



Aethiopia 26 (2023)

International Journal of Ethiopian and
Eritrean Studies

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Review

KATRIN BROMBER, *Sports & Modernity in Late Imperial Ethiopia*

Aethiopia 26 (2023), 299–301

ISSN: 1430-1938; eISSN: 2194-4024

Edited in the Asien-Afrika-Institut
Hiob-Ludolf-Zentrum für Äthiopistik
der Universität Hamburg
Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

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Reviews

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^{4b}') 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-Rakotondrainy, 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

the pre-occupation Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase period, and on through the Fascist occupation, post-liberation, and finally in socialist Ethiopia. By focusing on each administrative period, Bromber demonstrates how social and cultural transformations were brought about by the various governments through their attempts to use sports to serve their causes. In addition, the book places the discussion about sports in Ethiopia within the framework of modernity.

The book has been structured into five core chapters with an introduction and conclusion complemented by a selection of pictures. Chapter one highlights Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase's reasons for introducing and promoting many internationally recognized sports. Bromber writes how during his 1924 European trip 'he gained first-hand experience of modern sports and the "Olympic spirit" at the eighth Olympic Games in Paris' (p. 35). This sentence is not just indicative of the emperor's encounter with modern sports, but also of Bromber's argument that it was Ethiopia's desire to influence international diplomacy which led to the domination of the sports scene within Ethiopia 'with European and North American agents' (p. 180). This chapter also discusses the role of modern schools in the expansion of sports in the capital city, Addis Abāba (p. 46).

Chapter two focuses on how Fascist Italy used sports for propaganda purposes during its occupation of Ethiopia from 1935 until 1941. Bromber draws on Amharic publications produced during the period to highlight some of the ways they 'legitimized religious and racial segregation through sports during that period' (p. 81). Bromber also says that sports that were already prominent in Italy, cycling and football in particular, were promoted during this administration (p. 71).

Chapter three investigates the post-liberation period, and the way sports were used to mould youth to become 'the torch-bearers of progress' (p. 90). Bromber highlights here the growth of physical education in schools and the formation of the Ethiopian Inter-School Athletic Association.

In chapter four, Bromber examines the Young Mens Christian Association's (YMCA) role in the Middle East and North Africa as well as Ethiopia in 'turning problematic youth into healthy, loyal citizens' (p. 120). The chapter shows how the YMCA ('Y') grew to be identified as a sports hub promoting sports such as basketball and body building.

The stadium as a space for sports and political activities is presented in chapter five. Bromber discusses how the stadium accrued local and international value. Upon the inauguration of the first stadium, the emperor expected it to be 'where young Ethiopian athletes reveal to the world the physical strength of the empire' (p. 165). In addition, Bromber demonstrates the symbolic value attached to the construction of stadiums in how it demonstrated modernity through the transformation of cities. Particularly interesting is that while Addis Abāba already had a space allocated for traditional sports, Ġan Meda, the stadium was built where it stands today because modern planning suggested it be placed in the centre of the

city (p. 182). The chapter also considers other spaces such as night clubs and the Ethiopian highland rally in discussions pertaining to the transformation of space in the second half of the twentieth century.

Methodologically, Bromber's refreshing work draws mostly on primary sources such as newspapers, personal conversations, and memoirs as well as secondary history books. Perhaps the one thing worth mentioning is how the analysis relating to sports in the early twentieth century is entirely limited to Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase's rule. A contextual and historical study of the place of sports in the pre-Ḥaylā Śəllase era would have allowed Bromber to make links with the century upon which she focuses. For example, Bromber suggests that the emperor promoted the boy scout movement as a means to enable the transforming of young boys into soldiers (p. 51). This was also true of nineteenth century Ethiopia, for boys were trained in physical fitness to serve as warriors from an early age. Such links would have allowed us to observe more acutely how Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase actually transformed the urban scene. The interesting question that arises here is: did the emperor try to create loyal soldiers and cadets through the promotion of the boy scouts programme with the idea that the traditional ways of training young boys would create a youth that would inevitably challenge his rule?

Nonetheless, the book is a great source to consult for those interested in Ethiopia's modern history from the point of view of cultural and social transformations, as well as for those interested in global sports studies.

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NADIA NURHUSSEIN, *Black Land: Imperial Ethiopianism and African America* (Princeton, NJ–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019). xv, 259 pp. Price: €35.00. ISBN: 978-0-691-19096-9.

Black Land is a literary criticism work of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American poetry, novels and plays. The book is divided into eight chapters, with an introduction and conclusion all dealing with how Ethiopia fed African American creative productions revolving around their own racialized politics, and notions of international black solidarity and imperialism. At the heart of it is the space Ethiopia occupies as a mythical land as well as a historical-political entity. The book explores selected African American literary and cultural productions presented following a chronological development of historical events in Ethiopia from Emperor Tewodros II's relations with England (specifically, the Napier expedition of 1867–1868), until the second Italian invasion of Ethiopia in