



International Conference
École Française de Rome
Pontificio Istituto Orientale
23-26 May 2023, Rome

ETHIOPIANS ABROAD in the Middle Ages

Program & Book of abstracts



PONTIFICIO ISTITUTO
ORIENTALE



Centre français
des études éthiopiennes



European Research Council
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Tuesday 23 May

PONTIFICIO ISTITUTO ORIENTALE
Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore, 7

15h-15h45: Visit of the Pontifical Oriental Institute

15h45-16h15: Coffee break

16h15-16h45: Welcoming address by Fr. David NAZAR (Rector of the Pontifical Oriental Institute) and Fr. Rafał ZARZECZNY (Professor at the Pontifical Oriental Institute)

16h45-17h45: Keynote by Alessandro BAUSI

*Lost (and Found) in Egypt and the East: The contribution to Ethiopian Studies of
Johann Michael Wansleben*

19h: Reception offered by the École française de Rome at the Palazzo Farnese

Address: *Piazza Farnese*

Wednesday 24 May

ÉCOLE FRANCAISE DE ROME Piazza Farnese

9h: Welcome at the École Française de Rome

9h20: Welcoming address by Vivien PRIGENT (Directeur des Études pour le Moyen Âge, École Française de Rome)

9h30-10h: Introduction by Julien LOISEAU (Aix-Marseille Université – ERC HornEast) and Martina AMBU (LabEx Hastec - EPHE LEM)

SESSION 1: SLAVES AND FREED MEN AND WOMEN (10H-12H20)

Chair: Alessandro GORI

10h-10h40: Sobhi BOUDERBALA (Université de Tunis – ERC HornEast)
At the service of Muḥammad: Ethiopian slaves and clients in Mecca and Medina during the first decades of Islam

10h40-11h20: Giuseppe CECERE (Università di Bologna – Alma Mater Studiorum)
Ethiopian slaves and Muslim mystics in the Medieval Arab World: case studies and general issues

11h20-11h40: *Coffee break*

11h40-12h20: Craig PERRY (Emory University)
Objects of Desire and Subjects of Knowledge: Enslaved and Freed Ethiopian Women in Fifteenth-Century Arabia

12h30-13h30: *Lunch*

13h30-14h15: Introduction to the exhibition *Islam in Enderta. Two Years of Archaeological Survey and Excavations in Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia.*

SESSION 2: CULTURAL BROKERS (14H20-18H)

Chair: Anaïs WION

14h20-15h: Alessandro GORI (Institut for Tværkulturelle og Regionale Studier – Københavns Universitet)

An Ethiopian presence in the devotional geography of the Near East: the maqāms of Bilāl b. Rabāḥ

15h-15h40: Sophia DEGE-MÜLLER (Universität Hamburg – Hiob Ludolf Center for Ethiopian Studies)

The Mäqdämä Wängel – tracing its Arabic Vorlage and translation history

15h40-16h20: Zaroui POGOSSIAN (Università degli Studi di Firenze)

Saint Ewostatewos and Armenia in the Context of Armenian-Ethiopian Interactions

16h20-16h40: *Coffee break*

16h40-17h20: Deresse AYENACHEW (I Tatti – The Harvard University Centre for Italian Renaissance Studies)

The Stephanites abroad: the case of Abunä Ezra the wise

17h20-18h: Mathilde ALAIN (Centre for the Study of the Renaissance at the University of Warwick – Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Université de Tours)

Este frade andara em Itália e sabia algum tanto de latim: Ethiopians abroad and Francisco Álvares' travel account

Thursday 25 May

SESSION 3: JERUSALEM (9H-11H00)

Chair: Gianfrancesco LUSINI

9h-9h40: Olivia ADANKPO-LABADIE (Université Grenoble Alpes)

*Inventing Ethiopian Pilgrimage to Jerusalem:
a study of Ethiopic Medieval Narratives and Archives (13th-16th centuries)*

9h40-10h20: Alice CROQ (ANR ChrIs-cross) et Camille ROUXPETEL
(Université de Nantes)

Ethiopians in Jerusalem Patriarchates archives (14th-15th centuries)

10h20-11h: Simon DORSO (ERC HornEast – Aix-Marseille Université)

*From Saḥart and Damūt to the Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem: hypothetic trajectories
of Rashīd and Mubāraka, two Ethiopian slaves in the second half of the 14th century*

11h-11h20: *Coffee break*

SESSION 4: NETWORKS I - MATERIALITY (11H20-12H40)

Chair: Sophia DEGE-MÜLLER

11h20-12h: Awet TEKLEHIMANOT ARAYA (Centre for Islamic
Archaeology, Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies – University of Exeter
& Curator of Hajar-Africa)

