
Böll, Verena, et al. (Eds.): Ethiopia and the Missions. Historical and Anthropological Insights. Münster: LIT 2005. XXII, 243 S. m. Abb. 8° = Afrikanische Studien, 25. Kart. 29.90 €. ISBN 3-8258-7792-2.
Bespr. von Hatem Elliesie, Berlin.

Gustav Warneck is considered to be the founder of modern "Missionswissenschaft".¹ His works, written mostly during the second half of the 19th century, placed missions at the centre of Christian thinking and provided the first systematic analysis of this activity. *Missiology* was then established as a branch of practical theology, dedicated to studying the mandate, message and methods of the Christian missionary. Moreover, at a time that witnessed the rise of the great missionary movement in Western Protestant areas, this discipline was essential in providing field missionaries with practical methods and tools to carry out their conversion work. Although later studies incorporated a more cross-cultural approach, *missiology* remains, today, a discipline predominately shaped by modern Protestant theology. Having said this, one is able to observe that the purely scholarly branch of studies on missions has been established relatively recently. The book at hand offers an interesting insight and is, therefore, an important contribution to the scholarly discourse of this specific field of study focusing on Eritrea and Ethiopia, with "Ethiopia" used as the term referring to both² (p. xvii). The publication consti-

¹ Cf. Hans Kasdorf, Gustav Warneck (1834–1910). Founder of the Scholarly Study Missions, in: Gerald H. Anderson/et al. (Eds.), *Mission Legacies. Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, Maryknoll 1994, pp. 373–382.

² Eritrea and Ethiopia.

tutes a compilation of papers presented in the workshop “Historical and Anthropological Insights into the Missionary Activities in Ethiopia: Conversions, Resistance and Compromises”, held on 25–26 July 2003 at Hamburg University, Germany. It is divided into three main sections – “History” (pp. 1–98), “Anthropology” (pp. 99–194) and “Crossroads” (pp. 195–223).

The editors start off with a concise historical outline (pp. viii–xix) on the missions in “Ethiopia”, e.g. stating that “the arrival of missionaries [took place] in the 1550s” and that “the arrival of the second wave of missions coincided with the colonial expansion of the 19th century” (p. xvii). As to the latter, in the middle of the century, the first Capuchin and Lazarist missionaries settled in Ethiopia as well as the first Protestant missionary groups. The first missionaries arrived under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society from London and, were later joined by members of the Hermannsburg group from Lower Saxony, from St. Chrischona-Pilgermission, Basel, and the Swedish Missionaries. However, during this period proselytism was carried out with circumspection under the watchful eye of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church’s (ዮሐንዳዊ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን *yä-’Ityōpya ’ortodoks tāwahədo betä krəstīyan*) clergy. Foreign missionaries were limited and only allowed to convert so called *Fālaša* (or *Betä Isra’el*) peasants as well as a few Oromo who had been ransomed from slavery, and the missionaries had to limit [for quite some time] most of their activities in the northern parts of “Ethiopia”. Ethiopia’s five years of Italian occupation interrupted widely foreign missionary work in the middle of the 20th century, when only Catholics and the Hermannsburg Mission were allowed to work. After World War II, missionary groups resumed their previous activities, again. However, by then, both ecumenical trends in worldwide Christianity and the growing number and presence of converted groups resulted in the emergence of local Christian churches, such as the Ethiopian Evangelical Church *Mākanä Iyäsus*, founded in 1959 as a federation of local Lutheran groups originating from various Lutheran Missions; the *Qalä Həywät* Church, set up in the 1970s from the activities of the Sudan Interior Mission; and the local Mennonite churches *Mäsärätä Krəstos* and *Mulu Wängel*.

The contributions in the “History” section emphasize two distinct periods: the Jesuit period addressed by Leonardo Cohen, Andreu Martínez d’Alòs-Moner and Sevir Chernetsov; and the later 19th century by Kebede Hordofa Janko and Wolbert G. C. Smidt. This leaves, according to Donald Crummey (p. 2), large topics and periods untouched. Translation, specifically, is an important theme in the papers “The Jesuit missionary as translator (1603–1632)” (Leonardo Cohen) and “Missionaries, enslaved Oromo and their contribution to the development of the Oromo language: an overview” (Kebede Hordofa Janko). In the general literature, this theme is most closely associated with modern Protestant missions, but Leonardo Cohen

