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Dissertation abstract

*Die Salte. Geschichte, Geschichtserzählung und Geschichtsbewusstsein
eines muslimischen Volkes im südlichen Zentral-Äthiopien*

Dissertation at the Faculty of Humanities, Hamburg University, de-
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DIRK BUSTORF, *Die Sälte. Geschichte, Geschichtserzählung und Geschichtsbewusstsein eines muslimischen Volkes im südlichen Zentral-Äthiopien*. Dissertation at the Faculty of Humanities, Hamburg University, defended on 4 September 2009

viii, 421 pp., 12 maps, appendices (glossary, tables, lists, photos)

The study of the Sälte, Muslim agriculturalists in southern Central-Ethiopia was at large a desideratum. Now, this dissertation presents the findings of a recent ethnological-historiographical basic research. The oral traditions of the Sälte are interpreted by two complementary perspectives: (1) a historical reconstruction based on oral traditions correlated with written sources; and (2) an analysis of ideological and narrative structures constituting historical consciousness and ethnic identity. Against the background of earlier discourses on the character of oral tradition, myth and history the work develops its theoretical base and methodological body from an examination of the concepts of *historical consciousness* and *cultural memory*.

The thesis provides a concise introduction into the ethnographic data with special reference to the sociopolitical system and the *culture of remembrance*. The main part of the work is dedicated to a reconstruction of the histories of the Sälte sub-groups, which did not constitute a common entity before the 20th century but were linked by ties of intermarriage and shared features of historical memory. Their early memory and core of identity is characterized by legends about an Arab ancestry and migrations in the 17th century. Due to the density of sources, the 19th century forms one of the main focuses of the thesis. In the wake of Mənilək's conquest of the South, inter-clan conflicts and migration were notorious. However, they resulted in an expansion of Sälte territories and the forming of an alliance system. The Sälte strongly participated in the emerging Islamic revivalism but their support of the *ğihād* against Mənilək was weak. Mənilək imposed the Ethiopian system of rule on the Sälte. The leading families, however, could maintain prominent positions in the local administration. Under the Italian occupation, the Sälte for the first time were acknowledged as a distinct entity. Under the Həylä Şəllase I and *Dərg* regimes they were again subsumed as Gurage until the "ethnic federalism" policy of the current regime triggered processes of self-definition and cultural revival on the base of historical consciousness.

The basic structures of historical consciousness are identified by certain "figures of memory", central statements of the historical narration which function as focal points of memory as well as of the construction of historical meaning and identity. Groups of such "figures of memory" constitute

the qualitatively varying steps of historical narration and levels/layers of historical consciousness. Applied to the historical narration of the Səḷte, this approach, unlike Vansina's model of two levels of oral tradition, leads to at least four levels of historical consciousness overlapping each other while at the same time being very different in quality.

MERSHA ALEHEGNE, *The Ethiopian Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Critical Edition and Translation*. Dissertation an der Fakultät für Geisteswissenschaften der Universität Hamburg, verteidigt 12. Mai 2010 zur Erlangung des Titels eines Dr. phil.

The oldest religious nations that have Holy Scriptures (Torah, Bible, Koran, etc.) developed their own methods of commentary that helps discover the truths and values of their scriptures. In a similar manner, Ethiopia, a nation whose culture has been influenced by the Bible for many centuries, has developed and established its own tradition of interpretation and of commenting on the Biblical and Patristic texts. This tradition, known as *andəmta*, is a unique and most valuable legacy of the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Täwəhədo Church and the entire country of Ethiopia. It is here that the foundation for the practice of the Orthodox faith is set forth, the education of monks prescribed, the theology of the church firmly standardised, the calendar fixed and dogma practised.

The study provides a critical edition of the *andəmta* of the commentary of Genesis. It also supplies the history of the corpus as a *raison d'être* for the edition, discusses the history of research in the commentary tradition, describes the MSS consulted in the preparation of this edition, and outlines the method used. It consists of four parts: Part I deals with introductory matters on the commentary tradition in general and the book under investigation in particular. The same part also describes the rules followed and the methods applied in the process of editing the text. Part II contains a text-critical edition of the Amharic *andəmta* text of Genesis with *apparatus criticus*. The function of the edition is to present the evidence of the essential MSS as completely as possible. Hence, the text-critical apparatus records the textual variants of the MSS selected for the edition. Through this process much effort has been exerted to produce a text which can be assumed to be the representation of the earliest text of the *andəmta* of Genesis. Part III presents the English translation of the text, with commentary on concepts and terminology in the footnotes. Because of the complicated transmissional feature of the *andəmta* text, longer passages appear either as additions or various readings in some of the MS witnesses. Some of these texts are translated in this part according to their original position in the Amharic text. Part IV contains archaic terms found in the examination of the MSS, an inventory of *andəmta* MSS in published and unpublished catalogues of different libraries and museums, and a general bibliography.