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### Review

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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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### Reference list

(The reference list includes the bibliographical information of the original texts that were translated into Polish in the discussed issue of *Literatura na świecie*).

Dinaw Mengestu, *All Our Names* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); T. Eiben, 'Out of Ethiopia: An Interview with Nega Mezlekia', *Poets & Writers*, January/February 2014 (online available at: [http://www.pw.org/content/out\\_ethiopia](http://www.pw.org/content/out_ethiopia); last access: February 11, 2015); F. Falceto, 'Un passant nyctalope', in Sebhat Guèbrè-Egziabher, *Les Nuits d'Addis-Abeba: Roman traduit de l'ambarique (Ethiopie) par l'auteur et Francis Falceto* (Paris: Actes Sud, 2004), pp. 2–9; Ḥaylā Šəllase I, ሕይወቴና፡ የኢትዮጵያ፡ እርምጃ (Ḥəywätenna yä'ityopya ərməḡḡa, 'My Life and Ethiopia's Progress'), I, Addis Abäba 1965 EC (1972 CE); C. Hayoz, *Portrait de Marie: Complainte de la Vierge. Deux poésies mariales éthiopiennes inédites. Texte, traduction, commentaire. Thèse etc.*, MA thesis (Fribourg: Université de Fribourg, 1956); D.G. López, 'El Movimiento rastafari y el tercer milenio Ethiopie', *Del Caribe*, Santiago de Cuba, 2008; Nega Mezlekia, *Notes from the Hyena's Belly: An Ethiopian Boyhood* (New York, NY: Picador, 2000); Səbhat Gäbrä Ḥgzi'abəḥər, ፩ ፥ ፮ ፥ ፯ (Amməst, səddəst, səbat, 'Five, six, seven') (Addis Abäba: Maḥlet Asattami Dərəḡḡət, 2000 EC (2007 CE)); —, ሌቲም፡ አይነጋልኝ (Letum aynəgalləñ, 'I will not see the end of the night') (Addis Abäba: Zed IE Mattämiya Bet, 2005 EC (2012 CE)); Sebhat Guèbrè-Egziabher (Səbhat Gäbrä Ḥgzi'abəḥər), *Les Nuits d'Addis-Abeba (Ethiopie) par l'auteur et Francis Falceto* (Paris: Actes Sud, 2004); E.T. Semi, 'Ethiopian Jews in Europe: Taamrat Emmanuel in Italy and Makonnen Levi in England', in T. Parfitt and E.T. Semi, eds, *Jews of Ethiopia: The Birth of an Elite*, Routledge Jewish Studies Series (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), pp. 74–100; K. Wendt, ed., tr., *Das Maḥafa milād (Liber Nativitatis) und Maḥafa Sellāsē (Liber Trinitatis) des Kaisers Zar'a Yā'qob*, CSCO 221–222, SAe 41–42 (Louvain: Secretariat du CSCO, 1962).

Miłosława Stępień, Konin

ABBAS H. GNAMO, *Conquest and Resistance in the Ethiopian Empire, 1880–1974: The Case of the Arsi Oromo*, African Social Studies Series, 32 (Leiden–Boston, MA: Brill, 2014). xiv, 370 pp., 4 ills, 8 maps, 7 tables. Price: € 75.00/US-\$ 97.00. ISBN: 978-9-0042-5813-6; E-ISBN: 978-9-0042-6548-6.

This book tricks potential readers: the spine sports the broadly phrased main title, attractive to many, and only from the cover do we learn that the focus lies on the more narrow case of the Arsi Oromo. Almost shamefaced, the subtitle is printed in tiny type. We all want our books to have a broad appeal, but allow me to ask: what does Abbas H. Gnamo's work deliver for people who are not specifically interested in the Arsi Oromo, but in 'conquest and resistance in the Ethiopian Empire' in general? A lot, as it turns out, as most chapters manage to balance the ethnographic focus and the wider context.

The tenor of this book is clear. The author starts out by evocatively recounting how, through his own biography, ‘Amharanization’ impacted on Oromo life, especially until 1991. Schools, hospitals and other sites were named after Šāwan generals, land was alienated from the proverbial tiller, and the Oromo had to struggle to organize themselves. This personal experience is grounded in the broader *zeitgeist* that lionised Mənilək’s victory at ‘Adwa while accommodating both his conquest and the wars against the peoples of the south: the gloss is revealed for what it is. This familiar deconstruction of a dominant national narrative is well executed here, addressing cultural aspects as well as the political economy.

