



## Aethiopica 09 (2006)

International Journal of Ethiopian and Eri-  
treat Studies

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LEONARDO COHEN SHABOT, University of Haifa, Israel – ANDREU MARTÍNEZ  
D'ALÒS-MONER, European University Institute, Florence; Universität Hamburg

**Article**

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Aethiopica 09 (2006), 190–212

ISSN: 1430–1938

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Published by

Universität Hamburg

Asien Afrika Institut, Abteilung Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

Hiob Ludolf Zentrum für Äthiopistik

## **The Jesuit Mission in Ethiopia (16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> Centuries): an Analytical Bibliography**

LEONARDO COHEN SHABOT, University of Haifa, Israel – ANDREU MARTÍNEZ D'ALÒS-MONER, European University Institute, Florence;  
Universität Hamburg

The mission carried out by the Society of Jesus in the Ethiopian highlands from 1556 to 1632 has been for the last two decades object of an important number of publications. The interest for the political and religious activities of the missionaries has gained momentum; there is hardly a meeting on the history of Ethiopia that does not include at least one contribution dedicated to this issue. The bibliography on this mission is growing at an increasing pace. An essay reviewing the main scholarly trends and providing the most complete list of titles was, thus, heavily needed. Serious research is based on a sober knowledge of what has been produced and an awareness of what remains still to be studied. It is our hope that this work will contribute to both goals.

### **From colonial curiosity to modern secular interest**

Although the study of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia is as old as the mission itself – to mind come works such as those by the Jesuit missionaries themselves or by the German Hiob Ludolph – the first scholarly works can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see chart). During the century of modern colonialism, the Red Sea, the Horn of Africa and the Nile river basin became strategic areas and major colonial arenas. Not by chance, it was the powers that were most active in the Red Sea like England, France and Italy, who showed great interest in studying the deeds performed in the same latitudes two and three centuries earlier by the Portuguese explorers and Jesuit missionaries.

The first articles with a modern approach that were dedicated to the mission in Ethiopia appeared in the decades preceding and following the Berlin Conference (1884–85), which saw the formal division of the African continent. Most of the works were published in the organs of the colonial and geographical societies and were written by individuals engaged in one way

or another in the colonial machinery.<sup>1</sup> Unsurprisingly, these earlier studies focused mostly on the “exploratory” character of the Jesuit mission: did the Jesuits really reach the sources of the Nile? Was Bruce right in claiming they never did? (189). Scholars were not yet ready to discuss on the polemics between Orthodox monophysites and Roman Catholics.

Among the missionaries to which more attention was dedicated were Jerónimo Lobo, Manoel de Almeida and Pedro Paez. Jerónimo Lobo, who played a minor role during the mission, was by far the one who received more attention. His travel account, the *Itinerario*, enjoyed since its first French edition by Le Grand back in 1728 a widespread diffusion in Europe.<sup>2</sup> The colonial media, mostly British, praised Lobo as a pioneer traveller and adventurer and were enchanted by the broad descriptions present in the *Itinerario*. In his turn, Manoel de Almeida aroused admiration for the map he had produced around 1645 to illustrate his work *Historia da Ethiopia a Alta*. This was rightly valued as the most accurate cartographic work on Ethiopia until the coming of modern colonial science. Finally, the Spaniard Paez attracted interest for other reasons than for being the genius and architect of the Jesuit “success” in Ethiopia – after all, his main missionary achievements at the court of Susānyos and his masterpiece *História da Etiópia* had, at the time of colonial historiography, not yet been “discovered”. He was attributed the role of “discoverer” of the sources of the Blue Nile – one that, it shall be stressed, the Castilian never claimed for himself.

To sum up, during this period, the missionary achievements of the Jesuits remained in the background. Colonial scholars were more attracted by the military expedition led by Dom Christovão da Gama in 1541–43, whose vivid description by Castanhoso was widely circulated in colonial *milieux*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The colonial journals and bulletins that saw the appearance of the first articles on the mission were mostly the organs of the geographical societies, which had as the main goal explaining to the European public the progresses of colonialism: in Portugal, *Revista das sciencias militares*, *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* and *Revista portuguesa colonial marítima*; in England, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* and *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*; in France, *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, *Journal Asiatique*; and in Italy, *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana*.

