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# SEEKING OUT WISE OLD MEN

SIX DECADES OF ETHIOPIAN STUDIES  
AT THE FROBENIUS INSTITUTE REVISITED

Reimer

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looking at a publication together with Ethiopian informants (1950–1952),  
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## PREFACE

Karl-Heinz Kohl

The long debate on ethnographic writing that began in American cultural anthropology in the early 1980s was, without any doubt, one of the most important epistemological turns in the recent history of our discipline. It showed that each ethnographic sentence is based on an intensive exchange between the anthropologist and his or her interlocutor; it helped to overcome the naïve idea that human cultures can be described in the same way as scientific experimental set ups; and, last but not least, it sensitized anthropologists to the language they use. But as happens so often with new insights, the critical conclusions drawn from the debate went far beyond its original objective. To many among the younger generations of anthropologists who came into academia after the mid-1990s, most early ethnographic writings seemed to be worthless. Was not their claim to offer an objective picture of reality an illusion? Were they not full of hidden biases and false assumptions? This critical view was widely supported by postcolonial theoreticians who accused anthropology of always having been a servant to Western imperialism and of never having rid itself of its colonial past.

Indeed, a strange feeling does arise when reading some of the older ethnographic writings. Their authors seldom mention the names of the people they worked with and from whom they received their information. Instead, they use collective terms, such as this or that 'tribe', and seem to be convinced that all the 'closed' social groups they studied share the same common 'mentality'. Even if they do offer some warm words for the hospitality, kindness and cooperation of their 'informants', they do not hide their own feelings of superiority toward the people they call 'natives', 'negroes', or even 'primitives'. Yet it would be a mistake to denounce them as racists only because of their use of words that today are socially shunned and banned from our scientific, and even everyday, vocabulary. It is true that one of the most important targets of anthropology has always been the fight against prejudices. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to judge the achievements of the early field researchers only by their violation of our self-imposed rules of political correctness. We have to take them for what they were: children of their time. Even the generation of anthropologists that went to the 'field' in the late 1960s were still shaped by the spirit of the colonial age that was still only just coming to an end. The *zeitgeist* may have influenced the ethnographic data they collected, but it did not diminish their great value as descriptions of the historical ways of life of peoples that had no other means of preserving their own history than oral traditions. Many of them had lived for centuries in a relatively stable situation before and even under

European colonial rule, but that has changed rapidly over the last five decades, under the impact of decolonization, nation building and globalization. So, in spite of all their shortcomings, twentieth century ethnographies are today unique historical sources. As written records, they help the members of the ethnic groups to which they refer to not only reconstruct and revive their cultural traditions, but also to justify their legal claims against the postcolonial states in which they are often small minority communities and against large multinational corporations.

Given the important role published and unpublished ethnographic writings could play in the future, it is a pity that there are only a few places in which they are stored and made accessible to a broader public. In Germany, one of these places is the Frobenius Institute in Frankfurt. Founded by Leo Frobenius in 1898 as the Africa Archive, it contains hundreds of thousands pages of unpublished field notes, manuscripts and letters as well as photographs, drawings and film footage, written and created by members of this anthropological research institute over the last 120 years. Although Frobenius and his successors also carried out ethnographic research projects in South and Southeast Asia, South America, Australia and Melanesia, the institute's activities were focused in Africa, more precisely, in Ethiopia. Convinced of the elective affinities between the German and the Ethiopian Paideuma or 'cultural soul', Frobenius himself had embarked on a secret intelligence mission to Addis Ababa in 1915, where he wanted to meet representatives of the government to persuade them to enter the war on the side of Germany. But his attempt failed and he only reached Eritrea before being forced to return home by the Italian colonial administration. Consequently, the first scientific expedition to Ethiopia was organized in 1935 by Adolf Ellegard Jensen, who became director of the institute in 1946. Two further expeditions to southern Ethiopia followed in 1950/2 and 1954/5. Jensen died in 1965, and after a two-year intermission, his pupil Eike Haberland became director of the institute, where he remained until 1992. Haberland had accompanied Jensen on his postwar expeditions to southern Ethiopia and, under his direction, Ethiopia continued to be one of the most important focuses of the institute's research activities. After a break of almost twenty years in which West Africa, Indonesia and Melanesia had become the preferred destinations for ethnographic fieldwork projects, scientific interest in south Ethiopia was renewed when Sophia Thubauville joined the Frobenius Institute in 2010. Under the supervision of Ivo Strecker, one of the doyens of contemporary Ethiopian studies in Germany, Thubauville had done intensive ethnographic fieldwork among the Maale in southern Ethiopia and became co-director of the South Omo Research Center in 2009. As a member of the Frobenius Institute's scientific staff, she has invited Ethiopian scholars to Frankfurt, entered cooperation agreements with them, organized conferences and workshops in both Germany and Ethiopia, and initiated new research projects.

