

Le chapitre 7 revient sur les obstacles auxquels se heurtent les frères Schlagintweit pour la mise en musée des objets rapportés, alors que le modèle humboldtien est remis en cause. Il apporte une contribution intéressante aux travaux actuels sur l'origine des musées ethnographiques et l'élaboration de collections scientifiques héritées des explorations.

Le chapitre 8, enfin, traite des différentes mémoires de l'exploration. Tandis que les critiques se poursuivent en Angleterre, les échos sont positifs dans le Raj britannique, où les avancées scientifiques sont reconnues, tandis que les frères Schlagintweit sont réutilisés à des fins politiques dans leur patrie, où l'impérialisme naissant cherche des héros à célébrer.

Par l'exploitation de nombreuses archives, collectées principalement en Allemagne et en Angleterre, mais aussi ailleurs, l'auteur nous offre une étude très complète de l'entreprise des frères Schlagintweit. L'un des mérites de ce livre, et non le moindre, est de la replacer à la fois dans l'histoire générale des explorations, dans celle de l'Inde britannique à un moment de profonde remise en cause, et dans celle des réseaux scientifiques transnationaux. Si le contexte allemand est plus rapidement brossé que celui de l'Angleterre, l'auteur montre cependant la haute considération dont bénéficie la science allemande à cette époque, dans la lignée d'Alexander von Humboldt et de Carl Ritter principalement. Le chapitre sur la vie intime de l'expédition permet également de diversifier les acteurs de cette histoire et de sortir d'une perspective uniquement européenne. On peut saluer enfin que l'approche transnationale adoptée, tout en mettant en valeur les mobilités et les échanges transversaux, ne masque pas

les limites d'une science sans frontière. Au milieu du XIXe siècle, en effet, les enjeux nationaux sont primordiaux et le fait que les frères allemands soient employés par les autorités britanniques ne va pas de soi, soulève des critiques, selon des logiques de compétition bien montrées. La démonstration, claire et convaincante, est servie par des illustrations pertinentes et souvent reproduites en couleur. En résumé, il s'agit là d'un ouvrage fort bienvenu, à lire pour les historiens des sciences et ceux des empires.

Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe: *Laying the Past to Rest. The EPRDF and the Challenges of Ethiopian State-Building*, London: Hurst & Co. 2019, xxi + 355 pp.

Reviewed by
Ulf Engel, Leipzig

Ethiopia is at a crossroads: the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF, which in-itself is a coalition of former liberation movements) is split, general elections due on 29 August 2020 have been indefinitely postponed, "ethnic" and "religious" violence is flaring across the country, secession of parts of the country has become a serious option, the planned filling of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is causing a major conflict with downstream riparian states Sudan and Egypt – and on top of that the worst locust invasion in decades

as well as the Corona virus have hit the country hard.

Politically, the young Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (b. 1976), who has come to power in April 2018, has embarked on a series of domestic and foreign policy reforms: Political prisoners were released, the diaspora invited to participate in the politics of the country, hardliners of the regime replaced by reformers, and serious efforts undertaken to improve the human rights record. And for the reconciliation with neighbouring Eritrea, Abiy was awarded the Nobel peace prize in 2019. In pursuance of his political reform project, in November 2019 the Prime Minister transformed the ruling EPRDF into the Prosperity Party (PP) – only that one of the four components of the ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), is not having any of this, up the point that it wants to run the general elections as originally scheduled in the northern part of the country which it controls. From their perspective, Abiy's policies are seen as a betrayal of the shared values of the liberation struggle against the military junta, the communist Derg under Mengistu Haile Mariam (1974–1991).

It is therefore absolutely timely to have a book published on the history of the EPRDF which is written by an insider, with unparalleled access to people and documents. Only very few, if any, accounts of this nature are available. The author's course of life is emblematic for the country's contested history. Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe is a former TPLF commander, member of the party's central committee and founding member of the EPRDF council. From 1991 to 1997 he led the country's disarmament, demobili-

sation and reintegration programme. And in 2001, he was part of a group in the TPLF's central committee which openly challenged Ethiopia's leader, the late Meles Zenawi. In response to a paper in which Meles compared the TPLF and EPRDF leadership in Ethiopia in 2000/2001 to the post-revolutionary situation in France after 1789, and in which he also called for a discussion of "Bonapartism" among the new elite, a group dissenting TPLF members accused him of being too "liberal" and giving in too easily to IMF economic conditionalities. The dissenting group walked out of the meeting (which actually lasted for a month) and Meles finally secured a 17 to 12 vote in his support. Mulugeta, who had suggested to postpone the meeting, survived the following purges (for his own account of the leadership crisis, see pp. 217–225).

After he left politics, Mulugeta became director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) at Addis Ababa University (2007–2014) – which is also the alma mater of the current Prime Minister who graduated from this institution with a PhD in 2017. During this time, Mulugeta enjoyed an ambivalent relationship with the regime: the institute became an island of critical debate protected by the university's then Vice Rector Prof. Andreas Eshete (2003–2011) and tolerated by Meles. Today, the author is a senior fellow with the World Peace Foundation at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University (Medford MA) which is directed by his brother-in-spirit Alex de Waal. Mulugeta has co-authored a number of important reports on the future of peacekeeping in the Horn of Africa, security sector reform, and other issues.

