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INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE “ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS FOR/IN ETHIOPIAN STUDIES”

by Sophia Thubauville and Sayuri Yoshida

This special issue deals with archives and collections in Ethiopian Studies. It was created out of the panel “1201 Archives and Collections for/in Ethiopian Studies” at the 20th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, which was held at Mekelle University in Ethiopia on 1-5 October 2018. The panel was planned and organised with the understanding that different archives and collections are used for varied research questions by researchers in Ethiopian Studies. The archives and collections that Ethiopian Studies deal with are very diverse. Some of them are renowned and easy to access, while other collections remain mostly hidden and unknown, because of their spatial distance from Ethiopia, language barriers or other reasons. Some of these archives and collections are only known to a few researchers. Others are closed to public access. In recent years, information on the internet and digitisation have increased the accessibility of many archives and collections. The cataloguing and promotion of Ethiopian archives and collections should be a contemporary goal in this period of digitisation, especially as the discipline of Ethiopian Studies is growing due to the recent rapid expansion of higher education in Ethiopia. Therefore, the panel aimed to provide a platform of exchange for researchers working with archives and collections that include various media such as ethnographic objects, photographs, films, and manuscripts. The panel also aimed to provide a platform for the exchange of information between researchers from archives and museum collections. The speakers presented archives and collections, activities and projects related to them and discussed problems in making these collections visible, accessible and secure. The panel had six presentations, which are all covered in this special issue. After the panel and during the preparations for the present publication, we were able to gain two further contributions dealing with valuable collections in the UK (see Jones and Eyob in this issue), the provenance of which is currently highly debated due to the recent 150th anniversary of the Battle of Maqdala.¹

Questions of restitution, and shared heritage with source communities

Many collections and cultural assets from Africa are currently located in Europe and are inextricably linked with ideas of colonialism and imperialism. In the case of Ethiopia, questions of their origin, legitimacy to keep such objects in European collections and restitution arose immediately upon arrival of the objects. For example, directly after valuable objects were brought to England after the Battle of Maqdala, General Napier said that these objects should only be temporarily stored in the British Museum until Ethiopia had a stable government again to which the objects could be returned. The former British Prime Minister Gladstone regretted that the important and sacred
items were stolen from Ethiopia at all. A second well known case from Ethiopia is the stele from Aksum, which stood in Rome from 1937 to 2005. The stele was brought to Rome as spoils of war by order of Benito Mussolini in 1937 after the Abyssinian War. It was finally returned and re-erected in Aksum in 2008. In both cases there were long and partially successful negotiations about the restitution of cultural assets. Recently, the return of cultural assets to their societies of origin has once more been the subject of much debate. This can be seen, for example, in the much-discussed statements made by French President Emmanuel Macron in 2017. He has a sympathetic attitude towards the restitution of objects taken from African countries without consent during the colonial era and currently owned by French museums. Another example is the discussion about the opening of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, which will include the holdings of the Ethnological Museum. Since the redesign of the museum, the collections, which include objects captured by German colonial rulers, have been closely scrutinised and hotly debated.

Rather than joining current discussions of the origin and restitution of cultural assets, this special issue aims to debate the contents and current value of archives and collections and how they can be shared and used, especially with scholars and institutions in Ethiopia. Today, digitisation is a meaningful and easy way to share content from collections and archives. Of course, the sense of meaning depends on the type of collection. While digitalisation makes sense for photos (see Semenova and Thubauville this volume), books, manuscripts (see Eyob this volume), and other written material, it does not replace the question of restitution for objects and religious writings.

**Foreigners as authorities of the “authentic”**

Ethiopia is one of the few African countries where historical texts written by local people exist. However, documents in Amharic and Ge’ez are limited to the north of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Empire. Areas incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire at the end of the 19th century had no written languages and thus no texts written by the local population.