One of these projects, which the German Research Foundation (DFG) has funded since 2014, is dedicated to the historical contributions to Ethiopian studies made by the members of the Frobenius Institute. Its first and most important aim has been to dig-

italize the huge corpus of material stored in the institute's archives. By translating the texts and feeding them, along with the other research material, into a database, we hope to make them accessible not only to an international scientific audience but also to the offspring of the peoples and cultures from which they stemmed. But, as already stated, much of what was written down in a span of more than hundred years, today risks being misunderstood or seen as offensive. Although anthropologists of the discipline's classic epoch of empirical fieldwork wanted always to be as objective as possible, they were anything else but data-creating recording machines. On the contrary, they were always involved in interactions with their 'native informants', had feelings of sympathy and antipathy, led 'shadow dialogues' (Vincent Crapanzano) with their absent colleagues and wanted to prove or contest something. They were often stressed by the physical conditions of a hot and unfamiliar climate and missed the benefits and comforts of modern urban life. For a full and fair understanding of the unfiltered and often very private texts of the field researchers, it is necessary to put them into the context from which they emanated. This volume aims to provide some of that context and is, as such, an important addition to the planned ethnographic database.

On the one side, it contains articles from leading scholars in the field who give a critical evaluation of the Frobenius Institute's contribution to south Ethiopian studies. On the other side, members of the institute try to reconstruct the particular conditions in Germany and in Ethiopia under which the rich ethnographic corpus came into being. Together, they build the methodological, theoretical and historical background for three Ethiopian scholars' interpretations of the cultural past of their own country as seen through the eyes of foreign observers. This last part is perhaps the most important because it shows how the data collected by the members of the Frobenius Institute can still be used today.

Our thanks go to the German Research Foundation and its anonymous reviewers, who have enabled us to realize the digitalization project as well as the lecture series on which this book is based; to our American, Dutch, Ethiopian, German and Japanese colleagues for their precious contributions; and especially to Sophia Thubauville, Sabine Dinslage and Kim Glück for their hard work and tremendous commitment.

INTRODUCTION  
Six decades of Ethiopian Studies at the Frobenius Institute  
Reconstructing Ethiopia's past

Sophia Thubauville

*LEO FROBENIUS AND ETHIOPIA*

The Frobenius Institute's lasting focus on Ethiopian Studies was initiated by its founder Leo Frobenius,<sup>1</sup> long before he even moved his institute to its current location in Frankfurt am Main. While his institute was still located in Berlin in 1914, Frobenius – a well-known expert on Africa as well as a patriot and close friend of Emperor Wilhelm II – went to northeast Africa to initiate a revolt against the British in Sudan, although officially the trip was declared the seventh *Deutsche Inner-Afrikanische Forschungs-Expedition* (German Inner African Research Expedition). Frobenius was meant to cross the Red Sea to Eritrea, from where he would reach the Sudan via Ethiopia. The German legation in Ethiopia had been isolated and Frobenius was supposed to act as a messenger for them. However, Frobenius' somewhat eccentric personality made it impossible for him to travel incognito; his presence was uncovered by the Italians in Eritrea and he was sent back to Europe (Braukämper 1994). For a short time, he was able to visit Eritrea's Hamasen region – where he took photographs and drew sketches of rock art (Thubauville 2014) – but he reached neither Ethiopia nor his final destination, Sudan.

