Ethiopian images of self and other:
essays on identification and stereotype

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> Stereotypes and the practice of stereotyping
> – attributing to all members of a category or class identical features –
> have not traditionally been well received within the social sciences.
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> *(Rapport/Overing 2007: 391)*

As I set out to write this introduction, a story is hitting the news around the globe. On July 12, 2013, an Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 787 Boeing Dreamliner caught fire at Heathrow airport. What would appear to most of us as quite simply an unfortunate event, one in a string of misfortunes haunting a new and technologically ambitious airplane, triggered reactions throughout the internet which bear reporting. An Ethiopian newsportal, yehabesha.com, has done us the service of gathering dubious comments made by international users on Twitter and on a CNN webpage. Consider these (anonymized) examples:[2]

> That Ethiopian airlines plane caught fire because it's made from sticks and mud. What did you expect?

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2   The original source was http://news.yehabesha.com/people-around-the-world-reaction-after-ethiopian-plane-caught-fire-reactions-from-cnn-and-twitter/; this site has since been taken down, but was preserved online at http://ethiopianewsforum.com/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=57026, accessed January 22, 2014. All comments are reproduced in their original form – [*sic*!] applies throughout.

"Ethiopian Airlines plane catches fire" … Honestly, i didnt realise theyd discovered fire in Ethiopia.

Why have Ethiopia got a Dreamliner, when they can't feed their people #confused

Ethiopia can't feed its population but it can afford a Boeing 787 #nointernationalaid

WTF are Ethiopia Air doing with a Dreamliner anyway? Cost of plane £140m, UK AID £330m per annum. Mugged off. #Ethiopia #stopforeignaid

If Ethiopia has 50 fancy dreamliner airplanes, why the fuck are we still sending them rice?

No real facts, or news for that matter…maybe the Ethiopians built a campfire in the plane and were roasting a goat.

I thought flying in Ethiopia meant flapping your arms in a tribal feather dress.

What shocks me is that there are enough people coming and going to Ethiopia to require a Dreamliner.

I hate flying Air Ethiopia. Meals are never served, ever.

There is little cause to assume that people who feel motivated to post vicious comments in online forums or to derisively tweet about current media events would be representative of the average media consumer. Still, the above sample surely is sufficient to make a simple point: images of a place, a nation, or a category of people, once they are out in the world, will not easily go away. The prevailing image in question here is an uninformed and insulting one of Ethiopia. It is an image likely based on unforgotten (and not updated) 1980s Western media campaigns and a solidified racist sediment, combined with revanchist sentiments that balk at providing international aid with so much amiss at home, underlying and feeding these commentators' views of the world.

However deplorable we consider stereotypes and judge them as superficial, inaccurate, or practically misleading, and whether we – as the epigraph by Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing suggests – disapprove of them in academia as much as in the everyday world: deploring them will hardly dispel them. Neither will specific stereotypes go away on their own accord, nor will the social practice of stereotyping vanish. Activists in the field of race and gender equality know best that it is extremely difficult to bring people to own up to their prejudices and work towards more realistic, empirically validated, regularly updated, fair und non-priv-

ileged notions. This is true for gender, origin, religion, or any of the other fields which people use to rhetorically categorize and characterize people. The by now proverbial *Orientalism* (Said 1979) is a case in point: a specific critique aimed at a cultural practice of othering that emerged in a specific context and for a specific audience has become so successful that it can now be applied metaphorically far beyond its originary frame of reference and still be (mis-)understood.[3]

But there is little evidence that there is much variation in people's tendency to approach the world through stereotypy, and while the powerful can always express their views more openly and loudly than the weak (compare Scott 1985), one would be hard pressed to identify anybody innocent of this original 'social sin.' While the anonymity of producing and widely disseminating negative images of others by means of social media or web 2.0 commentary functions is a modern aspect of this, as the examples above have shown, radio and newspaper previously lent themselves to that purpose just as well. This is not a modern phenomenon. It is not migration and cosmopolitan plurality that elicit such views; in fact, this volume offers some concrete evidence that images of self and other are as present and as relevant in much more 'traditional,' intimate and unmediated face-to-face settings.[4] In acknowledging this universal relevance, then, the academic task must be to try and gain a clearer understanding of how stereotypy works, through example and analysis. Treating all these broad generalizations, the ready-mades of social *Gestalten* that we use for quick assessments as well as for strategic politicking, as mere mistakes and obstacles in the way of civility and equality is naïve and as a scholarly approach entirely on the wrong track.

Images and stereotypes fulfill important cognitive and communicative functions. They are rather resistant to falsification, and can be as contagious as any biological virus (compare Sperber 1996). They are 'good to tell,' they are the basis of much joking and of narrative clichés. At the same time, the virus analogy here is misleading, because despite the alarming introductory example, hardly all generalizations are pejorative and harmful. We often admire members of a certain category of people for some trait or other we ascribe to them – especially (but not

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3 Recent reflections about the life and times of "orientalism" are found in the edited volume *Orient – Orientalistik – Orientalismus* (Schnepel, Brands, and Schönig 2011). Especially relevant for my argument would be the chapters by Schäbler about the reception of Said's book over the decades and by Kramer on Said's view of culture. It emerges quite clearly that Said's "intentionalist" approach sees only deficiency and a disturbing will to power behind "orientalizations."

