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**Review**

RICHARD CAULK, "*Between the Jaws of Hyenas*": a Diplomatic History of  
*Ethiopia (1876–1896)*; edited and with an introduction by Bahru Zewde

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## Reviews

and Kaplan. If she is correct, the clash between the clergy affiliated with Däbrä Libanos and the emperors is primarily the stuff of legend, and a major chapter in 14<sup>th</sup> century history must be rewritten. The analysis of this and other similar episodes is, moreover, central to the larger structure of Derat's work, much of which is devoted to exploring the literary expressions of the changing relationships between clergy and monarchy during this period.

Derat's sensitivity to literary questions is throughout one of the major strengths of her work. Over 35 years have passed since the publication of the third edition of Cerulli's *Storia della letteratura etiopica*<sup>3</sup>. Although several important articles on the history of Ethiopic literature have been published in the interval, no book length study has appeared. Thus, the important contributions of Kropp, Getatchew, Marrassini, Bausi and Colin, to name just a few, have not yet been integrated into a single framework. Derat makes a major contribution to filling this gap through a series of mini-studies scattered throughout her book. At numerous points she devotes herself to issues such as the history of the title *‘aqqabe sä‘at* (92–95) or of the royal prison of Amba Gəṣān 24–29.

Often the results are summarized in a table. By my count there are 13 tables and 11 maps in the volume. It would have been helpful if these had been numbered and were listed in the book's table of contents. At present only the last three tables which appear in an appendix are listed in the Table of Contents.

Derat's book is a must read for anyone seriously interested in pre-modern Ethiopia. Historical reconstructions which have remained unchallenged for several decades or more must now be revisited. While Taddesse Tamrat's pioneering work remains the most accessible presentation of the history of the period 1270–1527, scholars interested in the texts behind the story will find no better source than Marie-Laure Derat's book.

Steven Kaplan, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

RICHARD CAULK, *“Between the Jaws of Hyenas”: a Diplomatic History of Ethiopia (1876–1896)*; edited and with an introduction by Bahru Zewde = *Aethiopistische Forschungen* 60. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002. 688 pp.; hardback. Price: € 73,-. ISBN 3-447-04558-2, ISSN 0170-3196.

The sovereignty of the Ethiopian state has never been so menacingly challenged from outside as it was in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The trial

<sup>3</sup> ENRICO CERULLI, *Storia della letteratura etiopica*, Milano 1958 [3<sup>rd</sup> 1968].

came ironically from powers long regarded by Ethiopia either as brotherly neighbours (i.e. Egypt and the Sudan) in spite of their being Muslims or the Christian 'brothers' from across the seas in Europe. In actual fact, it was the latter that helped Khedivial Egypt, if not Mahdist Sudan, to surround and invade Ethiopia, and eventually they themselves (particularly France, Great Britain and Italy) entered the scenario to accomplish what Egypt failed to do in a quarter of a century. By a coincidence, as it often happens in history, Ethiopia raised four successive leaders (Tewodros II, Täklä Giyorgis II, Yoḥannəs IV and Mənilək II) who were not only determined to defy the challenge, but who could also perceive the mechanism of the politics of their challengers.

The present work by the late Richard Alan Caulk (1936–1983) is an intensive study of the confrontations between the Ethiopian leaders (especially Yoḥannəs IV and Mənilək II) on the one hand and the European colonial powers (particularly France and Italy) on the other in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As king of Šäwa, Mənilək inherited a landlocked dominion which required a great deal of diplomatic and military skills to survive as a viable state within or outside the empire. Realizing that he could not attain the imperial crown, Mənilək insured his position in Šäwa by paying an annual tribute to Emperor Yoḥannəs IV from 1878 onward, though this concession was, as it turned out to be, only a temporary solution; there were several trying moments in the relations between the two rulers in the next decade. The respite in any case enabled Mənilək to concentrate on the conquest of the rich regions to the south, west and east of Šäwa which nonetheless required a great deal of human and material resources.

To maintain the integrity of his dominion against the Emperor's possible change of policy toward Šäwan autonomy and to continue the conquest of the Cushitic states as well as to increase his wealth through foreign trade, Mənilək needed modern weapons and access to the sea for which he had to befriend Europeans. He thus welcomed European traders, missionaries, travellers, adventurers and envoys into his realm. With them came nevertheless the complications of negotiations and treaties which Mənilək had to unravel.