From 1920 to 1925 Frobenius and his institute – then called *Forschungsinstitut für Kulturmorphologie* (Cultural Morphological Research Institute) – were based in Munich. The Austrian researcher Friedrich Julius Bieber (see Bieber 2014) – who had already made a name for himself as a leading scholar in Ethiopian Studies with a travelogue and a two-volume ethnography of the Kaffa – became a corresponding member of the institute. Together with Frobenius he published *Zur Herrlichkeit des Sudans* (Concerning the glory of Sudan), the edited travel report of a fellow Austrian, Eduard Freiherr von Gallot, who had travelled through Ethiopia in 1831. With the knowledge gleaned from his own trips to Ethiopia (1904, 1905 and 1909), Bieber added an introduction as well as a summary with an update on the political situation to Gallot's report

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1 Frobenius never managed to visit Ethiopia himself. However, in some of his publications, especially the 1913 publication *Unter den sträflischen Äthiopen*, he uses the term 'Äthiopen' – which is similar to the German word for Ethiopians 'Äthiopier' – not for Ethiopians, but to describe the opposite of Hamitic people. According to his theory, the 'Äthiopen' and Hamitic people represented the two primary cultures and the main differences between them could be traced back, according to Frobenius, to psychological, cultural and emotional characteristics (Frobenius 1913).

(Frobenius and Bieber 1923). The two scholars had planned to begin an expedition to the Sudan in 1924, but unfortunately Bieber died that same year.<sup>2</sup>

*SEARCHING FOR PREHISTORIC STELE – HOW IT ALL STARTED*

In 1925 Frobenius, his institute and his assistant Adolf Ellegard Jensen, moved to Frankfurt am Main. In 1932 Frobenius was appointed Honorary Professor of *Kultur- und Völkerkunde* at Frankfurt University and in 1934 he was additionally engaged as director of the *Völkermuseum* in Frankfurt. By then Frobenius was 61 years old and the institute was ready for a generational transfer. Jensen had won Frobenius' trust in the course of two expeditions to South Africa and Libya, so Frobenius decided to hand over the directorship of the expedition to Ethiopia to him. The first of the institute's research missions to Ethiopia was to be the last *Deutsche Inner-Afrikanische Forschungs-Expeditionen* (DIAFE, German Inner African Research Expeditions) and the first in which Frobenius himself did not participate. Instead, Jensen was accompanied by the secondary school teacher Hellmut Wohlenberg, the artist Alf Bayrle, and Helmut von den Steinen. The team left Frankfurt in October 1934 and returned in May 1935.

As the institute's focus covered not only on ethnography but also on prehistory, the team of researchers were heavily inspired by François Azaïs and Roger Chambard's descriptions of the large number of monoliths to be found in southern Ethiopia (Azaïs and Chambard 1931) in their choice of destination.<sup>3</sup> The south of Ethiopia was still a *terra incognita* at that time and Jensen writes that it was difficult, even in Addis Ababa, to get any valid information on the existence and state of roads in the south of the country (Jensen 1936).

Von den Steinen was only loosely connected to the rest of the team, so he went directly to the Amhara region in the north of Ethiopia. Even though the publication of his findings was announced (Frobenius 1936:X), it was never realised.<sup>4</sup> The rest of the team travelled and worked together. Stirred by the French researchers' discovery of prehistoric stele, they seemed to have been preoccupied with the thought of similar discoveries as they travelled south along the lakes of the Rift Valley. On a small hill, Tutto Fela, in the Gedeo area, they finally found what they were searching for (Thubauville 2012a, 2012b). The southernmost point they reached was Konso. There, Jensen did pioneering research on the *gada* system and *waka* (wooden memorial stele), Wohlenberg concentrated on the recording of oral traditions and Bayrle undertook an

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2 Frobenius then postponed his Sudan expedition to the year 1926.

3 Azaïs was a French missionary and archeologist. He was accompanied by the young linguist Chambard during his five-year-long (1921–26) comprehensive ethnographic and pre-historic study in eastern and southern Ethiopia.

4 The whereabouts of his notes or manuscript is not known. The photographs taken during his research trip are archived in the photo archive of the Frobenius Institute.

extensive documentation, in the form of photographs and sketches, of the wooden stele of the Konso. Within a year after their return to Frankfurt in 1935, Jensen had already managed to publish their findings in the voluminous monograph *Im Lande des Gada* (In the land of Gada).

