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**Review article**

TOM KILLION: *Historical Dictionary of Eritrea*

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## Review article

TOM KILLION, *Historical Dictionary of Eritrea* = African Historical Dictionaries, No. 75. Lanham, Md. & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1998. xlii + 536 pages; 4 maps. ISBN 0-8108-3437-5 (cloth). Price: \$ 65.

Few things may enthrall an academic more than a readily accessible reference work of facts and dates. A substantial part of his/her research time is usually taken up by the search for minute facts: who exactly was this person who played this or that role? Where was that particular place with which such and such event is associated? What was actually the background of this person or that event? Such questions are relevant if one wants to avoid blunders, confusions, and anachronisms. Both time and space are essential components of historical writing.

TOM KILLION's contribution has presumably pleased many a writer, for Eritrean studies have hitherto been devoid of such an encyclopaedic work. ROSENFELD's dictionary,<sup>1</sup> though useful in many respects, has been very selective in the case of Eritrea. The excellent work<sup>2</sup> of PUGLISI is not only out of print long ago and scarcely accessible for many non-Italian speakers, but is also approximately fifty years behind time. KILLION's dictionary is, therefore, relatively comprehensive, up-to-date and in an international language that the overwhelming majority of researchers, students, diplomats and business people do understand.

The size of the book and the diversity of its entries attest to the industriousness of the author. The Series Editor, JON WORONOFF, rightly states in the foreword to this dictionary that:

“Writing an African historical dictionary is not like writing one on Europe, Latin America, or much of Asia. You do not just look up the information and fill in any blanks. In Africa, the blanks are often bigger than what has been written. So you must go out and collect the data yourself.” (Cf. pp. vii f.)

<sup>1</sup> PROUTY CHRIS and EUGENE ROSENFELD, *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia and Eritrea*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Metuchen, NJ, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> GIUSEPPE PUGLISI, *Chi è? dell'Eritrea 1952. Dizionario Biografico con una cronologia* (Asmara 1952).

This is a glaring fact which every Africanist is aware of, but which unfortunately is often not appreciated or understood by colleagues in other areas of studies.

The work is to be greatly appreciated when the reader takes into account how much time, energy and possibly money the author had invested to collect, compile and harmonize the biographical, historical and geographical materials, particularly for the second half of the twentieth century on which very little ground work had been done. The author from the Humanities Department at San Francisco State University accomplished the gathering of a substantial part of the material during his “work with Eritrean refugees in Sudan and visits to guerrilla-controlled parts of Eritrea” in 1987–88 and “during a stay in Eritrea [on a Fulbright Fellowship] in 1993–94, when he taught an Introduction to Eritrean History course at Asmara University” [p. vii]. The extensive bibliographical data and the descriptive list of resourceful archives appended to the work (cf. pp. 450–534) also show (though he does not claim explicitly to have read all) that the author laboured hard in the libraries and archives to draw and/or verify facts and dates pertaining to the “entries on persons, places, events, institutions and various political, economic, social, and cultural features”. (Cf. p. viii).

However diligent the author may have been in producing this work and how grateful we may be for his contribution, academic tradition obliges us to scrutinize the work in the interest of the author and his readers alike. The former may thereby realize the shortcomings of his feat and try to improve on it in later editions while the latter may be prompted to use the handbook consciously. As a reference work, it may be justifiable to consider in our evaluation the following three basic aspects: its comprehensiveness, its consistency and accuracy, and its accessibility.

At the first sight, any reference book of the size of this one naturally gives the impression of being complete. Indeed KILLION's collection is impressive, and it in fact encompasses the past and the present, the dead and the living, political and economic events, geographical sites, social institutions, etc. As far as personal entries are concerned, however, the work has something unconventional about it. It is at once a dictionary and a who's who. Hardly anything is stated in the book about the thoughts behind its conception and the criteria of its compilation. One is left on his/her own to make out anything he/she wishes with the title. For the reviewer, the phrase “Historical Dictionary” connotes the past to the exclusion of the present and the future. Some other people may also share this view. An anecdote may be illuminating at this juncture. Emperor Ḥaylä Śəllase is said to have once confronted his minister of education with the question whether he would not write his “history”. The learned Ethiopian Jew replied: “Your Majesty is not dead”. It is surprising that a sizable percentage of

the biographical entries concern living persons, particularly those in authority today. Whether they were consulted personally or whether the compilation was done on the basis of a hearsay is not hinted at all. This makes one skeptical about the authenticity of the author's sources.