The articles of Pawłowska, Rubinkowska-Anioł and Yoshida address the fact that the historical texts described by them and written by foreigners are therefore the only historical sources of the respective regions or on the respective topics. The articles examine prejudices and misunderstandings that have arisen due to their production by foreigners and how we can or should discuss them today. The foreign authors established oral traditions, interviews and their own observations that were coloured by their own backgrounds. This gave Western explorers and academics authority, and the practices mentioned in the texts they wrote were considered “authentic”. This power of the author (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and traditions “invented” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) or revived by such is an important theme in social anthropology.
Contributions to this special issue

The articles of this special issue start with discussions of collections of Ethiopian objects in collections and museums outside Ethiopia. Alexandra Jones, curator at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London describes its Ethiopian collection. Many of the Ethiopian objects at the Victoria & Albert Museum can be traced back to the loot British troops took during the battle of Maqdala in 1868. To mark the 150th anniversary of these events, the museum arranged a display of around 20 objects connected to the British Expedition to Ethiopia. The display considers the role of these objects as witnesses to a significant and difficult period in Ethiopian and British history, addresses some of the questions and controversies surrounding objects of this nature in UK museums and aims to encourage a dialogue about objects collected during historic periods of conflict and promote discussion about access to these collections in museums today.

Sayuri Yoshida discusses the collection of Friedrich Julius Bieber (1873-1924), who visited Ethiopia, especially Kafa, at the beginning of the 20th century and is recognised as the foremost authority on ethnological research dealing with Kafa. Friedrich Julius Bieber left many objects and written documents concerning both Ethiopia and his daily life. Today, the collections are held by the World Museum, the District Museum of Hietzing, and the Austrian National Library in Vienna. His collections and archives are becoming known in Kafa. Today, the Kafa people refer to and use foreign researchers’ work to revive, reproduce, restore, and perform their traditional Kafa history and culture.

Aneta Pawłowska focuses on Polish collectors of Ethiopian art. The three famous personalities described by her were the forerunners of professional researchers. They focused on the rich and diverse Ethiopian art and culture: Stanisław Chojnacki (1915-2010), Waclaw Korabiewicz (1903-1994) and Stefan Strelcyn (1918-1981). Each of them dedicated his life and passion to the Christian culture of Ethiopia. Thanks to their work, some Polish museums, archives and libraries were enriched by collections of valuable Ethiopian art. Since Polish collections of Ethiopian artefacts are little known in the Ethiopian Studies, the article gives an important first insight.

Hanna Rubinkowska-Anioł presents the Ethiopian cross collection of Waclaw Korabiewicz, which is kept in the National Museum in Warsaw, and its history in the wider context of the Polish collections of Ethiopian artefacts. Korabiewicz not only laid the foundation for one of the largest collections of crosses in the world, but also devoted himself with great passion to researching the symbolism of Ethiopian crosses. His conclusions, especially concerning the classification of Ethiopian crosses and the importance of the symbolism of their elements, are still present in the literature dealing with the subject and are still important points of reference.
The following two articles focus on visual collections in Ethiopian Studies. Valeria Semenova describes the Ethiopian photograph collections of the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, St. Petersburg, Russia. The main stock of this Ethiopian collection was augmented by doctors sent to Abyssinia by the Russian Red Cross with a medical mission to support the Ethiopians during the war against Italy in 1895-1896. Her survey tries to classify the most popular subjects in this photograph collection, which has already been made accessible online.

Sophia Thubauville discusses the research activities and the extensive visual documentation of southern Ethiopia by the Frobenius Institute, and shows how the Institute today aims to make its archives accessible and visible. The former institute directors and Ethiopia researchers A.E. Jensen and E. Haberland were strongly influenced by their predecessor and founder Leo Frobenius. Frobenius and, thus also, Jensen and Haberland were intensively engaged in the visual documentation of cultures. Their first research trips to Ethiopia were accompanied by professional painters who drew sketches of landscapes, settlements and people. The researchers themselves supplemented the visual documentation with photographs and film footage, which led to the creation of a unique visual archive on Southern Ethiopia at the Frobenius Institute.

The two final articles deal with a central topic of archives and collections in Ethiopian Studies, namely with manuscript collections. Eyob Derillo, gives an overview of the collection of Ethiopian manuscripts at the British Library, and a recent exhibition dedicated to them. The Ethiopian collection in the library includes over 500 manuscripts most of which are written in Ge’ez and were acquired from the mid-eighteenth century onwards from military expeditions, travellers, and private collectors. Examples from the British Library’s collection of the Maqdala manuscripts (dating from 1,400-1,900) strongly reflect the intellectual and artistic achievements of Ethiopian scribes. Marking the 150th anniversary of the Abyssinia expedition, a first exhibition dedicated to the manuscripts was organised. As these collection items had never been exhibited or displayed before, the anniversary presented an ideal opportunity to give the Ethiopian collection the recognition it deserves.

