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SOPHIE KÜSPERT-RAKOTONDRAINY, University of Birmingham

## Review

JÜRGEN KLEIN, *Christlich-Muslimische Beziehungen in Äthiopien.  
Interreligiöse Situation – Konflikträume – Verstehenszugänge*

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by Alessandro Bausi

in cooperation with

Aaron Michael Butts, Bairu Tafla, Ludwig Gerhardt, Hewan Semon Marye,  
Susanne Hummel, and Alexander Meckelburg

Editorial Team

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## Reviews

In fact little came from al-Aẓm mission. In May 1905 another Ethiopian mission to ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd failed to obtain the keys to Dayr as-Sulṭān. Mənilək, for his part, shelved the promise to build a mosque in Addis Abāba (the first was to be built by Mussolini’s Italy). By 1908 Mənilək’s health began to fail and also, weakened by the ‘Young Turks’ revolutionaries, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd was deposed the year after.

Al-Aẓm himself, continued his career under ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (after this mission he was appointed imperial commissioner to Bulgaria) and died in 1910. His effort to improve relations between the two empires barely succeeded, but his book had some impact on the emerging Arab world. In 1908, in Cairo, two of his cousins, Ḥaqqī and Rafīq al-Aẓm, published an Arabic translation. Titled *Riḥlat al-Ḥabaṣah* which came to be arguably the best source of information on Ethiopia for the Arab public at least until the 1935 Fascist invasion of the country. However, the following episode attests to the persistence of the cultural barrier between the Ethiopian and the Arab-Islamic worlds. In 2001 the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing (*AIRP*) in Beirut, issued a new edition of the book in Abu Dhabi. The publishers renamed the edition ‘A Voyage to Ethiopia, 1896’. They unfortunately—certainly not due to ill intentions—did not account for the difference between the Ethiopian and European calendar. Misled by the dating of Ethiopian letters quoted by the al-Aẓm (see p. 304), they added the year 1896 to the book’s name and its chapter headings, as if these were the original dates. This new edition is quite popular in the Middle East today, but gives a misleading picture of Mənilək’s Ethiopia during the tumultuous year of the battle of ‘Adwa. Hopefully the new English edition of the 1906 book about the 1904 ‘voyage to Ethiopia’ (*Riḥlat al-Ḥabaṣah*) will help improve mutual awareness.

Haggai Erlich, Tel Aviv University

JÜRGEN KLEIN, *Christlich-Muslimische Beziehungen in Äthiopien. Interreligiöse Situation – Konflikt Räume – Verstehenszugänge*, Beiträge zur Missionswissenschaft / Interkulturellen Theologie, 51 (Berlin–Münster: LIT Verlag, 2021). 514 pp. Price: €44.90 ISBN: 978-3-643-14852-0.

Relations between Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia have not always been harmonious; there have been countless conflicts since the first encounter between the religions. Jürgen Klein’s book addresses these challenging relations from three main perspectives: Ethiopian history, national religious institutions, and Amharic literature. It is originally a doctoral thesis from the Theological College Wuppertal/Bethel in Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology, written in German.

Klein lived in Ethiopia for fourteen years (1998–2012) and his in-depth knowledge of the society, history and the Amharic language has been an asset in his research. His work was particularly related to the Lutheran Mekane Yesus Church, but in his book, he considers different Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox denominations as well as Islamic perspectives.

Klein approaches Christian–Muslim Relations in Ethiopia from a ‘multi-perspective approach’ (*Multiperspektivischer Ansatz*). From this perspective, he considers relations between various ‘approaches to understanding’ (*Verstehenszüge*) (VZ) which he derives from different ‘factor areas’ (*Faktorenbereiche*) such as history, land and resources, culture, economy, and education, among others. He visualizes this in a complicated matrix that shows the different *Verstehenszüge* and their relations—e.g. the historical sphere (VZ-G), the legal sphere (VZ-R), the institutional sphere (VZ-I), and the literary-thematic sphere (VZ-LT).

