

Ethiopia in the Eurasian Imaginary (New Orleans, 7–10 Feb 2019)

AATSEEL Conference, New Orleans, Feb 7–10, 2019

Deadline: Jun 29, 2018

Kate Cowcher, Stanford University

We are looking for participants for the following panel, to be presented at American Association of Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Languages (AATSEEL) conference in New Orleans in February 2019. We plan to organise a follow-up panel - on "Eurasia in the Ethiopian Imaginary" - at the European Conference on African Studies in Edinburgh in 2019. These two panels are interdisciplinary (the organisers are in Comparative Literature and Art History) and part of a larger research project on the politics of representation and cultural exchange between Eurasia (particularly Eastern Europe and Russia) and Ethiopia.

At this stage, please just send us an expression of interest and a short description of your proposed paper by June 29th. Individual abstracts for the New Orleans panel will be due on November 1 2018.

CFP: Ethiopia in the Eurasian Imaginary

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Ethiopia has long occupied a unique space in the cultural imaginary of Russia and Eastern Europe. An Orthodox Christian country nestled within Africa, Ethiopia was unsurprisingly considered the appropriate birthplace for Abram Gannibal (the great-grandfather of Alexander Pushkin) who in all likelihood actually hailed from Cameroon. In the nineteenth-century, hopes of a partnership with Orthodox Ethiopia became central to the fantasy of Russian imperial expansion in Africa, resulting in failed military missions, but successful literary works inspired by the Russian empire's "Abyssinian" chapter. Russia provided support for Ethiopian troops in their fight against the Italians at Adwa in 1896, and in the aftermath of the October Revolution Addis Ababa reportedly provided refuge to those escaping the Bolsheviks.

In the twentieth century, relations between Ethiopia and the Eastern bloc took on new and often contradictory valences. The case of Emperor Haile Selassie, whose politics ran counter to communism but whose leadership was admired across the Black diaspora as an example of African self-determination, posed a challenge for Soviet leaders looking to shore up Black support across the globe. Haile Selassie claimed to be "non-aligned" and his own project of domestic modernisation coincided with the age of Soviet "friendship of peoples," ensuring the certain young Ethiopians pursued broad education programs, from mining engineering to art history, across the East Bloc. These cultural and political entanglements only intensified in the wake of the 1974 Ethiopian revo-

lution and by the late 1970s, Ethiopia was touted by the Soviets as the "progressive" leader of a "Marxist-Leninist confederation" in Africa. The Pushkin Center in Addis no longer houses many books, but it was once a major hub for cultural exchange and a space for the dissemination of Russian literature and language. The legacy of the long entanglement of Ethiopia and Eurasia has yet to be examined.

Interdisciplinary and transnational in scope, this panel will bring scholars from Russian and East European cultural studies together with researchers on Horn of Africa and the Black diaspora to trace the unique space Ethiopia has occupied in Eurasian imaginary. We welcome proposals for papers that explore any aspect related to this rich network of cultural exchange.

Reference:

CFP: Ethiopia in the Eurasian Imaginary (New Orleans, 7-10 Feb 2019). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 21, 2018 (accessed Jul 15, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/18449>>.