Minako Ishihara presents her ongoing archival research in Muslim Oromo societies in Southwestern Ethiopia. She focuses on ‘books’, either printed or hand-written, kept by local Muslim intellectuals, especially Sufi Muslims. For local Muslim intellectuals, the books are not only media for preserving and transmitting knowledge, but possession itself is conceived of as a sign of prestige and power. Printed books are not only bought from bookshops, but are obtained through personal transmission. She concludes that as physical collection of books is unrealistic, the task of digitising local creativity (books) and heritage (buildings, photographs), and building databases is undoubtedly an urgent issue. Databases could be built on and interconnected, becoming
not only resources to future researchers, but also invaluable assets to the local society.

This special issue is an attempt to create a platform for the exchange of researchers working with archives and collections of Ethiopian Studies. The cases covered are limited and only a small range of topics is covered. This special issue is therefore only intended as a start, and we hope that future studies will continue and broaden this discussion.

References


Notes

1 The battle of Maqdala took place on 13 April 1868 when a British military expedition attempted to free British hostages taken by the then Abyssinian emperor Tewodros. After the British victory and suicide of the emperor British troops looted the city and took the treasures back to Britain where they entered collections in different ways.

2 See statements on the website of the British association Afromet: http://www.afromet.info/about_us_statements.html
THE COLLECTIONS OF F. J. BIEBER AND THE KAFA CULTURE: CONNECTING ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

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Introduction

Archives have significant value as primary sources for a broad range of academic disciplines. In areas where published texts are lacking, such as Ethiopia, archives elucidate the history and culture of the society and clarify the current situation of that society. However, the meaning and influence such archives provide for the people in the society must be discussed.

This paper aims to discuss new perspectives by combining archival research and anthropology. It focuses on the Kafa culture, the collections of Friedrich Julius Bieber (subsequently referred to as F. J. Bieber), recognised as the foremost authority on ethnological research dealing with Kafa in southwestern Ethiopia, and the significance of establishing archives from collections.

The paper first discusses Kafa and its history. After examining previous Kafa research, it concludes that the Kafa people refer to foreign researchers’ work when explaining their own history and culture. Second, the paper details the collections of F. J. Bieber and argues for the value of these collections and their impact on today’s Kafa and Ethiopian people. Third, the paper indicates the difficulties, possibilities, prospects, and issues of archival research. Finally, the paper discusses the future impact of the collections on the Kafa people.

The Kafa zone and research

The history of Kafa

874,716 people (Census, 2007) live in the Kafa zone located in southwestern Ethiopia, known as the birthplace of coffee. The Kafa kingdom was the most powerful state within the Kafa Highlands until 1897 and greatly influenced nearly all major historical developments of the Gonga and other peoples south of the Blue Nile (Lange, 1982 p. 180). This kingdom had rich resources, including slaves, coffee, musk, and other goods that were important to Red Sea trade with the Arabian Peninsula.

When Menelik II of the Ethiopian empire pursued conquests and the incorporation of many ethnic groups and kingdoms of the southern and western parts of Ethiopia in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Kafa king-
dom became a target. Although the Kafa kingdom had been invaded by the Ethiopian empire several times in the 1880s, it had successfully defended itself from these invasions. However, when the army of Menelik II was armed with modern technology, the situation drastically changed. Menelik II appointed Ras Wolde Giyorgis, who had much experience in battle, as commander of his army, and Kafa was invaded in 1897.

Kafa suffered devastating damage in the battle with the Ethiopian empire. When the Ethiopian empire conquered Kafa, houses and religious buildings were destroyed and burned, and many people died. The last Kafa king, Gakki Sherocchi, was captured and taken to Addis Ababa, the capital of Shawa and of the Ethiopian empire, to spend the rest of his life in captivity. The rich natural and human resources of Kafa were exploited by the Ethiopian empire, and the Kafa people lost their king and culture.

Conquest of the Kafa kingdom by the Ethiopian empire in 1897 and the subsequent oppression of the Kafa people triggered the loss of traditional Kafa society. The oppression of the Ethiopian empire prevented any resistance from the Kafa and made continuing their own culture and beliefs, or handing down traditions to future generations, difficult. The influence of the Ethiopian empire, particularly the Amhara culture and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, forced changes to the Kafa culture, including their clothing, and acculturation and conformity to Amhara customs. The Kafa people were forced to change their Kafa names to Amhara names or to names related to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

In 1936, Ethiopia became a colony of Italy. From 1936 to 1941, the Italians, because of their policy of resolving disputes among indigenous populations, encouraged the Kafa people to identify the land markers that defined their lineage and to re-establish their traditional land claims (Orent, 1970 p. 229). This allowed the Kafa to reconstruct the political organisation, royalty, and titled nobility of the dominant Kafa clans that were lost during the Ethiopian conquest.

