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Personalia

Academic News

Edward Ullendorff

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The name of Edward Ullendorff (b. Zürich, 25th January 1920) is to all intents and purposes synonymous with Ethiopian Studies in the United Kingdom during the second half of the 20th century. Ullendorff's scholarly interest in Ethiopia began whilst he was an undergraduate at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem between 1938 and 1942, where as part of a Semitic Languages MA degree he first began to study Ethiopian Semitic languages under Hans Jacob Polotsky. The knowledge acquired there led to various positions with the British Administration in Eritrea and Ethiopia between 1942 and 1946, and during that period he is perhaps best known today as the founding force behind the first Tigrinya language newspaper, the *Eritrean Weekly News* or ናይ፡ኡርትራ፡ሰሙናዊ፡ጋዜጣ. Ullendorff's first publication, however, was an article fittingly titled הַבַּשִּׁית, 'Habašit' ('Abyssinian') that appeared in the Hebrew language newspaper *Ha'arets*, in February 1943. This was followed by a number of short newspaper articles and studies on Eritrean and Ethiopian matters written in English, Hebrew and Tigrinya.¹ After a short period working in the Palestine Mandatary Government between 1947 and 1948, Ullendorff moved to the United Kingdom where he began his academic career in Oxford, tutoring Colonial Service cadets in Arabic, all the while continuing to be a prolific contributor especially of book reviews on Ethiopian topics. Whilst in Oxford he obtained his doctorate of Philosophy with a dissertation on the comparative phonology of Ethiopian Semitic, which was to be published some years later as his first truly book-length publication, *The Semitic Languages of Ethiopia. A Comparative Phonology* (1955). In 1950 he was appointed Lecturer in Semitic Languages at the University of St. Andrews, where during the nine years that he was there as Lecturer and later Reader he published around 90 reviews, notes and articles again mainly on Ethiopian subjects, non-

¹ A full bibliography of Ullendorff's writings up to 1999 can be found in SIMON HOPKINS (1989) together with DINA ULLENDORFF (2000).

linguistic as well as linguistic, including for instance a *Catalogue of Ethiopic MSS in the Bodleian Library* (1951) and a substantial study on ‘Hebraic-Jewish elements in Abyssinian (Monophysite) Christianity’ (1956), but also occasionally on more general Semitic philology ranging from Hebrew and Aramaic to Ugaritic and South Arabian. Reviewing academic books has always been one of the most active areas of Ullendorff’s writing, and one that he rightly considers an important part of an academic’s duties; indeed, his bibliography contains over 300 reviews over more than 60 years of publications. In 1959 he moved to the University of Manchester to take up the Chair in Semitic Languages and Literatures, where for the next five years he continued to work equally on Ethiopian themes as well as on wider Semitic topics, especially Biblical and Ugaritic studies, to which he has returned on various occasions throughout his career. For example, taken at random, one may mention his articles on ‘An Aramaic *Vorlage* of the Ethiopic text of Enoch?’ (1960b), or ‘The Biblical sources of the Ethiopian national saga’ (in Hebrew) (1960c). It is also indicative of his wide ranging scholarship that he has never confined himself to “languages and literatures” in the strictest sense. Thus, not long after he moved to Manchester there appeared the first edition of his book *The Ethiopians. An Introduction to Country and People* (1960a), a highly readable and informative book that has seen several reprints and four editions, the latest published in 1998 in Kingston, Jamaica.

In 1964 Ullendorff moved to the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University of London, to take up the Chair in Ethiopian Studies that had been specially created for him. This was the first Chair in Ethiopian Studies anywhere in the world. Ullendorff remained Professor of Ethiopian Studies until 1979 when he exchanged that position for the Chair in Semitic Languages. On his retirement in 1982, the University of London conferred upon him Emeritus status in the fields of “Semitic Languages and Ethiopian Studies”, thus giving recognition to both of the chairs that he had held. The year after taking up his Chair in London he was elected to the British Academy where, in 1967, he gave that year’s series of Schweich Lectures on Biblical Archaeology on the subject of Ethiopia and the Bible, which were later published under the same title (1968), an eloquent testimony to the philology-based range of his scholarship, covering as the book does a broad canvas of textual sources in Semitic languages. During his time in London, the study and teaching of Ethiopian languages, though sporadically available there already from the mid 1930s, acquired a regular basis, in the case of Amharic greatly aided by his *An Amharic Chrestomathy* (1965), which was followed twenty years later by a similar volume, *A Tigrinya (Təgrāñña) Chrestomathy* (1985). Of his more than 250 publications that appeared whilst he was at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) many are reviews, short notes

and articles, but notable as longer studies, amongst others, are his translation from Amharic of the first volume of Emperor Haile Sellassie I's autobiography (1976), 'Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek: the Versions Underlying Ethiopic Translations of Bible and Intertestamental Literature' (1980), and *The Hebrew Letters of Prester John* (with Charles Fraser Beckingham) (1982). Some of Ullendorff's writings have been re-issued in four volumes of collected studies (1977, 1987, 1990 and 1995). His extensive and indefatigable output of articles, reviews, letters and books is complemented by his long service as editor of two major scholarly journals, first as joint editor of the *Journal of Semitic Studies* from 1961–64, and then as Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* from 1968–78.

In 1988 Ullendorff published an account of his early adult years in Palestine and his experience of Ethiopia up to his last visit in 1974 during the early months of the Ethiopian Revolution. This book, *The Two Zions. Reminiscences of Jerusalem and Ethiopia*, provides a personal picture of the events, places and people that lie behind a scholarly career of so much variety and productivity. In 1989 Ullendorff was honoured with a dedicated volume of the *Journal of Semitic Studies* to celebrate his 70th birthday. Now, more than 20 years later, one is even more conscious of the unprecedented contribution that he has made to the field of Ethiopian Studies, living and working now for over 60 years in the United Kingdom. His work has been recognized by his election not only to the British Academy, but also to the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei as a foreign associate in 1998, and by the award of the Haile Selassie I Prize for Ethiopian Studies in 1972. A whole generation and more of Semitists and Ethiopianists for whom he was teacher, mentor and inspiration today owe him a profound debt.

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Alessandro Bausi Herausgeber der äthiopischen Sektion des Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium

SIEGBERT UHLIG, Universität Hamburg

Die internationale Editionsreihe des Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (CSCO) hat einen neuen Herausgeber für die äthiopische Sektion. Das CSCO wurde 1903 begründet und veröffentlicht seitdem wichtige Werke des Christlichen Orients, darunter syrische, koptische, arabische,