A look at the religious past of Eritrea and Ethiopia: monasticism as a case study
Gianfrancesco Lusini, Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”
In contemporary Eritrea and Ethiopia, monasticism has kept its own vitality, and remains a cultural landmark for millions of observing Christian believers. In the past, monks and monasteries played also a decisive role as as driving forces of economy and society. A great deal of written sources is available to enlighten the history of monastic life in both countries. The paper will present some examples, among the many possible ones.

Adaptation and appropriation of traditions among the Betä Ǝsrä’el (Ethiopian Jews)
Sophia Dege-Müller, Ruhr-Universität Bochum
In the past, the Betä Ǝsrä’el (Ethiopian Jews) have been displayed as using ‘only’ Christian texts and prayers for their ritual practices. In general, their entire tradition was labelled as a secondary substratum to the Christian Vorlage. What has been ignored is how the group adapted these materials to their own needs, and thus turning it into something unique. The talk wants to present such unique elements of Betä Ǝsrä’el tradition.

The image of Muslims and Islam in Christian Ethiopic hagiographies
Marcin Krawczuk, University of Warsaw, Department of African Languages and Cultures
The purpose of the paper is to reconstruct the image of Muslims and Islam in the Christian hagiographical texts written in Ethiopic language (Gə’əz). Based on about 20 hagiographical texts the author surveys how various themes related to Muslims and Islam are present in this genre of Ethiopic literature and what literary purpose they serve.

Harari Islam: devotional and spiritual practices in context
Sara Fani, Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”
Harār is historically one of the most important Islamic centre in the Horn of Africa. In the centuries the city, known also as Madīnat al-awliyā’ (‘the city of saints’), has developed particular religious aspects strictly related to its founding myth, which are still recognisable in the devotional practices of local people. Other spiritual practices and beliefs, such as the ones regulating the extraordinary relation with the hyena population, are the result of the assimilation of indigenous pre-Islamic traditions with the Islamic history of the city.

An Ethiopian Lady and the Spanish Jesuits. Origin and impact of a religious debate in the 17th Century
Verena Böll, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg
The encounter of the European and Ethiopian world in the 16th and 17th c. is a conflict-ridden encounter between two creeds and the associated status in world history. At the Ethiopian royal court, heated theological debates took place, in which a noble woman defended the Orthodox faith with intensity. Wälättä Petros fought against the union with the Catholic Church, became an activist and finally experienced the expulsion of the Jesuit missionaries from Ethiopia in 1632.