However, after Haile Selassie I returned from Britain and became the emperor of Ethiopia, Kafa was again subjected to a loss of culture. Although some of the Kafa people resisted the Ethiopian empire in the early 1940s, the Kafa were a minority and held a peripheral position in the Ethiopian empire. Under the Derg regime from 1974 to 1991, differences in ethnicity or religion were denied; the regime aimed at having superficial harmony and unity that made it difficult for the Kafa people to express their ethnic identity.

In 1991, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), consisting of several ethnic political parties, was established under the flag of self-determination rights for the ethnic groups (“Nations, Nationalities, and
Peoples”). The EPRDF listed democratisation and a free-market economy as its pledge. Under the EPRDF federal constitution of 1995, every ethnic group was granted self-determination and the ability to emphasise and express its identity, culture, and history.

Under the self-determination provision, the Kafa were recognised as a distinct ethnic group and were then allowed to express their ethnic identity without any repression. For example, in public offices in the Kafa zone, the Kafa language became the official language in 2008, replacing Amharic, which had been used for administrative documents. In schools, the teaching language changed from Amharic to Kafa. Additionally, some place names were changed back to the names they held in the Kafa kingdom. In the late 2000s, construction related to Kafa culture and history was implemented. For example, the king’s palace of the Kafa kingdom was rebuilt. A field museum showing a traditional village was built, and a permanent exhibition about the culture and history of Kafa has been planned for the National Coffee Museum in Bonga, Kafa zone of southwest Ethiopia. There is a trend to revive and reconstruct the traditional culture and history in the Kafa zone (cf. Yoshida, 2018 p. 211).

**Kafa research and foreign researchers**

In Ethiopian Studies, historical research has concentrated on the history of northern Ethiopia and the Ethiopian empire. Areas conquered and incorporated into the Ethiopian empire at the end of the nineteenth century have been regarded as marginal to Ethiopia’s history. Because of the absence of written documents, the history of southern and western Ethiopia has not been fully explored. Thus, research on southern and western Ethiopia has been done mainly through anthropology. However, many elders with knowledge of the region’s oral tradition and history have passed away, creating difficulties in determining the history and lifestyle of the region’s people through conducting field work in present-day Ethiopia.

Europeans visited Kafa during the nineteenth century and left various records of these visits. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Kafa was visited by European travellers, explorers, and missionaries who tried to reach the kingdom in the midst of the wooded highlands of North-east Africa (e.g. Grühl, 1932). These Europeans provided rich descriptions of the history, geography, culture, custom, and language of the Kafa kingdom (e.g. Cecchi, 1886; Massaja, 1888; Bieber, 1920, 1923).

During the mid-twentieth century, research on Kafa focused on traditional Kafa society. This research investigated the history, political structure, social structure, and religion of the Kafa kingdom. In the 1960s, Orent (1969) conducted social anthropological research on the Kafa society and clarified its social structure and religion. In the 1970s, Lange (1982) made a comparative
study of the literature and field work from the historical viewpoint, thus clarifying the history of the Kafa kingdom. Research based on field work became popular, foreign researchers’ work such as that of Bieber and Cecchi continued to serve as a source of Kafa’s history.

**Foreign researchers quoted by local people**

The Kafa language has no alphabet; consequently no material written by the Kafa people exists. Additionally, elders with knowledge of the oral tradition and history of Kafa have passed away. Therefore, determining the former history and lifestyle of the Kafa people is nearly impossible not only for researchers but also for the Kafa people themselves, and the work done by foreign researchers who visited Kafa in the past plays an important role in understanding this culture.

Since 2005, the author has repeatedly encountered the same scenario: when the Kafa people discuss their culture and history, they quote foreign researchers. For example, in an interview about the history of Kafa, a Kafa man who worked at the cultural tourist bureau asked, “Have you read articles written by Orent and Lange?” Another informant referred to books about the history of Kafa that are popular in Ethiopia. Furthermore, another Kafa man said, “There is no written document about history written by the Kafa. Our Kafa history remains because the foreign researcher wrote our history.” Additionally, foreign researchers have been quoted by the political movement in Kafa (Yoshida, 2013 pp. 13-14).

