

Reviews

Pount, Cahiers d'études. Corne de l'Afrique – Arabie du Sud, 2012, Numéro 6, Études éthiopienne et yéménites, eds. F. Mermier, D. Morin, A. Rouaud, Les Éthipisants Associés, ISBN: 978-2-9524-9647-6, s. 211.

In my review of *Pount* 6, 2012 I would like to focus on Didier Morin's paper 'La participation française à l'*Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* ou du déclin des études éthiopiennes en France' (p. 9–29). D. Morin praised the editors that alongside Ethiopia they also included Somalia, Erythrea and Djibuti in their project. Morin presented a thorough analysis of *EA* ed. S. Uhlig (vols. I–IV, 2003–2010) from the perspective of the French universities. He evaluated the French contribution in the *EA*. Morin emphasised that only 5% of the *EA* entries were compiled by French academics, vs. 20% by German academics (p. 11). No important and extensive paper at all in the four volumes of *EA*, continues Morin, was commissioned to a French scholar (e.g. Amharic, Ge'ez, Abyssinia etc.); nor was any French academic invited to join the Editorial Board. Only three French names can be found among the 'field specialists' in Volume III: A. Gascon, O. Tourny, and D. Morin (p. 13). In Morin's view the flourishing period in French Ethiopian studies, marked by Cohen's *Traité d'amharique* and Chaîne's *Grammaire éthiopienne* is now a thing of the past. Of this he was profoundly critical and expressed his bitter regret that the Institut national des Langues et Civilisations orientales (INALCO) was no longer making an important contribution to Ethiopian studies.

In this context I would like to commend to Morin's sound methodology, which has a universal value and can also be applied to all ancient studies in general: 'La hiérarchisation des données est une des premières tâches de toute recherche' (p. 22), he commented on C. Dubois' paper in the *EA*. We may also reiterate Morin's observation that selection and hierarchy of sources is a central issue in Oriental and also in other ancient studies.

Next Morin added one more essential conclusion of universal value: 'L'erreur de méthode est ici la rançon d'une méconnaissance des langues et de l'histoire des populations, chez une historienne dont le terrain d'enquête se cantonne aux cartons des archives coloniales d'Aix-en-Provence' (p. 23). Personal experience in the field is essential in the Oriental studies in general and in ancient Oriental

and Classical studies as well. I once expressed this opinion in my review of I. Madreiter's book on the ancient Greek literature on Persia (*Gnomon* 87, 2015, p. 397). In my discussion with I. Madreiter I referred to Jacoby who 'was a representative of the Habsburg-Hohenzollern school of ancient history (let me label it as such for the needs of this polemic), which says that if you like to write something on the ancient world, all you need is a good library, like those in Berlin, Vienna or Rome, where, by the way, the libraries are simply splendid (this is still an influential school in the contemporary Polish ancient studies). There is, however, another school, let me label it the British and French colonial school, which instructs its students that they should travel by camel, donkey, steamship, motor car or on foot to verify their knowledge by autopsy.'

A couple of years ago I had an interesting discussion with Didier Morin, in which I described the decline in the teaching of the ancient Oriental and Classical languages in Poland. He answered with a reflection that it was a more universal phenomenon and referred to me *Pount* 6, 2012 and his paper on the decline of Ethiopian studies in France. In this paper he also noted other relevant factors, for example 'diminution du nombre d'étudiants, et donc des ressources' (p. 28), only to add that 'on peut disserter sur Axoum sans expertise connue en guèze' (p. 29). At the end of Morin's important paper the reader will find a conclusion which is worth quoting in French and translating into English: 'Des théories – souvent à visée universaliste – sont devenue le préalable à toute description. Le «terrain d'enquête» n'est qu'un prétexte à leur vérification. Il est proposé de dissoudre la Corne de l'Afrique, ses populations, ses langues, son histoire, dans des thématiques transversales que sont l'économie du sous-développement, la pandémie du SIDA, les migrations, les identités' (p. 29). Theories which are frequently regarded as universally valid have started to take precedence over description of whatever kind. A selected field of studies has become simply a pretext for the verification of a theory. Nowadays we tend to believe that we should break the Corn of Africa, its populations, languages, and history down into transversal methodologies of underdeveloped economies, a pandemia of AIDS, migrations and identities.

I would also like to mention R. Beylot's paper 'Recherches sur l'homiliaire éthiopien en l'honneur d'Ouriel' (pp. 143–155). This author focused on the Ethiopian manuscript EMMML 1943 from Ḥayq Estifanos, which contains a homeliar in honour of the Archangel Uriel. Beylot observed that Ethiopian Christianity shared its devotion to the Archangels with Coptic Christianity (p.144), where it also appeared at a very early date. Beylot argues that images of Archangels must have been present in the earliest Ethiopian illuminated manuscripts at the side of the enthroned Virgin Mary (p. 144). Beylot must be right. A veritable gallery of the Archangels can be collected from the extant Coptic frescoes. We have, for example, an impressive image of an Archangel from Faras in Christian Nubia. M. Rassart-Debergh's paper *Les Trois Hébreux*

dans la fournaise en Égypte et en Nubie chrétienne (1984) may be recommended as a guide to one of the galleries of angels in the Coptic art. Beylot emphasised that Uriel did not appear in the Western canonical writings, neither in the Catholic nor in the Protestant Churches. The Ethiopian Uriel came from the Jewish apocryphal tradition (*Apocalypse of Esdras*, *The Book of Henoch*, *The Book of Adam and Eve*). Beylot passed by the story of the Holy Family's sojourn in Ethiopia, which opened the sermon (p. 150) and focused on the story of Ethiopia's baptism, which shows the art of Ethiopian story-telling at its best. The Ethiopian medieval sermons must have been strongly influenced by the Coptic homiletic writings. They show the same narrative components: miraculous appearances of saints and angels, pilgrimages to Jerusalem, holy hermits, Christian feast-day celebrations, biblical references, and references to ancient manuscripts and libraries. On the pages of Uriel's homily we find the Nine Saints of Ethiopia, Kyriakos of Bəhnəsa, Athanasios of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, and St. Ephraem the Syrian, who appeared on a cloud. Beylot observed that Ruphinus of Aquileia's story of the beginning of Ethiopian Christianity is different, which is worthy of special notice. According to the old Ethiopian apocryphal tradition it was Uriel who collected Jesus Christ's blood at the hour of His Passion. The Dərsanä 'Ura'el (EMML 1942) belongs to a group of manuscripts which tell Archangel Uriel's story. Beylot dated the EMML 1942 to the 1st half of the 16th century.

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