

On the Confessions of a British Spy. Everyday Consumption of Qat and Media in Eastern Ethiopia

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The paper will focus on Muslims' everyday life in Eastern Ethiopia and the embeddedness of media practices, drug consumption and religious debates. The starting point will be the pamphlet *Memoirs of Mr. Hempher, the British Spy to the Middle East*, published anonymously in Turkey and popular among sympathizers of Sufism worldwide. This polemic document purports to be the account by an 18th century British agent and focuses on his instrumental role in founding the Islamic reform movement of the Wahhabiyya.

My paper will highlight the appropriation of this idea in Harar, a town in Eastern Ethiopia. Based on ethnographic fieldwork it will show the role and significance of "new" media and their influence in religious debates. The rejection of "Wahabism" is a crucial notion of the majority of the Hararis, a small group within the multiethnic town with a particular distinct religious authority.

The second part of the paper will change from the perspective of morals and ethics towards the everyday consumption of media and *qat*, a mild narcotic widely used in the Horn of Africa. Following a friendship group of male Hararis in their thirties between 2002 and 2006, the ambiguities of everyday life in coping with media and religious debates are highlighted: Chewing *qat* in the afternoon, the change in consuming various forms of media, their production of videos with local songs or the composition of new *zikris*, songs of saint veneration, as arenas to negotiate religious debates within and about different media.