The Kafa people learned about foreign researchers from books written in Amharic and published in Ethiopia. Three books on the history of the Kafa have been published and distributed in Ethiopia (as of 2019). These three books extensively cite the works of foreign researchers. For example, the book *Käfana Tarikàwà-kà 1390-1897 kà Anatoñiyò Šící* (History of Kafa 1390-1897 Antonio Shechi (sic)) written by a Kafa man named Täkle Shaligito (1992/93) bears the name of an Italian, Antonio Cecchi, in the title. Books by Argaw (1994) and Bekele (2004) cite many books and papers written by foreign researchers, such as Bieber, Cecchi, and Cerulli. In other words, their books play the role of introducing foreign literature about the Kafa. In addition, Kafa people who are studying at university will learn of books and articles written by foreign researchers, such as Orent and Lange, at the library. The Kafa people rarely raise any objections or criticisms to these authors and their works.

F. J. Bieber is especially well known by the Kafa people and is considered an authority in Kafa research. For example, a celebration that commemorated part of the Kafa zone being designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in June 2010 was held in Bonga. F. J. Bieber’s grandson, Klaus Bieber, was invited to the ceremony by the German NGO, Nature and Biodiversity Conservation
Union (NABU). At that time, the achievements of F. J. Bieber were honoured, and a street in Bonga was named “F. J. Bieber Avenue.”

F. J. Bieber and his collections

F. J. Bieber and his visit to Ethiopia

F. J. Bieber (Fig. 1) visited Ethiopia, including the Kafa region, at the beginning of the twentieth century. He is recognised as the foremost authority on ethnological research dealing with Kafa. He was born in 1873 in Vienna during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. His parents came from Brno, located in the present day Czech Republic, and they emigrated to Vienna after they were married.

When he was eight, F. J. Bieber received Quer durch Afrika: Gerhard Rohlfs’ und Verney Cameron’s Reisen (Across Africa: Gerhard and Verney Cameron’s travels) (Burmann, 1880) from his father as a Christmas present. Through this book, he became interested in Africa. Although F. J. Bieber wanted to study ethnology, his father died when he was thirteen, and the opportunity to pursue these studies formally was lost.

F. J. Bieber started an apprenticeship at a shoemaker’s shop. At the age of seventeen, he started off on a journey to see Africa. However, he was unable to complete his journey. Disappointed, he returned to Vienna and worked as a sales clerk at a local bookstore. This was a good opportunity for him to learn more about Africa from the books that surrounded him, and he taught himself ethnology. As he gained knowledge, he began giving public lectures about Africa and Ethiopia. Through these lectures, he became acquainted with two retired army officers, and he accompanied them on their journey to Sudan as an expert on Africa in 1892.
F. J. Bieber obtained a position at the Ministry of Trade in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy after his homecoming. He gave lectures about his experience visiting Africa and the possibility of trade between the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the Ethiopian empire. During this time, he mastered not only Amharic but also ethnology through self-education. These efforts provided him with the opportunity to visit Ethiopia as a specialist on Ethiopia and as an Amharic interpreter three times, in 1904, 1905, and 1909.

F. J. Bieber did not have an academic or scientific education. However, he left behind many achievements in Ethiopian Studies, his most distinguished contributions being his research about the Kafa. When F. J. Bieber visited Ethiopia as an interpreter in 1905, he visited Kafa from June to July. During his stay, he collected much information about Kafa’s history, language, culture, ethnicity, religion and politics. In his last years, he compiled his research on Kafa into a two-volume work entitled Kaffa: ein altkuschitisches Volksstum in Inner-Afrika. Nachrichten über Land und Volk, Brauch und Sitte der Kaffitscho oder Gonga und das Kaiserreich Kaffa (Kaffa: An ancient Cushitic people in Central Africa. News about land and people, customs and traditions of the Kafficho or Gong and the Kaffa Empire), published in 2 volumes, 1920 and 1923 (Bieber, 1920, 1923). Thus, F. J. Bieber contributed to the formation of the Kafa research framework. Although there is no doubt that his works are a valuable source, there is no denying that his work reflects his personal views as well as the academic trends of his times.  

The collections of F. J. Bieber

F. J. Bieber published books and many articles. In addition, he left behind both a collection of objects and written documents concerning Ethiopia and his daily life there. His collection includes ethnological objects from Ethiopia, instruments used on his journeys, photographs, books, and unpublished written documents such as diaries, drafts, memoranda, letters and postcards to his family and friends. Since the death of F. J. Bieber, his second son Otto and his family have kept these items in good condition.

