

At The Step of a Dromedary: Interdisciplinary Study to Integrate Chinese and African Relations in Ethiopia Before and After The Covid-19

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Abstract

The author holds that 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 in a multidisciplinary documentation.

The first part of the research was carried out before Covid-19. In the immediate aftermath there was a civil war that is continuing to rage. New research is currently underway in the post Pandemic to document how Covid-19 and the civil war are changing Ethiopia. The current political situation has made the return to Ethiopia complex.

There are two main objectives of the research. The first is based on the sociology of work, which allows monitoring the growth of infrastructure built by Chinese workers and the perception of risk of the Ethiopian population of Tigray in the post-pandemic period and civil war. Thanks to the use of GIS (Geographic Information System) some roads created by Chinese companies that worked in the area have been geo-referenced. The second point is to document the life of the Ethiopian and Chinese population, expanding the discourse of gender anthropology, collecting interviews in situ and online in the post-Covid-19 period. The interviews were made to the Ethiopian population of different ages, genders and social classes. The interviews were also obtained from the Chinese side, to understand the development of their work. A remote interview was conducted in November 2022 which showed the current situation and how much the Chinese presence can affect the restoration of peace between Tigray and the central government in Addis Ababa.

Official estimates of the number of Chinese in Africa vary widely; on the African continent there are increasingly heterogeneous groups of Chinese migrants, in terms of: language, dialect, class, education and occupation. On the basis of this and a very general state of the art, it was decided to increase the studies of the development of the Belt Road Initiative and

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of what surrounds the phenomenon. The civil war started in Tigray in 2020 and still ongoing, makes the project constantly evolving. For the realization of this study, interdisciplinary investigation methods were integrated, such as: landscape archeology, work sociology, gender anthropology and ethnography.

Keywords: China, Ethiopia, Work Sociology, Gender Anthropology, Belt Road Initiative