



Aethiopia 16 (2013)

International Journal of Ethiopian and
Eritrean Studies

ANDREAS WETTER, Berlin

Review

HARALD ASPEN – BIRHANU TEFERRA – SHIFERAW BEKELE – SVEIN EGE
(eds.), *Research in Ethiopian Studies: Selected Papers of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim July 2007*

Aethiopia 16 (2013), 239–244

ISSN: 2194–4024

Edited in the Asien-Afrika-Institut
Hiob Ludolf Zentrum für Äthiopistik
der Universität Hamburg
Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

by Alessandro Bausi

in cooperation with

Bairu Tafla, Ulrich Braukämper, Ludwig Gerhardt,
Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg and Siegbert Uhlig

Reviews

HARALD ASPEN – BIRHANU TEFERRA – SHIFERAW BEKELE – SVEIN EGE (eds.), *Research in Ethiopian Studies: Selected Papers of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim July 2007* = AethFor 72, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010. x + 593 pp. Price: € 98.00. ISBN: 978-3-447-06146-9.

As the title indicates, the book is a selection of contributions that were presented at the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies held in 2007 in Trondheim, Norway. This book is actually just a subset of the complete proceedings, which consist of 116 papers that can be downloaded from the conference website (<http://portal.svt.ntnu.no/sites/ices16/default.aspx>). The printed version of the complete proceedings contains 46 papers, two of which are not part of the online version: “Authoritarianism and the Ethiopian Body Politic: Dissonance between Democratization and Elite Political Subculture” by Paulos Milkias (pp. 349–366) and “The May 2005 Elections and the Future of Democracy in Ethiopia” by Merera Gudina (pp. 379–390). Although it is no doubt by pure coincidence that both of them directly criticize the Ethiopian government, adherents of conspiracy theories could suspect that the omission in the online version could be motivated by the intention to “make the electronic version available to other institutions that may want to host it, e.g. the Institute of Ethiopian Studies” (Ege et al. 2009: xix). Besides the large number of high quality papers, the online version has the advantage that all pictures and photos are in color, while they are in black and white in the printed version.

The two versions also differ with regard to the layout. The type area of the printed version is a little bit bigger so that the contents of pages differs between the two versions. And since the online version contains many more papers than the printed one, the page numbers are obviously also not the same, which has implications for citation.

The contributions in the printed version are grouped under four general headings: *Philology and History* (12 papers), *Anthropology, Religion, Beliefs and Music* (15), *Politics, International Relations and Development Studies* (15) and *Linguistics* (4). In the online version the papers are distributed in four volumes. The thematic divisions presented in the online volumes, which reflect the disciplinary panels of the conference, have been abandoned in the printed book (e.g., Archeology, History, Anthropology, Islam, Ethiopian Orthodox Tāwahedo Church, and Politics and others are separate sections in the online version).

It is surely not possible to review and evaluate all contributions of a multi-disciplinary book such as these proceedings in an equal manner. After all, academics generally possess expertise limited to their specific discipline. The real value of this book is that one finds two types of contributions from which anyone interested in research on the Horn of Africa can profit. The first type of papers provides new empirical data or presents new and original approaches. A number of papers report on fieldwork or other data-based research and provides new (at least for non-specialists) or impressive insights in the respective fields of study. The second type of papers describes the use of specific research methods. The few selected for discussion below should serve to illustrate the latter. Having said that I will try to comment on a number of papers that do not lie in the range of my own expertise (linguistics).

The paper “*Ras Wäsän Säggäd*, a Pre-Eminent Lord of Early 16th-Century Ethiopia” (pp. 15–28) by Michael Kleiner contains an original approach in historical studies, as he attempts to trace the biography of a specific political actor who did not belong to a royal family but nevertheless played an important role in Ethiopian history.

