

NEWS FROM SOUTH OMO RESEARCH CENTER AND MUSEUM

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A story from Maale

Once there was a husband and a wife. Always when they talked about work, the wife said: "In this house there is no food, but only work!" Then the husband slaughtered a sheep. When he cut the meat, he cut the hand of his wife intentionally. After some while, she started again to complain about her work and the lack of food. Then her clever husband asked her: "When did you get that wound on your hand?" The wife remembered how she obtained the wound, felt ashamed and went back into the house. Her husband said: "You can't be satisfied every day, sometimes there is also hunger!"

SORC NEWS

New Supportive Partners and Directors of SORC

Until December 2008 the South Omo Research Center (SORC) had been financially supported by the special research project 295 of the University Mainz, Germany. Before that project ended, Prof. Günther Schlee from the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Germany) and Prof. Masayoshi Shigeta from the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies in Kyoto (Japan) assured the members at the third Management Board meeting of SORC that they would jointly take over the financial support of SORC, and also contribute to the academic life of the research center in the future. It has now been half a year since the two institutions have taken over the support of

SORC. Currently Shinichiro Hisada (ASAFAS, Kyoto) and Sophia Thubauville (MPI, Halle) are co-directing the center. Apart from them and their research activities, many researchers from other nations have joined them in using the South Omo Research Center as a field base and a place of academic exchange.



Sophia Thubauville and Shinichiro Hisada in front of SORC

Handing Over Ceremony at SORC

On January 9th, 2009 the SORC directorship was handed over from Prof. Ivo Strecker to Mr. Hisada, a Japanese researcher at SORC. Among those in attendance were Dr. GebreYntiso (AAU), Negatu Densa (Chief Administrator of South Omo), Dagne Gebre (Bureau of Information and Culture, Jinka), David Turton (British Anthropologist), Jean Lydall (Former Assistant Director of SORC), Monika Sommer (German visiting scholar at SORC) and local elders and women. Choke Bajje from Hamar opened the session at 4:30pm with a blessing. Dr. Gebre Yntiso then spoke of the history of SORC and thanked Ivo Strecker for founding and developing this research center. Next, Ato Negatu Densa also warmly thanked Ivo and promised to give strong support for SORC in the future. Ivo then welcomed Hisada (Incoming Acting Director) by handing him the ritual staff, which he himself had often used before as an emblem of SORC. He explained that this staff with a hook at one end and a fork at the other end was already known in Ancient Egypt and today is still used in South Omo by the Arbore, the Hamar

and others. The staff allows the handling of thorny bushes to make fences for the herds.



was (Ancient Egypt), sbonkor (Arbore), woko (Hamar)

But this practical purpose is also extended to the realm of ritual where the fork of the staff is used to ward off what is unwanted (disease, drought, war) and the hook is used to draw close what is wanted (health, abundance, peace). Hisada should use the hooked end of the staff, Ivo said, to attract large funds and many scholars to the center, and with the forked side he should keep away poverty, thieves and liars. After the speeches followed by a tour of the property, and the ceremony ended at 7pm.

HAMAR PROVERBS:

**GUNI HADAN GA'ANA
DAKENKOGOBADI!**

IF A SNAKE HAS BIT YOU,
THEN YOU RUN FROM A
ROPE.
IN OTHER WORDS, EVERY-
ONE MAKES MISTAKES,
BUT YOU MUST TAKE CARE
NOT TO REPEAT THE SAME
MISTAKES OVER AND
OVER.

**KUFISSA RATSIDAN
KUTSUBO LALADE KODDE**

PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO
CATTLE, THEY WANT TO
DRINK MILK, BUT THE
FLIES WILL OVERTURN
THE MILK.
THIS MEANS THAT IF YOU
DON'T HAVE CATTLE, YOU
WILL ALWAYS BE LOOK-
ING FOR OTHER PEOPLE'S
CATTLE, SO YOU WILL AL-
WAYS BE DEPENDENT ON
THE RICH PEOPLE. THIS
KIND OF PERSON IS UN-
DERMINED, AND LOOKED
DOWN UPON IN THE COM-
MUNITY, TO THE EXTENT
THAT FLIES ARE SAID TO
HAVE MORE POWER THAN
THIS PERSON.

Kids' Corner

Toala is a special kind of stone which represents cattle in Hamar culture. Children use these stones to differentiate the different colors of the cattle and goats. Children collect them and keep them behind a stone fence, just like with real animals. Through playing with these stones, the children learn the different colors used in classifying cattle in Hamar, and how to look after cattle. When the children grow up they then begin to look after the real animals instead.

