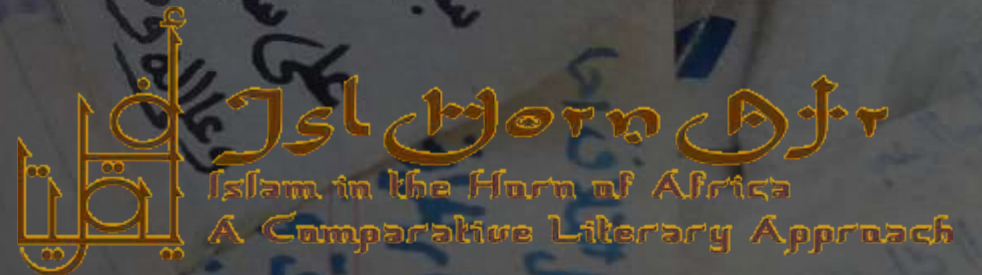


Teaching Oromo History via Arabic Chronicles

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Context

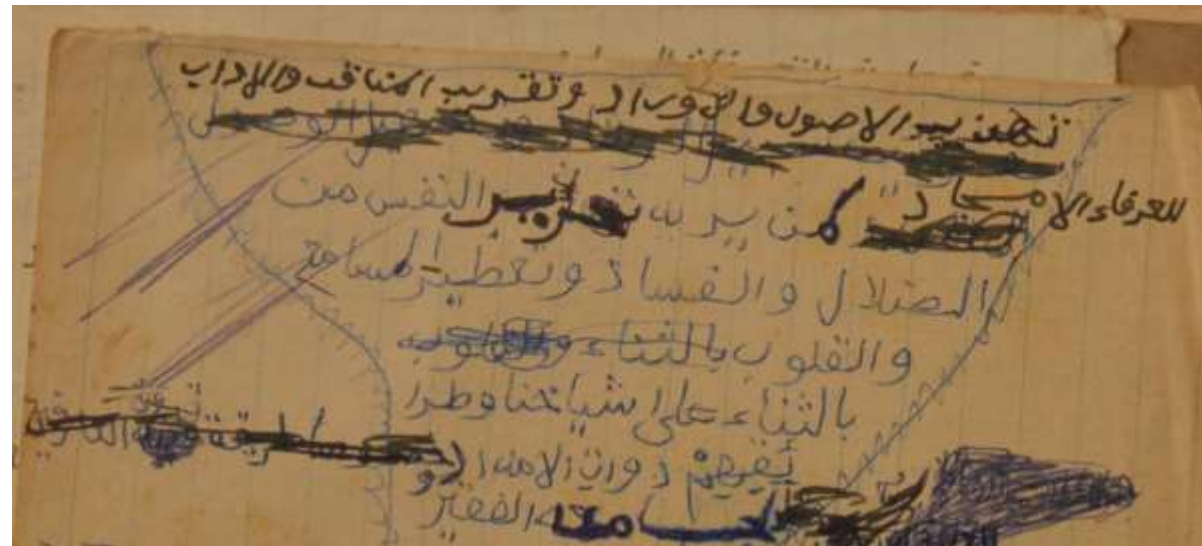
- ◆ Data for this presentation have been gathered by the team of the Islam in the Horn of Africa: A Comparative Literary Approach (University of Copenhagen ERC, 2013-18, P.I. prof. Alessandro Gori)
- ◆ IslHornAfr has digitized and cataloged some 3500 manuscripts and printed books from different areas: Ethiopia (Harar, Jimma, Afar, Wollo), Djibouti (Balbala, Tadjoura), Somaliland (Berbera).
- ◆ The database (islhornafr.tors.sc.ku.dk/) includes about 6.000 texts of different genres, mainly religious (devotional, legal) and documentary (court registries, private letters)
- ◆ Very few historiographical works by local authors.
- ◆ Most of the works are in Arabic. Local languages (Oromo, Amharic, Afar, Old Harari) are mainly written in *‘aḡamī*.

