

Pastoral Livelihoods and Conflict Dynamism among the Hamer in Ethiopia

Culture, history and human-nature relationship in a changing ecological setting

1st year student

Namibia Field School

Research Area: Hamer Woreda in South Omo Zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples`

Regional State, Ethiopia

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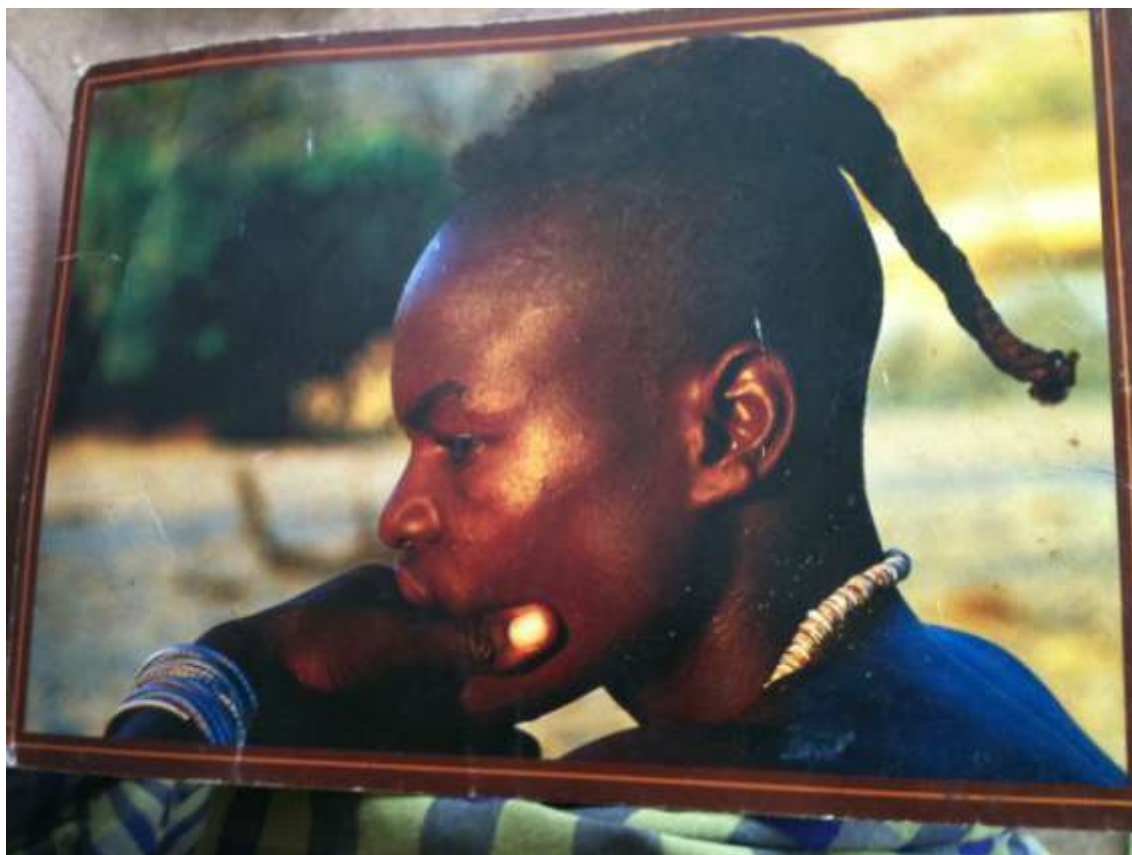
Key words: Hamer, livelihood, livestock, conflict, culture, ecology

Research Background and Objectives

The study was conducted in South Omo Zone, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples` Regional State among the Hamer Pastoral communities with an aim to identify natural resource bases and livelihood assets. It also intended find out any activities showing the use of power to diversify livelihood options, and cultural rituals related to livelihood assets, their consumption, acquisition and distribution patterns. Other research interests were identification of institutions and/or ceremonies associated to acquisition, use and dispersion and management of livestock, decision making and contribution of GuD¹ and GeD² (Livestock herds at and away from home respectively) to the household economy, ecology, power status and rituals as well as their linkage to causes of conflict with neighboring tribes.

While addressing the above objectives, I found out a strong connection between livelihood, culture and ecology. During the research I was able to analyze the spatial and temporal destocking and restocking mechanisms between the GuD and GeD in view of socio-cultural interactions and influence of ecology in a pastoral livelihood. Unlike previous finding from a German scholar (Ivo Strecker), I got the impression that the Hamer are predominantly pastoral with an increasing agro-pastoral engagement. That links my study of the Hamer with the Himba of Namibia is a result of my investigation opening a research gap on the socio-ecology of the historical connections between the two people. My hypothesis about a gradual transformation of livelihoods in response to anthropogenic and nature induced asset shocks in its livelihood system proved to commence as well.

A Himba boy appearing in a postcard



A picture sent from Namibia to the Hamer (received from a Hamer man)

A fare-well party in Wegnarki Lika village, Turmi, Ethiopia



Hamer women giving me a blessing up on my completion of the first phase of my research and stay with them

Keskie River



Keskie River after floods with little water wetting the dry sand beds