In short, Hussey is to be commended for tackling a difficult and important subject, but his book falls short of the nuanced analysis that such a complex issue requires.

Kathryn Edwards
Tulane University
New Orleans, Louisiana
medward5@tulane.edu

doi:10.1017/asr.2016.100

Mohammed Hassen. *The Oromo and the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia, 1300–1700.* Woodbridge, U.K.: James Currey, 2015. xx + 379 pp. Oromo Glossary. Spelling of Ethiopian Names. Maps. Chronology. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $80.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978–1847011176.

Prominent Ethiopianists such as C. Conti Rossini, Enrico Cerulli, and Taddesse Tamrat analyzed Christian and Muslim sources of Ethiopia—the sultanates of Shawa, Ifat, and Harar—without noticing the presence of the Oromo in the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia before the sixteenth century. With better knowledge of Oromo culture and language, Mekuria Bulcha, in *Contours of the Emergent and Ancient Oromo Nation* (CASAS, 2011), argued convincingly for the presence of the Oromo within the Christian kingdom and the Muslim states along the middle Awash Valley before the sixteenth century. Mohammed Hassen hinted at this thesis in his first book (*The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History, 1570–1860*, Red Sea Press, 1990), but provided no details. In his new book, *The Oromo and the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia*, he offers a careful reevaluation and reinterpretation of the history of medieval Ethiopia that includes the Oromo.

The book is divided into eight chapters with narratives that shift between the sedentary and pastoral Oromo and the exploits of the Christian kings. The first two chapters focus on the sedentary Oromo and their contacts and interactions with the Christian and Muslim populations in medieval Shawa. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the dramatic population movements of the pastoral Oromo into the Ethiopian highlands. Chapters 5–8 recount the struggle of the Christian kings and their unsuccessful efforts to stop the spread of the pastoral Oromo into the Ethiopian highlands. Reexamining available traditions and written sources, Hassen argues that the Barentu, one of the two Oromo moieties, were more numerous than the Borana during the sixteenth century. Although one could argue that the population size and distribution of the Borana and Barentu are less conclusive than Hassen asserts, and that the two groups were more dispersed than he suggests (as the distribution of the names of their sub-moieties indicates), the book nevertheless provides a valuable portrait of the two groups. Divided into seven full-fledged moieties and thirty sub-moieties, the Barentu spearheaded the northward

https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2016.101 Published online by Cambridge University Press

movement and successfully spread from the headwaters of the Wabi Shebelle in the south to Bagemeder and Tigray in the north. The Borana, by comparison, with only three sub-moieties, made very little progress during the first half of the sixteenth century. Ultimately they spread to the central Shawan plateau and across the Gibe Valley to the west.

The book argues convincingly for the presence of sedentary Oromo within the medieval Christian kingdom, but the question remains as to how they got there and how long they had lived in the region before they came under the administration of the Christian polity. Hassen points out that as "part of Cushitic-language speakers, the Oromo have always lived within Ethiopia" (234); according to Mekuria Bulcha's research, they had lived in the Shawan plateau for many centuries before Ethiopia itself existed as a country. Ethiopian boundaries were imposed, partially in the fourteenth century and extensively in the late nineteenth century, on the people who had lived in the area for a long period of time. It is not clear, in Hassan's account, what happened to the sedentary Oromo after the jihadic wars (1529–43). How did they react to and become integrated into the migrating pastoral group? Similarly, the fate of the Barentu, who moved to the east toward the city of Harar, is not explained fully, and the transition of the pastoral Oromo to sedentary farming in the eighteenth century is beyond the scope of this book.

Finally, a note on sources. Hassen uses different sources, including Ethiopian chronicles, Muslim sources, Oromo and Christian traditions, myths and legends—a hallmark of erudite scholarship—and he variously critiques, questions, accepts, or rejects the conclusions of the scholarly works he consulted. But the book does not offer any discussion of the nature of Christian sources, except for the works of Abba Bahrey [Bahriy] (chapter 6). Such a discussion is necessary, however, because Christian sources were very often written, copied, and recopied by different scribes at different times, and in the process new information was added or omitted. There is, for example, a question regarding the initial reference to "G*alla*" (Oromo) in the original version of the chronicle of Amada Seyon (1313–44), where "Gasa" in the older version was changed to "Gala" [Galla] by a copyist in the eighteenth century (see Paolo Marrassini, *Lo Scettro e la Croce*, Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1993). Still, "Galla" may be correct, but the problem of copyist errors or intentional alterations over time are serious issues that have not yet been carefully securitized by Ethiopianists. Almost endorsing the discourse of Ethiopianist scholars, Hassen praises the work of Abba Bahriy probably more than what it deserves. No doubt, the clergyman left us valuable literature. But his work is obviously partisan, or even pure propaganda, aimed at portraying the Oromo in the worst possible manner and thus distorting their images for posterity.

Overall, *The Oromo and the Christian Kingdom* is a carefully argued book that challenges us to reevaluate Ethiopian and Oromo history through a

https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2016.101 Published online by Cambridge University Press

different lens. It clarifies a lot of issues and provides a highly needed scholarly reference on the early presence of the Oromo in the central Ethiopian highlands.

Guluma Gemeda
University of Michigan-Flint
Flint, Michigan
ggemeda@umflint.edu

doi:10.1017/asr.2016.101

Kwasi Konadu and Clifford C. Campbell, eds. *The Ghana Reader: History, Culture, Politics.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016. xiii + 476 pp. Illustrations. Index. $27.95/£18.99. Paper. ISNB: 978-0-8233-5992-0. $99.95/£69.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0-8233-7496-1. $27.95/£17.99. E-book. ISBN: 978-0-8223-7496-1.

The Ghana Reader is the latest title to appear in Duke University Press's series of "World Readers." Following the success of an earlier series focusing on Latin America, its aim is to introduce a general readership to the history, culture, and politics of selected nations around the world, with volumes extending, so far, from Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, Indonesia, and Russia to South Africa, Sri Lanka and, in an interesting "first nation" variant, Native Alaska. That Ghana should join South Africa in representing the African continent in the new series is not surprising. Although modest in terms of population (currently some 25 million) and economic clout, it has long punched above its weight on the regional stage and is now increasingly doing so on the global stage as well. As readers of this journal will hardly need reminding, Ghana shot to prominence in the mid-twentieth century when, in 1957, it became the first sub-Saharan African nation to win independence from European colonial rule, and in the years that followed it remained a beacon for the pan-African liberation movement under the charismatic leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. Before that—as revealed in an efflorescence of historical scholarship generated in part by this precocious statehood—the region that would become the British colony of the Gold Coast and then independent Ghana had given rise to one of West Africa's most powerful and dynamic states, the Akan forest kingdom of Asante. Ghana's iconic modern status may have been forged in the crucible of the anticolonial struggle, but that status rests on a rich cultural legacy shaped by a deeper history. It is this past and present, in all its tumult and vibrancy, that the collection sets out to encompass.

The editors, Kwasi Konadu and Clifford C. Campbell, were handed a generously broad canvas on which to work, and they did an excellent job in selecting a diverse range of engaging readings representative of Ghanaian history and life. Their aim, they explain in a useful introduction, was to evoke a wide variety of voices, to include pieces of critical importance to an understanding of Ghana, and to present selections that, even if taken from scholarly works (as many of them are), can be readily appreciated by the

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