

occasion by the town council, the Kaiser expressed his disappointment that the Jauer's trademark, the *Jauersche Wurst*, was not on the table. The "regrettable oversight" was later ridiculed by the local poet (and trained butcher), Gustav Frommelt (1842–1878), in his poem *Der Jauer'sche Bratwurst Klage lied* ("The Lamentation of the *Jauersche Wurst*").

A measure of cultural significance of *Jauersche Wurst* is its presence in German literature of various genres – novels, burlesques, dramas or short stories. In Chapter 7, the author discusses a number of examples, starting with Samuel Gottlieb Bürde's 1803 drama *Rübezahl auf Reisen* ("Rübezahl on Tour") and ending with Horst Bosetzky's 2005 contemporary crime novel *Bestie vom Schlesischen Bahnhof*. ("The Beast from Schlesischer Bahnhof").

Propagandists of the Third Reich also recognized the symbolic potential of local traditions and cultural elements in their policy of consolidating and perpetuating national attitudes. To this end, on the initiative of the National-Socialist regime, a folk festival – the *Jauersche Würstelfest* – ("Jauer Sausage Festival") was initiated in the town on a biennial basis – with the high rank of a "homeland festival" (*Heimatsfest*). Chapter 8 is devoted to this topic. The first of these festivals was held in 1933, and the last – in 1939. The tradition was abandoned after the outbreak of World War II.

Chapter 9 is dedicated not so much to the *Jauersche Wurst* brand as to the product itself. Just as its historical origins are unclear, Sobel says (although it was already widely known in Silesia and Berlin in the second half of the 18th century), there is no clear source data on its composition and manufacturing technology either. In this chapter, the author carefully analyzes the existing sources in search of answers to these questions. Finally, in the last chapter Sobel presents the gastronomical dimension of the Jauer sausage, i.e., the ways in which it has been served in various social contexts over the past two centuries.

Sobel's book is very well researched and interestingly written. It is provided with numerous and detailed footnotes and an extensive bibliography, including a long list of consulted periodicals, mainly 19th century German dailies. In the appendix the reader will also find a number of relevant illustrations. The book is very carefully edited and has an attractive layout.

Although the book's subject matter may seem trivial at first glance, it is a useful reading for cultural historians and cultural anthropologists, as well as those interested in regional history on both sides of the Oder River. First of all, as I mentioned above, reading Sobel's book makes us aware that a sense of local, regional or national belonging is often based on arbitrarily selected elements of everyday life, to which "cascades" of local and global events (to use Appadurai's term) may

give an extraordinary and supra-local dimension. Thus, in this case, a local culinary specialty from Jauer in Lower Silesia began to enjoy a pan-regional recognizability after it had been associated with the Prussian king Frederick the Great, who assisted the town affected by an abominable fire. Consequently, the product became a strong component of regional identity as well. Secondly, these arbitrarily selected cultural elements as components of local identity can also function outside the specific historical context in which they arose, and the *Jauersche Wurst* is a perfect example of this phenomenon: although German cultural continuity in Lower Silesia was disrupted after World War II, its individual components can still function in new political and cultural settings, and even become connecting elements between societies and nations divided by dramatic historical events. Silesia, where German, Polish and Czech cultures have interacted over centuries, is a perfect platform for such exchange in united Europe. A translation of this book into German is, therefore, highly recommendable.

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Solomon Woldekiros, Helina: The Boundaries of Ancient Trade. Kings, Commoners, and the Aksumite Salt Trade of Ethiopia. Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2023. 211 pp. ISBN 978-1-64642-472-6. Price: \$ 68.00

For centuries, caravans of camels and donkeys have been traversing the harsh landscape of Ethiopia's northern Afar desert and, laden with salt bars, climbing the paths back to the plateau. Once on the highland, the precious cargo is distributed in markets and shops. Essential nourishment for humans and animals, salt in Ethiopia was and still is one of the main products for internal and external trade. It played an important role as a currency, and entered into local legends and traditions. Although the first certain evidence of the Eastern Tigray-Afar salt trade route dates back to medieval times, it is very likely that it was already active in earlier times. Particularly, during the flourishing of the Aksumite polity (late 1st mill. BCE to late 1st mill. CE), but presumably even earlier.

In "The Boundaries of Ancient Trade," Helina Solomon Woldekiros investigates in a diachronic perspective the organization of salt trade on the Afar route with a special focus on Aksumite and present times. Combining first-hand archaeological data and ethnographic observations, the author traces ancient and contemporary salt caravan paths, documents trading posts and campsites, examines the role played by different groups and participants, and inspects the social and political context of salt trade. Central to the discourse is the concept of the "niche economy" as a

flexible economic “space” created and reshaped by people according to their needs. This approach challenges the habit of analyzing African contexts using Western interpretative models, as does the hypothesis, correct in my opinion, of Aksum as a complex political entity in which vertical hierarchy and power centralization were counterbalanced by coexistence with horizontal heterarchical structures.