*The Abyssinian/Ethiopian presence in Medieval Eastern Arabia (7th-16th c. AD).
Reflections from archaeological investigations in Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf*

12h-12h40: Timothy INSOLL (Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies –
University of Exeter)

Ethiopians in India? An Archaeological Perspective from Islamic Eastern Ethiopia

13h-14h: *Lunch*

SESSION 5: NETWORKS II - MONASTERIES AND TARIQAS (14H-17H)

Chair: Vivien PRIGENT

14h-14h40: Mikael MUEHLBAUER (American Research Center in Egypt)

*Ethiopians at Egyptian Monasteries and Egyptian forms
in Ethiopian Monasteries circa 1100*

14h40-15h20: Zacharie MOCHTARI DE PIERREPONT (FNRS –
Université de Liège)

*Ethiopia, Western Arabia, and the Red Sea mystical environment: assessing the spread
of Sufism within Ethiopian scholarly networks (7th-9th/13th-15th c.)*

15h20-16h: Martina AMBU (LabEx Hastec – EPHE LEM) & Samantha
KELLY (Rutgers University)

*Ethiopians from Jerusalem, Cairo, and Rome: circulations and exchanges
(15th-16th centuries)*

16h-16h20: *Coffee break*

16h20-17h: Bertrand HIRSCH (Université Paris 1 – Panthéon Sorbonne)

Ethiopian Monks and Dominicans in the Sixteenth century

SESSION 6: NETWORKS III - EMBASSIES (17H-18H20)

Chair: Vivien Timothy INSOLL

17h-17h40: Verena KREBS (Ruhr-Universität Bochum – Historisches
Institut)

All the King's Men: Italians as Solomonic Ethiopian ambassadors in the 15th century

17h40-18h20: Anaïs WION (CNRS – Institut des Mondes Africains, Paris)

The cost of sending Ethiopian emissaries abroad: a case study (early 16th century)

Friday 26 May

SESSION 7: ETHIOPIAN CAIRO (9H-12H15)

Chair: Giuseppe CECERE

9h-9h40: Perrine PILETTE (CNRS – Orient & Méditerranée, Paris)

The many Lives of Matthew I the Poor (1378-1409), from Egypt to Ethiopia

9h40-10h20: Magdi GUIRGUIS (Kafr el-Sheikh University – IFAO)

The Coptic traditions of writing to Ethiopian kings and bishops, 13th – 18th centuries

10h20-11h: Iskandar BCHEIRY (Atla)

*Ethiopians in Egypt and Jerusalem during the 15th and early 16th centuries:
an examination of four unpublished letters written by the
Coptic Patriarch John XIII (1484-1524)*

11h-11h20: *Coffee break*

11h20-12h: Julien LOISEAU (Aix-Marseille Université – ERC HornEast)

*Is there any Ethiopian connection? People from the Horn of Africa
in late 14th-century Cairo*

12h-12h15: General Conclusions

12h30-14h: *Lunch*

15h30: Proposed visit of the *Museo delle Civiltà* (Entrance fee 10 €)

Book of Abstracts

in alphabetical order

Olivia ADANKPO-LABADIE (Université Grenoble Alpes)

Inventing Ethiopian Pilgrimage to Jerusalem: a study of Ethiopic Medieval Narratives and Archives (13th-16th centuries)

Since late Antiquity, Ethiopia has had periodic relations with the Mediterranean world and the Near East. From the 13th century onwards, pilgrims from Ethiopia are clearly attested in Palestine. These travelers were mostly monks trained in the ascetic life in the convents of the Abyssinian highlands. Outside Ethiopia, these pilgrims lived in hospices. Meanwhile, the pilgrimage to Jerusalem became a recurrent topic in medieval Ethiopian hagiographical narratives. While Enrico Cerulli and later Paolo Marrassini have identified the journey to Jerusalem as a commonplace of many *Gädlät* (*gadla Ezrā*, *gadla Yoḥannes Meśrāqāwi*, *gadla Ēwoṣtātēwos*, *gadla Za-Yoḥannes*, *gadla Gabra Manfas Qeddu* etc.), it remains to be understood what place the pilgrimage to Jerusalem has in the hagiographical genre and how these travel narratives were elaborated.

Are these descriptions merely topical or do they borrow from the real experiences of pilgrims documented elsewhere in the archival records of the communities of Jerusalem and Rome? How did Ethiopian scholars portray Jerusalem through narrative?

This paper will first examine all the known published medieval hagiographic narratives dealing with the journey to Jerusalem, analysing their literary and biblical composition and their possible interrelations. The aim is then to understand how the details of the pilgrimage are presented and to what extent they reflect the actual experiences of medieval Ethiopian pilgrims. This study will therefore rely on a corpus of hagiographical accounts but also on documents produced by Ethiopians who made the journey to Jerusalem between the 13th and 16th centuries. This study will thus attempt to understand how Ethiopian scholars constructed the medieval image of Jerusalem.

