

Christine Chaillot, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Tradition. A Brief Introduction to its Life and Spirituality, Inter-Orthodox Dialogue*, Paris 2002. ISBN 83-85368-98-1

At first sight, one might think that this subject had already been well covered relatively recently by Kirsten Stoffregen-Pedersen's *Les Ethiopiens*, published by Brépols in 1991. In fact, the content is sufficiently different for the book under review to offer an excellent complement to Sister Kirsten's work, filling out the picture with many extra details. The word 'tradition' in the title reflects the fact that the Eritrean church, now a separate patriarchate, and the diaspora churches, are included, but in fact the book deals largely with the Ethiopian and Eritrean churches today, with only brief historical notes.

After a number of introductory letters from Orthodox prelates and a brief geographical, historical, ethnic and linguistic Introduction, including some religious statistics, the first chapter offers a brief history of Ethiopia from prehistory to the modern day. It does not supply more than incidental detail about the history of the Ethiopian church. Chapter 2 outlines the story of the five men who have held office as patriarchs of the Ethiopian church, and the church organisation in both Ethiopia and Eritrea, with their various departments of administration.

I found this book especially useful and interesting from the point of view of its excursus on the diaspora of the Ethiopian Church, described in the third chapter, 'Mission and Diaspora'. The diaspora after the fall of the empire in 1974 has had the intriguing consequence that the EOC has become a world church, with dioceses, even if only with small populations of the faithful, from Australia to the USA and Caribbean, and from Europe to South Africa and the Middle East.

Within this theme the position of the Rasta community is inevitably one of exceptional interest. Wishing to associate with a purely African, and ancient, church, which was moreover the church to which their messianic figure, Ras Tafari, the late Emperor Haile Sellassie, belonged, the Rastafarians nevertheless came across the stumbling block that the emperor himself denied the messianic position they gave him, and, though the highest in rank, was ultimately merely another member of the Ethiopian Orthodox community. The Ethiopian church in the Caribbean, and in Europe, receives Rastafarians who accept this. Chaillot cites one who saw the late emperor's real significance not as a deity, but as a figure who could lead black people back to Christianity.

Missionary work, past and present, is briefly described. This too is an interesting phenomenon. I myself have attended, with Ethiopian convert friends, some of the 'born-again' Protestant services in Addis Ababa, and witnessed the extraordinary vigour of these new churches. The Orthodox church, Chaillot tells us, is reacting to this with a spread of its own missionary endeavour. Outside the work of one or two metropolitan bishops and a number of monks in the past, the Ethiopian church has not been very conspicuous for its missionary work, conversion often being the consequence of conquest by the state rather than any religious conviction.

Chaillot's fourth chapter, on the Sunday School movement, is also fascinating. It shows how over many years students managed to organise discussion or teaching groups under the most difficult circumstances, and how such groups eventually came to form a significant national association recognised by the patriarchate, *Mabeber Kidusan*. Here and in other contexts Chaillot adds a very useful contribution by citing verbatim the comments of Ethiopians about their aims and aspirations.

A brief excursus on literature is followed by Ch. 6, on church teaching. This provides a full account of the traditional teaching schools of the church, with its special features of *zema* and *gene*. There is also a section on the life of the students who attend these schools, and on the modern theological colleges that have been set up in parallel to the traditional schools.

Two chapters describe the liturgical and spiritual life of the church, while the final chapter is devoted to monastic life. There is a great deal of detail, which, as in other chapters of the book, is inevitably presented in the form of a list with brief commentary on each point. These chapters are quite comprehensive in the information they offer, reservoirs of information on all aspects of the themes of their titles.

In sum, an excellent source book, and written in the rather unexciting manner of such books except where it comes alive with the citations of the faithful. I found very little to complain about in the writing (except for people being expelled instead of expelled). Small black and white illustrations abound, not captioned, which is a pity, but with a caption list at the back. There also are the Ethiopian alphabet, several maps, a graph showing the church organisation, plans of typical churches, a substantial bibliography, and some useful addresses.

Stuart Munro-Hay

Wilhelm Baum, Äthiopien und der Westen im Mittelalter. Die Selbstbehauptung der christlichen Kultur am oberen Nil zwischen dem islamischen Orient und dem europäischen Kolonialismus (Einführungen in das orientalische Christentum 2), Klagenfurt (Verlag Kitab) 2001, ISBN 3-902005-06-8, 279 Seiten und 16 Farbtafeln

Nachdem der Autor bereits mit zwei Erscheinungen, die den Oriens Christianus berühren, hervorgetreten ist,¹ legt er nun eine weitere Veröffentlichung vor. Sie kann aber nach näherer Betrachtung nur gemischte Gefühle hervorrufen. Nicht nur weil von einer Lektorierung kaum noch etwas zu spüren ist (die Zahl fehlerhafter Wortverdrehungen, das Auslassen und Verwechseln von Buchstaben [z.B. statt, »von« den Brincken, wird die Kölner Mediävistin zu »Van«...] ist so groß, daß man von einer Aufzählung Abstand nehmen muß), sondern weil auch die »Wissenschaftlichkeit« zu wünschen übrig läßt. Es findet sich keine sinnvolle Transkription von orientalischen Sprachen, z.B. Kuschiten/= pers. Kusa [korrekt: Kušaya]², S. 14, »Habasha« [= arab. al-Ḥabaša], S. 74 u. a., der allgemein bekannte Herrschertitel wird von Baum als »Negusa nagast« angegeben (S. 27), was eine Verballhornung des Hammerschmidtschen Vorschlags: *neḡuṣā nāḡāst* bedeutet; aber auch die Umschreibung des Griechischen ist mangelhaft (S. 16, 27 u. ö.). Der laufende Text vermischt legendäre Berichte mit historischen Fakten (z. B. S. 74ff.), weil eine klare Abgrenzung der Strukturen und Formen nicht vorhanden ist. Die Toponomastik ist nur lückenhaft erklärt; die angeblich berücksichtigte Literatur, die am Ende des Buches – leider nicht immer korrekt³ – zusammengestellt worden ist, erscheint mehr zufällig als systematisch; viele wichtige

1 (1) Die Verwandlungen des Mythos vom Reich des Priesterkönigs Johannes. Rom, Byzanz und die Christen des Orients im Mittelalter, Klagenfurt 1999 (Verlag Kitab); (2) zusammen mit Dietmar W. Winkler und einem Beitrag von Manfred Hutter: Die apostolische Kirche des Ostens. Geschichte der sog. Nestorianer (Einführungen in das orientalische Christentum 1) Klagenfurt 2000 (Verlag Kitab).

2 Gernot Walser, Die Völkerschaften auf den Reliefs von Persopolis, Berlin 1966, 99; siehe auch Piotr O. Scholz, *Ethiopia and the East: Observations on contacts along the southern "silk route" with particular regard for ancient Oriental and Iranian sources*, in: Claude Lepage (Hg.), *Études éthiopiennes (Actes de la Xe conférence internationale des études éthiopiennes Paris, 24-28 août 1988)* I, Paris 1994, 53-59.

3 Julius Aßfalg ist nicht Autor sondern Mitherausgeber [mit Paul Krüger (†)] des KWCO;