

## Enno Littmann

### An Assessment of His Legacy in the Light of Ongoing Scholarly Debates<sup>1</sup>

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Enno Littmann was born on 16 September 1875 in Oldenburg, Lower Saxony, Germany. According to his *Autobiographical Sketch*, written ‘to be red on my grave’, Littmann came from a family of translators, his grandfather having been a translator in Napoleon’s army. He developed an interest in ancient languages at an early age and started to learn Arabic, Syrian, Persian and Italian by himself. Although Hebrew was optional, he undertook this class (Littmann 1959: XIII–XIV). In the years 1894–1898, he studied in Berlin, Greifswald and Halle where he made contact and became friends with the famous Orientalists of the time, August Dillmann and Praetorius (Littmann 1959: XIV–XV). He concentrated his research on all major Semitic studies with the exception of Akkadian.

In Ethiopia, Littmann is remembered for his research on Ethio-Semitic languages and literature especially Gəʿəz, Tigrinya, and particularly Tigré. Above all, he is well remembered for leading the successful Deutsche-Aksum Expedition (DAE) in 1906 and for the subsequent publication of the four-volume field report in 1913. In addition to his research in Ethio-Semitic studies, Littmann also contributed a lot on Arabic philology and Semitic epigraphy, in which he was considered one of the leading specialists of his generation. His interests extended to the Ethio-Cushitic languages and Littmann was able to write poetry in Oromiffaa (Kleiner 2007: 588b–589a). He also produced several scholarly papers on Ethiopian history and culture.

In this article I will focus only on Littmann’s works on Ethiopian studies, to which he contributed more than 130 monographs, reviews and articles. In addition to the study of the origin of the Ethiopian

writing system, Littmann also contributed a lot to the study of pre-Aksumite, Aksumite and Greek inscriptions found in Ethiopia. In particular, his theory of the origin of the Ethiopian alphabet – formulated after the DAE expedition (1906) to Aksum, Yäha and Eritrea – was universally accepted for almost a century until it was first questioned by Ethiopianist scholars in the 1950s (Drewes 1959: 83–88; Drewes 1962: 2–4; Drewes and Schneider 1976: 95–107). According to Littmann, the Ethiopic alphabet originated from monumental Epigraphic South Arabian (ESA), which was brought by immigrants from South Arabia, the Ḥabašat and the Agʿaziyan. According to Drewes (1959: 83–88), this hypothesis should now be revised since he believes the Ethiopic alphabet must have originated from the cursive ESA not from the monumental writing (Drewes 1959: 83–88).

In addition to his work on epigraphy, Littmann is also known for a series of critical editions of Gəʿəz texts. In the critical edition and translation of *Ardeʿt: The Magic Book of the Disciples*, Littmann consolidates the work pioneered by the French scholar René Basset published in his series *Apocryphes Éthiopiens* (Littmann 1904a: 1–48).

In winter 1900/1901, Littmann copied from the Royal Library in Berlin the *Chronicle of Atse Tewodros* (1855–1868), entitled *Yä Tewodros Tarik* by its author Däbtära Zännäb. In the following year, he edited and published the Amharic version (with the English title: *The Chronicle of King Theodore of Abyssinia*) from the sole manuscript known to have existed (catalogued as ms. Orient. quart. 478 in the Royal Library in Berlin; Littmann 1902: v–vii). Although he promised to publish the text’s English version, this project never materialized.



Fig.1: Portrait of Littmann, in Arabic clothes by an unknown artist, ceiling at Weinstube Stanis in Rottenburg

In the early twentieth century, Littmann continued editing manuscripts. Among which I consider the treatise attributed to Zär'a Ya'qob and his disciple Wäldä H̄eywät to be important for the understanding of Ethiopian philosophy. It was translated from the sole surviving manuscript known in the d'Abbadie *Catalogue raisonné* (1859) as *Hatäta Zära Ya'qob* (but also Wäldä H̄eywät); its complete title reads, *Livre de la Sagesse, de l'Examen, de la philosophie et des arguments rassemblés par un grand docteur de notre pays, nommé Walda Hiwat* (d'Abbadie 1859: 212).<sup>2</sup>