Mathilde ALAIN (Centre for the Study of the Renaissance at the University of Warwick – Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Université de Tours)

Este frade andara em Itália e sabia algum tanto de latim: Ethiopians abroad and Francisco Álvares' travel account

Francisco Álvares was a Portuguese chaplain who travelled to Ethiopia between 1520 and 1526, to accompany a Portuguese embassy to the royal court of the Ethiopian king, Lebna Dengel. Based on this journey, he wrote an account printed in Portugal in 1540, *Ho Preste Joam das Indias*. Álvares' account gives an overview of the royal court of the negus, where Álvares met and interacted with several well-read Ethiopians. Among them, some were able to speak or at least understand Italian, Latin, and even Portuguese. A part of this Ethiopian elite is said to have been travelling outside Ethiopia, including for instance one Ethiopian who went to Italy. The Ethiopian presence in Europe was recounted by many contemporary sources. Álvares' account, however, shows us the important role these Ethiopians played culturally and politically upon their return to the negus' court, and also the role they played in European intellectual life.

The reception of Álvares' text and its circulation tell us about the Ethiopian presence in Rome. Ottob.lat. 2789, an Italian manuscript containing a version of Álvares' text, includes 42 additions at the end by Ethiopian scholars living in Rome, including Täsfa Şeyon, named 'fra Pietro' in the Preface. These collaborations between Ethiopians and Italians in the production of knowledge about Ethiopia show the importance of the Ethiopian community in Rome in the mid-sixteenth century, and their impact on knowledge of Ethiopia in Europe at the time.

Martina AMBU (LabEx Hastec – EPHE LEM) and Samantha KELLY (Rutgers University)

**Ethiopians from Jerusalem, Cairo, and Rome:
circulations and exchanges (15th-16th centuries)**

Eighty years ago, Enrico Cerulli offered a first exploration of the organizational aspects of and relations between Ethiopian monastic communities in Jerusalem and Egypt. Drawing upon the recent analysis of Ethiopian communities in Egypt and Jerusalem by Dr. Ambu and of the Ethiopian community in Rome

by Dr. Kelly, this paper revises and expands Cerulli's analysis by revisiting the Ethiopian archive relative to the communities in Jerusalem and Egypt and expanding its purview to include the community of Rome. Drawing on a series of administrative micro-texts recorded in diverse manuscripts belonging to these communities, it considers the linkages among their offices and administrative practices, and the circulation among them of people, books, and other objects, to illustrate the material and intellectual exchanges through which they formed a vital network of Christian Ethiopian communities abroad.

Deresse AYENACHEW (I Tatti – The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies)

The Stephanites abroad: the case of Abunä Ezra the wise

Since the beginning of the 15th century, the Stephanites, an Ethiopian monastic movement, ignited a religious controversy. In 1454, this movement was violently suppressed under King Zär'a Ya'əqob, who decided to end any religious controversy in the name of his kingdom's unity and persecuted the Stephanites. In their turn, they produced several hagiographies narrating these persecutions led by the Ethiopian kings. In this critical period, as the chief of the Ethiopian Church refused to ordain them, a group of Stephanites headed to Egypt in order to receive the priesthood from the Patriarch of Alexandria himself. The *Life of Ezra* claims that, as a member of this delegation, this monk acquired in Egypt several technical skills (e.g., the water mill), and came back to Ethiopia, where he was repeatedly summoned to meet king Na'od. Thus, Ezra demonstrated his technical skills that astonished the medieval court of the Ethiopian king. Through the study of their hagiographical dossier, it is clear that Stephanites never accepted any grant of local governors and kings to avoid the domination of the political authorities and enjoyed economic autonomy.

This paper intends to investigate the Stephanites defense of their creed abroad despite the opposition by the Ethiopian kings. It also aims to explore how Ezra used his technical skills to appease the Stephanites' persecution and assured the independence of his community.

Iskandar BCHEIRY (Atla)

Ethiopians in Egypt and Jerusalem during the 15th and early 16th centuries: an examination of four unpublished letters written by the Coptic Patriarch John XIII (1484-1524)

Among the sources that shed light on the presence and activity of the Ethiopians in Egypt and Jerusalem during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries is a collection of four historical letters written by the Coptic Patriarch John XIII (1484-1524). These letters are found in a copybook of correspondence preserved in the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchal Library, in al-Azbakiyyah, Cairo. This copybook of correspondence is an Arabic manuscript dated 1661-1663 A.D., and contains 91 letters and models of letters, benedictions, and diplomas, which were copied from the sources and composed into this volume. The manuscript was mentioned in the Catalogue of Georg Graf, no.541 (1397), and in the Catalogue of Marcus Simaika Pasha. no. Serial 291, call no. Theo.301.