If space was limited in this book, as often is the case with reference works, the living have certainly ousted the dead from the dictionary. The question of omission is a serious problem of this otherwise useful work. Many important persons are left out from the dictionary for no obvious reason. Most of those overlooked are noticeably Eritreans in the service of the Ethiopian government, a circumstance which nonetheless would not make them less Eritreans than others; they were only in a different camp. But there is no indication if this was a factor the author considered when making the selection. He was conscious of the fact that quite a few highly qualified Eritreans were living in Ethiopia, as he states in the entry "Addis Ababa":<sup>3</sup>

"From the 1890s onwards, the Ethiopian capital has been an important center for Eritrean immigrants. Initially, most were highland Christians fleeing Italian Colonialism. A community of educated Eritreans developed under the patronage of Emperor Haile Selassie I in the 1920s–30s, including such influential figures as Lorenzo Tæzaz." (cf. pp. 32 f.)

Quite a few of them attained not only high political and academic positions, but also exercised an immense influence in shaping Eritrean politics. Dr. Lorenzo Ta'æzaz, foreign minister and chief legal advisor of the Emperor, Blatta Dawit Uqbazgi, minister of state in the foreign ministry, and Blattengeta Efrem Täwäldä Mädhən, ambassador to London and later crown councillor, were in the vanguard in pleading Eritrea's union with Ethiopia when the question of the former Italian colonies was discussed by the international conferences of Paris and London in the 1940s. These were native Eritreans from Akkälä Guzay and Ḥamasen. Other significant ones who should have been entered in the work were, for example: Professor Abraham Dämoz, an outstanding academic and writer; Fitawrari ሌmbaye Gäbrä Amlak, regional governor within Eritrea in the 1950s and 60s; Däggəyat ሌmbaye Habte, regional governor and councillor to the central provincial administration of Eritrea; Däggəyat ሌmbaye Ḥadära, regional governor and leading politician in the 1940s on account of which he was assassinated; Dr. ሌmbaye Wäldä Maryam, minister of justice and chief legal advisor to the prime minister's office; Ato Gäbrä Iyyäsus Abbay, engineer and writer; Dr. Abba Gäbrä Iyyäsus Ḥaylu, historian and writer; Ato Gäbrä Mäsqäl Kəfläzgi, minister and diplomat; Ato

<sup>3</sup> Keywords taken from the *DICTIONARY* retain their original orthography (mostly in caps) and are put in inverted commas throughout this review.

Ḥamid Färäḡ Ḥamid, president of the Eritrean Assembly; Ğəlani el-Huseni, active leader of the Beni ʿAmr; Fitawrari Mikaʿel Ḥasäma Rakka, regional governor, writer and councillor to the central administration of Eritrea; Ato Saləḥ Ḥənit, minister of public works; Ato Säräqä Bərhan Gäbrä Əgzi, outstanding lawyer and diplomat; Däggəyat Täsfaḥannəs Bärhe, vice-governor of Eritrea in the 1960s; Qänñazmač Täsfaledät Gäräd, acting governor of Eritrea in the 1970s; Ato Täsfa Mikaʿel Ḥayle, the first civil and military aviator and educationalist; Dr. Täsfa Gäbrä Əgzi, minister of information; and Mämhər Yəsəḥaq Təwäldä Mädhən, promoter of education in Eritrea in the 1940s and 50s.

Most of the Baḥri Nägaši of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well as such political figures of the nineteenth century as Kəntiba Zärʿay who governed Ḥamasen for more than 40 years in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and, Balambaras Kəflä Iyyäsus, a notable and contender for power on the eve of the Italian colonial rule are left out. Similarly, quite a few outsiders who played various roles in Eritrea in the nineteenth century are missing. For instance, Däggəyat Əsätu, son and representative of Däḡḡaç Wube in the 1840s, Wag šəyuum Gäbru and Raʿəsi Baryaʿu Qawlos who governed Eritrea for some time in the 1870s, and Däggəyat Ḥaylä Šellase who was the deputy of Raʿəsi Alula, etc. Equally amazing is the exclusion of the British officials who administered Eritrea in the 1940s: Kennedy Cooke, Stephen H. Longrigg, G.F. Drew, etc.