#### Littmann and the DAE (1906) contribution in retrospect

Enno Littmann and his colleagues in the *Deutsche Aksum Expedition* made a notable contribution to our understanding of the 'Pre-Aksumite' and Aksumite archaeology, epigraphy, history and architecture. Arguably, no other research project ever undertaken in northeast Africa has left such a lasting impact on Ethiopian studies as the German expedition of 1906. Officially called the *Deutsche Aksum-Expedition* (DAE), it was financed by the German Kaiser and lasted eighty-four days from from 12 January to 7 April (Phillipson 1997: 1–3). The scholarly contribution of Enno Littmann to Ethiopian studies is well illustrated by the scholarly mission's published report. Littmann was the principal author of the four-volume publication, which detailed the DAE's extensive ethnographic documentation. The impressive results were perhaps due to the good relations between the German team and the local people in Aksum in particular and northern Ethiopia in general, although Littmann (and his team) did not attempt to present their report in the language of the local people or in other European languages comprehensible to (present day) Ethiopians. The beginning of the First World War in 1914 – just a year after the publication of the DAE field report – perhaps made it difficult to rectify this omission, as did the continued alienation of Germany in the inter-war period.



Fig. 2: Littmann residence, Tübingen, Germany

However, we also know that local informants helped the German mission to document most of the visible archaeological sites in northern Ethiopia but that Littmann and his colleagues did not care to acknowledge them appropriately. Nor did they attempt to involve Ethiopians in the mission except as laborers and translators. As noted by Phillipson, perhaps this should be understood in the context of the mind-set of European researchers working in other parts of the world in the early twentieth century (2011: 136).

Although the published volumes of the ethnographic material shows the quality of the expedition's documentation, curiously none of the expedition's archives were available for scholarly scrutiny until the 1990s, at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Phillipson 1997: 4; Phillipson 2011: 136). The archives remain largely unexploited even a century after the expedition. Geographically speaking, the contribution of the



Fig. 3a: Littmann Street in Tübingen, Germany

DAE investigation to our knowledge of Ethiopia's past is strictly limited to the northern part of the country. It focused on the ancient sites of Aksum – Yäha – Däbrä Dammo, Mät'ära, Qohayto, and Toḵonda<sup>c</sup>. Other important 'pre-Aksumite' and Aksumite sites are either mentioned in passing or never cited at all. Most of the information used by the DAE about Lalibela (Phillipson 2011: 186) and Agula<sup>c</sup> Ch'erqos (Littmann et al. 1913 Band II: 98), for instance, was taken from Raffray's and the Napier expedition respectively.

Although the German mission was able to document extensive ethnographic findings, it never attempted to use the huge archive after 1913. The large number of photos taken and the extent of the ethnographic documentation undertaken suggest that the German team were on good terms with the local population (including priests and church officials), but unfortunately no attempt was made to offer to readers a better picture of this rapport in the published account of the expedition. Nor did Littmann and his DAE colleagues make any attempt to produce disciples to continue in their footsteps. This may be explained by the fact that, in the interwar period, Littmann almost completely abandoned Ethiopian studies in favour of Arabic philology and Arabic folk literature<sup>3</sup> (Kleiner 2007: 589a–589b).

The work of the DAE as far as stelae, buildings and tombs are concerned, was strictly focused on the clearance and exposure of monuments rather than detailed excavation to understand the use, purpose,



Fig. 3b: Official inauguration of the Littmann Street in Aksum, below May Shum, in presence of the conference organizers, the Tigrai tourism and culture office and the German Embassy, January 2006, photo by Wolfgang Hahn

associations or age of the sites concerned (Phillipson 2011: 143). It is true that the expedition laid the foundations for the study of Aksumite archaeology, but its contribution to our understanding of the formation of the Aksumite kingdom/state, its chronology, economy (domestic, regional and international), social organization, ideology, consolidation and eventual decline and collapse is very limited. In addition, the research only documented the visible edifices of northern Ethiopia (Phillipson 2011: 148). The mission's major activity was only to plan and sketch the monuments. No stratigraphic context or provenance of the objects documented was presented (Godet 1977: 19; Phillipson 1997: 1–2; Phillipson 2011: 148).



Fig. 3c: Plaque in memoriam of Enno Littmann at the Littmann-Street in Aksum, 2010

Although it is important to note here that the DAE presented the first description of Aksumite pottery (Fattovich 2011: 203), this important archaeological element was scarcely exploited by the German mission, save for the presentation of potsherds from the surface collection (see Littmann et al 1913, Band II: 200, 203–4, 206–8). In addition, while the DAE exposed several monuments partially known to previous travellers and researchers (such as Theodore Bent), nothing was proposed to conserve the archaeological and cultural sites nor the objects documented. Nor was any attempt made to train locals to do the job of conservation. In the following decades, some of the monuments were destroyed deliberately or unconsciously and our knowledge about some of the sites and objects is dependent on the excellent sketches and plans made by the members of the expedition.