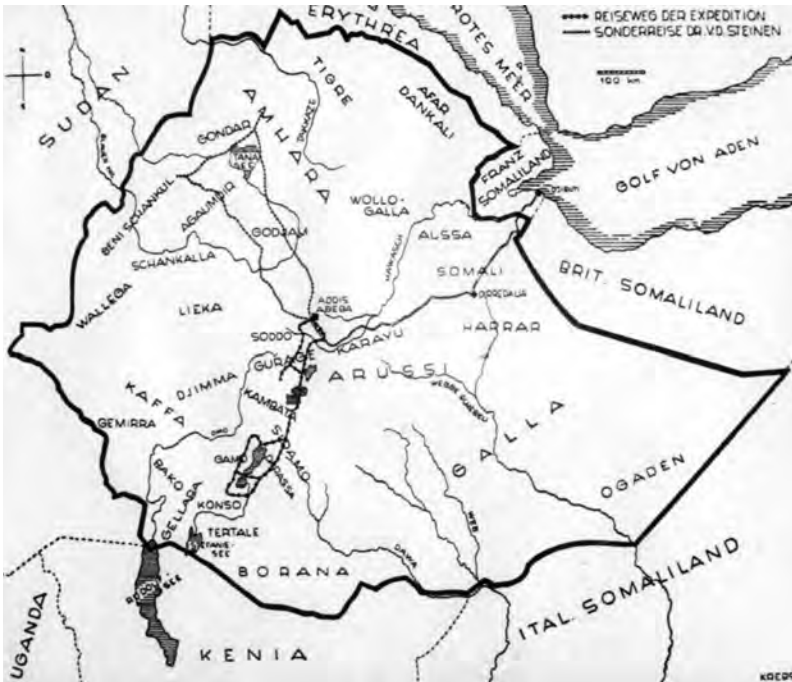


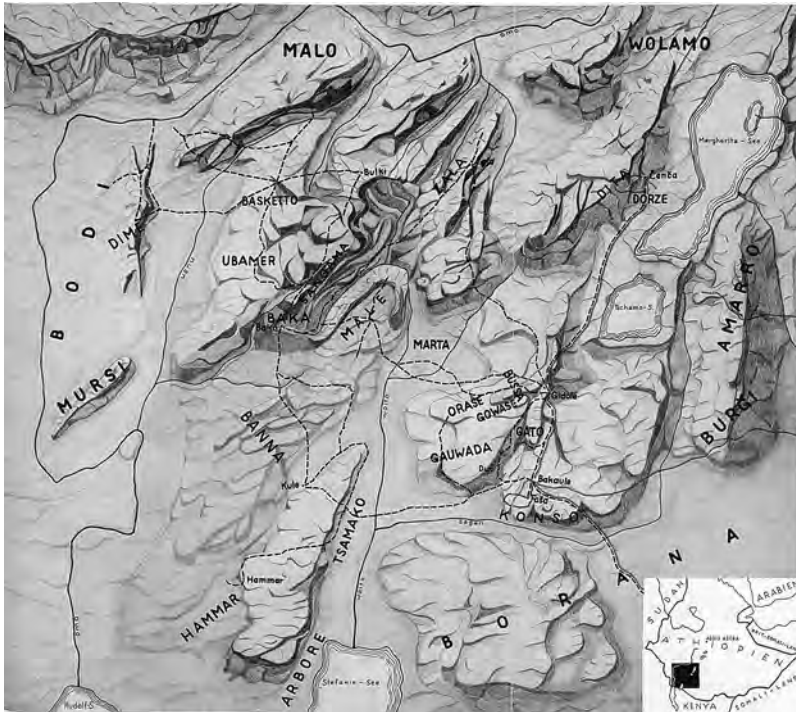
Fig. 1: Map of the 1934–1935 expedition

The years that followed – before and during World War II – were difficult ones in many ways. Jensen’s second wife was of Jewish origin and this led to losing his *venia legendi*, the permit to lecture at the university. Furthermore, he could not be appointed as the new director of Frobenius’ institute after Frobenius’ death in 1938. Finally, Jensen had to join the war.

During World War II, when all the male researchers had been recruited as soldiers, the female members of the institute were very successful in keeping some activities going and rescuing the institute and its collections (Beer 2006). One of them was Elisabeth Pauli, a trained painter who had joined the institute in 1933 and participated in several expeditions to copy rock art. With time, Pauli became interested in ethnography herself, and she and another female institute member, Agnes Schulz, spent the war preparing literature reviews on the peoples of southern Ethiopia (Pauli 1944, 1950; Schulz 1941/43). Their work and publications lay the foundations for the institute’s post-war expeditions.

