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Review

KARL JOHAN LUNDSTRÖM – EZRA GEBREMEDHIN, *Kenisha: The Roots
and Development of the Evangelical Church of Eritrea 1866–1935*

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Reviews

skirmish among two Italian agents (Celso Odello and Giovanni Persico), King Ibn Sa‘ūd and some of his court officers (Fu‘ād Hamza, Prince Fayṣal and Yūsuf Yasin), the Italians, obtained 1,000 camels for their troops and a kind of “favourable” neutrality in the Ethiopian conflict which implied that Saudi Arabia did not join the League of Nations in sanctioning the Italian invasion. Erlich not only reconstructs the facts according to their chronological order but also justly analyzes them in the frame of the contemporary geopolitical arena and against the background of the strategies of both Great Britain and Italy in the Middle East and the Red Sea area.

Chapter four focuses on another so far scarcely investigated but momentous bend of the recent Islamic history in Ethiopia, the so-called “fitna of the Club” (*fitna* being a word of the religious vocabulary of Islam meaning internal strife among the faithful). In January 1948, some representatives of the nationalistic group of Harär (*al-Waṭaniyya*) secretly joined the Somali Youth Club (the Somali independence movement) in Mogadishu to try to drive the attention of the International Committee on Somalia towards the issue of the future status of Harär (as if the town was a part of Somalia and not of Ethiopia). The Harari envoys failed in their mission and fearing the reaction of the Ethiopian monarchy went into exile first in Saudi Arabia, and eventually to Egypt. In Harär many members of the *al-Waṭaniyya* were arrested and deported to other regions of Ethiopia. The episode was a turning point in the evolution of the Ethiopian Islam, and its consequences last until today.

With his already proven skill in the critical reconstruction of Ethiopian history, Haggai Erlich managed to produce a reference book which is of great help to approach some previously almost unexplored aspects of the dynamical relationships of Ethiopia with one of the main countries of the Islamic world. Further research on this fascinating field has thus now found a solid basis to start with.

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KARL JOHAN LUNDSTRÖM – EZRA GEBREMEDHIN, *Kenisha: The Roots and Development of the Evangelical Church of Eritrea 1866–1935*, Trenton, NJ – Uppsala: The Red Sea Press, 2011. 520 pp., paperback. Prize: US-\$ 34,95. ISBN: 978–1–56902–350–1.

The book under review, henceforth simply *Kenisha*,¹ is the voluminous and detailed summary of the foundation and development of a European Church

¹ The term *Kenisha* is discussed in detail on pp. 26–28. Its most simple translation would be “readers” and designates the local converts, in this way it is also often used in the book.

in Africa. Yet it is much more than just a report about a religious movement. It is a manifold account of a whole region, political changes, ethnic struggles, personal challenges of the missionaries, their success and defeat, and of course religious ideas. It recounts the process of transformation from the foundation work of the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) to the emergence of the Evangelical Church of Eritrea (ECE).

Karl Johan Lundström started the work on the manuscript as early as 1997, encouraged by Gustav Arén, who himself is well known for his accounts of the Evangelical movement in Ethiopia.² Only after Lundström's death in 2003 was the task handed over to Ezra Gebremedhin. He found willing support and help in Lundström's widow Mai-Britt, who had attended the work from the beginning. In order to respect his predecessor's work Ezra Gebremedhin marked all of his changes and additions with the acronym "Ed.". Next to the parts of his own authorship, he especially added footnotes, introductions and closing notes to the chapters, and additional information to Lundström's parts. Through this Ezra Gebremedhin succeeded to combine two writing styles of two authors in a harmonious way, while keeping them clearly separated. Both authors are closely related to the topic and their history is in part interwoven with later events and persons. *Kenisha* is therefore a very personal account which should be kept in mind in passages that could allow a more aloof or critical point of view.

The general outline of the book is that of a chronicle, though it jumps back and forth in the chronology in some parts as the incidents happened simultaneously.

