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Vignette:

Gold coin of King Aphilas, early third century CE, as drawn by A. Luegmeyer after the coin in Rennau collection. Weight 2.48 grams, diameter 17 mm.

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The journal focuses on philology, linguistics, archaeology, history, cultural anthropology, religion, philosophy, literature, and manuscript studies with a regional emphasis on Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa, and related areas. The editors welcome contributions on relevant academic topics as well as on recent research in the respective field. Each issue of AETHIOPICA contains reviews of books which form a substantial section of the journal.

AETHIOPICA is published mainly in English. Articles in French, German, and Italian are also accepted for publication. An English summary for all articles in any language is provided.

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Editorial

The present issue of AETHIOPICA is the twenty-fifth since the journal's founding in 1998. It is also the thirteenth issue I have worked on as editor-in-chief, one more than that of founder Siegbert Uhlig. The present time, however, does not lend itself to celebrations of any sort. The global political crisis and the situation in the Horn of Africa are having a deep impact on the scholarly community, which appears divided and radicalized on opposite or increasingly diverging positions as never before. The growing influence of diaspora communities is at times marked by waves of resurgent nationalism. The challenge posed by main-stream policy in countries of established scholarly traditions gives less and less space to small fields—as is the case of Ethiopian and Eritrean studies. The consequent lack of resources triggers the fragmentation of the scholarly scene. New balances based on mutual legitimation and acknowledgement of a common scholarly method are not obvious. The consequence of this complex situation, which reflects global changes, is that scholarly and academic freedom can be put at risk. Of all priorities envisaged in the mission of AETHIOPICA, preservation of academic freedom along with scholarly quality has been, is, and will remain the top priority of the journal.

I regret that in the past, and still now, the lack of available qualified authors has prevented AETHIOPICA from duly commemorating distinct colleagues and researchers recently passed away who were more than deserving of an obituary. I would like to remember at least some of them here, by name, as a very modest tribute to their work and memory: Johannes Launhardt (1929–2019), Mesfin Wolde Mariam (1930–2020), Steffen Wenig (1934–2022), Girma Fisseha (1941–2020).

To end on a positive note, three colleagues active in Ethiopian and Eritrean studies have received important awards this year, and we would like to mention them here: Samantha Kelly (Professor of Medieval History at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, also on our International Editorial Board), has won the Choice Outstanding Academic Title 2020, and the African Studies Review Prize for the Best Africa-focused Anthology or Edited Collection 2021, for her *A Companion to Medieval Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Leiden–Boston, MA: Brill, 2020); Verena Krebs (Junior-Professorin für Mittelalterliche Kulturräume at Ruhr-Universität Bochum) has received the Dan David Prize for her *Medieval Ethiopian Kingship, Craft, and Diplomacy with Latin Europe* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); and Massimo Zaccaria (Professore Associato in Storia e Istituzioni dell'Africa at Università degli Studi di Pavia) has received the Giorgio Maria Sangiorgi award of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei 'per la Storia ed Etnologia dell'Africa'. To all of them—the warmest congratulations from AETHIOPICA!

and contextually based theory as to why. Finally, her focus on the Solomonic perspective in Ethiopia's wider relations, and her interrogation of the legacies of scholarship born in earlier eras, are interventions of relevance beyond this study's immediate subject. Any future reflection on these matters will have to take this book into account.

Addendum: Between the time of this review's submission in August 2021 and its publication, Krebs's work has been honoured with a 2022 Dan David Prize for 'outstanding early and mid-career scholars and practitioners in the historical disciplines' from the Dan David Foundation of Tel Aviv.

Samantha Kelly, Rutgers University

SHIFERAW BEKELE, UOLDELUL CHELATI DIRAR, ALESSANDRO VOLTERRA, and MASSIMO ZACCARIA, eds, *The First World War from Tripoli to Addis Ababa (1911–1924)*, Contemporary Horn of Africa, 6 (Addis Ababa: Centre français des études éthiopiennes, 2019). 375 pp., illus. Price: €25.50. ISBN: 978-2-875-87070-4.

As is well known, the recent centenary of World War I gave a decisive impulse to new interpretations of and gazes on the Great War, which has been increasingly regarded as a truly global event, also due to widespread global historical and postcolonial trends. The latter has also made the African continent the focus of a great deal more attention regarding historical scholarships, clearly evidenced by the sharp rise in publications focusing on World War I and (colonial) Africa from varying perspectives. One of which is the interesting book discussed here, that was the outcome of The First World War from Tripoli to Mogadishu (1911–1924) conference held at Addis Ababa University in 2016, organized by the editors of the volume, all of whom are esteemed names in the fields of the Horn of Africa and Italian colonial history.

