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Review

VOLKER MATTHIES, *Unternehmen Magdala: Strafexpedition in Äthiopien*
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Reviews

Bustorf beschäftigt sich mit Fluch und Segen sowie der Konstruktion eines schicksalhaften Zusammenhangs zwischen den Taten der Vorfahren und dem Geschick ihrer Nachfahren als ätiologische Grundmotive der Geschichtserzählung bei den Silt'ë. Segen, Fluch und Schicksal vererben sich über die Generationen hinweg und werden als Erklärungsmuster bemüht, wenn die Legitimität politischer Autorität, die Zuteilung von Ressourcen oder die Größe der Nachkommenschaft begründet werden soll. In Anlehnung an Assmann, der die Bedeutung des "kulturellen Gedächtnisses" darin sieht, dass die Vergangenheits- und Zukunftsbewältigung im Dienste der Gegenwartsbewältigung steht, kommt Bustorf zu dem Ergebnis, dass mit Fluch, Segen und Schicksal nicht nur der Geschichte Sinn verliehen wird, sondern "die Vergangenheit mit Moralität" aufgeladen wird, womit ein "Bezug zu gegenwärtigen Werten" hergestellt wird (S. 130). Diese Dialektik zeigt sich auch im Segensgebet, das zunächst "Mittel der Zukunftsbewältigung" ist und "retrospektiv zum Mittel der Vergangenheitsbewältigung" (ebd.) wird, indem es das glückliche Schicksal eines Individuums oder Kollektivs erklärt.

Zusammengefasst enthält der Sammelband sehr lesenswerte Beiträge, die leider nicht alle gewürdigt werden konnten. Manche Aufsätze machen auf mich allerdings den Eindruck, als seien sie von den betreffenden Autoren aus der Schublade gezogen worden. Das breite thematische Spektrum der Beiträge wird den vielfältigen Forschungsinteressen des Jubilars gewiss gerecht, doch rechtfertigt dies nicht, dass man den Leser zunächst orientierungslos dastehen lässt: Im Inhaltsverzeichnis fehlt eine thematische Gruppierung der Aufsätze, und auch eine Einleitung sucht man vergebens (es gibt nur ein Vorwort). In einer Einleitung hätten die einzelnen Aufsätze sowohl vorgestellt als auch thematische Schnittmengen zwischen ihnen herausgearbeitet werden können. So muss man in dieser Festschrift etwas herumsuchen – doch fündig wird man als Ethnologe dort allemal!

Alexander Kellner, München

VOLKER MATTHIES, *Unternehmen Magdala: Strafexpedition in Äthiopien* = Schlaglichter der Kolonialgeschichte 11, Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2010. 200 pages. 76 illustrations, 4 maps. Price: € 24.90. ISBN: 978-3-86153-572-0.

The years 1867/68 witnessed an unprecedented pre-colonial British military intervention in Ethiopia. The so called Mäqdäla-campaign, also known as the Napier-expedition (after General Sir Robert Napier, who led the campaign) was an enormous endeavour in terms of logistical and military exer-

tion: it involved 6000, mostly British-Indian troops, the building of a railway and the use of elephants from India for transport,¹ as well as the expansion of a port at Zula as a base station. It was a carefully planned operation, making use of the most recent cartographic, anthropological and linguistic knowledge about Ethiopia.

The campaign was one of “Queen Victoria’s little wars”² (p. 9), one that “Kipling referred to as the ‘savage wars of peace’”.³

For Captain Henry Hozier, a member of the Napier expedition, the intervention was done neither in search for “power”, or “fame” nor “expansion” but driven by “humanitarian interest” since Britain had not aimed at “territorial expansion” but “prestige among European nations”⁴. The military expedition resembles a “humanitarian intervention” in the modern sense: it was an incursion into the internal affairs of a state which is – at least officially – only done to prevent crimes against humanity, as in this case, to free the victims of a tyrant, while – much less officially – it had also to fulfill a political agenda (which is certainly also quite characteristic of humanitarian interventions), such as “restoring prestige” which is a typical colonial concept.⁵

In *Unternehmen Magdala*, Volker Matthies portrays the campaign as an “expedition of punishment” against a rebellious African ruler, which not only showed the imbalance in military power between the opposing parties but also marked, together with other pre-colonial endeavours, the beginning of the “industrialisation of war” (p. 10). The book thus sets out to focus on the military implementation of the campaign.

