



# Aethiopia 18 (2015)

International Journal of Ethiopian and  
Eritrean Studies

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**Review**

TIMOTHY POWER, *The Red Sea from Byzantium to the Caliphate, AD 500–1000*

Aethiopia 18 (2015), 251–254

ISSN: 2194–4024

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

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## Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume

- AE* *Annales d'Éthiopie*, Paris 1955ff.
- ÄthFor* Äthiopistische Forschungen, 1–35, ed. by E. HAMMERSCHMIDT, 36–40, ed. by S. UHLIG (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner (1–34), 1977–1992; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (35–40), 1994–1995).
- AethFor* Aethiopistische Forschungen, 41–73, ed. by S. UHLIG (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998–2011); 74–75, ed. by A. BAUSI and S. UHLIG (*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.
- BSOAS* *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London, 1917ff.).
- CSCO* Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1903ff.
- EAE* S. UHLIG, ed., *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, I: A–C; II: D–Ha; III: He–N; in cooperation with A. BAUSI, eds, IV: O–X (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010); A. BAUSI in cooperation with S. UHLIG, eds, V: Y–Z, *Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014).
- EMML* Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.
- JAH* *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge 1960ff.
- JES* *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa 1963ff.
- OrChr* *Oriens Christianus*, Leipzig–Roma–Wiesbaden 1901ff.
- PdP* *La Parola del Passato. Rivista di studi classici*, Napoli 1946ff.
- PICES 8* TADDESE BEYENE, ed., *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Addis Ababa (26–30 November) 1984*, I–II (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies–Frankfurt am Main: Frobenius Institut, Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, 1988–1989).
- PICES 10* C. LEPAGE and É. DELAGE, eds, *Études éthiopiennes: Actes de la X<sup>e</sup> Conférence internationale des études éthiopiennes, Paris, 24–28 août 1988* (Paris: Société française pour les études éthiopiennes, 1994).
- PO* *Patrologia Orientalis*, 1903ff.
- RIÉ* É. BERNAND, A.J. DREWES, and R. SCHNEIDER, *Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite*, I: *Les documents*, II: *Les planches* (Paris: (Académie des inscriptions et belle-lettres) Diffusion de Boccard, 1991).
- RRALm* *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, Roma, 1892ff.
- RSE* *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Roma, 1941–1981, Roma–Napoli, 1983ff.
- SAe* *Scriptores Aethiopici*.

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genous People in the First–Third Centuries (pp. 113–143); Michael C.A. Macdonald, ‘Romans Go Home?’ Rome and Other ‘Outsiders’ as Viewed from the Syro-Arabian Desert’ (pp. 145–163); H el ene Cuvigny, ‘Papyrological Evidence on ‘Barbarians’ in the Egyptian Eastern Desert’ (pp. 165–198); Helmut Satzinger, ‘The ‘Barbarian’ Names on the Third-Century Ostraka from Xeron’ (pp. 199–212); Conor Whately, ‘Arabs, Outsiders, and Stereotypes from Ammianus Marcellinus to Theophylact Simocatta’ (pp. 215–233); Hugh Elton, ‘Writing the Histories of Romans and Arabs in the Fifth-Century Roman East’ (pp. 235–247); Geoffrey Greatrex, ‘Procopius and Roman Imperial Policy in the Arabian and Egyptian Frontier Zones’ (pp. 249–264); Robert G. Hoyland, ‘Insider and Outsider Sources: Historiographical Reflections on Late Antique Arabia’ (pp. 267–280). The traditionally more strongly stressed theme of ‘conversion’ dynamics is also present, but not pivotal in the volume, rightly so, given the variety of other aspects considered; cf. however Philip Wood, ‘Christianity and the Arabs in the Sixth Century’ (pp. 355–370). R. Stephen Humphreys, ‘Consolidating the Conquest: Arab-Muslim Rule in Syria and the Jaz irah, 630–775 CE’ (pp. 391–405) marks the chronological epilogue of the time-span encompassed by this book.

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TIMOTHY POWER, *The Red Sea from Byzantium to the Caliphate, AD 500–1000* (Cairo–New York, NY: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012). xiv, 363 pp. Price: US-\$ 34.50. ISBN: 978-877-416-544-3.

