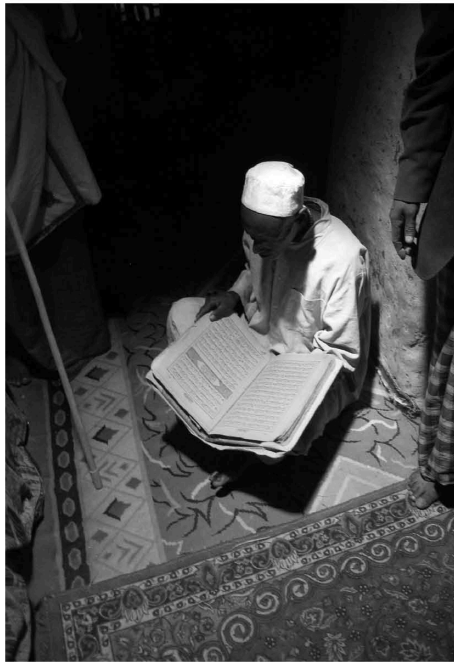


# ISLAM AND POLITICS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA AND BEYOND

TERJE ØSTEBØ

Much of my research in 2014 has been devoted to three parallel projects, all dealing with religion and politics in the context of Ethiopia. While this is a continuation of my interest in Islam in the Horn of Africa, it has moved in the direction of investigating Islamic reformist views on democracy, secularism and the role of religion in the public sphere. Obviously, this also includes looking at how the state has reacted and acted. The first of these research projects is part of a larger one called “Ethiopia: Consolidating Peace, or Emerging New Conflicts?” which explores recent conflictual patterns emerging in the very recent years. My part of this investigates increasingly fragile interreligious relations, and how the competition over the same public space has caused tensions between Muslims and Christians. It also looks into the regime’s religious policies and how its assertive secularist policy have exacerbated negative relations to the religious communities, particularly the Muslim. My second project, again part of a larger one, “Ethiopia’s Foreign Policy,”



has analyzed both the role of religious (state and non-state) actors in the Horn of Africa, and how this has shaped Ethiopia’s “religious” foreign policy. The project has also looked beyond the immediate region, and explores Ethiopia’s ambivalent policies towards Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States. The last project has been looking at representation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Ethiopia. While the movement has no concrete and formal presence in the country, it is present through individuals and groups of individuals attracted to the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideas, becoming crucial for what I have called a “Muslim Politics of Recognition.” All of this research is carried out through my engagement in the International Law and Policy Institute (Oslo, Norway), and the projects are funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and NOREF, respectively.

In addition to this, I have been working on a project on African Salafism, surveying both common trends and local variations for Salafi movements and groups across the continent. In particular, the

focuses here have been on the issue of ritual purity and piety within Salafi religious reform, and what I call “The Politicization or Religious Purity.” This project is in relation to my role as a guest editor for a special issue on Salafism in Africa for the journal *Islamic Africa*. Lastly, I have worked on a project on the relationship between religious and ethnic identities in the context of the Horn of Africa. I have through this research tried to forward new conceptual approaches on how to understand the formation, maintenance, and power of such identities. This will appear as part of the Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Material Religion, 2015.

2014 has also been a successful year in terms of publications. These have included five journal articles in *Comparative Islamic Studies*, *Africa Today*, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, *Instituut Culturele Antropologie*, *Contemporary Islam*, as well as a case-study report on Islamic reform in Zanzibar.

Terje Østebø is assistant professor in the Center for African Studies and the Department of Religion.