Historiographical Sources

In addition to the well known texts studied by Wagner and the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabaša* there is a number of recently discovered sources:

- ◆ *Ḥulāṣat muḥtaṣar al-taḥrīr* of Badr al-Dīn b. Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥāḡḡ Surūr al-Zabbī al-Guragī (d. 1401/1980).
- ◆ *Ġilā' al-fikr 'an manāqib al-'ārif bi' Llāh Sayyid Aḥmad b. 'Umar al-Burnuwī* of Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān (Shekota Abba Mecha, d. 1975)
- ◆ Biographies of the Tiḡānīs of Jimma by Maḥmūd b. Sulaymān
- ◆ *Kitāb Farā'id al-ḡamma fī tā'rīḥ Banū Diggū wa-Ġimma* by Abba Jobir Abba Dula (d. 1988)
- ◆ Marginal notes reporting chronologies (*tawārīḥ*) and short biographical notices

Tahdīb al-Uṣūl wa al-Awrād wa
Taqrīb al-Manāqib wa al-Ādāb
li'l-'Urafā' al-Amğād li-man
Yurīd Tahrīr al-Nafs min al-Ḍalāl
wa al-Fasād wa Ta'tīr al-
Masāmi' wa al-Qulūb bi'l-Ṭanā'
'alā Ašiyāhinā wa Ṭarā'iqihim,
ZBM00028, f. 45r.



السلطان عبد الله بن عبد الرحمن بن محمد بن داود بن علي
 ابن قنقلان بن ابي كويج بن هرو بن ديون بن جارسون كلو
 ابن بلوسن وايوسن هرو بن جها بن اكا كوسن جلد بن شيبا بن
 رايان بن سيرا بن قبطون بن بفسون بن بوسن بن بنشون بن طبو
 ابن اوقان بن ابيو
 وما قيل في النسب بعض النسابين ان قبائل ارمو تنسب الى
 ارمو دان العباد لا ارمو بن عاد الاولي ولا الاوهم بن سام بن نوح عليه السلام
 كحيثما لا يحقها وما يسبق الى الذهن قوله ينتسبون الى حم بن نليس
 بحسن والمحقق الحسن ان يكون المنتسب اليه ارم لا ارم

*Kitāb Farā'id al-
 ḡamma fī tā'rīḥ Banū
 Diggu wa-Ġimma,
 HDR00056, f. 2v.
 Genealogy of Abba
 Jifar II.*

Teaching pre-1800 African History

- ◆ The following slides are based on the preparation material for a seminar, part of the MA course in History of Africa, I will give in March 2018 at the University of Bologna
- ◆ It will be a 16-hour seminar focused on Arabic historiography of South Western Ethiopia
- ◆ Students have
 - ◆ little or no training in Arabic language
 - ◆ basic knowledge of the history of the Horn of Africa
 - ◆ little or no information about history of Islam and Islamic Studies in general
- ◆ The seminar aims to:
 - ◆ Train the students on the use of local written sources for historical studies about Africa
 - ◆ Give the students an outline of the history of the Oromos of Ethiopia
 - ◆ Basic training in Oromo language

Case Study

◊ Excerpts from *Kitāb Farā'id al-ğamma fī tā'rīḥ Banū Diggu wa-Ğimma*

This case study has been chosen for different reasons.