4 While it is by no means difficult to find texts in the social sciences and humanities that strictly capitalize Self and Other, this book will forego this, largely for aesthetic reasons: while bearable for a chapter or two, the constant barrage of capital letters proved too intense at the manuscript stage.

exclusively) if we ourselves belong to this category. Stereotypy works in both ways, as generalizations beyond individuality serve to project fears as well as longing, and serve to nurture disdain as much as adoration. And if this is the case, what could be our epistemic basis for accepting positive stereotypes and rejecting pejorative ones? Here, we are halfway down the road towards the 'strategic essentializing' of postcolonial studies, in which an empowering narrative is valued above a critical one. One key to this conundrum used in this book is to temporarily shelve the question of the legitimacy or even of the correctness of images of self and other which find public expression and endorsement in favor of a decidedly empiricism-minded assessment of how stereotypes actually behave in the world.

Images of self and other is a non-judgmental attempt to capture this dramatic polarity, this awkward balance of (legitimate/positive?) images of self and (illegitimate/negative?) images of other in interaction. The case studies in this volume trace publically voiced imagery to its emergence and show its means of persistence; they reveal its vectors and sites, its nodes and branches. This is of clear relevance for the study of identification. Stereotypes and the wider images of self and other are expressions of perceived cultural specificity and difference, and also practical tools to engage in interactions which might well lead to utterly different "elaborations of being" (Rapport/Overing 2007: 394). Specifically in regards to ethnic identity and cultural contact, this focus offers up a rich data set.[5]

So – is this a book about stereotypes? First, I try to not use the terms 'images' and 'stereotypes' interchangibly. The visual metaphor of the (social) 'image' is obviously less technical, and has a wider penumbra under which a good number of other aspects can and should be subsumed. The 'images' in this book come in a plethora of forms, are multi-medial and multi-sensory: while acknowledging that the visual experience often determines or even over-determines perceptions of a situation, we find that statements about self and other are more fully embodied, and evocations of the other can cause sensations which go far beyond the visual. Stereotypes, then, are often partial expressions of images – but as such, as verbal things in the world, they are among our most accessible data. They are of essential value in the pursuit of the less tangible and certainly more complex idea of 'image,' which we take to be fundamental to all sorts of identification processes. So when

5   The reader might look for other social categories which might deserve attention in the Ethiopian context: what about the gendered self and other? What about differences in age, class, health, or wealth, all social parameters which usually lend themselves to strong divisions between people? Some of these do come up in the later chapters, but they are not the focus of this volume. As further reported below, the research program underlying this work focussed on "cultural and linguistic differences," and it is this program we aim to enrich.

I call out stereotypes, I refer to (more or less collective) representations, which "provide a social group with collective explanations as to why different social groups act as they do" (Hinton 2000: 158), including of course these "groups" themselves. An explicit reference to images points to the less accessible but certainly no less real attempts by people to deal with a world full of other people in a coherent manner. This yearning for coherence and dislike of ambiguity can trump judgment and other critical facilities, but must it always? To demonstrate my capacity for dealing with ambiguity, I will refrain from further defining 'images.' In the following chapters, the contributions shall speak for themselves and for the wide range of ways in which human beings order the world and fill it with stories and portraits. Those portraits, it bears pointing out, will be of both individuals and of collectives. This is in fact the crux: there is always a fraught relation between a social category and its putative members. Individual identification is very difficult to disentangle from more collective assemblages. While identity can be worked at with solitary effort, the tendency to see people as representatives of something or other is usually too strong for an individual to entirely avoid getting caught up in stereotype.

The motivation for this volume arose out of research practice. The more anthropological chapters evoke their authors' recognition over the course of fieldwork just how strongly their respective research sites were shot through with images of self and other, and how strongly these images demanded their close attention in turn. Without learning local idioms of stereotypy, how can – say – an anthropological researcher ever hope to navigate discussions about interethnic relations (compare Gabbert/Thubauville 2010) or processes of boundary-making, through which a group distinguishes itself from others? How can we study identity and self-esteem (compare Strecker/Lydall 2006) if we close our ears to which (self-)ascribed features people appreciate, and which features (of others) they depreciate? Some stereotypes, obviously, are simply crude and obvious; some are subtle and sophisticated. Some are critical while being appreciative: the Kara, the focus of my Ethiopian fieldwork, can in the very same sentence mock their Hamar neighbors for being slow to modernize, and praise them for being the ultimate herdsmen (compare Dubosson, this volume). Attraction and rejection can go closely hand-in-hand indeed, and the study of their verbal and non-verbal expression is inherently worthwhile. We can often find out that clichés are used reflexively or even ironically, as the people we study and live with reveal (with a wink maybe) their awareness of the spurious nature of what they sometimes claim about others – and themselves.

