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**Review**

HENRI DE CONTENSON, *Antiquités Éthiopiennes d’Axoum à Haoulti*

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## Reviews

Von diesen 21 Schriftstellern, die ein repräsentatives Bild von der amharischen Literatur geben, werden nur sechs in anschließenden Autorenportraits kurz präsentiert.

Alle Kapitel sind von verschiedenen Erläuterungen zur amharischen Grammatik und von Übungen zur Grammatik und zum Inhalt der vorangehenden Texte begleitet. Diese Übungen sind teilweise im akademischen Unterricht zu verwenden, teilweise übersteigen sie auch die Möglichkeiten der Studenten. Ein Beispiel für eine Übung (*mālmäḡa / targil*) sei hier gegeben (S. 243). Die auf Amharisch und Hebräisch gestellte Aufgabe besteht darin, auf der Grundlage eines vorangehenden Textes (d.i. eines Gedichtes von Isayyas Alāme) die gegensätzliche (*tāqarani / hafaxim*) Beziehung zwischen folgenden Ausdrücken herzustellen:

1. <i>läggas</i>	‘großzügig’	a. <i>anḡātu qəbe tāṭṭa</i>	‘sehr erfreut sein’ (w.: sein Darm hat Butter getrunken)
2. <i>anḡātu arrärä</i>	‘wütend sein’	b. <i>māgzat</i>	‘kaufen, herrschen’
3. <i>ret</i>	‘bitter (wie Aloe)’	c. <i>mabbālašät</i>	‘zerstören, in Unordnung bringen’
4. <i>yä-tāqanna</i>	‘wer/was gerade ist’	d. <i>ṭafač</i>	‘süß’
5. <i>maqnat</i>	‘gerade machen’	e. <i>qotq<sup>o</sup>atṭa</i>	‘geizig’
		f. <i>maštät</i>	‘riechen’
		g. <i>y-al-tāqanna</i>	‘wer/was nicht gerade ist’

Die Lösung ist: 1.e., 2.a., 3.d., 4.g., 5.c.

Für einen intensiven Amharischkurs ließen sich die Texte und Übungen sehr gut verwenden. Einige der literarischen Texte sind in dem fünfbändigen literarischen Sammelwerk *Ǽffəta* erschienen, das nicht allen zugänglich sein dürfte.

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HENRI DE CONTENSON, *Antiquités Éthiopiennes d’Axoum à Haoulti*, Bibliothèque Peirsec 16, Sépia, Saint-Maur-des-Fossés 2005, 227 pp., 220 figs. Price € 30,-. ISBN: 2-842-80098-2.

The establishment of the Ethiopian Archaeological Institute (now the Authority for the Research and Conservation of the Cultural Heritage), Addis Ababa, in 1952 represented a turning point in archaeological research in the country, as the Institute promoted systematic investigations in Tigray (northern Ethiopia) and at Akkele Guzay (central Eritrea) that have greatly increased what is known about the origins of Ethiopian civilization in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.–1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D. On the basis of a cultural agree-

ment with France, strongly supported by Jean Leclant, French scholars provided the Institute with scientific and technical support. These scholars included Jean Leroy, Jean Doresse, Jean Leclant, Henri de Contenson, and, from 1958 to 1991, archaeologist Francis Anfray and Roger Schneider, an epigrapher and linguist.

From 1956 to 1959 Henri de Contenson conducted archaeological excavations at Aksum, and at Wūšata Golo and Hawlti in the Aksum region. He also recorded archaeological remains at other sites in the Aksum region. The results of these investigations were published in different journals, such as *Comptes-Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1959), *Annales d'Éthiopie* (1959, 1961, 1963), *Journal Asiatique* (1960), *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* (1961), *Syria* (1962), *Revue Archéologique* (1963), and *L'Anthropologie* (1976), as well as in the *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies – Addis Ababa 1966* (1969) and *UNESCO Histoire Générale de l'Afrique II: Afrique ancienne* (1980). These investigations contributed greatly to a better understanding of the early stages of Ethiopian history, mainly during the so-called “Pre-Aksumite Period” (mid-1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.).