The Emperor of Ethiopia, Tewodros II, after having ended the *zämänä mäsafənt*, provided for unity of the various Abyssinian highland kingdoms and was known as a modernizer of the state apparatus.

¹ The Napier expedition has also found its way into popular culture; an interesting side remark to the campaign is the elephant Kala Nag in Rudyard Kipling’s *Jungle Book*, (Toomai of the Elephants), who was awarded a medal of honour for participation in Mäqdäla campaign.

² B. FARWELL, *Queen Victoria’s Little Wars*, London: Allen Lane, 1973, p. xvii.

³ Cp. R. KIPLING’s poem *The White Man’s Burdon*, “Take up the White Man’s Burdon, the Savage Wars of Peace ...”.

⁴ H. HOZIER, *Der Britische Feldzug nach Abessinien: Aus officiellen Aktenstücken*, Berlin: Duncker, 1870, p. 1.

⁵ For the comparison with humanitarian interventions see: W. SMIDT, “Teilnehmer und Beobachter bei der britischen Intervention in Abessinien 1867/68 nach dem österreichischen Beobachter k.u.k. Major Kodolitsch”, in: W. WITAKOWSKI – L. ŁYKOWSKA (eds.), *Wälättä Yohanna: Ethiopian Studies in Honour of Joanna Mantel-Niecko on the Occasion of the 50th Year of Her Work at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Warsaw University* = *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 59/1, Warsaw: Elipsa, 2006, p. 226

Vast parts of Abyssinia were far from being *terra incognita* to Europeans but in fact saw the active presence of travellers, missionaries and diplomats. Tewodros, driven by the idea of modernization, was using their help in many ways. With the British crown in particular, the Emperor was hoping to establish diplomatic and economic relations. Among the British through whom Tewodros hoped to forge bonds of friendship with the crown were the British Consul Walter Plowden and his secretary John Bell. Both died in the service of Tewodros.

After the death of Plowden the British dispatched another consul to Massawa: Consul Cameron, who brought presents and a letter from the Queen to the Emperor. In the letter the Queen showed her gratitude for how he had treated Plowden and Bell. This induced him to return a letter, which later became the origin of the diplomatic crisis, and the background for the Napier expedition.

The letter aimed at establishing military relations between Ethiopia and Britain. Tewodros hoped to create a Christian alliance against the Muslim i.e. Ottoman threat along his coastline. A German version of the letter is reprinted in the present volume (p. 25) from Hozier (1870: 23). Cameron was asked to deliver the request to the Queen personally but disobeyed the order and instead went to the Sudanese border. The letter was sent to England without priority and in the foreign office it did not receive much attention. Indeed, as Matthies explains, the two sides had incompatible hopes and expectations. While Tewodros hoped for a military alliance against, the British were interested in establishing peaceful political, strategic relations with Egypt and the Ottoman Empire (p. 25).

As no answer arrived at the Emperor's court and Tewodros learned about Cameron's departure for Bogos (which he regarded as forging an alliance with the enemy), he arrested the British missionary Henry Stern. When a letter arrived that ordered Cameron back to Massawa with no mention about the previous letter of request at all, Tewodros also arrested Cameron.

These news arrived in London through the Aden based Consul Merewether. For the British the taking of hostages was a breach with international law, while it was an acceptable practice for the Ethiopian ruler to achieve his aims (p. 28).

The taking of hostages induced the British crown to dispatch troops under the command of Sir Robert Napier, who on 30 October 1867 landed in Zula Bay and made their way into the northern mountains to Mäqdäla, where Tewodros had brought his European and other hostages.

Thus began the Napier expedition, which in a short time reached the mountain fortress of Mäqdäla, defeating Tewodros' army and freeing the hostages, which eventually led to the suicide of the Emperor.