Academic approaches to stereotypes and images

To seriously engage with the title of this volume, with 'images of self and other,' requires us to look at semantics. The various available ways to imagine 'images' have a great influence on what this metaphor evokes, what expectations it raises, and how it prestructures our thinking in possibly unintended ways. Consider these sample questions we might ask: Are images fleeting visions, or are they hewn from stone, for eternal contemplation? Are they two-dimensional images, or three-dimensional? Are they moving images or still? Do we find images as a seemingly natural part of our cultural lifeworlds, or are they ostentatiously shaped by people? If so, can everybody engage in this task, or is it restricted to skillful artisans, or to people with high status? Specifically, concerning 'images of self and other' – does everybody have them? To the same degree? From which perspective? From whose perspective? Where are they exhibited? What senses are involved? Should we even talk about an 'image' in the field of cultural contact when the Dassanech of southern Ethiopia characterize their fishing neighbors as 'smelly'? (Almagor 1987) It is liberating to realize that all these are empirical questions, using a sufficiently loose understanding of 'images.' Any and all can apply, and we simply need to be methodologically prepared to look for them. As anthropologists or historians, discussing things as 'images of self and other' invites us to explicitly address these modalities, or running the risk that unwanted presuppositions and assumptions infiltrate and subvert our and subsequently the readers' thoughts. Talking about (visual) 'images,' we might inadvertently all disagree about what is typical of an image, or even what makes something an 'image.' Some caution is well-advised. We therefore actively engage and problematize this metaphorical notion.

There is not enough space here to comprehensively discuss the social science literature on stereotyping – or what has more recently, in its familiar guise of more macro-level 'national character' studies, been called "imagology" (Beller/Leerson 2007). Instead, I will briefly align my approach to the topic with a few select authors, to prepare the ground for the discussion of the ethnographic material compiled in the various chapters. At any rate, saying that this volume is about 'images' seems preferable to the cold diagnosis of 'stereotypes,' out of which surely nothing good can come.

As perspectives from within social or cultural anthropology come, Rapport and Overing (2007) provide one of the most useful discussions of this topic. They offer a concise assessment of both scholarly and non-scholarly (largely normative) attitudes towards stereotyping, and go on to constructively suggest a more fruitful approach. I want to echo some of the issues they raise in their handbook entry.

Identifying three academic traditions which deal in stereotypes, they point out that these all assume a deficiency view of this social practice: Sociological approaches treat them as "temporally and regionally consistent matrices which are learnt by undividual members through processes of socialization," and as a functionalist means to bolster internal coherence through "identity rhetoric" and a "normative treatment of others" (2007: 393). "Psychodynamic approaches" look at the human (even subconscious) underpinnings of self and other, at instincts and personalities (ibid.). Finally, cognitive approaches "have tended to reject a focus upon both motive and ideology," instead acknowledging the "inevitable human fallibility" and our limits in dealing with situations where we are "bombarded with environmental stimuli" (ibid.). These various deficiency views are then resonantly summarized in the following manner:

> [S]tereotypes are conventionally treated as overgeneralized, overdetermined, second-hand and partial perceptions which confuse description and evaluation, which merely reflect ideological biases, instinctual motivations, or cognitive limitations. (2007: 393f)

While particularly explicit, they are not alone among scholars to point out that to discard stereotypes as a bad or wrong sort of data – as for example Asmarom does (1973: 277) – is premature (see Barth 2000: 33; Streck 2000: 301). MacKie especially refutes positions which see stereotypes as simply mistaken (1973: 432ff) or which equate stereotype with negative prejudice (1973: 438). The definition she suggests is this: "A stereotype refers to those folk beliefs about the attributes characterizing a social category on which there is substantial agreement" (1973: 435). I would add that stereotypes, and also 'images' in the context of this volume, are always implicitly comparative, even where they are not negative.

For my argument, then, "folk beliefs" are important both in regard to the question what sort of social categories seem to call for stereotypy, and to the way such "agreement" is reached and expressed. If stereotypes are explanatory devices (see Bateson 2000: 38–58), what are people trying to explain? One must not assume that stereotypes override other aspects of social relations (Streck 2000: 301), or that they inescapably pre-structure interaction. Instead, as collective representations, they do not only reveal something of the world-view within which they flourish, but also allow a more pragmatic analysis: who uses what sort of stereotypes in which contexts about whom? How collective are they, really? How grounded are they in a "bodily experience of the environing world" (Rapport/ Overing 2007: 46)? MacKie's definition, in using the word "agreement," points to this rhetorical nature of images. An image sticks if it is resonant (compare Girke/ Meyer 2011), if it is persuasive; an image that does not persuade will be transient.

This leads back to my antecedent question about what we mean by 'images' – I suggest that it is necessary to understand images as something that is being shown, that is paraded around the village, so to speak. To evoke an image is an attempt to define a situation by invoking otherness or community, triggering chains of cultural associations, reverberating in echo chambers (Maranda 2011) and providing us with anchors to our social landscape. A stereotype is less vague and evocative, telling us more clearly what should be important about a given other, and as a conversational commonplace, it will often simply trigger assent. We might choose not to use such anonymizing categorization, but the stereotype is always there, beckoning us to reduce complexity and to increase situational relevance.