Sobhi BOUDERBALA (Université de Tunis – ERC HornEast)

At the service of Muḥammad: Ethiopian slaves and clients in Mecca and Medina during the first decades of Islam

The presence of Ethiopian slaves in the pre-Islamic Ḥijāz is well-attested by Arabic sources which give a list of slave markets (especially in Mecca and its hinterland) reserved to enslaved *Ḥabashī*-s. The most famous one is by far Bilāl, a former slave to a Meccan chief, freed by Abū Bakr and offered to Muḥammad. A prosopographical investigation on the *Sīra* and the biographical dictionaries (especially those of the Companions) reveals the presence of a large number of Ethiopian women and men in the immediate entourage of the Prophet in Medina, described as clients (*mawālī*, sing. *mawlā*) and servants (*khuddām*, sing. *khādim*) of Muḥammad.

This paper aims to a better understanding of the Ethiopian slave trade in the Ḥijāz before the birth of Islam, and to analyze the procedures of manumission set up very early in Medina (according to Arabic sources), allowing the formation of a social group of Ethiopian *mawālī* around Muḥammad. The biographies of *ḥabashī* servants of Muḥammad shed light on the role of this group in the nascent Islamic community and its posterity after the death of the Prophet.

Giuseppe CECERE (University of Bologna – Alma Mater Studiorum)

Ethiopian slaves and Muslim mystics in the Medieval Arab World: case studies and general issues

The present paper focuses on a significant aspect in the history of the Ethiopian diasporas in the Arab World during the Middle Ages, that is still waiting for comprehensive studies: the presence of several ‘Ethiopian/Abyssinian’ (*Ḥabashī*) slaves or freedmen in Muslim Sufi networks, especially in the so-called ‘golden age’ of Sufism, seventh-eight centuries AH / thirteenth-fourteenth CE.

Far from being confined to marginal positions, some Ḥabashī personalities played important roles in the doctrinal elaboration of Islamic mysticism and/or in the spiritual and organizational life of their *ṭarīqa*-s. Therefore, studying their representations in contemporary and in later sources may contribute a great deal to a better understanding of actual conditions and symbolic status of ‘Ethiopians’ in the Medieval Islamic World, and may shed new light on ideas shaping representations of slavery and ‘blackness’ in the concerned societies, as well as on mechanisms of social mobility available to ‘Ethiopian’ slaves in those historical contexts.

With this in mind, the present paper tries to define some lines of research on this subject, on the grounds of the study of three main individual cases: namely, Shaykh ‘Abdallāh Badr al-Ḥabashī (d. 618 AH / 1222 AD), an esteemed disciple of the ‘Greatest Master’ Muḥī l-dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) and a Sufi writer in his own right ; Shaykh Mufarrij al-Damāmīnī (d. 648 AH / 1250 CE), a most venerated ecstatic saint in Ayyubid Egypt; Shaykh Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī (d. 732 AH / 1332 CE), a Shādhilī master from early Mamluk times that is still highly revered in present-day Egypt.

Alice CROQ (ANR Chrls-cross) et Camille ROUXPETEL (Université de Nantes)

Ethiopians in Jerusalem Patriarchates archives (14th-15th centuries)

Knowledge about the Ethiopians in Jerusalem, attested in the city since at least the 12th century, owes much to Enrico Cerulli’s documentary work, which consisted in collecting and editing documents from various origins mentioning Ethiopians from medieval to contemporary times. In this Cerulli took a fundamental step forward in our knowledge, which nonetheless, for medieval

and modern times, has not since been surpassed. Cerulli compiled his inventory in the 1930s and 1940s. Thus, he collected only the documents he could see at the time. Since then, some archival collections have been opened, while others, which had been totally neglected by historiography, have been brought to light. By the examination of some case studies, this paper aims to present the untapped potential of Jerusalem Patriarchate archives to write the history of the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem and abroad. Twenty-two documents (of the 70 already inventoried) preserved in the Armenian patriarchate archives and two kept in the Franciscan Custody archives, both so far impenetrable, deal exclusively with Ethiopians in Jerusalem and the Bilād al-Shām, especially in Damascus. Not only these documents concern the rights of the Ethiopian community, its members, and its territorial anchorage (purchase of houses and land in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Damascus), but they will inform both local and regional, intra- and inter-community networks, especially with the other Christian denominations, the Mamluk authorities, and the Kingdom of Ethiopia.

