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Review

GIAN CARLO STELLA, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani d’Africa (Eritrea – Etiopia – Libia – Somalia – Sudan): 1271–1990*

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Doc. 199, S. 281 Ende *wa-naḥnā* (sic) *mamnūnīn minḥu ilā ḡāya* eher “wir sind ihm sehr zu Dank verpflichtet” als “we trust him completely”. Vielleicht ist statt *minḥu* auch *mannahū* zu lesen: “wir wurden durch seine Gunst beglückt”. — In der Unterschrift steht *muḥāfiḏ Zaila° Abū Bakr Paša* “der Gouverneur von Zaila° Abū Bakr Paša”, nicht *muḥāfazat Zaila° Abū Bakr Paša* “The Governate of Zeyla, Abū Bakr Pasha”.

Doc. 223 = S. 322 übers. den Schluß “und informiert (*wa fahhimū*, an °Alā°addīn Paša gerichteter Imperativ im Höflichkeitsplural) die Dorfältesten von Massawa, Ḥarqīqū und Imkullū, daß, wenn die Sendung der Personen nicht stattfindet, ich das Land ausplündern werde, (informiert sie) so daß sie hinterher nicht sagen können: ‘Warum hat er uns nicht informiert (*aḥbaranā*, nicht *aḥbarnā*)?’ und damit recht hätten” statt “the village chiefs at Massawa, Ḥarqīqū and Imkullu have understood that if these people are not sent I shall destroy the land, so that they will not say for whatever reason that we did not inform [them], and correctly [so]”.

Wie gesagt, diese Verbesserungsvorschläge betreffen zumeist nicht den Kern der Aussagen der Dokumente, aber doch etwas die islamische Geisteshaltung der Schreiber und sind deshalb vielleicht nicht ganz überflüssig.

RUBENSON gebührt der Dank der Äthiopisten, daß er ihnen diese neue Sammlung zur Verfügung gestellt hat, und auch die Islamkundler schulden ihm Dank, wenn sie sich vielleicht auch noch etwas die Zähne an den Texten werden ausbeißen müssen.

Ewald Wagner

STELLA, GIAN CARLO, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani d’Africa (Eritrea – Etiopia – Libia – Somalia – Sudan): 1271–1990. Parte Ia: Civili*. Fusignano Biblioteca-Archivio “Africana”. 1998. 132 pages/columns.

Rather modest in its making (no ISBN, price, figures, pictures or maps) and unmistakably facile in its presentation, this work is supposed to be the first of unspecified number of volumes aspiring at covering the biographies of around one hundred thousand Italian civilians who had gone to North and Northeast Africa as missionaries, explorers, adventurers, administrators and business people in the last seven centuries. That is of course a noble project! The realization of such a reference work would save immense time and energy of scholars, often wasted in search of trivial information on this or

that person, and the reviewer wishes the author, without concealing the flaws of his pioneering volume, all the best in executing the rest of the work.

Evidently, the author is not a novice to African studies, as a list of publications of the last 25 years enumerated on the cover indicates. He is proud of an enormous collection of books and other publications related to Africa, as he claims in the preface, among which is GIUSEPPE PUGLISI's *Chi è? dell'Eritrea 1952. Dizionario Biografico con una cronologia* (Asmara 1952). He is also aware of the existence of numerous documents and publications in various Italian cities. This work nonetheless scarcely reflects the actual utilization of these sources. At least it is not evident from the entries themselves or from any note in the book.

Unlike Puglisi, Stella prefers to limit his project to Italian civilians who went to North and Northeast Africa as missionaries, envoys, explorers, colonial servicemen and businessmen. A statistical survey of these civilians and their military counterparts in Libya, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and marginally the Sudan is given in chronological order (cf. pp. 9–12). The number of Italian civilians in Eritrea (the country which attracted the largest number of them) increased slowly from 359 in 1889 to 4565 in 1931. The author states negligently, however, (cf. p. 9) that they were all concentrated in Asmara, though several entries in this work refer to residents of Massawa, Däqqämharä, Kärän, etc.

The significance of the dates in the title of the book is not explained anywhere. What happened in '1271' so as to take up this particular date as a marker and why is '1990' a closing year for the whole work? There seems to be no entry in the book from the 13th and 14th centuries. The earliest date the reviewer could find is '1402' in which one named "Antonio da Firenze" joined the embassy of Bartoli to "Abissinia" (cf. col. 90). The first date makes sense if the subtitle is applicable to all subsequent volumes and that the name of the one who travelled in '1271' begins with a letter other than 'A'.

The present volume (which is devoted to the letter A) allegedly contains more than 2500 names of such civilians. It is, therefore, no wonder that the content should regrettably be too sketchy. The length of the entries varies from half a line to about three quarters of a column. Some of the succinct ones hardly make sense in their explanation or description. E.g. "ACCAME. 'F.lli Accame'. Ditta di Decameré." (col. 24). Besides, there is repetition or duplication in some cases. E.g. there is scarcely any difference

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in substance between the biography of Antonio da Firenze and that of Antonio da Tarvisio (col. 90).

These are but only a few of the shortcomings of this special lexicon which fell into our hands more or less by a sheer accident. Requested to cater the price of the book as a usual part of a review technicality, the author revealed that it was not intended for a sale. Surprising though it may seem, the reply is appreciable, for there has scarcely been a work in Ethiopian studies which promised so much and offered so little as the present book, or more precisely booklet.

Bairu Tafla

ÉVALET, ANDRÉ, *De Ménélik à Mengistu. Un Suisse en Éthiopie. Témoignage recueilli et annoté par Micheline Fontolliet Honoré. Genève, Musée d'ethnographie/Association Suisse-Érythrée, 1999. 162 p. Prix Fr. 38,-. ISBN : 2-88457-005-5.*

Avide de puissance, le roi du Choa Ménélik souhaitait armer son pays et le moderniser. Dans ce but, il était prêt à avoir recours à une aide privée encore plus qu'à une aide internationale qu'il savait dangereuse. Attirés par ces dispositions, de nombreux Européens — traîne-savates ou ambitieux, trafiquants ou techniciens — affluèrent dans le pays. Parmi eux un ingénieur zurichois, Alfred Ilg (curieusement prénommé Albert, p. 6, mais l'erreur est ensuite corrigée). En 1898, Ilg recrute pour son maître qui est devenu roi des rois d'Éthiopie en 1889, un compatriote. C'est ainsi qu'Édouard Évalet, de Bienne, se retrouve à Addis Abeba avec la mission de réparer les montres et horloges impériales. Pour vivre — Ménélik est mauvais payeur —, le Juraissien s'associe avec l'architecte bernois Carl Faller, lui aussi engagé par Ilg, pour créer une scierie à Djam Djam près de Addis Alām. En 1907, il fait un voyage au pays pour en ramener des machines et ... une jeune épouse qui, l'année suivante, met au monde un garçon, André.

ANDRÉ ÉVALET passera toute sa vie en Éthiopie, ne faisant connaissance avec la Suisse qu'en 1921, et pour huit années seulement, pendant lesquelles il suivra sa scolarité secondaire puis étudiera l'architecture.

Revenu prendre sa place à la scierie, il accepte en 1941, à la défaite italienne, d'être délégué du Comité International de la Croix-Rouge (CICR) et de s'occuper de l'évacuation des Italiens. En 1945, faussement accusé