In photos taken by the expedition (Phillipson 1997: 4 fig. 6), one can see the equipment used by daily laborers, including locally made baskets and digging materials of unknown origin. Although it looks like a minor detail, in my view it is important to know what was locally purchased and what was imported from Europe.

It is almost unanimously agreed that the DAE laid a solid ground for epigraphic research in Ethiopia. The published inscriptions were well interpreted, analyzed and illustrated with high quality photos in the fourth volume of the corpus. Drewes writes ‘one cannot but feel the greatest admiration for the acumen and competence he [Littmann] displayed in the presentation of the inscriptions and classical Ethiopic’ (Drewes 1991: 383). The designation of the pre-Aksumite, Aksumite, and Greek inscriptions with ordinal numbers followed by the DAE was used for about eight decades until it was changed in the 1990s into the designation presented by the RIÉ (Bernard et al. 1991).

The major contribution of the DAE team was its meticulous description, sketching and classification of Aksumite architecture; although some of the reconstructions of partially lost elite Aksumite edifices were often based on pure hypothesis. The work has become increasingly important over the last century as more and more monuments have disappeared or been obscured due to neglect and the expansion of the modern town of Aksum (Phillipson 1998: 611; Fattovich 2011: 223).

The designation of Aksumite stelae as Stela 1, 2, 3 etc. in the modern town of Aksum is still relevant and used by researchers today. Although the German researchers rightly identified the stelae in Aksum as funerary monuments and suggested that the edifices may have been part of a regional megalithic culture of memorial monuments (*nephesesh*) well known among Semitic cultures from Syria through Yemen from the first millennium BCE, their interpretation of the Aksumite culture was immensely influenced by the then South Arabian paradigm concerning the origin of this African civilization (Drewes 1962: 2–4; Fattovich 2011: 223).

According to ‘traditional scholarship’, the Ḥabašāt came from South Arabia in the first half of the first millennium BC to settle in the northern part of Ethiopia in present-day Tigray and Eritrea, although no evidence can be presented for the antiquity of this name in southern Arabia itself



Fig. 4: *Timqet* celebrations (?) in Aksum. Note the new Ethiopian flag created in 1897

(Müller 2005: 948b; Marrasini 2011: 91). No Sabaic epigraphic evidence has so far been documented before the second century AD to support the claim that the Ḥabašāt came from South Arabia (Müller 2005: 948b). The ḥbšt (Ḥabašāt) in the Sabaean inscriptions from the end of the second century AD already referred to Abyssinia (Müller 2005: 949a).

#### Littmann on the emergence of Gəʿəz script

Two types of writings were attested in ancient South Arabia in the first millennium BCE. Almost simultaneously, they were also documented in ancient Ethiopia. These are cursive and monumental alphabets. The monumental alphabet writing is believed to be derived from the cursive script (Schneider 1983:412). After a thorough study of ‘pre-Aksumite’ and Aksumite inscriptions, Enno Littmann published his results in 1913. Littmann presented his overview of the inscriptions in great detail on pages 76–82 of volume IV of the expedition’s publication and prepared



Fig. 5: *Wängelä Wärq* from Aksum Şeyon Church

an illustration at the end. His conclusion was that the Ethiopic writing system was derived from the South Arabian monumental *musnad* script (Drewes and Schneider 1976: 95). But in 1915 Adolf Grohmann came to the opposite conclusion. He proposed the idea that the Gəʿəz alphabet was derived from South Arabian cursive writing (Grohmann 1915: 57–87). However, the scientific community continued to support Littmann’s view until the 1950s.<sup>4</sup> In the early twentieth century, the number of known inscriptions in cursive script was very limited but in the ensuing decades the number increased greatly on both sides of the Red Sea.