The collections are held by the Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek), the World Museum Vienna (Weltmuseum Wien), the District Museum of Hietzing (Bezirksmuseum Hietzing) in Vienna, and by Klaus Bieber, the grandson of F. J. Bieber. Moreover, several letters that F. J. Bieber sent to Leo Viktor Frobenius are held by the Frobenius Institute located in Frankfurt, Germany.

The Austrian National Library possesses thirty-five groups of documents. There, the collection is entitled “The Estate of F. J. Bieber (Nachlaß Friedrich Julius Bieber)” and includes manuscripts, such as diaries, letters, handwritten maps and postcards. The World Museum Vienna possesses 257 ethnographic
objects from Ethiopia, such as clothes, textiles, accessories, ornaments, tableware, bedding, musical instruments and weapons. After the World Museum Vienna reopened in October 2017, these Ethiopian collections were exhibited in the Ethiopia and Benin exhibition room. The District Museum of Hietzing possesses more than 200 ethnological objects from Ethiopia, as well as personal belongings, photographs and pictures. F. J. Bieber’s ethnographic collections from his Ethiopian visit are on permanent exhibition in the Museum (Yoshida, 2016). Klaus Bieber keeps photographs, private letters, and diaries of F. J. Bieber.12

**The value of the collections of F. J. Bieber**

F. J. Bieber’s collections clarify the relationship between the only independent empire in Africa and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In addition, the history of Kafa from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century is revealed, and the contemporary situation is clarified. Therefore, the collections contribute not only to Ethiopia’s regional and national history but also to that of African-European relations.

The documents are a repository of information not available in F. J. Bieber’s published articles, papers, and books. For example, he wrote diary entries nearly every day during his Ethiopian journeys in 1904, 1905, and 1909. He wrote the date, time, place, and location, with latitude and longitude, in each entry. He provided names of the people he met each day, both Ethiopians and Europeans. These diaries clarify how his research was performed and who were his informants. The narratives differ depending on the social status and position of informants. Although the information about informants is quite important, he did not provide this in his books and articles. His diaries and photographs show that he was accompanied by Amhara soldiers and met socially high-status people. It is easy to imagine that this might have changed some of the information that was given to him by the Kafa people, who were afraid of these soldiers. He wrote and sent picture postcards and letters to his wife in Vienna as well. By comparing the content, dates, and places recorded in his diaries and on the postcards, a detailed itinerary of his travels can be determined.

F. J. Bieber collected the conversations and oral traditions of the Kafa people and wrote them in the Kafa language with Roman script. These documents are a kind of “raw” data and suggest how Bieber collected and faithfully wrote up people’s narratives. Although he knew the Amharic and Kafa languages, it is not known if he could speak fluently and whether he conducted his interviews in the Kafa language or through Amharic interpreters.

Many photographs are included in the collections that were taken in Ethiopia in 1904, 1905, and 1909. These provide additional information beyond
the actual images captured. For example, on the back of most printed photographs, F. J. Bieber and other persons noted information about the location and subject in German (sometimes in English and French)\textsuperscript{13} (Figs. 2 and 3). Other photographs have trimming marks where he used the photo in his publications (Figs. 4 and 5). In general, the process of writing, editing, and publishing books and articles is not revealed. However, these marks further illuminate his methods of writing, editing, and publishing his works.

![Figure 2](image)

**Fig. 2** Men from Gonga (front; unknown, K. Bieber).
The high social status of the central man is shown from his dress.

![Figure 3](image)

**Fig. 3** Descriptions on the photo of men from Gonga (back).
On top middle, handwriting states, “Gonga Guje Rasho, overseer of slaves in Amharic costume (Abbildung Nr. 20, Gonga, Gudsche rascho, Sklavenvogt in amharischer Tracht).”
Fig. 4 Abba Jifar of the Jimma kingdom and Mylius (front; 1905, K. Bieber).

Fig. 5 Trimming mark for publication by Otto Bieber seen on the photo of Abba Jifar of the Jimma kingdom and Mylius (back) (cf. Bieber, 1948 p. 117).

The ethnographic objects of the F. J. Bieber collection bring back evidence of the Ethiopian and Kafa people’s lives in the early 1900s, before modern and Western influences. More than half of the objects are everyday items in general use. It can occasionally be seen that some of these objects, such as tableware, are still being used in today’s Kafa. It is not known how he obtained these objects, but it is assumed many were given as gifts or purchased by him.