<sup>2</sup> For the different editions see CARLOS SOMMERVOGEL (ed.), *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, 12 vol., Bruxelles 1890–[1932] (reimpr. Louvain 1960), vol. 4, ad nomen; and MANUEL GONÇALVES DA COSTA, “Introdução”, in: Jerónimo Lobo, *Itinerário e outros escritos inéditos*, ed. Manuel Gonçalves da Costa, Barcelos 1971, 1–136, here 125–28.

<sup>3</sup> The Lisbon edition of 1855 prepared by the Academia das Sciencias de Lisboa was reissued by the military officer and scholar FRANCISCO MARIA ESTEVES PEREIRA (Lisbon 1898); before, the Italian Corpo di Stato Maggiore (1° reparto – 3° Ufficio) prepared a translation, today rare (*Storia della spedizione portoghese in Abissinia nel secolo XVI narrata da Michele da Castagnoso*, Roma 1888), see FRANCISCO MARIA

In studying the Jesuit mission the colonial societies focused, in most of the cases, on aspects relatively alien to it: the “discoveries” and the “explorations” so much praised in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had never been in the agenda of the Jesuit missionaries.

A turning point came in the turn of the century. Between 1902 and 1917 the Jesuit Camillo Beccari edited 15 volumes of documents from the Jesuit mission. Such an immense scholarly enterprise was inspired by a campaign – that eventually proved unsuccessful – sponsored by the Jesuit order towards the beatification of missionaries killed in Ethiopia and by the colonial momentum in Italy. The work was funded by the Italian Foreign Ministry and by the Government of the Eritrean Colony.<sup>4</sup> Beccari's collection made accessible to the wider public most of the Jesuit and Portuguese sources and included masterpieces such as Paez's and Almeida's *Historias* and a large sample of the massive collection of annual letters written during the mission. The collection had a noticeable impact within the wider Jesuit community and among those interested or involved in one way or another in the Horn of Africa. In the following decades there ensued an important number of articles, mostly in colonial or Jesuit-related publications. Although there are earlier examples in the biographies provided by the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Jesuit Antonio Franco, it is during these years when biographical notes dedicated to some missionaries began to make their way into encyclopaedias and historical dictionaries.

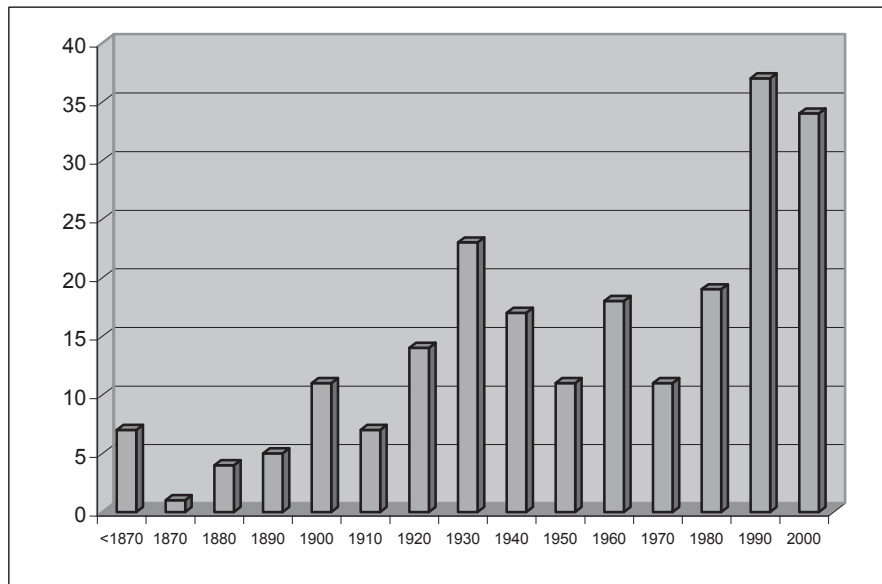
Judged from today's historiographic standards, the production during these years has an unequal value. Some studies had a clear hagiographic purpose whilst others were little more than pamphlets blaming the missionaries for their “missiological failures”; the most failed to unveil any new features helping us to understand the most critical aspects of this venture. Using Jesuit sources, some researches attributed the failure of the Jesuit enterprise to the intolerance shown by the missionaries and to Susənyos's own inability to rule. This was the case of an article by Paulo Durão appeared in the journal of the Portuguese Jesuits (83), who based his work on some texts published by Beccari, Albert Kammerer (23), dealing with the last period of Jesuit presence in Ethiopia, from Susənyos's conversion until the order's expulsion, and Reis Machado, who defined the Jesuits as authoritarian and intolerant (24, page 250).