In the mid-1950s, the challenge to Littmann’s hypothesis grew stronger. It was represented by two prominent Ethiopianist epigraphists: Abraham Johannes Drewes and Roger Schneider. According to these scholars there were two types of ‘pre-Aksumite’ population. This hypothesis was originally formulated by Drewes in the late 1950s and further developed into full-fledged hypothesis by Schneider in the 1970s and later (Drewes 1955: 121-126; 1959: 83–99; 1962: 2-4; 1980: 35–54;



Fig. 6: Women using the pounding hollow on the foot base of Stela 3

Schneider 1972: 23–25; 1976: 47–54, 1983: 412–416; 2003: 609–614). Likewise these scholars divide the ‘pre-Aksumite’ inscriptions into two:

Group I) Most of them could be compared to the Sabaean inscriptions of South Arabia by their morphology, lexicography, phraseology, deity names and style of writing. Many of the authors of these inscriptions explicitly mention their origin. Probably they originally came from Maʿarib<sup>5</sup> and Hadaqan (located north of Sanʿa).<sup>6</sup>

Group II) The inscriptions in this group have their own specific features, especially phonetics and vocabulary unattested in Epigraphic South Arabian documents (Drewes 1959: 83–99; 1980: 35-54; Schneider 1972: 23–25; 1976: 47–54; 1983: 412–416; 2003: 609–614). It is clear that the authors of these inscriptions were not Sabaeans but indigenous scribes. In parallel to the monumental type of writing, there were also several inscriptions inscribed in cursive texts (Schneider 1983: 412).



Fig. 7: Priests from Aksum

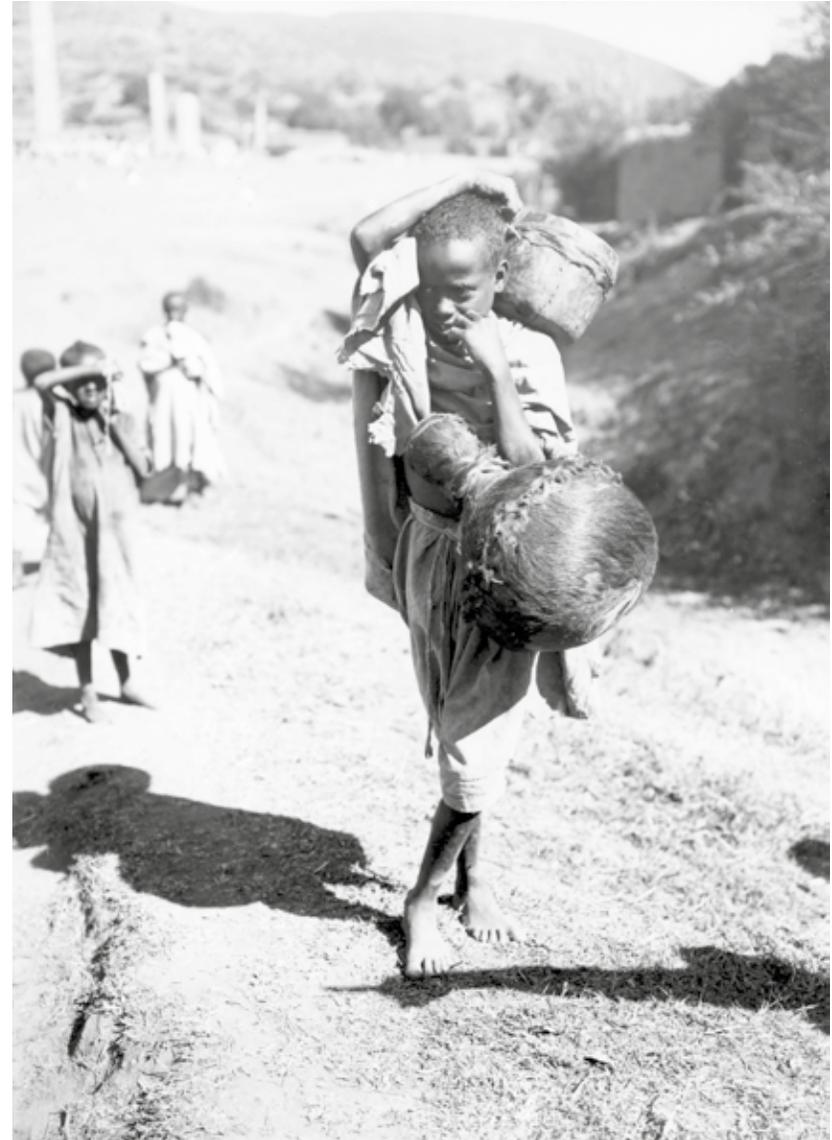


Fig. 8: Stelae Park. View from May Shum?

According to Schneider, the inscriptions of Group II suggest a single and coherent language, with divergences from Sabaic, all of which tend towards Gəʿəz. He then attributes them to a local population of ‘Ethiopians’. This means, there were two types of population in northern Ethiopia during the first millennium BC. The politically dominant and independent local population and a very small number of Sabaeen immigrants from Southern Arabia living and working by the good will of the local élites as artisans, masons and merchants (Schneider 1983: 412–415).

