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**Review**

ULRICH BRAUKÄMPER, *Islamic History and Culture in Southern Ethiopia. Collected Essays*

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## Reviews

economy made possible a tremendous increase of other illegal or unofficial economic activities, but also the legal sector was fuelled by khat. Khat profits and contraband goods helped to improve the standard of living of Harärge farmers and facilitated investment into other economic strategies.

The author shows persuasively the multiple economic benefits of the “holy” leaf. However, reading about its positive impact on the economic development of the region, one can imagine the negative: an almost total dependence of the Harärge economy on only *one* product. A product, by the way, which obviously harms the psychological constitution of, at least, a considerable number of more or less addicted consumers; and a product that can aggravate family problems. This last aspect, the sometimes destructive side effects of khat, are only discussed very sparsely in the book.

The book is recommended to all those interested in the history of Harärge. Furthermore, it is indispensable for those who want to understand how and why khat restructured the economy and society of this region and how this is interrelated with the economic and political history of the Horn of Africa in general. Beyond the regional perspective, Ezekiel Gebissa’s book helps to comprehend similar processes of an increasing influence of khat on the economies and societies in other areas of Ethiopia.

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ULRICH BRAUKÄMPER, *Islamic History and Culture in Southern Ethiopia. Collected Essays* (= Göttinger Studien zur Ethnologie, Band 9), Münster – Berlin – Hamburg – London – Wien: LIT Verlag, 2004. XII + 195 pp. Price € 27.28. ISBN 3-8258-5671-2.

As well known, Ulrich Braukämper is one of the few outstanding ethnologists who during the 70’s and, more recently, at the end of the 90’s devoted a great part of their activity to the study of the society and of the history of the peoples of Southern Ethiopia. In his long and extensive research he managed to make use of the keen perception of anthropology and of a refined historical insight thus demonstrating a combination of gifts which is often lacking amongst other anthropologists.<sup>1</sup> In his career he accomplished some invaluable scholarly achievements which are and will remain for a long time to come essential references. In particular, with his fascinating works on Hadiyya (*Geschichte der Hadiyya Süd-Äthiopiens – Von den An-*

<sup>1</sup> On the problem of the use of oral and written sources in Southern Ethiopia see his “The Correlation of Oral Tradition and Historical Records in Southern Ethiopia: A Case Study of the Hadiyya/Sidamo Past”, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 11 (1973), pp. 29–50.

*fängen bis zur Revolution 1974*, Wiesbaden, 1980) and *Kambata (Die Kambata – Geschichte und Gesellschaft eines südäthiopischen Bauernvolkes*, Wiesbaden, 1983), which are true masterpieces in the historical and anthropological studies of Ethiopia, Braukämper decisively contributed to the enhancement of our knowledge of the peoples of Southern Ethiopia. The researches on the Fandaano traditional religion of the Hadiyya which he is currently conducting will surely give us deeper insight into this unfortunately “vanishing socio-religious system”<sup>2</sup>.

The title of the book under review clarifies another aspect of Braukämper’s scholarly activity: the history and the culture – *lato sensu* – of the Muslim peoples of Southern Ethiopia.

As he himself states, Braukämper’s interest in Islam was born as a sort of collateral effect of his analysis of Hadiyya-Sidama speaking people in the 70’s (p. IX). We are glad that this by-product – as Braukämper calls it – came to light<sup>3</sup>. In fact, if scholars of social and historical anthropology of Southern Ethiopia must be grateful to Braukämper’s books, also every scholar of Islam in Ethiopia owes a big debt to Braukämper. In his long devotion to this topic, Braukämper “by-produced” – to continue using his terminology – always intriguing research on Islamic society and history in southern Ethiopia. In this rarely trodden field, Braukämper chose to take into consideration problems which are of the highest interest for the specialists. Braukämper’s studies on Islam are characterized by a certain deal of audacity – one may say – as they do not avoid dealing directly with the most crucial aspects of the religious history of the area. In particular, Braukämper aims at providing us with a reconstruction of the processes of Islamization of the people living in a wide region which extends from Hadiyyaland up to the Harar plateau. In doing this, he duely exploits both written and oral sources (long lists of informants testify to his long and hard field-work) and gives form to a general picture in which he tries to put all the social and historical agents and factors in their appropriate place and to carefully assess all the ethnical and religious components outside and inside the area of Southern Ethiopia.