Sophia DEGE-MÜLLER (Universität Hamburg – Hiob Ludolf Center for Ethiopian Studies)

The *Mäqdāmā Wāngel* – tracing its Arabic Vorlage and translation history

Ethiopian Four-Gospel manuscripts often feature a series of introductory texts, among which the most studied are the Eusebian Canon Tables and the Epistle from Eusebius to Carpianus. At least from the 15th century onwards, many Ethiopian manuscripts also contain another text, called *Mäqdāmā Wāngel* – *Introduction to the Four Gospels* (CAe 4872). In previous research, including Zuurmond's fundamental study of the Ethiopian Gospels (1989), this text has been either ignored or treated neglectfully. Zuurmond (1989, 14) states that the text relies on an Alexandrian Vulgate Vorlage but does not investigate this matter further.

As I will argue in this paper, I have managed to identify with more accuracy the Vorlage of the *Mäqdāmā Wāngel*. This is in fact not the Alexandrian Vulgate, but rather the sophisticated Gospel introduction by the Egyptian scholar Al-As'ad Abū al-Faraj Hibat Allāh ibn al-'Assal, who composed the text in Damascus around the year 1253. In addition, we may also be able to trace the translation of this text from Arabic into Gə'əz to Buṭrus ibn al-Khabbāz (or his entourage). He lived and worked in St Anthony's monastery in the 13th century and is known from a colophon to have copied Hibat Allāh ibn al-'Assal's text. This Buṭrus

ibn al-Khabbāz was elected and appointed Metropolitan (*mutrān*) of Ethiopia around the year 1270 but died before he could take up his position.

This paper aims to discuss the Arabic and Ethiopian traditions of the *Introduction to the Four Gospels* and to investigate whether Butrus ibn al-Khabbāz and his milieu can be connected to the translation of the Arabic text into Gə'əz.

Simon DORSO (ERC HornEast – Aix-Marseille Université)

From Saḥart and Damūt to the Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem: hypothetic trajectories of Rashīd and Mubāraka, two Ethiopian slaves in the second half of the 14th century

Among the nearly 900 documents discovered in the Islamic Museum in the Ḥaram al-Sharīf between 1974 and 1975, a corpus mainly composed of administrative, legal and judicial records as well as commercial papers from the thirteenth to fifteenth century CE, two deeds of sale dated 1381 and 1382 CE respectively concern the Ethiopian slaves Rashīd al-Saḥartī and Mubāraka al-Damūtiyya. Through a close examination of these two documents edited and translated by Donald P. Little (1981), this paper ambitions to delve into the social and political context of Ethiopian slave market in Jerusalem at the end of the Qalawunid dynasty, and expanding from the documents, to propose a hypothetic reconstruction of the itineraries and possible further trajectories of Rashīd and Mubāraka.

Alessandro GORI (Institut for Tværkulturelle og Regionale Studier – Københavns Universitet)

An Ethiopian presence in the devotional geography of the Near East: the *maqām*-s of Bilāl b. Rabāḥ

Bilāl b. Rabāḥ (d. ca 642), the Ethiopian manumitted slave, whom the Prophet Muḥammad chose as the first muezzin in the history of Islam holds an outstanding rank in the constellation of the Companions of the Prophet. Several different traditions flourished about Bilāl's life, especially in connection with his late years, after the decease of Muḥammad. Sources are unanimous on setting the closing period of Bilāl's biography in the Near East, where he took part in the first Islamic expansion.

As for the burial place of the Prophet's muezzin, a wide consensus among

scholars was reached on Damascus, where an imposing shrine until today contains Bilāl's beautiful catafalque. Minority opinions about the location of the tomb exist, pointing to other Syrian cities and villages. Beside the graves, however, the memory of Bilāl is preserved and honoured in a relatively conspicuous number of cenotaphs (*maqām*) scattered in the Near East, where an empty funerary box reminds the faithful of the personality and deeds of the Ethiopian muezzin, making him a constant and recurrent presence in the religious landscape of the region.

In the presentation, I will first summarize the traditions available about Bilāl's presence in Syria-Palestine, his shrine in Damascus and his other possible burial places. I will then present the data I collected on the *maqām*-s of the Ethiopian muezzin in Southern Turkey, Jordan and Palestine. I will eventually analyze the gathered information, reconstructing - as far as possible - the historical and religious background of every site and thus sketching a kind of devotional geography of Bilāl b. Rabāḥ in the Near East.

Magdi GUIRGUIS (Kafir el-Sheikh University – IFAO)

The Coptic traditions of writing to Ethiopian kings and bishops, 13th-18th centuries

In the processes of re-institutionalization of the Coptic Church in Arabic base, ibn al-As'al, in mid-13th century, sat out the protocols and formulas of the Coptic papal correspondences, decrees, treaties and so on. What ibn al-As'al had formulated continued to be used until mid-20th century. One of these aspects he articulated is the writing to the Ethiopian kings and bishops. This paper is an attempt to trace the real correspondences to Ethiopia, and how they were phrased and re-phrased up to political and cultural circumstances.