The data presented and discussed in the book result from nineteen months of fieldwork conducted in the Afar desert and the northern Ethiopian highlands between 2009 and 2012. During these months, the author followed the caravanners along the 162-km itinerary that make up the entire salt route, unfolding over an altitude difference of about 3000 meters from the salt plain in the desert to the edge of the plateau. She interviewed and observed all actors involved in the salt trade to obtain logistical, organizational and economic data along the entire salt supply chain from extraction to retail.

Archaeological survey and excavation allowed to document previously unrecorded sites dating back to the Aksumite time suggesting that goods (presumably salt and obsidian) were exchanged along this route since at least the early 1st millennium CE.

The stories of 152 caravanners as well as salt cutters, shop and warehouse owners, brokers, and leather bottle makers have been recorded along the route from Lake Asale through the towns of Hamed Ela and Berhaile to the major highland town of Mekelle. The archaeological and ethnographic material is complemented and confronted with the written reports of civil servants and the accounts of travelers of Early Modern and Modern periods.

The book, 211 pages long, is organized into 7 chapters (1–159) followed by a concluding section (160–163) and 7 appendices (165–173) with the listing of caravanners’ utensils and personal possessions, standard sizes of salt blocks, number of participants involved in the different stages of the process, and the inventory of domestic cereals, faunal remains, potsherds, and lithics from excavation. A comprehensive references list (175–203) and an index (205–211) close the book. Maps, drawings and B/W photos illustrate the text.

In Chapters 1–3 the author presents the topic of the study, its main goal, methodology and significance (Chapter 1), some theoretical cornerstones and the approach adopted (Chapter 2), and the Aksumite society, its emergence and involvement in long-distance trade (Chapter 3). In the core part of the book, the author discusses the functioning of past and present salt trade networks and how salt trade fits within the Aksumite socioeconomic and political landscape (Chapter 4), illustrates the ethnography of the Afar salt trade (Chapter 5), proposes a tentative reconstruction of the organiza-

tion of the Afar salt trade in ancient times based on the analysis of the archaeological evidence (Chapter 6). The final chapter combines the analysis of local trade with the organization of early complex societies in the northern Horn of Africa by investigating Aksumite social and political structure in the light of the organization of ancient salt trade.

The Eastern Tigray-Afar salt road is one of the latest economically significant caravan-based trade routes in the world, travelled by hundreds of camel and donkey caravans every year. A successful journey depends on a variety of factors which also include a long expertise and a system of knowledge built over centuries and passed on from generation to generation. The role played by each individual member of the caravan, the hardship of life during the journey, the harshness of the desert and the difficulties of the mountain passes, the food prepared and consumed in the camps, the system of salt taxation and distribution are carefully documented and presented by the author. Archaeological evidence dating back to the Aksumite period consisting of camps, churches and settlements are convincingly associated with a salt (and probably obsidian) trade along these same paths in ancient times. Noteworthy, these are the first sites systematically investigated in this area. A more detailed description of the materials found and, where possible, references for comparisons would have further enhanced the archaeological part.

As stressed by the author, extensive commodity exchanges significantly contributed to structure social relationships, foster inter-groups cooperation and drive political organization across the ancient world. The salt trade in northern Ethiopia does not escape this view. It favored, and still favors, interaction between groups with different social and economic structures and proves how African case material introduces us to a variety of salient factors that have only rarely been considered in the analysis of the organization and variation in complex societies. The pattern of socio-political dynamics related to the trade of a primary, essential food resource emerged in the Afar salt trade by the integration of ethnographic and archaeological data, suggests that Aksum’s political authority did not exert total control over it. Different segments of the society independently managed part of the salt trade. This adds another piece of evidence to the hypothesis that Aksum’s polity was probably not a vertical centralized structure *strictu sensu*.

This view challenges the very concept of “social complexity,” which is not necessarily synonymous with hierarchization or centralization; stimulates reflections on the variation in the resources and forms of power in supralocal organizations; emphasizes the often neglected role that the dialogue between political centralization and horizontal forms of resistance to loss of autono-

my had in several ancient and pre-colonial societies; remarks the fact that social development is not a straight, unilinear process from more simple to more complex structures: a variety of African societies move easily and fluidly back and forth, and often combine them in a variety of flexible and resilient forms.

To conclude, “The Boundaries of Ancient Trade” by Helina Solomon Woldekiros is a useful and stimulating lecture not only for anthropologists and archaeologists but also for those who are interested in this part of the world, in its history, cultures, and complexity. It provides the readers with a significant set of data and information on a heritage at risk of disappearing that make the book an extremely informative reading.