The one or the other person listed above is of course mentioned under the general entries, but there is no way for the reader to pinpoint any one of them unless he/she stumbles upon them by sheer chance. Besides, there are scarcely particulars about any of them that may satisfy the inquisitive reader. An index could in any case have been of great help in such a circumstance. Those who contributed to Eritrean studies are mentioned together with their works merely in the bibliography. Among those listed are: ENNO LITTMANN, G.R. SUNDSTROM, SIEGFRIED F. NADEL, CARLO ZAGHI, ALBERTO POLLERA, JOHANNES KOLMODIN, G.K. TREVASKIS and EDWARD ULLENDORFF. In fact, the two most relevant titles of the last scholar for Eritrea are absent from the bibliography: *A Tigriña Chrestomathy = Äthiopistische Forschungen 19* (Stuttgart 1985), and, *The Two Zions. Reminiscences of Jerusalem and Ethiopia* (Oxford – New York 1988). The first deals with the history and development of the Təgrəñña language, while in the second one the author relates his reminiscences and observations of Eritrea of the 1940s. Both are in English, as their titles indicate. Otherwise the author might have strangely apologised for including them, as he has

done with others: “Because of the scarcity of English-language material on most Eritrean subjects, I have included many foreign-language sources” (Cf. p. 452).

Irregularities in the inclusion and exclusion of geographical names and salient traditional institutions and/or conceptual terms are also conspicuous. Actually, Eritrean place names are so well documented by BOMBACI,<sup>4</sup> CONTI ROSSINI,<sup>5</sup> HUNTINGFORD,<sup>6</sup> the U.S. Defense Gazetteer<sup>7</sup> and FRANCHINI<sup>8</sup> that it is hard to imagine that the omissions were necessitated by the lack of sources. Many significant localities are nonetheless omitted. For instance, Godayef, one of the oldest villages around Asmāra, is not mentioned anywhere while recent sites like “Haz-Haz” (p. 247) and “Sembel” (p. 371) have been given prominence. Similarly, ʿAddi Nəʿammən, which features in the chronicles of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and which is still today a big settlement, does not appear in the book. In fact, the whole ʿAnsāba region is simply ignored. Not even the famous monastery of Şaʿədamba and the traditional legislative centre of the region, ʿAddi Ḥannəs, are mentioned. Only the river and the Fronts’ meetings in the valley are included. Cultural centres such as ʿAşmi Ḥarmaz in Akkälä Guzay and ʿAwdi Bərhanu in Ḥamase do not occur either.

The criteria for the selection of the traditional institutions and conceptual terms for entries are not clear and one cannot help wondering when terms of the same category or persons of the same rank and function as those entered in the reference work are discriminated. The titles of “Ras” and “Dejazmach” are denied full-fledged entries while “Na’ib” (p. 320), “Bahre Negashi” (p. 105) and “Kantibai” (p. 281) are included. Similarly, “Gulti”, “Risti” and “Gebri” are

<sup>4</sup> A. BOMBACI et al., *Elementi per la Toponomastica Etiopica* = R. Istituto Superiore Orientale di Napoli 15 (Napoli 1937); *Guida d’Italia della Consociazione Turistica Italiana: Africa Orientale Italiana* (Milano 1938).

<sup>5</sup> CARLO CONTI ROSSINI, *Catalogo dei Nomi Propri di Luogo dell’Etiopia. Contenuti Nei Testi Giʿiz ed Amhariña* (Genova 1894); CARLO CONTI ROSSINI, Saggio sulla Toponomastica dell’Eritrea in: *Bolletino della Reale Società Geografica Italiana*, Serie VII, III/10 (1938) pp. 785–816.

<sup>6</sup> G.W.B. HUNTINGFORD, Ethiopian Place-Names in: *African Language Studies* 3 (1962), pp. 182–94; G.W.B. HUNTINGFORD, *The Historical Geography of Ethiopia. From the First Century AD to 1704* = *Fontes Historiae Africanae. Series Varia IV*. Union Académique Internationale (Oxford 1989).

<sup>7</sup> *Defense Mapping Agency, Gazetteer of Ethiopia: Names approved by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names*. Prepared and published by the Defense Mapping Agency. 2 vols. (Washington, D.C. 1982).

<sup>8</sup> VINCENZO FRANCHINI, Contributo alla toponomastica dell’Eritrea tigrina in: *Quaderni di Studi Etiopici* 3/4 (1982/83) pp. 163–175.

entered whereas *awlo*, *gar*, *ḥamen*, *rim*, *ṣər<sup>o</sup>at* *əndabba*, *täzkar*, *zəho*, etc. are absent.

