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In memoriam Donald Crummey (1941–2013)

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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, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003; II: D–Ha, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005; III: He–N, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007; (in cooperation with A. BAUSI), IV: O–X, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010; A. BAUSI (ed. in cooperation with S. UHLIG), V: Y–Z, *Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014.
- EFAH* Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Orient-Abteilung, Epigraphische Forschungen auf der Arabischen Halbinsel, herausgegeben im Auftrag des Instituts von NORBERT NEBES.
- EMML* Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.
- IJAHS* *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Boston, MA – New York 1968ff.
- JAH* *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge 1960ff.
- JES* *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa 1963ff.
- JSS* *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Manchester 1956ff.
- NEASt* *Northeast African Studies*, East Lansing, MI 1979ff.
- OrChr* *Oriens Christianus*, Leipzig – Roma – Wiesbaden 1901ff.
- OrChrP* *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, Roma 1935ff.
- PICES 15* S. UHLIG – M. BULAKH – D. NOSNITSIN – T. RAVE (eds.) 2005, *Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Hamburg July 20–25, 2003* = *AethFor* 65, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- PICES 16* H. ASPEN – BIRHANU TEFERRA – SHIFERAW BEKELE – S. EGE (eds.) 2010, *Research in Ethiopian Studies: Selected papers of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim July 2007* = *AethFor* 72, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- PO* *Patrologia Orientalis*, 1903ff.
- RIÉ* É. BERNAND – A. J. DREWES – R. SCHNEIDER 1991, *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.
- RSE* *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Roma 1941–1981, Roma – Napoli 1983ff.
- SAe* *Scriptores Aethiopici*.
- ZDMG* *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Leipzig – Wiesbaden – Stuttgart 1847ff.

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2014

- “Board ed.: *E Ae V*.”

In memoriam Donald Edward Crummey (1941–2013)

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Remembering Donald Crummey and his role in Academia is not an easy task, given the huge amount of work he conducted in many fields of research and his innovative contribution to the scholarly debate. A remarkable curriculum, an intense and productive life distinguishes an outstanding scholar whose legacy is extremely difficult to sum up and compete with. Donald has influenced research into modern Ethiopian history for many decades, not only with his own work, but also by leading a team of collaborators among the young generation of scholars that are now lecturers at Addis Ababa University History Department, in the United States and Kenya.

Discussing his contribution to Ethiopian studies is extremely challenging, since this means dealing with a long period of prolonged fieldwork research involving key issues in the historiography of the modern country. A number of colleagues and friends, particularly in Ethiopia, have already discussed his personality and the leading role he played, and more will cer-

tainly be done in the future. I would like to add some notes here, in view of our own personal friendship and academic relationship, which began in the early 1980s. I am well aware of the fact that Donald's work will profoundly influence the next generation of scholars and that it warrants a more systematic analysis than the one I am providing here. My intention, then, is to discuss only the themes and aspects of his studies that I consider most relevant for the future of Ethiopia and Horn of Africa historiography.

Donald had a solid historical background and a remarkable sense of history, which he first gained during his studies in Canada and later in London, at the School of Oriental and African Studies, where he completed his Ph.D. in 1967. He then moved to the Addis Ababa University, where he started his career as a historian and professor and taught for the six years following his London graduation, greatly contributing to the consolidation of the History Department. A new generation of Ethiopian as well as Western scholars doing historical research affirmed the role of the Addis Ababa University within the panorama of African History Departments. Donald's friends and colleagues Richard Caulk, Tadesse Tamrat, Merid Wolde Aregay were a part of his life and professional career. This team of scholars represented the first opportunity for many Ethiopian students to conduct historical research on their own country and then manage to become teachers in schools and at university level as well. Many Ethiopian scholars were subsequently trained in the United States and reaffirmed the great standard of the Addis Ababa History Department; Donald was one of their sponsors in various Ph.D. programs in this process.

