
Book Reviews

AFRICA

Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner. *Envoys of a Human God: The Jesuit Mission to Christian Ethiopia, 1557-1632*. Leiden: Brill, 2015. 419 pp. ISBN: 9789004289147. \$203.00.

Envoys of a Human God by Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner offers new light in the study of the religious mission led by the Society of Jesus in Christian Ethiopia from 1557 to 1632. The book central point is to explain the complexities and difficulties of the Jesuit missions, and the cultural, political and religious exchanges between these missions and the Ethiopian kingdoms. In the Introduction, Martínez d'Alòs-Moner argues for a comprehensive study of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia to understand why this religious enterprise failed. He proposes a multidisciplinary reading of the historical record and recent archaeological research, which expands on previous works by Hervé Pennec, Leonardo Cohen, and Matteo Salvatore, and challenges many old assumptions on the subject from previous generations of scholars. At the same time, the author pays homage to the legacy of these scholars and its influence in the study the Society of Jesus global networks. In chapters One and Two, Martínez d'Alòs-Moner presents a detailed examination of the Portuguese maritime empire in the early modern period and their socio-political connections to the Jesuit mission. In chapters Three, Four, and Six he focuses on the Jesuit Indian mission and the role of the native merchant in the Indian Ocean, to place the Ethiopian case in a broader context. In addition, he brings detailed analysis from the work of the Jesuit mission in Japan and Mughal India and their influence in the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia and includes a comparison of the Jesuit mission experience in some other geographical areas as Latin America.

By giving due consideration to the cultural production of several geographical areas such as Africa, Asia, and the Americas, Martínez d'Alòs-Moner offers a more sophisticated picture of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia than the classics studies of Tamrat Tadesse and Dauril Alden. His thoughtful analysis shows a very complex network of the interrelations between colonialism and religion as part of the Jesuit global mission. The new issues featured in chapters Five, Six, and Seven include prosopographic analysis of missionary, non-missionary, and Ethiopian texts, in conjunction with artistic, architectural, and literary expressions from the “mission culture”, and recent archaeological research. In combining all these multidisciplinary sources (archaeology, art history, law, literature, theology, geopolitics, and sociology) Martínez d'Alòs-Moner, carried out a revisionist task by rewriting the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia from a global and local perspective, using a macro and micro analysis and as such he offers a unique point of view on the dimensions of that particular historical moment. In chapters Seven and Eight, Martínez d'Alòs-Moner identifies important methodological

questions regarding the category of the Ethio-Portuguese mixed-race group and the emergency of local dissent to the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia. His book is an excellent example of recent scholarship in Jesuit global networks characterized by the incorporation of new objects of study. This broadening of the range of objects of study in the field of Jesuit studies has embraced topics and issues from several disciplines, but still, much work remains to be done concerning the role of local agencies and the Jesuit mission in the early modern world.

The book also contains five well documented appendixes on political leaders in the Red Sea, India, and Europe (1600-1635), national and provincial rulers in Christian Ethiopia (1603-1636), Jesuit missionaries in Ethiopia (1555-1632), intellectual production during the mission (1611-1632), and a genealogical chart of the extended Ethiopian royal family (1550-1640). In addition, include three figures on the growth of Jesuit operatives in India and Ethiopia (1549-1632), the evolution of the number of students at Faremona and Gorgora (1605-1626), and the organization of contributions and disbursements during the Ethiopian mission (1610-1630); five maps of the Jesuit missionary network in Ethiopia; thirty-two black and white and colour plates; and seventeenth tables on currencies and units of measure used in the sources, routes undertaken by the Jesuits to Ethiopia (1555-1630), the population of Ethio-Portuguese mixed race in Ethiopia, numbers and leaders (1541-1646), age of missionaries in Ethiopia on joining the Society of Jesus (1555-1630), average age of missionaries arriving in Ethiopia (1555-1630), mean length of service in the Society of Jesus for the missionaries in Ethiopia (1555-1632), speed and main routes of communication for the mission (1557-1632), the evolution of conversions in Ethiopia (1605-1630), the Jesuit residences in Ethiopia (11561-1632), the Pauline framework, mean years spent in India by the missionaries before reaching Ethiopia (1555-1630), numbers of interns at the Jesuit schools in Ethiopia (1605-1626), Portuguese and Spanish expenditure for the Ethiopian mission (1555-1617), comparative estimates of expenditure and revenue for the Ethiopian mission, Jesuit Indian residences and the Japan mission (1575-1638), Ethiopian local expenditures for the mission (1570-1630), comparative of revenues between the Jesuits residences and the main regions in Ethiopia (1619-1629), and the exile literature produced by the Jesuit missionaries (1628-1660); and a bilingual glossary of terms.

Martínez d'Alòs-Moner's excellent book provide fertile soil for future research in the Society of Jesus missionary studies, representing as it does an attempt to move the discipline forward and attest to the new vitality of multidisciplinary research in the field. The book constitutes a valuable addition to the growing corpus of global Jesuit mission studies that has made possible the task of revising comparative religious history. By making new methodologies available, the author gives overdue attention to the role of local agencies and the emergency of local dissent to the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia. Using missionary, and non-missionary, as well as indigenous texts, and other cultural artefacts he presents a first-hand account of contemporary events which portrays the colonial realities confronted by indigenous people in Ethiopia. The result is a new interpretation that will help to redefine Jesuit missionary studies by guiding the research toward issues of connections and collaboration in diverse geo-cultural areas. Martínez d'Alòs-Moner's sophisticated reading shows a rich insight into the Ethiopian responses to European colonialism and the Jesuit global mission.