So far we have indicated examples of inconsistencies and lacunae apparent in the work. What about the content and presentation of the available entries? As expected, many of the entries (esp. if they pertain to recent decades) are extensive and fairly accurate and, hence, informative. Equipped with this wealth of information on the country's past and present, any researcher, diplomat or business person can with confidence footnote any item in a text, travel to any major place, or deal with any official in Eritrea. The political movements and military campaigns as well as many of the historical events are given in detail. Quite a few of the entries are cross-referenced, and a chronology of major events (cf. pp. xxiii–xli) as well as an introduction surveying the history of the country (cf. pp. 1–23) are also provided separately. Finally, the presentation is clear, logical and fluent. It is gratifying to read such entries as “Asmara”, “Keren” and “Mas-sawa”.

There are also a couple of attributes which are seemingly minor, but which actually should enhance the reputation of this reference work. At long last, we have an author who can distinguish between Eritrea/Ethiopia and Egypt. The term “Coptic” is applied in this work entirely and appropriately to the Alexandrian church in Egypt. The Eritrean and Ethiopian Orthodox churches are referred to with their proper appellations respectively. Another nuisance the author has rejected is what we may rightly call the travellers' culture which has stained many scholarly works; namely, translating unnecessarily personal and place names. For example, one sees frequently in books names such as *Ḥaylä Šellase* = “Power of the Trinity”, *Qäyyih Kor* = “Red Hill”, and *Addis Abäba* = “New Flower”. They do not, however, apply the same procedure to the names of their own societies so that one cannot help suspecting a subtle intention to ridicule other cultures. In this book, thank God, names are given as names, and nothing else.

On the other hand, our author has yet to acquaint himself further with the cultural subtleties of the region. For instance, on page 116, we find the entry: “*Dimetros Gebremariam, Aba Melake Selam*”. This person was married and is survived by several children, some of whom live in Europe and the United States. He was a priest, but not a monk. He could not possibly have been addressed as “*Abba*”. On page 119, the same person is referred to as “*Keshi*”, (*Qäši*) and that is precisely what he was. Unlike the Catholic church, where the priest is necessarily a celibate, the Orthodox church makes a distinction between a priest and a monk. A monk can, under certain circumstances, be a priest,

whereas a priest becomes a monk mainly if his wife dies. Neither was the case with Dimetros. Unlike the assumption of KILLION, his title of Mäl'akä Sälam has hardly anything to do with his political life. He was once the dean of the church of Däbrä Sälam Mädhane °Aläm in Asmära. Anyone who fills that post automatically bears that particular title. This is also another tradition of the Orthodox church in Northeast Africa. Every full-fledged church or monastery has a specific title or a group of titles attached to it which have to be borne by its functionaries.

Regarding the historical content, it should be remarked that not all the entries are of the same standard in quality. For some obscure reason, some entries form an antithesis to others regardless of the availability of historical sources. Citing at random a short entry of the type may perhaps illustrate this shortcoming:

“*Aberra Kasa*, Dejazmach. Great-grandson of Dej. *Haylu Tewolde-Medhin* of *Tsazzega*, Aberra was orphaned at an early age when both his great-grandfather and father were killed by *Wolde-Mika'el Solomun* at the battle of *Woki Duba*. Aberra took refuge with the Italians in Massawa after 1885, as did many of the highland *Mekwenenti*. He rose to be *capo* of a *Banda* of fifty rifles and was a loyal Italian soldier in the campaign to conquer the highlands. But when the Italians began to reduce the privileges of their erstwhile Eritrean supporters in 1890–91, Aberra became disillusioned. Hearing that the Italians planned to disarm him, on January 31, 1892, he fled with his men to Showate Anseba. His banda was pursued by Capt. Bettini and a column of *Ascari*, and on March 18 Aberra ambushed and killed Bettini and seven ascari near Wolta Medhane. He then fled to *Tigrai*, losing many of his men in battle at Mogo, and eventually found refuge with Ras Sebhatu in Agame. Aberra supported the Tigrean rulers' unsuccessful invasion of Eritrea in 1895, and died in exile in Ethiopia.” (P. 28).

