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Review

YIRGA GELAW WOLDEYES, *Native Colonialism: Education and the Economy of Violence Against Traditions in Ethiopia*

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schehen unentdeckt beobachteten. Auf ihre Berichte vertrauend, schätzt Ian Campbell, dass allein in Laga Wäld 1.200 bis 1.600 Mönche, Priester, und Pilger erschossen wurden—fast ausnahmslos Männer. Eine der wichtigsten Entdeckungen des Buches besteht darin, dass auf einer zweiten Exekutionsstätte, einem Tal namens Engečča, am 26. Mai noch einmal 500 bis 600 im Kloster Däbrä Libanos gefangen gesetzte Menschen erschossen und in einem Massengrab verscharrt wurden. Zuvor waren sie nach Däbrä Bərhan verschleppt worden. Wiederum erfolgte der Massenmord nicht unbeobachtet. Campbells Recherchen kommen zum Schluss, dass in einem der scheusslichsten Gräueltaten, welche die Italiener im besetzten Äthiopien verübten, vier Mal mehr Menschen den Tod fanden, als bisher in der Forschung bekannt war. Das ist ein Aufsehen erregender Befund, der viele weitere Fragen aufwirft, unter anderem die, weshalb die italienischen Hauptverantwortlichen für dieses Verbrechen nach 1945 nie juristisch von der internationalen Gemeinschaft zur Rechenschaft gezogen wurden.

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YIRGA GELAW WOLDEYES, *Native Colonialism: Education and the Economy of Violence Against Traditions in Ethiopia* (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 2017). 236 pp., index. Price: \$29.95. ISBN: 978-1-56902-509-3 (HB), 978-1-56902-510-9 (pb).

Yirga Gelaw's *Native Colonialism: Education and the Economy of Violence Against Traditions in Ethiopia* is an academic break-through in the area of modern education in Ethiopia, and successfully highlights what went wrong in education in twentieth-century Ethiopia. *Native Colonialism* argues that, even though Ethiopians were never subjected to the direct rule of European colonialism, they later developed a debilitating colonial-like consciousness that entrenched itself in the school curricula. This, he argues, has resulted in the active destruction and humiliation of tradition. The central argument is that, through their awareness of the power the West wielded, Ethiopian elites in the twentieth century created a system of epistemological violence which considered traditional forms of knowledge production to be backward and irrelevant as compared to Western education.

The book is organized into six principal chapters, with a Preface by Ephraim Isaac; the arguments presented in the book are developed chronologically and thematically. Yirga's first three chapters lay the foundation for the thesis as he navigates from defining key terms of the book to introducing the reader to the traditional thought and epistemology of Ethiopia. Fol-

lowing this, the book progresses chronologically, addressing the topic of when and how violence against traditions began, and how it continued to develop up to the present-day. Further, Yirga's thesis is consolidated by a historical analysis of the development of 'modern' education in Ethiopia in the last century. Beginning with Ḥaylā Śəllase's reign, Yirga sets out a path of exploration of Ethiopia's education system and the violence used against traditional systems of education. Detailed examination of this violence is presented in Chapter 5. In a critical analysis, Yirga presents the educational system of contemporary Ethiopia in conversation with the epistemological tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. By arguing that 'centeredness' and 'rootedness' are crucial for any individual to start contributing to and engaging in the betterment of their society, Yirga shows the dilemma and crisis of the modern Ethiopian educational system (p. 190).

Yirga's book is particularly striking for the breadth of its literature. He weaves an interesting narration of epistemic violence, by relating Ethiopia's history in a manner similar to that of Valentin Y. Mudimbe (1994),¹ Achille Mbembe (2001),² Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1982),³ among others, all of whom are scholars whose works on post-colonial and colonial Africa have thus far excluded Ethiopia. For a country that prides itself in never having been colonized, Yirga confronts the 'educated' class of Ethiopia and the generation that toppled Ḥaylā Śəllase's monarchy with an evaluation of their successive policies on education. He writes,

Western knowledge serves as a dominant epistemic location for Ethiopian elites to present their ideas as universal, neutral and objective truths, simultaneously ignoring the fact that western knowledge is itself local (not universal) and promoting Western epistemology as the only basis of knowledge. (p. 13)

The links between education and development, traditional education and modernity are comprehensively disentangled in this book, in which Yirga is clearly of the same mind as other notable scholars like Tekeste Negash and Mulugeta Wodajo,⁴ who have argued previously that the alienation of tradi-

¹ V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, London: James Currey, 1988).

² A. Mbembe, *On the postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

³ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Devil on the Cross* (Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers, 1982).

⁴ Tekeste Negash, *The Crisis of Ethiopian Education: Implications for Nation-Building*, Uppsala Reports on Education, 29 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1990); Mulugeta

tional education can only be detrimental to the socio-political development of Ethiopia. Yirga writes, 'people should not be disconnected from their traditional experiences because their experiences embody the most important resources for their education. Only in this way, education becomes an internally driven and dynamic cultural experience' (p. 93). More importantly, his reference to globally acclaimed writers on colonialism gives him a broader perspective than those works that cut Ethiopia off from the African continent, and generally from other parts of the world. One key example is his use of Edward Said's *Orientalism* to demonstrate how native Ethiopians have fostered a concept of their own country similar to the European concept of the Orient analysed by Said.

