A landmark in Ethiopian epigraphy:
Presentation of the *Recueil des Inscriptions de l’Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite* (*RIÉ* IIIB)

introduced by

Professor Dr Alessandro Bausi
Universität Hamburg

In the early 1970s, A. J. Drewes (d. 2007), R. Schneider (d. 2002), and É. Bernand (d. 2013), with F. Anfray, started a cooperation in a project aiming at the publication of a complete corpus of ancient Ethiopian inscriptions. In 1991 they published the first two volumes with texts and plates of all inscriptions known at the time, while a third volume of translation and commentary of the Greek inscriptions edited by Bernand appeared in 2000. The last volume (IIIB), authored by A. J. Drewes and posthumously edited by Manfred Kropp and Harry Stroomer, completes this major enterprise (*Recueil des Inscriptions de l’Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite*, Tome III: *Traductions et commentaires*, B: *Les inscriptions sémitiques*, Aethiopistische Forschungen, 85 / De Goeje Fund 34 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019). It contains the translations and commentaries of all the Semitic inscriptions in Sabaean and in Gǝ‘az. This work constitutes a landmark in the study of Ethiopic inscriptions and of Sabaean inscriptions of Ethiopia, since it definitely replaces older reference works. In dialogue with the editors of the volume, four invited speakers from the field of South Arabian and Gǝ‘az epigraphy (Dr Iwona Gajda, Dr George Hatke, Dr Irene Rossi, and PD Dr Peter Stein), will provide insights from different angles into the contribution of the *Recueil* to the prospective research on two important branches of Semitic epigraphy.

**Thursday, 13 March 2020, 2 pm-7pm**

**Warburgstraße 26, room 0001**

**20354 Hamburg**
Programme:

14:00:
Introduction
Alessandro Bausi (Hamburg), Harry Stroomer (Leiden), Manfred Kropp (Mainz), Pietro Liuzzo (Hamburg)

14:30-16:00:
Peter Stein (Jena): *How to edit a bequeathed manuscript? The “Inventaire des inscriptions sudarabes sur bois” by A. Drewes & J. Ryckmans*
Irene Rossi (Rome): *On the use of the root NHY in the South Arabian inscriptions from Yemen and Ethiopia/Eritrea*

16:00-16:30:
Coffee break

16:30-18:00:
Iwona Gajda (Paris): *Local traits in the Pre-Aksumite inscriptions of the* Recueil des Inscriptions de l’Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite
George Hatke (Vienna): *Curse Formulae in Aksumite Royal Inscriptions: A Comparative Perspective*

19:30:
Dinner
Iwona Gajda (Paris)

Local traits in the Pre-Aksumite inscriptions of the Recueil des Inscriptions de l’Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite

This paper will focus on differences between linguistic and cultural traits of some pre-Aksumite inscriptions compared to Sabaean inscriptions from South Arabia and try to reconsider the meaning and possible reasons of these differences. The question has been discussed by several scholars, especially Carlo Conti Rossini, Roger Schneider, Abraham J. Drewes, Paolo Marrassini and Christian Robin. Some remarks can be added to the observations and hypothesis formulated before. Special attention will be paid to the inscriptions from Eritrea (published by Drewes in the volume *Inscriptions de l’Éthiopie antique*, in 1962), compared with the inscriptions from some major sites, the question of their dating, the problem of the origin of their authors and to religious formulas.

George Hatke (Vienna)

Curse Formulae in Aksumite Royal Inscriptions: A Comparative Perspective

The fourth and sixth centuries CE are by far the best documented periods in Aksumite history. A number of extensive royal inscriptions, dating from both periods, provide a wealth of information on the political history of Aksum, more specifically regarding the military campaigns waged by Aksumite kings against neighboring peoples in Northeast Africa and, to a lesser extent, in South Arabia. An aspect of these royal inscriptions which has yet to receive much attention from scholars, however, is the use of curse formulae at the end of the text. These formulae speak of the harm which would befall anyone who might attempt to remove an inscription from its place. Such formulae have a very long history in the Semitic-speaking world, going all the way back to ancient Mesopotamia. The Aksumites’ use of curse formulae in inscriptions represents a very late stage in this tradition, one which survived the transition to Christianity in the mid-fourth century and is attested as late as the sixth. Although curse formulae involving the protection of a written text are well attested throughout the Semitic-speaking world during antiquity, it will be argued in this paper that the Aksumite tradition of inserting such formulae into inscriptions was inspired by South Arabian tradition and thus provides further evidence for the exchange between the two sides of the Red Sea as it pertains to written culture.
Irene Rossi (Rome)

On the use of the root NḪY in the South Arabian inscriptions from Yemen and Ethiopia/Eritrea

The Semitic root NḪY is attested in the formulaic expression b-nḥ or b-nḥy in some Sabaic inscriptions from Ethiopia/Eritrea dating back to the first half of the 1st millennium BCE. Because the noun is in construct state with a royal name, the formula most probably states the compliance of the (act recorded in the) inscription with the will of the king, similarly to other expressions found in ASA, such as b-ʾḏn and b-rʿẓ, which introduce the name of a king/deity. The root, in the ASA inscriptions from the Arabian peninsula, is used in different contexts. It occurs in the so-called expiation inscriptions (mainly in the Minaic and Northern Sabaic languages); since long, their main verb nḥy / tnḥy has received the translation “to confess” on the basis of a parallel in Geʿez. The root also occurs in irrigation contexts (mainly in Sabaic) in the term mnḥy, which has been interpreted as a noun (“canal”) or as a preposition (“towards”, via grammaticalization). The reappraisal of the ASA epigraphic documentation on this root and the reflection on its contexts of use across languages and periods urge to reconsider its current interpretations, in search for a more precise semantic attribution.

Peter Stein (Jena)

How to edit a bequeathed manuscript? The “Inventaire des inscriptions sudarabes sur bois” by A. Drewes & J. Ryckmans

During the last 13 years of his life, Abraham Drewes devoted a considerable part of his research activity to a peculiar field of Semitic epigraphy: the deciphering of a large collection of inscribed wooden sticks form Ancient Yemen. This collection, comprising about 350 inscriptions, had been acquired by the Oosters Instituut in Leiden in 1993, at a time when scholarly work in this field was still in its infancy. In close collaboration with his colleague Jacques Ryckmans from Louvain, he worked out a complete transliteration of almost all texts in this collection, yet without any translation or commentary, eventually leaving behind a comprehensive digital manuscript when he died in 2007. The edition of this manuscript could only be achieved in 2016; based on Drewes’ testamentary decree, his colleague and successor on the chair for Semitic studies in Leiden, Harry Stroomer, took responsibility for this task, inviting the present speaker for assistance. As research progress in the field has considerably been increased since the
early 2000's, it was clear that the bequeathed manuscript, basically finalized in 1998, could reasonably not be published without a major revision. This revision, undertaken between 2009 and 2011, proved to be a balancing act between a most authentic rendering of the authors' achievements on the one hand, and corrections and additions wherever necessary on the other. The result should be an up-to-date publication which meets the requirements of scholarly research without ignoring the originality of the authors' work.