According to paleographic studies, monumental alphabets were introduced into Ethiopia in the second half of the fifth millennium BCE from South Arabia<sup>7</sup> and were used by the élite. The first Sabaeen inscriptions documented in Ethiopia were monumental. In the early twentieth century, when Littmann was working in northern Ethiopia, dozens of them, albeit fragmentary, were already known. Littmann himself was able to document a certain number of graffiti written in South Arabian cursive alphabet. But in the course of the twentieth century, several other inscriptions in monumental and cursive alphabets were discovered. Epigraphists thought that these Ethiopian cursive scripts were corrupted forms of monumental alphabets and postdated the monumental inscriptions. But, as more and more inscriptions were discovered, this opinion was modified. In fact some of the inscriptions depicted on rock surfaces were of pottery and bronze objects antedating the monumental script. And some of the letters were in archaic forms and never observed in the inscriptions in monumental script (Schneider 1983:413). Therefore, they cannot have derived from this writing system.

The problem is that we cannot yet establish how and when these cursive alphabets emerged in Ethiopia. One may surmise that the same Sabaeans who introduced the monumental script also brought the cursive script to northern Ethiopia. At that stage the number of these Sabaeen immigrants may have reduced significantly and subsequently disappeared, probably assimilating with the indigenous population. With them the monumental writing also ceased to be used.<sup>8</sup>

The cursive script, however, continued to be used and evolve. In the second half of the second century AD, Gəʿəz emerged as a written



Fig. 9: Photo DAE Abb 9=DAE 857=MBA Sep. 224.09

language. In addition, most of these graffiti were recovered from Akkälä Guzay, southeast Eritrea, where the only Sabaeen settlement was recorded at Mät'ära. In southwest Eritrea, where several Sabaeen settlement sites were documented, no single inscription in cursive writing was discovered. Finally, neither the language nor the onomastics of these texts in cursive script can be considered Sabaeen.<sup>9</sup>

It should be noted that the language of the inscriptions of the five kings of the D<sup>c</sup>MT polity were all written in the second group type using non-Sabaeen language (Schneider 1976: 52). The oldest documents are those of the king W<sup>c</sup>RN H<sup>c</sup>YWT descendant of SLMN F<sup>c</sup>TRN (mentioned in RIÉth I, RIÉth 7, RIÉth 11, RIÉth 15, RIÉth 18-19, RIÉth 25, RIÉth 27, RIÉth 36-37 and RIÉth 289). He was apparently a contemporary of the Sabaeen mukarrib Karib'il the Great and thus would have reigned around 700 BCE.<sup>10</sup> His successors were RD<sup>c</sup>M descendant of SLMN F<sup>c</sup>TRN attested in RIÉth 9 and Addi Akaweh 1 (Gajda and Yohannes Gebre Selassie 2009: 49–61) and RIÉth 12 (from



Fig. 10: Local workers in Aksum clearing one of the sites; photo DAE Abb 20= DAE 0873

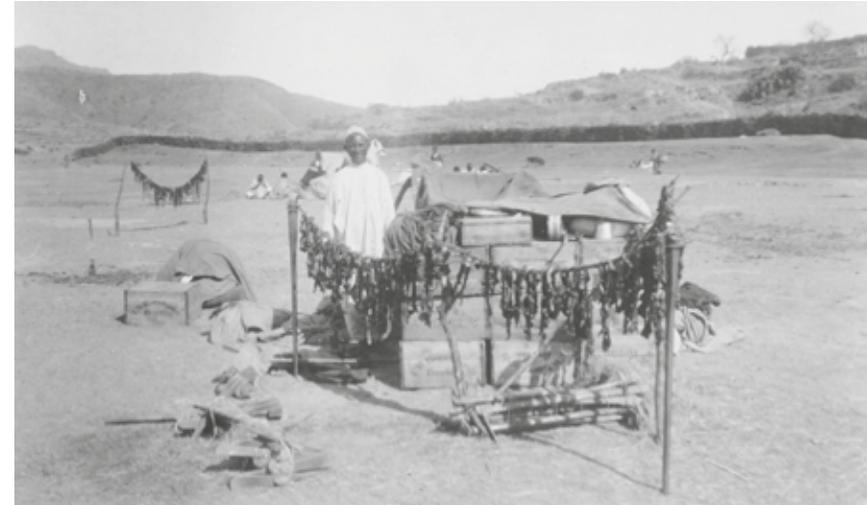


Fig. 11: Partial view of DAE camp in Aksum; photo DAE Abb 28=DAE 0867

Kaskase, Eritrea), RBḤ descendent of W<sup>c</sup>RN RYDN (RIÉth 8), LMN son of RBḤ (RIÉth 5, RIÉth 10, RIÉth 13) and invoked in RIÉth 61 and W<sup>c</sup>RN son of RD<sup>o</sup>M attested in MG 3 and MG 4 (Gajda, Yohannes Gebre Selassie and Hiluf Berhe 2009: 33–48; Robin 1998: 780–90).