*BECOMING A HUB FOR ETHIOPIAN STUDIES*

Directly after World War II ended, Jensen returned from the front. In 1946 he became the new director of the institute, which he renamed after its founder, Frobenius. Jensen and Pauli – who would eventually marry – soon began to prepare the next expedition to south Ethiopia. In 1950 two young research assistants, Eike Haberland and Willy Schulz-Weidner, joined the institute and the expedition. Both of them had just earned their PhDs in anthropology: Schulz-Weidner from the University of Mainz and Haberland, as a student of Jensen, from Frankfurt. The four team members left Frankfurt in September 1950 and were the first German social anthropologists to go on expedition after World War II. Although they planned to travel as far south as Chew Bahir and the Dassanach people in Ethiopia, logistical problems, especially the shortage of mules, prevented them from reaching further south than the Hamar Mountains.



----- Reiseroute 1950-1952      ————— Reiseroute 1954-1956

Fig. 2: Map of the 1950-1952 and 1954-1955 expeditions

Once they had reached the south of the country, the research team split up to study as many ethnic groups as possible. Mostly, they spent only a few weeks in one place. Although Haberland was the last to return home from the expedition (in July 1952), having spent many months among the Borana. In Summer 1952, Jensen and Pauli got married. Brought together by their passion for Ethiopia, Jensen, Pauli and Haberland seem to have formed a harmonious team for expeditions. While Jensen and Pauli especially appreciated the character and culture of the Konso,<sup>5</sup> Haberland seemed to have a special attachment to the Wolayta, who he admired throughout his unpublished manuscript (see Barata this volume).



Fig. 3: Haberland, Jensen, Pauli (from left to right) and Schulz-Weidner (from back) at their camp in Maale

The three researchers also formed the core of the next research undertaking to south Ethiopia, which left in 1954. The young social anthropologist Helmut Straube and the cultural geographer Helmut Kuls joined the endeavour. Haberland wanted to clarify some data he had collected among the Borana, Jensen and Pauli did their main research among the Sidama, and Straube concentrated on the ethnography of the Western Cush-

5 In the travel report of the 1950–1952 expedition (archive of the Frobenius Institute, register number EH 41) Pauli writes for example that after a long and tedious journey the “association of Konso friends” had reached the “promised land.”



itic people, namely the Sheko, Amaro, Gamo, Dorse, Otchollo, Boroda, Dita, Zala, and Janjero (or Yem).

The major outcomes of these two expeditions in the 1950s were three large ethnographies, all of which shared a similar style and structure while dealing with different peoples: Jensen's *Altvölker Süd-Äthiopiens* (1959), Straube's *Westkuschitische Völker Süd-Äthiopiens* (1963), and Haberland's *Galla Süd-Äthiopiens* (1963). Like a major survey, they provided, above all, a short overview of the social organization, religious life, life cycle, material culture, and oral history of the studied peoples. The appendices of the ethnographies contained drawings of material culture as well as a good number of photographs. Material for several other ethnographies – especially a second one on the Konso, one on Sidama, one on Wolayta and one on Gedeo – was also collected by the researchers, but for different reasons the ethnographies remained unpublished and their existence widely unknown (see Kansite, Barata, Ambaye, and Getachew this volume).

Jensen, who had been the main initiator of the research focus on southern Ethiopia at the Frobenius Institute, died in 1965. His disciple Haberland became the new director in 1968. He continued the focus on Ethiopian Studies and initiated three more research expeditions to southern Ethiopia: in 1967 Haberland went alone to study the history and political organization of the Wolayta; in 1970–1971 he went to study the history of the Hadiya, Dauro and Gofa along with three other institute members – Ulrich Braukämper, Siegfried Seyfarth and Karl Heinz Striedter; and finally from 1972 to 1974 Haberland, Braukämper, Seyfarth and the doctoral student Werner Lange, conducted studies among the Hadiya, Sidama, Oromo, Gamo, Gofa, Gongga and Dizi.

