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Dissertation abstract

Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier: Mätäkkäl (Ethiopia), 1898–1991

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defended on 29 November, 2005 to obtain a Dr. Phil. degree in Ethiopian Studies

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TSEGA ENDALEW ETEFA, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier: Mätäkkäl (Ethiopia), 1898–1991*. Dissertation accepted at the Asien-Afrika-Institut, Orientalistik, Universität Hamburg, defended on 29 November, 2005 to obtain a Dr. Phil. degree in Ethiopian Studies.

This dissertation examines the history of a significant region hitherto neglected in Ethiopian studies from the last decade of the nineteenth century to the end of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1991. Mätäkkäl is a large territory on the north-western part of Ethiopia's border with the Republic of the Sudan. It is sparsely populated with various ethnic groups such as the Gumuz, Šinaša, Oromo, Agäw and Amhara which are members of the four Ethiopian language super families.

The region is rich in natural resources which invited aggressive invasions from the Sudan and Christian Empire for a long period of time. However, these centuries of expeditions were not followed by effective incorporation until the first half of the twentieth century. Other than conducting annual expeditions to collect tributes and booty, the Ethiopian rulers did not dare to descend into the lowlands for effective occupation. Perhaps pre-occupation with other matters, conflicts and power consolidations within the Christian Empire might have delayed the annexation of the region. The Mahdist state was also not in a position to effectively occupy the region due to its unsettled conditions. After 1882, however, other factors led to the incorporation of the region by Ethiopia. The defeat at the Battle of Embabo of King Täklä Haymanot and his loss of the rich south-western regions to King Mənilək had diverted his attention to the western borderlands. Täklä Haymanot seems to have also decided to effectively control the western territories in the territorial competition after the fall of the Mahdist state. Thus the year 1898 was a landmark for the region which gradually decided the fate of the hitherto 'no-man's land'. Though eventually incorporated, the western borderlands were not effectively integrated into the Ethiopian state system. The presence of the state was still loose and the region harboured brigands and bandits from both Ethiopia and the Sudan until recently.

Intra- and inter-ethnic relations in north-western Ethiopia are very interesting due to the fact that almost all of the inhabitants have strong family, clan, cultural, trade and political ties on both sides of the Abbay. Also there are good relationships between the Gumuz of Ethiopia and the Sudan. The spirit of self-help has been an integral part of both urban and rural communities in

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this region as it was the case throughout the country. The corollaries of these intra- and inter-group movements and relations are that strong assimilation and integration have been developed. In terms of language, too, most of the ethnic groups are trilingual, Oromiffa being the *lingua franca* in southern Mätäkkäl. Yet, there are intra- as well as inter-ethnic conflicts arising from various factors. Interestingly the communities have developed conflict resolution mechanisms which helped them to solve conflicts. Traditional community courts played a very significant role in keeping group as well as ethnic solidarity.

The research work aims at making a significant contribution in revealing the history and cultures of the frontier communities, their assimilation, forms of rule and incorporation. The research will contribute to the understanding of the peoples and cultures of the Ethiopian-Sudan borderlands, to aggression and the domination of minorities, to inter-ethnic relations, to conflicts and their resolutions in Ethiopia in particular and in Africa in general. The study is organised into six chapters including introduction and conclusions. There are appendices which include two letters, 13 maps and five pictures.

IZABELA ORLOWSKA, *Re-imagining Empire: Ethiopian Political Culture under Yohannis IV (1872–89)*, Dissertation in the Department of History, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (Faculty of Arts and Humanities), defended on March 7, 2006 to obtain a Ph.D. in History.

This thesis is concerned with the question of how the Ethiopian monarchy reconstructed and reinvented itself after more than a century of decline. It examines the internal dynamics of this process, by utilising primary source materials in indigenous Ethiopian languages. The main sources used are chronicles commemorating the reign of Yohannis IV, the second of the monarchs who presided over the period widely regarded as marking the beginning of modern Ethiopian history. Chapter 1 outlines the main social and political themes essential for an understanding of Ethiopia in the late-nineteenth century. It deals with the origins of the national ideology, church-state relations, patron-client relations, the economic basis of society and land tenure. I then sketch the historical debate surrounding the period that provides the immediate context for the monarchy of Yohannis IV. Chapter 2 examines the rise to power of Yohannis and analyses this process by addressing understandings of authority, leadership and the role of charisma in the Ethiopian context. Chapter 3 examines how Solomonic genealogy and the religious symbols embedded in the glorious past of the monar-