Two ruling dynasties can be identified according to the epithet of the kings mentioned in the inscriptions: the Mukarrib of D<sup>o</sup>MT and the Mukarrib of D<sup>o</sup>MT and Saba<sup>o</sup> (Bernard et al: 1991: 67). This theory of two groups was forwarded partly as a critique of a hypothesis advanced by Conti Rossini in his *Storia d’Etiopia* published in 1928 (99–106; Schneider 1976: 47–54 notably 47–50). Subsequently, the main criticism has come from Italian scholars such as Avanzini and Marrasini who think that the hypothesis formulated by Conti Rossini has some validity even though the specifics of most of his arguments are questionable (Avanzini 1989: 469–478; Marrasini 2011: 90–91). Avanzini rebuffed Drewes and Schneider for accepting without serious consideration *D’une autonomie du développement graphique en Éthiopie par rapport à l’Arabie du Sud* (Avanzini 1989: 471–72). Conti Rossini’s central idea is that the pre-Aksumite Ethiopian civilization in all its as-



Fig. 12: Littmann shaking hands with *Dejjazmach* Gäbrä Sellase, the then *Nebur'd* and Governor of Aksum; photo DAE 63. 34 querstrich Sep. 23. 17 BrandenbgLandesamtDenk (2)

pects (writing, language, architecture, agriculture, water management, arms etc.) draws its inspiration from Southern Arabian models (Conti Rossini: 1928: 99–106; Schneider 1976: 47–50).

Christian Robin joined the debate in his publication of the *Great Temple*, a report of an archaeological and epigraphic expedition at Yeha in 1998 (Robin and de Maigret 1998: 737–797). According to Robin, what is left unsaid by other scholars is that the mentioned groups are not very different. The two distinct populations proposed by Schneider, are clearly closely related since they write languages that are almost identical and worship the same deities. Though never clearly stated, the origin of Schneider's Group II can only be Arabia. If one inclines to the hypothesis of a single population which came from Arabia, it has to be admitted that it was composed of at least two groups since the inscriptions explicitly mention D<sup>c</sup>MT and Saba<sup>c</sup> (Robin and de Maigret 1998: 791). Robin concludes his discussion with the following suggestions:

It is practically impossible to oppose two homogenous groups of inscriptions. In Schneider's group I, only a very few, such as RIÉth 30 (from Gobochla) and RIÉth 39 (from Yeha) can be considered truly Sabaeans; the other have original traits. On the other hand, the inscriptions in Group II do not constitute a homogeneous group and reveal varieties or evolutions (Robin and de Maigret 1998: 791).

Neither the onomastics nor the decorative and iconographic repertoire differentiates the two groups. The dividing line drawn by Schneider does not seem very significant (Robin and de Maigret 1998: 792).

a) The 'pre-Aksumite' inscriptions are written in language related to Sabaic, but have a whole series of particular characteristics (notably phonetic, morphologic and lexicographic). Robin joins Avanzini in arguing that these linguistic differences can be explained by a phenomenon of contact between Sabaeans from Arabia autochthones (Robin and de Maigret 1998: 792; Avanzini 1989: 41–42).

More recently a Russian scholar, Serguei Frantsouzoff, joined the criticism of Drewes and Schneider in an article presented at the XV<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies held at Hamburg (Frantsouzoff 2006: 572–586). In his presentation, Frantsouzoff argues that 'the careful analysis of the palaeography of Ethio-Sabaic monumental inscriptions and non-standard South Arabian texts from Ethiopia demonstrates that they are not separated by a rigid barrier' (Frantsouzoff 2006: 574). Frantsouzoff proposes comparison of RIÉ 31, with RIÉ 165, the abecedary from Dakhanamo, to see how 'South Arabian writings' could be distorted in the hands of less skilled scribes (Frantsouzoff 2006: 574–575). He further questions the logic of Schneider's refusal to attribute 'pre-Aksumite' cursive writing to South Arabian immigrants. He asks, if those who brought an ancestor of this script to the Horn of Africa did not belong to the epigraphic tradition of ancient Yemen, why were the 'cursive' characters [RIÉ 165] arranged in almost the same alphabetic letter-order as that of South Arabian signs? (Frantsouzoff 2006: 575). Finally Frantsouzoff, blames inexperienced scribes in 'pre-Aksumite' Ethiopia for the difference in the morphology of those inscriptions labeled Group I and Group II by Drewes and Schneider not a difference in their provenance (Frantsouzoff 2006: 576).

