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Review

ANAÏS WION, *Paradis pour une reine: Le monastère de Qoma Fasilädäs,
Éthiopie, XVII^e siècle*

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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.

Aethiopica 17 (2014)

Reviews

Kurze Anmerkungen:

Textband: S. xi, u.: Lies statt “when the noun is in the possessive case”: “when the noun has a clitic pronoun”. – S. 61, paenult.: Lies **ርእዩኩ ፣** statt **ርእርዩኩ ፣**. Übersetzungsband: S. 58, Mitte: Lies “except when illness or an expedition to fight the Heathen hinder them” (**በእንበለ ፣ ይከለሙ ፣**).

Mit der Edition dieses vergleichsweise kurzen, jedoch wichtigen Textes hat Getatchew Haile eine interessante Quelle für die Theologie und Geistesgeschichte des äthiopischen 15. Jahrhunderts mustergültig erschlossen. Rez. hofft, noch viele solcher hochrelevanter Texte aus seiner Hand empfangen zu können.

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ANAÏS WION, *Paradis pour une reine: Le monastère de Qoma Fasilädäs, Éthiopie, XVII^e siècle* = Histoire ancienne et médiévale 112, Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2012. 488 pp., illustrations. Price: € 40,-. ISBN: 978-2-85944-693-2.

The 17th century in Ethiopia was filled with events that generated great social and religious transformations, as well as relentless internal struggles for the domination and control of the empire. In its first decades, the kind of Catholicism imported by Jesuit missionaries achieved an unprecedented success as the triumphant religion. Nevertheless, the political instability and unrest that this decision generated among wide sectors of the nobility and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, led to the resignation of the emperor and the consequent expulsion of Catholic missionaries. The work by Anaïs Wion, *Paradis pour une reine*, contributes to shedding light on the different mechanisms that worked during the transition of the reign of Susənyos – defender and promoter of the Catholic faith in Ethiopia – and the reign of his son, Fasilädäs, who restored Ethiopia’s national faith.

The focus of the study is on Empress Wäld Sä’ala and the monastery she founded in 1618: Qoma Fasilädäs. Using this example, Wion manages to recover pieces of royal and local history, which intersect within “a small territory erected in a confined world, for a queen athirst for her own independence” (p. 323) Wäld Sä’ala was the wife of Emperor Susənyos and mother of Emperor Fasilädäs, and descended from a noble family from Wäläqa and Märḥabete, regions located south of Amhara and north of Šäwa. The empress founded her own monastery south of Bägemdər, which finished construction in 1640; she lived there and she was also buried at the monastery upon her death in 1661. Qoma was rich in lands and had a large

parish, within which more than 200 clerics and nobles resided. Although Emperor Fasilädäs never recognized this monastery, the community had the support of his brother and rival, *abetohun* Gälawdewos.

Indeed, as pointed out by Wion, Wäld Sä'ala opposed the pro-Catholic policies of her husband and renounced the court in 1618. However, her son's decision of reestablishing orthodoxy did not prompt her to return to court or to renounce her independent stance. Wion's study shows the way in which religious decisions are inextricably linked to political and contextual challenges. During the troubled period that shook Ethiopia in the aftermath of Susənyos' pro-Catholic defeat, a struggle for the inheritance of power arose between Fasilädäs and his brother Gälawdewos. The conflict was settled in 1646, when Fasilädäs had his brother arrested and sent into exile, where he apparently died in 1648.

Wion's research gives an excellent account of the complex circumstances around the foundation of the Qoma monastery; it clearly reveals the tension between the royal power held by Susənyos and his son Fasilädäs on the one hand, and the creation of regional territories on the other. The book sheds light on this ambiguous system of shared power clearly observed in Qoma, in which some traces of the emperor's antagonism can be perceived. Eventually Gälawdewos was defeated and his ally *abunä* Marqos banished; however, the queen managed to maintain her autonomy at Qoma. From 1648 on, the queen renegotiated the status of the monastery with Fasilädäs, after which the church was dedicated to Saint Basilides (Fasilädäs) and obtained the recognition of the emperor.

The work uses many different sources in the reconstruction of this historical period. Its use of iconographic, oral and written sources (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) allows the discernment of different narratives, which provide a rich and complex portrayal of the period that goes beyond the image transmitted by the official discourse of royal chronicles.

Indeed, several studies have appeared in the last decade dealing with the change in the status of noble women in Ethiopia as a consequence of the influence of Catholic missionaries. In his study of Wälättä Peṭros' hagiography, Sevir Chernetsov comments, "we are much indebted to this epoch for the fact of the transgression of the norms of female behaviour, committed by Wälättä Peṭros which was described in her Hagiography, and with sympathy".¹ Thus, Wion's book inserts into a new historiographical current

¹ SEVIR CHERNETSOV, "A Transgressor of the Norms of Female Behaviour in the Seventeenth Century Ethiopia – The Heroine of the "Life of Our Mother Walatta Petros", *Khristianskij Vostok* 4 (10), 2006, pp. 65–72, here 71. On this subject, see also VERENA BÖLL, "Holy Women in Ethiopia", in: BERTRAND HIRSCH – MANFRED

which focuses on the development of regional and political history, and allows us to glimpse into the transformations that acted on gender relationships of this period.