Until the 1950s the dominant explanation(s) for the origins of the Ethiopian state and civilization was a migration of South Arabian tribes into present-day Eritrea and northern Ethiopia and/or a Sabeian colonization of these regions. This hypothesis was outlined by Carlo Conti Rossini in his *Storia d'Etiochia* (Bergamo 1928). Conti Rossini suggested that: 1) South Arabian tribes migrated to the northern Horn of Africa and generated hierarchical societies, with South Arabian elites dominating the indigenous population in late prehistoric times; 2) These Afro-Arabian tribes were dominated by the Kingdom of Saba, as a consequence of Sabaeian colonization of the Tigrean plateau in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.; 3) Petty Afro-Arabian kingdoms, with kings descending from Sabaeian tribute-collectors arose again on the plateau after the end of the Sabaeian dominion in the late 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.; 4) One of these kingdoms, with a capital at Aksum (Tigray), progressively incorporated the other polities into its territory, which was the origin of the Aksumite state in the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D.

Henri de Contenson, together with A.-J. Drewes, R. Schneider, and F. Anfray, were the first scholars to challenge this reconstruction, based on new epigraphic and archaeological evidence. These scholars substantially rejected the hypothesis of a South Arabian migration or colonization and suggested a greater role of local peoples in the process of state formation in the region.

*Antiquités Éthiopiennes d'Axoum à Haoulti* is a collection of the sixteen papers that de Contenson wrote about Ethiopian archaeology from 1959 to 1976. They include eight fieldwork reports (Chapters I – VIII), three papers

about the Pre-Aksumite Period (Chapters IX, XV, XVI), four articles about problems of chronology and Aksumite history (Chapters X, XI, XII, XIII), and one paper about contacts between Christian Nubia and Aksum (Chapter XIV).

These papers reflect the state of knowledge in the late 1950s to early 1960s, and thus some interpretations are now outdated. More recent investigations, however, have modified the initial perception of the origins and development of the “Pre-Aksumite” and Aksumite states. These include large-scale excavations that Anfray conducted at Yeha and Matara in the 1960s and early 1970s; British, Italian, American, and German investigations at Aksum and in the Aksum region in the early 1970s and since the 1990s; and more extensive archaeological research in Yemen since the 1980s.

De Contenson’s fieldwork reports are still valid, despite stratigraphic procedures that have improved in the last forty years and more recent investigations, which have changed some of de Contenson’s interpretations. The building at Wūšata Golo, which was initially interpreted as a cult building, may now be identified as a rural elite house similar to Middle Aksumite houses that were excavated in the late 1990s on top of Beta Giyorgis hill to the northwest of Aksum. Some jars and bowls from Medoguwe and Kuhi that de Contenson dated to the pre-Christian Aksumite Period, that are similar to samples from Beta Giyorgis, can now be dated more precisely to the Proto-Aksumite Period (ca. 400–150 B.C.).

The report of the excavations at Hawlti is a very important contribution, as the site has been greatly disturbed by later illegal excavations. Only the circular arrangement of pillars that de Contenson recorded in 1959 is still visible. The small temples have been completely dismantled, with the stones reused in modern constructions. The original location of the temples, however, can still be identified, as large holes from de Contenson’s excavations are visible.

The papers about the Pre-Aksumite Period and its art are valid too because of the still scarce evidence of this period. De Contenson’s analysis of female statues and the so-called “throne” from Hawlti is still interesting, as he clearly demonstrates the syncretistic nature of Pre-Aksumite culture, which reflects a society integrated in a wide network of external contacts and open to different influences – but at the same time one which maintained its Ethiopian traits.

De Contenson’s paper about contacts between Christian Nubia and Aksum is another valid and stimulating contribution. In this paper he suggests the existence of a overland trade route for wine imported to Aksum from Upper Egypt and Nubia. The existence of this route is reinforced by the discovery at Kassala (eastern Sudan) in the 1980s of jar fragments with a wavy surface which date to the mid- to late 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.