Bertrand HIRSCH (Université Paris 1 – Panthéon Sorbonne)

Ethiopian Monks and Dominicans in the sixteenth century

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Ethiopian pilgrim monks on the route between Palestine and Italy or Spain, often via Cyprus, declared themselves, or were designated, as 'Franciscans' or 'Dominicans'. This affiliation with the European mendicant orders seems to overlap with the division in the Ethiopian monastic world between disciples of Täklä Haymanot or Ewostatewos. If the

fictional attachment to the Franciscans is long-lasting, the reception by the order of the Friars Preachers is quite different. This is evidenced by the chapters that Serafino Razzi, in his work published in 1577 under the title *Vite dei Santi e Beati, così huomini, come donne, del sacro ordine de Frati' Predicator*, dedicates to 'dialogues' that were said to have taken place between two Ethiopian monks and renowned members of the order in Pisa in 1516. While these accounts were disqualified by the Jesuits in the early seventeenth century, and the claim of fourteenth-century Dominican missions in Ethiopia was rightly swept aside by C. Conti Rossini, S. Razzi's text has not received much attention. Yet it deserves a thorough investigation. Who are these monks interviewed? Why are their hagiographic stories about glorious ancestors staged by one of the great scholars of the Order? What exchanges of knowledge and illusions were at work? And above all: how and why is a common knowledge built from very distant hagiographic traditions?

Timothy INSOLL (Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies – University of Exeter)

Ethiopians in India? An Archaeological Perspective from Islamic Eastern Ethiopia

The results of excavations at the trade centre of Harlaa (c. 6th to 14th centuries) have suggested potential contacts with India, and Gujarat in particular, especially between the 11th to 13th centuries. This evidence (agate beads, ceramics, possibly textiles) will be described and considered with reference to the types of relationships that might have existed. The historically known communities of Ethiopian origin in Gujarat (and other areas of India) will also be outlined as a means of assessing this further and the inferences that can be drawn about the place of people from Harlaa within these communities evaluated. Finally, the later 18th and 19th century links between the extant city of Harar and India will be discussed as indicating another dimension to Indian and eastern Ethiopian connections that were occurring within altered economic, social, and historical contexts from those apparent at Harlaa. The differences in the sources that attest these contacts will also be considered, for these are not yet indicated archaeologically, but are recorded historically, architecturally, and to a lesser extent, ethnographically, in Harar.

All the King's Men: Italians as Solomonic Ethiopian ambassadors in the 15th century

A notable feature of late medieval Solomonic Ethiopian diplomatic outreach to Latin Europe remains that several of the kings' high-profile embassies were led by foreigners. In the early 1400s, king Dawit dispatched a Florentine man called 'Anthonius Bartoli' to the Republic of Venice. Fifty years later, Dawit's son Zär'a Ya'əqob sent out a Sicilian named 'Petrus Rombulus' to Rome and Naples. This study examines what sources in Latin and Gə'əz — from the Ethiopian *Homily on the Wood of the Holy Cross* and Venetian archival material of 1402 to the interview notes in Pietro Ranzano's late 15th-century *Annals of All Time* — tell us about these men. What can we infer about their lives and activities in the Italian Peninsula as well as the Ethiopian highlands? What may we learn about the very structures of Ethiopian diplomatic outreach — about the size and make-up of ambassadorial parties, their resources, and the ambassadors' 'companions' — from the written record in both Europe and Ethiopia? Additionally, why might an excessive focus on connecting all sources relating to Ethiopian-Latin Christian encounters to individual named, and especially Italian, foreigners eventually limit our view of these same contacts in the later Middle Ages?

Is there any Ethiopian connection? People from the Horn of Africa in late 14th-century Cairo

Cairo was the place in both the Middle East and the Mediterranean where the highest number of people from the Horn of Africa were to be seen in the later Middle Ages. Moreover, nowhere else the social and cultural diversity of these people was more visible than in the capital city of the Mamluk sultanate. The perennial settlement of Ethiopian monks was a consequence of the patriarchate of Alexandria's relocation in Cairo that occurred in the 11th century. The inflow of slaves originating from the Horn of Africa, mainly women and eunuchs, was proportional to the urban demand for domestic servants as well as to the cultural preference for slaves assuming such origins, to whom certain tasks were entrusted. However, the coming of free Muslims from the Horn of Africa

seeking for science was an emerging phenomenon in Cairo at the beginning of the 14th century, and was closely related to the city's role as the intellectual capital of the Islamic world. In addition, if the visit of embassies from the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia dated back to the Fatimid period, their frequency increased from the late 13th century onwards, in relation to the newly established sovereignty of the Mamluk sultan on Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