ESTEVEZ PEREIRA, *Dos Feitos de D. Christovam da Gama em Ethiopia*, Lisboa 1898, xlv; it followed suite an English edition by RICHARD STEPHEN WHITEWAY (London 1902), a retired officer of the Bengal civil service and a German edition by the Orientalist ENNO LITTMANN (Berlin 1907).

<sup>4</sup> See EMMANUEL BARRADAS, *Il Tigre descritto da un missionario gesuita del secolo XVII*, ed. Camillo Beccari, Roma 1912, xiv.

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Chart: Works on the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia (dictionary and encyclopaedia articles excluded)



An inspiring work was that by Carlo Conti Rossini in an essay written in 1940 (39). Relying on his large knowledge of Ethiopian history and on an extensive reading of Beccari's sources, the dean of Ethiopian scholarship in Italy offered a comprehensive and insightful history of the mission. He tapped upon important factors in the mission such as the role played by the half-cast community of Ethio-Portuguese. His remains today a classic reference work and some of the ideas it brings have yet to be properly addressed by modern scholars. Of value was also the work by the German historian Kurt Krause, who offered an evaluation of the merits and limitations of Jesuit sources and that of compilers like Tellez and Ludolf (115).

More recently, the Ethiopian scholars Girma Beshah and Merid Wolde Aregay made a concise but valuable contribution by working on both Ethiopian and Portuguese sources (40). Their studies have a marked analytic character, displaying a more critical approach to Ethiopian, Portuguese and Jesuit sources. In later articles (51, 52) Merid Wolde Aregay placed the mission within the Ethiopian context and inquired into the reasons that lead to the failure of Catholicism in Ethiopia. In 1983 the Eritrean Capuchin Tewelde Beiene published the second half of his PhD dissertation dedicated to the Jesuit mission (101). The work, defended at the "Jesuit" University in Rome, the Pontifical Gregorian University, relayed on an impressive archival and bibliographical research, in both European and Ethiopian sources,

and had a strong theological focus. Although to date largely unnoticed, it shed light on the doctrinal polemics aroused by the activities of the Jesuit missionaries.

In the field of the arts, an important work was that by the French archaeologist Anfray, who in two articles located and described most of the sites associated with the Jesuit presence in Ethiopia (124, 125). After him a large number of articles were dedicated to the architectural legacy of the Jesuit mission, but a general ample survey is still missing.

A recent major boost in the historiography of the mission came with the publication in 1985 of *The Lost Empire* by the British Jesuit of Armenian origin Philip Caraman (11). Caraman, rather than a professional historian, was a skilled panegyrist of his order and an advocate for “lost” missions: previously he had authored a book on the Paraguayan missions (*The lost Paradise: The Jesuit Republic in South America*, New York 1976) and had served as screenplay informant in the Hollywood blockbuster *The Mission* (Roland Joffe, U.S.A. 1986). His book on the Ethiopian Jesuits appears, thus, often inaccurate (e.g., pages 7, 8, 71 note) and of little historiographic value. It also overstates some achievements, such as attributing to Pedro Paez a revolutionary architectural role (pages 47–48). However, well written and enjoyable, it reached a wider public, both academic and profane, as it is attested in the long list of reviews and by a French translation. Besides, it also had the merit to give to the missionary Pedro Paez the relevance he had since long deserved. Hereafter, an impressive number of studies has followed suit.