The paper “Why did the Manḡo Convert to Protestantism? – Social Discrimination and Coexistence in Käfa, Southwest Ethiopia” (pp. 141–152) by Sayuri Yoshida sheds light on a neglected minority group in southwestern Ethiopia living under severe socio-cultural pressure from the Käfa majority group. The paper is a good work of ethnographic research and it enhances our knowledge about the rich ethnic diversity of the country. The Manḡo nowadays speak the Käfa language. But from their socio-economic configuration, i.e. the fact that they used to live as hunter-gatherer, it is possible to assume that they switched from another language probably unrelated to the surrounding Omotic languages, just as other hunter-gatherer groups in Southern Ethiopia have done, such as the Šabo, K^wegu and Ongota do (Dimmendaal 2008: 851; Tosco 1998: 120).

Hermann Amborn’s paper “The Phallsification of the *Kallačča*: or, Why Sometimes a Cigar Is a Cigar” (pp. 201–215) is an impressive rejection of the Eurocentric interpretation of the famous “phallic” symbol used by different ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia.

The paper “Religious Change and Islam: The Emergence of the Salafi Movement in Bale, Ethiopia” (pp. 226–239) by Terje Østebø is a significant contribution, which presents results of important research on modern Islamic reform movements in southeastern Ethiopia. It is the first research on that subject and is based on extensive fieldwork. It gained additional significance when the current conflict over the introduction of the *Aḥbaš* doctrine began between the government and the Muslim population. The empirical

study of which the paper is a part has allowed for a better and more accurate understanding of political Islam in Ethiopia.

A paper that contributes in a similar way to our understanding of local conflicts is Dereje Feyissa's "A National Perspective on the Conflict in Gambella" (pp. 418–413), which provides a detailed explanation of the various causes and developments that underly the conflict in Gambella. It is through empirical studies like this that we can attempt to understand the interwoven ethnic and political factors that underly conflicts such as that in Gambella.

Christine Chaillot's "Traditional Teaching in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" (pp. 240–247) illustrates the vulnerability of intangible cultural heritage, in this case the traditional teaching of the Orthodox Church, which is threatened with extinction despite dominating parts of Ethiopia's culture. Being just one example among a number of similar cases it serves as an important reminder to strengthen the preservation of cultural practices and knowledge.

The paper "Wayyuu – Women's Respect and Rights among the Arsi-Oromo" (pp. 405–418) by Marit Tolo Østebø focuses on two interesting aspects of local culture. The first is the rich semantic and cultural scope of the term "wayyuu" in Bale Oromo society. In this regard it represents a good exemplary work of linguistic-anthropological study. The second aspect is the convincing explanation of how Oromo values and concepts can secure women's rights in a traditional society. Østebø consequently discusses in a critical way the application of Western-dominated human rights concepts to non-Western regions and societies and argues in favour of the incorporation of indigenous concepts into the human rights discourse.

Several papers deal with the relations between Ethiopia and the "outside" world. I would like to mention three contributions that touch on this aspect from different angles. Kay Kaufman Shelemay gives a rich and informative description of the Ethiopian diaspora music scene in the United States in her paper "Music in the Ethiopian American Diaspora: A Preliminary Overview" (pp. 321–333). Another aspect of Ethiopia's diaspora is represented in the paper "Betä Ǝsra'el Students Who Studied Abroad, 1905–1935" (pp. 84–92) by Shalva Weil, which contains the biographies of the first young Ethiopians of Falaša background who studied in Western Europe and North America. The paper "The Lion of Judah at Camelot: U. S. Foreign Policy towards Ethiopia as Reflected in the Second State Visit of Emperor Haylä Selassé I to the United States" (pp. 334–348) by Theodore M. Vestal treats foreign relations on the political level. This contribution is a detailed account of the official visit by the Ethiopian head of state in 1963 to the United States. Besides the description of the order of events during the visit, the paper also presents insights into the political relations between Ethiopia and the US with regard to the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia.