This paper aims to assess the social and cultural diversity of the people from the Horn of Africa who settled willingly or unwillingly in Cairo in the later Middle Ages and to understand the way in which this diversity was considered and characterized by the contemporaries. It will not address separately to Christians, Muslims and "Pagans", free individuals as well as slaves originating from the Horn of Africa, in order to better understand the development of various designations (above all, *nisba*-s) that were used to distinguish them. Finally, it aims at raising the issue of potential connections, mutual understanding and common interests between individuals of various backgrounds sharing the same vague geographic origin. Such connections are evidenced in the mid-15th century by the diplomatic correspondence of King Zār'a Ya'əqob (r. 1434-1468). Was this already the case in the late 14th century, before diplomatic exchanges between the Mamluk sultanate and the Christian kingdom eclipsed for several decades? The reign of Sultan al-Zāhir Barqūq (r. 1382-1399) will serve as an observatory for the present inquiry.

Zacharie MOCHTARI DE PIERREPONT (Université de Liège – FNRS)

**Ethiopia, Western Arabia, and the Red Sea mystical environment:
assessing the spread of Sufism within Ethiopian scholarly networks
(7th-9th/13th-15th c.)**

The study of Sufism in Late Medieval Ethiopia, although attested from the 7th/13th century onward, remains to date in its infancy, due mainly to a lack of contemporary and local documentary evidence and historiographical works. In the absence of new or hitherto unseen historical material, the development of *taṣawwuf* in Ethiopia may thus be better approached through the study of external sources. In that regard, the 8th/14th and 9th/15th centuries Yemeni and Ḥijāzī historiographical corpuses provide precious information and records, which mostly remain to be analysed. This paper aims to delve in more details with the Ethiopian scholarly networks of Western Arabia. It will propose a two-fold analysis: on the one hand, it will assess the chains of transmission related to Ethiopians engaged in the diffusion and practice of *taṣawwuf* in Yemen and

the Ḥijāz; on the other hand, it will analyse the role of the Ribāṭ Rabīʿ in Mecca, an institution built by the Ayyūbid ruler of Damascus, Nūr al-Dīn al-Afḍal ʿAlī (d. 622/1226), and later strongly tied to the Ethiopian scholarly and mystical landscape in Western Arabia. Doing so, I hope this paper will contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of scholarly transmissions within the Red Sea environment.

Mikael MUEHLBAUER (American Research center in Egypt)

Ethiopians at Egyptian Monasteries and Egyptian forms in Ethiopian Monasteries circa 1100

Ethiopia was reintegrated with the Mediterranean world and its religious destinations from the eleventh century on, primarily via Egypt by means of pilgrimage and trade. At this time, Ethiopians resided in Egypt, having established a monastery in Wādī Naṭrūn. Traces of parchment also attest to Ethiopians at St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai from at least the twelfth century, and presumably from there, they visited farther flung destinations in the eastern Mediterranean. Coincidentally, it was also at this time that we find in Ethiopian architecture the selective integration of elite architectural forms from the Fatimid Caliphate. Through the following paper, I will suggest that early Ethiopian contacts with Egyptian Monasteries may have inspired the subsequent use of Islamic architectural forms in elite Ethiopian monasteries.

Craig PERRY (Emory University)

Objects of Desire and Subjects of Knowledge: Enslaved and Freed Ethiopian Women in Fifteenth-Century Arabia

This paper will analyze the biographies of twenty-one enslaved and freed Abyssinian women (*ḥabashiyya*) that are preserved in the biographical dictionary *The Shining Light Upon the People of the Ninth Century (al-Ḍawʿ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ)* by Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497 CE). These biographies demonstrate how Abyssinian women were integrated into the elite strata of Islamic society in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Their integration was based initially on coercion as the judges, scholars, and notables of the Ḥijāz (western Arabia) acquired these women and used them as child-bearing concubines. I will also illustrate how several of these women

acquired and transmitted religious knowledge, especially in *ḥadīth* recitation for which they were granted *ijāza*-s (certificates of recitation authorization). As pious exemplars and the mothers of Ḥijāzī elite, these women accrued honor and social capital. For example, the woman known as Yuḥibbu Allah (God is Loving) was the childbearing concubine of Taqī al-Dīn ibn Fahd al-Makkī, a son of one of Mecca’s leading families. Her biography states that “her master...and others heard ḥadīth from her. A group from various places gave her *ijāza*-s. She died in 881 [A. H.] in Mecca. She was generous and greatly blessed for prayer vigils [that she had held.]” Enslaved Ethiopian men also appear in al-Sakhāwī’s dictionary. For example, the freed man Yāqūt b. ‘Abdullāh, who married a former Nubian concubine, was also granted *ijāza*-s and gave such certificates to others. I will use this biographical material to argue that scholars can use Arabic materials not only to write the history of slavery, but also to center Ethiopian women (and men) as themselves subjects of knowledge who participated in elite society and asserted agency despite their temporary subjugation.