In his propension towards the social dimensions of the peoples of South Ethiopia, Braukämper could not avoid becoming interested in what he calls – following Ernst Gellner – “folk islam” (p. IX; p. 165 note 38), that is a form of Islamic belief and practise – especially linked to sufi circles – which

<sup>2</sup> See his article “Fandaano: A vanishing Socio-religious System of the Hadiyya in Southern Ethiopia”, *Bulletin of the International Committee on Urgent Anthropological and Ethnological Research*, 40 (1999–2000), pp. 52–63.

<sup>3</sup> Actually, BRAUKÄMPER already devoted to Islam his study *Der Einfluß des Islam auf die Geschichte und Kulturentwicklung Adamaus – Abriß eines afrikanischen Kulturwandels*, Wiesbaden 1970.

is not fully in line with the standardized conceptions of the educated class and the jurists and which contains surviving elements of pre-islamic religions<sup>4</sup>. The cult of the Islamic saints and the historical and social role of their shrines of the region are thus also the subjects of some of his research.

Braukämper's analysis of Islam in Southern Ethiopia took the shape of a number of articles and conference papers which were scattered amongst different sources. All of these essays are now collected in this volume which was primarily conceived to simplify the work of researchers, especially of those who live "in countries where library conditions are limited" (p. IX). Not only Ethiopian scholars who – as the author says – were the main spur to the realization of the book but all the ones interested in Islam in Ethiopia have to be most thankful to Braukämper for this useful tool which enables them to easily have within reach writings otherwise hardly available.

Besides a preface (pp. IX–X), a two page-acknowledgement list (pp. XI–XII), and a general introductory chapter (chapter 1 pp. 1–11) which was expressly written for this collection, the book thus contains five already published essays: *Islamic Principalities in Southeast Ethiopia between the Thirteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (chapter two pp. 12–105; originally published in *Ethiopianist Notes*, I, 1:17–56; I, 2:1–43, 1977); *Notes on the Islamization and the Muslim Shrines of the Harär Plateau* (chapter three, pp. 106–128; originally published in: THOMAS LABAHN (ed.), *Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Somali Studies*, Hamburg, 1984, vol. II: 145–74); *The Sanctuary of Shaikh Husayn and the Oromo-Somali Connections in Bale (Ethiopia)* (chapter four, pp. 129–151; originally published in *Frankfurter Afrikanistische Blätter*, I, 1989, pp. 108–24); *The Islamization of the Arsi-Oromo* (chapter five, pp. 152–169; originally published in TADDESSE

<sup>4</sup> The existence of a Folk Islam or Low Islam, as clearly different from and even partially opposed to a High Islam, is nowadays no more univocally accepted in Islamology, where the criticism of the "two-tiered model" advanced by Peter Brown in relation to the cult of saints in Late Antiquity has been taken, at least partially, into account (PETER BROWN, *The Cult of the saints*, Chicago, paperback edition 1982, 17–22). On this point, see for example MICHEL CHODKIEWICZ, *The Seal of the Saints*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 8–15 (with an explicit reference to Brown's work), RACHIDA CHIH, *Le sufisme au quotidien*, Paris 2000, pp. 344–347, AHMET T. KARAMUSTAFA, "The antinomian dervish as model saint", in HASSAN ELBOUDRARI (ed.), *Modes de transmission de la culture religieuse en Islam*, Le Caire 1993, pp. 241–260. For an assessment of the importance of the survivals of pre-islamic cults in social or geographical peripheries of Islam, a problem which is entwined to that of Popular Islam, see besides Karamustafa's article mentioned above, also ALESSANDRO BAUSANI, "Sopravvenienze pagane nell'Islam o integrazione islamica", in *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, 19 (1958), pp. 93–107 and "Islam: integrazione o sincretismo religioso?", in LIONELLO LANCIOTTI (ed.), *Incontro di religioni in Asia tra il II e il X secolo d. C.*, Firenze 1984, pp. 99–114.

BEYENE (ed.), *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa 1988, Vol. I, pp. 767–777) and, finally, *Medieval Muslim Survivals as a Stimulating Factor in the Re-Islamization of Southeastern Ethiopia* (chapter six, pp. 170–184; originally published in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 137, 1, [1987], pp. 20–33).

