MAGDALENA KRZYŻANOWSKA, Universität Hamburg

Review

MUSSIE TESFAGIORGIS G., *Eritrea* and PAULOS MILKIAS, *Ethiopia*

Aethiopica 18 (2015), 309–310

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
Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume


**AethFor** Äthiopistische Forschungen, 41–73, ed. by S. UHLSIG (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998–2011); 74–75, ed. by A. BAUSI and S. UHLSIG (ibid., 2011f.); 76ff. ed. by A. BAUSI (ibid., 2012ff.).

**AION** *Annali dell’Università degli studi di Napoli ‘L’Orientale’, Napoli: Università di Napoli ‘L’Orientale’ (former Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli), 1929ff.*


**CSCO** Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1903ff.


**EMML** Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.


**OrChr** *Oriens Christianus*, Leipzig–Roma–Wiesbaden 1901ff.


**PO** Patrologia Orientalis, 1903ff.


**RRALm** *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, Roma, 1892ff.


**SAe** Scriptores Aethiopici.

Aethiopica 18 (2015)
Reviews


Mussie Tesfagiorgis’s and Paulos Milkias’s bulky (and expensive) volumes *Eritrea* and *Ethiopia*, respectively, inaugurate a new series of books *Africa in Focus*. Both are aimed at a broad readership and intend to give a solid and reliable background for grasping the political, social and cultural situation of the two countries.

The arrangement and content of the books follow what has probably been set as a standard for the *Africa in Focus* series. Thus, they contain seven main chapters dealing with *Geography*, *History*, *Government and Politics*, *Economy*, *Society*, *Culture* and *Contemporary Issues*. The chapter on *Society* is divided into smaller sections such as *Social Classes and Ethnicity*, *Women and...


309 Aethiopica 18 (2015)
Marriage, and Education. Similarly, the chapter on Culture embraces sections on Languages, Etiquette, Literature, Art, Music, Food, Sports and Leisure. Additionally, in Eritrea there is one subsection concerning Traditional (Herbal) Medicine while in Ethiopia we encounter a part on Popular Culture. The final chapter, on Contemporary Issues, comprises sections discussing ongoing topics that often hit the newspaper headlines outside these countries. For Eritrea these include, among others, freedom of the press, freedom of movement and freedom of belief, national service, the plight of refugees and food insecurity. In Ethiopia, in turn, we may read about such issues as ethnicity and ethnic federalism, religious conflicts, human rights, population explosion and family planning, capital punishment and adoption. At the end of both volumes, we find a glossary of local terms, basic facts about the country, a list of holidays and important organizations based in Eritrea and Ethiopia, respectively, annotated bibliography and indices.

The content of the two books is interestingly presented and generously illustrated with black-and-white photographs. Paulos’s book, however, warrants a serious criticism. In his zeal ‘to shatter the deep-seated stereotype of Ethiopia’ (p. xviii) as a famine-stricken arid country, the author, especially in the part dealing with history, offers ideology rather than a decent academic account. Furthermore, there are so many factual errors in the text that the book can hardly be recommended as a reliable source of information.

An editor’s critical eye has clearly never seen either Eritrea or Ethiopia, as can easily be inferred from their defective system of references, inconsistent spellings and a plethora of typos. It must be stressed that Mussie’s book is far better self-edited than Paulos’s.

The credibility of Paulos’s book calls forth strong reservations; therefore, I can only suggest to the interested reader that s/he use the book with great caution. Mussie’s book, on the other hand, I can heartily recommend to anyone who wants to gain a solid and broad knowledge about Eritrea and/or travel in this country, even if only in their imagination—where there are no travel restrictions!

Magdalena Krzyżanowska, Universität Hamburg