Thus, stereotypes are as a rule evaluative as well as of pragmatic use. But are they not 'false'? MacKie cuts to the heart of the matter: "The symbolic interactionist finds the stereotype validity issue quite meaningless. He asks, 'Since the stereotyped group's behavior is determined by powerful groups' beliefs about it, how can one speak of the accuracy of perception?'" (1973: 440) In analysis, then, one needs to assess in which way the image comes to be employed, abused, or resisted. How does it shape interaction? But this is again an empirical question, and has to be addressed as such. However much we might wish for it, there is little point in showing stereotypes to be 'false' if we strive for an understanding of how people actively relate to each other through their competing definitions of the situation.

Rapport and Overing actually try to move beyond the "deficiency view," offering a number of insights on what stereotypes, "as a discourse and a cognitive resort, can be said to offer" (2007: 394). For one, they point to the rhetorical capacity inherent in the expression of stereotypes: "opposition and exaggeration," even hyperbole, afford "opposition and contrast" and (with Mary Douglas) "clarity and definiteness." Refering to the chapters of Dereje and Girke in this volume, metaphor needs to be added to this list, with its poetic qualities and its displacing effects.

In contrast to the views which consider stereotypy a hearsay affair, stereotypes can also be conceived as a "discursive currency," a sense surely familiar to everybody ever learning a language in a foreign context. Knowledge of a "social landscape" and the features associated with it are fundamental elements of getting to know a lifeworld, and being able to join in (or even understand) a local idiom. Stereotypes, then, are not individual failings of judgment; they are cognitive anchors. We learn stereotypes as children before we ever learn about the reality they purportedly refer to. Rather than strictly ominous, this is helpful and necessary:

> They afford bearings from which to anticipate interaction, plot social relations and initiate knowing – and from a safe distance, too – however far removed their biases become from the manifold elaborations of social relationship and being which eventutate. (Rapport/Overing 2007: 394)

In simpler terms, stereotypes are a starting point of interaction, and do not have to be its end product: "[I]ndeed, the simpler and more ambiguous the stereotype, the more situations in which it can be used" (ibid.). The important distinction here is that the individual stereotype, isolated and dissected, is of course false and demeaning or misleading; but stereotypes do not exist in isolation, and are not singular; they occur as "varied, rich and all-inclusive array" for navigating and communicating about the social world. What if we had to try to understand an other as a complete and particular individual before even initiating interaction? We would be caught in analysis-paralysis, and never proceed! In rhetoric, this is known as "Evidenzmangel und Handlungszwang" (with Blumenberg 1981; also Bailey 1981 on the necessity of persuasion in politics).[6] Stereotypes circumvent this problem, and help us to frame encounters and proceed on whatever flimsy basis. The 'fix' offered by Rapport and Overing is this:

> [T]he prevalence of such stereotypic imagery may be seen as less obscurantist, less outrageous or threatening of communication and civility, when stereotypes are seen not primarily as instruments prejudicially to predominate or pre-empt others, and not as evidence of merely thinking in stale, collective terms, but rather as means for individuals rapidly to project and establish a secure personal belonging in a shifting, complicating world. (2007: 397)

With this, the verbally expressed and so often slanderous-seeming stereotypes move back into our internal worlds and converge with the broader idea of 'images.' I encourage readers to keep this in mind when attending to the cases presented in this book, starting directly with Richard Pankhurst's historical overview of contact situations: how these discursive 'pre-fabs' might be in fact interpreted not as loaded impositions, but as tentative invitations.

Despite its focus on Ethiopia, this volume cannot presume to constitute an antidote to existing stereotypes in that country, or even about that country. It serves first and foremost as a demonstration of the 'social lives' of images of self and other: what do people actually do with images? One of our aims is to sensitize readers to the variability of imagery in Ethiopia, how it reproduces and sometimes

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6   I translate "Handlungszwang" and "Evidenzmangel" as the pressing compulsion to eventually act and the insurmountable lack of sufficient evidence, respectively.

subverts power relations. Another is to naturalize stereotypes as an inevitabe aspect of social life, an aspect that ought to be dealt with as dispassionately (or passionately, as the case may be) as with any other aspect of people's lifeworlds.[7]

The contributions

A book such as this could (and possibly should) be written about most places in the world, but its focus on Ethiopia has reasons grounded in its academic genesis as much as in the very real issues faced by this dynamic nation. Nation-building cannot be considered complete in Ethiopia even today (see Markakis 2011), and debates about its future and its role in the immediate region, in Africa and in world are various. The question of how to best deal with cultural diversity remains relevant, even pressing. Recent publications on ethnic federalism and citizenship in Ethiopia, topics which raise the question of belonging and being a stakeholder, attest to the difficulties of integration and representation of both groups and individuals (e.g. Asnake 2013; Smith 2013; Vaughan 2013).

The following chapters do not deal in solutions to these big questions, but aim to further understanding of how the situation on the proverbial ground presents itself, and how contemporary complexity emerged and is sustained. How do people order their social worlds, and how do their images of self and other find expression? What are priorities for identification, what triggers allegiance? What are the aesthetic aspects of the social practices that constitute community and belonging? Where do we encounter stereotypes, and of whom, and why then and there? What work do they do? Attending these questions, even as they mostly focused on localized and particular processes, throws light on realities on the ground too easily overlooked from a macro-perspective.