Klein identifies a lack of research from an inter-religious point of view in Ethiopia and the need to consider the institutional aspect of these relations, such as the role of Protestant Churches. From this viewpoint, his work addresses a significant gap in the existing literature in the field and provides a relevant contribution to the debates. The main method for data collection was the review of archival materials including an impressive bibliography of literature on inter-religious relations in Amharic. To a lesser extent, Klein uses interviews he carried out with 29 individuals in key institutions and positions in Addis Abäba.

The discussion of the history of Christian–Muslim relations in the first main chapter spans two millennia and dwells on some key events. Informed by secular primary and secondary sources as well as religious texts, Klein interprets history from the specific perspective of inter-religious relations.

The second chapter discusses the institutional development of Christian–Muslim relations with examples from institutions and organisations working in the religious field in Ethiopia. These include government ministries and directorates, various Christian churches and missions, NGOs, ecumenical institutions such as the Interreligious Council of Ethiopia, and different Muslim movements, to mention but a few. Klein discusses contributions to the field of interreligious relations by each of these actors and the relations between them. Unfortunately, the purpose of the discussion on both the institutional and the historical aspects of Klein’s main argument on interreligious relations remains vague.

The third chapter contains a comprehensive presentation of Christian and Muslim Ethiopian authors and their works in different genres, from monographs to pamphlets. This is the most remarkable part of Klein’s research. It makes his book a useful reference work in which the reader may find detailed explanations of the content and arguments in Amharic publications written by authors with various perspectives for different audiences—some for readers of the same faith and

others for a more general public. Some authors are more aggressive in their criticism of the other religion whereas others seek to find commonalities. In general, Klein argues that criticism of the authors' own religions, whether Christian or Muslim, is absent in almost all of the writings since they would interpret this as undermining their identities (pp. 278, 286). Klein is well-informed on the background and purpose of this literature but at times fails to connect the descriptions to a coherent narrative of inter-religious relations in Ethiopia.

The discussions are meticulous, yet average readers get lost in detail and may ask themselves what it all means in practice. For example, Klein repeatedly refers to a conflict in Ġimma in Western Ethiopia. Yet, he does not explain anywhere in the book what actually occurred, which actors were involved, how the conflict unfolded or, in general, what it 'was about'; the timeline of conflicts (1991–2018) in the appendix is disconnected from the analysis in the chapters. The style of short and abruptly changing paragraphs/sections and complicated references to the matrix (e.g. 'VZ-LT<sup>4b</sup>') makes the reader struggle to understand the 'big picture' and how miscellaneous facts contribute to one coherent argument.

The main audience of this book seems to be scholars interested in a theoretical debate and not individuals working on how inter-religious relations evolve and manifest themselves in society. Hence, for anthropologists or practitioners in the field of peace and conflict in Ethiopia interested in lived experiences, the book is unfortunately of limited use in its current form.

I nevertheless believe that the content of the book is highly valuable because of its sheer richness in data. To make it more reader-friendly for a wider audience, I would welcome a shortened version in English (the current book has almost 400 pages excluding references and appendices) and scholarly articles that highlight concrete issues. The knowledge and research that lies behind this book should not remain unavailable for scholars and practitioners in Ethiopia and beyond.

Sophie Küspert-Rakotonrainy, University of Birmingham

KATRIN BROMBER, *Sports & Modernity in Late Imperial Ethiopia*, Eastern Africa Series (Woodbridge–Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2022). xvi, 219 pp. Price: €80.24. ISBN: 978-1-84701-292-0.

*Sports & Modernity in Late Imperial Ethiopia* is a book that outlines the history of sports in twentieth-century Ethiopia. It is a continuation of Katrin Bromber's valuable contribution to a negligibly studied field internationally, and within Ethiopia. It focuses on the introduction and development of a variety of organized physical activities including wrestling, swimming, athletics, and football during