The main concern of the book is the imbalance in center-periphery relations, manifested both in tangible things (like land) and intangible matters such as ‘memories, narratives and discourses’ (p. 10), all central arenas for identity struggles. The author highlights the tension between a discourse that emphasizes voluntary membership in the nation, and the facts of conquest. His attempt to be constructive is noteworthy: ‘I have tried ... to avoid one-sided narrative through a balanced assessment of facts by examining both official narratives and empirical historical facts’ (p. 12). But this effort to display historical correctness will hardly appease adherents of ‘Greater Ethiopia’, when one page later Abbas Gnamo succinctly punctures the basic lie of national integration: ‘How much does it matter to be free from European colonialism but to be enslaved or enserfed in one’s country by neighbors?’ (p. 13). Still, he proclaims his desire for a ‘healthy debate and dialogue about the historical past and a critical assessment of modern Ethiopian history’, in the hope of finding ‘solutions to the country’s chronic socio-economic and political identity crisis’ (p. 14). The book will polarize readers with a stake in Ethiopian politics.

Being less concerned with the Arsi case, I only briefly address Part 1 of the book (‘Oromo’s Socio-Political Culture and Institutions’), comprising Chapters 1 and 2. The first one, entitled ‘Democracy without State’, discusses Oromo institutions and values, especially in the political realm. By emphasizing the importance of consensus in Oromo affairs, it prepares the reader for the latter sections of the book that are marked by the lack of consensus and could be (but are not) labelled ‘State without Democracy’.

Chapter 2 draws on the anthropological study of kinship and social relations and addresses ‘The Making of Oromo Kinship Identity and Structure’. This is a competent section, complete with kinship diagrams, kin terms, rules of residence, moieties etc. For the modern anthropologist, it has a nostalgic charm, as few authors these days are as diligent and earnest about kinship as Abbas Gnamo is here.

Part 2 (chs 3 and 4) of the book takes on 'The Empire-State, Conquest and Resistance'. Chapter 3 argues that Ethiopia ought to be considered as an Empire. Several schools of thought on the matter are paraded, and Abbas Gnamo sees parallels especially between Ethiopia and the equally land-bound Russian (Tsarist and eventually even Soviet!) empire: while there is geographical contiguity in both cases, the criterion of 'the enrichment of the metropolis' (p. 101) applies. This will further upset some people and reassure others. I found it carefully argued, and buttressed by historical and systematic literature. The conquest itself is discussed in its various manifestations, and it is clear that 'consent' (e.g., p. 112) rarely mattered for integration into Mənilək's domain. Evelyn Waugh is cited several times as a key witness, always to great effect. Still: what do we gain by identifying Ethiopia as an empire?

For Abbas Gnamo, the imperial nature of the conquest lies at the root of Ethiopia's contemporary problems. Only by acknowledging this (and the resulting and enduring lack of legitimacy of contemporary institutions) would it be possible to deal in solutions. 'The Ethiopian imperial system introduced a dual form of oppression that took a dimension of class and ethnicity' (pp. 122–123): the conquered people were not considered citizens, and were being discriminated against by their conquerors. Slavery, racism, the expropriation of land, all contributed to a legacy of 'feudal colonialism' that grew out of the imperial project.

Chapter 4 discusses the specific case of the Arsi Oromo resistance, and 'writes against' other histories that viewed this conflict from the winner's side. We learn about the economic aspects of the campaigns towards Arsi, as well as the technological aspect of Šāwan success: firearms, the procurement of which forced Mənilək to cultivate ties to European powers. Both are connected, in that 'the spoils from the South' were 'a principal resource' (p. 144) for buying yet more weapons, and thus maintaining the cycle that guaranteed that the Arsi (and others) always remained outgunned throughout the phases of the conquest, from mere looting to actual occupation years later. This chapter also addresses the cases of Azule and Anole, iconic names for Oromo grievances.

Chapter 5 (beginning of Part 3: 'The Cultural, Economic, and Political Consequences of the Imperial Conquest') discusses Islam among the Arsi, and religious dynamics more generally. Islam gained ground mostly in the wake of conquest (and pushed back the *gadaa* system), partly as a 'resistance ideology' (p. 208). The Orthodox Church in turn provided a legitimising ideology for the conquest, but converting to Christianity did not help individual Oromo gain recognition by the invaders, while it surely alienated them from their own constituencies. The case of *balabbats* who had to convert is addressed here, as well as in other places in the book, as that of men caught between a rock and a hard place.