The very detailed general index which contains not only anthroponimes and toponimes but also other proper names, concepts and titles closes the book (pp. 185–195) and gives it unity, enabling the reader to make a complete search throughout the different articles. The eight maps which are connected with the articles are republished as they were in their original locations.

To repropose a study many years after it was firstly printed poses a lot of problems to the author. Braukämper preferred not to try to revise the contents of his articles on basis of the bibliography which was produced between the time when the original essays were published and 2001. He decided to consider only “to a certain extent” (p. IX) this literature and, as a matter of fact, a substantial effort to quote, at least in footnotes, some recent publications has been made. This procedure can really be considered rational and fully justified. However, this choice should not make one run the risk of underestimating the continuously growing literature on Islamic Ethiopia. So, it is true as the author says, that, generally speaking, for Southern Ethiopian Islam, “the total contribution by scholars to this field has obviously remained of a fairly limited size” (p. ix). Nevertheless, this is not the case at all for many other topics which are strictly related to the content of Braukämper’s articles. For example, in the second chapter devoted to the history of the Islamic principalities in Southern Ethiopia, a mention of the fact that some of the Ethiopic royal chronicles have been recently re-edited would have been recommendable. Also the debated problem of the identity of the Mäläsay has been the subject of a very interesting article which should have been mentioned in this chapter<sup>5</sup>. The famous saint *shaykh* Nūr Ḥusayn to whom the fourth chapter is devoted, has been the subject of studies which could have been mentioned, at least *en passant*, by the author<sup>6</sup>.

One would expect that the introductory chapter written for this reprint of essays was firstly devoted to the assessment of the meanwhile printed bibliography, and to try to connect this bibliography with the following

<sup>5</sup> MANFRED KROPP, “Mäläsay: Selbstbezeichnung eines harariner Offizierskorps und ihr Gebrauch in äthiopischen und arabischen Chroniken”, *Paideuma* 36 (1990), pp. 105–113.

<sup>6</sup> HADJI ABBAS, “Le rôle du culte de chaikh Hussein dans l’Islam des Arssi (Ethiopie)”, *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara*, 5 (1991), pp. 21–42, ALESSANDRO GORI, “First studies on the texts of *shaykh* Ḥusayn’s Hagiographies”, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 70 (1996), pp. 53–82.

sections. The author, on the contrary, preferred to give this part of his book a more general dimension. In fact, the text of the introductory chapter, briefly but courageously tackles some of the most sensitive points concerning Islam in Ethiopia and its study, mentioning a bibliography which contains articles published up to 2000. With relation to the sources, a general analysis of the major problematic phases of the history of Islamic Ethiopia was already sketched out by Tubiana in a concise but substantial article which would have been useful to be mentioned in this chapter but apparently remained unknown to the author<sup>7</sup>.

The introduction raises once again the *vexata quaestio* of the delay of European scholars in turning their interest to Islam, Falasha and traditional religions in Ethiopia, as compared with the very early attention shown to Orthodox Christianity. This original predilection of Ethiopianists for Christian Ethiopia – a sort of *peccatum originale* of Ethiopian Studies – is explained by Braukämper with Eurocentrism. In general terms, one may agree with professor Braukämper on the Eurocentrism of many pioneers of Ethiopian studies. However, this should not cause one to think that it is only a negative and condemnable Eurocentric attitude to consider the particular civilization usually called “Christian Ethiopia” as a very rich and complex cultural universe where one may easily discover long and deep influences and acculturating currents coming first from the Mediterranean Greek world, then from the Old and Medieval Orient, these last being of both Christian and Islamic faith. It is the confluence in Ethiopia of these different cultural elements – and Islam was one of them by full right since very ancient times – and their intermingling with one another and with other cultures that give that country a unique and polymorphic cultural shape which evidently cannot be paralleled in any other sub-saharian region.

Proof of the tight link between Ethiopia and Islam and vice versa may be found in the famous episode of the emigration of some of Muḥammad’s first followers to al-Ḥabaša (Abyssinia). This so-called *al-ḥiğra al-ūlā* is evocated by Braukämper (p. 4) on the sole basis of a passage from Trimingham’s *Islam in Ethiopia*<sup>8</sup>. In this connection, it is not correct to affirm – as the author does – that the Muslim refugees to Ethiopia “were eventually converted to Christianity”<sup>9</sup>. According to the Islamic sources, only one of them called ʿUbaydal-lāh b. Ġaḥš embraced Christianity. The others went back to Arabia at differ-

<sup>7</sup> JOSEPH M. TUBIANA, “L’Islam et l’Ethiopie”, *Sociétés africaines, monde arabe et culture islamique*, Mémoire du CERMAA, n. 1, Paris 1979, pp. 249–271.