By the time Mənilək directed his territorial conquest to the east hoping to get access to the sea, the coast of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean was occupied by the colonial powers: France in Obock (later Djibouti), Britain in Zeila (northern Somalia) and Italy in southern Somalia. This situation inevitably brought Mənilək a host of problems to deal with including the question of boundaries, the circumventing of embargoes of arms, as well as the threats of war. The death of Yoḥannəs IV in 1889 intensified Mənilək's troubles, as the Italians (his apparent allies) encroached into the Empire

from the north traversing the line agreed upon in an initially secret treaty between Mənilək himself and the Italian government. Having resisted all diplomatic overtures, the Italian advances could not be checked but by war.

This was the setting into the details of which Caulk goes with amazing dexterity. Internal and external affairs of state, war and conquest, trade and transport, famine and pestilence, and many more issues are meticulously dealt with in fifteen chapters, all in relation to Mənilək's diplomacy. In his presentation, the author recreated the complex developments of the time by setting several parallel issues, not unlike the presentation in a film, though in this case the reader must go back and forth with the narrator. The reader who is not familiar with the history of the time is in any case likely to lose the thread of argument.

The history of the work's composition is said to have lasted practically the equivalent in length of time to the period it covers. The editor of this extensive work tells us (cf. pp. 10f.) that it started in the 1960s as the author's dissertation – *The Origins and Development of the Foreign Policy of Menelik II, 1865–1896* – presented to the University of London in 1966, and that since then it was greatly improved upon by the author's extensive research while working with the Department of History of Addis Ababa University. That explains the mystery behind the length of the work and the 2793 footnotes mostly referring to numerous archival files, manuscripts, published articles and books as well as to interviewees. Caulk has evidently left no stone unturned to find facts to support his arguments and to give explanations to undocumented happenings. For that diligence and academic devotion, the author deserves the highest accolade. His work will certainly remain the best memorial of his meticulousness, as the editor puts it in the introduction (cf. p. 12).

If the author worked on his manuscript for 20 or so years, it must have been with the aim of satisfying himself and his readers with the ultimate result. That is a virtue by itself. He would have done better, though, if he had published the work early like his colleagues (cf. p. 10), as he could have been in a position to revise and correct it in accordance with the criticisms and suggestions of his peers. Perfection, however desirable, is less attainable in the academic world in solitude than within the open and critical milieu. Be it as it may, a few shortcomings of technical, factual and interpretive nature are observable in this stupendous work.

Leaving aside such technical errors as the pre-Christian dating of the author's life given on p. 10, "1936–1883", the cataloguing of which will only inflate the review, we begin from the very beginning to evaluate other matters of significance. Even then, space may dictate mention of only a couple of examples for each set of questions.

In contrast to the author's dissertation which covers the period 1865–96, the present work concentrates for some obscure reason on the period 1876–96. '1896' is self-evidently an historical marker whereas '1876' is not; at least not for a diplomatic history. That year was the point of time during which the Šāwan Nəguś had his greatest troubles at home, his own wife, a cousin and some rivals having risen against him. Mənilək's escape from Mäqdāla and his enthronement in Šāwa in 1865 would, as adopted in the dissertation, have been an appropriate beginning of a period dominated by a political figure on whom this work focuses.

Another perplexing matter is that no attempt has been made on the part of the author to explain such conceptual terms as 'diplomacy' and 'policy' in the Ethiopian context. This would not have been a problem had the author not attributed such concepts and practices exclusively to Europe in the opening paragraph of the first chapter, and Mənilək is described as one of the few African and Asian leaders who understood their use. Did Mənilək have a policy at all? In the conceptual sense of the term generally defined by the standard English reference works as "a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions", we know of none. The author himself admits on page 107 that Mənilək never clearly stated the principles of his policy: "Neither Ethiopian writers nor the Europeans who lived in his court give adequate notice to the exigencies under which Menilek had to work or to the foresight which gave his actions the statesmanlike quality of policy". We are, therefore, to assume that Mənilək's policy is to be understood under its pragmatic components: "prudence or wisdom in the management of affairs". Thus common-sense politics was by no means a uniquely European propriety nor was it practised only by a few in Africa and Asia. In fact Ethiopian history is full of instances in which war and negotiations went hand in hand.