Perrine PILETTE (CNRS – Orient & Méditerranée, Paris)

**The many Lives of Matthew I the Poor (1378-1409),
from Egypt to Ethiopia**

The Arabic *Life* of Mattā al-Maskīn (Matthew I the Poor), the 87th patriarch of Alexandria (1378-1409), is considered a major source for the history of relations between Egypt and Ethiopia during the Mamluk period. It is known both as an independent hagiography and as a part of the famous *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria (HPA)*. In the latter corpus, considered the official history of the Coptic Church, Mattā’s *Life* is, notably, by far the longest of all patriarchal biographies. While, in its independent version, however, the *Life* is included in an even longer text, containing a long funeral oration and a list of the Christian martyrs who died during Matthew’s patriarchate. Throughout a detailed analysis of the manuscripts (17 manuscripts, written between the 15th and the 19th century) – carried out in the framework of the ongoing effort aiming at the new critical edition of the *HPA* – this paper intends to explore the links between these two versions of Mattā’s Arabic *Life*. Doing so, it will also focus on the later reception and rewritings of this hagiography, both in Arabic and in Gə‘əz, while questioning its circulation and production environments.

Zaroui POGOSSIAN (Università degli Studi di Firenze)

Saint Ewostatewos and Armenia in the Context of Armenian-Ethiopian Interactions

This paper will start by looking at the evidence on increased direct contacts between Armenians and Ethiopia in the context of Mamluk Egypt and Cilician Armenia. The voyage of the celebrated monk and saint Ewostatewos to 'Armenia' will be viewed as part of this process. Then, I will focus especially on the various hypotheses regarding the location of Ewostatewos' grave and argue for the plausibility of the data found in the versions of *Gädlä Ewostatewos*, which has been questioned by Fiaccadori. Evidence from epigraphy and Armenian hagiography will be presented in support of this hypothesis.

Awet TEKLEHIMANOT ARAYA (Centre for Islamic Archaeology, Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, UK)

The Abyssinian/Ethiopian presence in medieval eastern Arabia (7th-16th c. AD). Reflections from archaeological investigations in Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf

The African presence in medieval eastern Arabia indisputably incorporated an Abyssinian/Ethiopian component. Despite the difficulty in pinpointing particular ethnic groups, this paper will propose some thoughts based on archaeological and other evidence for this relatively unexplored subject. Archaeological ceramics of Slipped Ware (often with black or brown slip) having an Abyssinian/Ethiopian affiliation have been uncovered in Bahrain/Gulf along with other East African types such as Triangular Incised Wares and Roulette Wares (8th to 11th century). These will be the primary focus of this presentation and will be discussed along with other material evidence to argue for a multi-ethnic African diaspora including an Abyssinian/Ethiopian element in medieval Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf. Moreover, other indicators such as toponyms in Bahrain, i.e. Jeblat Hebshi and Baijawiyah (indicating a possible link with Abyssinian and Beja peoples of the Horn of Africa) will be briefly discussed along with relevant historical sources. Finally, various approaches that could be used to explore the potential evidence available for the archaeological and historical study of Abyssinia/Ethiopia-Gulf networks in the medieval period (7th – 16th c AD) will be evaluated.

**The cost of sending Ethiopian emissaries abroad: a case study
(early 16th century)**

The Ethiopian court regularly sent emissaries abroad, whether to Egypt, Europe, Jerusalem or to oriental countries (Yemen, India, etc.). However, little is known about the practical organization of such journeys: who cover the costs of the travels and what were exactly these costs? And what about the dangers on the road and the eventuality of a disparition of the emissaries, were they taken into account? Was there something as an insurance for the family and dependents left in Ethiopia? Two acts preserved in the archives from Aksum, a town located in the northern region of Tigray, give access to some of the mechanisms used to finance and organize an embassy to Jerusalem. This case study takes place in a general context of intense exchanges with foreign countries and can be read in the light of the policy that prevailed during the regency and early reign of Ləbnä Dəngəl (1508-40). For two decades, the Aksumite institutions were managing their own assets for and on behalf of the political royal power, literally displaying their land resources at the disposal of the crown and its policy.

Ill. : Fra Mauro *mappa mundi*
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