Ethiopia was a fruitful experience as well as being a seminal area of his first research, which led him towards remarkable and outstanding achievements. The first book published during this period in Addis Abäba in 1972 – an elaboration of his dissertation – is considered a pioneering volume on politics, power and religious history: *Priests and Politicians: Protestant and Catholic Missions in Orthodox Ethiopia 1830–1868*. Moreover, his teaching and his role in advising student dissertations was highly appreciated in Addis Abäba, where he was very popular on the university campus, with many friends and surrounded by large esteem. He was a very influential figure throughout his life. Addis Ababa University paid tribute to him in a well attended memorial service in October 2013. On that occasion, Donald was remembered together with his friend and colleague Tadesse Tamrat whose passing just a few months before had deeply affected us all and particularly Donald, who had shared many personal and professional experiences with him. It was a good chance to commemorate their personalities and remember the early decades of the History Department that celebrated its 50th anniversary in February 2014.

In 1973 Donald moved back to the United States, obtaining a position at Urbana Champaign University, Illinois, where he spent most of his academic life, first as Professor for ten years and later as Director of the Center for African Studies from 1984 to 1994. His academic life in the United States was very impressive; during his directorship he was able to manage a great number of projects with a large team of assistants, supported by research grants from many institutions and American Foundations, above all the National Endowment of the Humanities, the MacArthur Foundation and the Fulbright African Regional Research Program. Urbana Champaign became one of the best qualified and well-known centres for African studies in Western academia. At the same time we should mention his continuous role in teaching and developing new courses acknowledged by a number of important awards.

Donald's international activity was very intense, particularly in organizing and attending meetings and conferences and as a visiting professor at many foreign universities. In Urbana Champaign he set up a large number of workshops and conferences, and was also a regular attendant and panel organizer at various conferences, particularly the African Studies Association annual meetings in the United States. His active participation in International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies and his presentations were greatly appreciated. Donald spent two different spells at the University of Bologna, having been invited as visiting professor by the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS). He promoted many activities, not to mention teaching and advising on dissertations, and was greatly appreciated by the students for his time and generosity. Beside lectures he delivered at IAS, an interview was published in the online journal of the History Department, which was edited by Karin Pallaver and titled: *African history and African studies. A personal view. A tandem interview with Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Donald Crummey*,¹ in which he discussed his personal involvement with Africa, sharing his opinion about the future of the continent and African studies as a discipline. The international scientific community widely acknowledged his work and his career with honors. On the occasion of his retirement two special sessions were dedicated to him at the annual conference of the African Studies Association, San Francisco, 2006: a round table chaired by James McCann "Reconstructing Political Ideology and Ritual: In Honor of Prof. Donald Crummey" in which I contributed by discussing his role in American historiography on Ethiopia, and a panel organized by his former Ethiopian students "Rethinking African Past: Distant Connections, Contemporary Meanings" focusing on "Land and Hegemony in Ethiopia".

¹ Published in: *Storicamente: Laboratorio di Storia* 2, 2006, no. 15 [online available at: <http://storicamente.org/pallaver/>; last access: 25 July 2014].

Donald's studies from the outset covered different themes. Just to mention some of his early research areas: religion, Orthodox Ethiopia and the influence of missionary societies, which resulted in the publication of the previously mentioned *Priest and Politicians*, the economy of production (see, for instance, *Modes of Production in Africa: The Precolonial Era*²), as well as social protest and rebellions, *Banditry, Rebellion & Social Protest in Africa*³. A number of articles were dedicated to society and ethnicity, the role of the Emperor Tewodros II and the construction of the monarchical power in modern times, important religious figures of Orthodox Christianity and the role of women in Ethiopian society. However, his subsequent studies gave him more international recognition and opened an extremely interesting phase in his scholarly production: agrarian systems in historical perspectives, land as a fundamental aspect of society and culture in Ethiopia, family and state relations, the peasant milieu. All these topics were treated using a new methodology developed in many articles during 1980s and 1990s and later in a volume that is a milestone of his academic work and is considered a true masterpiece: *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia: From the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*.⁴ Donald's survey of historical documents on land tenure in Ethiopia lasted for nearly three decades and finally resulted in this precious and unique volume. His collected data leave a legacy for future generations of scholars. Research that will survive and certainly will give us further insights. I suggest some remarks here, my own personal impression of his studies, given the fact that a serious evaluation of his scholarly work on Ethiopian history and society has yet to be done. But it is beyond the scope of this short note to embark on such an effort.