## Conclusion

To my knowledge, Littmann is the only Ethiopianist to whom an international conference is dedicated. To date, four international conferences have been held, initiated by the archaeologist Steffen Wenig of the Humboldt-University Berlin. The first was held in Munich (2002),<sup>11</sup> the second in Aksum, Ethiopia (2006),<sup>12</sup> the third in Berlin (2008)<sup>13</sup> and the fourth in Tübingen (2014),<sup>14</sup> after the original plan to hold it in Egypt was abandoned following the Egyptian revolution. The Tigrayan authorities have shown interest in hosting the Fifth Littmann International Conference in Tigray. In these conferences, topics such as archaeology, epigraphy, linguistics and culture, to mention just a few, are presented by scholars from Ethiopia, other regions of Africa, the US, Europe and the Middle East. In recognition of his contribution as a researcher and professor of Semitic studies, a street is named after Littmann in Tübingen (Fig. 3a), Germany. To inhabitants and local administrative bodies in Aksum, the DAE is synonymous with the team leader of the mission, Littmann. As a result, during the Enno Littmann Conference in Aksum in 2006, a street in Aksum was named ‘Littmann Street’ (Fig. 3b).

Finally, I cannot overlook Littmann’s impressive research and contribution to the linguistics and philology of Tigré. As Gianfrancesco Lusini notes: ‘No one has contributed to the knowledge of the Tigrenna language more than Enno Littmann’ (2011: 363). This Semitic language was both the first and final scholarly exercise of an energetic Ethiopianist. The first being his PhD on the verb in Tigré (defended in 1898) and the last a Tigré-German-English dictionary (posthumous publication, 1962) co-authored with Maria Höfner (Kleiner 2007: 588b–589b). New evidence and counter evidence feed the debate and assures its continuity. Vive le débat!

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### Photo credits

- Fig.1: Portrait of Littmann, in Arabic clothes by an unknown artist, ceiling at Weinstube Stanis in Rottenburg; photo by Hiluf Berhe: 2 April 2014
- Fig. 2: Littmann residence, Tübingen, Germany; photo Ch. Melchers
- Fig. 3a: Littmann Street in Tübingen, Germany
- Fig. 3b: Littmann Street in Aksum, Ethiopia; photo Wolfgang Hahn
- Fig. 3c: Plaque in memoriam of Enno Littmann at the Littmann-Street in Aksum, 2010; photo Yohannes Gebre Selassie
- Fig. 4: *Timqet* celebrations (?) in Aksum. Note the new Ethiopian flag created in 1897; photo DAE AbbI=774=MBA 224805

- Fig. 5: *Wängelzä Wäraq* from Aksum Şeyon Church; photo DAE Abb 4=789  
 Fig. 6: Women using the pounding hollow on the foot base of Stela 3; photo DAE Abb 27=DAE 0849  
 Fig. 7: Priests from Aksum; photo DAE Abb 3=DAE 777=MBA 2248.08  
 Fig. 8: Stelae Park. View from May Shum?; photo DAE Abb 5= DAE 837=MBA Sep. 224.08  
 Fig. 9: Photo DAE Abb 9=DAE 857=MBA Sep. 224.09  
 Fig. 10: Local workers in Aksum clearing one of the sites; photo DAE Abb 20= DAE 0873  
 Fig. 11: Partial view of DAE camp in Aksum; photo DAE Abb 28=DAE 0867  
 Fig. 12: Littmann shaking hands with *Dejjazmach* Gäbrä Sellase, the then *Nebur'd* and Governor of Aksum; photo DAE 63. 34 / Sep. 23. 17  
 BrandenbgLandesamtDenk (2)