A couple of contributions are notable in their use and application of new methods. In her paper “Ethiopia and the ‘Theatre-State’ Model: Symbolism and Ritual in Ethiopian Political Culture” (pp. 52–61) Izabela Orłowska analyses political behaviour in 19th-century Ethiopia using the theatre-state model of Clifford Geertz, which offers a number of tools to better understand the actions of political actors and their use of symbols. Donald Crummey demonstrates in “Exploring Landscape Change in Ethiopia: Evidence from Imaging and its Interpretation” (pp. 93–105) the value of using photographic imagery and remote sensing to detect and analyse changes in land use and population growth in Ethiopia. Steve Delamarter’s paper “Catalogues and Digitization for Previously Uncatalogued Ethiopian Manuscripts in the United States” (pp. 29–41) gives an overview of the Ethiopian manuscripts located in Northern America. Besides its value for researchers interested in philological studies, it is also important on a much broader context, i.e. the systematic preservation and cataloguing of historical and cultural sources using modern digital technology. The detailed description of the digitization process for manuscripts can serve as an example for preservation endeavours in other areas. Finally, in “On the Filming of ‘Pilgrimage to Ya’ā’” (pp. 248–259), Yasuo Matsunami and Minako Ishihara present a vivid example of how audio-visual research can be done in order to collect data, while at the same time involving the community in the research. Their paper is a unique report of a visual anthropological field research using participant observation.

Finally, I would like to comment on some of the contributions from Linguistics. Wondwosen Tesfaye shows in “Definiteness in Diraytata” (pp. 547–554) how information structure in this Cushitic language is connected with the marking of definiteness and case. Interestingly, it becomes evident that predicate-centered focus (i.e. state-of-affairs focus) is morphologically marked on the verb, while term focus seems to be marked by the absence of any overt marking either on the verb or on NPs (although the author does not differentiate between the different types of focus). The choice of definite marker is consequently determined by the different focus types. Unfortunately this contribution suffers from bad formatting, with the examples in the glossary not properly lined up. Andreas Joswig’s paper (pp. 568–577) shows how this could be done correctly. The paper “A Typology of the Middle in Ethiopian Afro-Asiatic Languages” (pp. 555–567) by Tolemariam Fufa Teso represents an interesting approach where the semantic functional type of verbs is treated from a comparative view. He compares middle verb types in the three language families Cushitic, Ethio-Semitic and Omotic. However, the presentation of the data and examples could have been done in a more systematic and lucid way. Sometimes the classification of middle verbs based on morphology is confused with a classification based on functional-semantic features. This

could have been avoided with a more structured presentation of the data. In his paper “North vs. South Ethiopian Semitic” (pp. 578–589), Rainer Voigt presents a detailed critic of Hetzron’s classificatory model of Ethio-Semitic languages from 1972 by arguing against the strict genetic division between a northern vs. a southern group. He bases his argument mainly on a different interpretation and assessment of the gemination in the type A, B, and C verbs. This is an important contribution because Hetzron’s hypothesis is the most accepted and cited classification model of Ethio-semitic languages. The downside of the paper is the lack of an alternative model for the internal genetic relations of that language family.