The next chapter returns us to the domination of the periphery (*dar agär*) by the centre, a historically stable reference point in Ethiopian politics. The chapter shifts easily between local views (e.g., on *balabbats*, *näftännä*, and land rights) and global contexts, and frames the Arsi experience in a pattern of feudal colonialism. An important distinction that reminds one of Markakis' 'two frontiers'<sup>1</sup> is made between 'classical Abyssinian feudalism' and 'modern feudal colonialism' (p. 240), a distinction grounded in the cultural, linguistic and finally ethnic differences between conqueror and conquered, that underlies enduring patterns of inequality.

The next two chapters (7 and 8) are collected under the heading 'Governing the Empire: Politics, Economy and Society' (Part 4), and are again useful for the non-Arsi specialist. Abbas Gnamo addresses the workings of administration here, down to the last details. 'Taxation without representation', corruption, injustice, shifting demography and denied stratification are the threads running through these chapters.

Finally, the book takes a step back and considers in its last chapter the big questions of state, nation, identity and ethnicity in Ethiopia. If it was a colonial empire, how did Ethiopia escape decolonisation in the wake of WW II? 'Thus, reducing colonial domination to white race and imperialism to European overseas empires appears to have exonerated the Ethiopian empire from imperial power status' (p. 302). Both the subsequent efforts at assimilation and modernization failed to give rise to a stable Ethiopian identity and genuine commitment to the national project. Abbas Gnamo remains unconvinced by conventional wisdoms on nation-building, pointing to the several centuries that France needed to 'produce the French nation' (p. 308).

In closing, he presents Amharanisation as a false promise, as 'anyone who wants to become Amhara has to negate his/her roots, his/her group and identity, religion, tradition and history' (p. 312), and still acceptance by the centre is not a given. Mənilək et al. conquered the territory of present-day Ethiopia, but never won the proverbial hearts and minds—and how could they? The national idea held in the centre is predicated upon the denigration of others in stereotype and ridicule, and necessarily triggers a sense of disenfranchisement and rejection among peripheral peoples. The final dagger thrusts deeply: in diagnosing that 'a pseudo-federal structure will not solve the contradiction between imperial values and democratic ideals, nor can it resolve century-old colonial situations and structural inequalities' (p. 333), he opens up practical questions that an academic book can hardly

<sup>1</sup> J. Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers*, Eastern African Series (Woodbridge et al.: James Currey, 2011).

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address in any substantial way. Will it be possible to disentangle state and nation(s)? Will Ethiopia take as many centuries as France did?

This book is good to discuss. Its transparent use of sources and the careful argument invite scholarly engagement. Still, some formal issues have to be noted, specifically, missing or false punctuation and spelling mistakes. There are occasional repetitions and redundancies. For both, I would blame the publisher, who apparently neglected proper proofreading and editing services.

None of these detracts from the qualities of the book: even for somebody little interested in ‘the case of the Arsi Oromo’, here are well-founded deliberations about Ethiopian history in general, and a good number of chapters could be extracted for classroom use.

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ÉLOI FICQUET and WOLBERT G.C. SMIDT, eds, *The Life and Times of Lij Iyasu of Ethiopia: New Insights*, Northeast African History, Orality and Heritage, 3 (Wien: LIT Verlag, 2014). 224 pp. Price: € 29.90. ISBN: 978-3-643-90476-8.

Ləḡ Iyasu (1897–1936) is probably one of the most controversial figures in Ethiopian history. However, his short reign from 1910 to 1916 is extremely poorly documented. Furthermore, the official discourse, initiated by Ḥaylä Šəllase I, disqualified Iyasu’s reign in condemning all his decisions and assisted in (almost) erasing it from the nation’s history and from official historiography. Although this period represents a crucial one for Ethiopia, due to both internal and external contexts, historians had huge difficulties in defining and analysing governmental actions and the decisions of Iyasu. Fortunately, over the last few years, new sources have emerged and some historians have taken on the task of re-interpreting that crucial period.

The book edited by Éloi Ficquet and Wolbert Smidt is the outcome of an international workshop held at Wollo University in Däse in November 2009. It represents a wonderful attempt to shed new light on Iyasu’s policy and life at a high academic level. The most important thing to emphasize in this book is its capacity to show different points of view and different opinions about Iyasu’s policy. Thus it is an extremely stimulating book, far from dogmatic opinions.

The first chapter (‘The Background: Family, Marriages and Alleged Origins’) contains three articles which take a new look at Iyasu’s origins and at various elements which seem to contradict the official discourse on his reign. The first article by Éloi Ficquet, ‘Understanding *Lij* Iyasu through