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In memoriam Richard David Greenfield (1931–2008)

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Richard David Greenfield (* London, 10 January 1931, † Oxford, 1 June 2008) made a major contribution to the knowledge of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa as a historian, teacher and opinion-leader.

Richard Greenfield graduated from prestigious British universities (Cambridge and London) cultivating a special interest in the history of Africa, which was just beginning to attain academic recognition at that time. After reading geography at Selwyn College, Cambridge, he worked in various African colleges and universities. Apart from the Ethiopian interlude that was so pivotal to his career, he held senior academic and administrative positions in Tanganyika (where he met the young Julius Nyerere), his beloved Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Sudan, Somalia and finally Eritrea. He also taught at the State University of New York and Northwestern University, and from 1977 to 1981 he was a Senior Academic Member at St Antony's College, Oxford and at Queen Elizabeth House in the Department of International Development at Oxford University.

The cornerstone of Greenfield's scholarly activity is unanimously acknowledged to be his *Ethiopia: a new political history* (Pall Mall Press, London 1965, pp. 516) which was a seminal book owing to its successful holistic approach to the study of the Ethiopian empire. Despite Greenfield's obvious affection for Ethiopia, where he lived for some years between the late 50s and early 60s, when working at the University of Addis Abäba (then named after Ḥaylä Śällase), the local authorities severely disapproved of the book. What irritated them most was Greenfield's unconcealed criticism of the incapacity of the autocracy to tackle the challenges of the progress that, to some extent, Ḥaylä Śällase himself had promoted with his own innovative and modernising leadership. Greenfield's narrative is attentive of the *longue durée* of Ethiopian history and perspicuously combining the institutional, conceptual, and social fractures with the pattern of a substantial continuity, provides the reader with the necessary tools to grasp the enduring significance of the vicissitudes of such a complex and many-sided saga. Greenfield wrote the book in the hectic aftermath of the coup attempted by the two brothers Mängəstu and Gärmame Nəway in December 1960. The tune is sympathetic with the idealism which inspired the failed coup when, for the first time, sections of the army and students coalesced against the feudal regime. Africa's wind of change blew across Ethiopia as

well bringing a new political and social awakening. Greenfield believed that Ethiopia was expecting its Nasser or its Castro to get rid of corruption and paternalism. He was an eyewitness to the dramatic events of 1960 and inferred that life in Ethiopia would never be the same as before. Perhaps Greenfield over-estimated an episode that after all was limited in its scope and unable to mobilize enough consensus in the society. Nonetheless, the epilogue to his impressive synthesis of Ethiopia on the verge of either collapse or renewal contains remarkable intuition. The emerging factor was represented by the young who attended high schools. In fact, the conservative groups believed that learning in the National University, largely financed by the United States, would have obviated the threat of foreign, subversive influence, but the “new ideas” were out of touch with ill-defined “traditional values” and doomed to unfold further. Repressive measures could not prevent students from becoming a decisive political force (pp. 455–456).

Because of the assistance and shelter he provided to some students persecuted on the aftermath of the coup, Greenfield was harassed by the Ethiopian police and briefly arrested. His book, written in 1962 once he left the country, was banned in Ethiopia and for years had a clandestine circulation, which, nevertheless, did not prevent it from influencing the young generation.

On the controversial relationships between Eritrea and Ethiopia the volume is quite balanced, though published when the *fait accompli* of annexation had already ignited the war of liberation/secession. He avoided espousing the case for Eritrean independence directly but also refrained from the traditional version of Greater Ethiopia. Greenfield rebuffed the analyses of Longrigg and other British writers on the strength of the separatists’ solicitations in the former Italian colony, recognizing the significant presence of the “unionist” organizations, usually considered an expression of the sole Christian community of the highlands (p. 284). According to Greenfield, Eritrea and Ethiopia were economically interdependent and this would have made the Federation a rational choice. However, divisions and misinterpretations wasted goodwill and hopes. Greenfield pointed out that the democratic aura transmitted to the Eritrean Constitution by UN was hardly compatible with the authoritarian configuration of the Empire. Once the programme of reforming the Ethiopian government had been abandoned, the idea of a divorce prevailed among young Eritreans (pp. 303–305). Rather than speaking in terms of Amhara or Abyssinian domination, he preferred to denounce “social injustice manifested in a multitude of ways” (p. 110).

Greenfield was throughout his life a passionate activist for the liberation of Africa and Asia from colonial and neo-colonial dominance. He wrote occasional papers and animated militant meetings. One of his works was

devoted to *Kwame Nkrumah and Pan-Africanism* (London, 1984). His awareness of the problems of decolonization had been stimulated by the direct experience he acquired during national service in Penang (Malaya) during the Emergency years. Later Greenfield was adviser for foreign affairs to a number of African politicians (i.e. President Siad Barre of Somalia), NGOs, associations and political movements. In the mid 1990s he was called upon to preside over the Africa Centre in London. In the United States his advice on African politics was sought and welcomed. Greenfield staunchly supported human rights by hosting and aiding immigrants and refugees, particularly those from the Horn and Eastern Africa.