Unfortunately, the cultural and chronological sequence that de Contenson suggested, based on his excavations, is now outdated. Taking into account the work of Anfray at Matara in the early 1960s, de Contenson divided the cultural sequence in northern Ethiopia/Eritrea during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.–1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D. into four main periods: 1) *Period of South Arabian Influence* (ca. 5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.); 2) *Intermediate Period* (ca. 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.–1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.); 3) *Pre-Christian Aksumite Period* (ca. 1<sup>st</sup> to mid-4<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.); 4) *Christian Aksumite Period* (ca. mid-4<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.).

The most recent research in Yemen and at Aksum suggests the following chronological sequence:

- 1) Pre-Aksumite Period (ca. 700–400 B.C.).
- 2) Proto-Aksumite Period (ca. 400–150 B.C.).
- 3) Aksumite Period (ca. 150 B.C.–A.D. 700), divided into four phases (Aksumite 1 or Early Aksumite Phase, ca. 150 B.C.–A.D. 150; Aksumite 2 or Classic Aksumite Phase, ca. A.D. 150–400/450; Aksumite 3 or Middle Aksumite Phase, ca. A.D. 400/450–550; Aksumite 4 or Late Aksumite Phase, ca. A.D. 550–700).
- 4) Post-Aksumite Period (from ca. A.D. 700).

Research in the 1980s and 1990s supports the local origins of the Pre-Aksumite and Aksumite states, as de Contenson, Anfray, Drewes and Schneider suggested in the 1960s and early 1970s.

At present, the development of early hierarchical societies and states in the northern Horn of Africa is tentatively outlined as follows:

1. The Pre-Aksumite state in Eritrea and Tigray arose as a consequence of long interaction between the populations of the regions on both sides of the southern Red Sea.
2. This interaction was intense in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 1<sup>st</sup> millennia B.C., when the African regions were included in the South Arabian area of influence and individuals or small groups of South Arabs settled on the Eritrean plateau and intermixed with the local people.
3. An Afro-Arabian complex society arose in Eritrea in the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C., which progressively included Tigray in its area of economic and possibly political influence.
4. This complex society was exposed to much influence from the Kingdom of Saba and probably became a satellite state of Saba in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.
5. This state in Tigray collapsed in the 4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC, perhaps due to problems with Meroe, while a Pre-Aksumite urban society survived in Eritrea until the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D.

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6. A new, indigenous, polity emerged in central Tigray in Proto-Aksumite times that developed into the Kingdom of Aksum in the late 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.
7. Finally, the Kingdom of Aksum consolidated and increasingly incorporated more of the Eritrean highlands into its territory in the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D.

The collection of papers by de Contenson is thus important as it provides readers with evidence of the relevant and innovative role that the author played in the history of Aksumite archaeology.

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PETROS S. BERGA, *What Happened to the Original Christian Unity in Ethiopia? Towards the Restoration of Our Original Unity in Christ*. St. Ottilien: EOS Klosterverlag St. Ottilien. 2006. 206 Pages. Price: € 24,80. ISBN: 3-8306-7213-6.

The physical form may provide essential clues about its content. This is the case with the book under review. The self explanatory title together with the cover picture, at least for those readers who have some knowledge of church history, gives an indication of what the book is about. The cover shows an Ethiopian icon of the brother Apostles Peter and Andrew representing the church of the west and the east respectively, each lifting the model of a church symbolizing the original unity of the Church. Thus, the broad aims of the book are both to explore why the relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Ethiopia has broken down and to set in motion a process whereby the two churches might restore the original unity of the Early Church. To this end, the author assesses and explains both the past history and present situation of the two churches, pinpointing the negative factors that have aggravated the problem, as well as some ways ahead that may help activate the dynamic of unity. He further suggests concrete proposals that could assist and actualize the process of regaining that original unity.

The book is originally an M.A. thesis submitted to the Department of Theology of the Catholic University of Utrecht, the Netherlands in 2002. As a piece of academic research which has therefore passed through scholarly scrutiny both by researcher and supervisors, the work is well-structured comprising a comprehensive thematic introduction, three well written empirical chapters which are further divided respectively into three, two and two subsections with concluding remarks. There is also an informative glossary and an exhaustive bibliography with more than 350 entries.