While the earlier expeditions of the 1930s and 1950s had been organized as group undertakings with common research interests and rules the participants had to adhere to,<sup>6</sup> from the 1960s onwards – even if several people travelled together – the research projects were more individual and driven by specific research interests. This was due, on the one hand, to changing discourses in social anthropology, but on the other, to changes in the financing of research trips. Beginning in the 1960s, research trips to Ethiopia were mainly funded by travel funds for individual research projects (see Braukämper this volume). Though the research in Ethiopian Studies undertaken by members of the Frobenius Institute has often been criticized for its lack of theory (see Abbink this volume), their expeditions and subsequent publications were defined by research interests in: cultural history (see Abbink and Barata this volume; Bustorf 2014), prehistory (see Kuba this volume; Thubauville 2012a and 2012b), the meritorious complex (Braukämper 2014), social stratification (see Epple and Kansite this volume), and the history of south Ethiopian kingships (see Barata this volume; Haberland 1965).

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6 A formulation of the rules for the expedition 1954–55 by Jensen can be found in the institute's archives (register number AEJ 41). It concerns amongst others the expected working hours, ownership rights, and required publications in the institute's name.

*YEARS OF ISOLATION*

Continuous contact with Emperor Haile Selassie had smoothed the way for the research activities of Jensen, Haberland and the other institute members in the south of the country. They regularly met the ruler after arriving in the country and his letters of recommendation guaranteed them the constant help of the administration and police forces in the south. In this way, the researchers were helped with building or renting houses, purchasing food and pack animals, and finding 'knowledgeable elders' or translators of local languages. The most obvious sign of the close and friendly relationship between Haile Selassie and the researchers was the fact that Haberland was awarded of the Haile Selassie Prize for Ethiopian Studies in 1971.



Fig. 4: Haile Selassie and Haberland during the ceremony following the award of the Haile Selassie Prize for Ethiopian Studies

However, after Haile Selassie's overthrow and the advent of the socialist regime in 1974, active research by the Frobenius Institute in Ethiopia came to an end since only a few researchers were able to work inside the country during that time (see Braukämper and Lewis in this volume).

Yet, Haberland continued to focus on Ethiopian Studies. He still had a lot of unpublished material from his former research trips and his publications on Ethiopia after 1974 were as numerous as those from his years of active research (see bibliography at the end of the publication). His last book – on social stratification among the Dizi – kept him busy until the very end of his career and finally had to be published posthumously (Haberland 1993).

During the socialist regime Haberland supervised two Ethiopian PhD students – Asfa-Wossen Asserate and Negasso Gidada – in Frankfurt, both of whom later on became important personalities in Ethiopian politics and in Ethiopian Studies in Germany. Asfa-Wossen Asserate, a grand-nephew of Haile Selassie, was already enrolled as Haberland's PhD student when his father was executed during the socialist revolution. After earning his PhD, he stayed in Germany and became a well-known writer (see short biography and bibliography at the end of the publication). Through his books, he greatly influenced the German image of, and knowledge about, Ethiopia. In the 1990s, he founded a scientific association in Germany – *Orbis Aethiopicus* – that focused on Ethiopian Studies and that continues to meet annually. Negasso Gidada came to Germany in 1974. While studying for his PhD, he held different offices within European Oromo associations and the Oromo Liberation Front in Europe. He returned to Ethiopia directly after the fall of the socialist regime and went on to become Ethiopia's first democratically elected president.

The second institute member who continued to be very active in Ethiopian Studies during the socialist regime was Braukämper. Although he was unable to carry out research inside Ethiopia in that period, he became actively involved in assisting Ethiopian refugees in Germany and Ethiopia's neighbouring countries like Sudan and Somalia. Unfortunately, these activities were not appreciated or supported by his boss, Haberland (see Braukämper this volume).

With the death of Haberland in 1992 and Braukämper's move to Göttingen, where he became professor in 1994, the Frobenius Institute's focus on Ethiopian Studies temporarily came to an end.