Although the greater part of the given period belonged to Yoḥannəs IV (1872–89) as much as it was Mənilək's, Yoḥannəs is treated rather marginally in this work. This tendentious approach may have been prompted by the existence of a superb study on the sovereign, to which a reference might have been thought sufficient. If so, it was not more than a lame excuse though, for the life and activities of Mənilək have been assessed far more often than those of Yoḥannəs, both during and after his reign. We need only to glance at Alfred Ilg's analysis of 1896 regarding the relations between Mənilək and the powers in the two decades that preceded the Battle of ʿAdwa. More extensive studies followed in 1902 by G.F.E. Berkeley, in 1908 by A. von Falkenegg, in 1910 by Carlo Rosetti, in 1935 by Ernest Work, and in 1947 by H. Schwarz – most of which seem to have been

overlooked or ignored by the author. In recent decades, distinguished scholars such as Sven Rubenson, R.H.K. Darkwah, Harold Marcus, and Carlo Giglio have investigated and analysed the developments of almost all issues of the period in great depth. From this point of view, it should be admitted that Caulk's work is more or less a rehash of all those contributions with some useful additional details. After all, no new evidence has emerged from this study regarding such unsolved historical questions as whether, for instance, Italy intentionally deceived Mənilək in the infamous Treaty of Wəçale or why Mənilək did not pursue his victory of ʿAdwa to dislodge the Italians from the highlands north of the Mārāb at least as far as the line foreseen in the treaty. The economic and social circumstances described at length have hardly hampered Mənilək from other formidable expeditions. The blameless Mənilək is vehemently defended against any criticism related to his intrigues against Yoḥannəs or his conspiracy with the Egyptians and the Italians who later became his enemies. Others who did exactly the same are nonetheless called (cf. p. 112) traitors and collaborators.

Perhaps Caulk made use of at least as many Ethiopian sources as Rubenson did, but a certain degree of ambivalence is noticeable in the way he handles them. His distrust is particularly palpable if the document tends to be critical of Mənilək, doubtless his favourite monarch. "Disappointed foreigners, as well as Menilek's most outspoken and intelligent Ethiopian critic, Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädagn", he writes on p. 106, "accused him of rank opportunism". In contrast, in the same paragraph a private letter of a European is quoted without any prejudicial comment: "In a private letter written at the beginning of 1887, Traversi summed up the judgement of those who found him affable and winning, but unwilling to be led: 'When he wants something, the king is movingly kind but if he must keep a promise, even one which serves his interests, or do the least favor, he is deaf in both ears!'" (Ibid. See also pp. 108, 155 and *passim*).

Even when the source's statement is proven correct (cf. pp. 653 f.), the author accepted the Ethiopian report half-heartedly: "Mahdist defeats at the hand of the British and the last stage of expansion by which Menilek's generation rounded out the empire were connected, according to the Gojjamé historian, Aläqa Täklä-Yäsus. The adversities of the Sudanese set off a race. The Ethiopians rushed to make good their frontier claims before European partition of the whole of the upper valley of the Nile. Although this cleric was not at the emperor's court, he seems to have been correct in linking Kitchener's successes to the Ethiopian push westward of Wälläga". Is it really necessary for someone to be in the royal palace in order to be believed as authentic when noting a fact he or she knew? How can we be sure that this cleric, who was a confidant of Nəguś Täklä Haymanot, did not have communication with the imperial palace?

Finally, mention should be made of technical errors which cannot necessarily be ascribed to misprint. Inconsistencies in the rendering of facts and dates as well as contradictions and inaccuracies of all kinds are unfortunately recurrent in the work. For instance, although the death of “Däjjazmach Haylu of Tsazäga” is correctly placed in July 1876 (cf. p. 141), the same person is raised to the position of ‘Ras’, which he never achieved and his death is erroneously placed in 1877 on p. 173. A discrepancy in the listing of events of the Battle of Mätämma has also occurred on p. 146: “On Friday, 8 March there was a skirmish; ... On Saturday, 10 March 1889, the Mätämma garrison under his command had been on the point of being overwhelmed”. If Friday was the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, as stated, then the next day, Saturday, must logically have been the 9<sup>th</sup>; but if Saturday was really the 10<sup>th</sup>, then Friday was the 9<sup>th</sup>. This could be a printing error or a result of a slovenly revision, for the correct date is in the researched books published in the 1970s; all the same a misleading error on which a false argument could be built.