Forthcoming Publication: To Live with Others

Essays on Cultural Neighborhood in Southern Ethiopia
Edited by Christina Gabbert & Sophia Thubauville, Köppe Verlag, 2009

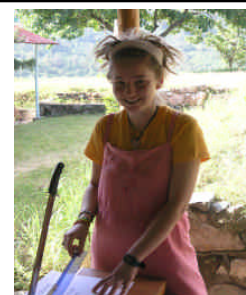
Cultural contacts are experienced through cultural and local closeness. This chronological and geographic dimension is the topic of the contributions of the volume "To live with others." The role of the neighbor is shown in its full ambivalence in case studies from Southern Ethiopia. Neighborhood is characterized both by peace and violence; the neighbor can be a friend and assistant, as well as an envious person and enemy. The close relations that originate from neighborhood can be cultivated by means of meeting or by avoidance. Peace and conflict both are seen as forms of intensified cultural contact. In any case cultural neighbors are interested in creating behavioral codes, so that

the lines between friends and enemies become clear and as such can serve as a basis for neighborly communication. A special form of contact is the establishment of alliances. Alliances as strategic elements, are applied to increase the web of affiliations, the basis for action. They touch as diverging cultural traits as kinship, economy, religion and politics. In southern Ethiopia neighborhood finds expression in institutions like exchange marriages, bond friendship, intercultural adoption and the meritorious complex. The creative and divergent ways of dealing with cultural neighbors are described in the forthcoming publication.

New Intern at SORC

Sue Cairnie is our newest intern, who comes from Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, Canada. She arrived on June 6th and will spend 5 weeks at SORC. She is doing her undergraduate degree in sociology and political science, and

is excited for the opportunity to learn more about anthropology and the people of South Omo. She is doing her internship in the museum, which includes re-organizing the library and display cases.



In Search of a Logo

The South Omo Research Center began a logo contest in June which ran for three weeks. Participants of Jinka town and the surrounding areas were asked to hand in suggestions for a logo which contains the letters SORC and some cultural item that represents the ethnic groups of South Omo. By July 3rd 40 participants had handed in suggestions. As two thirds of them had suggested using a headrest to represent the cultures of South Omo, the logo committee decided that this was a clear indication that the headrest should be part of the logo. The winners of the contest were Alemayu Salato, who combined the contours of Ethiopia and South Omo with a headrest, and Ibeno Tesfay, who drew a logo that included a headrest and the colors of the flag of the South Omo Zone. The third winner, Wegderes, handed in an imaginative logo that included many material objects used by the people of South Omo. A special mention went to Helene Grenzabach, a volunteer of the local NGO AEPDA. Her logo idea, which is a grass house surrounded by people, goats, cows, a headrest and a calabash, will be included in the future letter head of SORC.

The winners of the contest were announced on Sunday, June 5th during a coffee ceremony at SORC. The South Omo Zone Amateur Journalists arranged the ceremony's program and did a drama performance. The logo ideas of the winners will now be handed over to a professional media designer in Addis Ababa.



Logo idea of Ibeno Tesfay

CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

Ethnoarchaeology in Hamar

Jérôme Dubosson

In 2005 I discovered the Hamar agro-pastoral Way of life, thanks to a joint project with the SORC and the SWISS KERMA MISSION in Sudan, directed by Prof. Matthieu Honegger. At that time, my masters' research focused on the symbolic and aesthetic aspect of cattle, in particular the meaning of the deformation of cattle horns, which is practiced by different ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia, whose oldest archaeological remains date from the middle of the third millennium BC in Sudan. A this initial research in Hamar allows me to widen the interpretative horizon in archaeology, I decided to come back this year in order to engage in a new collaboration with the SORC. By sharing the life of my Hamar friends, and their joy and their pain, I hope to understand more deeply what it means to be a cattle keeper today. This experience will be useful in my new research on the benefits and



Jérôme in the field

the limits of anthropology in the construction of an archaeological discourse about pastoral societies. Indeed, most models and theories in prehistory used ethnographic data from "key" pastoral tribes, thus strengthening the diffusion of clichés, myths and prejudices. The choice of Hamar society, which is still little known, will bring original information and contribute to a critical approach of pastoralism.

Male Forms of Cooperation in Nyangatom

Luke Glowacki

As a first year PhD student at Harvard University, I will be conducting a summer pilot project among the Nyangatom. The Nyangatom are agro-pastoralists who live west of the Omo Valley from Ethiopia to Sudan bordered by the Mursi to the north and the Kara and Hamar to the east.



Luke during his first days at SORC

The focus of this summer project is to begin language training in Nyangatom in preparation for a long-term field study. My preliminary research will examine how coalitions form and

cooperation occurs between males. My goal is to understand how kinship, social, and environmental variation contributes to coalition formation and cooperation. The other sides of these questions concern the conditions in which coalitions begin to dissolve and cooperation breaks down.