The main historical issues Donald's work contributed to are medieval and modern Ethiopia, monarchy, state power and society, land as the core structure of the Ethiopian empire, peasant-state relations, the dynamics of rural society – all themes in which he had an innovative and solid approach. Oral and written sources (*marginalia* on land) were collected from the country's many monasteries and the recorded documentation is really impressive. The use of holy books and monastic documents for recording social life and the fact that this documentation is analyzed in a historical context covering a very long span of

² D. CRUMMEY – C.C. STEWART (eds.), *Modes of Production in Africa: The Precolonial Era*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981.

³ D. CRUMMEY (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion & Social Protest in Africa*, London: James Currey, 1986.

⁴ D. CRUMMEY, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia: From the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

time (1200–1900) are considered the main achievement of a long-lasting and meticulous work based on primary, previously unused sources. Other fundamental aspects of the interrelation between oral sources and written documentation mainly concerning land, literacy and society are treated in many research articles, as can be seen from his publication list and particularly in a volume, the proceedings of a workshop he organized in Urbana Champaign in 1993, later published with the title: *Land, Literacy and the State in Sudanic Africa*⁵. The importance of this collective work is the comparative perspective on a large historical area, considering that Ethiopian studies are rarely interconnected to other states and societies of sub-Saharan Africa.

The peculiarity of his elaboration is definitely a methodology based on a vast selection of sources combined with a critical perception of history. Donald was one of the first historians – certainly Western historians – to have a good command of local sources, both written (in Amharic or in Gəʿəz) and oral. A profound innovation that changed historiographical research on Ethiopia, characterized by an extensive use of sources “from the inside” involving a structured team of researchers. No less important is the use in his work of primary sources in Italian, which is not so common in the Horn’s historiography. Italian sources are treated critically, outside the colonial context, and – this is certainly another important issue well worth underlining – colonial sources had rarely been used, as he did, for conducting a social analysis. For a long period of time Ethiopian historiography was the domain of political history, diplomatic relations, anthropology, linguistics. Moreover, it is unusual to combine, as Donald did systematically, social history and local written sources, history in a long *durée* perspective and religious documents considered as an instrument for analyzing society as a whole. Flexibility, open mindedness, critical reflections, deep historical analysis rooted in the social context, no ideological vision of history, are all rare characteristics in a single scholar.

The work on land is the most complex study of his entire academic curriculum and the collection of a great corpus of sources discovered in Ethiopian monasteries and churches dealing with land tenure will remain forever. The *g^wəlt* system of land was treated extensively, an exception considering that the previous studies on land tenure had privileged the *rəst* system and family inheritance. Few studies have the solidity of Donald’s work characterized by an extreme accuracy in collecting and analyzing the material, being at the same time a work of synthesis. We hope that his former Ph.D. students and collaborators in the field, particularly Shumet Sishagne, Daniel Ayana and Habtamu Mengistie, will continue this area of studies that warrants further investigation.

⁵ D. CRUMMEY (ed.), *Land, Literacy and the State in Sudanic Africa*, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005.

I owe to Donald an important phase of my research on the land tenure system, conducted in Eritrea in the period 1991–1997. Following the evaluation of colonial record and oral sources, the last part of my work in Eritrea, in collaboration with Alessandro Bausi and Gianfrancesco Lusini, was concentrated on *marginalia* on land. During the six years of our fieldwork, I simply extended Donald's project on Ethiopia to Eritrea. I must be very humble as I merely followed the main ideas of the project with no comparison to Crummey's very innovative and intensive work conducted in a great number of Ethiopian monasteries and churches. Although our research was not so exhaustive, I tried to use Donald's methodology in Eritrea, an area not included in his work on land. We collected a corpus of local documents that we examined within a comparative perspective focusing on Ethiopian and Eritrean common social institutions, cultures and, lastly, documentation of various origins on land. Particular attention was given to *marginalia* documents kept in many monasteries and churches of the Eritrean highlands. In this sense I can say that his work represented a fundamental aspect of my last research on land, a part of my research that I consider to be very crucial. I am therefore very grateful to him for letting me use his material before the publication of the 2000 volume and for his generosity in sharing his sources.

