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Personalia

In memoriam Alexander Naty (1957–2003)

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modernen Bibelwissenschaft¹ hat v.E. eine Geschichte der äthiopischen Bibelübersetzung verfaßt.

Das Werk und das Leben Michel van Esbroecks sind ein Beispiel für Hingabe an die wissenschaftliche Forschung und den Dienst an den Idealen der christlichen Geschichte. Stets betonte er, daß die Arbeit des Historikers ein Gegenmittel gegen die Amnesie sei. Äthiopisten, die die Bedeutung der äthiopischen Mariologie für das Verständnis des mittelalterlichen äthiopischen Christentums und die Einheit des Oriens Christianus verstehen, werden die Bemühungen dieses herausragenden Wissenschaftlers auch in Zukunft würdigen.

In memoriam Alexander Naty (1957–2003)

Wolbert G.C. Smidt, Universität Hamburg

The academic community has lost a remarkable scholar. On 9 December 2003 Alexander Naty, Ph.D., died after a week long coma in a clinic in Asmara; he was only 46 years old. He was among the few Eritrean academics trained in prestigious universities abroad who returned to Eritrea shortly after her independence and stayed in order to build up the new-born country. He had made his name as a social anthropologist with specialisation both in Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies.

Born on 12 September 1957 in Mariti, Kunamaland, during the Eritrean-Ethiopian Federation, he was one of the first Kunama to get a higher education. In 1978, after having visited an Italian school, he acquired the Ethiopian Secondary School Leaving Certificate at the *Qeyyéh Bahéri Bet Témbéerti*, Asmara – already by that time he had mastered six languages. Giving up his first vocation, becoming a Catholic priest, he then joined Addis Ababa University. He received his B.A. in Sociology in 1982 and joined the Institute of Ethiopian Studies as a researcher. Here he did his first social anthropological fieldwork as a field assistant to Donald L. Donham, among the Maale in south-west Ethiopia. In 1986 he received his M.A. at Stanford University, followed by a Ph.D. in Anthropology in 1992 after extensive research among the Aari, focussing on state-society relations in historical perspective (*The Culture of Powerlessness and Spirit of Rebellion among the Aari People of Southwest Ethiopia*). He was thus fulfilling the

¹ “Les versions orientales de la Bible: une orientation bibliographique”, in: J. KRASOVEC (ed.), *Interpretation of the Bible*, Ljubliana, 1998, 399–509.

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ideal that social anthropology should not remain an affair of Westerners researching the “exotic” other.

In 1994 he joined Asmara University as a lecturer and researcher, and was instrumental in building up the Department of Anthropology and Sociology; he also served as the Department Chair. As the only Kunama academic to be a member of the Constitutional Commission (1995-97), he had the chance to participate in the drafting of Eritrea’s Constitution. He also served on the Electoral Board, and the Ministry of Education Committee for Writing Children’s Books, thus being quite influential in the promotion of Kunama literacy. Well integrated in an international network of academics, being widely published and believing in the necessity of a steady exchange of ideas and research findings, he regularly participated at international conferences and served as a visiting scholar at: Yale University (Agrarian Studies Program, Institution for Social and Policy Studies, 1992–94), Leiden University (*Afrika Studie Centrum*, 2001) and in Japan (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science), among others. As a member of an authorized delegation from Asmara University he attended the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Hamburg (July 2003), presenting the results of his research on the Aari and discussing them, e.g., with younger Japanese colleagues following in his footsteps in that area. When he came back from a subsequent research stay in Rome, the complicated political situation in his country led to a short imprisonment and the immediate dismissal from his post, due to his participation at the conference, which was misunderstood as being an “Ethiopian” conference. Retiring to Haykota in his native Kunamaland, he soon after contracted cerebral malaria.

He is survived by his parents, his wife Aster Beyene and his daughter Amaale. His planned and much expected research on Kunama history could not be finished, but he will be remembered as a most helpful, adaptable and openminded researcher, encouraging his students and helping foreign scholars as a well-informed advisor.

In memoriam Aberra Jembere (1928–2004)

Jon Abbink, African Studies Centre, Leiden,
and Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

Dr. Aberra Jembere, a notable Ethiopian public figure and scholar of law, died on 23 March 2004 in Stockholm, Sweden, where he had been undergoing medical treatment. His funeral took place shortly afterwards in Addis Ababa at the Trinity Cathedral cemetery, in a major public ceremony at-