FEATURES

CRYSTAL ANNIVERSARY REFLECTIONS ON THE NASCENT FIELD OF DJIBOUTIAN STUDIES

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The Republic of Djibouti, formerly known as the Côte Française des Somalis (French Somali Coast) and the Territoire Française des Afars et des Issas (French Territory of the Afars and Issas), became one of Africa’s newest states on June 27, 1977, when it achieved independence from France. Unlike the majority of African countries, Djibouti constitutes a “mini-state” that, over the years, has been described as a “cross-roads” country at the intersection of Africa, the Middle East and Asia, the “hell of Africa” due to its often inhospitable climate, and the “eye of the cyclone”—a reference to the country’s once special role as an island of stability in the troubled region of the Horn of Africa. A Current Bibliography on African Affairs honored the independence of this unique republic in 1977 by publishing a review article, “The Republic of Djibouti—An Introduction to Africa’s Newest State and a Review of Related Literature and Sources,” by Walter Sheldon Clarke, the first U.S. Chargé d’Affaires accredited to the country.

Since the appearance of that article fifteen years ago, significant developments have occurred within the nascent field of Djiboutian studies. First, several topics of historical interest among scholars have generated a significant amount of new literature in the post-independence period. For example, Djibouti’s role as the coastal end-point of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway has fostered an important growth in the number of travellers’ accounts, as well as works on the evolution of transport within the country. Similarly, the internal politics, foreign relations, and general history of the country—so crucial to gaining a complete understanding of regional conflict and cooperation in the Horn of Africa—also have been areas of

*The initial basis for this article was research which originally appeared as Peter J. Schraeder, Djibouti (Oxford, England; Santa Barbara, California; Denver Colorado: Clio Press, 1991).
traditional interest among scholars. More unique, perhaps, is the vast number of works within the fields of geography and earth sciences. These works were spawned by Djibouti's geographical location at the triple juncture of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and East African rift systems, a position which has made the country a veritable treasure trove of volcanic and geothermal activity. The post-independence period has also spawned a growing amount of literature on a variety of new topics. Among these are the periodic refugee burden imposed on this small country as a result of regional conflict and drought; the harmful physiological and social side effects of substantial local usage of a narcotic known as 'khat' (catha edulis); the Djiboutian government's attempts to replace an almost total dependence on imported energy and foodstuffs by developing local energy and agricultural potential; and the importance of regional and international development cooperation, most noted by the establishment in Djibouti City of the headquarters for the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD). And, last but certainly not least, the field since 1977 has witnessed the completion of eight doctoral dissertations at least partially devoted to the study of Djibouti in such diverse fields as anthropology, geochemistry, geology, geophysics, history, and political science.

The purpose of this article is to offer a "crystal" (fifteen year) anniversary assessment of the evolution of scholarship within the field of Djiboutian studies by providing a bibliography of the significant works which have been published from 1977 through 1991. As is the case in all such endeavors, the bibliography inevitably builds upon the preliminary archival explorations of numerous scholars and research institutes. Among the most notable of these are the above noted work by Clarke (the first such bibliography of English-language material), a volume of French-language materials compiled by the Documentation Center of Djibouti's French Cultural Center (see Bibliographie de la République de Djibouti, q.v.), and an excellent introductory volume describing Djiboutian society, politics and international relations as written by Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff (see Djibouti and the Horn of Africa, q.v.). Due to Djibouti's common cultural, ethnic, religious, political and language ties with its two larger neighbors of Ethiopia and Somalia, an equally important starting point for a full understanding of the nascent field of Djiboutian studies is the vast bodies of scholarly works subsumed under the broad titles of Ethiopian and Somali studies. For example, both Harold Marcus, a noted U.S. historian of Ethiopian studies, and Mohamed Khalief Salad, a respected scholar within the field of Somali studies, have compiled bibliographies dealing with Ethiopia and Somalia, respectively, which are useful starting points for studies specifically focusing on Djibouti.¹ Similarly, the volumes

¹ See Marcus, The Modern History of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa: A Select and Annotated Bibliography (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution, 1972); and Salad, Somalia: A Bibliographical Survey (q.v.).
devoted to Ethiopia and Somalia as part of the Scarecrow Press’s African Historical Dictionaries series also are of great benefit.²

Individuals intent upon utilizing this bibliography as an introduction to either brief or more extensive forays into the field of Djiboutian studies should be aware of several caveats. First, the works cited are only from the 1977-1991 period and constitute scholarly books and journal articles, as well as some government reports. Those seeking a more complete listing of works (including non-scholarly citations such as newspaper articles) from the pre-1977 period should consult the “Bibliographies” section of this article. Second, the works are divided alphabetically by author’s last name within a total of twenty-one subheadings. In the case of Arab, Ethiopian, and Somali names, however, they are listed (contrary to standard practice in the West) by the author’s prenom. Third, although the majority of works cited are of the English language, several French works have been included throughout the text, particularly for categories lacking sufficient English-language materials (such as “Ethnicity and Population” and “Constitution and Legal System”). And, despite an original intent to focus this bibliography on relatively “easy-to-find” books and journal articles, several citations constitute “hard-to-find” publications more dependent on inter-library loan services. Among these are publications of various agencies of the Djiboutian government; donor organizations, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); private institutes, such as the Arlington, Virginia-based Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VTTA); and regional organizations, such as IGADD.

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² See Margaret Castagno, Historical Dictionary of Somalia (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1975); and Chris Prouty and Eugene Rosenfeld, Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia (q.v.).
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