The primary aim of the Swedish mission was to start to proselytize the Oromo of Ethiopia. Due to the internal struggles in the fading *Zämänä mäsafənt*, however, those southern regions were inaccessible. Instead the Eritrean coastal areas were chosen as a working ground in the meantime. *Kenisha* describes the first steps of the early Swedish settlers in Eritrea, namely among groups of the Mänsa³ and Kunama. The focus in the beginning of the book lies on the young missionaries and their personal quest to establish themselves in an area which was linguistically, climatically and in its society completely unfamiliar to them. Also, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in these regions challenged the settlers and involved the missionary into doctrinal and Christo-

² GUSTAV ARÉN, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia. Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* = Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia 32, Stockholm: EFS-förlaget – Addis Abäba: Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, 1978; ID., *Envoy of the Gospel in Ethiopia. In the steps of the Evangelical Pioneers 1898–1936*, Stockholm: EFS-förlaget, 1999.

³ The transliterations used in *Kenisha* are based on Arén's work which in parts differs from contemporary spelling. The inconsistency of the transliterations in general might be annoying for the reader obsessed with details, however, it does not disturb too much.

logical discussions. After the early pioneers had cleared the way the SEM was able to establish larger mission centres in the country. Stations were opened in Āmkullu, Massawa, Hərgigo, Bäläsa, Gäläb and Asmära. The book continues to describe how, next to the religious contribution those centres developed into important locations for the local population. Hospitals and clinics were established, and despite their small size they often offered the only medical facilities within miles. Male and female missionaries with a background in medical training functioned as good as possible as full-scale doctors.

The missionaries also cared for the education of the local children, which also revolutionary extended to the education of girls in 1876. Young local converts were ordained deacons and deaconesses, and promising students were sent abroad for further education in religious and secular matters. Some of the most renowned figures were surely Onesimus Näsib and Tāwäldä Mädhən Gäbrä Mädhən. In the clinics the students were also trained in medical education, and especially women underwent nurse training.

New challenges for the missionaries arose when Eritrea became an Italian colony and with the simultaneously growing Catholic influence. In earlier decades the Swedish missionary stood under the benevolent protection of Werner Munzinger.⁴ Even though life was not without problems at that time, at least the political officials of the Massawa Governorate presented no larger obstacles. The Italian colonial officials brought skepticism towards the SEM, which was natural in Catholic Italy towards Evangelical movements. The year 1915 marked a turning point in the relations between the SEM and the colonial government. Members of the SEM faced restrictions of their freedom of movement, financial transfers were delayed and medical and educational institutions hindered in their autonomous work or were forced to close down.

In the early 1920s a new movement developed within the SEM, a movement that was longing for the formation of a local and independent church – self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating – a philosophy which had already been introduced by Professor Kolmodin at the beginning of the 20th cent. A first constitutional meeting formed the Evangelical Church of Eritrea in 1926. In the years until 1933 over ten synodical meetings were held in order to organize and structure the new, independent church. *Kenisha* ends with the Italian invasion into Ethiopia and the subsequent problems for both the members of the SEM and the young ECE. Rudimentary description follows

⁴ In his years as governor of the Massawa Governorate Munzinger tried to push the development of the region by all means, introducing modern technology like telegraph lines, but also supporting Swedish and French missions who themselves both tried to cultivate their areas of action.

of the first initiatives of ECE's members who oriented themselves towards Addis Abāba once the Italians had withdrawn. Thus a thorough study of the developments following the year 1936 is left open as a desideratum.

In *Kenisha*, the authors also elaborate the important role the SEM played for the development of language and literature studies. From the beginning the missionary considered it crucial to provide the local communities with Bibles and prayer books in their own languages. Translation of the Bible into Təgre, Təgreñña, Amharic and Gə'əz were equally performed. Next to the religious Scriptures a large quantity of oral literature and poetry was recorded, also grammatical sketches or linguistic books were composed. Those books were often authored in cooperation with or by single missionaries or locals. Aster Gannoo is not only a fine example for this but also for the successful education of girls. Moreover, as for the case of Kunama, the missionaries were the first ever to put it into writing, thus coining the Latin script for this language. Hand in hand with the composing of books, the local printing press was also developed. In 1885 one of the first printing presses in the horn of Africa was opened by the SEM in ፤mkullu.