## Endnotes

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- 1 I would like to thank Wolbert Smidt and Steffen Wenig for the photos presented here (Fig. 4–12) and for translations of important materials from German to English. I would like also to extend my thanks to Christoph Melchers for driving me to the Littmann Street and residence in Tübingen. Mr. Melchers' remembers Littmann himself, as his parents' home where he grew up was not far from Littmann's residence. The pictures of the DAE (fig. 4-12) are today property of the "Messbildarchiv des Brandenburgischen Landesamtes für Denkmalpflege", i.a. the authority of heritage preservation of Brandenburg.
- 2 The attribution of Zär<sup>a</sup>Ya<sup>q</sup>ob's philosophy has become a topic of much controversy among Ethiopianist and Ethiopian scholars. Some believe that Zär<sup>a</sup>Ya<sup>q</sup>ob was an Ethiopian from Aksum and his treatise should be considered Ethiopian but others think that it should not. The principal advocate of the latter camp was the Italian Ethiopianist scholar Carlo Conti Rossini. According to Conti Rossini, the condition of Ethiopia in the seventeenth century was not conducive to having a philosophical treatise as mature as Zär<sup>a</sup>Ya<sup>q</sup>ob's. He attributed these treatises to his compatriot, the Capuchin (Franciscan according to d'Abbadie 1859: 213) missionary to Ethiopia Father Giusto d'Urbino. And he believes that the palaeography of the manuscript should be assigned to the nineteenth century instead of the seventeenth. Later on, Donald Levine, in his book *Wax and Gold*, argued in his favour, saying that 'Ethiopian religious literature

does not invite introspection; it is a corpus to be venerated and solemnly rehearsed' (Levine 1965: 268–69 quoted from Tedros Kiros 2005: 37). The most prominent scholar who attributes the treatise to an Ethiopian is Claude Sumner. Recently, Tedros Kiros refuted these claims and counter-argued that 'Zara Yacob was born to this tumultuous time, a time that was not cognitively capable of tolerating differences. This was an aggressive period that sought to impose one dominant view of Christianity. This intolerant milieu had a profound impact on Zara Yacob's philosophy ...' (Tedros Kiros: 2005: 38).

- 3 There were some sporadic publications concerning Ethiopia during this period, such as his contribution on the Anza inscription (see for example Littmann 1950 and 1952[1953]).
- 4 Drewes 1959: 121-126 (Thamudic origin of Ethiopic alphabet was proposed by J. Ryckmans. It was challenged by Drewes); Frantsouzoff 2006: 572 (The notion of 'Thamudic writing' is now considered as 'the invention of western scholars even though there is virtually no evidence to connect any of the texts gathered under the rubric with the ancient tribes of Thamud', see Macdonald 2009: 3).
- 5 A recently discovered bronze cauldron (dated 7th century BC) reveals a clan name Yasrān from the vicinity of Marib. (Nebes 2011: 160).
- 6 Drewes and Schneider 1976: 95–107.
- 7 See Schneider 1983 (412). Drewes and Schneider's dating and chronology is based on the 'short chronology' formulated and defended by Pirenne (1984: 257–269; 1987: 116–122; 1989: 257–269). According to the proponents of this chronology the oldest monumental South Arabian inscription cannot antedate the fifth century BC (Pirenne 1987: 118; 1989:257).
- 8 The suggestion of Littmann in favour of the monumental script as the direct ancestor of Gə<sup>ə</sup>z was perhaps influenced by the fact that very few inscriptions in cursive script were recorded in the early twentieth century. The pseudo-*musnad* (Gə<sup>ə</sup>z written in South Arabian script) inscription of king 'Ezana may have also convinced Littmann to propose that the Gə<sup>ə</sup>z writing system emerged from monumental South Arabian. In reality, the latter disappeared 500 years before the Littmann's proposed date for the emergence of Gə<sup>ə</sup>z alphabet (Schneider 1983: 414–415).
- 9 This dating is apparently according to the 'long chronology' which claims that the oldest monumental South Arabian inscriptions can be dated as close as the eighth century BCE (Pirenne 1987: 116).
- 10 Organized by Steffen Wenig and Walter Raunig at the Ethnographic Museum Munich.

Enno Littmann: An Assessment of His Legacy in the Light of Ongoing Scholarly Debates

11 Organized by Steffen Wenig and Wolbert Smidt in collaboration with Mulwork Kidanemariam, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the German Aksum Expedition (DAE), funded by the German Cultural Institute and the Cultural Section of the German Embassy.

12 Organized by Rainer Voigt, Seminar of Semitistics, Freie Universität Berlin.

13 Organized by Iris Gerlach of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) and Christian Leitz of Tübingen University in collaboration with Steffen Wenig, Wolbert Smidt and Rainer Voigt.