Laying the Past to Rest is based on Mulugeta's PhD dissertation which he has authored conducted at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. The main arguments are constructed in dialogue with the academic debate and on the basis of a variety of internal, partly not accessible party sources, often written in Tigrigna (while others are drawn from the archives of the Tigray Martyr's monument and the National Archives). As already indicated in the third paragraph of this review, as a key participant of many of the developments analysed in his book, Mulugeta is walking a tightrope as somebody that analysing at least parts of his own history. The important episode in 2000/2001 around the TPLF's leadership crisis, for instance, is largely reconstructed with reference to the memoirs of Gebru Asrat – himself being a former member of the TPLF central committee.¹ Given the culture of secrecy of the party, this may be as best as it can get. However, serious challenges in writing the history of contemporary Ethiopia and contested party politics remain.

Nevertheless, Mulugeta has tried to develop a balanced account of past EPRDF achievements and contemporary challenges. The arguments presented are based in a sound discussion of the literatures on African liberation movements in general, the EPRDF and democratic transitions in Africa. Only few relevant contributions to the academic debate are missing.² In addition, the author has conducted some 15 extensive (although anonymous) interviews with key informants emanating from the regime. The conceptual framework for the thesis is pragmatically chosen (based in organisational studies, partly rooted in the 1960s). First and foremost, Mulugeta has

an interest in why the TPLF/EPRDF succeeded in its liberation struggle and what shaped the party/coalition, what explains the EPRDF achievements and constraints in power, and how this compares to the initial aspirations of a "reform rebellion" (pp. 10–11). Accordingly, in the first part of the book Mulugeta looks at the formation of TPLF and the way it organised governance in liberated areas; in the second part he takes an interest in the debates leading to the creation of the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT) and the EPRDF coalition; and in third part he recalls the challenges this coalition has faced since in government – from the "democratic transition" to the war with Eritrea to contemporary challenges which predate the above mentioned critical juncture the country is fronting today. Unfortunately, the author decided for the year 2012 (i.e., when Meles passed away) as a cut-off date of his analysis. The brief epilogue only offers a glimpse of how relevant Mulugeta's analysis could be for understanding the current crisis (pp. 301–303).

Yet elsewhere, the author has extended the argument convincingly developed in this book: focussing on the loss of the EPRDF's intellectual leadership (which, according to him, was so crucial to gain power and start the Ethiopian state-building project after 1991), Mulugeta argues that the current leadership of both the country and the Prosperity Party are retreating from earlier promises: the Prime Minister is said to be personalising power, there is a roll-back of reforms invoking memories of authoritarian pasts, the new party has lost legality, and the "country is at risk of balkanisation along ethnic lines".³ In any case, this book offers a comprehensive basis for under-

standing the underlying debates, grievances and contradictions Ethiopia as a polity currently is confronted with.

Notes

- 1 Gebru Asrat, *Sovereignty and Democracy in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa 2014 (in Amharic).
- 2 On the 2001 leadership crisis in TPLF, see also, e.g., Paulos Mekias, Ethiopia, the TPLF, and the Roots of the 2001 Political Tremor, in: *Northeast African Studies* 10 (2003) 2, pp. 13–66; Medhane Tadesse/John Young, TPLF: Reform or Decline?, in: *Review of African Political Economy* 30 (2003) 97, pp. 389–403.
- 3 Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe, “Ethiopia’s poll has been pushed out by COVID-19. But there’s much more at play”, *The Conversation*, 18 May 2020, <https://theconversation.com/ethiopia-poll-has-been-pushed-out-by-covid-19-but-theres-much-more-at-play-138322> (accessed 17 June 2020).

Casey Marina Lurtz: *From the Ground Up. Building an Export Economy in Southern Mexico*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2019, 296 p.

Reviewed by
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Regional history and its subsidiary micro-history continue to rewrite the narrative of Mexico’s economic and political development since its independence in 1821. Since Luis González y González in his *Invitación a la microhistoria* (1973) issued the challenge to explore the many Mexicos, dozens and dozens of studies using state and local archives, illuminated the upheavals that wracked the nation during the 1810s and 1910s, the politics, economics and quotidian life of the early republic, and the pre

and post Revolution. Historians produced and continue to produce nuanced stories about the regions and localities. Casey Lurtz’s *From the Ground Up* is another such carefully crafted, meticulous study, analyzing the economy of Soconusco in the state of Chiapas, the southernmost area of Mexico.

The analysis focuses on the development of an economy based on coffee exports. Soconusco was and is the leading producer of Mexican coffee, which was during the period under study (1870s to 1920) the nation’s second or third most important agricultural export commodity. The region was in the nineteenth century sparsely populated and isolated, with difficult, but immensely fertile land. It provides an interesting case to complement existing studies about vanilla, henequen and sugar. The author argues that none of the usual narratives and analyses of Latin American export economies apply to Soconusco. Most important, foreign plantation owners, who stole land from peasant villages and abused their workers, did not dominate. In fact, though there was a strong foreign presence, especially German, foreigners produced only half the coffee; small, local landowners accounted for the other half. Villages, small merchants, laborers, and plantation owners interacted and connected intimately and extensively to the global economy.

Professor Lurtz upholds one current tenet of Mexican historiography, that politics and economy centered locally, and discards another long ago, strongly held view that the globalization disadvantaged exporters of agricultural commodities. In the former view, historians concluded that neither the Díaz regime (1877–1911)