Readers engaging with the book's linear structure will find a thematic order, as we move from historical views to the more contemporary, and from the center

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7   To link to another current discussion, I would like to draw attention to our contributor Erin MacLeod's recent interview with Verene Shepherd, (University of the West Indies professor and Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on people of African descent), on the practice of blackfacing and the case of the Dutch "Zwarte Piet" on the blog site "Africa is a Country" (see http://africasacountry.com/the-year-the-blackface-tradition-in-the-netherlands-hit-the-big-time/, accessed January 21, 2014). #blackface has also been a recurrent Twitter hashtag in Germany throughout 2013, as various media with a clear lack of historical awareness and cultural sensitivity used blackface for purposes of comedy. Blackface, especially when presented as a harmless carnival, obscures its own roots in racist practice. In today's world, it matters as a decontextualized and anti-historic presentation of self and other. Each incident reveals the inextricability of stereotyping, identification, in- and exclusion.

to the periphery. Additionally, as the book progresses, an ever-stronger emphasis is placed on how images make manifest the internal discontinuities of community and national claims. There are no separate sections, though, as each chapter picks up on some of the topics addressed so far, and certain issues recur throughout. Taken together, the contributions provide a broad historically grounded palette of Ethiopian cases which cast light on the social practice of stereotyping just as much as the more elusive but also more comprehensive and multi-sensory images of self and other. Cultural contact is relevant throughout, as people struggle to find and maintain their identities in comparison and often contrast to others. The image of self arises precisely from the fraught contact situation with the other; this dialectic holds true throughout this book.[8]

This comes out very clearly in "Ethiopian stereotypes. An inquiry into changing perceptions over the millennia," by Richard Pankhurst, a senior historian. His chapter begins with an overview of images of (highland) Ethiopia from outside perspectives as they have emerged over centuries, and on subsequent imagery that arose with increased contact and especially heightened presence of foreigners in the country. Beginning with early Egyptian, Greek, and Arabian stories about the "land of God," the "land of the best people" "where no-one is wronged," he goes on to enumerate the shifting images of the country over the last two millennia. The rather positive early notions came to be complemented later on by others that referred to people's physical features, such as the Greek concept of the "land of the burnt faces" or of "savages" even. Famous mythical or real historical characters, such as Prester John or the Queen of Sheba, or more recent events, such as the defeat of the Italians at Adwa 1896, came to be known abroad and caught hold of the occidental imagination. In a second part he juxtaposes these external images with internal Ethiopian stereotypes of themselves and each other, that is, the somewhat mutual and often problematic notions different people living within the boundaries of Ethiopia held and expressed. To complete the diorama, Pankhurst then turns to the documentation and even travelogues of foreign visitors to the country, who found themselves in social categories not of their own making, and stuck with loaded labels they partly resented, partly accepted.

The sheer plethora of images spilling out of the historical record goes along with a partly drastic emotive power, even where or especially where the actual

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8 Readers will find that not all authors use the same transcription style from Amharic to English. This is a common problem for edited volumes in Ethiopian studies. Rather than change all instances of *färänj* into *ferenj* and 'Haile Selassie' into 'Haylä Sellase,' or vice versa, I have elected to respect each author's choice. This should cause no problem for understanding or cross-reference.

words spoken were only little understood. Exemplary is the use of the term *'ali*, addressed at Europeans, which seems to have been frustratingly maddening to some foreign visitors for its very opacity. What is in a name? Does a term of address bestowed on an other already carry an image, or represent a stereotype? Many contemporary visitors to Ethiopia have found themselves addressed as or referred to as *färänj*, and had to deal with their own uncertainty whether they were being insulted or just labeled. Pankhurst's text preserves this ambiguity in the use of labels.

For "From empire to airport. On *antika*-painting in Addis Ababa of the 1930s," Jörg Weinerth also begins in the past. Richly illustrated with photographs of paintings collected by the Frobenius Institute in Frankfurt/Main, his text traces the emergence of a rather recent art tradition: *antika*-style paintings on canvas. In the decades leading up to the 1930s Italian invasion, this new style of painting was developed and finally adapted to the taste of foreign collectors and even tourists chasing after souvenirs. This eventual commercialization of a painting genre that was formerly only produced for churches, and then later for the court, is revealing in regard to images and imagination. The themes chosen by the painters, especially early on, very specifically reflected the Ethiopian highland (*habesha*) identity: paintings of the Queen of Sheba myth and of the Battle of Adwa supported the national narrative. But what originally could not unjustly be called propaganda material with a certain legitimating intent lent itself with its often comic-like serial narration and its depiction of heroic or mythical scenes to adaptation to consumer aesthetics. In this peculiar configuration of the political economy, state policies, and tourism, the *antika* (already carrying a claim of antiquity in its name) came to be seen as typical and traditional Ethiopian, a status they to a degree still hold today: a prime case of cultural heritage.

Weinerth's chapter thus echoes some of the topics raised by Pankhurst – as it turns out, the items which monopolized the foreign attention on Ethiopia were just as affectively powerful at home. By conveying a celebratory image of the *habesha* of both recent and mythical past, this art form clearly has potential to contribute to a present-day image of people who understand themselves as the inheritors of this patrimony. As the following chapters will show, though, the great narrative depicted by *antika* and also alluded to by some of the stereotypes from Pankhurst's chapter is not all-inclusive. Many Ethiopians at the periphery, often contrasted with the *habesha* by use of the derogatory term *shankilla*, share neither this religious tradition nor the imperial one, unless one counts having been potential slaves to the Highland population as sharing that patrimony (compare Donham 2002: 12).

