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Personalia

In memoriam Siegfried Pausewang (1937–2012)

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Personalia

his own. His passing away leaves a big gap in all our lives. A large number of people attended his funeral at Holy Trinity Cathedral on Ethiopian Good Friday, 13 April. The Patriarch, *Abunä* Pāwlos V, spoke warmly about Afāwārq setting an example of an Ethiopian artist who worked hard throughout his life. Unusually for a church, his funeral oration by his friend, Ayalneh Mulat, elicited applause. An oration, also in Amharic, was earlier given at Mäsqäl Square, by our son Alula, in whom Afāwārq took a paternal interest. When we were living in London in the 1980s, Afāwārq came to visit us. As he left – immaculately dressed – to enter his taxi, a woman passer-by exclaimed: “He is larger than life.” He was just that – a unique and flamboyant personality – and friend.

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On Friday 13th April 2012, Dr. Siegfried Pausewang passed away, some months after he had been diagnosed with cancer. He had been actively, although with some reservation, planning for his continued work for Ethiopia and Ethiopian Studies up to only a few days before he died, and had unassumingly asked if the door could be kept open for the eventuality of his participation at the 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Dørre Dawa later this year, in a panel on land tenure and development in

Ethiopia. Although he had informed us about his serious diagnosis, we were totally unprepared for the sad news that the cancer had taken him away.

Siegfried Pausewang was born 2nd February 1937 in Sudetenland, the German-speaking part of Czechoslovakia. Towards the end of World War II his father was killed, and at the breakdown of the Nazi regime, the German-speaking population was driven away from their homes. Siegfried and his remaining family – his mother and five siblings, aged four to sixteen years – set out on a long trail through a war ridden Europe. After months of fighting for survival they arrived at a refugee camp in the Western zone of Germany.

Siegfried seldom talked about his childhood experiences of the war, but when he occasionally did, it was both fascinating to listen to and gave meaning and context to the person and scholar we came to know him as; a man with a sincere, serious and untiring engagement for marginalized and oppressed people. His life trajectory and his academic career were coloured by this engagement. His Ph.D. dissertation in Sociology at the University of Marburg (1967) was an analysis of the development of fascism in Germany. Throughout his career, he combined an analytical interest in political systems and ideologies with a deep concern for people living under different political and economic conditions, particularly in Ethiopia. There is a long and consistent line from his early engagement as a teacher at courses for political consciousness in Germany in the early 1960s (*Studienkreis für politische Bildung*, Nordrhein-Westfalen 1961–65) to the Training Initiative for Democracy in Ethiopia, in which Siegfried was engaged as a consultant from 1994 onwards. From 1980 to 1984 he lived in Zambia with his family, working as the Head of a German Volunteer Service in the country.

Among Norwegian scholars of Ethiopian Studies Siegfried was the unchallenged veteran. His post-doctoral academic career started at Haile Selassie I University where he was engaged as an assistant professor of Sociology from 1967–1971. Here he taught “Sociology of Development in Ethiopia” and established a network with Ethiopian intellectuals, many of whom were later to become prominent figures in the Ethiopian political and academic scene. He also developed a familiarity with Ethiopian realities as they were lived and experienced by common Ethiopians, both in the towns and in the countryside. One of his early contributions to a better understanding of Ethiopian rural realities, and how to study them, was a book entitled *Methods and Concepts of Social Research in a Rural Developing Society – A critical appraisal based on experience in Ethiopia* (Weltforum Verlag, München, 1973). This work not only supported a methodological approach with a high degree of attention and respect for empirical reality and variation, it gave also a valuable and rare insight into the Ethiopian rural realities of the time, through the case study that followed the methodological arguments in the book. It became an

important source of knowledge about the Ethiopian society – and how to approach it as social scientists – for scholars after him.

Siegfried married his Åse before he went to Ethiopia, and both their children, Elin and Dag, were born there. In 1972 the family moved back to Norway, where Siegfried took up a position as a lecturer in Rural Sociology at the Agricultural University of Norway, Ås. He was also a lecturer in Sociology at the universities of Oslo and Bergen, before he settled with his position as a senior research fellow at the Christian Michelsen Institute (CMI) in Bergen in 1977. At CMI, a major, independent research institute with a broad portfolio of projects related to economic, social and political development, he worked primarily with Ethiopian issues on development and democratization.

Siegfried was a scholar with a broad competence and a large network. He generously shared his knowledge and time for the benefit of the advancement of Ethiopian Studies. He took the lead as an editor of a number of books dealing with the prospects of peace, development and democracy in Ethiopia⁵ and wrote numerous articles, book chapters and reports in English, Norwegian and German.

Siegfried Pausewang also had a great humanitarian spirit and was extremely engaged in the difficult situation of Ethiopians in exile in Norway and elsewhere. He shared his concerns with the Norwegian public in the media, and also served as an expert witness in court cases related to Ethiopian asylum seekers at a number of occasions. In the courtrooms, like in academia and the public sphere, he eloquently combined his insight into high-level politics with ordinary, grass-roots perspectives and the daily lives of the common Ethiopian citizen.

Siegfried will be deeply missed by colleagues and friends in Norway, in Ethiopia, and in many other countries. We have lost a great humanist, human rights activist and scholar. As his colleagues and friends we mourn his departure but celebrate his memory. We are certain that the legacy he has left in his numerous publications will live a long life and inspire generations to come.

⁵ S. PAUSEWANG et.al. (eds.), *Ethiopia: Rural Development Options*, London: Zed Books, 1990; S. PAUSEWANG – ABEBE ZEGEYE (eds.), *Ethiopia: Society in Change*, London: British Academic Press, 1994; S. PAUSEWANG – K. TRONVOLL – L. AALEN (eds.), *Ethiopia since the Derg: A Decade of Democratic Pretension and Performance*, London: Zed Books, 2002; S. PAUSEWANG – BAHRU ZEWEDE (eds.), *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below*, Uppsala – Addis Ababa: Nordic Africa Institute, 2002; G. M. SØRBØ – S. PAUSEWANG (eds.), *Prospects for Peace, Security and Human Rights in Africa's Horn*, Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2004.