In some parts *Kenisha* draws a lot of information from Arén's work.⁵ Yet in the majority it presents new source materials, mostly Swedish Mission writings, which have not been available to the broader public before. The book is furnished with a rich collection of illustrations, photographs and sketches produced throughout the decades. With the high density of mentioned individuals and places it is a pleasure to have most of them illustrated repeatedly in the course of time.

To mention some negative points: the chapters are divided by a huge number of subheadings. They were surely intended to structure the text and make it easier to grasp for the reader. However, it might be mentioned that the large number of the subheadings can be rather distracting.

One real lacuna is a decent map. The map used in *Kenisha* was published in 1922 by the SEM's own printing press and details out of it introduce every new chapter. The editor explains that the map was chosen to help the reader locate the mentioned places, a reader however who is not well acquainted with the region might get confused.

Kenisha gives a great overview about the stages of the formation of the ESE and the role the SEM had played in the game. With its ending in the

⁵ This is in fact inevitable. The roots of the Evangelical missions in Ethiopia and Eritrea overlap to a large extent. Several SEM expeditions into the Ethiopian lowlands to reach the Oromo were undertaken in later years. Thus also an exchange of missionaries took place, such as Onesimus Nāsib who returned to Wälläga in 1903/05 and finally died in Naqamtee. Arén's studies are so elaborate that he also covers a lot of the ECE's history.

Reviews

1930s the authors have left room for a sequel, that is a thorough account of the ECE; a desideratum that hopefully will soon be filled up.

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J. CALVITT CLARKE III, *Alliance of the Colored Peoples. Ethiopia & Japan before World War II*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, James Currey 2011, XVII, 198 S. Preis: GB-£ 50,-. ISBN: 978-1-84701-043-8.

Eine Beziehungsgeschichte zwischen zwei so verschiedenen und weit voneinander entfernt liegenden Ländern wie Äthiopien und Japan mag auf den ersten Blick überraschen und wurde auch lange Zeit ignoriert. Es ist daher sehr verdienstvoll, dass Calvitt Clarke mit dieser Monographie eine Lücke schließt. Er verwendet dazu Material in englischer, französischer, italienischer und russischer Sprache. Außerdem konnte seine japanische Ehefrau bei der Untersuchung von Quellen in ihrer Muttersprache behilflich sein. Leider bleiben deutsche Zeugnisse unberücksichtigt.

Zunächst einmal untersucht der Autor, welche Gemeinsamkeiten beide Länder in den 1930er Jahren hatten, und zeigt auf, dass Äthiopien in Japan ein Modell für seine dringend zu vollziehende Modernisierung sah und daher den Kontakt zum Reich des *Tenno* suchte. Außerdem hoffte die Regierung des *Nəgus* auf Unterstützung bzw. Abschreckung gegen Italien, das mehr oder weniger offen auf eine Aggression gegen sein Land hinarbeitete. Rasse und Rassismus spielten in diesem Zusammenhang weltweit eine große Rolle. Die westlichen Länder fürchteten ein Festsetzen Japans in Afrika und weiteren Gebieten der kolonisierten Völker. Das fernöstliche Kaiserreich war durch seinen eindrucksvollen Wirtschaftsaufschwung seit dem 19. Jahrhundert und den Sieg über Russland 1905 zum Idol der farbigen Welt geworden und hatte dort eine gewisse Aufmüpfigkeit gegen die imperialistischen Mächte hervorgerufen. Jetzt tauchte das Gespenst der "gelben Gefahr" wieder auf und drohte sich mit der "schwarzen Gefahr" zu verbinden. Mussolini gelang es daher weitgehend, sich als Retter der "weißen" Zivilisation zu präsentieren und sogar als Verteidiger der westlichen Interessen in Afrika gegen japanische Ambitionen. Dadurch wurde der Widerstand gegen sein abessinisches Abenteuer in den westlichen Nationen erheblich geschwächt. Sogar die Sowjetunion, bis dato selbsternannter Vorkämpfer der Unabhängigkeitsbewegungen unter den kolonisierten Völkern, ermutigte im Namen der "Rasse" Italien bis Ende 1935, um das faschistische Regime im anti-deutschen Lager zu halten.

Andererseits gelang es Äthiopien, Unterstützung in der farbigen Welt für seine Sache zu gewinnen, auch wenn sich diese nicht militärisch auswirken