

Title: An Acmeist Cartography of Africa: Ethiopia in Nikolay Gumilev's "Shater"
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Abstract:

In his cycle of poems "Shater" ("The Tent", 1922), Nikolay Gumilev created a poetic cartography of the African continent. His "map" of Africa consists of references to a glorified African past that, according to the logic of the cycle, only the White poet's voice can recreate and converse with. Typically for the modernist discourse on Africa, the continent is constructed as a counter image to European civilization. Gumilev's Africa is a place of spiritual and poetic fulfillment – for the White Russian poet only. Thus, Gumilev's African "map" is firmly rooted in colonial discourse. Aesthetically, the idea of conversing with the past and "building" is rooted in Russian Acmeist poetics that does not aim at overwriting the past but engages in a dialogue with it. In "Shater", Ethiopia forms one of the mythical realms within this poetic dialogue. It is full of allusions to the Ethiopian founding myth grounded on King Solomo and the Queen of Sheba. An additional layer within the fabric of this dialogue, alongside the images of spiritual and poetic fulfillment, is created by the imagined proximity of Russian and Ethiopian Christian orthodox faith. It allows for projecting Russia onto Africa. The paper explores the interplay of the different layers of Gumilev's poetic "map" of Africa. Its overall context is my book *Zwischen Moskau und Dakar: Literarische, filmische und kulturelle Verflechtungen* (2018).