The British Charles Beckingham implemented a critical literary approach in detailed studies of the Jesuit and Portuguese sources (8, 104, 105). He presented a scholarly and detailed account of Portuguese and Jesuit literature about Ethiopia and the missionary enterprise. Beckingham also stressed the importance to use Ethiopian chronicles and new hagiographic material, largely unexplored in the study of the mission and outlined some key issues to be further researched regarding Ethiopian history during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Among the most recent studies, the great majority have dealt with political history. Some stressed the Ethiopian Emperor's wish to make use of Catholicism for his project of a centralised state (34). The Russian Sevir Chernetsov (37) and the Portuguese Manuel João Ramos (62) inquired further in this issue, studying the centralising policies of Susənyos's forerunner, Zä Dengel, and basing part of the Jesuits' influence in their own concept of an absolutist state. The French scholar Hervé Pennec followed a similar path and framed his PhD dissertation, the second to be fully dedicated to the mission, around a clear-cut distinction between the “religious” and “political” goals of both the

missionaries and the Ethiopian *negus* (58). He stressed the symmetrical manipulative intentions in both the actions of the missionaries (politics as a means to achieve a religious goal: conversion) and the Ethiopian Emperor (religion as means to achieve a political goal: centralisation).

During the last years, an increasing number of studies have dealt with particular aspects of the daily life during the mission. This has opened discussion to new topics, such as gender (107), culture (76, 78, 92), literature (77, 79, 80, 96, 97), the religious conflicts ensued after Mendes's religious reform (74). It is to be hoped that further detailed studies on the cultural, intellectual and religious character of the encounter between Jesuits and Ethiopians will present a more complex and richer description of this episode, central both in the history of Ethiopia and of the European expansion.

### Methodology

This bibliography contains 297 titles of secondary literature on the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia. In compiling it we tried to be as exhaustive as possible. Our principal goal was to provide the most complete list of scholarship. We decided to limit the focus to printed secondary literature, leaving for the future a compilation of original sources, published and unpublished (a task that was partly attempted by Beccari, 7), and on studies dealing with the broader topic of Portuguese-Ethiopian relations. Academic dissertations and unpublished papers were left aside. The category secondary literature, although often vague, helps in appraising how the mission has been perceived by the generations following the events. Thus, we excluded from the study texts written by actors from the mission or by contemporaries to the events. We did not consider either a series of important titles published in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that were fully or partially dedicated to the Jesuits<sup>5</sup> were

<sup>5</sup> In chronological order: BALTHAZAR TELLEZ, *Historia geral de Ethiopia a Alta ou Preste Ioam*, Coimbra 1660; JOHANN MICHAEL WANSLEBEN, *A brief account of the rebellions and bloodshed occasioned by the anti-Christian practices of the Jesuits ...*, London 1679; HIOB LUDOLF, *Historia aethiopica, sive Brevis & succincta descriptio regni Habessinorum, quod vulgò malè Presbyteri Iohannis vocateur*, Francofurti ad Moenum 1681; MATEO DE ANGUIANO, *Epitome historial y conquista espiritual del imperio Abyssino a cuyo imperador llaman Preste Juan*, Madrid 1690; HIOB LUDOLF, *Iobi Lvdolfi aliàs Leutholf dicti ad suam Historiam aethiopicam antehac editam commentarius ...*, Francofurti ad Moenum 1691; ID., *Appendix ad historiam aethiopicam Iobi Lvdolfi illiusque commentarium ...*, Francofurti ad Moenum 1693; ID., *Appendix secunda ad Historiam aethiopicam Iobi Lvdolfi ...*, Francofurti ad Moenum 1694; MICHAEL GEDDES, *The church history of Ethiopia: wherein among other things, the two great splendid Roman missions ...*, London 1696. A later work belonging to the same group would be GOTTOFR. OERTELI, *Theologia aethiopum ...*, Wittenbergae 1746.



largely commented compilations of texts written by the missionaries. Hence, the earliest work from our sample is – besides the short biographies by António Franco – that by James Bruce from 1790. As we tried to keep up to date with a production that grows at a quick pace and on a yearly basis, the newest titles correspond to the year 2005. It is likely that the bibliography will need further updates of new titles, and eventually – we hope not too many – of earlier titles we might have missed throughout the research.