The book is an unpretentious account of the Napier expedition. Its main focus is on the military campaign itself, compared to, e.g., Arnold's *Prelude to Magdalla*.⁶

The book is organized into 13 chapters. Chapters one to five give an introduction to the Napier expedition and Ethiopia as such ("Mysterious Ethiopia") as well as look at British involvement, the diplomatic crisis between Ethiopia and Britain, together with the domestic British debates preceding the campaign. A subchapter of chapter two ("The European Hostages", pp. 29–34) takes a closer look at the hostages. Being a German account, this part of the book focuses on the German hostages such as Eduard Zander and Wilhelm Schimper (pp. 31–33) with biographical details.

Beginning with chapter six (p. 57 onwards) the book discusses the military course of the campaign. The narrative is outlined chronologically from the landing at the port of Zula, the military and logistical preparations, and eventually the trek into the highlands. It reconstructs negotiations with Tewodros's opponents, such as Kaša Mərça, Mərça Wārqe and wäyzäro Mästawät, for cooperation and peaceful passage through their respective territories, to reach Mäqdäla. The book closely examines the contributions of Werner Munzinger and Gerhard Rohlfs as translators and their role in negotiations. Also Munzinger (pp. 53f.) and Rohlfs (pp. 86f.) are presented with extensive biographical details.

The main achievement of the author is the use of previously little known sources from Prussian and Austrian military observers and staff members of the campaign. This has not been done extensively before and to my knowledge the contribution of these to the study of the campaign has until now only briefly been attempted by Wolbert Smidt.⁷

The main body of narrative is based on the accounts of the Austrian military observer Theodore von Kodolitsch,⁸ as well as the German observers Graf G. von Seckendorff⁹ and Ferdinand Freiherr von Stumm,¹⁰ and the medical doctor and member of staff Josef Bechtinger.¹¹

⁶ P. ARNOLD, *Prelude to Magdala: Emperor Theodore of Ethiopia and British Diplomacy*, ed. by RICHARD PANKHURST, London: Bellew Publishing, 1992.

⁷ W. SMIDT, "Teilnehmer und Beobachter bei der britischen Intervention in Abessinien 1867/68 nach dem österreichischen Beobachter k.u.k. Major Kodolitsch", in: WITAKOWSKI – LYKOWSKA (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 224–254.

⁸ T. VON KODOLITSCH, *Die Englische Armee in Abyssinien im Feldzuge 1867–1868* ("The British Army in Abyssinia during the Campaign 1867–1868"), Wien: Gerold, 1869.

⁹ Graf G. VON SECKENDORFF, *Meine Erlebnisse mit dem englischen Expeditionscorps in Abessinien 1867–1868* ("My Adventures with the British Expeditions Corps in Abyssinia 1867–1868"), Potsdam: R. Cabos, 1869.

It is not surprising that Volker Matthies, a leading scholar of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Hamburg, has focused mostly on the military history of the campaign as well as on its military and logistical execution. It is another achievement of the book that by following the (military) observations of the aforementioned staff members the author takes a very detailed look at the beginnings of colonial warfare and which can be read as a field-study to Matthies' earlier work *Kriege am Horn von Afrika* ('Wars in the Horn of Africa').¹² The book is thus a case study of (pre-)colonial wars and brings to light the different military tactics and focuses on the imbalance in military power. The book is rooted in modern peace and conflict studies using a descriptive appraisal of the primary sources to analyse intentions, perceptions and the actual execution of military conflict, settled by military means and the defeat of one of the opponents. Chapter 9 ("The Massacre of Aroge"; pp. 103–112) describes in depth British armament and war tactics.

Rooted in the genre of historical war studies, one chapter is dedicated to the "embedded journalists" (chapter 7), such as Henry Morton Stanley, who reported about the campaign for British and other European and American newspapers. This contributes to the recent discourse and adds to the relevance of the book for contemporary wars or "humanitarian interventions" and adds the Napier-expedition, to some extent, to a contemporary discussion on "war-journalism".