With this book, Timothy Power hopes to fill a gap in the research on the civilizations of the Red Sea area and lay sound foundation for future field work of an archaeological character. The gap is between the overwhelming interest for the classic Roman period of Red Sea and ‘India trade’ on the one hand (c. first century BCE–first century CE)—it is for example apparent the huge interest raised by the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (c. 60 CE)—and on the other for the Islamic period starting from the ninth/tenth century on. Consequently, the time span of the ‘long Late Antiquity’—a fruitful concept introduced by Averil Cameron, referring to the late Roman and early Islamic periods (c. 330–830 CE), which, like the concept ‘Late Antiquity’ has hardly been applied so far to research on the Red Sea area—is underrepresented in available studies. Power’s aim is to assess on the basis of a DBA (‘desk-base assessment’) the known or potential archaeological resources within a specific area, collating existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify their likely character, extent, quality and worth in a local, regional or international context (see p. 5). This attempt is part of an increasing and still developing global rethink on Red Sea in history (cf. for example for later periods, J. Miran, ed., *Space, Mobility, and Translocal Connections across the Red Sea Area since 1500 = Northeast African Studies*, 12/1 (2012)).

After an introduction on methodology and historical premises (pp. 1–18), chapters one ('The Late Roman Erythra Thalassa', pp. 19–59, c.325–525 CE) and two ('Contested Hegemony', pp. 61–101, c.525–685 CE) approach the core period systematically, by regions, sites, and actors. These two are obviously by far the most important chapters from an Ethiopian studies perspective. The kingdom of Aksum appears as the main trading power in the Red Sea, also on behalf of Byzantium, as part of 'a 'globalising' Hellenic and Judeo-Christian *koine* culture throughout the Red Sea basin, naturally to varying degrees of adoption and assimilation, but nonetheless universal in breadth' (p. 53), and is certainly a more important actor in the area than the competitors Ḥimyar and the Persians. In chapter three ('The 'Long' Eighth Century', pp. 103–143, covering c.685–830 CE) the Horn of Africa is hardly mentioned (in keeping with numismatic evidence and what we know of written culture), except for the increasingly important role of the Dahlak islands and the decay of Aksum (which had already started in the late sixth century). Chapter four ('The Early Islamic Bahr al-Qulzum', pp. 145–187, c.830–970 CE) marks the beginning of what the author calls the 'bourgeois revolution'—as attested in the documents on Red Sea trade discovered in the Cairo genizah. In this period besides the increasing role of the Dahlak islands, Zayla develops into an important slave trade port. The final chapter, the 'Conclusion: The 'Long' Late Antiquity from the Perspective of the Red Sea' (pp. 189–222) provides a comprehensive and global explanation for the decay of Byzantium, Aksum, and Ḥimyar in the Red Sea. Wary of catastrophic ('mystery cloud', plague, etc.) or prejudicial explanations (Islam as a natural factor of decay), Power looks at global factors—the collapse of the Gupta-Vakataka Empire and Tamilakam states, which were the Indian termini of the trade route—but also at local developments and factors. Completing the volume, the author offers a 'Gazetteer of sites' (pp. 223–233), providing geographical coordinates and bibliography for each of the main sites along the Red Sea; a set of 'Notes', precise and essential, also with reference to primary sources (pp. 235–278); a rich bibliography (pp. 279–356), and a selective index (pp. 357–363).

Even if the author's aim of paving the way to future research is left to one side, this book is a notable achievement result in itself. The author succeeds in providing a comprehensive synthesis, obviously relying largely on secondary sources, on a wide range of archaeological and excavation reports, and on his own field experience. Yet, he discusses most of the questions in some detail, often with reference to primary sources as well as to the various interpretations (ten pages of the bibliography, pp. 279–289, are occupied by the list of Latin, Greek, Coptic, Syriac, Arabic, and Persian sources). The quantity of information and references to archaeological sites and findings is really amazing.

Coming closer to the Horn of Africa, with which the author is not directly acquainted—given the width of the scope he can be excused for this—he relies heavily on the very good monograph by Stuart C. Munro-Hay of 1991, *Axum: An African Civilization of Late Antiquity*, but it is a pity that he did not include the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* among his reference works (p. 223, together with the *Encyclopedia of Islam* and the *Coptic Encyclopaedia*). Some important authors are also underrepresented: David W. Phillipson and Walter W. Müller are included with only one title each; the same is true of Andrea Manzo, who is however, frequently quoted, while Rodolfo Fattovich is ignored. There is no mention at all of contributions by Gianfranco Fiaccadori, who has extensively contributed on questions concerning the Red Sea (not only in the *EAE*). Some of Christian Robin's contributions are quoted, but his numerous publications after 2005 are not, which leaves the reader with a lack of information on South Arabian Judaism. The same applies to the so-called 'Nağrān events', that are reconstructed on outdated sources. Actually, with very few exceptions, only secondary literature in English and French was considered.<sup>1</sup>

