking readership as well, especially Ethiopians and most importantly to the Səlṭe themselves. Besides those readers interested in history and identity of the Səlṭe people, the book is generally relevant to scholars interested in the complex processes involved in identity formation – a phenomenon that can be observed in many parts of contemporary Ethiopia.

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SOPHIA THUBAUVILLE, *Die Wandernde ist eine Kuh: Lebenswege von Frauen in Maale, Südäthiopien* = Mainzer Beiträge zur Afrikaforschung 22, Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2010. 233 pp. with b/w photographs. Price: € 36,80. ISBN: 978-3-89645-822-3.

The Maale, as Sophie Thubauville's remarks in her contribution, next to other south Ethiopian ethnic groups, have already been studied by a number of anthropologists. Thubauville, however, chooses a different focus for her research – the life circles and life histories of women in Maale – following the trend that emphasizes gender related subjects in Ethiopian studies.¹

The Introduction gives an overview on former anthropological research and a short historical outline of women and gender studies in Anthropology.

Chapter 2 starts with a personal account on how the author was introduced to the field and got accustomed to Maale culture during her long stays in the field.

It also mentions the methodological approach, which is in line with other researches of the Mainzer anthropological school² and relies on all the basic

¹ Compare other recent examples in the Ethiopian context: e.g. the historical study of MARGAUX HERMAN on Säblä Wängel; E.C. GABBERT with G. BALLO, "How we let go war" on women's role in peacemaking among the Arbore, in: S. EGE – H. ASPEN – BIRHANU TEFERRA – SHIFERAW BEKELE (eds.), *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, II, Trondheim 2009, pp. 323–335 [online version: <http://portal.svt.ntnu.no/sites/ices16/Proceedings/Forms/Allitems.aspx>; last access: 20 March 2014]; see also: Footnote 2.

² Compare S. LATOSKY, *Predicaments of Mursi (Mun) Women in Ethiopia's Changing World* = Mainzer Beiträge zur Afrikaforschung 33, Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2013; T. BRÜDERLIN, *The Incorporation of Children into the Society: Pre- and Postnatal Rituals among the Hamar of Southern Ethiopia* = Arbeitspapiere des Instituts für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien 135, Mainz: Johannes Gutenberg Universität, 2012; E.C. GABBERT – S. THUBAUVILLE (eds.), *To Live with Others: Essays on Cultural*