Apart from the obvious anomalies in the writing of the personal and place names, there are several historical errors in this article: in the first place, there was no need for the Italians to conduct a big “campaign to conquer the highlands”. Most of the notables and their warriors were gone with Ra'əsi Alula to Mätamma. The rest were fighting one another and plundering the country. What Abärra could do as an officer was to guard a given area against plunderers utmost. Secondly, Abärra's rebellion was instigated not through the reduction of his privileges, but rather because of the impolitic measures the Italians undertook to ensure their rule. They did not trust the Eritrean notables and began to arrest and imprison them arbitrarily on the island of Naḳwra. Those who could



read the foreboding fled immediately. Abärä was among the first. Later he was followed by Blatta Gäbrä Ḥgzi'abher, Kántiba Gila Mika'el and others. Thirdly, Abärä is remembered in Eritrea not only for his bravery, but also for the destruction his rebellion brought about on the people. The Italians avenged the death of Bettini by summarily executing numerous village heads in upper and lower 'Ansäba. A historical dictionary mentioning Abärä should by all means include this account. Fourthly, Abärä did not stay long in Təgray nor was there an attempt to invade Eritrea in 1895. He went to Addis Abäba where he was well received by Emperor Mənilək who eventually let him demonstrate his military skill in the Walamo expedition of 1894. Upon the appeal of Ra'əsi Mängäša Yoḥannes for help against the Italian invasion across the Märäb, a military contingent was put under the command of Abärä who was sent to the north in advance. He was not expected to defeat the Italians, but to halt or at least delay their advance until the Imperial army marched.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, we should consider the question of accessibility. Since a dictionary is usually arranged in alphabetical order (and this work is not an exception in this respect), the question may seem irrelevant. But there are at least two interrelated stumbling-blocks with which the user will inevitably have to grapple, namely spelling and transliteration. The author had apparently given thought to these problems, though we may justifiably have our doubts about the success of his solution. In a note to the reader (cf. pp. xvii f.), we are told that three systems were considered: the Italian way of rendering Eritrean names and terms in Latin script, an "ad hoc British system dating from the 1940s", and "the complex transliteration system adopted in Ethiopia after 1966". The author claims to have rejected all three in favour of "the spellings of Eritrean personal and place names most commonly used in the contemporary Eritrean English-language press."

There is no standard transliteration system in African studies, and every author opts for whatever he/she thinks is practical, accurate or feasible. There is nothing wrong with adopting a system as long as that "system" is worth its name. However, consistency is an essential component of a system and that is precisely where the press (be it in Eritrea, Ethiopia or elsewhere in Africa) fails. That problem is well reflected in this work as, for instance we read on pages xix and 397 the title "De-jazmach" while the same term is written "Dejazmach" on pages 27, 107 and 439.

In this system, the letter "g" followed by "e" or "i" is to be read as hard "g" just as if it were followed by any of the rest of the vowels (a, o and u) and, hence, "Gebre" and "Gebri" are written thus, while "Bet Gherghis" (p. xxix), "Ghermazien"

<sup>9</sup> For further details, see CARLO ZAGHI, L'Italia e l'Etiopia alla vigilia di Adua nei dispacci segreti di Luigi Capucci, in: *Gli annali dell'Africa* 4.2 (1941) pp. 517–45.

(p. 54), “Gheleb” and “Ghinda” (p. 231) and numerous other names have retained their Italian form of writing. Both “q” and “k” are apparently regarded as having the same sound, although the author could have well chosen the “q” for the implosive. Thus, Ko<sup>o</sup>atit is written as “Qwatit”, Kwazen as “Qwazien”, and Qoḥayto as “Kohaito”, whereas “Keren”, “Kunama”, and “Kudo Felasi” are correctly entered under “K”. Mind you, I am not referring here to the lack of diacritical signs, but rather to actual orthography. The confusion of the different sounds which may be indistinct in the foreigners’ ears is not only queer for the native Eritrean, but also makes difference in meaning as, for instance, in kārdädä (to harden) and qärdädä (to slice). When looking for an entry, the reader must in any case keep several possibilities of orthography in mind.

The problem of inconsistency in this work also extends to the self-set rules (e.g. abbreviations) and the choice of entries. On page xix, we read the abbreviation, “Dej. Dejazmatch (Amh./Tigrn. military title)”. It is not clear what for one needs an abbreviated form if its full version is allowed to be used in several pages, as indicated above. As it stands, this abbreviation contains two other laxities: in the first place, “Dejazmatch” is the Amharic version which was dominant in Eritrea after 1952 and, hence, often appeared in such a form in the Eritrean press. Even those who did not speak Amharic understood it. Hence, it is unnecessary to mention the language(s) in which the title was used or from which it originated. But if one should do so for a semantic or an etymological reason, then one should refer to Gə<sup>o</sup>əz and provide the correct Amharic and Təgrəñña versions. The Təgrəñña version of the said title is Däggäzmatī.<sup>10</sup>