The next chapter also addresses visual and in a way excessive aestheticism, but focuses on its relevance for personal rather than collective identity. With an admirable grasp of what is truly important to his informants, Jérôme Dubosson explains the relationship of Hamar men to their favorite ox, called *errawak*. The Hamar, agropastoralists from the South Omo region and neighbors of Arbore, Mursi, and Kara,[9] are not alone in celebrating cattle, and linking individuals to specific specimen for aesthetic and social reasons. Dubosson's approach towards this practice emphasizes the multiplexity of the relation between the herder and their animals, and how personal wants and desires are inscribed into the body of the *errawak*, even as the name of the animal (describing the particular configuration of the colors on its hide) becomes the preferred name of its owner. The animal comes to be a medium of communication about the self, a manifestation of an individual's desires for autonomy and recognition.

The self-image of an individual, as manifested in their *errawak*, is intrinsically grounded in a collective understanding of selves as people of cattle, intimately sharing an environment with the cattle. People consume milk and related products, they smell the animals, feel them, and are around them from earliest childhood on. This intimacy breeds familiarity, and mutual knowledge, in the sense of Haraway's "companion species" (2003); and on top of all that, cattle are of course the most prized and valuable possession of the Hamar. Being a Hamar man, then, entails having a favorite animal (or being perceived as deficient), and it is crucial to understand that beyond partaking of a general ethos, this is also a path to individual identity in this rather egalitarian society, which offers its members (in the absence of ubiquitous conspicuous consumption) few extrinsic means of distinction.

Having cattle matters not merely to individuals, but shapes a whole way of life. How a life on the path of pastoralism influences especially aesthetics and the soundscape of a place is one of the first topics explored by Echi C. Gabbert. In "Songs of self and others in times of rapid change. Music as identification among the Arbore of southern Ethiopia," she invites the reader to follow her as she analyzes song lines and walks along (figurative) song lines in Arbore. Her analysis is the result of years of meticulous transcriptions and dedication to the intangibles of social life. It reveals not just the complexity and range of Arbore music, but also gives a twist to the visual bias of the word 'images.' The songs sung by the Arbore are arguably rich in imagery, poetic, allusive and persuasive, and they not only mark Arbore identity, they are in a way a central aspect of it. We learn how certain songs are diligently protected not only from foreign influence but from endogenous

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9   See, respectively, the chapters by Gabbert, LaTosky, and Girke, all this volume.

modification as well, a preservation effort which raises an entire new set of questions regarding heritage and authenticity.

While the Arbore songs are a historical record of specific events, they also record the "living routines of Arbore identity," value struggles and other dynamics of change. Even when they are normative or even admonishing, their meaning can be taken ambivalently: of course, the girl Dakara who absconded with her true love rather than following the traditional path into marriage did do a bad thing – but she also did follow love rather than calculation, valuing her freedom over custom. Subsequently, the young girls who sing Dakara's song today have motivation to both be and not be integrated into the song themselves one day. Would they rather be remembered as rebels of the heart, or not be remembered at all for being 'good' girls? Gabbert has a pithy phrase to describe the relation of Arbore songs and Arbore culture: "In whichever way songs represent and remind, they reflect and constitute at the same time." The images contained within them are mobile, open to flexible interpretation, and of high emotive power.

With the final four chapters, the book's focus is shifted from the imagery of self-identification to cultural and social divides. Shauna LaTosky reports on the Mursi, who are, due to the lip-plates worn by some women, probably the most iconic of all the Ethiopian minorities, and very much an instance of underprivileged and marginalized *shankilla*. Her chapter "Images of Mursi women and the realities they reveal and conceal" is a critical vivisection of contemporary visual practice. There is a thriving cottage industry of professional (and amateur) photographers and film-makers who use Mursi images to achieve fame and make some profit, both online and for more traditional coffee-table books. The effect of their efforts is to visually sustain ideas of exoticism and primitivism, while allegedly celebrating the lifeworld of the Mursi and other phototourism-afflicted people. The staged and arranged and often plain bizarre nature of the pictures, as LaTosky demonstrates, proves that there seems to be much less interest in understanding Mursi than in (re-)presenting Mursi, or, to echo a recent film she discusses, in "framing the other."

The Mursi photos draw the gaze, and are immensely suggestive, but as LaTosky's nuanced contextualization drives home, such suggestions are apt to mislead. The social reality behind the lip-plates and the correspondingly stretched lip are far removed from the drama and spectacle viewers and tourists expect and perpetuate. Mursi women have their own viewpoints, their own reasons for sustaining (or abandoning or modifying) the practice, and act in awareness of what tourists, aid workers, missionaries as well as the national administration expect of them. In effect, LaTosky provides an emic and nonconformist subtitle to the still images of

the Mursi which consumers have come to cherish as screens on which to project their own fantasies about women and Africa.

