



PROFESSOR HUSSEIN AHMED

PROFESSOR OF HISTORY IN ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

1952-2009

Professor Hussein Ahmed was a distinguished and emerging authority of Islam in Ethiopia in the 21st Century. His book on “Islam in Nineteenth-Century Wollo, Ethiopia: Revival, Reform and Reaction, 2001” is a hallmark of his scholarship and objectivity. He was the sole author in this century to be published on Islam in Ethiopia since the John Spencer Trimingham’s Islam in Ethiopia in 1952. He was an author of more than 35 articles on Islam in Ethiopia and he also reviewed and critiqued recent publications by Haggai Erlich’s Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia: Islam, Christianity, and Politics Entwined. When this author attempted to define Islam in the Ethiopian context, Professor Hussein reminded him of the true history of Ethiopia as an indigenous and home-grown religion. Similarly, Professor Hussein reviewed the English Translation of the Conquest of Ethiopia by Paul Lester published by Tsehai Publication in 2003. The original book Futuh Al-habasha was written by the Arab Historian Shihab ad-Din Ahmad Ibn Abde-al-Qadir covering the history of Islam along with Imam / General of Adal Ahmad Ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi – (a.k.a. Giragn Ahmad) - who conquered part of Ethiopia until 1537. His perceptive review contributed to understanding the history of Ethiopia in view of the local and international influences and the role of Islam as a cohesive and uniting factor.

Professor Ahmed was liked and respected by his students, academic and political figures as well as other ordinary Ethiopians. Professor Hussein Ahmed passed away on June 5th, 2009, and was buried the following day in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and was eulogized through hundreds of e-mails and internet portals by eminent historians and authors on Islam in Ethiopia and Africa. His funeral was attended by the President of Addis Ababa University, Vice Presidents, colleagues, students and friends from the Department of History at Addis Ababa University (AAU), as well as representatives from the Ministry of Education, diplomats and visiting professors from the United States and other countries at the time of his burial. Thousands of Muslims, interfaith representatives and other dignitaries paid their tributes while attending the solemn funeral of this distinguished Professor and one of the modern giants of Ethiopian history.

Professor Hussein was a towering figure in academia and among history scholars in Ethiopia and internationally as evidenced by the e-mail comments streaming from professors from Chicago, London, Boston, etc. Several speakers and colleagues expressed that his numerous collections of Islamic manuscripts in his personal possession in his library must be preserved and published by the proposed Professor Hussein Ahmed’s Foundation.

Professor Hussein Ahmed is survived by his two parents, his wife and three children. He was a modest, honorable, loving and caring parent who impeccably fulfilled his religious and scholarly duties. He performed his last Hajj accompanied by his mother and wife. He completed his elementary and secondary education in Dessie, Wollo, Ethiopia and graduated from Addis Ababa University with

honors. He continued his graduate studies in the United Kingdom and continued his post-doctoral fellowship and research in Europe and America. He visited and lectured as a guest lecturer and presenter in scores of conferences and seminars at American and European universities. His last paper was supposed to be presented in Europe when he fatally fell ill and suddenly passed away. In recognition of his perceptive vision on history, he just fulfilled the Qur'an's message for all generations. The Qur'an makes references to those who value history and learn from it while shouldering the responsibility of continuing the legacy of those like Professor Hussein who have passed away.

Professor Hussein Ahmed fulfilled his message and mission and documented Islamic history in Ethiopia objectively and concluded that reconciliation is followed by harmony, and harmony gives rise to peace. It's our duty and responsibility to follow his shining path of truth.

Dr. Zaki Sherif and Dr. Ahmed A. Moen contributed to this article on behalf of Badr Ethiopia.

***SEED** posthumously salutes **Prof. Hussein Ahmed** as a distinguished scholar and authority in Islam in Ethiopia and as a venerated teacher, in appreciation of his lifelong dedication to preserving the history and interfaith harmony among Ethiopians & between Moslems and Christians in Ethiopia in particular, in acknowledgement of the rich and positive contributions and legacy he has left behind by exemplifying the ideals and standards of our community, in recognition of his inspiring academic excellence, his efforts to keep on fighting to preserve and defend the history, pride and dignity of Ethiopia, for his civic responsibilities and many other positive attributes,*