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### In memoriam Diana Mary Spencer (1923–2009)

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Diana Spencer first travelled to Ethiopia in 1964 to join her husband, Oscar, a United Nations adviser stationed in Addis Abāba. Having acquired a good knowledge of Arabic while they lived in the Sudan, she began to study Amharic in Ethiopia with a private teacher and later on in the Mission Language School in Addis Abāba. Inspired by books on Ethiopian history and travellers' accounts she set about to explore the cultural centres of the country, travelling by public busses and staying in modest countryside hotels.

In 1965, after a successful trip to Wag, Lasta and Amba Gəṣān, which resulted in important discoveries of unknown churches, manuscripts and art objects, Diana Spencer joined a research project on the history of Ethiopian art carried out by the “Friends of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies”. In this capacity, she travelled alone and extensively by mule and on foot, making some 20 trips between 1967–1975 to remote churches and monasteries in the Ethiopian highlands in search of rare manuscripts and paintings. To further this research, she studied in a traditional ecclesiastic school attached to the church of Baʾātā Maryam in Addis Abāba, where she learned Gəʿəz and Ethiopian church literature, together with theology and liturgy. She graduated at the level of the *qəne bet*.

The difficult and adventurous travels she undertook gained renown among the officials of the Ethiopian government and the hierarchy of the Ethiopian church, who encouraged her by providing letters of recommendation and important information concerning the rural network. Some of her expeditions were supported by the Crown Prince Asfa Wäsān Həylā Śəllase and the Patriarch *abunä* Theophilos.

During her travels, Diana Spencer developed a special relation with the people and ecclesiastics in two important religious communities in Wällo: Tädbäbä Maryam and Ahəya Faḡḡ, where she was always received with honour. She visited these places on a number of occasions, participating in the spiritual life of the communities, and subsequently providing meticulous reports about her experiences in her publications.

Diana Spencer's travels resulted in important discoveries which contributed greatly to the knowledge of Ethiopian religious art and culture, particularly to a better understanding of the reception and assimilation of Western European and Byzantine pictorial traditions by the Ethiopian artists. Her principal find was the signed work of the Venetian painter Nicolò Brancaleone, and several others which on stylistic grounds could be ascribed to him or his workshop. Another important discovery was the manuscript *Tä'ammərä Maryam* kept in Tädbäbä Maryam. The manuscript, which was written for King Ləbnä Dəngəl, is extensively illustrated with drawings executed by a skilful, anonymous West European artist. Also significant were her records concerning the Byzantine paintings of St. Mary which, in Ethiopian tradition, were ascribed to St. Luke and, as such, received the status of miraculous icons. Moreover, at Amba Gəšän, she was successful in photographing in part the oldest known and illuminated manuscript of the *Tä'ammərä Maryam*, as well as the miniatures from the manuscript containing, among others, the famous historiographical work known as *Mäšhafä Təfut*. This and many other of Diana Spencers' achievements have never since been repeated.

Diana Spencer described the art objects she had seen and photographed (some of them no longer exist), as well as her travel experiences, in several articles. She also gave illustrated lectures with slides, mostly at International congresses and conferences devoted to Ethiopian studies and particularly to Ethiopian art and architecture. Her reports have been carefully studied by scholars, and frequently used as reference material and treated as precious guidelines by those who have followed in her footsteps. Almost all important books on Ethiopian art written after the late 1970s refer to the artefacts discovered by Diana Spencer. Furthermore, she generously shared her photographic material with interested scholars. She was also one of the first who, in 2005, donated over 200 precious slides to *Mäzgäbä Sə'əlat* (<http://ethiopia.deeds.utoronto.ca>) – the on-line database created to house photographic material concerning Ethiopian art and culture.

In 2003 Diana Spencer, already suffering from a terminal illness, completed her work on *The Woman from Tedbab*. The book, which is dedicated to her grandchildren, is a vivid account of her adventurous travels. It also documents her most spectacular discoveries and contacts with contem-

porary influential people; records which for us are often of significant historical importance.

Diana Spencer was a unique woman, a member of an older generation of Ethiopianists who were deeply devoted to the country of which they never tired despite many misgivings and disappointments. Her bravery, energy and sense of urgency to bring to light the hidden treasures of Ethiopian sacral art has inspired, and continues to inspire, the many younger scholars and travellers who are involved in Ethiopian studies.

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### In memoriam Hussein Ahmed (1952–2009)

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On Sunday June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Professor Hussein Ahmed passed away at the still young age of 56 in Təqur Anbäsa Hospital in Addis Abäba in consequence of a heart attack. It was an absolutely unpredictable and painfully choking event which caused a sorrowful dismay in all those who personally knew the man and the scholar and in the whole community of the Ethiopianists.

Hussein Ahmed was born on September 22, 1952 in Gädam Ančaro (Qallu wäräda, South Wällo). He had his first education in his own native village and then he moved to Däse where he attended the primary and secondary school. Once completed his schooling, Hussein Ahmed enrolled in Addis Ababa University where he attended the history courses of Märid Wäldä Arägay and Taddäsä Tammərat. Already during his undergraduate