LaTosky's chapter is much enriched when read with a web browser at hand, to either access the various URLs provided or simply look up available pictures of Mursi. It is for the bothersome vagueness of the legal situation that we chose to not reproduce the glossy photographs which feature in her analysis. Our alternative tactic, to provide URLs, is less cumbersome than it might appear: the internet today is saturated with Mursi photography, and it is enlightening and yet simple to sample this wealth. Readers will likely find that LaTosky has even understated her criticism.

Felix Girke's contribution on "Metaphors of the Moguji. Self-defining othering in Kara political speech" turns its lens on the question of the mutuality of images. The occasion is a meeting intended for the reconciliation of Nyangatom and Kara, who had been at war for some time even as many close bonds cross-cut the populations. Convening in southern Kara, representatives of both polities use the opportunity to blame a third party for the ills that have befallen them: the Moguji. Not only are individual Moguji singled out as instigators, but the entire ethnic category is colorfully denigrated. For a long while, Moguji had settled among the Kara in an ambiguous non-egalitarian relationship, and are in fact considered the earlier masters of the land. Kara and Moguji thus formed a heterogeneous group of selves living in the same territory while strictly kept apart by multiple ritual restrictions that have separated them into dominant subjects (the Kara) and a subordinate others (the Moguji).

Kara community life was complicated by the recent turn of disgruntled Moguji to their Nyangatom neighbors, whence they hoped to find support. The meeting however shows Kara and Nyangatom colluding in putting the Moguji in their place. Imagery has an important role in this dynamic, and its rhetorical (specifically: metaphorical) expression in political speeches by Kara and Nyangatom forms the core data of this contribution. But the political dominance of the Kara permeates everyday life to such a degree that it is not even clear which counternarratives the Moguji hold. They are not being given the public space to express any, as that would present a challenge to the political status quo. Images here occur not just as epiphenomena of larger struggles, but as the very means and in a way as the ends of politics.

The next chapter again addresses an imbalanced relation. In "The pure, the real, and the chosen. The encounter between the Anywaa, the Nuer, and the Highlanders in Gambella," Dereje Feyissa depicts the existing mutual stereotypes of two lowland groups (the Nuer and the Anyaa), and the highland Ethiopians who have

settled in Gambella as representatives of the Ethiopian central state or during the resettlement program in the 1980s.

This is another fraught relationship, which is here explored by an intriguing cultural analysis of what people pick out as diacritical markers – what is it that makes the other an other? A perfect example is the lowlanders' disdain of the *habesha*'s, the highlanders' predilection for raw meat. In a reversal of the narrative which paints them as backwards and marginal *shankilla*, the Nuer and Anyaa take this an indication of a lack of refinement and cultivation, seeing themselves as less primitive because they would always cook meat. Dereje's term of "mutual irritation" really comes alive in these examples, as the actors in this encounter at every turn manage to re-interpret a proudly presented identity marker into something negative. Beyond the illustrative examples of a situated encounter, Dereje points to the role of institutions and political economy as the backdrop: echoing Girke's queries about domination and mutuality, he makes clear that power plays a decisive role in the question of who can make what sort of statements about whom when and where.

Less focusing on confrontation, but certainly indicating irritation, Erin C. MacLeod's closing chapter casts some light on a unique case: the relation between the Rastafarians immigrants to Ethiopia, who settled in and around Shashamane, and their 'Ethiopian' neighbors and hosts. As is well known, Rastafari regard the former Emperor His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie as God, and their religion accordingly (and somewhat ironically) is difficult to reconcile with orthodox Ethiopian Christianity. Even Ethiopians who appreciate the Rastafarian dedication to Ethiopia find this problematic, and cite this heterodoxy as a strong impediment to full integration of the Rastafarians into society. Interviewing descendants of the imperial family and academics, MacLeod goes beyond more established receptions of how the Rastafarians imagine Ethiopia and their expectations regarding their 're-patriation': combined with her observations in Shashamane, a complex picture emerges which revolves around and perpetually recurs to four icons of difference. One is of course HIM Haile Selassie, another is religion as such. Problematic in a different way are the third and the fourth: the alleged dangers of marijuana (intrinsically associated with the Rastafarians), and the intermarriage between Rasta men and local women, the latter leading to unresolved identity questions for children and worries of being left out by local men.

It will have become clear that – unlike the commentary which began this section – the chapters do not deal with imagery projected onto Ethiopia from the outside, excepting the chapters by Pankhurst and LaTosky (and, to a degree, MacLeod and Weinerth). More emphasis is placed on the views Ethiopians have cultivated

of themselves and towards each other: not far-fetched opinions, but rather contact-induced generalizations. At the same time, the intensity and type of stereotyping are not so very different from the abstruse comments on Twitter and CNN. For the practical purposes of navigating a social landscape, intimate knowledge of individuals does not necessarily trump the sweeping generalizations about a collective, and stereotypes within Ethiopia do not appear to be different in quality than those wielded by outsiders. Both can be equally unfounded, unfair, hate- or hurtful, and both can be helpfully analyzed to see what cultural tropes and commonplaces people use to negotiate their belonging and orient themselves towards an other.