Some inaccuracies are irreconcilable with the meticulousness of the scholar who worked for so long to reconstruct and interpret the history of a period. Although he claims to have consulted the Ilg papers (cf. p. 163), we encounter two undocumented statements on pages 97 and 164 respectively which could actually have come from unfounded sources. The first reads: “While Makonnen was reviving negotiations with Lagarde at the beginning of 1888, one of the Swiss artisans who worked with Ilg in Shäwa and who had accompanied him home at the end of 1887, Ernest Zimmermann, was at Aden on his way back to Šäwa”. Zimmermann’s first name was Alfred, and not ‘Ernest’, nor did he accompany Ilg to Europe in 1887. He plied on business between Ankobär, Zeila and Aden from where he wrote a dozen or so extensive letters to Ilg on the events of the time as well as on his attempts to win Zeila for Mäniläk.

A serious allegation is contained in the second erroneous statement directly related to Ilg: “Until he left Ethiopia in 1908 under a cloud for mismanaging Menilek’s finances, the Swiss engineer, Alfred Ilg (d. 1916), was justly regarded as the emperor’s right hand man in foreign affairs”. Alfred Ilg left Ethiopia in 1906, and not in 1908 as claimed, and certainly not because of mismanagement of Mäniläk’s finances. This allegation, though serious, has not been documented in the book now under scrutiny nor has the reviewer so far come across such an imputation.

There is no doubt that the author could, and possibly would, have cleansed his work of the errors if he had lived long enough to see it through the press. Ethiopian studies would have been poorer by one serviceable book had not the Department of Addis Ababa University thoughtfully decided to bring it to light. The book is readable and beautifully bound like

## Reviews

all other monographs in the series. The inquisitive student of Ethiopian history is provided with a well-organized bibliography while access to the book is facilitated by the fairly comprehensive index, though the reader's attention must herewith be drawn to the fact that many Ethiopian personalities are unusually entered under their titles.

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VOLKER MATTHIES, *Historische Reisen nach Aksum. Europäische Entdecker und Forscher beschreiben das antike Zentrum der äthiopischen Kultur*. Berlin: Verlag Dr. Köster, 2003. 92 Seiten, € 16,80. ISBN: 3-89574-498-0.

Der Politikwissenschaftler VOLKER MATTHIES erleichtert durch seine neueste Veröffentlichung den deutschsprachigen Aksum-Interessierten die Suche. Er stellt Auszüge aus Berichten über Aksum von sieben europäischen Reisenden vom 16. Jahrhundert bis Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts zusammen. Die in chronologischer Reihenfolge wiedergegebenen Beschreibungen Aksums beginnen mit Francisco Alvares, gehen über James Bruce, Henry Salt, Eduard Rüppell, Theodor von Heuglin, Gerhard Rohlfs und schließen ab mit einem Auszug aus dem Bericht der "Deutschen Aksum Expedition" von Enno Littmann. In der Einleitung ist eine weitere Schilderung von Richard Andree von 1869 eingearbeitet.

Das Deckblatt des Buches wird von der größten aksumitischen Stele geziert, nach einer Zeichnung von Henry Salt (1805). Das Layout des Buches ist insgesamt sehr gefällig, das leicht gelbliche Papier vermittelt den Eindruck von Historizität. Die zahlreichen Abbildungen, Photographien und Karten sind sorgfältig gedruckt und ergänzen den Text auf angenehme Weise. Die einzelnen Kapitel werden jeweils mit Kurzbiographie und Angaben zum Reisekontext des Reisenden, wie Motiv, Finanzierung, Forschungsauftrag und Ziel der Reise, eingeführt. Anschließend folgt die Schilderung Aksums mit Portrait des Autors und weiteren Abbildungen.

MATTHIES begründet seine Zusammenstellung der Reiseberichte mit der Bedeutung Aksums, nicht nur für die äthiopische Geschichte, sondern auch für die Beziehungen zum gesamten Mittelmeergebiet. Aksum war Handelsmetropole und Capitale der vorchristlichen Zeit und Griechisch die Verkehrssprache. Aksum ist Aufbewahrungsort der Lade, die Menelik nach der Tradition nach Aksum gebracht haben soll, und somit Zentrum der salomonischen Dynastie. Aksum war christliche Hauptstadt und ist weiterhin religiöser Mittelpunkt der Äthiopisch-Orthodoxen Kirche.