Another field of knowledge which the book seeks to shed light on is that of the relationships among the different theological and monastic identities within the Ethiopian Church itself. The rift between unctionists (*Qəbat*) and *Täwəḥədo* followed the Ethiopian Church during part of the 17th and 18th centuries, and was a consequence of the first encounter with the Jesuit mission. Wion states that “up to now, studies that deal with this subject stem from a confirmation carried out *a posteriori*; that is, they consider the *Qəbat* and *Täwəḥədo* movements to be stable entities. Furthermore, many studies were carried out by Catholic clerics; they are often biased and focus mainly on dogmatic interpretation and the analysis of Catholic legacy, and their frequently contradicting results have muddled historical analysis” (pp. 323f.).² I agree with Wion that it is necessary to renew perspectives relative to this matter; however, in my view, the many studies done on this subject, whether from a theological or an intellectual historical perspective, are complementary to historical analysis – social and political – rather than adverse to it. Wion’s work provides us with new elements for the reconstruction of the religious identities of this period in the face of greater future work.

Wion’s book not only provides us with an Index, but also with a series of annexes, with following standouts: an inventory of the Qoma Fasilädäs

KROPP (eds.), *Saints, Biographies and History in Africa*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003, pp. 31–45; GÉRARD GEIST, *L’influence portugaise sur la femme éthiopienne aux XVI^{ème} et XVII^{ème} siècles*, Coimbra: n. publ., 1986. Recently published, see WENDY LAURA BELCHER, “Sisters Debating the Jesuits: The Role of African Women in Defeating Portuguese Proto-Colonialism in Seventeenth-Century Abyssinia”, *NEASt* 13/1, 2013, pp. 121–166. Unfortunately, Wion does not cite any of these sources in her bibliography, nor does she use them to contribute to an explanation for the social transformations she gives an account of.

² Some important contributions on this subject are absent from Wion’s work, for example: GETATCHEW HAILE, “Materials on the Theology of Qəb’at or Uinction”, in: GIDEON GOLDENBERG (ed.), *Ethiopian Studies: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Tel Aviv, 14–17 April 1980*, Rotterdam – Boston, MA: A.A. Balkema, 1986, pp. 205–233; TEDROS ABRAHA, “Qəbat”, in: *E Ae* IV, pp. 267b–270a; ANDRZEJ BARTNICKI – JOANNA MANTEL-NIEĆKO, “The Role and Significance of the Religious Conflicts and People’s Movements in the Political Life of Ethiopia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, *RSE* 24, 1969–1970, pp. 5–39; MERID WOLDE AREGAY, *Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom 1508–1708, with Special Reference to the Galla Migrations and their Consequences*, Ph.D. thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, January 1971, pp. 549ff.

Reviews

Library (pp. 329–333), a French-translated text relative to the life of Wäld Säʾala (pp. 335–346), and a series of Qoma Fasilädäs oral translations collected in September and October, 1999 and completely translated into French (pp. 347–432).

In conclusion, due to its sources and to the historical analysis it provides, Wion's book is an important contribution to the understanding of the events that shook Ethiopia during the first half of the 17th century.

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PETER GARRETSON, *A Victorian Gentleman & Ethiopian Nationalist: The Life & Times of Hakim Warqenah, Dr. Charles Martin*, Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2012. xv + 320 pages, 2 maps, 8 photos and a chart, cloth. Price: GB-£ 55.–. ISBN: 978–1–84701–044–5.

This book tells a fascinating life story of a versatile man who was a physician by training as well as practice, a businessman, a diplomat, a progressive and an educator, to mention only a few of the roles he played in various countries during his almost 87 years of life.

Hakim Wärqənäh Ḩsäte was allegedly born in Gondär (presumably the city) on 22 October 1865. At the age of two and a half he was found on a battlefield in Mäqdäla by a British officer, which is where his parents moved by imperial order and where the British forces fought Emperor Tewodros II. Wärqənäh is said to have had a complex personality, which taunted him for at least two-thirds of his life. As his biographer so eloquently described, Wärqənäh “was effectively caught in the middle of an international conflict at a very tender age; and would remain caught between different cultures for the rest of his life” (cf p. 1).

As a child Wärqənäh was taken to India by an officer, where he was brought up and educated by different families of British origin and thus became an Englishman through and through. His Ethiopian origin always remained present and eventually influenced his permanent settlement. He studied medicine and practised it in India. He also did his postgraduate studies at Edinburgh and Glasgow universities and was subsequently appointed civil surgeon in Burma, where he worked in various parts of the country before returning to Ethiopia after the Battle of ʿAdwa to treat the wounded. He eventually went back to Burma only to return to Ethiopia some years later where he married a woman of high birth.