Aside from the content, I want to comment on some flaws in the editing. There are some mistakes in the transliteration of Amharic terms. On p. 57 *č* is not geminated in *ačäge* (አጩጩ), while the second and third consonants in *čannəqq* (ጭንቅ) on the next page (58) have to be geminated. Similar gemination is missing in the words **mäbalačäw* and **yəbalu* where it should be *mäbbalaččäw* (መባለጩው) and *yəbbalu* (ይባሉ) on p. 59.¹ All in all Amharic and also Arabic terms are not transliterated in a consistent way. The word *bäh^wala* (በኋላ) is rendered in two different forms in one text: on p. 59 the given form is *bähwala*, while in the bibliography of that paper on p. 64 the word is transliterated with the etymological form *bäh^wala*. The choice of graphic signs that do not represent the Amharic pronunciation like *h* or *ħ* for *b* and *ś* for *s* (e.g., in Həylä Šəllase p. 334ff.) is omnipresent in the book. This kind of notation may be necessary in philological works, but it seems to be quite unnecessary in papers on modern history. In any case, it is not applied consistently. The name *Yohannes* is sometimes written with *h* (pp. 241, 334) and sometimes with *b* (pp. 309, 434); the name *Wäynəsät Mammō* is written *Wäynishet Mamo* (p. 441). In contrast to Amharic, the different signs in Arabic words do correspond to different pronunciations, but on p. 251 some Arabic terms lack a consequent transliteration, i.e. instead of *Haqq al-Bahr* and *Bāb al-Wuṣūl* it should be *Haqq al-Baħr* and *Bāb al-Wuṣūl* respectively.

In some papers, publications cited in the text are missing in the bibliography: Ydlibi 2006 (pp. 63, 68), Bartels 1983 (p. 250), Bourguignon 1973 (p. 252), Hanna Pitkin (no year, p. 351), Lipjart (no year, p. 358), Alex Inkel (no year, p. 361). The author Ali Mazrui appears twice in the reference list on p. 378, i.e. as Mazrui, Ali A. and Ali A. Mazrui.

In some papers the text has not been edited properly: on p. 127 “emergence *and* of classes of Muslim literati” and on p. 349 “The debate about [...], a central question for Ethiopia, *has A biggest challenge facing Ethiopi-*

¹ On the same page a wrong form in Amharic is given: the word for “to strike, to eradicate or to defeat” is not *attäfä* but *atäffa*.

ans today is the [...]. On p. 89 it is stated that Hizkiyas Finas died in Alexandria, Egypt, but on p. 90 the place of his death is Italy.

Most of these points are minor flaws and do not diminish the academic value of the book. They do, however, contradict the editors' preface in the online version that "the papers published in the book went through an extensive editing process" and are "more carefully edited" (Ege et al. 2009: xix).

The International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies (ICES) in general, and the 16th Conference in particular, are quite unique in African studies because they comprise a high number of diverse disciplines ranging from philology to development studies. The common ground of all the contributions in the proceedings, or the feature that defines this conference, is clearly the political and geographic region, i.e. Ethiopia or the Horn of Africa. This has become clearer over the years as the number of disciplines has increased considerably since the start of these conferences in 1959. In this sense, the ICES can be regarded as a good example of 'area studies'. As far as I know, there is no other comparable multidisciplinary scientific tradition related to another specific region in Africa. So the real value of a volume like the present one for anyone doing research in the region is that it offers the opportunity to look beyond one's area of research and read and learn about studies from other disciplines which may be geographically located close to the area of one's own research.

References

- DIMMENDAAL, G.J. 2008, "Language Ecology and Linguistic Diversity on the African Continent", in: *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2/5, pp. 840–858.
- EGE, S. – H. ASPEN – BIRHANU TEFERRA – SHIFERAW BEKELE (eds.) 2009, "Preface", in: *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, I, Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Social Anthropology [online version: <http://portal.svt.ntnu.no/sites/ices16/default.aspx>], pp. xix–xxiii.
- TOSCO, M. 1998, "People who are not the Language they Speak": On Language Shift without Language Decay in East Africa", in: M. BREZINGER (ed.), *Endangered Languages in Africa*, Köln: Köppe, pp. 119–142.

Andreas Wetter, Berlin

ITYOPIS ኢትዮጵያ – Northeast African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vol. 1, Mekelle University, Tigray, Ethiopia, 2011. 207 pp. Price: ETB 30.00/US-\$ 15.00. ISSN: 2223–7178.

A part of the relatively new institution of higher learning in the capital city of Tigray, northern Ethiopia, recently realized the importance of founding an academic organ which could promote the scientific work of its members and