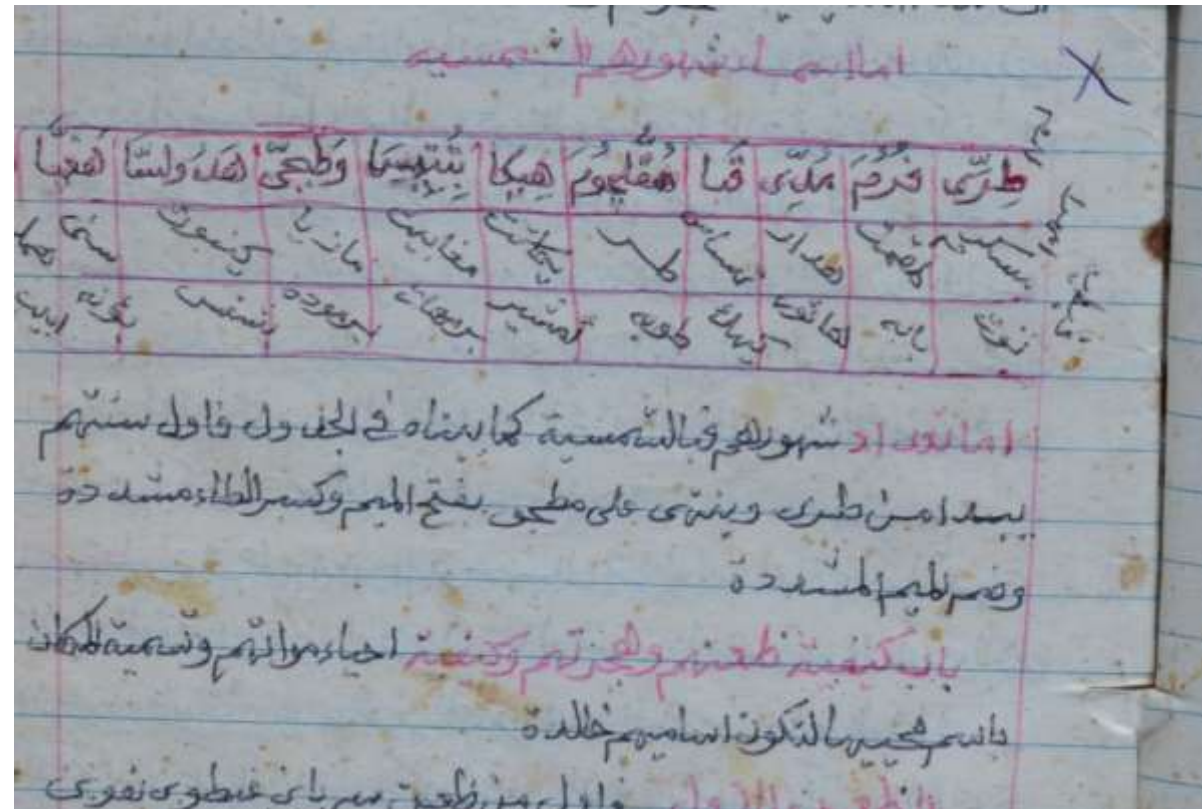
- ◊ I am already working on it, so I have already a good knowledge of the text and its context
- ◊ It's written in a plain, easy readable Arabic (with several flaws, anyway). It's also in prose so its translation can be easily accessible to students.
- ◊ It reports a narration of historical events and not only biographies, as the *Hulāṣa*.
- ◊ It reports several names of places and people that can help situating the events in space and time.

شجره ^{الحبيبي} ~~محمدا~~ غانبي ^{محمدا} المكرم ^{محمدا} وسلسله ^{محمدا} ديجو الفاع الثاني المعظم
 عبد الله ابن عبد الرحمن ^{٢٠} بن محمد ^{٣٠} بن داود ^{١٠} بن علي ^٥
 غنغلا ^٦ بن ابي ^٧ بن كوي ^٨ بن هر ^٩ بن دغو ^{١٠} بن جارس
 بن كلو ^{١٢} بن بلو ^{١٣} بن وايو ^{١٤} بن هرير ^{١٥} بن جما ^{١٦} بن اكاكو
 بن جاش ^{١٨} بن مشا ^{١٩} بن رايا ^{٢٠} بن سيرا ^{٢١} بن عبطو ^{٢٢} بن
 بن بورنتو ^{٢٣} بن برشتو ^{٢٤} بن غنغلا بفتح الغين وسكون
 النون وكسر التين ^{٢٥} الغين الثاني وفتح اللام بن ابي بضم الالف
 وكسر السين بالاهمال ^{٢٦} ياء الاشباع بن كوي بضم الكاف بالها

Launhardt, 5v. Full name of Diggo, with spelling of the Oromo parts of his name.

Sketch of the Oromo calendar system

HDR00056, f. 6r.



والله يومنا هذا سنة الحرام ونحن تحت نير الشيوعية
الآن الله تعالى برحمته ولطفه اذهب عنا نير الشيوعية بالكلية
وصرف عنا مؤسسه منغستو لهيل ماريام آخر السنة المذكورة في شهر
كنبوت ١٣ فخرجوا من الله التمام من الديكتاتورية قريبا

...and until nowadays, 1411 H / 1983 EC we are under the foot of communism. God, in His Mercy and Subtle Support, totally took ake it away from us and turned away the regime of Menghistu Hayle Maryam at the end of the above mentioned year, on the 13th of the month of Gambot. We then hope that God [will give us] soon a complete democracy.

Religion and Ethnicity

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

◈ الحمد لله الذي خلق من الماء بشرا فجعله نسبا وصهرا جل من قائل في <محكم> كتابه <العزیز> ما كان شعرا أولا سحرا يا أيها الناس انا خلقناكم من ذكر وأنثى وجعلناكم شعوبا وقبائل لتعارفوا [كذا] ان اكرمكم عند الله اتقاكم

In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Merciful
Praise be to God who created man from water, gave a him descendance and a spouse and he said «Exalted be Who is saying in the wisdom of His venerable book there is not poetry that before was magic (?) Oh Men! We created you from male and female and we divided you in peoples and tribes so you could know each other; indeed, the most noble before God is the one who awes Him most [Qur. 49:13].