Detailed analysis of the collections of F. J. Bieber will make further understanding of Ethiopia and Kafa society possible. For this analysis, organising and utilising the collections is necessary.
Archival research on the F. J. Bieber collection

Archival work and its issues
To utilise and evaluate the F. J. Bieber collections as primary sources for the benefit of future generations, the collections must be arranged so that the details of each object are clear. However, this archival work requires various specialist skills and knowledge. For example, when arranging or elucidating objects, special knowledge, such as that on a specific period, area, society, or language, is indispensable. In other words, this archive requires knowledge about Kafa, Ethiopia, and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

However, researchers with such professional expertise do not necessarily have experience with archival research nor have the skills or knowledge to deal with objects and their arrangement and digitisation, and database creation. Ethnological objects particularly require museology knowledge and skills. Moreover, special features may be required for the arrangement or classification methods for each country. Therefore, cooperation across disciplines and institutes is important. The documents also present language barriers. Most of F. J. Bieber’s documents are written in German. The handwriting is kurrentschriften, used in the German bloc until the mid-twentieth century. Even if a person can read German, reading kurrentschriften requires additional knowledge. Therefore, the documents must be transcribed into block letters.

Digital archiving

After arrangement and detailed analysis of the collection, the digital archives must be established, and the digital data must be publicly released on the Internet. Sharing these digital archives would not only promote academic research but would also provide opportunities for people living in Ethiopia to access the collection.

The F. J. Bieber collections are divided among several institutes. Thus, many challenges and issues face the digital archiving of the collections kept by the District Museum of Hietzing and in private collections (i.e. that of Klaus Bieber). First, implementing the digital archiving and disclosure of collections owned by private individuals and small institutes is difficult. In general, digital archiving and its disclosure is implemented using the systems and servers of institutes which possess the collections. Most institutes, including museums, libraries, and universities, deal with their own collections and do not handle materials they do not own. In addition, digital archiving requires various specialised skills and knowledge. For example, securing, managing, and protecting the data are essential, and the system and site must be permanently operated and maintained. This requires continuous funding.

Since 2018, the author has been working to establish digital archives of the F. J. Bieber collections, especially focusing on the collections possessed by the
District Museum of Hietzing and Klaus Bieber, with the Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Establishing digital archives for the F. J. Bieber collections on the Internet will enable a broad sharing of the collections, which are currently distributed across several locations internationally. It will also provide an essential starting point for mutual dialogue and discussion regarding joint use. The intention is not only to facilitate academic research but also to give easy access to the Ethiopian people and encourage them to learn more of their history and to offer their own contributions to the digital archives.

Conclusion

The F. J. Bieber collections elucidate the history and culture of Kafa and Ethiopia, both historically and currently, providing insights that are impossible to develop through present-day field work. The collections hold value as the primary source for various academic disciplines, history, cultural anthropology, and international-relations.

The collection is important and valuable for the Kafa people as they reconsider their culture, history, and identity. Since the Kafa language has no script, no historical record written by the Kafa exists. In addition, many of the elders who knew the history and oral tradition of Kafa have passed away. The Kafa people have no choice but to depend on foreign research to investigate their history and culture. However, there are problems and pitfalls in this. What have been described by foreigners are stories about the history and culture that were told by people who were in privileged positions and had access to foreigners. The nature of the information differs depending on the informant. For example, explanations of Kafa society by government officials and by farmers would not be the same. In addition, the stories were reconstructed and reassembled by foreigners, with their own bias. As mentioned above, the Kafa people refer to and use foreign researchers’ work to revive, reproduce, restore, and perform their traditional Kafa history and culture. However, the published books and papers that the Kafa people refer to reflect the intentions and interests of their authors.

Likewise, what the Kafa people desire to revive, reproduce, restore, and perform is not the traditional Kafa history and culture, but rather “the traditional Kafa history and culture” that contains the thoughts, interpretations, and intentions of the Kafa people today. In other words, it is a representation of the history and culture of Kafa that the Kafa people think is authentic and want to show to others. Behind this, there may be the political interests of the Kafa people who want to insist on the uniqueness of their history and culture for political reasons. If “traditional Kafa history and culture” could be presented to the Kafa people in the form of museum exhibitions and events, it might deeply influence their historical view and identity, irrespective of age or sex.
It is hard to consider at present that the F. J. Bieber collections have any immediate influence on people’s historical view and identity of Kafa, because the collections are held by Europeans around Austria. For many Kafa people, visiting Austria to see the collections is not easy. Establishing a digital archive of the F. J. Bieber collections on the Internet would provide the Kafa people with the opportunity to access the collections. However, the impact and influence on the Kafa people in the future will need to be examined after the digital archives of F. J. Bieber have been published internationally.

