



Faculty of Humanities



Field work on Ethiopian Islamic manuscripts Reflections on the first IslHornAfr mission

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IslHornAfr: Project framework

- Financing by the European Research Council Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) Advanced Grant no. 322849
- Period of financing: 01/07/ 2013-31/06/ 2018
- Originally based at the University of Florence (01.07.13)
- Transferred to the University of Copenhagen on 01.02.14
- Now based at the Institute of Cross-cultural and Regional Studies/University of Copenhagen



IslHornAfr: Staff

Principal Investigator: Alessandro Gori

Associated Researchers:

- Dr. Sara Fani
- Dr. Adday Hernandez
- Dr. Michele Petrone
- Dr. Anne Regourd
- Mr. Orhan Toy



IslHornAfr: main aim

- Mapping the Islamic literature in the Horn of Africa (in Arabic and in local languages) and
- Its production, circulation and usage

Data collection:

- Printed books and manuscripts

Database:

- Storage and evaluation of the data



Islamic manuscript tradition of Ethiopia

Steps of the research:

- Localization
- Digitization
- Description
- Evaluation

Further interventions:

- Preservation
- Conservation



Islamic manuscripts in Ethiopia: easy localisation

In established institutions

- Public libraries: e.g. Institute of Ethiopian Studies

Public museums:

- Harari national Museum; Jimma Museum

Private libraries/museums

- 'Abdullah Sharif Private Museum (Harar)

International collectors

European libraries

Private possession of European scholars (the late Prof. Drewes, Leiden)



Islamic manuscripts in Ethiopia: difficult localisation

Sufi shrines

- Guardians; successors of the founder
- Zāwiya

Madrasas

Koranic Schools

Qāḍī courts

Private learned men

Family legacy

«Diaspora» (Somali, Harari)



Organizing fieldwork in Ethiopia

Network of acquaintances

- Students of the Philology programme at the university of Addis Ababa
- Local learned men and scholars

Normal procedure followed

- Create reciprocal trust
- «Do ut des» relationship
- Creation of infrastructure
- Dissemination of skills
- Support in local cultural activities



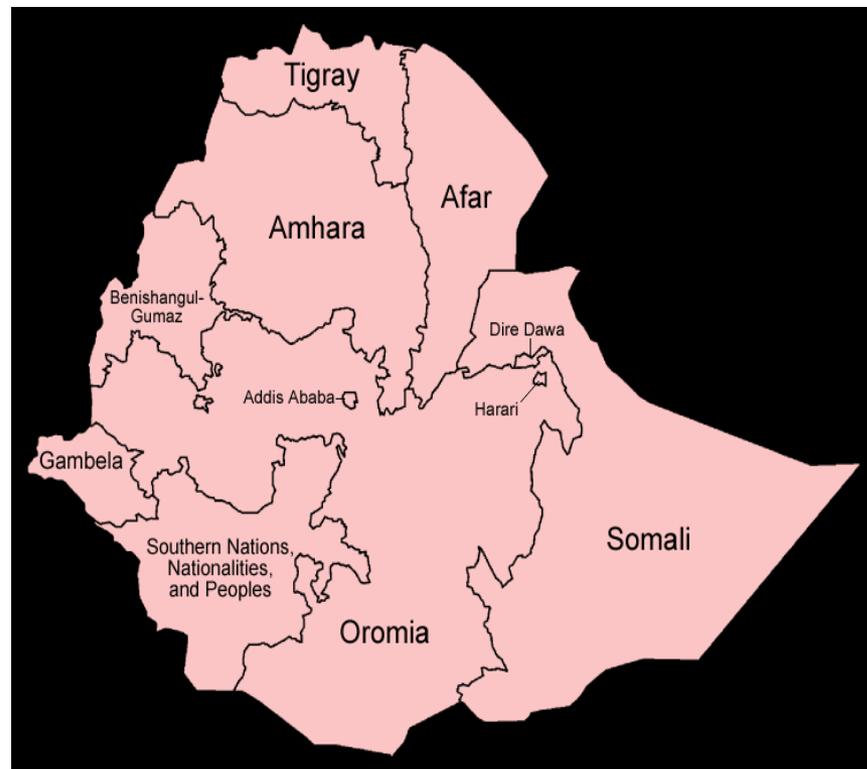
Ethiopia: general framework

Local authorities and administrators

Ethiopia: federal republic

- Ethnic federalism

Administrative units:
regional states and chartered cities, zones, wäräda (districts) and qäbäle (wards)



Agreements achieved

- Governmental/political authorities (second level)
- Administrative authorities (second level)
- Local cultural offices (regional state)
- Authorization needed
- Authorization of the of the Oromo Regional State



Open issues and problems

Conflicts among different level of power

- Federal (central) vs. regional state

Cultural authorities vs. Administrative authorities

University vs. political administration

Relationships with guides and «facilitators»



Open issues and problems

Local owners relationship with:

- Administration/university
- Researchers

Payment issue:

- *baḥšīš*, standard salary, gifts

Support in developing skills and capacities



Advantages of working in an Islamic environment

- No church hierarchy
 - Patriarchate
 - Central administration of monasteries
- Secular clergy vs monastics
- Possibly less bureaucratization





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