The book is the product of extensive research from within both traditional and modern educational institutions in Ethiopia. Yirga's own experiences as a student both in Lalibäla and the monastery of Daga ሁጵጵጵ, his 'teaching career as a law lecturer' (p. 6) in Addis Abäba, as well as his Masters and PhD courses at Curtin University on the 'relevance and significance of education in Ethiopia' (p. 6) show the connections between his philosophy and the book's thesis. Moreover, his sources include first-hand personal interviews and research he conducted in both traditional educational institutes and in universities and high schools in Addis Abäba and Lalibäla. Further, his thesis is placed comfortably within research drawn from international and local scholars as well as from facts taken from World Bank reports and from the Ethiopian government's statutory policies regarding education. His narrative is strongly and consistently backed by historians such as Bahru Zewde, while, at the same time, he challenges the narratives of these very scholars. Yirga's book is exceptional in that it posits a challenge to historians of twentieth-century Ethiopia who viewed the elite as positive creators of change.⁵

Another strength is that Yirga avoids the trap of romanticizing tradition. From the beginning, he clearly highlights the fact that he does not fall into the school of thought which preaches globalization as the force that is homogenizing all societies or traditions as victims of this process (p. 16). His point is that, ideally, a mix of Western and Ethiopian traditional education is necessary in contemporary Ethiopia. He avoids bifurcated concepts and

Wodajo, 'Postwar Reform in Ethiopian Education', *Comparative Education Review*, 2/3 (1959), 24–30.

⁵ Cf. Bahru Zewde, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002).

follows a conciliatory approach throughout the book to concepts usually considered to be at opposite ends of the continuum.

However, Yirga fails to recognize the book by *Liqä Səltanat* Habtä-Maryam Wärqnäḥ called *Ṭəntawi yä'ityopya təmhərt* (no date but, based on a note on the inner cover, the text was published around 1970 CE),⁶ a well-known work on traditional Ethiopian education. In Yirga's book, Chapter 3 bases its description of Ethiopian traditional schools by focusing on the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwəḥədo Church, based on Ephraim Isaac (1971),⁷ Getnet Tamene (1998),⁸ and Yirga's own experience. On the whole, Yirga's book lacks secondary sources from Ethiopian Orthodox Church-educated scholars and *Liqä Səltanat* Habtä-Maryam's book would have deserved some attention, as it represents the concerns of a traditionally educated man and church scholar about the future of traditional education during Emperor Ḥaylä Šəllase's time, when the Church had lost its monopoly over education in Ethiopia. Moreover, recognition of the book would have given readers solid evidence of the fact that there were church scholars who were actively discussing the educational system. Yirga argues that colonialism is a system that is constantly in struggle with those it wants to dominate, and that a colonial-like system was developed within Ethiopia through education. *Liqä Səltanat* Habtä-Maryam's book describes precisely this struggle between the elite of the new schools and those of the traditional schools. Yirga's book seems to present church scholars as being passive in relation to the development of modern education, while *Liqä Səltanat* Habtä-Maryam's work shows their attempts to maintain, document, and transfer the traditional school system to future generations.

In conclusion, I highly recommend the book to any reader interested in understanding contemporary Ethiopia and particularly to those involved in drafting, editing, and contributing to the educational policies of the country. Yirga's book serves as a key 'call for a corrective approach' (p. 203), and is aimed directly at policy makers such as the Ministry of Education and at all those interested in the future of Ethiopia. It recommends a shift in educational policies towards a focus on traditions by constantly highlighting the idea that traditional education systems and indigenous knowledge sites

⁶ Habtä-Maryam Wärqnäḥ, ጥንታዊ የኢትዮጵያ ትምህርት (*Ṭəntawi yä'ityopya təmhərt*) (Addis Abāba: Bərhanənnā Sālam mattāmiya bet, n.d.).

⁷ Ephraim Isaac, 'Social Structure of the Ethiopian Church', *Ethiopia Observer*, 14/4 (1971), 240–288.

⁸ Getnet Tamene, 'Features of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Clergy', *Asian and African Studies*, 7/1 (1998), 87–104.

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should have a leading role in Ethiopian education. Yirga challenges the way in which historians, such as Bahru Zewde, have depicted the educated elite of twentieth-century Ethiopia, by presenting them for what they are—agents of colonialism, demonstrating culpable indifference to the importance of traditions they consistently disregarded in favour of Western education. Finally, Yirga leaves the reader to ponder the possibility of developing a curriculum that integrates both traditional and modern education. The author stresses the need for compromise and for a reconciliation of traditional and modern education, as well as the importance of indigenizing education so that local people are able to create knowledge about themselves, from what they observe and see around them. The goal then, according to Yirga, is to develop an epistemology with Ethiopia rather than the West, as the centre of education.

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ULRICH BRAUKÄMPER, *Afrika 1914–1918. Antikolonialer Widerstand jenseits der Weltkriegsfronten*, Studien zur Kulturkunde, 130 (Berlin: Reimer, 2015). 212 pp., 10 tables. Price: €39.00. ISBN: 978-3-496-01548-2.

The hundredth anniversary of the First World War (henceforth WWI) has generated great scholarly interest in the conflict. Many new research projects on the Great War have been conducted, documentaries have been made, and exhibitions aimed at a broader audience have been organized. In comparison to the previous more scientific productions, many of the new research projects about WWI also broaden the geographical perspective. In the last years, in accordance with leading trends in transnational and global history, the research on this war, which has traditionally been seen as a crucial moment in *European* history (the *Urkatastrophe*), has paid growing attention to the analysis of warlike events in *non-European* regions. Thus, the African continent too has been integral to these investigations, not only because of its colonial ties with European countries, but also for its political and economical connections with other continents. However, despite the importance of including Africa in the studies on WWI, the topics of the new research have largely been limited to European agencies, and mainly related to the colonial territories. For this reason, the book reviewed here is particularly original: it investigates WWI in Africa, but from the specific perspective of a local phenomenon, namely anticolonial resistance during the World War. In particular, it underlines the crisis of colonial rule as seen by the African population, and their