This book should not be consulted to check specific details—although these are quite abundant. Rather this book offers a comprehensive, global, fresh overview of the complexity of the questions and events along the Red Sea routes over the course of several centuries, with a pre-eminent interest in material culture documentation on religious history. The book is clearly

<sup>1</sup> Other omissions are not easily excusable, for example, P. Schneider, *L'Éthiopie et l'Inde. Interférences et confusions aux extrémités du monde antique (VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle avant J.-C.–VI<sup>e</sup> siècle après J.-C.)*, Collection de l'École française de Rome, 335 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2004); J.-F. Salles and A.V. Sedov, *Qāni'. Le port antique du Hadramawt entre la Méditerranée, l'Afrique et l'Inde. Fouilles russes 1972, 1985–1989, 1991, 1993–1994*, *Indicopleustoi*, 6: Archaeologies of the Indian Ocean (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007); C. Zazzaro, 'Historical and archaeological records to reflect on the maritime components of the Aksumite society', in A. Bausi et al., eds, *Æthiopica et Orientalia. Studi in onore di Yaqob Beyene*, II, *Studi Africanistici, Serie Etiopica*, 9 (Napoli: Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo, 2012), 625–640; and now Eadem, *The Ancient Red Sea Port of Adulis and the Eritrean Coastal Region. Previous investigations and museum collections*, Cambridge Monographs in African Archaeology, 85, BAR International Series, 2569 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013); also B. Lourié, 'India 'far beyond Egypt': Barlaam and Ioasaph and Nubia in the 6<sup>th</sup> century', in D.F. Bumazhnov et al., eds, *Bibel, Byzanz und christlicher Orient: Festschrift für Stephen Gerö zum 65. Geburtstag*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 187 (Leuven–Paris–Walpole, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters en Departement Oosterse Studies, 2011), 135–179. And on the Roman period: S. Bianchetti and V. Bucciantini, eds, *Atti del convegno internazionale 'Tracce di presenza greca fra Etiopia e India' (Università degli Studi di Firenze nei giorni 21–22 maggio 2012)* (Lugano: Agorà & Co., 2014 = *Sileno*, 40/1–2 (2014)), and (still unpublished) the PhD thesis by R.R. Darley, *Indo-Byzantine exchange 4<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries: a global history* (University of Birmingham, 2013).

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written, with many footnotes referring to sources and secondary literature, so that substance and nuances of information are committed entirely to an exemplarily clear and understandable text. There are a few, minor typos. A couple of passages are strange: instead of *terminus ante quem* one would expect *post quem* (for example p. 66); similarly, low (that is, *late*, as commonly understood) chronology is used instead of high (that is, *early*, see p. 192, 'this chronology [450–880 CE] is now thought to be too 'high', and a revised 'low' chronology supported by Phillipson and Manzo redates the Middle Aksumite period to approximately 350–500/550 [CE]').

Finally, one can share the author's belief that the potential contribution of archaeological investigation in the Horn of Africa concerning the history of the Red Sea in the 'long Late Antiquity' is still at its very beginning. The Eritrean coastal archaeological sites, Adulis included, have been but marginally documented so far. This is probably the most urgent desideratum for the years to come.

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CURT NICCUM, *The Bible in Ethiopia: The Book of Acts*, Ethiopic Manuscripts, Texts, and Studies, 19 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014). xii, 354 pp. Price: US-\$: 40.00. ISBN: 978-1-61097-735-7.

This edition of the Gəʿəz text of the Acts of the Apostles, which represents a thorough revision of the author's PhD dissertation completed at the University of Notre Dame, fills a further gap in the diminishing list of New Testament books for which no critical edition of the Ethiopic text exists. It comprises an introduction (pp. 1–88), the text and apparatus (pp. 89–267), three appendices providing statistical and textual evidence (pp. 269–330), a bibliography (pp. 331–343), and author and subject indices (pp. 345–354).

The focus of the introduction tends to be rather more on the significance of the Ethiopic version of Acts in the context of the textual history of the New Testament than on the details of the Ethiopic manuscript evidence. In chapter 1 Niccum outlines the history of the Gəʿəz version of Acts, which he argues was based on a Greek *Vorlage* and whose origin he dates between 350 and 525, most probably in the late fourth century. He discusses the use made of the version by Arthur Vööbus in relation to the Old Syriac and by Marie-Émile Boismard and Arnauld Lamouille in the identification of the 'Western' text of Acts, maintaining in both cases that their views were seriously misconceived. He concludes (pp. 15–19) by arguing that the earliest attainable text of Acts, the A-text, was revised towards the Arabic in two stages, the Ab-text and the B-text, the former most probably in the thirteenth century and