For compiling the bibliography we looked at any material having partially or totally to do with the Jesuit mission. Thus, works dealing with Portuguese contacts with Ethiopia were listed in case some of their pages were dedicated to the mission. The same applies for works dealing with Ethiopian history and culture. Works dealing uniquely with Portuguese episodes preceding the mission, such as Christovão da Gama's famous armed expedition or Rodrigo da Lima's embassy, although decisive elements to the background of the Jesuit enterprise, are not taken into account. The years covered by the titles here considered span roughly from 1556 to 1632, but these remain only indicative dates. Thus, for instance, titles listed here dealing with Ignatius of Loyola's engagement with the "Preste" antedate 1556 in their scope. Eventually, for books having enjoyed of a larger diffusion we provide successive editions and reviews in scholarly journals. When possible, in the case of books we tried to provide the pages or chapters where the specific information was to be found. Prefaces and introductions to Jesuit primary sources are generally not listed, with some relevant exceptions due to their interest. Encyclopaedia and dictionary entries containing consistent and helpful information on individual missionary figures were also considered for survey.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the research, we tried not to exclude any language, although reasons of availability and the own historiographical dynamics, make it so that Western European languages dominate in this survey. The titles were searched in a diversity of media and places. In an initial stage we used our own bibliographies and those provided by other scholars in books and

<sup>6</sup> We did not consider, though, several missionary biographies from the *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada*, Bilbao n.d., or the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which were too sketchy and short to be of any interest; and also early biographical works – to the exception of António Franco's – such as JUAN EUSEBIO NIEREMBERG (1595–1658), *Varones ilustres de la Compania de Jesus*, 1643–47 (edition of the first 6 vols. Bilbao 1887–90) and PHILIPPO ALEGAMBE (1592–1652), *Bibliotheca scriptorum societatis Jesu post excusum anno 1608 catalogum Petri Ribadeneirae nunc hoc novo apparatu librorum ad a. r. s. 1642 editorum concinnata et illustrium virorum elogis adornata*, Antverpiæ 1643.



journal articles.<sup>7</sup> Later, a more systematic approach was followed. We looked into the main electronic databases for humanities (JSTOR, First Search) and browsed a set of journals that could contain relevant articles. Similarly, we searched into the production of some major scholars with important contributions to Ethiopian historiography, such as Carlo Conti Rossini, Esteves Pereira, Enrico Cerulli; the later was a deceitful task, though, since with the exception of Conti Rossini these scholars produced not a single study on the mission. All titles listed have been read through.

Due to the number of titles at hand a thematic presentation was on order.<sup>8</sup> The distribution of the titles according to a few topics will help the reader to quickly situate the works and to have a first hand idea about their general content. Such a layout was especially needed provided the nature of our work, which did not allow to have a subject or author index. Titles were distributed among six main categories: 1) general; 2) politics; 3) religion – theology; 4) cartography – culture – gender; 5) art – architecture; and 6) individual figures. In the later category we limited the search to nine of the most important and representative missionaries. We also included there titles on Ignatius of Loyola and *nəgus* Susənyos, as their engagement in the mission has been a much treated topic in historiography. Within every category the titles are listed in alphabetical order.

### Abbreviations

AlbDic	ALBUQUERQUE, LUÍS – FRANCISCO CONTENTE DOMINGUES (eds.), <i>Dicionário de História dos Descobrimentos Portugueses</i> , 2 vols., Lisboa 1994.
BayEth	BAYE YIMAN et al. (ed.), <i>Ethiopian Studies at the End of the Second Millennium (Proceedings of the XIV<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa, November 6–11 2000)</i> , 3 vols., Addis Ababa 2002.
BöllEth	BÖLL, VERENA – STEVEN KAPLAN – ANDREU MARTÍNEZ D'ALÓS-MONER – EVGENIA SOKOLINSKAIA (eds.), <i>Ethiopia and the Missions: Historical and Anthropological Insights</i> , Münster 2005.
FrAn	FRANCO, ANTÓNIO, <i>Ano Santo da Companhia de Jesus em Portugal</i> , 1a ed., prefaciada e anotada por Francisco Rodrigues, Porto 1931.
GetMiss	GETACHEW HAILE – AASULV LANDE – SVEN RUBENSON (eds.), <i>The Missionary Factor in Ethiopia: Papers from a Symposium on the Impact of European Missions on Ethiopian Society. Lund University, August 1996</i> , Frankfurt am Main et al. 1998.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, LASZLO POLGAR, *Bibliographie sur l'histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus, 1901–1980*, vol. 2: *Les pays: Amérique, Asie, Afrique, Océanie*, Roma 1986, 511–15.

<sup>8</sup> A helpful referent for our study was the excellent bibliography by EWALD WAGNER, *Harar: annotierte Bibliographie zum Schrifttum über die Stadt und den Islam in Südostäthiopien*, Wiesbaden 2003 (Aethiopistische Forschungen 61).

