

Following the Caravans: Interdisciplinary Study to Integrate Chinese and African Relations in Ethiopia

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Abstract : The aim of this project is to study the Chinese presence in Ethiopia, following the path of the last salt caravans from Danakil to Tigray region. Official estimates of the number of Chinese in Africa vary widely; on the continent, there are increasingly diverse groups of Chinese migrants in terms of language, dialect, class, education, and employment. Based on this and on a very general state of the art, it was decided to increase the studies on this phenomenon, documenting the extraction of salt and following the sellers in the north of the country. The project is unique and allows you to admire a landscape that will soon change, due to the construction of infrastructure that is changing the dynamics of movement and sales. To carry out this study, interdisciplinary investigation methods were integrated, such as landscape archeology, historiographic research, participatory anthropology, geopolitics, and cultural anthropology and ethnology. There are two main objectives of the research. The first was an analysis of risk perceptions to predict what will happen to these populations and how the territory will be modified, trying to monitor the growth of infrastructure in the country and the effects it will have on the population. Thanks to the use of GIS, some roads created by Chinese companies that worked in the area have been georeferenced. The second point was to document the life and rituals of Ethiopian populations, in order not to lose the aspects of uniqueness that risk being lost. The local interviews have garnered impressions and criticisms from the local population to understand whether the Chinese presence is perceived as a threat or a solution. Among the most exclusive interviews, there are those made to Afar leaders in the Logya area and some Coptic representatives in the Wukro area. To make this project even more unique, the Coptic rituals of Gennà and Timkat have been documented, unique expressions of a millennial tradition. The aim was to understand whether the Maoist presence began to influence the religious rites and forms of belief present in the country.

Keywords : China, Ethiopia, GIS, risk perceptions

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