

GORI, Alessandro: *Studi sulla letteratura agiografica islamica somala in lingua araba* (Studies in Somalian Hagiographic Islamic Literature in the Arabic Language). Firenze, Università di Firenze 2003. xii + 430 pp. ISBN 88-901340-0-3; ISSN 1724-8213.

The monograph aims at contributing to the study of Islamic hagiography as reflected in the literature written by Somali authors using the Arabic language. Two types of hagiographic texts are examined to this purpose: (i) texts representing what the author calls 'genealogical' hagiography, and (ii) those related to 'brotherhood' hagiography.

The first type of texts deal with the ancestors of Somali clans, clan-families and the holy men associated with these families. These texts narrate various legendary episodes of the holy men, their pious life and erudition, and their memorable miracles.

Genealogical hagiographies, examined in the monograph, are represented by three texts focused on the personality of *šayḥ* Iṣḥāq b. Aḥmad, the forefather of the Isaaq Somali clans: the *Manāqib* (glorious deeds) of *šayḥ* Iṣḥāq; the *Nubḍa* (genealogic story) written by *šayḥ* Ādam b. Waʿays; and the *Amḡād* (praiseworthy qualities), by *šayḥ* Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad Darwīš.

The holy man, the forefather of the clan, is presented in these texts as a descendent of a noble Arabian lineage and his outstanding origin is proved by an alleged historical evidence.

The second type of texts forms part of what the author classifies as 'brotherhood' hagiography and represents the literary expression of the Islamic mystical brotherhoods (*ṭuruq*, sing. *ṭarīqa*) spread all over Somalia.

The latter type, represented by the critical edition of the *Ṭaḍkira* of *šayḥ* ʿAlī b. Muḥammad "Mayye" from Merka, is an important source of data related to the activities of the most important mystical brotherhoods in Somalia and their impact on the cultural and religious milieu of this Islamic country.

Apart from the pivotal part of the study, dealing with Islamic hagiography and its place in the social and cultural life of Somalia, the book provides valuable introductory information about the use of the Arabic language in Somalia as well as the mainstream of the literary production of the Somali authors using this language. From the point of view of the Arabic studies, the chapter 'La letteratura somala in lingua araba/la letteratura araba di Somalia' ('The Somali literature in Arabic language/the Arabic literature of Somalia') is perhaps the most interesting part providing highly valuable first-hand information of this largely unexplored field where the tradition is challenged by modern creativeness and the Arabic form seems only to disguise the Somali content and Somali identity.

The monograph is a worthy contribution to the study of Islamic hagiography as part of the Somali literary and cultural tradition.

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OLIVER, Roland – ATMORE, Anthony: *Medieval Africa, 1250-1800*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2001. 251pp. ISBN 0 521 79372 6 paperback.

It is a difficult task to present an up-to-date work on the history of Africa, a field of study in which knowledge increases steadily and almost daily as new archaeological discoveries and historical sources are brought to light. It is commendable therefore that Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore in this new revised edition of their earlier work have tried to present a comprehensive story of this period of African history from a new