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Review

EVA POLUHA and ELEHU FELEKE, *Thinking Outside the Box: Essays on
the History and (Under)development of Ethiopia*

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Reviews

culture and language, the biography of Ruufoo (the first Oromo research assistant and translator of the Bible) is offered to the reader. Formerly an Oromo slave, Ruufoo spent much of his short life at the Saint Chrischona mission near Basel. Apart from individuals, the histories and missions of research institutions such as the Frobenius-Institut für kulturalanthropologische Forschung in Frankfurt am Main, the Hiob-Ludolf-Zentrum für Äthiopistik in Hamburg, and the Max-Planck-Institut für ethnologische Forschung in Halle (Saale), that have played an important role supporting research on the north-eastern African region, are also presented. This publication, edited by Wolbert G. C. Smidt and Sophia Thubauville, is an informative and evocative reading that will surely encourage interested scholars to continue an important tradition of research on North East Africa.

Nicola Camilleri, Università di Pavia

EVA POLUHA and ELEHU FELEKE, *Thinking Outside the Box: Essays on the History and (Under)development of Ethiopia* (n.p.: n.pub., 2016). xxx, 383 pp., 4 maps, 9 tables. Price: \$34.99 (HB), \$23.99 (pb). ISBN: 978-1-5144-2228-1 (HB), 978-1-5144-2224-3 (pb).

In essence, this self-published book is an attempt to find an answer to the question of why Ethiopia, in spite of its long history and rich culture, remains one of the poorest nations in the world. The work is the joint achievement of a family who have spent much time pondering over this mysterious question. The authors make the purpose of their work clear in the Preface (pp. ix–xi): ‘This book of essays is the product of a sincere attempt to try to understand why Ethiopia continues to be one of the poorest countries in the world’ (p. ix).

The writing of the book was shared by at least three members of the family. The father, a physician by profession and an Ethiopian by origin, wrote the first part which is a survey of the country’s history from the Aksumite period to the twenty-first century. That must have been tedious work for a non-historian, and the result was apparently not fruitful. An historical narration without interpretation and analysis cannot give an answer to the question posed above.

The mother, an anthropologist who had already written several books and articles on various aspects of Ethiopian society, dealt with the second part. She examined various scientific fields and significant events that took place in the country in the twentieth century trying to track down the caus-

es of Ethiopia's poverty while their son completed the work of his parents by drawing the necessary maps of various features of the country's past.

The source and implications of the unusual phrase used as the main title is explained at the end of the long Introduction (pp. xv–xxx). It was borrowed from Wikipedia: 'To think outside the box is to look further and to try not thinking of the obvious things, but to try thinking of the things beyond them' (p. xxx). Encouraging people to think profoundly is a good idea. The authors repeatedly state that their idea was to encourage all concerned to think deeply about how Ethiopian society's problems should be solved. That is the theme of the book under review, but one wonders if it was then necessary to produce such a bulky book to get the message across. The problem of Ethiopia's poverty and the difficulties connected to it were well described on pp. 322–331. That alone as an article would have sufficed to impart the important message. Moreover, large works usually make for unnecessary mistakes, and this one is not an exception.

The most serious mistakes are obvious from the choice and use of sources. For example, on p. 55 it is stated that Major Harris, who led the first British delegation to Šäwa, recorded in the three-volume account of his mission that he heard that the ruler of Šäwa descended through his mother from the ruling house of Gondär. However, the footnote relating to this statement refers to D. N. Levine, *Wax & Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1972). Why could one not refer to Harris's book (W. C. Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia*, I–III (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1844)) instead of citing a secondary source? In fact, the bibliography contains mainly books and articles written in English; even those written by French, German, and Italian scholars are used only if they have been translated into English. Despite their unacademic stance, the authors have nonetheless produced a readable and interesting book.

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JOACHIM G. PERSOON, *Spirituality, Power and Revolution: Contemporary Monasticism in Communist Ethiopia. With an Overview of the Orthodox Church during Communism by Václav Ježek* (Volos: Volos Academy for Theological Studies, 2014). 545 pp., illus. (pp. 535–545). Price: €20.00. ISBN: 978-618-81264-3-5 (HB).

The theme of this book, as given in the title page, is the relationship between the Orthodox Church and Communism. Persoon sees differences