#### LEGACIES OF SIX DECADES

Sixty years of research involving eleven people<sup>7</sup> and six long-term research expeditions to Ethiopia, have left a big imprint in the archives of the Frobenius Institute. The scientific legacies of Jensen and Haberland stored in the institute's archive include various written documents, such as diaries and notebooks, travel reports, letters from, within and to the field, scripts for lectures, hand-drawn maps and even several unpublished

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7 For more information on the institute members who participated in these expeditions and their publications, see the list of short biographies and the bibliography at the end of this publication.

manuscripts of ethnographies. The institute also has a special administrative archive, which provides an insight into the financing of the expeditions to Ethiopia (see Dinslage this volume), but also into the scientific contacts of the researchers. Thanks to the example of Frobenius himself, after his death the institute also put a great deal of effort into the visual documentation and collection of material culture. Today more than 20,000 photographs and sketches, 83 film reels (see Thubauville, this volume) and around 1,200 ethnographic objects (see Glück, this volume) taken and collected from Ethiopia, can be found in the archives. While nearly all the research outcomes were pioneering works since not much ethnographic research had been done before in southern Ethiopia, the comprehensive visual documentation of southern Ethiopia between 1934 and 1974 is particularly extraordinary.

Since September 2014 the “Indexing and digitizing of the archival material on Ethiopian Studies of the Frobenius Institute” project, financed by the German Research Foundation, has been indexing and sustainably archiving all of the above-mentioned material concerning Ethiopian Studies from the legacies of the Frobenius Institute. The aim of the project is to facilitate public access to these documents through an open-access database. Until now the material has been virtually inaccessible and only available in German. By digitizing it and feeding it into a German and English language database, the material will be accessible to an international audience for the first time.

As some of the methodological and theoretical parameters under which the researchers worked back then are obsolete and controversial today, the publishing of the data must be accompanied by a critical discussion. Therefore, dialogue with Ethiopian colleagues has been a central element since its beginning of the project. Several colleagues have been invited to review material from an Ethiopian perspective: Kansite Gellebo from Arba Minch University in August/September 2015; Getachew Senishaw from Addis Ababa University in November 2015; Ambaye Ogato from the Max-Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle in May 2016; and Data Dea Barata from Sacramento State University in October 2016. Their help in translating and discussing the unpublished manuscripts of Jensen and Haberland has been invaluable and their reviews form part of this publication. Cooperation and dialogue with them, and other Ethiopian colleagues, continues.

Furthermore, the lecture series *Frankfurter Äthiopienstudien: Eine Retrospektive* (“Ethiopian Studies at Frankfurt: A Retrospective”) took place in Summer term 2016. The aim of the lectures was to critically discuss the published and unpublished work on Ethiopian Studies in the Frobenius Institute with leading international researchers (Herbert Lewis, Asfa-Wossen Assefate, Dirk Bustorf, Susanne Epple, Jon Abbink, Ulrich Braukämper, Ivo Strecker, Itsushi Kawase). Most of their presentations, which discuss important methodological and theoretical problems around the contributions of Frobenius Institute researchers to the study of southern Ethiopia, are presented here as articles.

*STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK – A CRITICAL DISCUSSION*

Today, the documentation of Ethiopia's south by the Frobenius Institute is not only of ethnographic but also of historical interest. It took place before Protestant missions converted the local population successfully and in large numbers and before the socialist revolution. Both factors later led to radical cultural and social change among the peoples of Ethiopia. While the focus on Ethiopian Studies at the Frobenius Institute ended with the death of Haberland and departure of Braukämper, it was continued by Braukämper in Göttingen and Straube in Munich, both of whom had been initiated into the subject at the Frobenius Institute. Therefore, the influence of the Frobenius research tradition influenced Ethiopian Studies in Germany even after the 1990s.

Individuals such as Jensen, and research in Germany in general, certainly faced substantial difficulties before, during, and even after World War II, but one can see from the archival material that the Institute's scientists remained in contact with international colleagues, had access to international publications, and participated in international conferences. Given this, it is perhaps surprising that the Frobenius scholars at that time held on to the Institute's very distinct methodology and theory, which – from today's critical perspective – was inadequate. While participant observation has been a defining part of anthropological fieldwork since Malinowski (1922), the members of the Frobenius Institute continued their survey-like research style in groups of several researchers. Staying in places for only short periods of a few weeks or months did not allow the Frobenius researchers to learn local languages to a conversationally level. Their obsession with cultural history made them spent most of their time and effort on recording oral histories from male elders, who often had high ritual and/or political positions. In trying to reconstruct south Ethiopia's past, the earlier Frobenius researchers often forgot to describe its present.