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Stier, Nokchachom Cheskhun: Merit and a Sense of Home. Emerging Thai Buddhist Communities in Germany. Glienicke: Galda Verlag, 2023. 336 pp. ISBN 978-3-96203-306-4. (Insights from Southeast Asia. Multidisciplinary Approaches towards the Region, 8) Price: € 64,00

Zwischen September 2017 und Juni 2019 hat die Verfasserin (= Vfn.) Feldforschungen in Thai-Tempeln in Deutschland für ihre Dissertation an der Universität Heidelberg mit einem umfangreichen Themenspektrum durchgeführt: Es geht um die Rolle von Thai-Frauen in den deutschen Thai-Tempeln, ihre Lebensweise und die Bedeutung der Religion für die Identitätsstärkung und -bewahrung dieser Frauen. Die Vfn. liefert einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Thai-Religiosität im deutschsprachigen Raum, zusätzlich zu den Studien von Woramon Sinsuwan (“Thai Marriage Migrants in Germany and their Employment Dilemma after the Residence Act of 2005”. Glienicke: Galda Verlag 2020) und Andrea Zimmermann (“Träume, Tränen und Tempel. Thai-buddhistische Religiosität im Alltag thailändischer Heiratsmigrantinnen in der Schweiz”, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag 2023). Ein Leitthema ist der Erwerb von *boun* (pali: *puñña*) “Verdienst” (12), wovon das Handeln der Frauen bestimmt wird, die sich regelmäßig im Tempel engagieren und meist bereits vor 2005 durch Heiratsmigration nach Deutschland gekommen sind (vgl. 21–26).

In Deutschland leben etwa 100.000 Thai, entweder mit deutschem oder thailändischem Pass. Dadurch ist Deutschland – nach den USA – jener Staat, in dem die meisten Thai außerhalb von Thailand leben. Etwas mehr als 50 Tempel (vgl. 28) dienen der religiösen Praxis dieser Personen – meist Frauen –, von denen die Vfn. fünf für die Durchführung ihrer Forschung ausgewählt hat (36–41, 45): Wat Buddhavihara Berlin (1992 gegründet); Wat Sanghavihara Stuttgart (2009 von Berlin aus gegründet); Wat Buddhavipassana Wassenach (2009 gegründet, seit 2013 mit Wat Chom Tong in Chiang

Mai, Nordthailand, verbunden); Wat Buddhadham Freising (2007 gegründet, mit Wat Mahathat in Bangkok verbunden); Wat Pah Bodhi Dhamm Berlin (gegründet 2009). Die fünf ausgewählten Tempel spiegeln dabei ein breites Traditionsspektrum wider, so dass die Vfn. ein facettenreiches Bild der Bedeutung des Buddhismus im Leben der Thai-Laiinnen erarbeiten kann.

Frauen engagieren sich in den Tempeln, um Verdienst (*boun*) zu erwerben, indem sie Speisen in großer Menge spenden und kochen, entsprechend der traditionellen Vorstellung, dass die Menge ein Ausdruck von Reichtum – als Folge von gutem Karma – ist. Diese “Kochdienste” zeigen eine Veränderung religiöser Praxis in der Diaspora gegenüber Thailand. Während in Thailand eine Person fest für die “Tempelküche” verantwortlich ist, wird dies in Deutschland in den kleineren Tempeln von den Frauen durch Absprachen organisiert bzw. in den “Stadttempeln” in Berlin oder Stuttgart spontan geregelt, da dort im Durchschnitt täglich wenigstens fünf Frauen zum Kochen anwesend sind, am Wochenende oder an Feiertagen bis zu 20 (vgl. 53ff.). Interessant sind ferner die Ausführungen der Vfn. über einen anderen Unterschied zwischen Thailand und Deutschland. Am wöchentlichen Feiertag (*wanphra*) übernachten in Thailand ältere Frauen traditionell im Tempel und befolgen die acht Laien-Gelübde. Aus räumlichen Gründen ist dies in den Tempeln in Deutschland fast unmöglich, so dass sich daraus eine Neuerung entwickelt hat, indem manche Frauen weißgekleidet in den Tempel kommen – als Ausdruck der Befolgung der acht Gebote an diesem Tag. Bei den Frauen, die im Zentrum der Studie stehen und schon seit mehr als zwei Jahrzehnten in Deutschland leben, ist die Bindung an den Tempel deutlich höher als bei jüngeren Frauen, wobei diese frühen (Heirats-)Migrantinnen buddhistische Werte traditionsverbunden an die jüngere Generation weiterzugeben versuchen (vgl. 73–76). Diese Traditionsverbundenheit führte 2018 im Wat Freising auch zur Ordination von zwei jungen Männern (21 und 23 Jahre) zu Mönchen auf Zeit. Gegenüber der Durchführung des zweitägigen Rituals in Thailand wurde die Zeremonie in Freising auf einen Tag komprimiert.

Ein eigenes Kapitel widmet die Vfn. den *maeji*, da einige Frauen sich für diese Lebensweise entschieden haben – als sozialer Stand, der im Theravada-Buddhismus aus dem Bemühen entstanden ist, dadurch wieder die Ordination von Frauen als Nonnen zu reaktivieren. Inzwischen haben sich *maeji* als dritter sozialer Stand – neben Laiinnen und (wenigen) Nonnen – im Thai-Buddhismus etabliert. In Deutschland gibt es *maeji* nur im Wat Berlin (vgl. 119–121). Regelmäßig leben neun *maeji* im Tempel, wobei innerhalb des Tempelareals vier Gebäude einen eigenen Bereich für die *maeji* bilden. Einige Berliner *maeji* beschreibt die Vfn. aufgrund von biografischen Interviews (126–136). Maeji Duen