Still, by looking at more intimate relations, situations of direct and often everyday contact, this focus presents a stronger contribution to Ethiopian Studies, especially considering that there is currently a body of work by scholars such as Jan Záhořík (2008, 2011) on international images of Ethiopia, and a plethora of work on the relations between the larger populations of the country, such as Amhara, Oromo, and Tigre. Smaller places have been spotlighted more infrequently. The background of a number of the contributors, who previously collaborated in a research program on the modalities of cultural contact, presents another reason for this focus, as the next section documents.

Area studies and the background to this volume

This book appears now as the second volume in the new series "Schriften des Zentrums für Interdisziplinäre Regionalstudien." While the research presented here was not facilitated by the Zentrum (also: ZIRS), the constellation is still auspicious. A central objective of the ZIRS is to stimulate and coordinate work in a modern understanding of area studies, which explicitly seeks to build on regional expertise to make meaningful contributions to the systematic disciplines. In this case, these are social/cultural anthropology and history in general, or, more granularly, peace and conflict studies, human-animal relation studies, art history, comparative religions, and, in fact, imagology. Each contributor is an expert on their particular part of Ethiopia, and taken together, the book will surely be of interest to any self-identifying Ethiopianist (and hopefully to a good number of Ethiopians as well); but the real ambition is to provide case studies which link back to issues in these systematic disciplines and thus reach out and contribute to discussions far tran-

scending Ethiopian studies.[10] As contributors and as editor, we are grateful to the ZIRS for this opportunity to publish the manuscript in the "Schriften," and invite scholars from any background and with any regional expertise to engage with our chapters and join our conversation on images and stereotypes. The fit between the aim of this particular book and the aims of the "Schriften" seems genuine and congenial.[11]

At the same time, this book belongs to a less formal book series, comprising two other edited volumes: *The perils of face. Essays on cultural contact, respect and self-esteem in southern Ethiopia*, edited by Ivo Strecker and Jean Lydall (2006) and *To live with others. Essays on cultural neighborhood in southern Ethiopia*, edited by Echi Gabbert and Sophia Thubauville (2010). Each book was released by a different publisher, and yet they are intimately entangled: all three spring forth from the work of a project group which was part of the Sonderforschungsbereich (SFB) 295 "Cultural and linguistic contacts. Processes of transformation in North-Eastern African and West Asian history" funded by the German Science Foundation (DFG) and located at the University of Mainz.[12] The project group was led by Ivo Strecker throughout its three phases, who also provides an afterword to this volume.[13] Echi Gabbert, Shauna LaTosky, Jörg Weinerth as well as Felix Girke were all at some point direct participants in the SFB's work. The other contributors joined us along the ways, in various venues and creative collaborations, and in academic sympathy for the work achieved and planned on the basis of Ivo Strecker's visions and teachings.

What entwines *Ethiopian images*, *The perils of face* and *To live with others* is, then, not only an academic history, continuity of personnel and a general regional focus, but a fundamental motivation to positively explore diversity in Ethiopia, to probe the depths of Ethiopian cultural worlds, and to celebrate the people who welcomed us as researchers into their lives, hosting us in some cases for years, and proudly taught us what we wanted to know about their lifeworlds. Now, eight

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10 Jon Abbink's panel "Rethinking the anthropology of Ethiopia – from ethnography to explanation, held" at the 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Dire Dawa (2012), similarly sought to reconnect regional expertise to larger questions in the systematic discipline of social/cultural anthropology.

11 2014 is also the year in which the ZIRS is trying to set up a platform for interdisciplinary Ethiopian Studies at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, as there are ongoing and yet unconnected projects in and partnerships with Ethiopia in legal studies, pharmacy, economics and social/cultural anthropology.

12 See http://www.uni-mainz.de/Organisationen/sfb/295/. The page was last accessed January 29, 2014, but is no longer maintained.

13 After Ivo Strecker's retirement, playfully known as his new research stipend, Prof. Thomas Bierschenk took over the formal directorship of the project group.

years after *The perils of face* and four years after *To live with others*, *Images* sees publication, and continues the discussions begun in these earlier volumes. Cultural contact is a central concern throughout this series, as are emotion and imagination, as well as the expression of culture in practice, in interaction.

Readers familiar with current developments in Ethiopia will know that many of the lifeworlds presented here (esp. chapters by Dubosson, Gabbert, LaTosky, Girke) are in danger of being modernized into oblivion. The agropastoralist populations could end up as collateral damage, their communities dispersed, their traditions disrupted, their knowledge declared worthless (compare Girke 2013).[14] While ominous, this process is still ongoing and there is still some hope for equitable solutions and measured development. If not, the world could possibly once again see an abundance of pictures of misery from Ethiopia in the next decade, of destitute and demoralized people resettled in the name of efficiency and development. In a bitter irony, these would be images just like those that gave rise to the tweets and comments mentioned initially, and which still today feed the problematic reputation Ethiopia still found all over the world.

Halle (Saale), June 2014

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14 See the relevant 2012 Human Rights Watch report here: 'What will happen if hunger comes?' http://www.hrw.org/reports/2012/06/18/what-will-happen-if-hunger-comes-0 (last accessed February 20, 2014). It has now been supplemented by a multimedia show found here: http://4246-multimedia-hrw-org.voxcdn.com/features/omo_2014/slide.html#/.

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