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**Review**

NICOLA CAMILLERI, *Staatsangehörigkeit und Rassismus: Rechtsdiskurse und  
Verwaltungspraxis in den Kolonien Eritrea und Deutsch-Ostafrika (1882–1919)*

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believed to be legendary, a man who composed prophetic poetry about events spanning some two hundred years, including even 1990s Ethiopian politics. Another such example is the claim of the superiority of Italian firearms at 'Adwa (p. 27), which is simply not true. There are also debatable ideas such as Yates's claim that 'in terms of identity formation [...], Ethiopian sources [...] give scholars a window into how African societies might have produced modern national communities if left alone' (p. 4), which is a romantic reading of a specific period of Ethiopian history shaped by far-sighted rulers of various backgrounds. Yet, we must ask, are there any societies that are ever 'left alone'?

Despite the questions and doubts concerning the conceptual lenses adopted and some of the interpretations presented in the book, *The Other Abyssinians* has the potential to reorient how we think of Ethiopian history. Furthermore, it is a book that brings to light historical facts that challenge historical readings based on essentialized ethnic identities of past Ethiopians. By attempting to show the intricate relationship between political alliances, marriages, land-tenure, and a throne that was practically open to all contestants—barring religious diversities—Yates has taken a major step for us all and serves as an inspiration for further work. An expansion of his effort to southern Ethiopian history along the same lines not being the only one.

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NICOLA CAMILLERI, *Staatsangehörigkeit und Rassismus: Rechtsdiskurse und Verwaltungspraxis in den Kolonien Eritrea und Deutsch-Ostafrika (1882–1919)*, Global Perspectives on Legal History, 19 (Frankfurt am Main: Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory, 2021). xiv, 297 pp. Price: €23.94. ISBN: 978-3-944773-36-0.

The distinction between colonizer and colonized is a fundamental element of the colonial order. In most colonies, a dual legal system developed for this purpose. As legal subjects, colonized individuals did not belong to the legal system of the imperial metropolis; rather, they were subject to the arbitrary provisions of 'native law', such as the 'Code de l'indigénat' in the French colonial empire.

In his dissertation, submitted to the Freie Universität Berlin ('Free University of Berlin') in 2017 and published in 2021, Nicola Camilleri examines the legal discourses and practices in which the status and rights of individuals in the Italian colony of Eritrea and the German colony of German East Africa were negotiated and codified with regard to their nationality. This had a profound impact on both the colonized and the colonizers and was characterized by colonial racist discrimination.

The book is situated at the intersection of global history, colonial history, and comparative legal history. It is divided into five chapters, which are grouped into three thematic units. The first part describes the conquest and founding of the colonies of Eritrea and German East Africa, their initial legal relationships, and their respective inhabitants. The second part deals with the politics of citizenship, its function in creating or maintaining a dichotomous opposition between colonized and colonizer, and the conception of citizenship and subjecthood. In the third part, Camilleri analyzes the boundaries of legal status on the basis of successful and unsuccessful changes of status.

Camilleri's choice of Eritrea and German East Africa for comparison is insightful. Both territories in eastern Africa were colonized by European states, which only became formal colonial powers in the late nineteenth century. What both had in common, Camilleri notes, was that the status of the colonized populations was initially undefined and shaped by the state of establishing rule through violent force. While the legal status of the indigenous population was initially not clearly defined, Germany and Italy introduced laws and regulations that increasingly separated the colonizer and the colonized in legal terms.

The legal regulations established a dichotomous juxtaposition between the colonized and the colonizer with the intention of legally securing foreign rule. Both the Italian colony of Eritrea and the German colony of German East Africa used differentiating legislation to establish a colonial society that separated colonizers from the indigenous population. While the Italian colony of Eritrea clearly defined the legal status of *sudditi* ('subjects') and *assimilati* (foreigners from countries considered 'uncivilized'), the legal status of African inhabitants in German East Africa remained undefined, with them being classified as non-citizens and *Eingeborene* ('natives'). Challenging the colonial practices and dichotomous definitions, the Indian elite in German East Africa were a special case. For them, the German legislators created the status of 'deutsch-ostafrikanische Landesangehörigkeit' ('German East African citizenship') (p. 123).

It is particularly noteworthy that Camilleri does not limit himself to the theoretical negotiation of legal norms but also examines their practical application. In doing so, he illuminates the artificial boundaries drawn by the racist utopia of colonial rule. Using the example of naturalization procedures, he concedes that although the theoretical possibility of a change of legal status by accepting German or Italian citizenship existed in both colonies, this possibility was only open to people who did not come from the respective colonies. The colonized population was effectively precluded from this change of status by legal practice. Similarly, attempts to change status through marriage faced significant obstacles. In German East Africa, marriages between colonizers and the colonized were effectively prohibited from 1906 onward. In Eritrea, while no formal prohibition existed, such marriages were strongly disapproved. The treatment of children

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from these relationships also challenged the racist order. In summary, a comparison of legal practices reveals a ‘particularly radical attitude’ of Germany as a colonial power (p. 254).

With his study, Camilleri has made an important contribution to the legal history of colonial Eritrea and German East Africa. The study is compelling by virtue of its clear structure, systematic analysis, and convincing argumentation. The transnational and transimperial comparisons reveal similarities and differences between various European forms of colonial rule. It shows that—although there were notable differences in questions of legal treatment—racist theories were a central element of both Italian and German colonialism and were reflected in their legal definition of citizenship.

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RAYMOND SILVERMAN and NEAL SOBANIA, *Ethiopian Church Art: Painters, Patrons, Purveyors* (Los Angeles, CA: Tsehai Publishers, 2022). 332 pp., over 300 figs., Price: \$74.95 (Paperback), \$94.95 (Hardcover). ISBN: 978-1-59907-290-6 (Paperback), 978-1-59907-291-3 (Hardcover).

This volume presents a survey of contemporary paintings and art practices within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), integrating visual analysis research with ethnographic methodologies. The book results from a long-term research project conducted between 1993 and 2020 in both the historic northern city of Aksum and the capital, Addis Abäba. Through fieldwork, interviews, and a thorough examination of iconographic traditions, the authors document and contextualize current artistic production in Ethiopia. The book is organized into four main chapters, framed by an introduction and an epilogue. The narrative is further enriched by a series of thematic interleaves—short essays interspersed between the main chapters that clarify key terms and concepts central to Ethiopian art and visual culture. The inclusion of a glossary provides additional support for readers unfamiliar with specialized terminology. Although it serves only as a basic guide, due to the lack of an accurate transcription of the Amharic alphabet, it nonetheless makes the text more accessible to a wider audience.

The first chapter focuses on the city of Aksum as a center for artistic production. It pays particular attention to the traditional apprenticeship model practiced in Aksum, where learning occurs through close, hands-on mentorship. The chapter introduces a diverse group of painters spanning four generations, beginning with Yohannēs Tāklu (1882–1979), a foundational figure in the region’s visual culture. It provides an account of Teklu’s artistic practice and legacy, emphasizing the impact of his techniques and teachings through his children, grandchildren, and other apprentices trained in his studio. Additionally, the chapter highlights