Archives make dialogue between past research and present people possible. By combining archive research on the F. J. Bieber collections and anthropological research in Kafa, Ethiopia, it will be possible to understand how Kafa historical perspective and identity can be transformed and reconstructed in accordance with the times.

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References


Notes

1 The area conquered by and included in the Ethiopian empire in the second half of the nineteenth century has politically been given peripheral positioning due to historical circumstances.

2 The reason for this focus is due to the ancient Ethiopian empire, whose ancestor was Menelik I (born around the tenth century, B.C., the son of King Solomon of the ancient Israeli kingdom and the Queen of Sheba). Additionally, many
manuscripts written in Ge’ez, such as church documents, royal chronologies, and administrative documents, have been recorded and kept from northern Ethiopia and the Ethiopian empire, and these manuscripts have attracted the attention of historians.

3 The author conducted field work in the Kafa zone from 2005 to 2013. The field work from 2005 to 2006 was conducted under the title, “Historiographical investigation of ethnic conflict in Northeast Africa” (Project Leader, Prof. Katsuyoshi Fukui, Kyoto University, JSPS17251014). The field work conducted from February to March 2008 took place under the aegis of the Global COE Program at Nagoya University: “Hermeneutic study and education of textual configuration” (Project Leader, Prof. Syoichi Sato). The research performed from 2008 to 2009 was funded by a Research Fellowship for Young Scientists (JSPS08J08228). The research conducted in 2010 was funded by the Shibusawa Ethnological Foundation for graduate students. The Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa, also supported the research.

4 During my fieldwork, a Kafa man told me that his elder brother was a local research assistant of Orent in the Kafa zone in the 1960s. It seems that the Kafa people may have relied on Orent’s research because they know how Orent conducted his research with his Kafa assistant.

5 Täkle and Bekele were high school teachers. Argaw worked as a Kafa zonal official in the Derg regime. They are well known in the Kafa zone. Some Kafa people who study in universities indicate that most of the contents of the books written by Täkle, Argaw, and Bekele are citations, and are doubtful of their academic significance.

6 See more details in Holzapfel (2012).

7 There is no information as to how he became interested in Ethiopia and especially in the Kafa.

8 In F. J. Bieber’s collections, there are postcards and letters showing his academic connections.

9 Otto Bieber did his best to spread his father’s work. For example, Otto introduced the life and achievements of F. J. Bieber through general lectures. Additionally, Otto published a book about his father (Bieber, 1948). Otto also held an exhibition in Vienna and elsewhere of the ethnographic objects that F. J. Bieber collected in Ethiopia and exhibited the collection of F. J. Bieber in the African room in his apartment (cf. Bieber, 2015).

10 The World Museum Vienna was formerly known as the Ethnology Museum (Völkerkundemuseum) and changed its name in April 2013.

11 Every document kept by the Austrian National Library is digitised and downloading the PDF images is permitted. The digitisation is funded by grants from JSPS project “Save the collections of Friedrich Julius Bieber: To clarify the Ethiopian history among people who have no letters” (JSPS17H04775).

12 It is planned that the collections held by Klaus Bieber will be donated to the Austrian National Library in the near future.

13 The handwriting in English and French is not F. J. Bieber’s handwriting.
The project carried out from April 2015 to March 2016 was funded by the Sasakawa Scientific Research Grant from the Japan Science Society, and the title of the project was “Review of the history and culture of Kafa in Ethiopia in the early twentieth century: through the research on collections of Friedrich Julius Bieber.” The research performed from April 2016 to March 2017 under the project “Making digital images and an inventory of manuscripts of Ethiopian ethnographic collections in the early twentieth century at the museum in Austria” was funded by the Inamori Grants from the Inamori Foundation. From April 2017 to the present (supported until 2021), funding is received from grants-in-aid for scientific research from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan. The research is being conducted under the title, “Save the collections of Friedrich Julius Bieber: to clarify the Ethiopian history among people who have no letters in the early twentieth century” (JSPS17H04775).

JSPS = Japan Society for the Promotion of Science