- HowEnc HOWGEGO, RAYMOND JOHN, *Encyclopedia of Exploration 1800 to 1850: a Comprehensive Reference Guide to the History and Literature of Exploration, Travel and Colonization between the Years 1800 and 1850*, Potts Point (Australia) 2003.
- KochJes KOCH, LUDWIG, *Jesuiten Lexikon. Die Gesellschaft Jesu einst und jetzt*, 2 vols., Löwen – Heverlee 1962 (orig. ed. Paderborn 1934).
- KurEth KURIMOTO, EISEI – MASAYOSHI SHIGETA – KATSUYOSHI FUKUI (eds.), *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective (Papers of the XIII<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Kyoto, 12–17 December 1997)*, 3 vols., Kyoto 1997.
- MachBibl MACHADO, DIOGO BARBOSA, *Bibliotheca Lusitana*, ed. M. Lopes de Almeida, 4 vols., Lisboa 1741–59 (reed. 1965–67).
- MarTr MARCUS, HAROLD GOLDEN (ed.), *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies. Papers of the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Michigan State University, 5–10 September 1994*, 2 vols, Lawrenceville, NJ 1994.
- O'NeDic O'NEILL, CHARLES E. – JOAQUÍN M.A DOMÍNGUEZ (eds.), *Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús*, 2 vols., Madrid 2001.
- PanProc PANKHURST, RICHARD – STANISLAW CHOJNACKI (eds.), *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies [3–7 April]*, 2 vols., Addis Ababa 1966.
- PerPort PEREIRA, JOÃO MANUEL ESTEVES – GUILHERME RODRIGUES (eds.), *Portugal: Diccionario Historico, chorographico, biographico, bibliographico, heraldico, numismatico e artistico*, 7 vols., Lisboa 1909.
- PMLA PMLA [*Publication of the Modern Language Association of America*]
- RamInd RAMOS, MANUEL JOÃO – ISABEL BOAVIDA (eds.), *The Indigenous and the Foreign in Christian Ethiopian Art: On Portuguese-Ethiopian Contacts in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Papers from the Fifth International Conference on the History of Ethiopian Art (Arrábida, 26–30 November 1999)*, Burlington 2004.
- RASO BECCARI, CAMILLO (ed.), *Rerum Aethiopicarum scriptores occidentales inediti a saeculo XVI ad XIX*, 15 vols., Romae 1903–17 (repr. Bruxelles 1969).
- RSE *Rassegna di studi etiopici*
- SomBib SOMMERVOGEL, CARLOS, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus* (new ed. of Augustin and Aloys de Backer), 15 vols., Héverlé-Louvain 1960.
- SpLit SPEAKE, JENNIFER (ed.), *Literature of Travel and Exploration. An Encyclopaedia*, 3 vols., New York – London 2003.
- TadProc TADDESE BEYENE (ed.), *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies. University of Addis Ababa [26–30 November 1984]*, 2 vols., Addis Ababa – Frankfurt am Main 1988–89.
- TylJes TYLENDÁ, JOSEPH N., *Jesuit Saints & Martyrs. Short Biographies of the Saints, Blessed, Venerables, and Servants of God of the Society of Jesus*, Chicago 1998 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).
- UhlEAE UHLIG, SIEGBERT (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 1–2, Wiesbaden 2003–05.

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- See ch. VI: "Arrivée des Jésuites en Ethiopie", 132–41; ch. VII: "Règne de Minás (1560–64)", 142–47; ch. X: "Gouvernement de Sertsè-Denghel", 165–72; ch. XI: "Règnes de Yacob et de Zè-Denghel (1597–1607)", 173–84; ch. XII: "Règne de Socinios (1607–1632)", 185–97; ch. XIII: "L'Abyssinie Catholique", 198–213; ch. XIV: "Guerres civiles", 214–24; ch. XV: "Critique des appréciations de divers écrivains, sur le règne de Socinios", 225–33.
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### Summary

The Jesuit mission in Ethiopia was an episode of great importance in the history of Ethiopia and the Portuguese expansion. However, despite the number of studies dedicated to it a bibliography was still missing. This paper tries to fill the gap; it discusses the historiography of the mission, outlines the main themes treated and provides a comprehensive list of secondary literature.