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Author

Philips, John

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research in the Soviet Union do not prevent use of Russian publications. The same applies to the People's Republic of China.

Despite these problems, Jacobs's work is a solid piece of research, remarkable in two ways. First, it significantly contributes to our understanding of Sino-Soviet relations in a crucial decade. Second, it explores one of the initial instances of a pattern of Soviet involvement which prevails to this day. Anyone interested in these two topics will find this publication fascinating.

Steven D. Stinemetz
Harvard University

Axum. By YURI M. KOBISHCHANOV. Soviet Union, 1966; English reprint ed., translated by Joseph Michels and Lorraine Kapitanoff, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980. Pp. xii + 348. Bibliography, maps, illustrations, index, appendix on sources. \$18.95.

This work presents us with the best synthesis in English of knowledge about the ancient African empire of Axum. It is solidly based on the existing documentary sources in Latin, Greek, Arabic, Sabaeen, Ge'ez, and other relevant languages. Distinguished by an archaeological introduction, this volume is likely to remain for years the standard work on an important but neglected ancient empire. As a reference work, it is beneficial not only for Africanists but also for Islamicists, Indian historians, students of ancient Byzantium, and even scholars in Armenian studies.

Axum was originally published in the Soviet Union in 1966. It is such an important work that its publication in English was inevitable. Still, Joseph Michels, Lorraine Kapitanoff, and the Pennsylvania State University Press are to be praised for their effort. Not only does the archaeological introduction by Michels add a significant new dimension to the work, but the collaboration between scholars at Pennsylvania State's African studies and Slavic languages programs and the author have allowed even the original text to be updated, making this more than a mere translation. It shows the potential for cooperation both between disciplines and between countries.

This book is the only scholarly work available which makes use of all extant inscriptions as well as other forms of documentary evidence. It should be on the shelf of any Africanist, since the kingdoms of ancient northeast Africa are such popular topics with students. Kobishchanov particularly details the Axumite conquest and administration of parts of Nubia, as well as its conquest of the Himyarite kingdom of South Arabia. He shows that Axumites attempted to repair the famous Marib Dam of the ancient Sabaeen society, which has not been rebuilt to this day.

Axum avoids the stereotyped chronological organization

of standard histories. Taking a more Marxist approach, the work first briefly summarizes the political history of the kingdom, then discusses the economic resources available which provided the base of the Axumite superstructure. The third chapter discusses the socioeconomic system. Here Kobishchanov avoids overemphasis on the slave trade, a fault which some western scholars have been guilty of in their treatment of ancient Africa. The fourth chapter details the political system which was used to administer the socioeconomic system. The last chapter, on ideology, discusses not only the nature of Axumite religion during the formative years of the polity, but the complex rise of monotheism and Christianity. Kobishchanov attributes the adoption of a monotheistic religion to the necessity of finding a common ideology for Nubians, Arabs, and the many other subject peoples of the empire. Christianity came to fulfill this role as a result of protracted struggles between the Christians and Jews of northeast Africa and southern Arabia. Axumite emperors became perhaps the most zealous proselytizers of Christianity in the ancient world.

An understanding of Axumite religion is indispensable for Islamicists and important for Semiticists in general. This is true not simply because Axum was one of the greatest ancient Semitic empires, but also because Axum was a major trading partner of the Meccan Kureishites and wielded enormous power in the area before the rise of Islam. Axum was the destination of Muslim refugees from persecution before the *hijrah*, or flight of the prophet Muhammad from Mecca, and the first *jihad*. Muhammad seems to have considered the religion of Axum to be the nearest to his own of any in the area.

Kobishchanov shows that Axumite trade with India was not just a stage in the flow of goods between India and Rome, but was important in its own right. From India, Axum received iron and steel, gold coins (some of which have been recovered archaeologically), ceramics, textiles, sugar, and spices. To India, Axum sent emeralds and other stones, ivory, rhinoceros horn, and slaves. Axumite exports have even been authenticated from archaeological digs in China. During the fifth and sixth centuries, Indian merchants were constantly visiting Axum. Although Kobishchanov does little to distinguish different areas of India, he shows how important India and Axum were to each other, and even suggests Indian influences on the nature of Axumite monotheism, which later influenced Islam so profoundly.

Another important Indian influence on Axumite civilization which has long been noticed is that on the Axumite alphabet. The writing of the Axumite language, Ge'ez, was in syllabic characters following the principle of the ancient Indian Brahmin and Kharoshti scripts. This Ethiopian alphabet was to have a major effect further north. Kobishchanov shows that it was the ancestor of the Armenian and Georgian alphabets of the modern Soviet Union, a note of great import to scholars of the Caucasus region.

For Byzantine specialists Kobishchanov details the history of Byzantium's foremost trading partner and ally. He corrects earlier interpretations which tended to show Axum as a subordinate of Byzantium by explaining that Axum's conquest of south Arabia was accomplished after Axum refused an offer of military aid from Byzantium. He also shows that

Axumites were assisting Byzantines to fight Berbers in the eastern Sahara at the beginning of the fifth century. In addition, Axum's power and friendship were necessary to prevent Beja raids on Byzantine Egypt.

Although the general organization of the book is materialist, the work is not Marxist in an important sense. There is little explanation of the contradictions inherent in Axumite society of any particular period. Although change is not ignored, there is not the sense of change arising out of the tensions and class conflicts produced by internal contradictions which one finds in the works of most western Marxists. This lack of a dialectical model results in an occasional sense that the author is describing a society in functional stasis, rather than one in a dynamic process of continual change. This same charge, however, could be leveled at most non-Marxist western descriptions of societies, whether current or historic. It does not significantly detract from the achievements of Kobishchanov, Michels, and Kapitanoff.

John Philips
University of California, Los Angeles

The Rainbow and the Kings: A History of the Luba Empire to 1891. By THOMAS Q. REEFE. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981. Pp. 306. Maps, tables, index, bibliography. \$24.95.

Thomas Q. Reefe's book provides the student of central African history with a thorough and well-organized collection of dynastic oral traditions and a periodization of the precolonial history of the area. But it is essentially a history of the kings and the ruling lineages of the Luba empire, with only a short chapter on trade and a few paragraphs on the empire's economic base.

The strength of Reefe's book is in his analysis of the myths which make up the ideological baggage of the Luba ruling classes. He uses a functionalist approach to show how these myths have become important to the kingship, since, according to Reefe, this is how some of his informants saw the role of these traditions in their own society. Reefe explains, for example, that Nkongolo, a major figure in the Luba genesis myth, inflicted amputations upon his followers and thereby set a precedent for the royal practice of amputation as a form of punishment on faithless subjects. Reefe tries to show the astonishingly successful way in which the Luba rulers were able to consolidate and maintain control over an extensive empire through the use of a complex ideological superstructure based on such myths.

Despite his provocative analysis of the myths and his chronology of kings, Reefe's book has two major flaws. The first is his understatement of the economic base of the empire. Most central African states were products of a process of competition over the control of scarce resources such as salt, water, gold, iron, and copper. Reefe tells us that