(pp. 7–30) aptly demonstrates that translation was an activity already taken seriously by 17th century Jesuits for a certain period of time, and that it ran in two directions – from Latin and Portuguese into Gə‘əz and vice versa. Particularly intriguing is the energy that Jesuits invested in rendering Gə‘əz texts into Portuguese. Leonardo Cohen’s point of departure is that Ethiopian literature itself is characterized by translations from Greek, Arabic and Syriac.³ Sevir Chernetsov takes up this issue in his article “Ethiopian theological response to European missionary proselytizing in the 17th–19th centuries” with characteristic energy and erudition, noting that, faced with the Jesuit challenge, Ethiopian scholars turned to the literary heritage of their own Patriarch of Alexandria, and set about producing their own translations from Arabic into Gə‘əz. Already during Gälawdewos’ reign (1540–1559), a large tendentious collection of patristic writings (from Apostles up to Coptic Patriarch Christodulos, 1050–1078), “a kind of *Summa totius theologiae* of militant Monophysism” (p. 55), the “ሃይማኖተ : እበ” [sic!] (i.e. ሃይማኖተ : እበው *Häymanotä Abäw*), was translated into Ethiopic. At the end of the 16th century e.g. two other works were translated from Arabic, which were thematically quite close to *Häymanotä Abäw*, namely መጽሐፈ : ሐዊ (*Mäṣḥafä Hawi*) and ተልሚድ (*Tälmid*). *Hawi* is originally Arabic (*ḥawī/حوي*) which was translated of the Greek *Pandektēs*, i.e. the sum of religious instructions, based on patristic writings. The original Greek text had been written by a certain Antioch, an Orthodox monk from the monastery of St. Sabbas in Palestine, and its Ethiopian translation was made in 1582 in Däbrä Libanos by a certain Abba Salik. The Arabic term *talmid*, i.e. disciple, became the title of another theological treatise directed against heresies and ascribed to a monk named Giyorgis, a disciple (*tälmid*) of Antonius the Syrian.

Kebede Hordofa Janko’s paper (pp. 63–76), which rests on secondary sources, deals with the translation of the Bible in the Oromo language. It highlights three individual Oromo – Ruufoo, Onesimus Näsib, and Aster Ganno – who all helped create an Oromo literature translating the Bible and a variety of Protestant materials. Wolbert Smidt’s paper “The role of the former Oromo slave Pauline Fathme in the foundation of the Protestant Oromo mission” (pp. 77–98) touches on some of the same developments that Kebede Hordofa Janko discusses. Juxtaposed to Wolbert Smidt’s focus on an individual is the focus of Martínez d’Alòs-Moner in his contribution “Paul and the other: the Portuguese debate on the circumcision of the Ethiopians” on Jesuit missionary strategy and its roots in European intellectual, theological and political leanings. This yields a productive and plausible analysis of the Jesu-

³ Cf. Lanfranco Ricci, *Ethiopian Literature*, in: Aziz S. Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, New York 1991, pp. 975–979 (with a useful bibliography).

its obsession with the distinctive practices of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church. Although they were fully aware of the Chalcedonian issue, they composed a long list of what they viewed as Ethiopian errors, the first of which was circumcision (cf. p. 4).

In the second section of the collection, the papers focus on anthropological aspects of the conversion process. Accordingly, communal identity, its formation and re-formation is a central theme in all these articles. Interesting to note is the fact that the contributors cite and/or invoke Robert Hefner's claim whereby "Christian conversion is fundamentally about the assumption of new identities [...]".⁴ Susanne Epple, for example, notes in her paper "Missionary Work and Cultural Change among the Banna and Bashada of Southern Ethiopia: An Emic Perspective" that "Protestants form a new kind of community with its own rules and rights" (p. 168). Alexander Naty, for his part, argues in his essay "Protestant Christianity among the Aari People of southwest Ethiopia, 1950–1990" that "[t]he establishment of the SIM [Sudan Interior Mission] in Aari-land gave way to the formation of a community transcending existing ethnic and linguistic boundaries" (p. 148) while Abbebe Kifleyesus contends in his contribution "Zännəṭ lä Geta. Flaunt fancy for Christ's Celebrity: Pentecostal Proselytisation and Identity Formation in Addis Ababa" that in Addis Ababa "Pentecostal created a form of community [...] new spiritual and material networks that extended beyond ethnic and class considerations" (pp. 127–128).

Despite the aforementioned authors' familiarity with Hefner's understanding of conversion, and the manner in which "new identities are enacted primarily through the adoption of new narratives",⁵ they pay, however, little, if any, attention to the critical treatment of testimonies. This could have been carried out, since, for almost a quarter century, scholars have argued that converts' accounts of their conversions are not merely explanations, but also sources which need to be analyzed and explained themselves.⁶

The articles in the third section "Crossroads" reflect personal experiences of the agents and subjects in different forms of missionary activities. The main theme is laid on the interaction between the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church and its representatives on the one hand, and Protestant churches as well as missionaries in Ethiopia on the other. While Mersha Alehegne shows in his paper "The Orthodox-Protestant Relationship in Ethiopia: A Glimpse

on Interaction, Attitude, Cause of Disharmony, Consequences, and some Solutions" (pp. 199–207) how the controversies are seen from the point of view of an Orthodox Christian, Tsega Endalew's paper "Protestant Mission Activities and Persecutions in Bahär Dar, 1968–1994: A Chronicle" (pp. 209–220) takes the perspective of a Protestant convert and discusses specific events which took place in Bahär Dar. Moreover, Sven Rubenson describes quite tersely his personal experiences he had as a missionary in learning to accept his Ethiopian Orthodox counterparts in his article "How the Missionary was Converted: A Personal Account" (pp. 221–223). As indicated in the latter title, the contributions in the third section reflect personal experiences, findings and views, and should be taken as such.

⁴ Robert W. Hefner, *World Building and Rationality of Conversion*, in: Robert W. Hefner, *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, Berkeley 1993, pp. 3–46.

⁵ Donald Lewis Donham, *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford 1999, p. 120.

⁶ Cf. James Arthur Beckford, *Accounting for Conversion*, *British Journal of Sociology* 29 (1979), pp. 249–262.