The following publication – which is divided into three parts – aims to show in more detail the merits but also the problems of the material produced on Ethiopian Studies by the Frobenius Institute. All articles have been produced through and benefited from the dialogue which has been made possible by the German Research Foundation's funding of the project "Indexing and digitizing of the archival material on Ethiopian Studies of the Frobenius Institute" since September 2014.

The first part of this volume deals with research in Ethiopian Studies and the political environment in which it was carried out during the time of the last three governments in Ethiopia. Herbert Lewis gives a participant's view – having been a contemporary witness of Haberland's engagement in Ethiopian Studies and carrying out research himself during all three governments – of six decades of Ethiopian Studies and its institutional development and preferred topics. Asfa-Wossen Assefate gives an insight into the idea of modernity that influenced Haile Selassie's rule. His descriptions are important to our understanding of the circumstances under which most field research by Frobenius Institute members took place. Ulrich Braukämper discusses the questions

of ethnicity that have interested, but also troubled, researchers in Ethiopia even before ethnicity became the organizing principle of the Ethiopian state in 1991. The first part closes with an overview of the ethnographic films that have been produced in Ethiopia. Itsushi Kawase, himself one of the most active ethnographic filmmakers in Ethiopia, starts his outline with the pioneering films of the Frobenius Institute and ends with more recent and experimental films.

The second part concentrates more on the research that was done directly by members of the Frobenius Institute. The first three articles deal with the topics on which the researchers focussed. A very prominent topic – and the theme of two contributions – is social segregation and division. Susanne Epple looks into the published and unpublished material of Frobenius Institute researchers on artisans, hunters and slave descendants and asks whether social boundaries are now more permeable than they were when they were first described. Kansite Gellebo focuses on the special case of the Konso and on the peculiar ways in which the status of marginalized people has been transformed there in recent times. Another topic that has been central to research at the Frobenius Institute for a long time is the study of rock art. Richard Kuba explains the findings of Frobenius Institute members concerning several rock art sites in Ethiopia.

After giving these short insights into the themes covered by the researchers of the Frobenius Institute, the second part continues with a critical discussion of their approaches and methodology. Dirk Bustorf starts with the very central issue of informants. He shows the evident lopsidedness in terms of gender and status in the researchers' selection of informants. Jon Abbink's article on Haberland's Rankean approach illustrates how Haberland's focus on reconstructing history determined his research, but unfortunately also limited his possible findings as well as the information that can be found today in his unpublished material.

The third and last part concentrates on raising awareness of the unpublished archival material that is left today from these six decades of research in Ethiopia. Sabine Dinslage shows what can be learned from the institute's administrative archive about the financing of the first expeditions to Ethiopia. Kim Glück concentrates on the collecting activities of the researchers and tries to reconstruct what happened to the ethnographic objects that were collected in Ethiopia. With the help of archival documents, Sophia Thubauville reconstructs the filming activities of the researchers during the two expeditions in the 1950s. The volume continues with reviews of three unpublished manuscripts by anthropologists of Ethiopian origin. Data Dea Barata starts with an analysis of the 'youngest' manuscript in the archive, Haberland's ethnography of the Wolayta. Ambaye Ogato then comments on the Sidama manuscript written by Jensen, Straube and Pauli. Finally, Getachew Senishaw contributes a review on Jensen's manuscript on the Gedeo.

All this work is the outcome of critical discussion of the documents on Ethiopian Studies at the Frobenius Institute. Yet the material we talk about is so unique and voluminous that it would be impossible to provide a complete overview and discussion in just one book. So this publication is just the beginning of a dialogue that I look forward to continuing.

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#### LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1: Map of the 1934–1935 expedition, register no. FoK042-000b © Frobenius Institute

Fig. 2: Map of the 1950–1952 and 1954–1955 expeditions, Jensen 1959, appendix, map 1

Fig. 3: Haberland, Jensen, Pauli (from left to right) and Schulz-Weidner (from back) at their camp in Maale, register no. FoA-23-Ha039-03 © Frobenius Institute

Fig. 4: Haile Selassie and Haberland during the ceremony following the award of the Haile Selassie Prize for Ethiopian Studies © Frobenius Institute