On this last topic, he published books, pamphlets, texts of conferences and papers presented to symposia: *An historical introduction to refugee problems in the Somali Democratic Republic* (London, 1979), *An historical introduction to refugee problems in the Horn* ("Horn of Africa", New Jersey, vol. 2, n. 4, 1979, pp. 14–26), *The OAU and Africa's refugees* (Oxford, 1983), *The wretched of the Horn: forgotten refugees of Black Africa* (New York, 1984), *The refugee crisis in Africa* (Washington, 1986).

In order to disseminate his knowledge and his views Greenfield resorted to the conventional academic channels but he did not disdain to publish articles in periodicals addressed to a broader readership such as "Ethiopia Observer", "Eritrea Profile" as well as international magazines dealing with African politics.

His bibliography includes *inter alia* a report on the state of higher education and university research in Ethiopia ("Makerere Journal", Kampala, n. 8, 1963, pp. 1–15), a survey of Ethiopian sources for the history of patriots' resistance to the Italian occupation ("Makerere Journal", n. 9, 1964, pp. 7–32), an analysis of the Ethiopian elite ("Tewodros", London, vol. 1, n. 1, 1965, pp. 38–44), three long articles of the case of Harar and the Ogaden ("West Africa", London, various issues, September–December 1977), *Two months that shook Sudan* ("Horn of Africa", New Jersey, vol. 8, n. 1, 1985, pp. 5–20) and *A Note on a Modern Ethiopian Protest Poem* ("Institute of African Studies Research Review", London, vol. 5, n. 1, 1960, pp. 17–31).

Over the years Greenfield vigorously championed the right of Eritreans to self-determination, raising funds for their cause, and publishing various articles and pamphlets such as *Eritreas Kampf um Freiheit* (Köln, 1978). In the 1990s independent Eritrea became a sort of second motherland for him. In fact, from 1992 Greenfield was invited regularly to Eritrea for the Independence Day celebrations until in 1999 he moved there permanently and was appointed Professor of History at the re-founded University of Asmara. During his stay in Eritrea, whilst the Eritrean establishment was committed to the task of building up a state, a nation and a legacy, Greenfield participated actively in the debate on the sources and themes for the writing of Eritrean history and was a very vocal supporter of the need to remove Eritrean history from the traditional accounts focusing on Ethiopia's imperial hegemony. In

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the Department of History, beside his teaching activities, Greenfield was of invaluable help with his generous and painstaking supervision of many students' BA theses.

When in Asmara, Greenfield collaborated with the Research and Documentation Centre (RDC) assisting both senior and junior staff with his competence and enthusiasm. He also contributed to the enrichment of the collection of the RDC depositing there his personal library, which included some rare works on early travels to Ethiopia, and a very rich archive with a precious documentary collection relevant to the history of Africa and to the liberation struggle in Eritrea. This invaluable material, known as the Greenfield Collection, is now available to scholars and students in the RDC.

In memoriam Berhanou Abebe (1932–2008)

ANAÏS WION, CNRS, Centre d'Études des Mondes Africains – Paris

Le 1^{er} juillet 2008, Berhanou Abebe (Bərhanu Abbäbä) s'est éteint à l'âge de 75 ans, victime d'un malaise cardiaque, alors qu'il était au Zimbabwe en mission d'observation électorale pour l'Union Africaine. La cérémonie d'enterrement a eu lieu à la cathédrale d'Addis Abäba et il a été inhumé au cimetière catholique.

Si l'on doit donner quelques repères pour présenter une vie si pleine, nous commencerons en disant que, né dans une famille éthiopienne francophone, il suivit sa scolarité à l'École Française d'Addis Abäba et fut en 1953 l'un des premiers bacheliers du lycée Gäbrä Maryam. Son baccalauréat en poche, c'est tout naturellement qu'il partit faire ses études à Paris. Il y resta treize années, le temps d'obtenir de nombreux diplômes en droit, en ethnologie et en littérature. Sa thèse d'État, soutenue en 1965, porte sur l'histoire sociale en Éthiopie à la fin du XIX^e siècle, mais c'est son diplôme préparatoire à la thèse de doctorat qui est publié en 1971 sous le titre *Évolution de la propriété foncière au Choa (Éthiopie) du règne de Ménélik à la constitution de 1931*. Il s'agit d'une analyse de la nature de la propriété foncière et, au delà, de la structure de l'état éthiopien à la période contemporaine. Lors de ses études dans le quartier latin, il travailla pendant sept années en tant que répétiteur d'amharique à l'Institut des Langues Orientales.

Rentré en 1968 en Éthiopie, il se met au service de l'État. Enseignant à l'Institute of Ethiopian Studies où il dirige la section des Manuscrits de la