<sup>8</sup> The author quotes only a few paragraphs of Trimingham’s book, which deals with the emigration to Abyssinia on almost two and a half pages (pp. 44–46).

<sup>9</sup> Trimingham, with reference to MUIR’s *The Life of Mohammed*, says that only “Some of them have become Christians”.

ent times and circumstances and took part in further developments of the Islamic *Umma*. Two of them played a huge role in the history of Islam: Ġaʿfar and ʿUṭmān. Muslim historiography goes up to maintain that the Negus himself converted to Islam and became the famous Aḥmad al-Naǧāṣī, whose shrine is still a venerated place of devotion between Māqāle and ʿAddigrat – the occurrence of the *al-ḥiǧra al-ūlá* which stands at the very origin of Islam in Ethiopia. The emigration of those first Muslims to the land of the righteous king of Abyssinia who protected them against the pagans and eventually became a Muslim himself, represents a sort of foundation myth – so to speak – of the Islamic presence in Ethiopia, and as such it continues to influence contemporary Islamic discourse in the country. For this reason, it should frankly have deserved a more careful mention in Braukämper’s book. In particular, Tim Charmichael’s contribution is properly mentioned by the author<sup>10</sup>, but Haggai Erlich’s book which follows the evolution and the role of the idea of *islām al-Naǧāṣī*, and of its underlying ideology up to modern times is completely ignored<sup>11</sup>. Also Hussein Ahmed’s important article of 1996<sup>12</sup> should have been properly mentioned in this connection.

As for the five republished essays mentioned, the bibliography is partially updated; changes to the originals were introduced by the standardization of the editorial form of the texts and, more substantially, by uniforming the transcriptions of Semitic and Cushitic words and proper names. To this purpose, the author refers to the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* and to the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* as his authoritative basis. However, even a very rapid glance at the book shows that this standardization is not devoid of numerous and recurring mistakes and inconsistencies. It would be very tedious and of very little interest to give here details of these graphical shortcomings. Some of them must anyway be clarified.

Ḥidjra (p. 4 and p. 190 in the index) has to be rectified into hidjra (as an aside, the transliteration of Arabic used in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* provides that *ṣīn*, *ǧīm*, *tāʾ* and *dāl* should be written with two graphemes underlined; the author did not comply to this rule). Ḥabasha (pp. 3 and 6) can only represent the transliteration of the Arabic word الحبشة which has a very general sense, never restricted to only “Christian Ethiopians from Amhara and Tigray”. Perhaps the aim was to render the Ethiopic term Ḥabāša (ሐባሻ) which is, also, a complex concept indeed but may be closer to the

<sup>10</sup> TIM CARMICHAEL, “Contemporary Ethiopian Discourse on Islamic History: the Politics of Historical Representation”, *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara*, 10 (1996), pp. 169–186.

<sup>11</sup> HAGGAI ERLICH, *Ethiopia and the Middle East*, Boulder and London, 1994.

<sup>12</sup> HUSSEIN AHMED, “Aksum in Muslim Historical Traditions”, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 29 (1996), pp. 47–66.

meaning intended by the author. The form Maḥzūmī appears on pp. 12, 19, 24 and 191 (index) to erroneously substitute a previous more correct Makhzūmī which was used in the original version of the article (pp. 17, 22, 23 – makhzūmite). Banu ‘Umayya and Banu al-Ḥumāya (p. 22 and 187, also in the original article p. 24) have both to be corrected into Banū Umayya which together with Banū al-‘Abbās and Banū Hāšim (mentioned on the same page) represent the most famous clan of the tribe of Qurayš. The struggle between Banū Umayya and Banū al-‘Abbās at the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century is one of the most crucial events in Islamic history. It is not surprising to find some echoes of it in Islamic Ethiopia. Hāshamites (p. 24 and p. 190; also in the original article p. 28) should better be written Hāshimites (descending from the aforementioned clan of Banū Hāšim to which the prophet Muḥammad also belongs). Ḥanafī‘ites (pp. 25 and 190 in the index) is perhaps a misprint for Ḥanafites due to the influence of the similar form Shāfi‘ites.