When I return to the South Omo Valley for my long-term field study, I will focus on testing models of cooperation against real ethnographic data gathered from the Nyangatom. Although the conditions under which cooperation occurs have been extensively modeled, there have been few attempts examining whether models of cooperation are useful in understanding human cooperation in a real-time social context. A long-term field study facilitated by the resources of the South Omo Research Center and the Nyangatom people will help me address these questions as part of my doctoral research.

I'd like to thank this research center and the generosity of the peoples of the South Omo Zone who are enabling a new generation of anthropologists to take to the field and learn about the diverse peoples and cultures of this unique corner of the world.

ETHNOGRAPHIC FACTS OF LIFE IN SOUTH OMO:

Did you know that women in Hamar also own headrests? But compared to men who carry them around wherever they go, the headrests of women do not leave their houses.

Did you know that in most of the ethnic groups of South Omo, the queen bee of a beehive is called by the same name as male leaders (such as bitta or kati)?

Did you know that women in Maale have traditional bras? They only wear them when they are breastfeeding children, to avoid their breastmilk from contaminating anything. Their milk is considered to be dangerous.

Did you know that Bodi is the only group in South Omo where women can have favorite oxen and receive a name from them. In other groups it is only the men who have favorite oxen.

Studies in Rhetoric and Culture

Berghahn Books 2009

"This new series on studies in rhetoric and culture edited by Ivo Strecker and two American colleagues partly derives from ethnographic fieldwork work done in South Omo and theoretical debates held at SORC and AAU.

We hope that SORC will continue to make not only empirical but also theoretical contributions to anthropology and related subjects."

More at: www.berghahnbooks.com

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WE'RE ON THE WEB

www.southethiopiaresearch.org

Homepage Update

Help to make our homepage a buzzing, lively place for South Omo researchers!

Send us your researcher's profile and scientific articles for our 'reading room'!

Intern Positions

The South Omo Research Center welcomes interns of all nationalities and various fields of studies like anthropologists, linguists, librarians, museologists, restorers, media designers, educationalists, etc!

Possible spheres of activities are:

- *Improvement of the museum's exhibits and object conservation*
- *Improvement of the museum's educational programs*
- *Update of the homepage and editing newsletters*

CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

Interface Development for the practical use of GIS information in Aari

Shinichiro Hisada

I am conducting my research on Interface Development for the practical use of GIS information which enables participatory research for local residents, since May 2008, in the research location, Dordora village of South Omo zone. The village is located at an altitude of more than 2600m

above sea level was formerly covered by forest, but the area of a neighboring village beyond the river, which is a village boundary, is now extensively cultivated. I am investigating the methods and techniques for the purpose of studying forest use by residents as well as the reason why the forest had been left only in the highlands of the village area.

In this research, I suggest the technique of practical area studies which utilizes P3DM

Model) as an interface between researchers and local residents, and investigate the possibility for the practical use of GIS information which enables participatory research for the local resident. In particular, I will test whether P3DM interfaces can be utilized in the present conditions for the analysis of land uses that often create problems for the protection of forest resources and the securing of farmland / grazing land.

Conflicts caused by conversions to Protestantism in Maale

Sophia Thubauville

The Maale live on agriculture and cattle breeding in the highlands of southwest Ethiopia. Today they number about 71,000 people. The key components of the indigenous beliefs of the Maale are rituals and sacrifices to the ancestors. Apart from people, who still follow their indigenous beliefs,

about half of the population has already been converted to Protestantism.

Once an individual converts to one of the two protestant churches in Maale, it is expected of him to change his lifestyle crucially. Apart from changing his clothing habits, he will have to do without alcohol and tobacco, stop singing and playing traditional music and live monogamously. Those changes lead to countless conflicts for the individuals themselves who have converted, as well as for their rela-



Protestant church in the village of Gudo

tives and neighbors.

The research project takes a close look at the norms of the two diverging ways of life of the followers of the indigenous beliefs and the protestant converts.

Obituary of Katsuyoshi Fukui

David Turton

Professor Katsuyoshi Fukui, who died suddenly last year at the age of 64, was a leading figure in the anthropological study of southern Ethiopia and the main architect of a remarkable growth in Ethiopian studies in Japan since the 1980s.

In 1973 he began his study of the agro-pastoral people who were to become the main focus of his subsequent research and writing, the Bodi of the lower Omo



Valley, southwestern Ethiopia. Through his own writing and research, through the contributions of the many younger scholars whom he inspired and encouraged and through his tireless energy in organizing

international meetings and forging links with scholars from Ethiopia, Europe and America, he put the study of southern Ethiopia and of Northeast Africa firmly on the map of Japanese anthropology.

Recognizing no doubt the importance of creating institutional structures to support this growing community of scholars, Katsuyoshi founded, in 1992, the Japan Association for Nilo-Ethiopian studies (JANES) which, among other things, publishes the English language Journal of Nilo-Ethiopian Studies.