This volume offers an extended collection of essays, some of which were first presented at a panel on Oral Traditions in Ethiopian Studies held at the 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Darre Dawa in September 2012. The panel asked to investigate the suggestion that, in the history of Ethiopian studies, reflection on the methodology of orality did not receive the attention it deserves, given its importance in many fields of research. Still the core matter of this Supplement to AETHIOPICA is to follow up on how Ethiopian studies deal with oral texts as historical and (in the widest sense of the word) ethnographic sources. The editors and authors question the methods and styles used in the study of oral sources, and provide methodological, theoretical, and empirical insights into the work with orality in Ethiopian studies. Thirteen field cases and an introduction investigate, among others, the history of orality research, the interplay of written and oral evidence, methods of working in purely oral societies, and explore genres of oral traditions and orality in Ethiopia.
Oral Traditions in Ethiopian Studies
Oral Traditions in Ethiopian Studies

Edited by
Alexander Meckelburg, Sophia Dege-Müller,
Dirk Bustorf

2018
Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden
Veröffentlicht mit Unterstützung der Hamburgischen Wissenschaftlichen Stiftung.

Hamburgische
Wissenschaftliche
Stiftung

© Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden 2018
This book, including all of its parts, is protected by copyright.
Any use beyond the limits of copyright law without the permission of the publisher is forbidden and subject to penalty. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage and processing in electronic systems.

On the front cover (left to right): blessing for peace (Abore, 2007; photo courtesy of E. C. Gabbert), Fasil Gǝmb (drawing with pen and watercolour, Gondär, April 1999; courtesy of M. J. Ramos); note taking during interview with Opuo elders (Wanke, Itang ḏärā, Gambella, October 2006; photo courtesy of A. Meckelburg); peace workshop’s ritual slaughtering and final blessings (Abore, 2007; photo courtesy of E. C. Gabbert).

On the spine: Bible students in Waqro Maryam (Waqro Maryam, Tagray, September 2005; photo courtesy of A. Meckelburg).

On the back cover (left to right): Gwama men members of a work party drinking local beer (Lake ṣḥābalā, Mao-Komo special ḏärā, September 2011; photo courtesy of A. Meckelburg); Kara elders debating the merits of irrigation (Dus, Hamār ḏärā, SNNPR, October 2006; photo courtesy of F. Girke); the ethnographer immersed in the debates of the Nyinyankot age set (Dus, Hamār ḏärā, November 2004; photo courtesy of F. Girke); Sceriffa ʿAlawiyya among Muslim leaders (Piola Case-lli Archive in Rome, around 1930; photo courtesy of S. Bruzzi).

Printing and binding by Memminger MedienCentrum Druckerei und Verlags AG.
Printed on permanent/durable paper.
Typesetting and copy editing: xxxx
Printed in Germany
www.harrassowitz-verlag.de
ISSN xxxx
ISBN xxxx
Oral Traditions in Ethiopian Studies  
Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................... v

DIRK BUSTORF, ALEXANDER MECKELBURG, SOPHIA DEGE-MÜLLER, Introduction: Oral Traditions in Ethiopian Studies ................................................................. 1

MANUEL JOÃO RAMOS, Castle Building in Seventeenth-Century Gondär (Ethiopia) ........................................................................................................... 25

ANAÏS WION, Memory and Oblivion in the History of Gong Monastery (1670–1750): The Paradoxes of Qubat Historiography ......................................................... 43

HANNA RUBINKOWSKA-ANIOŁ, Between Oral and Written Tradition: A Vision of the State during the Times of Ḥaylā Šēlle I ........................................... 65

ÉLOI FICQUET, The Life and Deeds of Ras Wädağe, Lord of Amhara from c.1720 to 1760: Edition of an Oral Account Recorded by Arnauld d’Abbadie in the 1840s ........................................... 81

SILVIA BRUZZI, Gendering Italian Pro-Islamic Policy in Ethiopia (1936–1941) through the Prism of Oral and Visual Sources ........................................... 117

DIRK BUSTORF, Religious Identity Claims and Historical Consciousness in Myths of Origin among the Gurage, Ethiopia .......................................................... 139

FESSEHA BERHE, The Dob’a in Light of Oral Traditions from Eastern and Southern Tägray ............................................................................................................. 163


ANDREAS WETTER, The Origin of Two Argobba Villages in South-Eastern Wällo: The Tradition of Abbayye Kulubas and Abbayye Fäqi Abmād ........................................................................... 213

ECHI CHRISTINA GABBERT, Journey in Translation or Translating Silences: Reflections on the Documentation and Interpretation of Oral Sources .................................................................................. 243

FELIX GIRKE, The Triangle of Orality: On Language, Culture, and Fieldwork in South Omo ........................................................................................................... 267
MEZGEBU BELAY, *Feuding and the ‘Myth of Masculinity’ as Expressed through the Traditional Verbal Arts in Eastern Goğam, Amhara Region* ................................................................. 293


List of Contributors ................................................................................................. 327