Transcription mistakes can also be found in many bibliographical references which are, moreover, very often incorrect or inaccurate. Here follow some examples. Enrico Cerulli’s article “Il sultanato dello Scioa nel secolo XIII secondo un nuovo documento storico” was published in *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* volume I, not in volume XIX as indicated by the author on pp. 93 and 147, repeating a mistake which already appeared in his original essays. An article “L’Africa Orientale in carte arabe dei secoli XII e XIII” is erroneously attributed to E. Cerulli (p. 93). That writing is, in reality, the first part of a longer article by Carlo Conti Rossini under the title “Geographica”, published in *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* volume III (1943), pp. 167–199. Cerulli’s contribution “Gli emiri di Harar dal secolo XVI alla conquista egiziana (1875)” was printed in *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, volume II not XX (as written on the same p. 93). The famous hagiographies of *shaikh* Nūr Ḥusayn are quoted under the heading *rābī al-qulūb* (pp. 130, 132, 138, 150 and 192 in the index), a form which is incorrect twice: the first word should actually be written *rabi‘*, while the second one contradicts the transcription system used elsewhere in the book: we have *qulūb* instead of *kulūb* (Arabic *qāf* is always written *k* in the book according to the rules of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*).

Reading again Braukämper’s papers has stimulated in the present reviewer a great number of reflections. At least two of these seem worth-while to be exposed here. Amano (pp. 24, 56–57, 62 and 185 in the index) who, according to the author is “most probably a title, although this is not certain” (p. 62), could, on the contrary, be tentatively interpreted as an hypochoristic form of the Arab-islamic proper name Amān Allāh or Amān al-Dīn. The existence of a tight relationship linking the Somali Aḥmadiyya brotherhood to the shrine of *shaikh* Nūr Ḥusayn and the high veneration in which that saint *shaikh* is



held inside that Islamic *ṭarīqa* is confirmed by several facts<sup>13</sup>. This by no means causes a postponing of the vague chronology of *shaykh* Nūr Ḥusayn's life to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Aḥmadiyya first spread to Somalia, as it is only the link between the *ṭarīqa* and the saint of Bale that was established at that time. The Aḥmadiyya which is here concerned is the Aḥmadiyya Idrīsiyya, the brotherhood created by some of the disciples of Aḥmad b. Idrīs al-Fāsī (died 1837); and it has absolutely nothing to do with the homonymous Pakistani group of the Aḥmadiyya founded by Mīrzā Gulām Aḥmad (died 1908) which in Humphrey Fisher's book mentioned by Braukämper (p. 133 notes 19 and 148), *Aḥmadiyya A Study in Contemporary Islam on the West African Coast* is actually referred to.

Concluding these few remarks on Braukämper's collection of essays, sincere admiration and deep gratitude should be expressed to the author for his scholarly activity and, particularly, for this book which makes now easily available to all the Ethiopianists and Islamologues some of the results of his hard work.

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DENA FREEMAN and ALULA PANKHURST (eds.), *Peripheral People: The Excluded Minorities of Ethiopia*. London: C. Hurst & Co., 2003. xxvi + 394 pp. Price: £ 50.00. ISBN 1-85065-657-6 (casebound). £ 18.95. 1-85065-656-8 (paperback).

This path-breaking book contains a collection of original, field-based studies of the occupational minority groups in Southern Ethiopia. These craft worker peoples (smiths, tanners, weavers, woodworkers, basket workers, potters, hunters, folk healers, ritual specialists) tend to have peripheral status and low social prestige, but historically fulfil vital economic and technical functions in the wider society. At the same time, as we know from other parts of Africa, they are usually seen as having ambiguous status, feared but loathed, shunned but indispensable. They are often seen by the 'host' peoples, mostly agrarian cultivator groups amongst whom they are settled, as having supernatural powers and/or as being a source of ritual 'pollution'. The questions of why and how these groups were excluded in the course of history, and how this exclusion as to food, marriage, commensality, burial, ritual and other social relations functions in day-to-day

<sup>13</sup> ENRICO CERULLI, *Studi Etiopici II La lingua e la storia dei Sidamo*, Roma, 1938, pp. 19-26; see also ALESSANDRO GORI, *Studi sulla letteratura agiografica islamica somala in lingua araba*, Firenze 2003, pp. 246-248.