The editors open the book with a very rich and informative Introduction summarizing the state of the art in many fields and explaining the main questions the book addresses. Of particular relevance is the motivation of regional focus and time frame, no doubt to the surprise of the military history and First World War specialist. While this obviously subscribes to a by now well-established scholarship taking into consideration both the aftermath of the war as well as the long preparation to it, the opting for such different geographic region as the proper object of investigation is a challenging choice demanding the explication of its motivation—one which is, in fact, provided convincingly. With the inten-

tion of the book to overcome a simplistic (Eurocentric) narrative of the war as a clash of nations and accomplish it by enlarging the space and time of the analysis and grant more attention to local agency and reactions, can one do better than look at areas which were not the scenarios of the major campaigns on African soil always mentioned in discussion of World War I in Africa? ‘The attention of the historians has been much more sporadic towards those territories where, instead, there were no clashes between the two opposing alliances. Blockades, revolts, riots, hunger, diseases and famine: even countries far away from the major battlefields could be deeply affected by the Great War’ (p. 17). To refer to these multiple upheavals and major or minor conflicts the editors speak of an ‘arc of tension’ (p. 16). As a matter of fact, in all societies investigated in the book, be it Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Italian Eritrea, and so on, situations of social, political, and military tensions are easily found and are in fact addressed in the three parts that make up the volume; it is not surprising that a major role is played by the Ottoman Empire in almost all articles published in the book (whose relevance for north-east Africa need not be highlighted here) and whose end was marked by the world conflict.

The book consists of fifteen articles, collected in three sections. *Vis-à-vis* the research questions outlined in the Introduction and the nicely depicted intentions of the book, it turns out that some inhomogeneity throughout the sections emerges. However, as a collected volume and outcome of a conference, a flaw like this is quite common in similar works. At the centre of the first section is the balance of power between the international players in this conflict, analysed, all in all, through the lens of political history: nevertheless, the interesting essays of Elena Vezzadini and Jakob Zollmann stand out for their successful attempt at dealing with their research object in a very original way, the first writing ‘transnationalism from below’ and the second decentring international legal history due to its analysis of Ethiopia in the frame of contemporary discussion on neutrality and sovereignty. The second section of the book deals with colonial policies in the context of the war and investigates the reasons leading Italy to invade Libya (Andrea Ungari), seen as the first act of World War I, the recruitment of troops (Alessandro Volterra and Laurent Jolly) and other strategies and military-political ideas related to the conflict. In this section, the essay by Massimo Zaccaria, devoted to canned meat production in colonial Eritrea, is an exceptional piece of historical scholarship for the research object, the methodology, and the rich trove of diverse sources used. Proceeding from a social historical analysis, the author manages to demonstrate with concrete example how much the war impacted social life in the colony with consequences enduring far longer than the conflict itself. The request of canned meat for soldiers on the part of the Kingdom of Italy transformed Eritrea into a manufacturing country in service of the nation in arms. In this chapter, those requiring evidence of the entanglements

in colonial and metropolitan histories gain a very clear demonstration of how war events impacted on geographically distant locations: military battles taking place on the Karst plateau may well have greatly affected farmers' families' lives in Eritrean land in no less a way than those of the—let's say—Sicilian families whose young sons were recruited to war. Eritrea's role in the imperial political strategy was to be supportive of the Italian struggles and provide it with all it could.

Aimed at demonstrating the significance of local agency and local players' reactions, in terms of methodology, the book's third section gives the book a precious, additional value. Religious profiles and the cultural production of local societies are addressed here, as well as the way in which the Italian community in Tunisia reshaped itself when faced with World War I (Gabriele Montalbano). A sophisticated contribution is given by Uoldelul Chelati Dirar in his chapter on the Great War via the writing of Təgrāñña expatriates. Not only does this offer an invaluable opportunity to read the voices of colonial subjects living in Eritrea (or abroad) and facing war related policies but it also reveals the deep complexity of contemporary political and social circumstances; colonial subjects appear with their multifaced identities faced with the unique circumstances of a war counterposing European states which were also colonial powers.

The research lab on World War I in Africa remains open and will definitively regard this book as an important reference point for investigations merging international and political history with social and cultural history.

Nicola Camilleri, Università degli Studi di Padova

MELAKU GEBOYE DESTA, DEREJE FEYISSA DORI, and MAMO ESMELEALEM MIHRETU, eds, *Ethiopia in the Wake of Political Reforms* (Los Angeles, CA: Tsehai Publishers, 2020). 616 pp. Price: \$60.00. ISBN: 978-1-59907-251-7.

This book appeared at what was in hindsight a particular and short-lived moment in Abiy Ahmed's premiership. Predating the global pandemic, the postponement of the national election and the conflict in Təgray that has drawn in regional actors, it reflects both the optimism and the uncertainty surrounding rapid political change in 2019 to early 2020. A multidisciplinary volume, it represents divergent political viewpoints and contrasting writing styles and formats, from sweeping historical and macroeconomic overviews to tightly delineated accounts of primary research, to policy-focused contributions. The book corrals a great amount of expertise and scholarship and, as such, provides valuable insights into a wide variety of issues across the country and the region. Chapters