Another aspect of Donald's work that was an inspiration for my research is the evaluation of the *rim* land tenure system. The first work in modern historiography on *rim* was Donald's contribution "Gondarine *rim* land sales: an introductory description and analysis",⁶ and gave me the idea to organize an international workshop at the University of Bologna on this topic in 1999, with the aim of re-opening the historical debate. Many scholars on land tenure attended this conference and the discussion was very interesting, especially on how to redefine this category of land tenure and to try and analyze *rim* land in a new long *durée* perspective. Donald's contribution to the workshop, later published in the proceedings,⁷ was another chance for me to discover a different interpretation in comparison to my work on Eritrea land tenure. His investigation on *g^walt* and *rim* as land categories deeply rooted in Ethiopia and the interconnection with the social context contributed to reframing my sub-

⁶ Published in: R.L. HESS (ed.), *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Session B, April 13–16, 1978*, Chicago, IL: Office of Publications Services, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1979, pp. 469–479.

⁷ D. CRUMMEY, "The Term *rim* in Ethiopian Land Documents of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", in: A. BAUSI – G. DORE – I. TADDIA, (eds.), *Anthropological and Historical Documents on "Rim" in Ethiopia and Eritrea*, Torino: L'Harmattan Italia, 2001, pp. 65–81.

sequent work on this topic in Eritrean highlands, and I appreciated this re-reading of sources offered by his own research.

Recently, the last phase of Donald's studies concentrated on new topics: environment, social change and historical perspective of the rural landscape, famine and drought in rural Ethiopia, with a special focus on 20th century Wällo region. With a team of many scholars and supported by a huge grant from the United States Foundations, he managed to focus on many issues concerning society and environment. The preliminary results of this work were published in the *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 1998, in *Storia Urbana* 2001 and in the *Proceedings of the XIVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, November 6–11, 2000, Addis Ababa* in 2002. Donald's first efforts can give us a clear perspective of the solidity of his work dealing with environment, but we deeply regret that he was unable to complete the volume he had been working on for many years: environmental change, environmental perception and vulnerability to famine in Ethiopia, 1888–1985. The five chapters he wrote are the result of a prolonged work that lasted a number of years in northern Ethiopia of leading researchers and experts from many different disciplines. Now we are waiting for Bahru Zewde's editing of what will be the last product of Donald's research activity.

We were definitely expecting other works; when we received the news of his passing, it was difficult to realize that such a scholar would not provide us with more insights and would remain silent forever. The news came so unexpected and so abruptly. Donald will be remembered as a great scholar, a rare professor with a profound sense of humanity and passion for his work, a man of science and a friend for many students and scholars.

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In memoriam Amsalu Aklilu (1929–2013)

GETIE GELAYE, Universität Hamburg

On December 19, 2013 Dr. Amsalu Aklilu passed away at the age of 84 in Addis Abäba. Amsalu was a distinguished lexicographer of Amharic, who published bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, several books and numerous scholarly articles. Ethiopian pupils and students of Amharic language and literature will always remember Amsalu's *English–Amharic Dictionary* which he published in collaboration with G.P. Mosback in 1981.

Amsalu was born on September 2, 1929 in the town of Däse, Wällo. He first went to church school and later attended the Holy Trinity Elementary and Secondary School in Addis Abäba. He studied Theology and Semitic Languages at Cairo University and obtained his Bachelor of Divinity and Bachelor of Arts in 1957. Amsalu obtained his Ph.D. in Semitic Philology in 1962 from the University of Tübingen, Germany. His Dissertation was entitled: *Etymologischer Beitrag zu A. Dillmanns Lexicon linguae aethiopicæ*. Amsalu participated at several International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies and contributed important scholarly papers on the various aspects of Amharic, semantics, sociolinguistics, Arabic loanwords in Amharic, science and technology terminologies in Amharic, on the standardization of Amharic orthography, Amharic dialects, language policy and planning and the development of Amharic during the reign of Emperor Tewodros II.

Amsalu taught at the Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature, Haile Selassie I University (later Addis Ababa University) from 1963–1993 in both graduate and undergraduate programs and served Addis Ababa University as a senior Professor for nearly 40 years. Twice he was Head of the Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature, Dean of the Institute of Language Studies and the first Director of Addis Ababa University Press in 1994. Amsalu was also a member of the Academy of Ethiopian Languages, and served as General Secretary of the Advisory