Religion and Ethnicity

- ◊ Abba Jobir justifies the choice of writing a book on his clan in the light of the Qur'ān
- ◊ In a *ḥadīṭ* quoted in the introduction he mentions the possible written sources in a very generic way:
 - ◊ “*rawāhu al-Buḥārī, Muslim, Abū Dawūd*”
- ◊ The *ḥadīṭ* justifies the study of genealogies (*ansāb*) and invites the believers to do so to strengthen the bonds between them
- ◊ The opening reprises the form and the style of an Islamic book

Authorship and Public

- ◊ Abba Jobir justifies the choice of writing a book on his clan in the light of the Qur'ān and *sunna*
- ◊ This would imply that his intended public had to be Muslim
- ◊ His ideal reader had to be also familiar with Islamic literature and scholar's formalities (quotations of *ḥadīth*)
- ◊ His readers had to know Arabic and, possibly, be of Oromo ethnicity
- ◊ Were there any readers of this kind in Ethiopia at the time of writing the *Fadā'il al-ğamma*?
 - ◊ Arabic was used as lingua franca among learned Muslim in Jimma area
 - ◊ Diffusion of devotional poems in Arabic
 - ◊ 'Ağamī Oromo used to a limited extent

Migrations and Maps

- ◊ The first section of the *Farā'id* (ff. 3v-42v) deals with the account of Oromo migrations on South Western Ethiopia, up to the foundation of Jimma
- ◊ These accounts include full spelling of Oromo personal and place-names

How these materials will be used:

- ◊ Translation of some of these passages for the students (in Italian)
- ◊ Drawing a map of Oromo migrations with the students
- ◊ Some of the words in Oromo will be used to introduce some linguistic features of Afaan Oromo

وفسر الطاء مسدده وفتح جيم وفتح هاء
 باب في كيفية ظعنهم وكيفية ما حياهم اموات غابات قارة
 افريقيا الحبشة الاثيوبيا واستوطنا فيهم عليها وتسميتهم
 اسمهم المكان باسمائهم لتكون اسمائهم خالدة فيها الى
 اخر ايام الدنيا **الظعن الاول**
 قال من ظعن سرباين غطوبين بغوبين بور فتقوبين برتو
 قبل انه المسمى باباديبانو هو الذي ظعن باولاده وموا
 شيه من بلده ولا بو هي بلدة وعرة تحت بلاد بورنا
 تسمى وعرة ولا بو بضم الواو وفتح وهم الباء بامالة واوا
 لا شباع وذلك انهم لما ظعنوا من ولا بو باولادهم واموالهم
 قالوا لنزل **فتقع** بضم الفاء والغين مسكونة وضم غين
 وسكون غين الثاني فاستوطنوا هناك اعواما مديدة
 ثم ظعن منها الى **فكل** بضم الفاء واللام وسكون اللام
 ومن كلام الامرم تقع في كثير من الفاظهم اذا غاب احد عن
 وطنه فيقول ان غبت الى **فكل** والى **فتقع** كناية لى بعد عن وطنه
 فاستوطنوا هناك اعواما مديدة ثم ظعن ونزل كما را ساء
 بفتح السين وكسر الدال بامالة ياء الاشباع وهو مكان في
 بلاد الحبشة

Chapter on their [of the
 Oromo] migrations and on
 the way they celebrated
 their ancestors in the woods
 of Abyssinian Ethiopian
 Africa and how they settled
 in these lands and named
 them after their own
 names, so they could last
 until the end of the world,
 and God is most
 Almighty!"

Drawing a map with students

- ◆ Using data progressively collected during lessons we will fill in a map of Oromo migrations
- ◆ Secondary sources will be also used:
 - ◆ *Guida all'Africa Orientale Italiana*
 - ◆ Nordic Africa Institute data
 - ◆ Other existent maps



Conclusions

- ◆ The focus of the seminar is to teach a methodology of inquiry that uses the manuscript as an object of study and as a source for historiography
- ◆ The presentation of history will pass through the acquisition of practical and theoretical skills
- ◆ The map as a final outcome will give students a tangible product of their efforts
 - ◆ Useful for further research (thesis, fieldwork)
 - ◆ Can be also used during exams
- ◆ Using Arabic sources can trigger curiosity about a language that is sometimes overlooked in Ethiopian Studies