The other laxity is the definition or description of the title merely as “military title”. This is rather misleading for the reader, especially if one is not familiar with the Eritrean and/or Ethiopian history. Its military connection is primarily etymological, the title being formed by the merging of two words: Däggä (Təgrəñña) / dāḡ (Amharic) meaning outside and Azmatī (Təgrəñña) / azmač (Amharic) signifying an expeditionary commander;<sup>11</sup> hence, a commander outside the Imperial

<sup>10</sup> Cf. FRANCESCO DA BASSANO, *Vocabolario Tigray-Italiano e Repertorio Italiano-Tigray* (Roma 1918) col. 722, 795; YOHÄNNES GÄBRÄ ƎGZI<sup>o</sup>ABHER, *Mäzḡäbä-qalat Təgrəñña-Amḡarəñña* = “Dictionary: Təgrəñña-Amharic” (Asmära 1948–49 YG = 1955–57) p. 689; GƏRMAŞEYON MÄBRAHTU, *Ləssanä Ag<sup>o</sup>azi* (Asmära 1976) pp. 536 f., 558.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. AUGUST DILLMANN, *Über die Regierung, insbesondere die Kirchenordnung des Königs Zar’a-Jacob*. Aus den Abhandl. der Königl. Preuß. Akad. der Wiss. zu Berlin vom Jahre 1884, p. 75 n. 1; IGNAZIO GUIDI, *Vocabolario amarico-italiano* (Roma 1901; repr. 1953) p. 687; KIDANÄ WÄLD KƏFLE, *Mäşḡafä säwasəw wägəs wämäzḡäbä qalat Ḥaddis: nəbabu bag<sup>o</sup>əz fəččəwbamarəñña* = [“A book of grammar and verb, and a new dictionary. Gə<sup>o</sup>əz entries with Amharəñña definitions”] (Addis Abäba 1948 YG = 1955/56) p. 346; WOLF

court or capital. Military command was, however, only a partial duty of the “Dejazmatch”. The high Imperial official was more or less a miniature of his sovereign lord within his domain: he was the prime governor of the province, the chief judge in both civil and penal matters, and the supreme commander of the men at arms. As such this conceptual term should have deserved an entry of its own in the *Dictionary*.

Among the titles which have featured as entries, we find “Bahre Negashi” (p. 105) and “Kantibai” (p. 281) in the *Dictionary*. The form of these two titular appellations is again perplexing and one wonders if the informants of the researcher were not primarily Amharic-speakers: “Negashi” is a corruption of the Amharic form “Nägaš”; the Təgrəñña version is “Nägaši”. Another typical Amharic-speaker’s version of a well-known Təgrəñña term is šob<sup>c</sup>attä which is given on pages 27, 37 and 197 as “Showate”. The Təgrəñña guttural “a” (°ayn) has always been a problem to most Amharic-speakers who pronounced it in the same way as the glottal “a” (Alif), and still worse they tended to change it to “w” when combined with “b” as in the above given example. By the same token the Təgrəñña version of “Ileni” (p. 32 and passim) is Ellen, that of “Adi Qwala” (p. 36) is °Addi K<sub>w</sub>ala, and that of “Chewa” (p. 135) is çəwa.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, the Amharic version of ‘Ra<sup>3</sup>əsi’<sup>13</sup> i.e. “ras” is used throughout the work. Where this was unfitting, a slight modification of vowels was undertaken arbitrarily after the fashion of an Amharic-speaker’s. An example is the name of a famous settlement in Hamasen given as “Adi Rasi” (cf. p. 320) instead of “°Addi Ra<sup>3</sup>əsi”. This important centre known not only for its historical significance, but also for its healing waters, is by the way, excluded as a main entry, in spite of a remark elsewhere (Cf. p. 243) that it is one of “the important villages”.

To sum up, KILLION’s work has some inherent weaknesses pertaining to philosophical, methodological, and technical nature. Its emphasis is on a particular period of Eritrean history, and its writing of Eritrean names and terms is far from being satisfactory. All the same, it is useful in many respects and, as a unique work of its kind, it will probably remain our major reference work on Eritrea for a long time to come.

Bairu Tafla

LESLAU, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic). Ge'ez-English / English-Ge'ez with an index of the Semitic roots* (Wiesbaden 1987) pp. 123, 639.

<sup>12</sup> JOHANNES KOLMODIN, *Traditions de Tsazzega et Hazzega* = Archives d’Études Orientales 5.1: Textes Tigriña (Rome 1912) pp. 148, 155 f. and passim; GƏMAŞEYON, 1976, p. 621.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. DA BASSANO, 1918, (footn. 10), col. 151.