The book is well annotated and thoroughly researched. The use of primary and secondary sources seems excellent and the use of previously unused sources adds to its scholarly impact. Despite this, the book is not necessarily written for a scholarly audience.¹³ It rather aims at people interested in the field of colonial history, Ethio-British relations and war studies. The focus on Germans or German-speaking personnel, with rich bibliographical

¹⁰ F. Freiherr VON STUMM, *Meine Erlebnisse bei der Englischen Expedition in Abyssinien, Januar bis Juni 1868* ('My Adventures during the British Expedition in Abyssinia, January to June 1868'), Frankfurt/Main: Jügel, 1868.

¹¹ J. BECHTINGER, *Ost-Afrika. Erinnerungen und Miscellen aus dem Abessinischen Feldzug* ('East-Africa. Memories and Miscellanea from the Abyssinian Campaign'), Wien: Gerold, 1870.

¹² V. MATTHIES, *Kriege am Horn von Afrika: Historischer Befund und friedenswissenschaftliche Analyse = Bewaffnete Konflikte nach dem Ende des Ost-West Konfliktes* 19, Berlin: Dr. Köster, 2005.

¹³ The complete avoidance of diacritics in the transliteration of the Ethiopian script is regrettable (e.g., Theodore i.e. Tewodros; Mircha Werque i.e. Mərça Wārque, etc.). Almost irritating from an Ethiopianist's point of view is the continual use of the term "Galla" for the Oromo including in the caption for the illustration of *wäyzäro* Mästawät (here Mistiat) as "Galla-Königin" (Galla-Queen). The discourse on the term is mentioned (p. 15) but neglected thereafter.

Reviews

narratives, gives insights into the international staff, the main body being Indian troops though, thus recalling an international *humanitarian intervention* under British command.

The book is well illustrated with maps (made for the publication), facsimiles of maps and portraits and a variety of original photographs and drawings taken during the expedition.

The book is the first ever full account of the Mäqdäla campaign in German and thus, seen from a German point of view, one wishes the book a wide readership, hoping for a better understanding of the *savage wars of peace* among the German-reading audience.

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RUDOLF AGSTNER, *One week in Ethiopia, forever with God: Guidebook to the Foreigners' Cemeteries in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia* = Kulturwissenschaft 25. Berlin – Münster – Wien – Zürich – London: LIT Verlag, 2009. 216 pp. Price: € 19.90. ISBN: 978-3-643-50091-5.

Das Werk entstand während der Amtszeit des Autors Rudolf Agstner an der österreichischen Botschaft in Addis Abäba, Äthiopien. Anders als seine bisherigen Publikationen, beschäftigt sich diese nicht mit der Auswertung diplomatischer Urkunden und Briefe, sondern mit der Dokumentation von Grabinschriften. Wobei hauptsächlich Gräber des internationalen Friedhofs in Gulale, einem Stadtteil Addis Abäbas, ausgewertet werden. Auch einige andere ausländische Friedhöfe werden aufgezeichnet.

Die Aufmachung des Buches und der, eine Grabinschrift zitierende, Titel *One week in Ethiopia, forever with God* wecken das Interesse des Lesers. Ebenso wie die persönliche Einleitung, in der die Beweggründe des Autors zur Publikation der vorliegenden Forschung erläutert werden. Es folgt ein einleitender Teil, in dem die Entstehung und Geschichte des internationalen Friedhofs und einzelner nationaler Friedhöfe, sowie ihre Verbindungen zu den Auswanderer-Gemeinden in Addis Abäba dargestellt werden. In allen weiteren Kapiteln wird zu Beginn die Lage des jeweils beschriebenen Friedhofs, bzw. Friedhofsteils, veranschaulicht, dann seine Zugehörigkeit zu bestimmten ausländischen Gemeinden erläutert und schließlich werden die verschiedenen Gebiete landschaftlich beschrieben. Danach folgen eine genaue Aufzählung aller Grabinschriften sowie die Wiedergabe aller zusätzlich vorhandenen Informationen zu den begrabenen Personen. Besonders schöne oder einzigartige Grabsteine werden photographisch abgebildet.

Das Bemerkenswerte an der vorliegenden Dokumentation ist, dass sie absolute Pionierarbeit leistet: Sie ist die bisher einzige Veröffentlichung